

Quick Start Guide for Academic Department or Program Web Sites

The new academic department or program web sites enable you to focus on the content of the site and have fewer worries about web design or knowledge of HTML.

The base navigation for a department page includes the following items:

- Home/About the Department*
- Major/Minor Requirements*
- Courses*
- Faculty & Staff*
- Prospective Student Information
- Research
- Facilities
- Advising

*The content on these pages will be managed by the department in partnership with the Office of Public Affairs and/or in conjunction with the College Registrar.

Additional navigation items may be added easily to the departmental Quick Links section. For example, the French Department web site may want to link to the web page for the Wellesley-in-Aix study abroad program.

Start with the Inventory

Start by evaluating the current departmental web site. This can be done a number of ways, by printing out the pages or simply reviewing them online. Either way we recommend that you create a list (using the excel template supplied) of all the pages on your existing departmental web site.

While reviewing the site, make note of the type of content on each page – does the page contain just descriptive text? How about any images? Are there any pieces of multi-media on the page?

It is helpful to note the person in the department who is going to provide the content for each page and the individual with final authorization for the content on the page. While we suspect this will be a departmental chair, it is good to know if it may be someone else.

Map the Content

Once you have a rough idea of the content that exists on your current site. Compare that content with the navigational items listed above, making note of which content will go on which page in the new site. Consider the following:

- Can the content match the structure outlined?
- Is there content (old, out-dated, or belonging to another group) which no longer has value and should not be recreated?
- What other navigational items might you need? (Contact me if the mismatch feels dramatic.)

Rewrite the Content

It is important that the text on your departmental web pages get a fresh look. In many cases the writing has adapted and changed just as the people updating the site. We all want the College web site to have a similar feel at all levels. Please take the time to consult your departmental description in the course catalog and rewrite all of the site's text using the following helpful hints.

- A few pointers for writing for the web:
Keep your writing short and more importantly be concise
- Present the information so that anyone can understand it – keep it simple
- Put the most useful and relevant information first
- Use headers to help readers scan your content
- Use bullets for information that can be listed rather than detailed
- Avoid long paragraphs
- Cut your current text by at least a third

A style guide for the new web site:

The College is currently working on new ways to present itself to external audiences. The web site is a primary source of content that will represent the College. With this in mind, it will be important that your departmental pages also support these themes. Public Affairs will assist your department by reviewing the site for relevant text. Public Affairs may have suggestions and will work with you to alter the text for a better fit with the rest of the College's web site.

Over time, there will be a writing guide to assist each of us in our writing for the web, partly to enhance consistency throughout our web presence.

Considering Images:

Take a look at the existing images on the existing site. Do these images directly support the work of the department. Are there a few images that you feel are representative of your department?

The Elements of Each Page

Department Home Page

The home page has the following elements you will need to think about, write, or identify:

- A short description of the department
- A featured highlights area (an area to highlight timely announcements or to draw attention to a particular item on the site... Perhaps highlighting a new faculty member, or a new course, or a recent graduates accomplishment, etc.)

- A profile feature (from the profile repository generated in conjunction with Public Affairs)
- Recent related news (as determined by Public Affairs)
- Announcements – related to the department
- Upcoming Events – related to the department
- Contact Information with Names (as needed)
- Links (to other related sites)

Major/Minor Requirements

This page contains the following elements:

- Text about the major
- Text about the minor
- Text about honors and thesis
- In some cases text about transfer credit or exemption exams
- In some cases text about going on to graduate studies in this area
- Departmental contact information
- A profile feature
- Links (to other related sites)

Courses

This page contains the following elements:

- A short description about the curriculum or course listing for the department
- A downloadable PDF of the course listing (from the Registrar)
- A detailed course listing (generated by the system)
- Departmental contact information
- The profile feature
- Links (to other related sites)

Faculty & Staff

This page contains the following elements:

- A listing of faculty & staff in the department with links to full profiles (generated by the system)
- Departmental contact information
- The profile feature
- Links (to other related sites)

Research (optional)

Many departments have a research page to discuss student research projects. To talk about thesis and independent study opportunities, internal and external summer research programs, or provides information on recent research projects. This page may include photos or links to photos.

Prospective Student Information

The goal of this section is to provide a prospective student with an understanding the field of study and find out what the information she would need in order to get started in this major or field. Including but not limited to:

- How to get started
- Excellent reasons to select this major
- Ideas of what you can do with this major
- Fun things we do in this field
- Placement Examination information (if appropriate)

Facilities (optional)

This page can be used to highlight facilities used by the department. To show-off labs, computing spaces, classrooms, or other meeting spaces that the department uses on a regular basis. This page may include photos or links to photos.

Advising (optional)

This page can be created to discuss the faculty advising environment of the department. To discuss major advising and thesis advising, as well as any addition supports created within the department (tutors, tables, etc.) This page may include photos or links to photos. This section may also include a link back to the Class Deans office for additional academic advising.

Links (optional)

Some examples of links are:

- Library's in-depth guide
- French House
- A photo gallery page
- Link to shared info at another institution
- Specific study abroad page