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Student project produces College Debate 2016 logo

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Student project produces College Debate 2016 logo

In today's visual world, political campaigns brand themselves with logos, drawing on distinct images, specific fonts, and vivid colors to indicate what the campaign hopes to convey to its audience. Dominican's College Debate 2016 is no exception.

Appropriately, the CD16 logo for #CollegeDebate16 began as a student project at Dominican.

Last fall Steven Polacco, associate professor of art, and students in the Special Topics in Graphic Art class in the [Department of Art, Art History and Design](#) brainstormed and collaborated on producing the initial concepts for the College Debate 2016 initiative.

As the special topic course focuses on client-based design solutions, Polacco arranged a series of meetings with the client – CD16's on-campus organizers.

"The first step was for the students to meet with the CD16 organizers, who outlined the initiative in broad strokes," Polacco says. "Then, working in small groups, the students developed a list of primary words that they thought best defined the conference. From there, they researched political and campaign imagery and, as a class, determined a consistent direction."

Together, the class selected pencil sketches of three logos they believed best exemplified the spirit of the conference. Each student whose sketch was selected then led a group to create a final product using vector illustration software that would ensure the final product was camera ready.

Voice Your Vote, the clear winner, was selected for use on the 'meet the delegates' page of the [College Debate 2016 website](#).

As the [initial CD16 event](#) – a June convening on the Dominican campus – drew closer, CD16 organizers returned to Polacco for help creating banners and collateral material that would serve as backdrops while the delegates were on campus.

Again, the students met with the event organizers in order to understand how the project had advanced from its initial concept. As CD16 was designed to get college students civically engaged and voting, the organizers wanted images that would appeal to millennials. They also wanted to underscore the project's key focus: to spark civil conversations focused on national issues affecting young adults.

"The goal of College Debate 2016 is to amplify key student issues, elevate their thoughts, and encourage other students to engage in activities around the presidential election," said Hanna Rodriguez-Farrar, Dominican's senior advisor for strategy and planning. "We wanted imagery that would incorporate elements that reflect conversation, issues, and national reach."

Polacco and his students brainstormed and developed several prototypes by the end of the spring semester. Drawing on the student input, Polacco produced the final product to meet CD16's tight June deadline.

"I developed a series of digital 'sketches' around the idea of fun, playful, yet bold typography, the ubiquitous 'chat bubble' to represent debate the hashtag, and the star, a symbol I believed could represent politics, America, and individuality," Polacco said.

Polacco selected a color scheme that combined "DU Blue" and a warm yet electric red. As for orientation, he wanted the logo to function as both a square and a vertical rectangle. After much trial and error and back and forth about not leaning the mark to one side or another (in order to avoid political 'leanings'), and adding a stroke around the chat bubble in the negative space of the 'C' to better define the shape, the logo was born.

“I suppose you could say that the logo's total life cycle was six hours... and two semesters,” Polacco remarked.

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