⊛ ChatGPT

CIE Website Design Strategy

Brand Color Palette

- **Primary (PES Blue):** `#313D71` (dark blue) – aligns with PES University branding.
- **Secondary (Dark Gray):** `#262523` – for body text or subtle backgrounds.
- **Accent Colors:** Use a **vibrant orange** (e.g. `#F2994A`) for buttons/CTAs (blue and orange are complementary, improving readability [1]). Consider a secondary accent like **teal** (`#0E7C7B`) or **golden yellow** (`#FFD166`) for highlights or info bars.
- **Background:** Mostly white (`#FFFFFF`) for clean space, with light-gray (`#F5F5F5`) sections to separate content.
- **Text:** Black (`#000000` or `#333333`) for main text to meet contrast needs.

Accessibility: Ensure all text/background combinations meet WCAG 2.1 AA contrast (≥4.5:1 for normal text) [2] . For example, white text on the primary blue or black text on white. Avoid color pairings like pure red/green that fail color-blind tests. Use online contrast checkers to verify ratios.

Color Usage Guidelines

- **Headers/Footers:** Use the primary blue background with white text, or dark gray text on light backgrounds. This anchors the page in brand color.
- **Sections/Cards:** Alternate white and very light-gray backgrounds to group content blocks. Use subtle colored stripes or iconography (in accent colors) to label each section.
- **Buttons & CTAs:** Highlight calls-to-action with the accent color (e.g. orange buttons with white text). On hover/focus, lighten or darken the button color to indicate interactivity. Ensure the button text contrasts strongly (WCAG ≥4.5:1).
- **Links:** Primary links can be blue; on hover change to the accent color or underline. Maintain a consistent style.
- **Forms/Inputs:** Keep input fields on white background with a subtle gray border. On focus, use a blue or orange outline. Submit buttons use the same accent color as other CTAs.
- **Graphics & Icons:** Apply accent colors sparingly to icons/logos (e.g. icon outlines or fills in orange) to reinforce the brand palette without clutter.

By using color sparingly for emphasis and keeping most backgrounds neutral, the design stays professional. As AudioEye notes, high-contrast and complementary colors (like blue vs. orange) "help ensure clarity and readability" [1] .

Typography & Text Styles

- **Font Choices:** Pair a **sans-serif** for headings with a **serif** for body (or vice versa). For instance, *Montserrat* or *Open Sans* (clean, modern sans-serifs) for titles, and *Merriweather* or *Libre Baskerville* (serif) for paragraph text. This combination helps readers quickly scan headings while making long text easier to read [3] .

- **Sizing Hierarchy:** Use a clear scale. Example: H1 ≈36–42px, H2 ≈28–32px, H3 ≈24–26px, body ≈16px (100%). Use relative units (rem/em) so text scales on different devices. Ensure line-height ≈1.5 for paragraphs.
- **Weight & Style:** Make headings bold or semibold. Body text regular weight. Limit decorative or script fonts – choose open letterforms (e.g. *Lucida Sans* is noted for on-screen legibility [4]).
- **Alignment & Spacing:** Left-align most text; center only smaller headings or calls-to-action. Use consistent margins: e.g. all <p> margin-bottom ~1em. Short paragraphs (3–4 lines) improve readability.
- **Accessibility:** Ensure fonts are legible at small sizes. The Nielsen Norman Group advises using larger fonts and ample line spacing to guide the eye [5] . Avoid all-caps blocks of text.

By following a clear typographic hierarchy (size, weight, color) and pairing fonts smartly, the site will read as professional yet inviting. As Canva's font guide notes, "using a serif for your body copy makes dense information easy to read" [3] .

Layout & Visual Hierarchy

- **Grid & Whitespace:** Build on a responsive 12-column (or 8-point) grid. Use generous padding around major sections. White space is a *feature* – it "enhances visual hierarchy by directing attention" [6] [7] . E.g., separate banner, text, and card elements with ample gaps.
- **Home Page Structure:**
- **Hero Banner:** Full-width image or solid-color block with a bold headline, brief subheading, and a primary CTA. Centered text on ample white space (e.g. "Welcome to CIE – Empowering Innovators" with a "Learn More" button).
- **Key Programs/Cards:** Display major programs (EIE course, Ignite, Startup Program) as cards or feature blocks in a grid. Each card has a title, icon or image, short description, and a link. Use consistent card styling (border or shadow) so each stands out.
- **Announcements/Updates:** A slim highlight section (maybe with a light-yellow background) near top of home page showing the latest news or upcoming event, with a link to more info.
- **News & Events:** Section with latest blog posts or event tiles. Could be a 2- or 3-column listing of events with date, title, and image thumbnail.

