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Evaluation of Purdue University and Its Peer Institutions Website Recruiting Methods

John L. Perkins
Purdue University - Main Campus, jlperkin@purdue.edu

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Evaluation of
Purdue University and Its Peer Institutions
Website Recruiting Methods

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Science in Technology

A Directed Project Report

By

John Lawrence Perkins

Committee Member	**Approval Signature**	**Date**
Dr. Gary Bertoline, Chair	_____	_____
Dr. Michael Beyerlein	_____	_____
Professor Daniel Lybrook	_____	_____

Directed Project: Evaluation of

Purdue University and Its Peer Institutions

Online Recruiting Methods

John Perkins

jlperkin@purdue.edu

Purdue University

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Introduction

With every new generation there comes new customs, challenges, and advancements. Our most recent generation, the Millennials, have very distinct characteristics that differ greatly from the generations before them. In order to catch the attention of this new generation more efficiently, the methods used must adapt and change as well. For college institutions this means a review of their current recruiting methods. Competition among college institutions occurs in a very interesting way. This is due to the fact that universities and colleges offer a specific service to their customers that create few, if any, substitutes for the experiences they offer.   Most institutions specialize in specific fields, be it research, technology, learning, engagement, and so on and so forth. Institutions are given rankings by magazines, newspapers, and national polls. There are several factors, from graduation rates to students' performance, to publications by the universities' professors that combine to create a university's rank. Therefore, a college such as Purdue selects different institutions it feels it is closely related to and would like to compete with. On Purdue's website one can easily find its strategic plan and those of the eleven institutions it identifies as its "Peer Institutions." While several factors account for an institution's ranking, this paper will focus on the one factor that affects nearly ever output of a university, the student.

This paper will identify the characteristics of the new generations of students, Millennials, how students do research and look for information such as where they want to go to college, what these Millennials look for in websites, and how Purdue's recruiting website compares to its peer institutions.

Problem Statement

The millennial generation is different in their information gathering techniques from previous generations; a fact which will be further substantiated in the literature review (Prensky, 2001). One such difference is how they search for the college that they would like to attend. Van Horn quoted one of his participants that said when someone suggests colleges to him; he simply goes to the Internet and looks at the information available at their websites (Van Horn, 2003).

While the students' methods for selecting colleges have changed, it is important that these institutions' approaches to recruitment adapt to accommodate the new search methods used by prospective students. In order to fully compete with its peer institutions, a college must work to outperform its peer institutions in all aspects including recruitment of its students. Students' methods for selecting colleges have changed; therefore institutions need to evaluate their current methods of recruiting the best students via the Internet.

Significance of the Problem

There are many factors that account for the ranking of an institution. One important factor is the academic quality of the students. This study will focus on the effectiveness of Purdue and its peer institutions to use the Internet as an effective tool for recruiting students. While there are factors other than the students themselves that account for an institution's ranking, it is arguably the most important factor. The inability of an institution to capture the attention of the best and brightest students when searching for the college they would like to attend would have serious effects on the institution. Such effect could include fewer applicants

due to lack of the university using the selling points that the Millennials look for and, poorer

performing applicants due to the high potential students choosing another institution.

Definitions

Millennials – a term used to refer to the generation, born from 1980 onward, brought up

using digital technology and mass media. (Dictionary.com)

Virtual Environment – a computer-generated, three-dimensional representation of a

setting in which the user of the technology perceives himself to be in, and within which

interaction takes place. (Dictionary.com)

Virtual – Created, simulated, or carried on by means of a computer or computer network.

(American Heritage Dictionary, 2001)

Teen Second Life - Teen Second Life is an international gathering place for teens 13-17 to

make friends and to play, learn and create. (http://teen.secondlife.com)

YOUniversityTV – the first wholly integrated College Video Resource Community

dedicated to promoting higher education by assisting students with the college-selection

process, providing access to videos and educational resources for colleges across the U.S.

(Mascot, 2009)

Assumptions

The most important assumption for this paper is that the assessment of each university's

websites remains consistent throughout the entire evaluation process. A detailed and well crafted

process must be created and followed in order to fulfill this need. A second important

assumption is the creation of the criteria to evaluate the websites. The criteria must be accurate

to properly assess the strength of each institution's online recruitment process. In order to create such criteria, extensive research into what teens look for and what methods and criteria others have used must be collected.

Limitations

The first limitation of this project is that the researcher has no formal background or training in website evaluation. In order to compensate for this, extensive research into proper website evaluation as well as rigorous standards and methods will be used throughout the evaluation process. Another limitation is that the resources do not exist to evaluate all the institutions in the United States. Therefore, this paper will be concerned only with evaluating Purdue University and its peer institutions. The final limiting factor is that the evaluation will be conducted only online. Therefore, no information given while on campus visits will be presented. To compensate for this, this study will be concerned only with the online recruiting methods employed by each university.

Delimitations

For this study the goal is to assess the online recruitment process of Purdue and its eleven peer institutions. This paper will focus on the websites from the perspective of new and prospective students and will not explore sections that are not relevant to new or prospective students. The boundaries of this paper are the eleven peer institutions as well as Purdue's own websites; more specifically the prospective and new student sections of the websites.

Literature Review

Change has been a word used greatly in the past few years to describe the new

generations. Today's young generation grew up during a technological revolution that gave most

households computers and video game systems. Capturing this new generation's attention and

selling ideas, products, and services must change with that. This literature review will examine

what defines this "new generation," and what Purdue and its peer institutions offer in forms of

attracting prospective students by means of their prospective websites. This literature review

will also study different means of evaluating websites in order to create valid criteria for the

evaluation process of Purdue University and its peer institutions' websites.

Today's Student

Nearly every article available on the topic acknowledges that students today are different

from their predecessors. But what does that mean, and what are the implications of such a

realization? Scott Carlson (2005) in his article entitled *The Net Generation in the Classroom*

described the new students or "Millennials" as; "defined by academics, trend spotters, and

futurists." The Chronicle of Higher Education's (2007) publication entitled *How the New*

Generation of Well-Wired Multitaskers Is Changing Campus Culture pointed out the rare reading

habits, the trend to be goal oriented, and their flexibility. However, both authors specifically

describe the Millennials as impatient and expectant of instant feedback (Carlson, 2005;

Chronicle of Higher Education, 2007). Authors Carol Elam, Terry Stratton, and Denise D.

Gibson (2007) in their article entitled *Welcoming a New Generation to College: The Millennial*

Students described the new generation as conventionally motivated and respectful, structured

rule followers, protected and sheltered, cooperative and team oriented, talented achievers, and

confident and optimistic about their futures (Elam, Stratton, & Gibson, 2007). While these descriptions are not exactly the same, one can begin to see the general characteristics of the millennial student.

Several authors agree that the primary cause for changes in the new generation is the technology that they grew up with. Marc Prensky (2001) in his article entitled *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants Part 1* suggests that today's students process information fundamentally differently from those of previous generations. Similarly, Sherry Turkle (2004) in her article entitled *How Computers Change the Way We Think* proposes that technology has changed the way we think. Turkle (2004) has suggested that technology may do thinking for us resulting in our impaired ability to problem solve for ourselves.   "Kids today are different," according to Ian Jukes (2007) in his article *Changing Students and Classroom Focus T+L*. Jukes (2007) went on to contest that students' brains are constantly adapting due to "digital bombardment." Jukes (2007), similar to the previous authors, suggests that technology is changing students.

One of the major differences of the Millennials is that they grew up with the Internet in their daily lives and they continue using it regularly today. Royal Van Horn (2003) in his article entitled *Internet-Savvy Students*, created five metaphors for how students today use the Internet. Van Horn (2003) first references that students use the Internet as their primary means for gathering source material for class projects. Similarly, Walter Minkely (2002) found in his article entitled *Pew Study: Students Prefer 'Virtual Library,'* that 78% of students prefer to use the Internet for research. Kouider Mokhtari, Carla A. Reichard, and Anne Gardner (2009) found in their article entitled *The Impact of the Internet and Television Use on the Reading Habits and Practices of College Students* that 84% of students prefer using the Internet for educational purposes, as opposed to reading for academic purposes. Mokhtari, Reichard, and Gardner (2009)

also found that 95% of students reported using the Internet every day. Keith Anderson (2001) in his article entitled *Internet Use Among College Students: An Exploratory Study* found that most students use the Internet for 100 minutes per day. Ken Haycock (2005) in his article *Interactive Web Sites for Teens* 2005 found that teens average from 5 to 10 hours a week using the Internet. Haycock (2005) also outlines the differences in how teens use the Internet and what that means in terms of building websites designed to fit their needs. Given the popular use of the Internet in teens, Van Horn's (2003) fourth metaphor he presented was that students use the Internet as a "virtual guidance counselor." Van Horn (2003) quotes a participant from his study who said, "I can find out what I expect in the next grades up, or, if I think a little further, what college I might attend. If someone recommends a university online, and I'm interested, I can just pull up another window and search for that on the Web and find out more." Van Horn (2003) surmised with the information collected that students are beginning to use the Internet more than traditional forms, such as guidance counselors and parents, in their college searches.

Given this information, it brings a point that it seems universities', "front line" of recruiting should be the information provided on their websites and how that information is presented.

Evaluation Process of Universities Websites

After reviewing the following articles and sources, *Teaching Undergrads Web Evaluation: A Guide for Library Instruction* by Jim Kapoun (1998), *Interactive Web Sites for Teens* by Ken Haycock (2005), and the independent website Quality Criteria for Website Excellence (2009), one can compile the different criteria offered into seven different categories that will be used during the evaluation. The seven categories are user friendliness, interactive

content, speed, general font size, use of photos and videos, presentation in terms of design and distinctiveness, and content of material in the website. In the following review it will be shown that the criteria offered by each author fits into these seven measures.

User Friendly

Ken Haycock's (2005) article *Interactive Web Sites for Teens* focuses on the specific wants and needs that teens have of websites. Haycock (2005) first notes, teens are not as skilled as adults in navigating the Internet. Deeper in his article he points out that teens should not be asked to "work too hard", further commenting that, "yes, they are lazy," and, "teens avoid complex or incomplete content" (Haycock, 2005). From these suggestions, it can be inferred that websites for prospective students need to be user friendly. Similar to Haycock, Quality for Website Excellence (2009) suggests a criterion dealing with easing the complexity of websites. Its criterion complexity and quality of tables, clarity of grammar and use of language, as well as the criterion navigation and links, suggests that simplicity is very important for websites (Quality for Website Excellence, 2009). Furthermore, Quality for Website Excellence (2009) recommends the criterion user friendliness itself as a measure.

Photos/Videos

Ken Haycock's (2005) article specifically states that, "when using web sites, teenagers are easily bored." Furthermore, he goes on to mention that, "Photographs and images can relieve text of the burden of communicating ideas" (Haycock, 2005). The use of photographs and videos can add to the entertainment value of a website, and therefore capture the audience's attention by appealing to multi-sensory input rather than just reading text. The Quality Criteria

for Website Excellence (2009) incorporates the use of photographs and videos as a criterion for

their evaluation with both audio-visual synchronization, audio and video broadcast/use of

streaming media, multi-sensory appeal and impact, and advanced components 093 WAP and

WebTV formats.

Presentation

Perhaps the most important section in terms of capturing and maintaining a teen's

attention span is the presentation aspect of a website. According to Ken Haycock (2005), "Teens

prefer clean, modest, but still cool designs." Haycock (2005) goes on to mention that, "Unlike

adults, teens will not stick around a web site with useful content but poor presentation." The

Quality Criteria for Website Excellence (2009) includes many criteria that focus on the

presentation aspect of evaluation. The criteria from Quality Criteria for Website Excellence

(2009) include appeal to universal audience, HTML quality, graphic design, aesthetics and

beauty, attention to detail, innovation and lateral thinking, creativity, vision, and distinctiveness.

Content

The article by Jim Kapoun (1998) entitled *Teaching Undergrads Web Evaluation: A*

Guide for Library Instruction written in 1998 focused on finding reliable sources for projects.

Kapoun (1998) notes that students and even faculty are beginning to use the Internet as their first

source for information due to the ease of finding information and currency of material. Kapoun

(1998) warns that the Internet can provide false or poor information, and one must be careful of

the sites he trusts. Therefore, Kapoun created a list of five criteria that he uses for print.

Kapoun's (1998) first criterion is accuracy, referring to the author or institution responsible for

the webpage. Kapoun's (1998) second criterion is authority which focuses on the credentials of the authors and what gives them the authority to write the page. Similar to these two criteria is legality suggested by the website Quality Criteria for Website Excellence (2009). Legality is defined by property rights and copyright laws being properly observed by the webpage. (Quality Criteria for Website Excellence, 2009) Kapoun's (1998) next criterion is objectivity, which simply means the website remains objective, showing limited advertising and therefore little outside influence. Similar to Kapoun's objectivity is the value and focus criteria offered by Quality Criteria for Website Excellence (2009). Both value and focus imply the lack of outside forces influencing the author. Kapoun's (1998) next criterion is currency which alludes to how up-to-date the content of the webpage is. Kapoun's (1998) final criterion offered is coverage implying if there are any limiting factors such as fees, browser technology, or software requirements that one must have in order to view all the information. Similar to Kapoun's coverage is Quality Criteria for Website Excellence's (2009) criterion which does include measures of free resources as well as defined missions or goals of website, message, and expression. The Quality Criteria for Website Excellence (2009) does offer content criteria suggestions not specified by Kapoun. Those remaining criteria are consolidation and reinforcement of purpose, simplification of complex components, use of synopses and summaries, articulation of complex concepts, and professionalism in achieving website goals. (Quality Criteria for Website Excellence, 2009) Similarly Haycock's (2005) article states that teens avoid websites with complex or incomplete content.

Interactivity/Speed/Font Size

The measures of interactivity, speed, and font size are mainly identified by Ken Haycock, though interaction and speed are mentioned by Quality Criteria for Website Excellence as well. For the interaction aspect, Haycock (2005) points out that teens look for something to do as much as look for something to read. Interactive maps, well designed search engines, and other applications can help to capture and hold the teen's attention. The Quality Criteria for Website Excellence (2009) does offer one section entitled "human interactivity" that discusses interactive maps, search engines and other applications.

Several authors and articles throughout, including Haycock (2005), Carlson (2005), and the article *How the New Generation of Well-Wired Multitaskers Is Changing Campus Culture* (2007), describe the new generation as impatient. Haycock (2005) says that teens have, "Lower patience levels than adults." The Quality Criteria for Website Excellence (2009) does have a criterion entitled "speed and bandwidth sensitivity" as well. Because of the Millennials' impatience, slow speeds while browsing websites are detrimental for them.

Font size is argued by Haycock (2005) to be important because of teens reading habits and general dispositions. He states that, "Teens need large type, not because they have bad eyesight, but because they move quickly, lean back in their chairs to look at their computers, and are easily distracted" (Haycock, 2005). While these statements and the font size criterion are not identified by the other authors or articles, it is believed that this is a very important criterion that must be measured.

Literature Conclusions

Clearly, college students and the upcoming classes are different from past generations. These students have different skill sets, likes, dislikes, wants, and needs. The Millennials are described as impatient and expectant of instant feedback. Several of the authors suggested that the Millennials prefer the Internet as a means of conducting research. One even went a step further and suggested that the Millennials use the Internet as a substitute for counselors, using a quote from a student in which the student said that if someone were to suggest a college to him that he would simply go online to check it out. This suggests that universities should not only focus their primary recruiting material online but also present their material in a very specific way in order to properly communicate it to teens. Furthermore, these Millennials have very specific tastes and attributes they look for in websites.

Methodology

The process of evaluating Purdue University and its peer institution first starts with identifying Purdue's peer institutions. The list of Purdue's peer institutions was gathered from Purdue University's website (2009). The next step was to set up an evaluation process by determining the criteria and how that criteria can accurately be assessed. In order to construct the proper criteria and a consistent and accurate evaluation process, the researcher found several articles and one independent website pertaining to design and evaluation of websites. The articles are *Teaching Undergrads Web Evaluation: A Guide for Library Instruction* by Jim Kapoun (1998), *Interactive Web Sites for Teens* by Ken Haycock (2005), and the independent website Quality Criteria for Website Excellence (2009). These articles can be viewed in the literate review. Prior to evaluating Purdue and its eleven peer institutions, a brief pilot study of

two college institutions will be conducted. This step will provide the researcher with information on how well the criteria and process work, as well as whether the template needs any adjustments.

Based on all sources used in the literature review, the following criteria will be used to evaluate each peer institution's websites; User Friendly, Interactive, Speed, Font Size, Use of Photos/Video, Presentation, and Content. In an effort to create uniformity and consistency for all websites, the criteria will be followed rigorously. In addition, no more than three websites will be evaluated in a 24 hour time period. Furthermore, a time period of no less than two hours and no more than two and a half hours will be spent on each website. The researcher will use the rankings from a 0 to 5 scale and have the following connotation; 0 – total lack of criteria, 1 – very poor, 2 – needs improvement, 3 – average, 4 – good, 5 – excellent. The order the websites will be evaluated in will be chosen at random. It is expected that there may be features or information pertinent to the study which falls out of the rubric. This extra information will be noted and documented during the assessment process and made viewable in the appendix section.

Breakdown of Scale

User Friendly

For the user friendly portion, the ease of finding content and uniformity throughout the website as well as how well the different tabs and links are labeled will be assessed. Following are the definitions for each rank;

0 – requiring more than four "clicks" to reach the prospective student section, a total lack of properly and clearly labeled links, or a total lack of uniformity throughout the website

1 – requiring more than three "clicks" to reach the prospective student section, three or

more improperly labeled links, or very little layout uniformity throughout

2 – requiring more than two "clicks" to reach the prospective student section, two or

more improperly labeled links, or little layout uniformity throughout

3 – prospective student section easily found and quick to get to, sections clearly and

properly labeled, or mostly uniform layout

4 – most sections and labels are easy find and reach, website is uniform, with no more

than 2 links leading to different layouts

5 – all sections and labels are very easy to find and reach, total uniformity throughout

Interactivity

For the interactive portion, the effectiveness of the search tool as well as the amount and

degree of interactive maps and virtual environments will be assessed. The search tool will be

given the following key words each time: new student, fees, campus map, directions, and move-

in. Following are the definitions for each rank;

0 – no search provides desired results, and no other interactive features are present

1 – two searches do not provide desired results, or no interactive features are present

2 – one search does not provide desired results, and only one other interactive features is

present

3 – links to desired results are found in all searches, interactive features such as maps or

environments are present

4 – the first or second link provided by searches lead to desired results, interactive map is

available, and other interactive features are present

5 – the first link provided in searches lead to desired result, interactive map has multiple views and angles, and other interactive features such as virtual environments are present

Speed

For the speed portion, the assessment will consist of noting any and all lag time experienced while browsing the site. The same machine will be used throughout, to compensate for different processor and RAM speeds. Following are the definitions for each rank;

0 – all pages take 5 seconds or more to load and two or more "timed out" experience

1 – all pages take 4 or more seconds to load and one or more "timed out" experience

2 – very little lag time experience, most pages load within 3 seconds

3 – no lag time experienced, all pages load within 3 seconds

4 – all pages including interactive and virtual environments load within 2 seconds

5 – all pages including interactive and virtual environment load within 1 second

Font Size

For the font size portion, a standard of 12pt font will be the benchmark and awarded an average score of 3, while frequency of larger and smaller font sizes will be noted and proportionally move the awarded point up or down. Following are the definitions for each rank;

0 – average font size is 10pt or less with no larger font for headings

1 – average font size is 11pt with no larger font size for headings

2 – average font size is 12pt with no larger font size for headings

3 – average font size is 12pt throughout, with several headings averaging 14pt

4 – average font size is 12pt throughout, and headings range from 16pt to 14pt

5 – average font size is 14pt throughout, and all text is preceded with larger headings

Use of Photos/Video

For the use of photos and videos portion, the number of photos and videos per page and per "media" section will be tallied as well as the "selling value" of each photo or video. To determine how well the photos and videos "sell" the university, it will be noted how much information, delivery method, and entertainment value of each will be assessed. Following are the definitions for each rank;

0 – no photos or videos are used in the website

1 – very few photos used in website, no videos used

2 – photos sections provided, photos used rarely in general areas, and three or fewer videos used

3 – photo and video sections provided in website, some photos used in general sections as well, and at least one video is or provides the same information as that of the YOUniversityTV videos

4 – photo and video sections provided, some photos are used in the general sections to highlight links or provide extra visual, videos such as YOUniversityTV's general information are provided

5 – photo and video sections are provided, photos are used for several links to assist user in finding proper links, videos provided included overall general information and more specific information as well

Presentation

For the presentation portion, the ease of finding information, any distinctive/entertaining add-ons, as well as any broken links found in the website will be assessed. Following are the definitions for each rank;

0 – all labels and tabs are unclear, or more than five broken links are found

1 – several sections are improperly labeled, hyperlinks are very difficult to ready, or no more than five broken links are found

2 – most sections are properly labeled, hyperlinks are difficult to read, and no more than two broken links are found

3 – all sections are properly labeled and provide information needed, hyperlinks are easy to read, and no more than one broken link is found

4 – all sections are properly labeled, photos accent some hyperlinks, no broken links found, and some pages have unique entertaining features found

5 – all sections are properly labeled, photos accent most hyperlinks, no broken links found, and most pages have unique entertaining features found

Content

The final portion to be assessed will be the content. To assess the content a pre-assigned set of information must be discussed and be present. The topics to be discussed are majors, housing, prices, demographics, application procedures, maps, and student life such as athletics and clubs available. Any features making content easier to navigate will be noted. Following are the definitions for each rank;

0 – three or more topics are missing, or information on all topics vague and leaves one with no acting knowledge of the college

1 – no more than two topics missing, or information on no more than two topics is vague and leaves one with little acting knowledge of college

2 – no more than one topic missing, or information on no more than one topic is broad

3 – all general topics discussed leaving user with little if any questions

4 – general topics are discussed to answer most questions, and at least one unique feature offering information is present

5 – general topics are discussed with no information missing, several unique features are present to help user get more information

Findings

Pilot

Two institutions from the "Big 10" conference, Indiana University and Ohio State University, which are not part of Purdue's peer institutions, were picked randomly for the pilot run of the evaluation process. The purpose of the pilot study is test the criteria and evaluation process itself looking for any information that is not being calculated properly or features that are not being highlighted.

Indiana University

For the user friendly portion of this evaluation it should be noted that the majority of the website followed one layout making navigation fairly easy. The tabs offered when first reaching the prospective student section were very useful and contained all content that was identified as needed. For this reason user friendly was awarded a 3. For the interactive section, there were two key words that did not bring up any matching results; however, the interactive map was very good and had several nice features. Due to the map excelling expectations and the failure of two searches the score of 2 was awarded. No lag time was experienced but due to the broken links therefore a score of 3 was awarded. Pictures were offered on most pages. The pictures accented the pages topic offering an extra sensory input. There were four different videos offered including; Welcome Home, Academics, Athletics, and Student Life. An award of 4 was given for the use of photos and videos. There were several features offered that were out of the scope of the criteria that added value to the presentation. One feature was seeing a profile of your counselor whom is assigned based on the location of your hometown. There is also a "chat with" feature that during assigned dates and times, one can have an online conversation with students

and staff from Indiana University. There were two broken links found in the student life section.

Because two broken links is a 2 but the exceptional use of other distinct features was a 5, a final

score of 4 was award. All the information that was identified as required for the content section

was present as well as features such as "chat" that would offer one with more information. For

this reason a score of 4 was awarded.

Ohio State University

For the user friendly portion of Ohio State University's website an overall award of 3 was

awarded based on several factors. The format stayed the same through the majority of the

website though some links would lead to pages with different formats. The main tabs that were

offered were very useful and well organized though. For the interactive portion of the website,

two of the key words brought up no results, but a "suggestion" page was offered that could lead

to the information the key words were designed to bring up. There was an interactive map that

was easy to navigate. Because of the maps quality and presence an award of 3 was given. There

was no lag time experienced and therefore a score of 3 was given. For the font size, some of the

font was only 11; however, the pages did offer different font sizes making it slightly easier to

know the highlights of the information. An award of 3 was given for font size. Every page

offers at least one photo that accents the topic that is covered on that page. Furthermore, several

videos, including YOUniversityTV's independent review of the college is offered. An award of

4 was given for the use of photos and videos. The presentation of Ohio State University's

website was very good. Virtual visits were offered through both QuickTime and Windows

Media Player. Furthermore there was a link to "College Portrait," an independent website

offering information about Ohio State University. The photos on each page gave a nice break for

the eyes and were used nicely to accent the message being displayed. An award of 4 was given

for the presentation section. The content was good and very information but there was nothing

extra or unique about the information presented. An award of 3 was given for the content.

	User Friendly	Interactivity	Speed	Font Size	Use of Photos/Video	Presentation	Content	Total	Average
Indiana University	3	2	3	3	4	4	4	23	3.2857
Ohio State University	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	23	3.2857
Average	3	2.5	3	3	4	4	3.5	23	

Recommendations from Pilot

The first and foremost notable experience from running the pilot is that one should allow

positives and minuses balance one another out. This way if a factor such as broken links would

give a website a score of two but that websites feature otherwise would have provided a score of

4, 2 will be subtracted from 4 giving a final score of 3. Another notable change that will be

made is the averages. It is not necessary to show to the millions and therefore averages will be

rounded to the nearest hundredth.

Breakdowns of Points Awarded

Purdue University

Purdue University's website was overall the number 11th out of 12 websites reviewed. For the user friendly section, Purdue was awarded a 2. While finding the prospective student section was very simple, the lack of uniformity in terms of the template did make navigation from one section to another somewhat challenging. Also, there was a problem with the labeling of the section "Virtual Viewbook" as this would insinuate virtual pictures, though the "viewbook" contained other information such as "7 Secrets to Your Success" that contained very useful videos. The interactive section was very good with its search tool; however, it offered little else in terms of interactive functions. Due to the lack of other interactive content, a 3 was awarded to the interactive section. The speed of Purdue's website was average, and therefore given a 3. One page timed out, but on the second try it came right up. The average font size was 12pt with several headings of 14p; therefore, a score of 3 was awarded. For the photos and video criteria, there were specific video and photo sections offered in the website. There was a link to YOUnivesityTV's "sell" of Purdue University, though it was not made a highlighted link. Due to the fact that most of the websites offered YOUnivesityTV as well, Purdue was considered average and again awarded a 3 in this category. Purdue's presentation was the website's largest area for improvement. It was awarded a 1. Purdue often used gold as a color for its hyperlinks; however, this would make the hyperlinks fairly tough to read against the white background screen. Furthermore, there were three broken hyperlinks found while surfing the website. The content section was very comprehensive and offered some interesting features such as an online "chat" with admissions; however, several of the websites offered such things, and therefore content was awarded an average score of 3.

Cornell University

Cornell University's website had a very user friendly set up. Almost every page was based on the same template, making navigation simply a matter of familiarity. All sections were properly labeled and very easy to find. On the home page for prospective students, a link to their tour given by YOUniversityTV was the main highlight. This created an early "selling point" for Cornell. In terms of user friendliness, it was rated as excellent with a 5. Cornell's interactive section in terms of the search tool was lacking. Most of the keywords used did not provide information on or even closely related to desired results. There were virtual maps offered that required QuickTime 5, however, these maps were available in most universities' websites; therefore an award of 2 was given. The speed was awarded an average score of 3 as no lag time was experienced. The font size was mostly 12pt and, therefore, awarded an average score of 3. The use of photos and videos was excellent. Not only were they extremely easy to find, but they were very good at "selling" the university. There was even a section entitled "CornellCast" that had different video categories to help one find videos specifically about whatever one was looking for. Due to the easy and content of videos, an award of 5 was given. The presentation of the website was awarded a good score of 4. This was due to the fact that the majority of the website was simplistic but very informative. A great design was used to make navigation easy, fun, and distinct. Content, in terms of sheer information provided, was average, however, the content was very easy to get to due to their "quicklinks" which offered information similar to that of what one was currently looking at. Because of that, use of the quicklinks content was awarded an above average score of 4.

Georgia Institute of Technology

Georgia Institute of Technology's website was awarded an average score of 3 for its user friendliness. There was an easy to navigate template throughout the website. This offered quick and easy access to the information one was looking for. For the interactive section the search tool offered the same result on every keyword entry which was a simple breakdown of the website. This was not effective. However, the website did offer several 360 degree views photos that were interactive in terms of moving from left to right and up and down. Because the search tool was ineffective, but due to its use of the interactive 360 degree view photos, an average score of 3 was awarded. Because no lag time was experienced, an average score of 3 was awarded for speed. The majority of the text was 12pt, and thus the average score of 3 was awarded. Photos and videos were not used a lot, but the ones that were used were effective and even unique. As was stated earlier, 360 degree photos were available, and links to videos such as the YOUniversityTV campus tour were easy to find. Furthermore, there were several embedded photos in different sections of the website. Due to the excellent use of photos and videos, a score of 5 was awarded. The presentation of this website was such that it was distinct and unique. There were no broken links, videos and photos were used wisely, and the design was such that it was entertaining and fun to navigate, and was therefore awarded a score of 4. For the content section, this website offered great amount of information, but since most all the website offered the same amount of information an average score of 3 was awarded.

Pennsylvania State University at University Park

Pennsylvania State University at University Park's website has one main template and only once was a hyperlink used that resulted in leaving that template. Moreover, the template

itself made information extremely to find due to its bulleted list design. For this reason the user friendliness was awarded a 4. This website was the only website to offer a virtual campus environment in Teen Second Life. By using this, an individual can use an avatar to walk around a virtual environment that is modeled after their campus. Furthermore, there were other interactive maps. The only downside of their interactive section was that the search engine was not very effective. Therefore, a score of 4 was awarded. Perhaps due to the advanced design or perhaps for other reasons this was the only website to show much lag time. There are some links that would take up to 8 seconds to load compared to most universities averaging around 1 second of load time. Speed was awarded a total of 2 because most pages did not take that long to load, but an improvement for the longer load times are needed. The font size was an average of 12pt and was awarded a 3. The website contained a personalized video message from the president of the university. There were several other videos available as well. While they were a little dry, they did contain good information that was useful. For a more exciting "selling" video the website did have a link to YOUnivesityTV's tour of the campus. Therefore, it was awarded a 4 for this section. For the presentation of the website a 5 was awarded due to the design and way in which amenities were presented. The content offered was clear, concise, and easy to find. What's more, online chat and an online virtual campus was offered to help orient one around the campus. Due to these reasons a 4 was awarded for content.

Texas A&M University

Texas A&M University's website was very user friendly. While at times it appears to be a very small and perhaps non-comprehensive site, it is actually just designed very well to avoid looking cluttered, and it is simple. For the user friendly rating, the website received a 4. The

search tool was rather ineffective, given the keywords used. It would most often bring up pages simply containing the words or phrases and in no particular order, instead of bringing up pages that the keywords were the actual topic of. Furthermore, there was not much else in terms of "interactive" features offered. Because of this, the interactive section received an award of 2. No lag time was experienced. Therefore, an average score of 3 was awarded. The font size was very easy to read and often would be 18pt. Because of this, a 4 was awarded to the font size. Most pages had several "phasing" pictures where one could see four to five different pictures. Furthermore, there are several good "selling the university" videos including a YOUniversityTV tour available. This website used the photos and videos extremely well, and therefore was awarded a 5. The presentation is distinct with the large font, phasing pictures, with an easy to follow design. Due to how good the website is at entertaining and providing useful information, an award of 4 was given. The content was useful and did contain some unique features such as information on available Spanish tours as well as a useful "tips" section. Given that it provides all that the other websites do and a little more, a 4 was awarded.

University of Arizona

University of Arizona's website had an easy to find future student section, utilizing a large link. While most of the sections are not based on the same template, the navigation is still fairly simple, and was hence awarded an average score of 3. The search tool was among the best of the different universities and provided the precise information desired. The interactive map is rudimentary at best. One must select between the different options of zooming in and out and even panning left or right. Only one of the functions may be done at a time. Also, there are no other interactive features offered. Therefore, an award of 2 was given. The speed suffered no lag

time, and was awarded an average score of 3. The font size was mostly 12pt and awarded an

average score of 3. Videos were used as a main "seller" in the future student section. There

were 13 different videos ranging from the day in the life of a student, to highlights of the

university's biggest achievements. The videos were used very well, and they were easy to find.

There were several photos and podcasts offered as well. For those reasons, the use of photos and

videos was awarded a 5. The website offered a unique amenity of the "future student" section in

Spanish. The videos, podcasts, and publication & press section offered resources that explain

things such as filing FASFA, study abroad, student life, and financial aid. Finally there was also

a "Chat" with admissions office that is available during scheduled days and times. For these

reasons an award of 5 was given for presentation. The content was similar to that of other

universities in that it did encompass all aspects that a prospective student would want to know.

Because all websites offered roughly the same amount of information, the content section was

awarded an average score of 3.

University of California Berkeley

University of California Berkeley's website is very segregated. While it is fairly easy to

navigate within each section, it is somewhat difficult to navigate from one section to another. For

instance, navigating from housing to another such as dinning is complicated. Additionally, the

templates are completely different from section to section. Because of these problems, the user

friendliness was awarded only a 2. The interactive map was good and, while it was not unique,

there were few as user-friendly as this one. Zooming in and out can be accomplished with the

wheel of a mouse, while clicking and dragging moves the map in the direction one wants to go.

One may click on different buildings to get photos of the buildings along with descriptions and

information pertaining to each specifically. The search tool was quite good as well. Often it would return the exact desired results, and when it didn't, it would usually have results similar to the topic desired. The interactive section was awarded a good score of 4. The speed suffered no lag time and was awarded an average score of 3. The font size was mostly 12pt and therefore awarded an average score of 3. Nearly every page used photos for indicating the headings, for highlighting links, and even for labeling specific sections. The undergraduate admissions homepage, which is where new students are first directed, contains an embedded YouTube video showcasing the school. The use of photos and video was awarded a score of 4. The presentation of the website is good. The website highlights videos and slideshows to give the user a multi-sensory experience. Its information is useful and easy to find. Because of this, the presentation was awarded a 4. Like most of the websites, Berkley's was extensive, but it did not exceed that of the others and therefore was awarded an average score of 3.

University of California Davis

University of California Davis's website is not based on one standard template. More specifically, they have a future student section that is completely different from the admissions section. This creates confusion as to finding all the information one would look for in a prospective college. Also, in order to go backwards one page one must use the browser's back button. The user friendly aspect of this website was awarded a 2. The search work very well and would bring the desired results. As for other interactive features, there were not a lot available but, those that were, were useful and well designed. For those reasons an award of 4 was given. No lag time was experienced, and an average score of 3 was given. The font was mostly 12pt, earning an average score of 3. While there are pictures and videos in this site, they

are not used in a selling manor. They do have a link to YOUniversityTV; however, it is not

really highlighted. For the presentation there are some pluses as well as some minuses. The

website offers a virtual tour that is essentially a slide show with captions. They also offer a

"quicklinks" that can be useful and helpful. However, due to segregation in the website creating

completely different templates, the website looks a little cluttered and poorly organized at times.

The pluses and minuses offset, giving this website a score of 3 for presentation. The content of

the website is thorough, though most of the other websites also are, hence earning a score of 3.

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's website was exceptionally well designed

for user friendliness. The future student section was very easy to find, and it was all based on the

same template. The template itself is easy to follow with tabs that have drop downs that

categorize information. Also, each page has several hyperlinks to find out more about certain

topics discussed in each section. A user friendly rating a score of 5 was given. The search tool

worked fairly well, but didn't always locate exactly what keywords are designed to bring out.

There were very few interactive features offered, and therefore a 2 was given. No lag time was

experienced, and for that reason an average score of 3 was awarded. While much of the text was

12pt font, there were headers and hyperlinks that were in 18pt font that made each section very

easy to find. For font size a 4 was awarded. Photos and videos were not used predominantly in

this website though, there were always "phasing links/photos" at the top of the page, and they did

offer the YOUniversityTV tour of their college. One of the phasing links was to a videos section

that would take the prospective student to YouTube videos of the university. But because that

could be found only if one were watching the phasing links, and because so few pictures were

used, an average score of 3 was awarded. The large font, easy navigation, phasing ads/links, and easy to find special offers (such as being able to sign up to receive extra information) made this a distinct website. Because of its very well done design, an award of 4 was given for the presentation. The content section was very similar to other universities' websites and was awarded an average score of 3.

University of Michigan

University of Michigan's website was not user friendly. The prospective student section was very easy to find. On the other hand, after one reaches that page, finding specific information becomes very difficult. The prospective student section was not in one standard template, and often hyperlinks will jump the user to totally different sections. The only way to get back is to use the web browser's back button. Due to its complex navigation, the website received a 1 for its user friendliness. The search for the website did provide the desired results looked for. Furthermore, there was a link to an interactive map from the home page. Because most of the websites offered and performed in such a manner, an average score of 3 was given. No lag time was experienced, and an average score of 3 was earned. Most of the font was 12pt and received an average score of 3. Photos and videos are not used in "selling" the university. In fact, there was only one section, mentorship, which contained a group of photos. There was a link from the homepage to YouTube videos, however, no videos found were about "selling" the university. An award of 2 was given for use of videos and photos. For the presentation section, the website did provide some distinct features such as offering the website in Spanish. Information was also often listed in a bulleted fashion which made scanning the page a little easier than one in paragraph form. However, because the bulleted lists were large at times, and

because of a lack of any "wow" factors a score of 2 was given. Though it was tough to find the content, with enough time all information could be found, and therefore an average score of 3 was awarded for content.

University of Texas at Austin

University of Texas at Austin's website was user friendly. The prospective student section was easy to find, there was consistency in terms of the template used, and information was easy to find. An average score of 3 was awarded. While the search tool often failed to provide desired results, this website offered a very good interactive section simply worded "Do Stuff Online", making it worthy of an excellent point total. This section was unique from the others in what it had to offer. Because the search tool performed poorly, but the rest of the interactive section was very good, a score of 4 was awarded. No lag time was experienced earning an average score of 3. Most of the font was 12pt, and an average score of 3 was awarded. A photo section that depicts the campus and its athletics is very nicely arranged. Also, they offer a "living on campus" video that is a good alternative to the much-used YOUniversityTV link provided in many of the other websites. An average score of 3 was awarded for the use of photos and videos. The presentation is good and offers some amenities such as a virtual tour and a printable self guided tour, but it does not exceed what other universities' websites offered and thus was awarded an average score of 3. For the content of this website, the university offered more information than other schools did without cluttering the web pages. While the search tool is not very good, it does not need to be, as all information one needs or wants can easily be found. Because of this, an award of 4 was given for content.

University of Wisconsin-Madison

University of Wisconsin-Madison's website was lacking a link or a section dedicated to future and/or prospective students. This could leave one questioning if there was any information that he could not find that the university may have wanted him to see. Because of this, the user friendliness of the website was awarded a 2. The search tool was pretty good and would render results that were closely, if not exactly, related to the information desired. Furthermore, a very good interactive map was provided. It was well designed, easy to use, and the graphics were unique compared to ones provided by other universities in that the view was an actual aerial view with very high resolution. Because of these factors a score of 4 was awarded. No lag time was experienced, and therefore it earned an award of 3. The majority of the font was 12pt, getting a result of 3. Photos were used very well in this website. Many hyperlinks were highlighted by a photo, and there were other photos available as well throughout the site. On the other hand, videos were underutilized. The videos provided had no commentary; they only played music and would occasionally have a word or phrase. Very little information was relayed in such videos. Because of the offsetting factors, a score of 3 was given. The presentation of the website was excellent. Information was easy to find and, as mentioned, hyperlinks to different sections often had a photo. Moreover, information was often presented in a well designed bulleted list form. Because of these features, the website was eye catching and distinct, and thus was awarded a 5. In terms of content, the website offered very similar information to what the other universities' websites offered, and was awarded a score of 3.

Peer Websites Comparison Chart

	Purdue University	Cornell University	Georgia Institute of Technology	Pennsylvania State University at University Park	Texas A&M University	University of Arizona	University of California, Berkeley	University of California, Davis	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	University of Michigan	University of Texas at Austin	University of Wisconsin-Madison	Average
User Friendly	2	5	3	4	4	3	2	2	5	1	3	2	3
Interactive	3	2	3	4	2	2	4	4	2	3	4	4	3.08
Speed	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2.92
Font Size	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3.17
Use of Photos/Video	3	5	5	4	5	5	4	3	3	2	3	3	3.75
Presentation	1	4	4	5	4	5	4	3	4	2	3	5	3.67
Content	3	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3.33
Total	18	26	24	26	26	24	23	21	24	17	23	23	22.9
Average	2.57	3.71	3.43	3.71	3.71	3.43	3.29	3	3.43	2.43	3.29	3.29	

Conclusion

Today's "Millennial" generation student is different from the previous generations. One such difference is how they search for the college of their choice. The Internet has created a new method for them to be introduced to and become familiar with a campus with the convenience of never leaving their home. Because of the changes occurring in students' searching method, universities must adapt as well if they want to compete for recruiting the best and brightest students. Purdue and its eleven peer institutions all have websites and resources on the Internet for attracting prospective students. People from previous generations such as Baby-Boomers and Generation-Xers have designed these websites. Because of the significant differences that exist between these generations and the Millennials, most notably information sourcing, the question of how effective these websites are was asked.

In order to test the effectiveness of these websites, an extensive study of each was conducted. Each website was compared to an elaborate rubric which clearly designated the criteria that the Millennial generation looks for in websites, along with comprehensive definitions of each ranking. The points awarded for each category from the criteria were charted for comparison.

No university in any category received a score of zero, indicating a complete lack of said criteria. Nevertheless, it is clear that most of the institutions are only meeting expectations rather than exceeding the expectations of the Millennial generation in most categories. If institutions such as those evaluated want to stay competitive for the best and brightest students they must continuously develop their recruiting methods to impress the new generations.

Recommendations

Purdue University in comparison with its peers ranked near average in most of the categories. Though when all calculations are added and compared, Purdue did rank eleventh out of twelfth. The user friendly and presentation sections both brought Purdue's score down. Purdue University's website simply lacked any "wow" factor that many of the other universities were able to provide with the use of videos, pictures, and unique features such as the University of Arizona's Spanish version of the "future student" section. Purdue University's website also lacked the uniformity that many other institutions offered. When clicking on hyperlinks and entering different sections a new layout was all too common. This made navigation more complicated and created a sense of disconnect within Purdue's own sectors such as housing, academics, and recreational sports.

For Purdue University's website to meet the expectations of the Millennial student it must improve the overall uniformity and possess something unique to "wow" those visiting the site. I would suggest the "future students" section adapting a layout that offers tabs with pictures emphasizing the different sections they represent. The tabs should include academics, athletics, student life, housing, campus information, and application process. While navigating to each section these tabs should remain permanent making it very easy to get from one section to the next. Each section can then contain the pertinent information along with amenities such as offering the website in a foreign language, videos highlighting the topic of that section, or many other unique features.

