

# 2023 NCMPR PARAGON AWARDS

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THE BEST OF THE BEST  
in COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
COMMUNICATIONS

# THE 2023 PARAGON AWARDS

You're a community college communications professional in the 21st century. Translation: You do it all. From building and tracking digital ads to designing bus wraps and campus signs, your creative skills are tested on the daily. You. Deserve. Serious. Praise.

In a time when creativity has been stretched to the limits, it's more important than ever to take the time to reflect on your relentless pursuit of excellence. Take some time and show the world the inspirational work you and your team have produced over the past year.

Sponsored by the National Council for Marketing & Public Relations (NCMPR), the Paragon Awards recognize outstanding achievement in design and communication at community and technical colleges. It's **the only national competition of its kind** that honors excellence exclusively among marketing and public relations professionals at two-year colleges.

Recognized as the leading professional development organization for two-year college communicators, NCMPR provides regional and national conferences, webinars, a Leadership Institute, relevant information on emerging marketing and PR trends, and connections to a network of more than 1,500 colleagues from more than 500 community and technical colleges. NCMPR is an affiliate council of the American Association of Community Colleges.

# CONTEST RULES

## WHO CAN ENTER

The creative concept must have originated from a community or technical college or district or state governing organization for two-year colleges. Project execution may be the result of collaboration with an outside agency. Entries may not be submitted through an external agency.

## WHAT TO ENTER

- Entries must have been published, broadcast, displayed and used between **July 1, 2022**, and **June 30, 2023**.
- Entries must be new designs or publications in the entry year; those that represent previously submitted work with minor modifications will be disqualified.
- Entries must be original, creative work, without the use of templates that can be customized for individual college use.
- A contestant may submit as many entries in each category as desired. The same entry may not be submitted in two separate categories except as noted.
- It is highly recommended that any entry submission that includes a video should include closed captioning. Including this feature will make for a more accessible video experience.

## IMPORTANT!

NCMPR carefully screens each entry and reserves the right to make adjustments determined to be in the best interest of those submitting entries and in accordance with the contest rules. Please be sure your entries meet all category requirements. Entries that do not meet requirements may be disqualified. Sorry, but fees will not be refunded.

## MAIL-IN ENTRIES

Mail-in entries will **NOT** be required for 2023 Paragons. All categories will be judged online.

## JUDGING

Judging for the Paragon Awards is done by industry experts – those in marketing, public relations and communication outside of community colleges (not NCMPR member-peers).

## ENTRY DEADLINE

### **NOV. 3: Early Bird**

Entries must be **UPLOADED** by 5 p.m. Pacific Time

### **NOV. 17: Regular**

Entries must be **UPLOADED** by 5 p.m. Pacific Time

## ENTRY FEES

### **NCMPR MEMBERS**

**EARLY-BIRD:** \$50 per entry  
(for entries submitted on or before Nov. 3)

**NOTE:** Payment must be processed to lock in the early-bird rate. See Page 6 for details.

**REGULAR:** \$65 per entry  
(for entries submitted after Nov. 3 and by Nov. 17)

### **NONMEMBERS**

\$100 per entry

# IMPORTANT DETAILS

**AWARDS:** Gold, silver and bronze awards will be given in each category. No ties will be awarded. Gold winners will receive the Paragon statue inscribed with the school's name. Silver and bronze winners will receive a certificate, available as a framed piece or a custom presentation folder, imprinted with the school's name. Colleges will not receive awards until entry fees are paid in full. Additional copies of awards are available for purchase separately after district conference.

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS:** Winners will be announced at the 2024 national conference at the Westin Seattle in Seattle, Washington. The winners and their CEOs will be notified in early January if they have placed in one of the top three spots.

**ENTRY RETURNS/RIGHTS STATEMENT:** NCMPR assumes the right to use entries for exhibition, publication and publicity. Entrants agree to hold NCMPR harmless of any claims that may be made against it by reason of such reproductions. Soliciting releases is the sole responsibility of the entrant.

**RULES/APPEALS COMMITTEE:** Contestants have 30 days from the date of the awards presentation to file a written appeal to NCMPR. The board of directors of NCMPR shall act as the final authority in all matters concerning the Paragon Awards.

## QUESTIONS?

**CONTACT THE NATIONAL OFFICE** at (505) 349-0500 if you have questions about acceptable formats for entries and/or placement in specific categories.

**NOTE:** NCMPR District Medallion Award entries and winners do not become automatic entries in the Paragon Awards. All Paragon entries require separate entry forms and fees. If you submitted entries in this year's Medallion competition, you may select which ones to transfer to the Paragons. For details, refer to the submission instructions on Page 5.

# SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

## CREATE YOUR ACCOUNT OR LOG IN

- 1 If this is your first time logging in to the award platform, go to **paragons.secure-platform.com** to create an account. Select **MY ACCOUNT** on the top navigation bar. Complete the required fields under **CREATE MY ACCOUNT**. You will receive an email confirmation that your account has been successfully set up.

**NOTE: If you don't find your college on the drop-down lists, call the national office at 505-349-0500.**

NCMPR recommends that you designate one individual from your college to submit and pay for all entries. When returning to the site, click on **MY ACCOUNT** to log in.

- 2 If you submitted entries in the district Medallion contest or last year's Paragons, you will use the same username and password to log in. Go to **paragons.secure-platform.com** to log in under **MY ACCOUNT**.

## SUBMIT NEW ENTRIES

- 1 Click **SUBMIT NOW** to start a new entry.
- 2 Complete the point of contact/entrant information. Hit **SAVE AND NEXT**.
- 3 Select the award category and complete the required fields.
- 4 Submit supporting documentation (URLs, PDFs, etc.). Important: Ensure that items are not password-protected. Entries could be disqualified if work samples are inaccessible.

- 5 Save OR complete your entry:

**a)** Click **SAVE** if you want to save your entry information and return later to finalize it. The entry will show up under **IN PROGRESS** on your account dashboard.

**b)** Click **ADD TO CART** to complete your entry; you can then Make Another Entry, Print Entries or Checkout (to process payment). It's recommended that you submit all entries before processing payment. Once you make payment you won't be able to go back and make revisions to your entries.

## TRANSFER MEDALLION ENTRIES TO THE PARAGONS

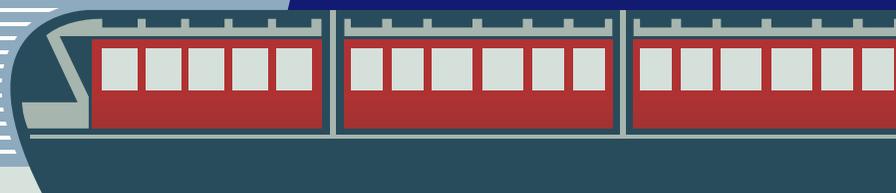
- 1 Click **INCOMPLETE** under **MY ENTRIES** on your dashboard. You'll see a list of entries previously submitted in the Medallions that are now available to enter in the Paragons.
- 2 Click **EDIT** for those entries you want to enter in the Paragons. Double-check the entry information and make adjustments if desired. Please **NOTE** that supporting documentation will need to be added. This section of the entry will not carry over to ensure the entries will meet the Paragon entry guidelines.

Click **SAVE** to save your entry information and return later to finalize. Click **ADD TO CART** to complete the entry. Click **CHECKOUT** to process payment after all new and transferred entries are completed and **IN CART**.

- 3 Click **REMOVE** for Medallion entries you do not wish to enter in the Paragons.

# HOW TO PAY FOR YOUR ENTRIES

- 1 Log in to **MY ACCOUNT**.
- 2 Click **IN CART** and select the **CHECKOUT** button.
- 3 You may pay by check or by credit card.
  - a) To guarantee the early-bird rate, you must complete the payment process on or before the early-bird deadline of Nov. 3. If you submit entries before Nov. 3 but don't process payment by that date, you will be charged the regular rate. (Check payments may be sent to NCMPR after the early-bird deadline as long as an invoice has been generated by Nov. 3.)
  - b) If paying by check, make checks payable to NCMPR. Please include "Paragon entries" on the memo line of the check. **Mail the check and a copy of the invoice** to the NCMPR national office at:  
  
**NCMPR**  
**5901 Wyoming Blvd. NE, #J-254**  
**Albuquerque, NM 87109**
- 4 Once payment is processed, print your invoice and entry confirmation. After paying, you will receive confirmation via email. You may also go back to your account at any time to retrieve receipts or invoices.



# ENTRY CATEGORIES

**NOTE:** All Paragon entries are to be submitted electronically. As the category dictates, upload a PDF of the Paragon entry AND a photo of it in use on campus. Include a description of the physical piece, including print specs, to help judges better visualize the entry. Please see best practices [HERE](#).

## PRINT

### 1. Academic Catalog or Class Schedule

**2. Viewbook:** Publication should be used primarily for student recruitment.

**3. Annual Report:** May be an annual report for the college in general, for the college foundation, or a combination of both.

**4. Newsletter:** Publication should be a maximum of 16 pages in length.

**5. Magazine:** More than 16 pages in length. Page count is not to include an embedded class schedule.

**6. Brochure (Single or Series):** Limit to three brochures in the series.

**7. Booklet:** Larger scale, multiple-page publications that often require special binding (saddle stitching, perfect binding, spiral binding, etc.). Examples include student handbooks, strategic plans, accreditation reports, facilities guides, graduation programs, athletic programs and the like.

