

2026 Creative Excellence Award Application

Application Deadline: November 12, 2025

Application Fee: \$20/entry for institutional member schools; \$85/entry for nonmember schools.

Unsure about your institution's membership status? Visit the [NIRSA Connect Member Directory](#) to find out.

Eligibility: Applicants must meet all of the following criteria to be nominated.

- Work must originate from the collegiate recreation department. Consultants or agencies can be used for the work, but submissions must come from the school.
- Work must be produced, launched, or published within the two-year period, May 1, 2023 – April 30, 2025.
- A single project can be entered in only one category. Institutions may submit multiple entries in the same category if each represents a distinct project.

Submission Requirements:

- Project overview – brief description of (250 words max) outlining objectives, target audience, creative approach, and execution.
- Provide creative samples (digital files, links, or photos of the work)
- Provide metrics, analytics, or qualitative outcomes showing effectiveness.
- List all contributors, including student staff, professional staff, and partners.
- Entrants grant NIRSA the right to use submitted materials for promotional and educational purposes.

Judging Criteria:

- Creativity & Innovation
- Alignment with Recreation Department Brand/Mission
- Execution and Professionalism
- Audience Engagement & Impact

Updated Categories for 2026:

- Brand Identity & Visual Design (logo revamps, signage, large format visuals)
 - Standout creative work focuses on brand elements for recreation programs, facilities, or services. Focus on branding elements.
Examples: Logo refresh, facility signage or maps inside the rec center, coordinated graphics for a campaign.
- Digital Content & Storytelling (videos, interactive website components)
 - Celebrates excellence in digital storytelling formats such as video, interactive web features, or short-form content highlighting the impact of recreation.

Examples: Member spotlight videos, virtual facility tours, interactive wellness hubs.

- Experiential & Pop-up Activations (on-campus engagement events)
 - Highlights creative, on-campus experiential promotions or activations that drive participation or awareness in recreation.
Examples: Pop-up group fitness classes in public spaces, tabling events.
- Integrated Marketing Campaign (multi-channel efforts across print, digital, and merchandise)
 - Recognizes comprehensive campaigns that use multiple channels (print, digital, social media, on-campus activations) to promote a recreation program, event, facility, or initiative.
Examples: New facility opening campaign, semester-long fitness challenge promotions.
- Print Collateral & Publication (brochures, magazines, impact reports)
 - Excellence in design and content for printed materials that promote recreation programs, services, or facilities.
Examples: Brochures, seasonal program guides, posters, banners, or specialty print pieces.
- Social Media Campaign (platform-specific campaigns with analytics)
 - Outstanding use of social media to engage the campus community and promote recreation programs or initiatives.
Examples: Instagram reels series for promotions, TikTok challenges, hashtag-based community building.
- Student-Generated Content Campaigns
 - Recognizes campaigns created primarily by student staff that reflect the student recreation experience. **Examples:** Student social media takeovers, peer-created highlight videos.

Please review all the eligibility requirements at <https://nirsa.net/nirsa/awards/creative-excellence-award/> before you prepare your application. We recommend that you review all the requirements of the Creative Excellence Award Application and gather the necessary resources before beginning.

If you have any questions or encounter difficulties with this form, please reach out to leadership@nirsa.org.

* Indicates required question

1. What is your membership status? *
- (At least one of the following must apply)

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ I am a NIRSA Professional Member
- ☐ I am a NIRSA Student Member
- ☐ I am employed by a NIRSA Institutional Member

2. First Name *

3. Last Name *

4. Job Title *

5. Institution *

6. Email Address *

7. This entry was created primarily by a:

Mark only one oval.

☐ Professional

☐ Student (I confirm that this is student work and I wish to be considered for the student recognition described on the CEA webpage, if applicable.)

Award Entry

Please create a web page, or PDF that can be uploaded to Dropbox, to display your award entry. Your entry must be accessible without the use of a password and links must remain live until after May 2026.

Below please include the following:

- Title of your entry
- URL link if applicable
- Additional material(s) can be uploaded to this Dropbox Folder: nirsa.org/AwardUploads

IMPORTANT: When uploading your media to Dropbox, please save all files in a folder on your device and name the folder **[School Name]--[Award Category]**, then upload the entire folder to Dropbox. Please do not upload individual files; uploading the entire folder helps us keep all materials from the same submission together and helps us tell submissions apart.

If you need additional assistance with providing materials contact leadership@nirsa.org.

8. Title of Entry *

9. Webpage URL Link

10. Category (See **CEA** page on the **NIRSA** website for award category details nirsa.net/nirsa/awards/creative-excellence-award) *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Brand Identity & Visual Design
- ☐ Digital Content & Storytelling
- ☐ Experiential & Pop-up Activations
- ☐ Integrated Marketing Campaign
- ☐ Print Collateral & Publication
- ☐ Social Media Campaign
- ☐ Student Generated Content Campaigns

Statement of Objectives, Implementation & Results

In addition to the materials you submit, the following answers will be used to evaluate and score your application.

11. What were the goals and objectives of the entry? *

12. Who was your target audience? *

13. What were you trying to accomplish with this project? *

14. Briefly describe the project's creative process. *

15. What were the results? How were the objectives met? *

16. Did you have any limitations that had to be overcome during the creative process? *

17. What tools or assessment criteria did you use to measure your results? *

18. Who designed/created this entry? Include the name and title of each person, as well as a brief statement of their contributions. *

Consent & Release

19. Creative Excellence Award winners will be prominently displayed on the NIRSA website. Images, submitted application text, and other materials submitted with winning applications may also be used for educational purposes, NIRSA Member reference, and other NIRSA promotions and communications. By submitting this application form, you grant NIRSA the nonexclusive right to copy, use, and distribute all photographs, images, and other materials (including names of individuals, institutions, and companies) provided as part of your application, in part or in their entirety, for the purposes outlined above. You waive the right to inspect or approve use of your application materials and acknowledge that you have permission to use all images and materials contained in your application. *

Check all that apply.

☐ I agree

Entry Fee & Payment Information

\$20 entry fee for institutional member schools; \$85 entry fee for nonmember schools. You will be prompted for payment once you submit your application. If you wish to pay by credit card via telephone or mail in a check, please email billing@nirsa.org with a contact number after submitting your application.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms