

MSU INVESTMENT PROPOSAL FOR INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES

PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

Title	Staff for Web Communications Team	Request Date	01/18/2012
Department	University Communications	Email	jake@montana.edu
Requestor	Jacob Dolan	Phone	406.994.5036

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Core Themes and Objectives (check all that apply)

Educate Students

- Our graduates will have achieved mastery in their major disciplines
- Our graduates will become active citizens and leaders
- Our graduates will have a multicultural and global perspective
- Our graduates will understand the ways that knowledge & art are created and applied in a variety of disciplines
- Our graduates are prepared for careers in their field
- We will provide increased access to our educational programs
- Communities and external stake holders benefit from broadly defined education partnerships with MSU

Create Knowledge and Art

- Students, faculty, and staff will create knowledge and art that is communicated widely

Serve Communities

- We help meet a fundamental need of the citizens of Montana by providing degree programs for our students
- We help meet the educational needs of the citizens of Montana by providing a wide range of educational opportunities to a variety of students
- Our students, faculty, staff, and administrators reach out to engage and serve communities
- Our students, faculty, staff, and administrator reach in to build the university community

Integrate Learning, Discovery, and Engagement

- Each graduate will have had experiences that integrate learning, discovery and engagement
- Outreach activities will educate students and address the needs of the communities we serve
- Students, faculty, and staff will create knowledge and art that addresses societal needs
- MSU is a community that will be characterized by synergy within and across disciplines, roles and functions.

Stewardship

- The public trusts the institution to operate openly and use resources wisely
- The faculty and staff are well-qualified and supported
- MSU will support Native American students, programs, and communities
- MSU will be an inclusive community, supporting and encouraging diversity
- Our publicly provided resources are used efficiently and effectively
- Natural resources are used efficiently and sustainably
- MSU nurtures a culture of resource conservation and ecological literacy among students, faculty and staff
- Our physical infrastructure (e.g., building, equipment, open spaces) will be well-maintained and useful

PROPOSAL SCOPE

Describe the Proposal

Background:

Web Communications oversees the Web, email, mobile device, social media and other digital communications for Montana State University. It provides planning, development, coordination and execution of the university's digital communications that includes email communications to external audiences, mobile Web and app development, social media for audience engagement and community development, online video production and distribution and Web communications for the MSU Web domain. Web Communications was created in 2004 with 2.0 FTE. At the time there was an additional 2.0 FTE in the ITC Academic Computing unit that also supported university-wide Web functions. In subsequent years, the responsibilities of Web Communications grew dramatically and the 2.0 FTE positions in ITC were assigned to new areas.

Currently, Web Communications is also proposing the purchase and implementation of a Content Management System (CMS) to better manage the MSU Web domain. Should the CMS be funded, the need for the following requested FTE in the Web Communications unit remains.

Problem:

The demand for integrated and strategic digital communications has increased at Montana State University, as it has at universities worldwide, yet MSU's investment of resources has decreased since 2004. The responsibilities of the Web Communications unit has grown from managing the university's primary Web pages to supporting and overseeing the entire MSU Web domain and its hundreds of thousands of pages, building the university's social media presence and online community, developing mobile content and strategy, overseeing and developing all email communications to groups of external audiences, and video development, support and distribution. The demand on the Web Communications unit has become unsustainable with its current FTE. If MSU desires to be on par with similar universities, this investment is critical to meet its audiences' expectations in the digital world.

A university's Web content plays a significant role in the recruitment of students. According to the 2011 Noel-Levitz E-Expectations study, 47% of students and 57% of parents reported that a poor website would affect their perception of a school. Additionally, 20% of the student respondents removed a school from their prospect list due to a negative website experience.

Proposal:

This proposal is an investment in Web Communications to meet the needs of the university, while continuing to align and integrate the university's Web and digital communications efforts with the university's recruitment, retention, teaching, research and outreach goals. Funding for three FTE is requested. While the three positions enhance each other, they fulfill separate needs and are independent of each other should only partial funding be approved. The positions are listed in order of funding priority.

Web Programmer – With a focus on writing code for complex Web development projects and integrating MSU's online tools and services with its communications efforts, this highly technical position would facilitate a more in-depth strategy in mobile Web, audience engagement, and user-experience for the primary Web pages on the MSU website.

Web Graphics Designer – With a focus on visual design that makes MSU's Web pages look polished and professional and with making pages easy to navigate, this position would work closely with Web content developers across the MSU Web domain to improve the university's public face on the Web both aesthetically and for ease of use.

Web Community Manager – With a focus on expanding and enhancing MSU's communications and engagement through social media and video platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, this position would engage MSU's audiences and develop relationships among the university, students, alumni and the MSU community at large.