**8. Flyer (Single or Series):** Single-page, one- or two-sided. No folds. Diecut/cardstock accepted. Size limited to 8.5x11 or smaller than 11 inches on the long edge. For a series, limit to three.

**9. Postcard (Single or Series):** Entries must be able to be mailed without an envelope and must meet U.S. Postal Service postcard requirements. No folded pieces allowed. For a series, limit to three.

**10. Notes/Cards/Invitations (Single or Series):** Includes thank-you cards, holiday greeting cards, invitations to special events, etc. For a series, limit to three.

**11. Poster (Single or Series):** Upload a PDF of the poster and a photo of it in use so judges can view overall size and impact. For a series, limit to three.

**12. Print – Wild Card:** Includes print materials that don't fit in other print categories – coloring books, calendars and specialty publications. Limit one item per entry. Upload the entry as a PDF, and upload a photo of the publication or printed piece in use.

## DIGITAL / ELECTRONIC MEDIA

**NOTE:** Provide a PDF and/or URL for each entry. IMPORTANT! Digital publications should be hosted online with interactive and dynamic features. Print documents that are simply saved as PDFs and posted online do not qualify.

**13. E-Publications:** Although a bit different in content, these are major college publications (i.e., catalog, class schedule, viewbook, annual report, etc.) that provide an overview of the college's programs, classes and services and are delivered in an e-format. Entry must not be entered into a print category.

**14. E-Newsletter:** May be targeted at either internal or external audiences as an email and/or web page that highlights news and updates on a weekly or monthly basis. Entry must not be entered into a print category.

**15. E-Cards:** Electronic submission. Includes thank-you cards, holiday greeting cards, invitations to special events, etc., that are delivered in an e-format.

**16. Website:** Focus is on the college's entire website.

**17. Microsite/Landing Page:** Focus is on individual pages or small clusters of pages that function as a discrete entity within the college's main website.

**18. Podcast:** Focus is on a single episode or series of episodes (limit three) within the same podcast. Entries will be evaluated based on strategy, impact, content and execution.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

**NOTE:** For all social media categories, provide the URL, along with key analytics.

**19. Social Media Page:** Electronic submission. Focus is on your college's main social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.) page. Judging will be done in real time, and judges will look at design, content, frequency of posts, engagement, strategy and effectiveness.

**20. Social Media Post:** Electronic submission. Share your favorite and/or most successful Tweet, archived Story, TikTok, or other social media post.

## VIDEO

**IMPORTANT!** Video files should be housed on the college website, YouTube channel or other video-sharing site. Provide a URL for the entry. \*Be sure video entries meet all requirements and do not exceed the specified time limits.\*

**21. Promotional Video – Short Form (2-5 minutes):** Entries must be at least 2 minutes in length and not more than 5 minutes in length. Used for general recruitment, image building and brand awareness for the entire college or specific programs.

**22. Promotional Video – Long Form (more than 5 minutes):** Entries must be more than 5 minutes in length. Used for general recruitment, image building and brand awareness for the entire college or specific programs.

**23. Video Shorts (Single):** Entries may be no longer than 2 minutes in duration and are typically unpaid marketing or PR videos used on social media, YouTube or the college website.

**24. Video Shorts (Series):** Entries may be no longer than 2 minutes in duration and are typically unpaid marketing or PR videos used on social media, YouTube or the college website. Limit to three in the series.

**25. Quick-Turn Video:** Entries may be no longer than 3 minutes in duration. These are videos that are taken and posted almost immediately on social media, YouTube or the college website. They are not scripted and not agency or professionally produced. Videos may include minimal post-production content such as text overlays.

# ENTRY CATEGORIES

## PHOTOGRAPHY/ ILLUSTRATION

### 26. Original Photography –

**Unmanipulated:** Color or black-and-white. Color and saturation adjustments, blemish removal, and other minimal edits are acceptable. Include a brief statement of how the photo was used.

### 27. Original Photography –

**Manipulated:** Color or black-and-white. Defined as substantial post-production edits, including the removal or addition of objects, major changes to hue/color/density, and software-generated edits. Submit original photo and manipulated photo. Include a brief statement of how the photo was used and how it was manipulated.

**28. Logo Design:** Provide a PDF of logo design and examples showing items with logo in use (limit to three samples).

### 29. Computer-Generated

**Illustration:** These are illustrations created in Photoshop, Illustrator, Freehand or other digital art software. Provide a PDF of the illustration and an example of it in use. Items entered in this category may also be entered in other categories.

## ADVERTISING

**30. Print Advertisement (Single or Series):** For a series, limit to three.

**31. Radio Advertisement (Single or Series):** Typically :10, :15, :30 or :60 seconds. Spots can include internet radio in all forms. Provide total ad spend in dollars and a URL to listen to the entry. If submitting a series (limit of three), combine them in a single file with a single URL.

