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University of North Dakota

Proposed Web Governance Model

mStoner

Introduction

University of North Dakota (UND) has engaged mStoner as its partner in a comprehensive web redesign and rollout initiative. The scope of the project includes a website governance strategy, which is a plan to establish a structure of staff, technology, policies and procedures to manage the UND website.

This document provides our governance-related findings from the strategic discovery phase and proposes a new governance model for UND. It satisfies a portion of the governance strategy deliverable (project deliverable #8). Subsequent documents will provide recommended policies and procedures, training and support structures, staffing, and a communication and rollout plan.

Findings from Discovery

UND In Transition

- **Mark Kennedy became president in the summer of 2016.** He is changing the culture of the institution and supports the idea of strong and centralized website governance.
- **An entirely new, activity-based budget model will launch in conjunction with the next fiscal year.** This is a large, multi-year project. As a support and service unit, Marketing & Creative Services will charge specific dollar amounts to revenue generating units (primarily colleges) for defined service levels.
- **UND is in the process of responding to significant, state-mandated budget cuts,** which are impacting all aspects of the university. At the same time, a significant investment is being made in branding and marketing (including the web project) to better position the institution for long term success.
- **An official, university-level marketing committee was recently formed,** providing leadership support for marketing initiatives and a vehicle for evaluating and making key decisions.
- In conjunction with the website redesign and rollout initiative, **UND is partnering with SME on a rebranding initiative focused on the university's positioning, promise, and visual identity.**
- **Marketing & Creative Services is expanding its scope of responsibilities and becoming more strategic in nature.** The web team originally focused on Student Affairs communications but now partners with Admissions and will soon add Graduate School and Extended Learning to its portfolio.

Current Governance Model

- **UND has a well-established, centrally-managed web content management system.** With the notable exception of the School of Aerospace Sciences, OU Campus is widely-used and is the recognized standard for the university. As is typical, Athletics and Alumni websites run on their own systems.
- **UND's website design is also centrally-managed.** The templates are widely- and consistently-used across campus. Relative to its size, UND has few “rogue” websites that have non-standard designs.
- **Content management is highly decentralized.** All colleges and most academic and administrative units operate independently with little involvement from Marketing & Creative Services. The web team assists these areas with user set up and support, training, and troubleshooting.
- **Technical aspects of the web presence are centrally-managed by staff within NDUS Core Technology Services.** While Medicine, Engineering, Library, and Nursing have technologists on staff, most units with technical needs (e.g. integration with applications or databases) are supported by the central team. On the whole, UND's web technology is in good shape, with relatively few outlier systems.
- **UND has no established processes for performing regularly scheduled reviews of marketing-critical websites.** Also, there are no standards for analytics, search engine optimization, accessibility, and other best practices. These key areas currently receive inconsistent or inadequate attention.

Web Team

- **The core web team consists of four full time staff:** a manager (Tera Buckley), a specialist (Tanner Rosendahl), a front-end developer/designer (Kelicia Christianson), and an application developer (Nathan Clough). Kelicia and Nathan are part of the Core Technology Services (CTS) group within the state-wide university system office.
- **The team has been working together for years, and the dynamic is healthy.**
- **Upcoming changes are unlikely to disrupt the team.** Tanner will transition to a new role within Marketing & Creative Services and be replaced by Matt Schill. Kelicia and Nathan may transition from CTS to a newly forming team within the office of the UND CIO, but their roles are not expected to change.
- **The team is constantly operating in a reactive mode,** troubleshooting issues, setting up users, re-training and re-educating users, responding to user support requests, and making changes to sites they fully manage.
- **In anticipation of the web redesign, the team throttled back on projects,** further contributing to the ad-hoc and task-based nature of their current workload.

Domains

There are approximately 160 subdomains within the UND web environment, including internally facing sites. The sites managed within OU Campus are listed below.

Site	Total Number of Files	Estimated Number of Web Pages	Percent of Total
arts-sciences.und.edu	14,100	3,700	12%
business.und.edu	2,400	600	2%
education.und.edu	4,900	1,300	4%
engineering.und.edu	4,800	1,200	4%
graduateschool.und.edu	2,600	700	2%
law.und.edu	5,400	1,400	5%
library.und.edu	2,000	500	2%
med.und.edu	10,700	2,800	9%
nursing.und.edu	4,900	1,300	4%
und.edu	62,400	16,200	55%
Totals	114,200	29,700	

Note: The “Total Number of Files” column encompasses all binary files including images and PDF’s.