- **Footer:** Organized into columns (as in current design): Quick Links, Students, Industry, Contact Info. Use the dark gray background or primary blue. Keep text links light (white or gray).

- **Typography & Color in Layout:** Use larger, bold headings for each section. Subheadings slightly smaller. Highlight key phrases or numbers in the accent color to draw the eye. For example, figure icons (like "2159+ Graduates" in [13†L50-L58]) can use accent color to pop.

- **Proximity & Alignment:** Group related items (e.g., all student-related links together). Align text and elements cleanly (left-aligned lists, centered block headers). "Items that are close together appear grouped" – use this Gestalt principle [8] .

In short, mimic the clarity of industry leaders: one focal point per section, clear calls-to-action, and plenty of "breathing room." As one resource notes, Apple's site "clean, minimal layout" with lots of whitespace makes content stand out [7] .

Responsive & Accessibility Practices

- **Mobile-First & Fluid Design:** Design pages to reflow on small screens: e.g., stack columns, scale images (use `max-width:100%`). The content order in HTML should be logical top-to-bottom, as fluid layouts "ensure the content order is the same no matter what device" [9] . Use CSS media queries to adjust font sizes and padding at key breakpoints.
- **Navigation:** On mobile, collapse the top "Students/Industry/Alumni/Inside CIE" menu into a hamburger. Ensure sub-menus are easily tappable.
- **Tap Targets:** Buttons and links should be at least 44×44px (Apple guideline). Provide visible focus outlines for keyboard users.
- **Contrast & Readability:** Verify all text meets WCAG 2.1 AA. For instance, dark gray text on white is safe; any lighter text (e.g. secondary info) should still be ≥4.5:1 contrast with its background [2] .
- **Zoom Support:** Ensure users can pinch-zoom up to 200% without horizontal scroll or lost content – a WCAG 2.1 AA requirement [10] . This means using relative widths and not fixing the viewport incorrectly.
- **Semantic HTML & ARIA:** Use proper HTML structure (`<header>`, `<nav>`, `<main>`, `<footer>`, `<article>`, etc.). For any custom widgets (e.g., tabs or carousels), apply ARIA roles so screen readers interpret them correctly (ARIA "provides semantic meaning" to content for assistive tech [11]).
- **Forms:** Every input needs a `<label>`. Inline errors should be text (not just color) and announced via ARIA if dynamic.
- **Images:** Provide `alt` text. If a banner is purely decorative, mark it with `alt=""`.
- **Keyboard Navigation:** All interactive items (buttons, links, form fields) must be reachable via Tab. Provide clear focus styles.
- **Announcements:** If using a news ticker or updating a content region via JavaScript, use `aria-live` or a role to notify screen readers of changes.

Following responsive, accessible practices ensures the site works for all users. LevelAccess notes responsive design "improves UX for everyone, including people with disabilities" [9] .

Interactive & Dynamic Sections

- **Announcements Slider/Bar:** If featuring a rotating news slider, include pause/next/prev controls. Use `aria-label` on controls and `aria-live` on the slide area so screen readers announce changes. Alternatively, a static "Latest News" link list is simplest.
- **Event Updates:** List upcoming events in a card or list view with date, title, short desc. Make each clickable to details. Use icons or brand colors for event categories if desired.
- **Newsletter Sign-up:** A simple inline form ("Get updates:" [email field] [Subscribe button]). Label the field ("Email Address"). On submit, show success or error message (announce via ARIA). Keep it unobtrusive but easy to find (e.g. in footer or a sidebar).
- **Contact Forms:** For "Contact Us" sections, use clear input fields (Name, Email, Message). Mark required fields. Use a prominent orange "Send Message" button. Show validation messages under fields.
- **Interactive Feedback:** All buttons/links should have hover and focus styles. If a form submission is in progress, disable the button and show a spinner or "Sending…" message.
- **Example Mockup:** A student startup program card: icon, headline "Student Startup Program", short text, and an orange "Learn More" button. On hover, button lightens.

Each interactive component should feel smooth and obvious. Keep animations minimal (e.g. a gentle slide-in for announcements) and always offer a way to skip or pause any auto-changing content. Label everything clearly so users "never guess" how to use it.