PROPOSAL SCOPE

Describe the broader impacts and benefits of this proposal

If funded, this proposal will provide a Web and digital communications team to support the strategic efforts of the university in recruitment, retention, teaching, research and outreach. This investment is needed to simply remain competitive with other universities. MSU will fall behind its peer universities in digital communications if current funding and staffing remain unchanged.

An expanded Web and digital communications team will:

Support MSU's core missions of recruitment, retention, research, teaching and outreach through the Web. An expanded staff will increase Web Communications' ability to work directly with Admissions, Student Success, Research, Extension, Extended University, the Alumni Foundation and other key units in building communications that advance the university's mission.

Expand the reach of MSU through social networks and build stronger ties to the university's many constituent groups through online social communities. Active development and management of social networks can aid the university in recruitment, retention and alumni and donor relationships. In 2010, one-third of prospective students searched for schools on social media sites and 76% thought the universities should have their own private social network.

Direct and assess visitor flow through MSU's website to the greatest benefit of recruitment, retention and engagement at all levels of the university. MSU can markedly improve its public face with improved Web resources.

Develop and implement a mobile-device communications strategy that meets the expectations and needs of prospective and enrolled students. In 2011, mobile usage on the MSU website grew 246% over the previous year. Sometime between 2014 and 2016, mobile Web usage will overtake desktop Web usage worldwide. Among teens, mobile Web usage is highest among students from the lowest income groups. A focused mobile strategy will improve MSU's ability to support underserved Montana families.

Monitor and engage the online conversations surrounding the university to give a better understanding of how MSU is being perceived. Nearly 450,000 Montanans have a Facebook account providing an opportunity to engage and connect with the university's key constituents in a new way.

Improve MSU's email communications to its audiences with more resources for design and construction. Email is currently used to engage nearly all of MSU's audiences and its use is expected to increase.

Develop and enhance video production and distribution throughout the MSU website through live-streaming of events and video capture. YouTube is the second largest search engine in the world and 27% of prospective students search for their schools on YouTube. Roughly, 55% of prospective students have taken the time to watch videos embedded on the websites of their schools.

Sources for statistics used in the above proposal:

1. <https://www.noellevitz.com/papers-research-higher-education/2011/2011-e-expectations-report>
2. <https://www.noellevitz.com/papers-research-higher-education/2010/2010-e-expectations-report>
3. <http://www.digitalbuzzblog.com/2011-mobile-statistics-stats-facts-marketing-infographic/>
4. <http://gettingsmart.com/news/infographic-facebook-university/>

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Implementation Plan *(Please describe with timelines)*

Phase 1: Develop position descriptions and proceed with hiring process. This will begin as soon as funding has been approved and will require two months to complete.

Phase 2: Develop comprehensive Web and digital communications strategic plan for the university that align with and directly support the university's strategic goals. This phase will take two months running concurrently with Phase 1.

Phase 3: Execute Web and digital strategic plan. This phase will be ongoing.

Phase 4: Assess and refine strategic plan from Phase 1 and return to execution. This phase will be ongoing and evaluated as tactics from Phase 3 are completed.

Assessment Plan *(Please describe with indicators)*

Assessment should occur with involvement from the team's partners and internal stakeholders to assess the success and productivity of the positions.

Critical Success Factors:

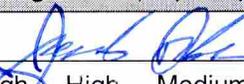
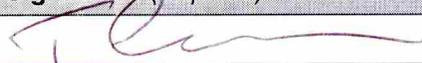
1. Must hire motivated and talented team members.
2. Must be able to maintain and build working relationships with key departments to focus their online communications.
3. Must be able to adapt and evolve with emerging technologies and identified needs.

Indicators:

1. Number of students engaged in university activities and initiatives.
2. Number of students, alumni and community members engaged in conversation about the university.
3. Key analytical indicators for primary web resources (measuring usage, effectiveness and engagement).
4. Overall satisfaction and appeal of university digital communications.

If assessed objectives are not met in the timeframe outlined, what is the plan to sunset this proposal?

Should the investment in the Web and digital communications team be evaluated poorly, the strategy to sunset the resources would be to avoid filling vacancies as they arise in the Web Communications unit.

SIGNATURES					
Department Head (please print)		Signature (required)			Date
Dept Head Priority (please circle one): Very High High Medium Low Very Low					
Dean/Director (please print)		Signature (required)			Date
Jacob Dolan					1/18/2012
Dean/Director Priority (please circle one): <u>Very High</u> High Medium Low Very Low					
Executive/VP (please print)		Signature (required)			Date
 Tom Calcaque					1/18/12
Executive/VP Priority (please circle one): <u>Very High</u> High Medium Low Very Low					