Implement a bottom-up approach to department website development. For example, staff and faculty should be able to sign into their department pages and individuals update their profiles, when they have new publications, new grants, new collaborations, etc.

CURRENT CHALLENGE:

Fresno State does a fantastic job at representing itself online at the university level through its website and social media such as Facebook and Twitter. These pages are lively with regular updates of what occurs on campus. In essence, it gives a sense of pride, passion, and community. However, a challenge Fresno State needs to address is how it can do a better job at representing itself online at the department level.

The department websites typically feel like a MySpace due their lack of activity and thus do not encourage engagement or excitement for Fresno State. I would not be surprised if these department websites deter prospective students, staff, and faculty from considering Fresno State compared with other university campuses. A strategic priority of Fresno State is to attract, develop, and retain talented, diverse faculty and staff. To attract talented, diverse faculty and staff, first impressions are critical and department websites struggle in this regard.

As an example, I am a new faculty hire since August 2015 and there is still no acknowledgement of my existence on my department's website. It is now February 2016, which in online and social media terms is an eternity. The whole purpose of websites and social media is to keep us up-to-date. Even before I took my position at Fresno State, I was very disappointed when searching the department website, as it provided me very little information on what department faculty were currently investigating as part of their research. I felt like I was wasting my time even looking at the website as I had no idea when it was last updated.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

Typical models to department websites take a top-down approach, where one member of staff or faculty updates the department website based on the profiles they receive from other staff and faculty. This approach is outdated as it requires too much management, takes too long, and the information is nearly out of date by the time it is posted.

My solution is to have a bottom-up approach to department website development. Staff and faculty should be able to sign into their department pages and individually update their profiles when they have new publications, new grants, new collaborations, etc. Such pages could easily be included as an expectation within probationary plans. As such, department pages would become much more dynamic and engaging. A web-developer would be needed to develop department websites in such a way.

BENEFITS TO FRESNO STATE:

With dynamic department websites, prospective students, staff, and faculty would get a glimpse of the incredible, active, and bold community at Fresno State. Such pages would also support greater opportunities for collaboration as faculty from other universities may not have realized Fresno State faculty were investigating similar topics. Ultimately, such a development would attract more staff and faculty to Fresno State while also fostering a greater community within Fresno State.

Currently, department websites look static and paint a poor picture of what Fresno State is really like. We can and should do better at representing the fantastic community we have across all levels of the campus. I believe our dynamic work environment needs to be reflected through our department websites.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: