

Homepage Census and Design Worksheets

As with a desktop site, the homepage should be the centerpiece of a mobile site: it is the door through which the majority of visitors enter. As such, both casual and mission-driven shoppers should be able to find what they need—or know where to find it—as soon as they land on the homepage.

This tool outlines the results of a mobile page census and provides guidance as to the optimal homepage design. It also provides instructions for conducting a more customized census.

Mobile Homepage Census Results

An informal census (focusing on primary menus and disregarding footers) of roughly three dozen COE mobile homepages revealed trends in content that audiences prioritized. Homepages overwhelmingly focus on prospective students, contain a menu that is roughly 8.5 items long, and skew toward program-related content and goal accomplishment.

Homepage Item	Count	General Location	
Programs	31	Top	Need-to-Have (best above the fold)
by Program Type	25	Top	
in General	19	Top	
by Academic Level	15	Top	
by Student Level	9	Top	
by Modality	6	Top	
by Student Motivation	2	Top	
Search	28	Top	
About/Why Us	24	Top or Bottom	
Call-to-Action	22	Top or Bottom	
In General	14	Top or Bottom	Nice-to-Have (best mid-page)
Call	12	Top or Bottom	
Request for information	12	Top or Bottom	
Apply/Enroll	9	Top or Bottom	
Email	8	Top or Bottom	
Social media	3	Top or Bottom	
News	18	Bottom	
Events	14	Bottom	
Testimonials	13	Middle or Bottom	
Maps	12	Middle or Bottom	
Calendar	12	Middle	Low Priority (best in footer)
FAQs	11	Middle	
Tuition	6	Middle	
Student Resources	6	Middle or Bottom	
Alumni Resources	5	Middle or Bottom	
Community	4	Middle or Bottom	
Faculty Resources	4	Middle or Bottom	
Virtual Tour	4	Middle	
Locations	4	Middle	

Homepage Census and Design Worksheets, Cont.

Customizing the Census

Given the diverse nature of COE units, offerings, and organizational models, customized census results are likely necessary. If that is the case, consider conducting an abridged census by looking specifically at competitors' homepages.

Identifying Competitor Institutions

Consider institutions and/or COE units catering to similar microsegments; offering programs in the same niche areas; working with local employers; and advertising in local media. Use Google to see who is coming up first with the keyword prospective students are most likely to use. Include both for-profit and non-profit institutions. Also consider including aspirant institutions in order to determine if the leaders in the space are designing their homepage differently from those that are middle-of-the-pack. Aim for a list of seven to 10 competitor institutions and three to five aspirant institutions.

Competitor Institutions			
Institution	COE Unit	Website	Notes

Aspirant Institutions			
Institution	COE Unit	Website	Notes

Homepage Census and Design Worksheets, Cont.

Conducting a Customized Census

Begin taking stock of content found on competitor and aspirant homepages using the spreadsheet outlined below. Add fields as needed.

	Competitor/Aspirant Institutions				
Homepage Features	Competitor #1: _____	Competitor #2: _____	Competitor #3: _____	Competitor #4: _____	Competitor #5: _____
Programs					
by Program Type					
in General					
by Academic Level					
by Student Level					
by Modality					
Search					
About/Why Us					
Call-to-Action					
In General					
Call					
RFI					
Apply/Enroll					
Email					
Social media					
News					
Events					
Testimonials					
Maps					
Calendar					
FAQs					
Tuition					
Student Resources					
Alumni Resources					
Community					
Faculty Resources					
Virtual Tour					
Locations					

Homepage Census and Design Worksheets, Cont.

Need-to-Have, Nice-to-Have, or Low Priority?

Using the results of the customized census, compile lists of features, content, and resources that are need-to-have (widely found, likely to be sought after by the majority of visitors), nice-to-have (found in many, though not necessarily most websites; appreciated by many, but not critical to most), and low priority (found infrequently or unlikely to be of great importance to any given visitor).

Need-to-Have Items

*Place in prominent locations
(e.g., above the fold)*

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Nice-to-Have Items

Place mid-page

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Low Priority Items

Place in footer

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Determining Next Steps

Armed with a better sense of what should be on a homepage, use the table below to start a critical assessment of your own homepage.

Homepage Feature	Present on homepage?	If absent, elsewhere on site?	In acceptable condition?	In appropriate location?	Team member(s) responsible for refreshing
Need-to-Have					

Homepage Census and Design Worksheets, Cont.

Homepage Feature	Present on homepage?	If absent, elsewhere on site?	In acceptable condition?	In appropriate location?	Team member(s) responsible for refreshing
Nice-to-Have					

Homepage Feature	Present on homepage?	If absent, elsewhere on site?	In acceptable condition?	In appropriate location?	Team member(s) responsible for refreshing
Low Priority					