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TO: Dr. Ken Blehm, College of Veterinary Medicine and
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RE: Usability Testing Report for College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences

DATE: February 22, 2008

Executive Summary

During fall 2007, usability testing was conducted on the College of Veterinary Medicine and Biological Sciences Website at Colorado State University. The purpose of the testing was to determine the Website's easy of use, investigate areas of concerns, and suggest improvements.

Methods

New students, current students (juniors and seniors) and faculty (N = 24) completed usability testing of CVMBS Websites. The participants included 9 New students, 6 current students, and 9 faculty members. Participants execute a series of tasks based on various scenarios. After completing the tasks, the participants complete a post-usability survey.

Results

While the CVMBS Website has extensive information and participants generally rated it positively, completing the tasks in the respective scenarios identified a wide range of challenges for redesigning the CVMBS and other CVMBS provided by Admission and the Center for Advising and Student Achievement.

Scenario Task Observation

Key findings include

- Students went to CSU A to Z, Admissions Program link and Academic Programs link from the CSU home page rather than going directly to the CVMBS Website. Their searches often took them to
 - Admissions
 - Center for Advising and Student Achievement

- For many tasks, all three groups took more than one minute to find the information in the scenarios.
- Failure rates—i.e., failure to find information ran as nearly 75% for some scenarios.
- Faculty and staff had the lowest completion rates.
- Students had problems finding
 - Needed coursework for degrees
 - Programs and degrees available
 - Transfer guidelines
- Faculty struggled with finding information on
 - Research information
 - Career (advising) information
 - Faculty resources

Open-ended Comments from Post-usability Survey

While all groups liked the Website layout, colors and the amount of information provided, their open-ended comments and concerns:

- Number of “clicks” needed to get to the information
- Poor labeling on links
- How and when to use the left navigation bar
- Overall organization of the Website, particularly within departments

Faculty and staff suggested clearer locations for

- Computer and teaching information
- Research resources
- Faculty/administrative policies

Other Survey Results—From Scale Questions

All groups agreed the Website’s basic design was good as reflected by

- Pleasing colors
- Pages loaded quickly,
- Words were legible
- Information was easy to read.

Major problem areas center on

- Navigation
- Ease of use (misleading links and finding information readily)

Students indicated that much of the CVMBS Website's information was important or useful to them

- Medical and vet degree information
- Jobs that graduates receive
- Knowing to what medical schools graduates were admitted
- Job openings
- Research opportunities

They easily found course requirements, student organization information and tutoring services.

While the faculty and staff agreed that information on the various academic programs was readily available and technology workshop information was easy to find, they reported problems finding

- Course guidelines and requirements
- Research information and support
- CVMBS policies

Conclusion

The CVMBS Website follows many good Website design guidelines. However, clearer navigation, better organization, and consistent and understandable links are needed to increase the usability of the Website.