**EAB**

**Who Should Read**

Chief Research Officers
(CROs) and Their
Communications Staff

Departmental and Central
Communications Staff

Webmasters

# Research Website Self-Audit

A Tool for Assessing and Enhancing Research Websites to
Better Communicate with Key Stakeholders

## 3 Ways to Use This Tool

- Diagnose the current state of the research website and identify both unique strengths and areas to target improvement efforts

-  Use results to assess how the institution's research website  stacks up against the average research website

- Leverage the results to justify and advocate for additional investment and attention to research website enhancements

University Research Forum

# Research Website Self Audit

In order to grow the research enterprise, institutions need to better communicate the value of university-led research, particularly to external audiences. One key channel for research communications is research websites. After developing a list of the 14 most valuable features based on website usability principles and exemplary research websites, we conducted an audit of 50 institutions. Our results indicate that institutions are not leveraging their websites to boost the value of their research. See our list below and determine how your site measures up.

**How to Use This Tool**

This tool will help research offices evaluate the strengths of their research website, as well as the areas where they can target improvements. Log onto your computer and assess whether your site contains each of the 14 items below. If you have questions or need help with your audit, contact Brooke Thayer (bthayer@eab.com).

| | Most Valuable Research Website Features | ☑ | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Navigation** | **1. First Result in Google Search** <br> Start at www.google.com. Search "[Institution's full name] research." Is your main research website the first result? | | |
| | **2. Visible Link on Institutional Home Page** <br> Navigate to your institutional homepage. Is there a visible "Research" link on the main menu? Make sure viewers can get from the institutional homepage to your research site in one click. | | |
| | **3. Matching Google and Homepage Links** <br> Does the link on your institutional homepage lead to the same research site that the first Google result did? | | |
| **Aesthetics** | **4. Visually Engaging** <br> Is your main research website visually engaging? Does it include several videos, photos, and/or infographics? | | |
| **Social Media** | **5. Research-Specific Social Media Links** <br> Does your main research page have the links to research-specific social media accounts? | | |
| | **6. Embedded Social Media Feed** <br> Does your research website have the feed from a research-specific social media account(s) embedded on the page(s)? | | |

The best practices are the ones that work for you.℠

# Research Website Self-Audit (Continued)

| Most Valuable Research Website Features | ✓ | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| **Content** | | |
| **7. Research Enterprise Metrics**<br>Does your website have visible metrics on the research enterprise (e.g. funding, awards, centers, etc.)? | | |
| **8. Highlights Large-Scale Initiatives and/or Expertise**<br>Does your website highlight large-scale university research initiatives and priorities? Grand challenges? Areas of specialization and/or expertise? | | |
| **9. Compelling and Jargon-Free Research Stories**<br>Does your website profile interesting research stories in compelling, plain language terms? | | |
| **10. Communicates Broader Impact of Research**<br>Does your website articulate the broader impact of research in terms of economic engagement and similar meaningful metrics (e.g. lives saved, jobs created, patents filed, etc.)? | | |
| **11. Contact Information and/or Instructions for Media**<br>Does your website provide contact information and instructions for media? | | |
| **12. Information for Multiple Stakeholders**<br>Does your website provide clearly distinguished information for multiple audiences (e.g. undergraduates, researchers, corporate partners, etc.)? Is this part of the navigation menu? | | |
| **Tools** | | |
| **13. Research-Specific News Center**<br>Does your website have a research-specific news center or page separate from the institution's news center? | | |
| **14. Faculty and Scholarship Search Engine**<br>Does your research website have a search engine viewers can use to find faculty and research in certain disciplines or topical areas? | | |
| **Total Number of Most Valuable Features** | | |