

# 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.<sup>1</sup>

**0** No research website had all **14 critical features**

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

**\$** Institutions with **higher research expenditures** had stronger research websites<sup>2</sup>

## 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 **38%** 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 **30%** of institutions provided clearly distinguished information for multiple audiences on their research websites

#### 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.

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

#### 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 **14%** 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)