### 32. Television/Video Paid

**Advertisement (Single):** 90-second maximum length. Includes ads with a call to action and used on TV and other video platforms like YouTube and mobile. Movie theater ads should be submitted in this category. Provide total ad spend in dollars and URL for the entry.

### 33. Television/Video Paid

**Advertisement (Series):** 90-second maximum length per spot. Limit to three spots in a series. Includes ads with a call to action and used on TV and other video platforms like YouTube and mobile. Movie theater ads should be submitted in this category. Provide total ad spend in dollars and URL for the entry.

### 34. Digital Ad (Single or Series):

Advertising formatted for various platforms (social media ads, Google ads, web banner ads, etc.). Note: Videos should be submitted under Quick-Turn Video category. Provide PDF, digital image or URL. For a series, limit to three.

### 35. Outdoor Signage/Displays (Single

**or Series):** Entries may be billboards, banners, bus panels or other large-display advertising posted outdoors. Submit artwork in digital format (PDF) and a photo of the advertising in use. For a series, limit to three.

### 36. Interior Signage/Displays

**(Single or Series):** Entries may be exhibit booths, displays, wall murals, window clings, directional signage or other displays designed for indoor use. Submit artwork in digital format (PDF) and a photo of the entry in use. For a series, limit to three.

## CAMPAIGNS

For all campaign entries, provide:

- the project's objectives;
- strategies and tactics developed to meet those objectives;
- the results and outcomes.

Combine all elements of the campaign in a **summary** that is saved as a PDF and optimized for quick download OR shared via a URL/shared drive. **Limit to a maximum of 10 elements**, that may or may not include: digital photos, URLs of communication pieces used in the implementation of the campaign such as press releases, fact sheets, brochures, posters, media coverage, radio and TV spots, videos, etc. Please make sure URL links provided are valid for at least 60 days following the submission deadline. Individual items included as elements of these campaigns may also be entered in other categories. The same event may not be entered in two different campaign categories.

### 37. Communication Success Story or Crisis Communication

**Campaign:** Entries may focus on college-driven media or external media coverage of a feature or news based story, college event or program, or a college crisis. (Do not submit plans but examples of actual media coverage.)

### 38. Government or Community Relations Campaign

**Campaign:** Entries should be one of the following: an information or lobbying campaign on behalf of the college directed to legislators or elected

officials; an information campaign to educate the community about your college; a communication program regarding a unique class or program designed to help solve a community problem; or an information campaign to promote a college bond or property tax referendum.

### 39. Special Event or Fundraising Campaign

**Campaign:** Types of programs include college commencements, anniversaries, dedications, fundraising galas, annual giving campaigns or other college events.

### 40. Successful Recruitment or Marketing Program

**Program:** Programs should be larger in scope than simple promotion campaigns but more targeted than a college's entire marketing plan for the year.

### 41. Social Media or Online Marketing Campaign

**Campaign:** A single program or campaign that promotes a central event, theme or idea and that uses messaging across a variety of platforms such as social, viral video, mobile, email, etc. Entries should show the plan and examples of its successful execution.

### 42. Successful Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Marketing

**Entries:** Entries should target a non-majority student group. Examples include, but are not limited to, single parents, minority males, LGBTQ students, students with disabilities and international students. Images should reflect target audience. Entries will be judged on inclusive photography and messaging. Stock photography is permitted if target audience is not represented or underrepresented among current students.

# ENTRY CATEGORIES

## MISCELLANEOUS

**43. Excellence in Writing – Short Form (up to 800 words):** Electronic submission. Entries may include blogs, news briefs, articles and other short pieces published in print or online. The focus is on the quality of writing. Provide a Word document, PDF or URL, along with the word count.

**44. Excellence in Writing – Long Form (more than 800 words):** Electronic submission. Entries may include feature articles, personality profiles, opinion pieces and other longer pieces published in print or online. The focus is on the quality of writing. Provide a Word document, PDF or URL, along with the word count.

**45. Logo Wear:** Includes T-shirts, caps, jackets, scarves and other clothing items with the college's logo or those designed for special events. Provide the original artwork for the piece, along with a photo of it on display or on a model.

**46. Novelty:** Examples include cups, keychains, masks, and other promotional items. Provide a photo of the item. Limit one novelty item per entry.

**47. Wild Card:** Includes marketing pieces that just don't fit anywhere else. Provide a PDF or photo of the item.

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**NCMPR**  
**INTO THE FUTURE:**  
360 DEGREES OF MARKETING KNOW-HOW

NCMPR NATIONAL CONFERENCE AND AWARDS CEREMONY