

Web Communication

Questions regarding this information may be directed to Regan Houser in the Institutional Advancement Division; 724-357-3062 or regan.houser@iup.edu.

In response to widespread campus demand, a Web Review Committee was formed by the former interim vice president for Institutional Advancement at the request of the then interim president. The committee continues to be chaired by the vice provost for technology, and its membership represents all divisions of the university, including at least two technology committees. Over the course of a year, the committee reviewed options and weighed wants and needs.

The two attached documents were distributed to deans and senior cabinet members to facilitate their understanding of a portion of the committee's final recommendations, which, in synopsis, included the following:

1. Implement a content management system.
2. Implement a new, fresh design and infrastructure.
3. Create and empower a staff that would oversee this crucial medium and assist university entities in making the most of it.
4. Create a review committee, chaired by a member of senior cabinet, which would settle disputes and facilitate larger decisions that would require senior cabinet input.

To date, the university has established contracts with two vendors. Ciber will implement a content management system (a product called Ektron), and Stamats Communications will assist with the redesign and with development of certain specialty websites (among them one for parents, one for the president, and one for undergraduate admissions). Work on these projects has not yet begun.

The university has not committed to a dedicated staff and, subsequently, a review committee to manage the university's web presence. Further, a project leader or project team have not yet been established to oversee the implementation of the work Ciber and Stamats will perform.

Synopsis of Plans for CMS Implementation

*The Content Management System (CMS) will **separate content from design**, making it possible for web maintainers to update their material from any location. They don't need to be at an IUP machine. Because it will be web-based, users can log on from anywhere.

*Users will still need to be trained, but the **training will not be as extensive**. They will not have to learn a variety of tools--such as Frontpage and Photoshop.

*The system will provide us with a number of automated features. It will allow us to **date material**, so that when it expires, it will be removed. It will **automatically update links** when addresses change, so we don't experience broken links. To a certain extent, it will spell check for us, so that even the bad typists and spellers can improve a little when they add content. It will automatically **add coding that most maintainers don't know to add** when they create a new page--which will, among other things, improve the performance of our search engine.

*It will allow for certain **core information to be stored and maintained centrally** but displayed in multiple places. Example: official course descriptions will be stored and maintained centrally but could be displayed on many department sites. Department maintainers would not be burdened with updating those. Only the official maintainer of that information would do so, which would ensure accuracy.

*It will serve up a variety of templates. **The templates will be the product of a separate RFP for design services.** Essentially, this allows us to better manage visual image while at the same time providing a broader range of visual options. In other words, we still can control our brand yet not put the departments and colleges under what they believe to be tight design constraints.

*The right CMS will provide us with a set **workflow and approval process**, so that content that has not been approved by a higher authority will not be published. The scheme for workflow has not yet been established, but the Web Review Committee envisions that it could be hierarchical, depending on the content (**departmental items approved by departmental authority, etc.**).

*The system **may allow us to manage content not just for the web but also for printed publication and other media.** It may well change the way we create our catalogs, for example. Because it is likely that the CMS will produce pages in extensible markup language (XML), content will be coded in such a way that the content can be repurposed for the print medium without much fuss.

*Many universities are turning to the CMS as a solution. Unlike the corporate world, universities are democracies in which all departments like to have home rule. That's great, but it does eat away at the reputation of the university as a whole when sites are not well maintained. The system **will allow the departments to participate in a way they desire yet remove some of the stumbling blocks many of the academic areas say they face.**

*The **RFP will ask for suggestions on how the CMS operations should be staffed.** This remains a big issue, since our web heretofore has been staffed in a piecemeal, cobbled-together sort of way.

Synopsis of RFP for Design Services and Web Design Plan

*The web design plan calls for the establishment of **sectors** to the IUP website, AKA hubs.

1. **Directory/repository pages:** These are the core pages of the university's site and the core pages of individual units that conduct official university business (colleges, departments, divisions, offices). These pages will be powered by the content management system. Entities will be able to choose from a number of different professionally designed templates, so that IUP's graphic brand is displayed in consonance with a graphic standards plan and navigation and search tools are deployed in the best possible way. The fact that there will be a number of templates from which to choose will provide more flexibility than we currently experience with just one.
2. **Exhibit pages:** These pages may or may not be powered by the CMS. Exhibit pages must carry a minor mark/link that identifies them as affiliated with the university. Examples would include the Myth Center, Kipp Gallery, the Hispanic Journal, or NEETC, which do not conduct the core business of the university but are considered to have a strong affiliation with the university and, as such, may need to portray different personae. Because the constraints on exhibit sites are few, it is expected that the site owners may exercise a wide range of creative freedom with design and navigational techniques.

3. **Personal pages:** All employees are afforded personal web space. Current policies dictating personal pages will remain in tact. (In essence, no rules will dictate these pages other than existing university policy and local, state, and federal law.)

*The web design plan recommends **the establishment of a web services staff**, which would be charged with operation of the CMS, training maintainers on CMS use, ongoing design of new and different templates, and providing design services for exhibits sites as requested or needed. The RFP asks for recommendations on staffing such an operation.

***The RFP for web design seeks the services for a web design firm, which will be asked to provide the following services:**

1. Analyze and recommend changes to the entire website.
2. Design of a series of templates for directory/repository pages, providing departments with more than one way to display their core pages. Designs must be completely compliant with accessibility standards to satisfy the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act (508).
3. Write and design new pages that support recruitment efforts, parent communication, and promotion of the president.
4. Design a new set of upper structure pages that provide a more intuitive structure for the audience to find information.
5. Create and recommend placement of standard elements on all directory/repository pages.
6. Assist with implementation of designs.