

Faculty Council Proposal For College-Wide Website Improvement

Proposal Leads: Ken Sims (Geology and Geophysics, Chair Faculty Council), Shane Murphy (Atmospheric Sci.) **Other Co-PI's:** John Naughton (Mech. Eng.), Morteza Dejam (Petroleum Eng.), Franco Basile (Chemistry), Lars Kotthoff (Comp. Sci.), John McInroy (Electrical Eng.), Adam Myers (Physics), Katie Li-Oakey (Chem. Eng.), Timothy Robinson (Math/Stats), Long Lee (Math/Stats), Charlie Zhang (Civil Eng.)

Amount Requested: \$80,000

Description of Need:

A well-organized, updated, informative, and inviting website is key to any successful organization. These criteria are especially important for academic websites, which are often a potential student's first impression of a department or college. Department/college websites serve as: (1) recruitment tools for graduate and undergraduate students, (2) resource centers for current students, staff, and faculty, and (3) informational hubs for the outside world to know what activities are occurring.

The College of Engineering and Physical Sciences (CEPS) reinstated a faculty council in the fall of 2023. The faculty council is now required by the college bylaws to undertake the following, "*consideration of matters of relevance to the college such as academic policies and practices and budget allocation...addressing matters presented to it for consideration by any member of the academic personnel of the college.*" Upon its creation in fall 2023, with input from all academic departments, the council decided that its top-priority project would be to improve the CEPS main website and departmental webpages. The faculty council did not pursue this project in AY2023-2024 for two reasons. First, the college faculty were informed by institutional marketing that the top priority was for departments to develop search engine optimized (SEO) pages. Second, the faculty council was informed that institutional marketing would revamp the main CEPS website during the 2023-2024 academic year and that we needed to wait for that to be completed.

The faculty council met at the beginning of the 2024-2025 academic year to develop goals for the current academic year. At this time, all departments had completed their SEO pages, and the revamp of the main CEPS page had been completed. Despite these accomplishments, the faculty council unanimously voted that website improvement remained a top priority. Specific issues identified with the web pages for CEPS and the departments in CEPS include:

- 1.) It is confusing and hard to navigate the college pages. The structure is different for every department, often leading to the inability to locate information.
- 2.) The main pages for most departments and the college are static and non-engaging.
- 3.) Many links are circular, outdated, or misdirected.
- 4.) Faculty research pages are difficult to find, non-uniform, non-engaging, and missing information.
- 6.) There is a lack of information for prospective students about what is going on in the departments.
- 7.) It is difficult for current students, faculty, and staff to find critical information.
- 8.) The pages often switch between going to the SEO vs. the main departmental webpage, making the experience confusing and frustrating.

While many departments have a staff or faculty member responsible for their website, this is not true for all departments. Additionally, for those who have identified a person, the webpage is typically an extremely small portion of their duties (< 5%), meaning they cannot devote significant time to it. The University's institutional marketing page on website design and maintenance (<https://www.uwyo.edu/web/site-editors/current-site-editor.html>) states that reorganizing an existing site "involves significant work from the site editor to clean up their site folder and pages along with creating a new site map structure through our site mapping tool. Site editors should expect a minimum of 40+ hours of work to complete this process." Given the 10 departments in the current CEPS this would suggest that fixing the issues above would require more than 400 hours of time.

Proposed Action:

Given that website improvement is a top priority for the faculty council and that there are insufficient resources within departments to accomplish this task, the faculty council reached out to the college to develop a plan. Unfortunately, the person in charge of the webpage recently resigned, leaving no contact point at the college level. Accordingly, the faculty council unanimously decided to write this proposal to bring in an outside consultant to reorganize the CEPS web pages. Institutional marketing maintains a database of consultants trained in the University's CMS system. We will hire (through standard contracting/bid processes) one of these consultants (or a consultant who will take the required training). The faculty council members (named in this proposal), will be the main contact points for working with the consultant. The faculty council members will reach out to their respective departments (and to those responsible for website content in departments who have such a position) to get the content needed for the pages. The faculty council will meet with the consultant multiple times during their twice monthly meetings to develop a structure agreeable to all departments. We will involve institutional marketing at all stages to ensure our plans are acceptable to the University. The main goals for the project will be to:

- 1.) Develop a structure where all department websites are organized in a similar fashion and have roughly equivalent information (we note that different departments will have different programs and needs but the overall structure should be consistent across departments).
- 2.) Create departmental web pages that are attractive and engaging while also containing content for current students, faculty and staff. The web pages will also be designed to be easily updated with news and events by departmental or college staff.
- 3.) Create easily updated pages for faculty where their research groups can be described that include images.

How this Proposal Will Accomplish Tier 1 Engineering Initiative Goals:

1.) *Excellence in Undergraduate Education:* The improved website will be a huge asset for recruiting undergraduates. Additionally, the new website will provide much easier navigation for current students to find resources on curriculum, activities, etc.

2. *World-Class Research and Graduate Education:* The improved website will greatly enhance our ability to recruit top graduate students and advertise our research to the broader public.

3. *Productive Economic Development through Partnerships:* The improved website will provide a platform where the college can advertise current research and innovation of interest to companies in Wyoming and beyond.

4. *K-14 STEM Education:* The website will be a resource for youth in Wyoming to better understand what the requirements and job prospects for various academic subjects are.

Detailed Budget Justification:

A detailed statement of work must be developed for the website before a quote can be obtained. If this project is funded, the faculty council, in conjunction with those involved with websites at the departmental level, will immediately begin work on a detailed statement of work and will work with procurement and institutional marketing to develop a proposal that can either go out for bid or be negotiated with a current contractor for UW. The webpage subcommittee of the council will lead these efforts with final decisions being approved by the entire council. We will work closely with institutional marketing during this process to ensure that whomever is hired for this work and the finished site will be acceptable to them. It is anticipated that the project will require the full \$80,000 available for individual projects based on the scope of work described above and institutional marketing's estimate of time required for this type of project. Because this project involves all 10 department in CEPS, \$80,000 will provide less than \$8,000 per department because there is also a need to overhaul the main CEPS page. Of course, there will be significant synergy because a common structure will be introduced for all departments. If a consultant is able to perform the tasks outlined above for less than \$80,000, the faculty council will identify the next highest priority projects for the webpages, which might include expanded capabilities for individual faculty research pages, more developed research pages for departments, improved student resources or enhanced faculty pages.

Detailed Budget:

An \$80,000 contract to an approved website development consultant to overhaul the main CEPS and all departmental webpages.