4 Key Components of Effective Research Websites

Your research website should be a key communications channel; however, universities are not getting full value from their web presence. The University Research Forum audited the research websites of 50 randomly selected research institutions and found that on average, universities utilize only **5.5 of 14** critical website features.¹

No research website had all 14 critical features

Less than half of institutions <50% incorporated 6 or more of the 14 features

Institutions with higher research expenditures had stronger research websites²

Effective Research Websites...

1. Engage with Visuals

Most visitors leave web pages in less than 20 seconds. Use visuals to make your site "pop."

ONLY

of institutions had visually engaging research websites that included video clips, photos, and/or infographics

3 strategies for designing a visually appealing website

- Invest in high-quality graphics instead of relying solely on text
- Make your site multidimensional by including videos, pictures, and infographics
- Remove clutter by creating a clear navigation menu with drop-down links and resources

2. Target Specific Stakeholders

Tailor web content to key stakeholders to keep them engaged on your site.

ONLY

of institutions provided clearly distinguisned information. distinguished information for multiple

3 strategies for making your website stakeholder-friendly

- Tailor information to different stakeholder audiences (e.g., students, researchers, funders, industry partners)
- Create a stakeholder menu with options "For students," "For Researchers," "For Businesses," and "For Media"
- Include an "I want to..." menu with the most common stakeholder requests

3. Highlight Unique Strengths

Research websites blur together, so make your website distinctive.

of institutions highlighted large-scale 30% university research initiatives, and/or expertise on their sites university research initiatives, priorities,

3 strategies for emphasizing institutional initiatives and expertise

- Amplify large-scale research investments by publicizing them online
- Emphasize your institution's unique areas of study using language that is distinct from that of other institutions
- Profile key research areas and explain the reasoning for and significance of each

4. Include Meaningful Metrics

Potential funders, lawmakers, and the public at large care about research impact.

ONLY

of institutions effectively communicated the broader impact of their research in terms of economic engagement and other meaningful metrics on their research websites

3 strategies for using meaningful metrics to communicate research impact

- Relate research to the local community, city, and/or state
- Provide concrete examples of the impact of research (e.g., development of cures or new drugs, improved child safety)
- Use quantitative terminology to communicate economic and community impact (e.g., jobs created, businesses established)

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For Researchers



For Businesses



For Media

Core Research Initiatives



Urban Planning and Policy

As an institution located in the heart of a metropolis, our faculty and students are uniquely positioned to study the challenges related to urban development...

Learn more +



Sustainable Energy

With access to state-of-the-art laboratories and technologies, as well as partnerships with both industry and government, we are leaders in researching ways to transform the energy industry...

Learn more +

Research Impact

200 +

The number of new businesses launched by faculty and students, creating 6,000 jobs and producing \$8 billion in annual revenues.

The amount of additional funding generated from external sources for every dollar of state investment. \$2 billion

The total annual economic impact of research at the institution

COMMUNITY IMPACT

In counties across the state, our researchers are conducting more than 300 research projects that help communities by improving the quality of education, addressing environmental concerns, and making cities safer.



University Research Forum

- 1. Audit was based on website usability principles and an examination of best-in-class research websites. The full list of the 14 features can be found at eab.com/urf/researchcommunications.
- 2. T-test (p<0.05) showed statistically significant difference in the number of website features between institutions with highe (>\$100M) and lower (\$10–99M) research expenditures.

How does your institution stack up?