While conducting the research a list of the best practices that the different websites practiced was compiled. The most notable practice that eased navigation, provided stability, and created a professional appearance was that of using a common template for the entire

"prospective/new student" section. While some of the websites had links and tabs to follow that would take you to a different section that had a different page layout, those that offered one common layout tended to have higher scores. The use of photos to highlight sections and as part of links and tabs was extremely helpful in aiding those visitors looking for information quickly. Furthermore, it provided a more visually appealing page that offered more than just words to receive information. A website that had either an embedded or even simply a link to an introductory video on the homepage was very useful. This allows for a visitor to receive an overview quickly that is multi-sensory. Additionally, these videos have the opportunity to be high energy and good quality "selling" mechanisms for the university. The final best practice that universities provided on their websites was that of a "wow" factor. A "wow" factor in this sense is something that is not commonly found in your average website. A few examples of wow factors would include; links to Second Life islands of your campus, online chat sessions with students and faculty, widgets that translate a webpage into any number of foreign languages, photos that encompass a full 360° view, and videos, specifically those with higher energy and music in the background. Captivating a new generation's student attention can be and is quite difficult, but by being innovative, creative, and constantly improving upon your competition, it can be done.

For future studies the use of questionnaires could be provided to freshman students and perhaps even high school seniors. The questionnaire could ask them to fill out a survey or perhaps independently evaluate Purdue's website and its online recruiting methods. Another step that could be taken in future research would be that of a tracking system that each university would embed in their websites. The tracking system could then calculate such data as time spent on each page, paths through the website, and a ratio of number of applicants to the number of

people who have visited the site itself. The final suggestion for future research would be to consider using other universities to compare Purdue University to. Prospective students applying to Purdue University may have a stronger tendency to apply to different colleges than the eleven peer institutions examined in this study. Therefore, Purdue University may not be in high competition for students with the different institutions researched in this study.

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environment

Appendix

Pilot University Websites Notes

Indiana University-Bloomington

1. <u>User Friendly – Easy to follow</u> – Prospective students tab/section was very easy to find. Several link then appear offering information for all of IU's campus's; IU Bloomington, IUPUI Indianapolis, IU East, IPFW Fort Wayne, IU Kokomo, IU Northwest, IU South Bend, and IU Southeast. Went to "Bloomington." Prospective Student section still easy to find. Four main tabs; academics, costs & financial aid, student life, and how to apply. Layout remains very consistent throughout making navigation easy.

2. <u>Interactive – Search tool, links</u> – search engine was used with key words/phrases (new student, fees, campus map, directions, move-in). Search with keywords "new student" and "move in" brought up zero results. Interactive map very good. Could zoom in and out with mouse reel and simply click and drag to navigate. Also buildings names were on the side, by clicking these names it would "jump" you to a building.

3. <u>Speed – Fast, how much wait time</u> – no lag time

4. <u>Font Size – Large</u> – average font size is 12pt, commonly has larger headers

5. <u>Use of Photos/Video – Entertaining, useful</u> – on the prospective student home page there is a scrolling picture feature that offers six different pictures. From prospective student home page there is a link to "watch videos about life at IU." Four different videos offered, Welcome Home, Academics, Athletics, and Student Life. Photos are used on every page to accent the pages main topic such as academics may offer a picture of someone study, athletics would show people cycling, and so on and so forth.

6. <u>Presentation – Graphic Design, Distinctiveness</u> – Layout remains very consistent throughout making navigation easy. Offers a section called "meet your admissions counselor" its based on the state and county you are from. Get to see a picture and read a small profile about them. As well as receiving their contact information. There is a specific section for "parents" that offers "adjusting to college, Bloomington campus, campus safety, jobs, courses & majors, finances, and overseas study" sections, as well as a general intro section. There is a "chat with students and staff" section that has schedule days and times. Did find a broken link when trying to access more information about housing. In the student life section, the "little 500" and "IU outdoor adventures" links are broken.

7. <u>Content – Useful, informative</u> – very useful content. The website would leave no questions unanswered. All information is in the "prospective students/office of admissions" section.

Overall Indiana University thoughts, website well designed for easy navigation. The pictures on each page offer a good "break" from just text reading while also accenting the topics discussed. Aside from the broken links and two keyword search problems, the website is very good at offering prospective students a look at IU and what it has to offer.

Ohio State University

1. <u>User Friendly – Easy to follow</u> – from home page there is a "future students" link very easy to find. From "future students" homepage, Undergraduates section was easy to find. Four main tabs; Academics, Campus Life, Visit, and Admissions each tab brings up a different picture underneath it. These tabs have hyperlinks under them, the hyperlinks do not change the webpage layout; furthermore the tabs remain at the top of the pages making navigation from each section very easy. A few links in the webpage would take you to a different page layout format.

2. <u>Interactive – Search tool, links</u> – search engine was used with key words/phrases (new student, fees, campus map, directions, move-in). "New student" and "directions" in the search brought up no results but did bring up a suggestion page. This suggestion page in both cases does get one to proper information. "Move in" did not bring up the proper results and neither did the suggestion page. Interactive map was present.

3. <u>Speed – Fast, how much wait time</u> – no lag, no timeouts

4. <u>Font Size – Large</u> – varies 11pt to 12pt, headers are larger, hyperlinks are gray, a little tough to see

5. <u>Use of Photos/Video – Entertaining, useful</u> – in video section there was a link to YOUiversityTV. Several videos offered, all 10 minutes or less, good for not loosing ones attention. Every page has at least one picture accenting the main topic discussed in that section.

6. <u>Presentation – Graphic Design, Distinctiveness</u> – Virtual visits offered in QuickTime and windows media player. Links to "College Portrait," an independent website giving information about different colleges. Layout is nice giving photos on most pages. Gives eye a break from being to "wordy."

7. <u>Content – Useful, informative</u> – The content incorporates all information that was identified as being required to be present.

Overall Ohio State University's website is set up nicely. It makes good use of font size differences to highlight what's important. The pictures highlight the main topic of the page they are part of. And it is fairly easy to navigate based on the fact that it remains consistent throughout most of the website.

University Websites Notes

Purdue University

1. <u>User Friendly – Easy to follow</u> – Prospective students tab/section was very easy to find. 11 links then appear. Why Purdue? Undergraduate Majors. Graduate Programs. International Students and Scholars. Financial Aid and Scholarships Graduate School Funding. Student Life, Campus Safety/Police. Housing. Orientation and New Student Programs. Student Consumer Information. Lack of uniformity from large section to large section. In the Undergraduate Admissions section there is a link "virtual viewbook" this link should have been better phrased and highlighted for new/prospective students – Virtual Viewbook offered "7 Secrets to Your Success" each secret had a video that was useful in explaining topic, more of website should work like this section

2. <u>Interactive – Search tool, links</u> – search engine was used with key words/phrases (new student, fees, campus map, directions, move-in) in each case, the first link listed was used – directions first link was incorrect, however the second link was correct

3. <u>Speed – Fast, how much wait time</u> – one time a page lagged out, second try rendered desired page

4. <u>Font Size – Large</u> – International section, font was small and crowded, on Home Page the general text was 11

5. <u>Use of Photos/Video – Entertaining, useful</u> – Has a photo gallery with 85 photos and small captions. 170 videos are available; all pertaining to Purdue in some way this was in the Undergraduate Admissions section. There is a link to YOUniversityTV; this is a website that gives very pertinent information such as Undergraduate Enrollment, In-State Tuition, Out-of-State Tuition, Room & Board, Region, and Type, as well as a detailed video tour/intro to campus. In Housing and Food Services section, Residence Halls offer virtual tours, however had a lot of difficulty in playing them. Housing and Food services offers a campus map and virtual tour; however it is really just a campus map that you could find on Google/map quest – not very "virtual"

6. <u>Presentation – Graphic Design, Distinctiveness</u> – In International section I found 2 dead links. Could not find anything to change the language in International section. Links are often marked in "Purdue's Golden" color … this can make is somewhat difficult to read. Most common problem is that each section (Rec Sports, Res Life, Graduate Admissions, etc) obviously have different designers. This becomes a little confusing if you get used to one design/expectation of how to navigate. Does Online chat with admissions available on presented days and time.

7. <u>Content – Useful, informative</u> – very useful content. Properly searched and with enough time. The website would leave no questions unanswered.

Overall Purdue thoughts, the website is useful and does help one get a sense of what they are getting into; however the biggest problem is that it is very segregated. When navigating it can get a little confusing how you got to what you are currently on due to the drastically different designed sections.

Cornell University

1. <u>User Friendly – Easy to follow</u> – Link to YOUniversityTV right on front page. Because most every page is from the same template it makes navigation easy after familiarity with it. Everything easy to find at a glance.

2. <u>Interactive – Search tool, links</u> – links to zoomable maps, virtual tours does require QuickTime 5, links to install it, with search tool "new student" rendered results mostly dealing with "new student programs" but very little with orientation. "fees" did not render information on cost of tuition. "move-in" brought no information about student move-in dates or info. …. When on Cornell's homepage, that information came up … when in Cornell's undergraduate Admissions Office section, proper information was provided

3. <u>Speed – Fast, how much wait time</u> – no lag, no timeouts

4. <u>Font Size – Large</u> – mostly 12 point, hyperlinks are red and easy to see

5. <u>Use of Photos/Video – Entertaining, useful</u> – 391 videos available on Cornell related events and specials, several photos on specific topics opening page. YOUniversityTV used as a highlight and recruiting tool, it is well placed and easy to find. Links to "Just for Fun" gives you access to "CornellCast" this section has a lot of videos in different categories which give you a "feel" for campus life and what you might see for different events and everyday life.