Content

- **UND has too many pages** for an institution its size. There has never been a concerted, university-wide effort to remove outdated or redundant pages. The web team estimates that 25% of the 30,000 web pages are geared toward external audiences.
- **UND has too many CMS users (~400), the vast majority of whom are administrative assistants with little marketing, web, or technology skills.** The web team estimates that 20% of users log in with regularity. Few people in the academic and administrative units have marketing and/or writing skills.
- **UND does not have a good solution for content targeted at internal audiences.** There is no portal or intranet for current students, faculty, or staff, therefore internally-facing content is housed on the main website. The design templates lack the flexibility to break away from the externally-focused navigation sets. This undermines the user experience for both internal and external audiences, and makes the site more difficult to maintain.
- **UND Today, the official news source for the university**, was created in 2016 under the direction of President Kennedy. It is published twice weekly both online (WordPress) and via an email newsletter (MailPoet). Content is carefully curated by a small editorial staff; UND Today is not intended to be a comprehensive hub or archive for all news across the university.

Recommendations

Actions To Improve UND's Web Presence

- **Increase the depth and breadth of the Marketing & Creative Services (M&CS) team's role in managing the web presence.**
- **Reduce the number of OU Campus users and raise the level of expectation for people in the system.** Create a “content contributor certification” program that covers the basics of writing for the web, SEO, and CMS topics. People need to meet a minimum standard if they are to work within the CMS.
- **Codify expectations for colleges and units.** Areas that operate independently should be expected to allocate a professional PR, marketing, or communications person to their website.
- **Reduce M&CS investment in user training, user support, and low value tasks.**
- **Increase M&CS investment in strategic tasks and projects, and managing marketing-critical websites.**
- **Leverage M&CS staff that are not in the web team.** Marketing Coordinators and Managers are the perfect people to help engage with colleges and other units. Leverage staff writer(s) for web projects.
- **Establish a prioritization schema for sites based on their marketing criticality,** and a tiered service expectation structure for M&CS' completion of content updates.

“It [our governance model] cannot be one-size-fits-all.”

Sarah Nissen

Executive Director of Marketing & Creative Services
University of North Dakota

Proposed Model

The table below offers a menu of options for web governance. M&CS should be clearly established as the subject matter expert and authority on web standards across all options. Publishing workflows should be introduced, allowing M&CS to govern more sites. The budget model should anchor to the Standard option.

	Fully Managed	Standard	Standard +	Independent	Independent +
Web Consultant	Marketing & Creative Services	Marketing & Creative Services	Marketing & Creative Services	Marketing & Creative Services	Marketing & Creative Services
Coordinator / Publisher	Marketing & Creative Services	Marketing & Creative Services	Marketing & Creative Services	College or Unit	College or Unit
Content Subject Matter Expert	College or Unit	College or Unit	College or Unit	College, Unit, or Department	College, Unit, or Department
CMS Contributor	Marketing & Creative Services	College, Unit, or Department	College, Unit, or Department	College, Unit, or Department	College, Unit, or Department
User Support	N/A	Marketing & Creative Services	Marketing & Creative Services	Marketing & Creative Services	College, Unit, or Department
Technical Support	NDUS Core Technology Services (CTS)	CTS	College or Unit and CTS	CTS	College or Unit and CTS
Similar Example in Today's Model	Admissions	College of Business & Public Administration	College of Engineering & Mines	School of Law	School of Medicine and Health Sciences

Note: Per the activity-based budget model, all revenue-generating units will pay for services, regardless if they choose to use them.

Implications

- By general rule, all sites within the main UND domain should be **Fully Managed** by M&CS. Given the current decentralized structure, there will certainly be exceptions to the rule. Over time, UND should work to minimize these exceptions.
- Many of the colleges will fit the **Standard** model. Units will have access to the CMS, but changes will flow through a workflow review process with approval from M&CS prior to publishing.
- Colleges with in-house information technology staff but more basic web content needs or skills will fit into the **Standard Plus** model. This likely includes Engineering and Nursing.
- Colleges and units with professional communicators and lower complexity websites will fit into the **Independent** model. This likely includes Law and research centers (many of which are not yet in OU).
- Larger colleges that have professional communicators and technologists to support more complex websites will fit the **Independent Plus** model. This likely includes Aerospace (when they move into OU), Medicine, and the Library.
- Due to its large size and varied program offerings, **Arts & Sciences** as a whole may not fit any of the above models. Arts & Science may require a custom solution, or a fitting of individual departments or groups of departments into the above options.

Other Technologies

- **WordPress should continue to be used for UND Today and blogs**, following the currently established support model and its expectations for M&CS and CTS staff. Various email newsletters are managed in WordPress via the MailPoet plugin. While this is not an ideal solution, it's working well and migrating to another solution is a low priority at this time.
- **UND should expect that sites moving into OU Campus will slot into the Independent or Independent Plus models, at least initially.** This includes School of Aerospace Sciences, Energy & Environmental Research Center (EERC), and other research center sites.
- **M&CS should expect to take a hands-on leadership role in the governance of the third-party web event calendar** system that will be selected and implemented as part of the web redesign and rollout initiative.
- **mStoner is not ready to endorse the idea of an entirely separate website for internally-facing content, and the governance of such a site is a concern.** We're analyzing this issue as part of our information architecture (IA) work, and will more concrete recommendations after the IA is delivered.