Recommendations for AS&E Websites

The recommendations outlined in this section were developed to help improve consistency in navigation and content for AS&E websites. There are six primary recommendations as well sections on content strategies and best practices.

**WHO are the recommendations for?**
The recommendations in this section apply to all websites within Arts, Sciences and Engineering at the University of Rochester. They were developed in conjunction with the Deans' Office and a faculty committee.

**WHY are the recommendations important?**
The main goal of these recommendations is to improve website navigation and content throughout Arts, Sciences and Engineering in a way that is attainable and consistent.

**WHAT are the recommendations?**
The recommendations include adoption of standard elements such as:

- A search function throughout the site
- A link back to the University homepage and their respective school homepage
- A standard set of navigational subheadings across department websites
- Easy-to-find contact information on the department's homepage

**Recommendations — Website Elements**
The recommendations for required elements listed below aim to improve consistency in website navigation and content. There are six primary recommendations that include adoption of standard elements such as:

- A site-wide search function
- A link back to the University and respective school homepages
- A standard set of navigational subheadings
- Specific and consistent faculty/staff information
- Easy-to-find contact information

A list of web browsers and mobile devices that sites should be tested against for compatibility issues are also provided. It is recommended that sites be designed with mobile devices in mind.

1. **Department Homepages**
   Each department homepage should feature the following elements:

   - Site-wide search
   - Link back to the College, School of Arts and Sciences, or Hajim School of Engineering homepage
   - Link back to the University homepage
   - Approved University, School of Arts and Sciences, or Hajim School of Engineering logo

2. **Top-Level Navigation**
   Individual department websites should feature a top-level navigation scheme that is persistent throughout the site. Uniformity in menu titles will not only help undergraduates and prospective students who may have multiple interests quickly navigate on department pages, but also aid pre-major advisors who visit department sites as well.
We recommend using the following menu titles:

- About Us
- People (includes faculty*, staff, and students if applicable)
- Majors & Minors
- Graduate Programs
- Research
- News and Events

Top-level does not refer to the location of the navigation bar, but instead refers to striving for consistent and relevant navigation menu titles. Individual departments may have a need for additional menu items besides the ones listed above.

3. Faculty Pages
Every faculty member should have a departmental page within the People area of the department’s site. The faculty directory page should include:

- A current photo
- Degrees earned
- Current research area
- Updated list of current research projects, papers, publications
- Current or representative list of courses taught

Personal faculty websites should be a link on this page, not a substitute for the departmental faculty web page.

4. Contact Information
On the department homepage, a “Contact Us” area should be included with the mailing address and department phone number. If an email address is to be included, it should be a department email address, not an individual’s email address.

5. Web Browser and Device Support
All websites should be tested in the following browsers and devices:

- Internet Explorer 7+
- Firefox
- Safari
- Chrome
- Opera
- iPhone
- iPad
- Android

6. Mobile Devices
As the portion of traffic to our websites from mobile devices increases, each department should have a plan for how their site functions in mobile devices. Sites should be tested in a variety of mobile devices to identify problem areas.

Recommendations—Content Strategies
Content strategy involves identifying the type of content that will best enable you to communicate to your online audience. The information below will help you to create and publish useful, usable content.
A content strategy defines:
- Key themes and messages
- Recommended topics
- Content purpose

**Define Your Audience**
The most important question to ask and answer for any website is: Who is the most important audience for this web page or site?

For example, for the University’s homepage, the most important audiences are those who are not already familiar with the University—those for whom the website will be their first impression of the University.

For Arts, Sciences and Engineering websites, the most important audiences should be:
(listed in no particular order)
- Prospective undergraduate students
- Prospective graduate students
- Current students
- Current faculty and staff
- Parents of prospective and current students
- Alumni

**Conduct a Content Audit**
Each department should conduct a content audit of their existing site. The aim is to identify where each piece of content on each page came from—who requested it, who wrote it, who added it to the site—and when it was last updated. Audits also identify problem areas (misspellings, dead links) and content gaps that could possibly be filled.

**Write for the Web**
Recommended reading: *Letting Go of the Words: Writing Web Content that Works* by Janice (Ginny) Redish

Web content is a conversation. When online, people tend to skim and scan in order to find and understand the information they need.

Answer your site visitors’ questions

For every topic on your site, think about what people come wanting to know about that topic. Then think about how to give them that information as clearly and concisely as possible.

Let your site visitors “grab and go”

**Here’s how:**
- Break your text into short sections with clear headings
- Start with key messages (i.e., “front-loading” the content)
- Write short sentences and short paragraphs (a one sentence paragraph is fine)
- Use lists and tables
  - Bulleted lists for items or options
Numbered lists for instructions
- Write and insert meaningful links
- Illustrate your content (with photos and captions)

Additional writing tips:
- Write in the active voice (most of the time)
- Use plain language
- Use verbs for action instead of nouns (e.g., “He denied…” instead of “He issued a denial…”)
- Remember parallelism (humans like patterns)
- Cut unnecessary words
- Use the inverted pyramid style (key message should be first)
- Talk to your site visitors by using “you” (and “we,” if appropriate) in the copy to draw the reader into the conversation
- Avoid overly long or clever page titles, section headings, etc.

For more writing tips and guidelines see the AS&E web style guide.

Recommendations—Best Practices

Tracking and Performance
Each department website should provide some means of tracking visits to the site. The recommended method for collecting user and visit information is Google Analytics. There is a main University account that can be added to each site, and then a separate report for that site can be provided.

Accessibility
All University department websites should meet basic accessibility guidelines for users with disabilities. Test your sites against a validator like WAVE to identify any accessibility problems that need fixing.

Templates
Arts, Sciences and Engineering; Hajim School of Engineering; and University templates are available for department use or the Web Help Team is available to design a custom template to meet your needs.

Logos
For guidelines on how to apply the approved versions of the University’s logo, visit: www.rochester.edu/creativeservices/graphicstandards/.

Remember, the logo is not synonymous with a header or headline. It does not need to be—and on department sites, probably should not be—the biggest, most prominent element on the site. For example, it is often appropriate to use the logo in a footer, or as a secondary element in a header.