6. <u>Presentation – Graphic Design, Distinctiveness</u> – the whole website is based on one standard template. Graduate School does have a different template. Very simplistic looking. Some of the school departments (College of Architecture, School of Industrial and Labor Relations) modify/break away from the overall template

7. <u>Content – Useful, informative</u> – very useful information, from housing to financial aid, to college history. Set up in logical, easy to navigate design. Often a "Related Links" section can be found, especially useful when you get close but don't quite find exactly what you are looking for. There always seems to be a way to get back to the homepage with one click. Very nice for navigation purposes.

Overall Cornell's website is well designed for finding what you want quickly and easy. Properly titled hyperlinks and tabs as well as the mostly universal template help for familiarity. The search engine was a little tricky as it would search only the particular section you were in at the time.

Georgia Institute of Technology

1. <u>User Friendly – Easy to follow</u> – YOUniversityTV easy to find on prospective students section. Home page appeared cluttered but links for prospective students were able to be found. Template creates easy navigation where your links are easy to find.

2. <u>Interactive – Search tool, links</u> – the 360° room view was very effective at helping one know what your room will look like. Search tool fairly ineffective. With all words/phrases, the search would send me to a "website outline" page that basically broke the whole website down with hyperlinks for each section. Furthermore the search tool was a slower load time than other pages

3. <u>Speed – Fast, how much wait time</u> – no lag, no timed-outs

4. <u>Font Size – Large</u> – font size was mostly 12pt

5. <u>Use of Photos/Video – Entertaining, useful</u> – YOUniversityTV was easy to find and used as a selling tool but other videos are not as prominent. In some sections there are embedded photos on the page. Some sections there are words as well as photos to highlight/describe a link. The 360° room view was very effective at helping one know what your room will look like.

6. <u>Presentation – Graphic Design, Distinctiveness</u> – The Residence Hall section had 360° zoomable photos of rooms and amenities. A specific parent section exists and seems easy to follow; this could help if a student wants to sell that particular university to them. There were links to blogs all about admissions

7. <u>Content – Useful, informative</u> – There is a "related links" section, this helps if you think you are close to where you want to be but you just aren't on the right page. Housing fees, deadlines, and applications where available.

The unique feature from this website was that many hyperlinks were accented with a photo. This captures attentions and helps you "see" what you are looking for. Most information was easy to find, though the search tool was not effective for more than simply breaking down the website in the simplest of forms. This website is good for finding what you want quickly and efficiently.

Pennsylvania State University at University Park

1. <u>User Friendly – Easy to follow</u> – Prospective students section very easy to find on home page. From Prospective Student Section navigation easy, only one main tab results in leaving the basic template. Bulleted list design creates very easy to find what you are looking for. Tabs are designed for extremely easy navigation.

2. <u>Interactive – Search tool, links</u> – Teen Second Life, Virtual Tours both extremely innovative and easy to use. Search tool wasn't very good, could you get close to your information but did not work as well as it could.

3. <u>Speed – Fast, how much wait time</u> – some links had long lag times, 8 seconds or more.

4. <u>Font Size – Large</u> – mostly 12pt some areas/tabs larger

5. <u>Use of Photos/Video – Entertaining, useful</u> – Link to personalized message from President of Penn State on Admissions home page (state of university 08), very informative, very long, somewhat dry. There is another YouTube link to the 2009 State of the University Address. Link to YOUnivesityTV, pretty easy to find but not used as a primary "selling tool" for prospective students. Links to visit campus through Teen Second Life

6. <u>Presentation – Graphic Design, Distinctiveness</u> – Very bulleted list design. Offers information in Spanish. After clicked one of bulleted list you get to picture and text tabs. Offers "Chat" with Admissions Staff. Links to visit campus through Teen Second Life. Virtual Tours extremely good

7. <u>Content – Useful, informative</u> – Extremely informative in all aspects. All questions are easy to find answers to.

At first glance, seemed dry and boring; however, student "sections" of the website were innovative, interactive, and fun. Offered second life links to campus tours, several videos both entertaining and informative, and the website was well organized. The tabs were easy to follow for finding the information you are looking for. Best Website I've visited so far.

Texas A&M University

1. <u>User Friendly – Easy to follow</u> – Prospective student/office of admissions section easy to find. Website seems compact and very simplistic. This helps on keep track of where they found certain information.

2. <u>Interactive – Search tool, links</u> –Search tool, not very effective. Would simply bring up links to pages containing word or phrase. Though with the quick links and tabs offered on this website, search tool wasn't needed for my list of words used.

3. <u>Speed – Fast, how much wait time</u> – no lag time

4. <u>Font Size – Large</u> – large, many sections are 18pt font, easy to read

5. <u>Use of Photos/Video – Entertaining, useful</u> – Tons of videos available, almost constant phasing pictures on webpage. Several "how to" videos for prospective students. Link to YOUniversityTV homepage, you have to put in Texas A&M to see their video. Several "selling" videos used for prospective students.

6. <u>Presentation – Graphic Design, Distinctiveness</u> – from the office of admissions website section the rest of the website/links fits the very general template. Almost always pictures phasing at top of webpage.

7. <u>Content – Useful, informative</u> – In tours information section, found that they offer Spanish tours. Several "tips" sections offer information on ways of getting admitted. Information for perspective students is extensive, must leave office of admissions section to find much about "student life."

With this website, videos seem to be the main selling point. The Admissions section is fairly small but contains very useful content. I would suggest a few more links for socially what new students can get involved with/in. Overall website pretty well designed and will defiantly sell to visual teens/one who like video. Has had largest font, least clutter per page thus far.

University of Arizona

1. <u>User Friendly – Easy to follow</u> – Map was one of several links at top of webpage the whole time. Future Students link was large and easy to find on home page. The template/layout is not standard. Each page is different from previous. It makes navigation a little more difficult, though many of the links and sections are pretty clearly marked.

2. <u>Interactive – Search tool, links</u> – Their interactive map is rudimentary at best. You have to select from; zoom in, zoom out, move image, and identify UA Bldg. Most maps have been set up so that the wheel of your mouse can zoom in and out and simply clicking and dragging moves the map, while clicking on a building identifies it. The Search engine provided exact information from key words.

3. <u>Speed – Fast, how much wait time</u> – No lag time

4. <u>Font Size – Large</u> – mostly 12pt but some 14pt

5. <u>Use of Photos/Video – Entertaining, useful</u> – link to photos/live webcams/tours highlighted on the future student homepage. 13 videos offered in future student section, videos range from "day in the life of (student)" to the university's large achievement.

6. <u>Presentation – Graphic Design, Distinctiveness</u> – Offers "future student" section in Spanish. Offers videos, podcasts, and publication & press section, this offers resources in several forms that explain things such as filing FASFA, study abroad, student life, financial aid, etc. "Chat" with admissions office is available.

7. <u>Content – Useful, informative</u> – Content encompasses most things one would look for. Some areas go into great detail while others just introduce the subject.

The University of Arizona had several videos, pictures, and podcasts. This created a multi-sensory way of gathering the information that a prospective student needs and wants. The website was not built on a template that was used throughout. While typically this would make

navigation a little tougher, the website does a good job with properly/clearly labeling links so as to counteract the lack of universal template. Furthermore the search engine was extremely good at providing the information desired from the key words.

University of California, Berkeley

1. <u>User Friendly – Easy to follow</u> – To find things like housing and campus life, there are not links from the Office of Admissions webpage (the webpage they bring "prospective student" to). Website seems small due to fact that each section is very "segregated from each other. No easy way of getting from office of admissions to housing for instance.

2. <u>Interactive – Search tool, links</u> – Interactive map is very good, click and drag around campus, click on building and get full description/history of, plus photo. There is a map that you can look at with numbers of certain buildings, you can go on a walking tour by yourself and text a certain number at each building and get a brief description sent right to your phone. Pretty good search tool, rendered results that were very close if not exactly what key words were looking for.

3. <u>Speed – Fast, how much wait time</u> – no lag time

4. <u>Font Size – Large</u> – 12pt

5. <u>Use of Photos/Video – Entertaining, useful</u> – embedded YouTube video on Undergraduate Admissions home page. Virtual tours available for residence halls. Every page is outline with photos; several links have photos as well. They did a good job not making it look cluttered but still used a lot of pictures. Several videos available from "campus spots" to "popular majors."

6. <u>Presentation – Graphic Design, Distinctiveness</u> – Online virtual tour available, mostly photos in slide show but gives pretty good view of campus life as well as text describing each photo/set of photos. Whole page dedicated to "campus tour" has several links, videos, pictures, and info. There is a link to YOUnivesityTV, not super highlighted but it is in a list of "tour video" section. Offers links to live webcams, pretty neat to see how active the campus is. There is a map that you can look at with numbers of certain buildings, you can go on a walking tour by yourself and text a certain number at each building and get a brief description sent right to your phone.

7. <u>Content – Useful, informative</u> – All information provided was very relevant. Considering that each section was pretty separate from the other sections it was easy to stay very focused on that particular section.

This website in some ways is deceiving, at first it seems small, but it is very extensive and is actually quit large. With the "no standard template" and very separate dividers of sections it is easy to really focus on one particular area, housing, tours, campus life, videos, etc. This is good and bad. Without the proper amount of time available or spent on website, it would be very easy

to miss important information. However, given the proper amount of time, this website is designed very well to keep you on topic as you can go through each part one at a time.

University of California, Davis

1. <u>User Friendly – Easy to follow</u> – Future Students section easy to find. Website is not on one basic template, though several sections are. Some links jump you to totally new sections and only way back is using back button. Particularly, the Admissions page is completely different from the "future students" page. Semi confusing for where prospective students should go. There is always a link to the home page.

2. <u>Interactive – Search tool, links</u> – There is a neat link to a Google calendar that has events dates and times. There are not many interactive options in this website. The search worked very well and brought me right to the information that I was looking for. However, I did find one broken link when clicking on one result.

3. <u>Speed – Fast, how much wait time</u> – no lag time

4. <u>Font Size – Large</u> – mostly 12pt

5. <u>Use of Photos/Video – Entertaining, useful</u> – there are 11 videos in the video section. YOUniversityTV is 8th down. They don't use it as a main seller. The other videos aren't really "selling" the university videos.

6. <u>Presentation – Graphic Design, Distinctiveness</u> – Virtual Tour contains photos and captions to help you see campus, students, architecture, etc. From any one given section things are easy to find and navigate, however, the segregation/slight misplaced items create a little tough all-around navigation. Quick links offers sections that can be very helpful and similar to those that you are in. did find some broken hyperlinks.

7. <u>Content – Useful, informative</u> – whole application available online. There are very useful pieces of information and videos in the "current student" section such as orientation videos and PowerPoints that should be in the prospective student sections.

This website is not very impressive though it does offer what one needs to learn how to apply, what they look for etc. It does offer some pretty good videos. The biggest flaw is that their orientation materials/videos/etc are in the "current students" section and there is no guarantee that a prospective student would go to that link. The other problem is that I found two broken links. There could be more throughout the website and while two isn't too bad, it can get annoying.

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

1. <u>User Friendly – Easy to follow</u> – future students section easy to find. The admissions website, which they recommended for prospective students right away, is one standard template. The template has tabs that have drop downs making it very easy to find what you are looking for. Maps were available on home page but none found in the admissions section which is where they told prospective students to go. Each page is loaded with hyperlinks to things mentioned. Conveniently easy to find parents section. In their phasing ads there are some very useful links such as the Illinois Network that has links for their facebook, youtube, twitter, etc pages. These "phasing ads" should be able to be found in the website as well.

2. <u>Interactive – Search tool, links</u> – very little interactive features. Search tool was fairly accurate; it had trouble with "directions" but otherwise worked really well.

3. <u>Speed – Fast, how much wait time</u> – no lag time

4. <u>Font Size – Large</u> – mostly 12pt but several 18pt for the links

5. <u>Use of Photos/Video – Entertaining, useful</u> – there is an entire section dedicated to photos. Other than photo section each page has either one but mostly no pictures. Other than YOUniversityTV couldn't find any other videos. There are videos available; it is a "phasing ad" on the admissions home page. This takes you to youtube videos that offer 275 different videos.

6. <u>Presentation – Graphic Design, Distinctiveness</u> – on Admissions home page there are student blogs available. YOUniversityTV is used as a large highlight, but it doesn't take you directly to University of Illinois. When clicking on separate page such as housing, it opens in a new tab. Helpful for if you want to get back to other information. Related blogs to the specific subject you are looking at are always available on the page. Neat section "Illinois near you" that you can put in your location and find out when Illinois recruiters will be in your area. Online application available. Does offer a "sign up" section that is used for "receive more information on Illinois and the application process." In their phasing ads there are some very useful links such as the Illinois Network that has links for their facebook, youtube, twitter, etc pages. These "phasing ads" should be able to be found in the website as well. Pages are not cluttered with words, making scanning very easy.

7. <u>Content – Useful, informative</u> – Content is very extensive. Could find everything a prospect student would need to gather information on for helping them choose a school.

This website was well designed. The only drawbacks from this website is that they tell prospective students to go to the admissions site, and from the admission I was unable to find such things a map and the phasing ads unless clicked on while they were phasing. Otherwise this website is easy to follow, loaded with content, and fairly quick to go through.

University of Michigan

1. <u>User Friendly – Easy to follow</u> – prospective student page really easy to find. Not one standard template, you never if when you click a tab if you are going to a totally new page. Navigation is complex.

2. <u>Interactive – Search tool, links</u> – from home page there is a link to a zoomable map. Search renders desired results for all key words.

3. <u>Speed – Fast, how much wait time</u> – no lag time.

4. <u>Font Size – Large</u> – 12pt

5. <u>Use of Photos/Video – Entertaining, useful</u> – there are "mentorship" pictures in the mentorship section. From the Michigan homepage can reach youtube videos … but none "sell" the college. Very boring website.

6. <u>Presentation – Graphic Design, Distinctiveness</u> – can get the undergraduate admission office website in Spanish. Very wordy, no pictures or videos jump out, may be none. Information mostly presented in bulleted list manor. The "bullet points" are hyperlinks.

7. <u>Content – Useful, informative</u> – content is useful but pages are super wordy. Data is all over the page. Data needs to be presented in better manor. Too tough to get to information.

This website was not very good. It was super wordy, didn't have many video or photos, and was just boring. Definitely the worst website of all so far.

University of Texas at Austin

1. <u>User Friendly – Easy to follow</u> – prospective students section easy to find. Navigation is fairly simple. Some sections make it a little tough to get back to the page containing their link but it was pretty manageable.

2. <u>Interactive – Search tool, links</u> – The search tool was not very good. Most of the results provided were not what the keywords were intended to bring up. They do have a pretty cool interactive section. It is different from all so far. If not for search, would give it a 5

3. <u>Speed – Fast, how much wait time</u> – did find a broken link, fast no lag

4. <u>Font Size – Large</u> – mostly 12pt

5. <u>Use of Photos/Video – Entertaining, useful</u> – There is a photo section it has campus and athletics photos. There is a "living on campus" video available. Not a whole lot of photos or videos, but ones they have are pretty good.

6. <u>Presentation – Graphic Design, Distinctiveness</u> – Chat sessions with admissions offered. They offer a self guided tour, in this you get a map with numbered landmarks and a key that lists the numbered building that gives history and information of each building and photos. There is a virtual tour section that is unique to those of the other peer institutions. It offers slide show with audio, still pictures with audio, and some videos.

7. <u>Content – Useful, informative</u> – Truly comprehensive in terms of content. Everything from how to apply, to checking your status, cost, demographics, etc. No question goes unaddressed.

This website has some very good points but is also missing some "pizzazz." Nothing really stands out. The design is pretty easy to navigate and the information is there but it is not really exciting or unique. They do have a pretty cool interactive section. It is different from all so far. The website needs work on the presentation aspect but otherwise is pretty good.

<u>University of Wisconsin-Madison</u>

1. <u>User Friendly – Easy to follow</u> – No "prospective" or "future" student section. Website is pretty easy to navigate. Sections don't leave the main template. Can always go back very easily. With no "prospective" student section, it is difficult to know if all information has been obtained.

2. <u>Interactive – Search tool, links</u> – Interactive map is very good. Click and drag, easy zoom in and out, click on building for more info, and map has a landscape look to it. The search rendered descent results. While the exact information was not usually the first link, all links were helpful and usually the exact information was provided with-in the first few hits.

3. <u>Speed – Fast, how much wait time</u> – no lag

4. <u>Font Size – Large</u> – mostly 12pt

5. <u>Use of Photos/Video – Entertaining, useful</u> – Link on homepage to YouTube videos. Photos used to highlight hyperlinks. There is a section of videos on scenery of campus, arts and culture, research and discovery, and athletics and spirit. These videos have no commentary, the audio is just music.

6. <u>Presentation – Graphic Design, Distinctiveness</u> – Website presents information in a very easy and eye catching way. Many hyperlinks are highlighted by photos. Information pops up in bulleted format, making it easy to scan the facts.

7. <u>Content – Useful, informative</u> – Has all you would want and think to look for in terms of content. Though tough to tell if there is even more.

The biggest downfall of this website is that there is no "future student" "prospective student" section. This makes it so you must search a little more and also leaves to question if you found all the available info for a prospective student. The layout and design is very good and easy to follow. The interactive map and search results were good. But I would still take away some major points for not having one specific section dedicated to prospective students.