

## Notes on Current Practices

### Q&A With Derek

Questions Posed by Tom Burkholder (answers in Blue by Derek)

How departments, programs and centers do routine maintenance of their websites?

**The current methods are generally: WebCapp, WebRequest. There are several exceptions to this process in which departments have direct editing access.**

#### **WebCapp**

For Editing: News, Events/Calendars, Lists, Galleries, Faculty/Staff Directories, Faculty Profiles, Custom Course Listings, Program Pages (Learning Outcomes, Testimonials). Tools specific to certain departments (admissions, bursar, registrar) have been created within webcapp as well.

#### **WebRequest Form:**

Web Request - (Online form requesting edits be made by MarComm Staff)

The vast majority of web edits are text changes and are easily completed by student workers, and can be completed by MarComm staff in response to a web request via the online form at: <https://webcapp.ccsu.edu/webrequest> This form submits to a request queue accessible by several MC staff capable of editing CCSU web sites. Rarely is it the case that requests remain in the system beyond the end of a business day.

#### **Authoritative Information:**

"Authoritative Information" usually refers to content which remains relatively static until modified (usually on a cycle/schedule) by some authoritative body such as a committee. Examples include Catalog Content, Curriculum Sheets, Academic Maps, Student Handbook, Employee Handbook, HR Forms, etc.

The "owners" of this content determine when and how it will be edited & updated. Any web editor is able to target this content/URL at this (centralized) location. The editing "restrictions" ensure that that multiple copies of this content are added to the web server and that the target URL does not change when the file is appropriately updated. *(This practice has been among the most effective in ensuring web content accuracy. Prior to implementing this practice, the web server contained 3 student handbooks, and 2 smoking policies. Academic department sites contained multiple (in one case six) curriculum sheets meant to represent the same program.)*

How do they make significant changes to existing?

"Significant" meaning "high-volume" can be done via the same tools mentioned above. Edits involving changes to a web site structure/style are done in collaboration with the office of Marketing & Communication so as to not introduce/remove elements into web pages which will compromise external governing factors (508 compliance, responsive structure, style adherence, etc.)

How do we get new sites designed and implemented?

This varies greatly depending on the type of "new" site. In any case, a request would be sent to the Office of M&C – preferably via the web request form in order to expedite the request.

Examples of "new sites" might include a new administrative initiative (such as the IPC) or the creation of a site for an academic program (MBA) or department (Journalism)

which did not previously exist. The next step is commonly a meeting with the contact/group representing the request. Occasionally (although infrequent), the content is prepared in advance in a format viable for a first draft of the web site. This site is developed online and posted for review. Changes (which may range from a simple modification to extensive revisions and follow up meetings will take place at that point). Faculty requesting a dedicated blank folder/directory on the web site are given access to an empty folder. These were occasionally requested for posting research or personal profile information. Most often, they were for faculty profile/academic information. With the creation of the faculty profile page option (via WebCapp) such as <http://www2.ccsu.edu/faculty/ned.moore> (as well as sites such as LinkedIn & social media in general) these have not been requested. The last remaining example is one emeritus professor: <http://web.ccsu.edu/elias/Elias.htm>

What training is needed? What mechanisms are there for creating and updating? Who can make changes? When and from where are changes allowed? Are there different permissions for different levels of change?

WebCapp was designed and developed internally – specifically tailored to the needs and technical (web editing) skill level historically typical of CCSU faculty, staff, & student workers requesting web site editing access. Short training video tutorials were initially created for the first “version”/(layout) of the WebCapp dashboard. Feedback regarding the ease-of-use of the tool indicated that even that was unnecessary.

Dealing with those issues will allow Chris to make the decision about what content management system we are going to use going forward.

OU Campus is currently the “official”/“commercial” product that we are using. OU-Campus was “designed for higher ed” and is supposedly the most commonly used solution by higher ed institutions. Our 5-year contract with OmniUpdate expires this summer, and the finance office has indicated that we would need to make decision very soon on whether or not we will renew – (as apparently it again needs to go out to bid either way).

More generally, we need to be involved in the discussion about who the website is for and how do we determine if the information we're putting out is getting.

“Who is the website for” can apply to all areas of the web site and the various audiences. In certain areas of the website (such as the portions focused on recruiting – homepage, landing pages/conversion pages, etc.) the answer is fairly simple as current best practices are constantly being posted, tested, reviewed, etc. Our office collaborates with the admissions department several times a week – working to better match & leverage best practices.

Areas that could use improvement (and committee intervention) are those focused more on the internal audience (current students, current faculty/staff, etc). This is most obvious around advising periods when students and faculty are on the website and “on a mission” to get their classes selected, their bills paid, etc.

## **Questions Posed by Stuart Barnett**

-How often do depts want a redesign?

It varies greatly. Some seem to want to overhaul their site every year or so while others never say a thing until we approach them.

--How many depts self-manage? Communication, Design?

Design and Communication are the only academic departments still using a design different from the CCSU template.

--How many depts have a designated web person?

Approximately half. (but we could find out the exact number before our meeting).

--Can we get analytics data about traffic to and in depts?

The data is available. However, we are currently working on a method for effectively aggregating and presenting this data in a meaningful way to all levels – including departments. Departments occasionally ask for their web analytics and we have provided this information. In most cases however, they need help reading/interpreting the data – meaning the numbers themselves or the trends within the context of factors influencing the numbers.