WEBSITE DOs and DON’Ts

This is a resource for Graduate Program Directors, faculty and staff for website optimization when creating and updating program, department or school websites. These suggestions are based on marketing research and study, and from frequently asked questions received from programs, departments and schools regarding website format.

DO:

1. **Realize** that you have 3-5 seconds to grab viewer attention to read further
2. **Think** of it as a marketing page – to catch interest, not an information only website
3. **Keep it simple**! One scroll or page down
4. **Stick with ONE** main color for headers throughout website, different color/shade for sub headers
5. **Be consistent** with the same type of format throughout website – ALL pages look similar
6. **Limit** navigation bar to seven or less buttons; limit drop down menus, use links
7. **Choose** EITHER left or top navigation
8. **Format** so important/critical information can be found in three clicks or less
9. **Use** a simple/short url (website address)
10. **KEEP** content/links current! Check monthly

Home page:

- **Minimal text** (summarize who/what/why)
- **Use color** for headers and subheaders – same color/shade for categories (all headers the same color, all subheaders, etc.)
- **Include links** to other pages for details – summarize, teasers
- **High quality images** - photo(s) a must and/or video (optional)
- **Realize** that a text box or information on the **right side** of the page is not seen by some people – non-critical information there

Information pages (non-Home page):

- **Acceptable** to use text and no photos (second level pages)
- **Summarize**
- **Use sections** with color headers
- **Enable** viewers to read all text in one scroll, or page down

DON’T:

- **...Assume** the home page is used for information only (text heavy)
  - INSTEAD - The home page is used to gain quick interest by the viewer to read further
- **...Make** the viewer scroll multiple times to see your information on pages
  - INSTEAD - Create new pages with less text – add links on other pages to reference them
- **...Add** more than seven navigation bar items
  - INSTEAD - Use links on a summary page to access more detailed pages
- **...Use** only black or dark gray font color so your pages look like a textbook
  - INSTEAD – Use color headers, and sub headers on pages consistently throughout the website – GVSU colors preferred
- **...Try** to answer every question ever received on the pages
  - INSTEAD - Create a FAQs page with hyperlinks from questions to answers to eliminate calls for repetitive questions
- **...Create** content and leave it for months/years without review
  - INSTEAD – Check your content and links monthly on the website (especially on a resource page or anywhere other websites are referenced)

The CMS system provides all of the tools needed to implement the recommendations above.
Contact the Web Team for further assistance at 616-331-2525