Top 10 Design Principles to consider when creating your UNCW ePortfolio

1. **Guide the Reader’s Eye**: Create a visual hierarchy using headings, subheadings, and paragraphs.

On the left, it’s hard to know where to focus and start. On the right, the larger headings draw the eye’s attention, then a subtitle, and paragraph continue to draw the eye down, from top left to bottom right.

2. **Avoid Information Overload**: Be selective and prioritize your content.

On the left, too much content is jumbled together, making it difficult for anything to stand out. On the right, less information is presented, and it is arranged in smaller chunks. Linked content allows the owner to post just as much without visually overwhelming the reader.
3. **Use Focal Points:** Make your most important content stand out using factors such as size, font, color, graphics, or positioning.

As with information overload, creating a focal point allows the most important information to stand out. On the left, it is unclear which element is the priority, while on the right, the larger size and darker color make the eye gravitate more toward the written paragraph.

4. **Utilize White Space:** Use white space to reduce clutter, organize content and keep from overwhelming the page.

On the left, space is omitted between the paragraphs and lists, creating a long and jumbled amount of text. On the right, the white space is added, leaving room between paragraphs and lists as appropriate. Space, even if it is not actually white, creates a break in the content and helps to prevent visual overload.
5. **Use Legible Fonts**: Choose fonts that are easy to see and read. Don’t use too many different fonts on one page.

On the left, the script font is difficult to read, while on the right, the font is more legible. On-screen text is generally easier to read using a sans serif font. Sans serif means without serif (the small lines at the end of the characters). Some examples include Verdana, Helvetica, and Arial. Decorative and script fonts should be used sparingly. Different styles such as bold and italic can be used within the same font family to create contrast without adding a new font.

6. **Keep It Consistent**: Elements such as a common theme, colors, or fonts can be used to create unity among the pages.

Using the pre-made templates, such as UNCW’s Student, Staff, Faculty, and Study Abroad templates, will set up a common theme specific to UNCW. If you choose to create your own, remember to create consistency throughout your pages.
7. **Alignment:** Aligning objects and text can establish a clean look and create unity. Remember not to center everything.

On the left, the text is all centered, making it harder for the eye to determine the starting point of the next line. Centering can be useful at times, but it is often overused. Aligning text and objects, like on the right, creates a crisp and more organized look. The aligned boxes and left justified text create sharp lines for the eye to follow.

8. **Balanced Layout:** Distribute text, graphics, and multimedia content evenly throughout your design.

On the left, the content is dispersed in a random fashion, creating a messy and chaotic look. On the right, the content is aligned and balanced so one side of the page is not heavier than the other.
9. Choose Your Colors Wisely: Choose 1 main color and 1 or 2 accent colors. Color can be used to create organize content, create contrast, show emotion and create an impact. Contrasting colors can be used to make text more legible.

The colors on the left make the text extremely difficult to read, while on the right, the contrast of the dark background and white text allow for easier reading.
10. Make Your Work Easily Accessible: There are many things you can do to make your ePortfolio more accessible for those with disabilities, such as converting files so they can be viewed easily and from many devices.

On the left, the yellow background makes the text difficult to read. For individuals with a visual impairment the color profile is especially hard to read. Text choices such as an over abundance of all caps, bold and italics add to the difficulty. On the right, legibility is improved with a simple, consistent font choice, as well as contrasting background and text colors.

For more information, the link below contains a checklist of ways to be ADA compliant online:
http://www.uncw.edu/oel/ADA%20Checklist.pdf