

UCCS Institutional Website Project

Website Survey Ten Recommendations

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Summary

In May, 2012, a small team comprised of members of UCCS University Advancement, IT Web Services and Institutional Research sent a survey about the UCCS website to faculty, staff, students, and some prospective students. There were 823 total respondents, primarily current students (82%). We asked "On a scale of 1 to 10, please rate the UCCS website. (1 is poor and 10 is very good.)" The mean score was 6.35; if we were being graded, that's a D. However, almost half (44%) of the respondents fail us.

Among the responses to various questions were a few clear patterns. Below is a list of recommendations, prioritized by volume of feedback.

Ten Recommendations

1. Improvements to the **user experience**, such as basic navigation, organization, ease of use, and optimizing for user efficiency should likely be the #1 priority. Simplify, organize, optimize. Generally respondents are asking for more consistency and convenience. Work to improve user satisfaction with a focus on user experience design and improved information architecture. Make gathering feedback and iterative improvement a fundamental part of managing the website. Reduce the amount of time and number of clicks it takes to perform important actions.
2. Next should be a fairly comprehensive strategy for improved **quality control**. Many of the complaints are about broken links, 404 errors, and outdated and inaccurate information.
3. Improve high-profile tools, such as **Blackboard, Webmail, Portal, and Registration**. These may simply be the areas that the survey respondents use the most, but there are a significant number of complaints about the primary tools for "getting business done." Some of the feedback is relatively vague, "the portal sucks" or "In My portal things are confusing and there are too many options" for example, which we can take to mean that generally the user experience can be improved. Other feedback, though, is very specific, such as integrating the tools together (at least basic integration, but specifically **single sign-on** is a major request), making sure it works with common browsers, ensuring the browser's back button functionality is not broken, reducing redundant content, improving information quality (reducing confusion), simplifying the experience, extending

time before session expiration (or potentially better communication about session expiration), and providing links back to the Current Students page after logging off.

- User-satisfaction with **Webmail** appears to be very low. A new solution for student webmail called "Office 365" was implemented shortly after this survey took place.
 - Take a close look at the "**registering for classes**" user experience (UX). Many complaints are about the process being too cumbersome, confusing, or inconvenient.
4. Improve **search**. Search was by far the most common complaint about a specific area. No clear single issue emerged, but satisfaction with the search function is very low. There is general dissatisfaction with the "tabs" (though users are asking for varying defaults with no clear consensus.) However, while the user interface may need some attention, the quality of the results was a very common complaint. Users are frustrated with results that point to outdated, inaccurate, and missing (404) pages.
 5. **Visual design and content** improvements. Respondents noted that it is important that the site be a high quality, honest, professional portrayal of the university, and the current design may not be meeting expectations.
 6. Consider a new strategy for the **Event and Academic Calendar**. Information quality control and user interface are the two major complaints. Event information may be missing, incomplete, or inaccurate, and finding and using the information that is available is difficult.
 7. Make **contact information**, especially for faculty members, more easily accessible. Some complaints are specifically that many instructors do not appear in the phone directory, but others revolve around faculty information being missing, outdated, or inconsistent on department pages.
 8. Improve **academic/degree information** and **department websites**. Many are requesting more prominent and well-produced information about academic programs, degree requirements, courses, etc., and are frustrated with the quality of department websites and lack of consistency between departments.
 9. Improve user experience on **mobile devices**. Few users report that they use the website from mobile devices, but many complain that the experience is poor. Any new design should have mobile access as an important consideration.
 10. Improve **support for UCCS web contributors**. Many respondent are asking for more help developing and maintaining their pages; more Ingeniux support.

Other IT-related Issues: there are a lot of complaints about passwords expiring too often, problems with the URL, sessions expiring too quickly, performance and reliability complaints, webmail not working on wifi, and problems with VPN access.

Other Specific Recommendations

Add a link back to the UCCS homepage and UCCS Current Students page from the logout screens for webmail, blackboard, and portal.

Add "Blackboard" to the quicklinks on the Faculty&Staff page.

Consider removing "Apply Now" from main navigation on Current Student and Faculty and Staff pages.

Build a "Social Media" page that links to all major UCCS social media accounts.

Remove tildes (~) from URLs.

Ensure uccs.edu always resolves quickly and reliably to www.uccs.edu without issue.

If possible, turn off case-sensitivity for URLs.

Potentially add a "Report this URL to Web Services" function to the 404 page, with a commitment to responding, to let visitors report problems.