

Home 8 Design Specification

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In this design specification, each of the strategic goals for the Home 8 Redesign is presented with design tactics intended to support the goal. We conclude with a section about ongoing support for the web site in order to continue to meet the redesign goals.

Improve Usability

Be responsive to users

- Continue to monitor search engine and server logs. Continue to fine-tune design based on what we learn from logs—what people are looking at, what people are looking for. Gain access to logs that are not currently available, including Athletics, Hop, and Hood.
- Get feedback on design through user testing and Home Team blog. Provide feedback mechanism on home and top-level pages so that users can continue to respond to the design and content after the new design is launched. Modify design in response to feedback as appropriate.

Improve navigation

- Use topic-based navigation on home page and top-level pages. The primary navigation will be Academics, Research, Campus Life, News, Events, and About.
- Design the main site for both internal and external visitors. Provide access to content that is relevant to both audience groups—e.g., information about the College, events, news.
- Develop a section geared toward prospective students. Provide access to content that is relevant to people who are considering attending Dartmouth—e.g., facts, tours, interviews.
- Develop an Inside Dartmouth section specifically for internal users. Provide access to content that is relevant to people who work and live at Dartmouth—e.g., access to WebBlitz and Blackboard, information about the holiday schedule, the administrative structure of the institution.
- Use icons to reinforce links where appropriate in order to make links easier to identify.
- Use context-specific photos to accompany spotlight articles and features in order to add visual excitement to the page and help differentiate features from other elements.
- Use descriptive labels for navigation so users can predict where to find the information they seek.
- Minimize clicking and ensure the path to content is as direct as possible.
- Develop a site map that provides an overview of the site organization and content.
- Provide an A–Z web site index to help people who know what they are looking for by name.
- Provide a QuickLinks menu with popular destinations. Develop a default set of links by reviewing search engine and server statistics. Develop a customization feature that allows users to customize their QuickLinks.
- Make the “file not found” page more helpful. Include links to the index, site map, and search features.

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Improve the search experience

- Work with Technical Services to refine search.
- Develop a Dartmouth Web Style Guide that promotes best practices for designing pages that index well.

Improve the events calendar

- Work with Technical Services to refine the Calendar user interface.
- Work with departments to encourage Calendar contributions. Where other departments are not participating, and where possible given resource constraints, add content to the calendar.
- Add links to the Calendar interface for event calendars that do not use the main calendar.

Consolidate content

- Work with Admissions to consolidate offerings for prospective students.
- Work with Alumni Relations to integrate offerings for alumni.
- Work with content partners to consolidate information about Academics.
- Work with content partners to consolidate information about Research.
- Work with content partners to consolidate information about Dartmouth in the World.
- Work with content partners to consolidate information about Opportunities.

Provide a more consistent, coherent, and robust user experience

- Develop a Dartmouth Web Style Guide that promotes best practices and common elements across Dartmouth sites. Include accessibility guidelines.
- Identify and consolidate validation tools to improve quality (link checking, code validation, spell checking, accessibility compliance).
- Request a directory listing of web sites on Webster and use this and the site map to create a Dartmouth Web Master Plan. Maintain and update the master plan regularly. Share the master plan with departments so that local development on the Dartmouth web fits in within the overall plan.
- Work with Web Publishing Services on templates for department pages.

Support key messages

Reveal more of Dartmouth online

- Include current news and events on the home page.
- Include a Spotlight that updates regularly. Provide a brief introduction to a longer article or feature that appears elsewhere, and also point to other, related web sites. Wherever possible, point to media. Include a photograph where possible.
- Develop Experience Dartmouth, a clearinghouse of images, video, and audio representing events and activities at Dartmouth. Work with the Media Production Group and others to regularly add media to the site. Establish a workflow that allows media creators to suggest and submit content to the site.
- Develop new sections around topics of interest, including Dartmouth in the World, Student Perspectives, Programs and Continuing Education, Academics, Research, Campus Life. Provide a coherent narrative with these sections—not lists of links.
- Include a random image script on the home page that loads a new image with each page load. Include many photos.

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- Represent Athletics more on the home page.
- Develop local content: e.g., photos of Hanover and the Upper Valley, community links that include links to the bookstores and places to purchase Dartmouth merchandise, what to do around Hanover.

Highlight distinctive characteristics

- Seek out and produce Web features using narrative and media to tell the stories of people at Dartmouth.
- Work with Technical Services to provide interactive, community-based tools such as blogs, wikis, and media management and tagging tools.
- Use Dartmouth colors, green and white, but do not overwhelm.
- Include photos on the home page that communicate the mood and tenor of Dartmouth.

Be more welcoming

- Provide narrative on home and top-level pages—not lists of links.
- Establish a general Dartmouth email address and put a link to the address on every page.
- Integrate Contact Dartmouth and the Online Directory. Include one primary contact and email address.
- Create a copyright page that explains how visitors can use our content.
- Consolidate information about opportunities at Dartmouth (e.g., employment, continuing education, summer programs).
- Offer translations of home and top-level pages.

Enhance Offerings

Accessible

- Use accessible, standards-based design for the home and top-level pages.
- Promote best practices for accessible content through the Dartmouth Web Style Guide.
- Explore options for improving accessibility, including validation tools.
- Provide a “help using our site” page with information about scaling text and other access tips.

Interactive

- Highlight interactive content, such as media, podcasts, and RSS feeds.
- Explore ways to allow user contributions, such as allowing users to submit photos for inclusion on the home page or encouraging contributions to Experience Dartmouth.
- Develop customization features, such as custom QuickLinks.
- Explore community-based tools, such as blogs and wikis.
- Provide feedback forms wherever appropriate.

Mobile

- Develop a mobile style sheet for the home and top-level pages.
- Build pages that are mobile-friendly.
- Provide content that is relevant in the mobile context, such as ring tones, wallpaper, events, and headlines.
- Explore ways to push out mobile-relevant content, such as event time/location, dining menus, bus schedules.

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Social

- Look for opportunities to establish sites for community discussion: e.g., Speak Out, Dartmouth, Student Viewpoints.
- Explore community-based tools, such as blogs and wikis.
- Explore ways to put prospective students in contact with current students.
- Connect the Dartmouth site with external web-based Dartmouth content (e.g., Flickr, blogs, wikis).

Ongoing Support

Oversight

- Appoint a site editor.
- Establish a working group to regularly revisit and revise the Master Plan and chart future development.

Developing content

- Create a hopper of web features for the Spotlight. Establish a workflow that includes the development of features as part of other communication efforts. Whenever possible, develop new web features.
- Establish a workflow with Media Production Services that includes performer release and media processing to prepare media for inclusion in the Experience Dartmouth section of site.

Managing content

- Establish content partners to collaborate on consolidation sections (e.g., Academics, Research, Campus Life, News, Events, Opportunities, Dartmouth in the World).
- Provide a clear conduit for content to be added to main pages. Reduce duplicate content on the site by making it easier for people who have content needs to request an addition to an existing top-level page, rather than adding a page or section within their own department.
- Establish a workflow that includes a regular review of content on home and top-level pages.

Maintaining architecture

- Establish a workflow with Webmaster that includes notification of new accounts and add the new accounts to the master plan.
- Update the site map and transitional pages to include new sites and new content on existing sites.
- Establish a workflow that allows content creators to easily notify Public Affairs of changes to the site structure that affect the home and top-level pages.