Web Solution for the Training and Support of Distance Instructors

Georgianna Laws, MEd • DLA 2016 Conference • June 20, 2016

The Great Wall of China

AUGUSTA
UNIVERSITY

"We are a four-year-old university with a 188-year history. We are Georgia's only public academic heath center, and one of only four comprehensive research universities in the state. We are research-intensive, and we are student centric. We are Augusta University. We are Jaguar Nation."

President Brooks A. Keel. PhD

AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY

Our mission is to provide leadership and excellence in teaching, discovery, clinical care, and service as a student-centered comprehensive research university and academic health center with a wide range of programs from learning assistance through postdoctoral studies.

Our vision is to be a top-tier university that is a destination of choice for education, health care, discovery, creativity, and innovation.

Values:

1. **Collegiality** – reflected in collaboration, partnership, sense of community, and teamwork.
2. **Compassion** – reflected in caring, empathy, and social responsibility.
3. **Excellence** – reflected in distinction, effectiveness, efficiency, enthusiasm, passion, and quality.
4. **Inclusivity** – reflected in diversity, equality, fairness, impartiality, and respect.
5. **Integrity** – reflected in accountability, ethical behavior, honesty, and reliability.
6. **Leadership** – reflected in courage, honor, professionalism, transparency, and vision.

Distance Learning

Mission: Support Augusta University's mission through excellence in distance education.

Vision: Provide opportunity and flexibility leading to student and faculty success and achievement.

http://www.augusta.edu/admissions/distanceeducation.php

Distance Learning

- **Certificates/Endorsements**: 3 medical, 5 in education
- **Bachelor's**: 5 medical
- **Master's**: 1 medical, 3 in education, 1 other (MPA)
- **Doctoral**: 1 medical (DNP)

Distance Learning Enrollment, Fall 2015

	Entirely	Fully	Partially	Hybrid	Total
CRN Count	63	126	1	30	220
Enrolled Hours	1,522	6,449	48	1,454	9,473
Enrolled Count	637	2,438	8	452	3,535

Problem

- To serve all my clients (3 groups totaling hundreds of faculty), I need to disseminate timely information
- University web services are centralized → my services are decentralized
  - The same is the case with many embedded instructional-support services such as instructional design, instructional technology, and instructional research/library
- To have a university site, I'd need a dedicated web master, which I do not have

Solution

- The solution for me, therefore was to host my own website.

- In turn, that brought financial access, technical, marketing, time, and ethical/legal challenges.

Instructional

DESIGN
Georgianna Laws

Financial Implications

- I started with the free WordPress.com but soon had to move to the paid WordPress.com for the ability to hand code and install plugins.

- I pay for my scheduling system, which works really well (I recently went to the next pay tier for the ability to have two parallel schedules).

Access Implications

- University services are offered behind a password wall; I wanted to address my faculty clients without barriers.

- Many centers for teaching and learning offer similar content freely to the general public.

- Although my content is specific to my clients at AU, it can also be freely accessed by the general public, in spirit of knowledge being a right, not a privilege.

Technical Implications

- I had to push the limits of my technical knowledge beyond HTML. Luckily, WordPress has a robust community and there are many tutorials and FAQs available online.

- The site is mobile friendly, and I strive to make all add-ons mobile friendly as well.

- I love the scheduling feature I use (2 calendars and text notifications).

- I continue to experience challenges in the technical realm for instance, I just transitioned from an image carousel for my portfolio to an actual portfolio website. I am not entirely pleased with my glossary and news tools.

Maketing Implications

- Since this is my own site, I had to:

  - do my own marketing
  - come up with my own digital image and logo
  - design the overall site layout, look, and feel, etc.

Time Implications

- Since I am in charge of my site, and I want to really do a good job disseminating needed information and starting collegial discussions → I have to constantly allocate time for the upkeep and expansion of my site.

Ethical/Legal Implications

- Moral and legal obligation have me *no* share private information under FERPA and HIPAA guidelines.

- I am also mindful of copyright law and ADA compliance.

Prerequisites

- The need
- Any internal approvals
- The will & time
- The technical skill
    - Writing and copyediting
    - Media sources (Wikimedia, Google Images labeled for reuse, Pixabay, etc.)
    - Basic graphic design (Adobe Suite, Canva, etc.)
        - Tip: A white background is more accommodating if you're not Photoshop savvy, like me
    - Basic understanding of copyright and ADA legislation
    - Basic HTML
    - Free website authoring tool (Google Sites, WordPress, Wix, etc.)
- The funds
    - Domain name (Go Daddy, etc.)
    - Server space (Blue Host, etc.)
    - Any desired upgrades or 3rd party add-ons

geolawsdesign.com

Dream Up
Your Site

Lessons Learned

1

Know your audience well so you can deliver what they need in a way that speaks to them.

2

Start with a vision for the site.

You want:
- logical navigation
- cohesive-looking/acting parts
- tie-ins with your institution's site.

3

Allow room for growth.

Chances are you'll add a few more pages after your initial site design and setup.

Keep in mind that growth in functionality often involves additional cost.

4

Try automating as many features as possible (e.g., contact form, a scheduling assistant, an intake form, etc.).

5

Try collecting meaningful, actionable statistics to help improve your services and website.

6

Build a site search capability.

It will probably be your site's most used functionality.

7

Test your site on multiple platforms, including mobile.

8

Make it easy for your users to:

- access the site
- print articles
- share out your content through email/social media.

9

Keep your site up to date.

Have the site builder bookmarked on your cell phone for on-the-fly updates when you are away from your computer.

10

"Vorba volant, scripta manent".

Your digital footprint will be out there for a while.

- Choose your content, tone, and media wisely.
- Avoid details that can date your articles (e.g., getting ready for Fall 2016).

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