The future of sdstate.edu

University Marketing & Communications

Overview
In August 2014, UMC began examining the current state of sdstate.edu. The process included evaluating the current content management system (CMS) by developing guiding principles and key criteria for a quality website, evaluating usability test results, and administering a CMS survey as well as a survey of peer institutions.

Five guiding principles
1. The web is externally hosted in the cloud, as supported by IT. The cloud provides greater flexibility and does not lock us into one solution.
2. Evaluate the current state of sdstate.edu and solutions as a communications tool rather than a form of technology.
3. Recognize that the web begins with the CMS. Design and content is secondary in the evaluation.
4. Empower the campus community to take ownership of the university’s overall digital presence and provide them the flexibility and necessary tools to be successful.
5. The web supports expectations outlined in IMPACT 2018.

Content management system survey results
In fall 2014, a survey was sent to approximately 200 web editors and 39 surveys were completed. Key results include:

- 59% of editors are faculty and NFE positions
- 58% perform updates as part of “other duties as assigned” in their job description
- 30% update site “as needed” and 29% update site every six months or annually
- Additional features requested: 17% online forms; 13% photo library; 11% video/multimedia embedding, rotating photo slides/carousel, alternate designs, and graphic elements
- User quote: “I quit updating a couple of years ago, but I am about to start again.”

The solution: Drupal.
Drupal is a content management platform used by approximately 30% of all .edu websites as well as whitehouse.gov, the NYSE website and weather.com. Drupal provides solutions for each of the four key criteria we identified during our evaluation:

1. Accessibility and language translation: There are federal standards all websites must meet to be compliant. The current sdstate.edu meets few, if any, of these standards. Drupal sites come with accessibility tools we can use immediately to meet these federal requirements.
2. Mobile optimization: sdstate.edu must meet the demand for increased mobile usage. 55% of Americans use their mobile device to browse the internet. Drupal has built-in tools to optimize our site for these different screen sizes rather than our current process of manual configuration.
3. Audience experience: SDSU must provide the best online experience no matter which of our audiences are viewing our website and no matter what device they are using. Drupal’s community of developers provides resources we can utilize to meet the expectations of our audiences.
4. Editing experience: Drupal comes standard with a customizable CMS so our users will have better tools and additional options to do more in less time. This new, user-friendly CMS will empower the campus community to take ownership of their digital presence.

Other .edu sites using Drupal: University of Minnesota, Kent State, Brown University, Iowa State University, Yale University, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Harvard University, Stanford University, Penn State, Arizona State University, Augustana University, Duke, Rutgers University and University of Michigan among dozens of other higher-education websites.