Current Site Issues & Improvements

- **Flat Aesthetic:** The dev site uses only black text on white with no color highlights. For example, the FAQ page lists questions plainly [12] . *Fix:* Introduce the brand palette – e.g., make headings blue and answers dark gray, or put each FAQ in an accordion with colored headers.
- **Typography Inconsistency:** All headings on the site currently appear similar (basic bold) with no distinct font or sizing. *Fix:* Apply the chosen fonts and make H1/H2 notably larger than body.
- **CTAs as Plain Text:** Items like "Contact Now" (Industry page) and "Learn More" (Programs page) are rendered just as text links [13] [14] . *Fix:* Style these as buttons (accent color fill, padding) so they look clickable.
- **Subscribe Section Missing Input:** On many pages (e.g. [12†L93-L99]), the "Subscribe" heading appears without an email field. Users can't actually subscribe. *Fix:* Add a working email input and submit button.
- **Busy Footer:** The "Stay Connected" text and CIE logo repeat in footer for every page. It looks crowded. *Fix:* Simplify footer – one CIE logo, a tagline, then columns of links. Remove duplicate "Stay Connected" blocks.
- **Lack of Imagery:** No photographs or illustrative graphics. The site feels text-heavy. *Fix:* Incorporate relevant imagery – e.g., students in labs, event photos, or thematic icons (lightbulb for innovation, network for industry).
- **Spacing Issues:** Text and sections are too close together. For instance, program descriptions run together. *Fix:* Increase padding around sections and between paragraphs. Follow a vertical rhythm.
- **Mobile Responsiveness:** The current site may not break down multi-column layouts properly (needs testing). Ensure all tables, columns, and nav collapse on small screens.

By addressing these, the UI will shift from prototype to polished product. For example, making "Send Message" a full-width orange button with hover feedback will greatly improve clickability. Consistent use of color (blue/orange) and spacing will give the site a cohesive, professional look.

Industry Inspiration

- **Apple.com:** Embrace Apple's minimalist style. Apple uses huge hero images and sparse text, with each section focused on one message [7] . A similarly clean design for CIE might show one flagship program per section, large font, and plenty of negative space.
- **Stripe & Major Tech Sites:** Many B2B sites use bold headings, short intros, and clear CTAs. Notice how Stripe (stripe.com) uses left-aligned headings with subtle color blocks to guide the eye. CIE can emulate this with blue/orange accent blocks and strong typography.
- **Educational Institutions:** University sites (e.g. MIT, Stanford) tend to keep their school colors, large scholarship stats, and student imagery. CIE should match their parent brand by using PES colors and formal typography, while adopting modern layout patterns (cards, icons, highlighted stats).
- **WCAG/Accessibility:** Follow WCAG guidelines as top-tier organizations do (level AA contrast, keyboard support). For example, W3C advises at least 4.5:1 contrast [2] and 200% zoom support [10] .

In summary, focus on clarity and elegance: **big headings, legible text, and strategic whitespace** [5] [7] . Use the brand's blue and orange consistently to signal actions and sections. This approach (inspired by Apple's and Google's clean designs) will make the CIE site feel modern, trustworthy, and accessible to students, alumni, and partners alike.

Sources: We based these guidelines on established design and accessibility principles – e.g., WCAG color contrast standards [2] , responsive design benefits [9] , typography pairing advice [3] , and visual hierarchy techniques [5] [7] . These ensure the site is not only elegant but also inclusive and user-friendly.

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[1] [2] Accessible Colors: A Complete Guide for Web Design

https://www.audioeye.com/post/accessible-colors/

[3] The Ultimate Guide to Font Pairing — Learn

https://www.canva.com/learn/the-ultimate-guide-to-font-pairing/

[4] 31 Best Web Safe Fonts for Accessible Design (2025)

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srsltid=AfmBOopCDD1RnXYQ2EboA83Nt03i6s3cf1ezbxL1zgozjeuiJpnUK90i

[6] How Apple Leverages White Space For Brand Success

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[7] White Space Examples: Inspiring Website Designs

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[9] [10] Responsive Web Design | Best Practices For Accessibility

https://www.levelaccess.com/blog/what-does-responsive-web-design-have-to-do-with-accessibility/

[11] WAI-ARIA Roles - ARIA | MDN

https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/Accessibility/ARIA/Reference/Roles

[12] [14] CIE - Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship | PES University

https://cie-dev.4gd.ai/students/faqs

[13] CIE - Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship | PES University

https://cie-dev.4gd.ai/industry/contact