



20 Recommendations

The Web Task Force Final Report, Summer 2000

1. University leadership—including the President, Provost, Senior Vice President for Business and Finance, and other University officers—must articulate a vision and provide funding for greater utilization of the Web for teaching, research, and service and administrative and business functions.
2. A senior-level University-wide Standing Committee on Web Development and Direction should be appointed, representing appropriate administrative and academic units, to advise the President and Provost on how to respond to the rapid pace of change in this area. The committee's charge should include identifying potential strategies to build alliances, generate new income, leverage brand identity, provide oversight, facilitate interunit collaborations, and identify new Web applications and opportunities to enhance the teaching, research, and service missions of the University and all administrative and business functions.
3. College and Unit Strategic Plans should identify objectives and actions for enhancing the use of Web-based technologies in teaching, research, and service and administrative and business processes. Such plans should include strategies and timelines for achieving these goals.
4. Existing faculty development and support programs should be enhanced to encourage effective pedagogical uses of the Web, to familiarize faculty with common software platforms and tools, to share best practices, and to introduce faculty to new applications that are being developed within Penn State academic units and at peer institutions.
5. A systematic plan for distributed Web-based learning should be developed to make on-line courses available to all locations when appropriate and useful to ensure a seamless on-line learning environment for faculty and students.
6. In order to encourage greater participation in on-line teaching and learning, faculty should receive reward and recognition for the creative, scholarly effort that is required to create on-line academic experiences. The effective integration of Web-based technology should become a component in appropriate sections of the rainbow divider in the portfolios of faculty who are being considered for promotion and tenure.
7. The University's Grand Destiny Campaign should include Web gift opportunities and should offer alumni and friends the option of making monetary gifts in support of Web-based activities, including course development, faculty training, and new applications for teaching, research, and service activities.
8. Principles and procedures to facilitate the creation of virtual research communities that expand the ability of Penn State faculty to attract funding for high-level collaborative research and to generate revenue for technology transfer and technical assistance should be developed.

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9. All academic departments should be encouraged to support a public service Web site. “Best practices” in external Web-based public scholarship and service should be recognized and disseminated throughout the University and should serve as models for future development.
10. A customizable Penn State Web portal should be developed that will allow faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends the flexibility to access the information they use most often. The portal should include robust, scalable communication tools as well as customizable calendar and graphical interface design. A Web portal should become the point of entry for the University’s constituents into a seamless Penn State virtual world and an expanded academic community.
11. A vision and implementation plan to achieve seamless, cross-unit, and intercampus E-Business/Administration and E-Commerce functions should be developed.
12. An officer with expertise in E-Business and E-Commerce should be appointed. This officer would be charged with facilitating policy development and providing coordination, counsel, and support services for University-wide E-Business and E-Commerce initiatives. This officer would also be charged with determining the appropriate venue for new income-generating sites as well as ensuring that new Web ventures advance the University mission.
13. The concept of a 24/7 central support center should be implemented to provide assistance to anyone trying to use a Penn State Web site. Specific units, such as Enrollment Management and Administration, the World Campus, Alumni Association, and Athletics, currently implementing or considering 24/7 service should explore creating a common office to provide support to constituents during atypical business hours.
14. Clear and consistent guidelines, procedures, and requirements for units entering into Web-based sponsorships or partnership arrangements that involve revenue generation should be developed.
15. A central support unit to assist all units in Web site creation and development should be created, and each college and administrative unit should formalize a Web applications team.
16. All official Penn State Web sites should adhere to the highest levels of quality, properly reflecting Penn State’s image and stature, and Web standards for style and design should be developed and adhered to.
17. A Web Enhancement and Review Committee should be appointed to continually review and recommend design enhancements to official psu.edu Web sites, including the Penn State home page. The committee should be chaired by the Executive Director of University Relations and should include, at a minimum, representatives from the Center for Academic Computing, University Publications, the University Faculty Senate, Student Affairs or Undergraduate Education, and a representative from Finance and Business. Note: This committee would be expected to work in concert with the senior-level University-wide Standing Committee on Web Development and Direction discussed in Recommendation 2.
18. A master plan and budget must be developed and funding must be provided to enhance the following University Web priorities: Electronic Teaching and Learning; Improved Administrative Support and Business Processes; Relationship and Community Building; Creating New Opportunities for Income Generation (E-Commerce). The master plan must include funding and

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support for priority University functions and services and for increasing bandwidth commensurate with the growing demand for new capabilities including audio and video applications.

19. Greater awareness of the importance of the Web environment and resulting applications in higher education must be created among University officers, department heads, unit leaders, and the faculty and staff in general.
20. A career ladder should be developed for staff with responsibility for Web applications and instructional design. All Webmasters should have standard core competencies, knowledge of the latest applications, and an understanding of University editorial style, policies, and processes, and all Webmasters and instructional designers should become part of a formal network facilitated by the Center for Academic Computing. Significant central resources must be allocated to support the development of a comprehensive University-wide training program for current staff.

Finally, the Task Force identified in its exploration and discussion on the Web a wealth of useful information and many specific suggestions for implementation. These are offered as guidelines in the body of the report and/or the appendices. Units with responsibility for effecting change should carefully review these suggestions as they implement new policies and practices.

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