

Lauren Jordan

**Break Barriers Branding**

# Research

Break Barriers was conceptualized based on in-depth dialogue facilitated by Carnegie Dartlet. After weeks of research with 164 engaged stakeholders of Northeastern Illinois University—faculty, staff, students, alumni, and leadership—they were able to find the authentic personality and story of NEIU. **NEIU exists to unlock authentic potential that taps the inherent tenacity of our students and inspires their aspiration to advance society and the world.**

This brought forth three personalities that aided in developing our branding. Using breakdowns of these traits, our team developed a new brand that embodied tenacity, and our long standing history of students coming to NEIU for a better, more prosperous future despite any obstacles they may face.



**“Dedicated Contender”**  
Resilient and tenacious



**“Compassionate Supporter”**  
Supportive and selfless



**“Expressive Contemporary”**  
Creative and original

# Tagline and Messaging

We brainstormed concepts for a new tagline and messaging that leaned a little heavier on the “Dedicated Contender” personality.

Knowing the journey many of our students take to get to a university, specifically to find themselves at NEIU, and using the descriptors of the “Dedicated Contender,” we came up with three taglines, “Break Barriers,” “Watch Me...,” and “Turn Grit into Gold.”

Each concept spoke to the underdog, the persistent, resilient and proud. Only one concept was flexible enough to speak to the other two personalities, “Compassionate Supporter” and “Expressive Contemporary” ---and that was “Break Barriers.”

“Break Barriers” has the flexibility to speak to those who are resilient and constantly overcome obstacles, no matter what the obstacle is-- financial, geographical, physical, mental, etc. The messaging highlights the ongoing work and dedication to reach a goal (or maybe not reach it), but at least be involved in a tireless journey of pursuit. The messaging can also speak to the friendly, supportive and compassionate to impact the world in positive ways and be part of something bigger. Which leads into the many ways our students can make these impacts, through creative approach, multicultural surrounding and originality. Some may “Break Barriers” by attending college, and others may break them when they leave.

Coming back full circle, “Break Barriers” fulfills Northeastern’s personality and story---  
**to unlock authentic potential that taps the inherent tenacity of our students and  
inspires their aspiration to advance society and the world.**

# Typography

**BREAK  
BARRIERS**

The font, Brixton Lead, was specifically chosen for its rugged look. It's rough, weathered, and scraped, but also resilient, strong and bold. The arrangement of the letters, and the stacking of the words should always compliment and support breaking barriers. When in its display form, the words should break off the edge of the screen or page. The letters should also overlap, and weave in and out of other design elements on the page. Subtle, but another way to support the idea of breaking barriers--in this case, barriers of a screen, page, or other design elements.





## Duotone Imagery

Tyeing in the NEIU colors, duotone imagery is the main design style of photography for “Break Barriers.” Images that represent tenacity, determination, and grit are primarily used in the duotone format. These images represent the “Dedicated Contender” personality, while the paint swashes that wrap around them represent the “Expressive Contemporary” personality.



## Supplemental Imagery

Supplemental imagery for “Break Barriers” represent all three personality types. They are displayed as a polaroid with at least one part of the image breaking an edge. This is another subtle nod to breaking barriers by forcing the image to break a traditional square frame. These polaroid images will often overlap each other to form a sense of community that lends itself to the “Compassionate Supporter” personality and the paint swashes, again, tie in the “Expressive Contemporary” personality.



# Billboards



A variety of billboards in the duotone style went up around the Chicagoland area as an awareness tactic. Image selection and treatment for the billboards showcase determination, tenacity, and pride. As a collection, the image selection also showcases the multicultural environment of NEIU.





# Digital

The “Break Barriers” brand was expanded digitally through advertising, landing pages and social media. The landing pages were designed in a way to retain the overlapping elements, as if to break the barriers of the hero image and content below.





# Video

The 30 second promotional video was another awareness tactic. The video included overlapping design elements and image selection that supports the overall NEIU brand and break barriers idea.

