The Importance of a Web Presence for Academic Departments

Today’s high school students are turning to the Web in increasing numbers when conducting their college search.

What are they looking for? What do they want to see? A survey conducted by the National Research Center for Colleges and Universities (NRCCUA) of 2,000 students in fall 2006, reveals the following:

- 74% are using the Web to conduct their college searches
- 69% want to read a faculty profile
- 70% want to be able to email a faculty member

Students also rated the various types of information they were seeking:

(1-not at all valuable; 5-extremely valuable)

- Academic programs, majors and minors - 4.53!
- Cost and financial aid information - 4.48!

These value results indicate students are most interested in information regarding academics and cost when they arrive at our Web sites!

Web sites can be indicative of institutional quality. An out-of-date departmental Web site could promote a negative opinion to the student of the strength of that program.

Elements of a Distinctive Departmental Web Site

Must have great content and it should be easy to find and then navigate. Not flashy!

- List all faculty members, titles, graduate schools
- A brief statement/testimonial from each
- List notable publications, awards, honors, grants, research
- Contact information
- A clear list of majors, minors, concentrations, tracks/honors classes
- Opportunities for students (research assistants/internships/competitions/events your department sponsors/opportunities to hang-out with you)
- Outcomes information of alums (grad school, degree, positions, a brief testimonial, if possible)
- Suggest change outcomes information periodically
- Good photos of departmental activities
- Blogs of student majors (you could blog as well!)
- Scholarship opportunities (deadlines/requirements)

Final Comments:

Your participation in solid, informative Web sites is crucial. We are competing for some good to great students and unless we provide more evidence of our academic programs and the opportunities therein, we could lose them. Informative Web sites are also important in attracting new faculty and potential donors.