Duke Web redesign master plan

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White Whale Web Services
September 9, 2005

Messaging

What Duke Means

> "This is the work of a great university: the struggle to expand the domain of knowledge; the struggle to share that knowledge through education; and the struggle to put that knowledge to profound human use."
>
> *President Brodhead, from the Inaugural Address*

If an institution as complex and organizationally diverse as the modern research university can be said to have a single meaning, the meaning of Duke University is rooted in *productive conflict between opposing concepts*. If academia wasn't already awash in faux Marxism, we'd call these opposites "dialectics."

In our interviews with Duke's leaders, we have frequently heard references to Duke's "entrepreneurial" or "restless" spirit. It's clear that one of the key values in the Duke community is dissatisfaction with easy answers and cookie-cutter solutions: rather than take the easy way out, Duke has consistently shown a willingness to tackle thorny problems in a search for more lasting, meaningful solutions.

The idea that progress can be achieved from the tension between conflicting or contrasting elements will be expressed throughout this document and in everything we produce for Duke.

The following are some key oppositions that lend meaning to Duke's core message:

The recent controversy regarding the Palestinian Solidarity Movement is an ideal example: faced with a very difficult campus conflict, other universities might have sought to downplay the differences and avoid controversy; Duke's leadership walked right into the middle of the conflict, and used the controversy to encourage a campus-wide debate about free speech and Middle East policy that continues today. Clearly Duke doesn't run from a challenge (an idea made more interesting in view of Duke's parallel tradition of athletic excellence).

1.   Tradition vs. innovation

As President Brodhead has said, "Duke is a school that has been continually willing to remake itself in sometimes fairly drastic ways to the end of becoming better." This spirit of innovation is a crucial part of what it means to be Duke.

At the same time, Duke carries the burden of history in a way many modern research institutions don't. When Duke's Web site was redesigned a few years ago, most users were pleased with the change. Still, a call arose to restore more classic elements such as the antique (actually Germanic) typeface, the university's crest, and photos of Duke's Gothic architecture and historic buildings. Our designs, Web branding and messaging strategies must seek to portray Duke as the modern, dynamic institution that it is, but we must find ways to bring along the historicity that is undeniably one of Duke's many assets.

2.   Academics vs. athletics

Duke can't hide from the overwhelming success of its men's basketball team. Nor should it: Duke's tradition of athletic excellence is part of an emphasis on the whole person that sets Duke apart from its primary competitors. Duke has worked to refute any impression of the school

as a basketball factory, and we won't interfere with that process; but neither will we pretend to ignore that much of the Duke.edu audience is interested in athletics.

3. Consistency vs. diversity

From an administrative perspective, it would be desirable for an entire university to speak with a single voice. Then messaging and visual expressions could be coordinated and carefully controlled, presenting a single, coherent institutional vision to the world. But although the modern university is a corporation, it can't behave like one. For all great universities— especially those, like Duke, whose character is in flux— are places of wild diversity.

We will create standards and tools that we hope will bring some much-needed consistency to Duke's visual and verbal expressions. But we will keep in mind that it is this diversity— which we'd rather call "messiness"— that makes universities such enjoyable places to live, learn and work.

4. Interdisciplinarity vs. depth of study

The emphasis on cross-disciplinary approaches that was one of President Keohane's primary achievements will only become more pronounced in the Brodhead era: the new president has repeatedly made clear that interdisciplinarity is one of Duke's greatest strengths.

Nonetheless, there is a parallel theme of excellence, of careful devotion to a field of study, that is an inseparable part of the meaning of any university of Duke's caliber. In our designs and messages we will heed the call of Duke's leadership to focus on interdisciplinary efforts, but we won't forget that persistent study of a single discipline has resulted in some of Duke's greatest discoveries.

Messaging strategies

"Messaging" is an overused term for all communications, written and verbal, produced on behalf of an institution. How can a "messaging strategy" apply to such a diverse and scattered set of utterances? Above all, any strategy we offer ought to be kept simple, and allow room for differing interpretations around the Duke community.

Our messaging strategies will develop hand in hand with our designs. The first guideline we offer is this: Duke's primary messaging should be expressed using verbs in the *progressive tense*.

In reading President Brodhead's speeches and comments online, we have noticed that he is given to using progressive verbs: this gives his comments about Duke a strong sense of dynamism. Duke is doing, working, building. Progressive verbs convey one of the most strongly held visions of Duke: that it is constantly evolving, changing, retooling to meet the next challenge.

Who or what is Duke? Different people have given us different answers:

- *venerable*
- *respected*
- *youthful*
- *fun*
- *innovative*
- *entrepreneurial*
- *passionate*
- *decentralized*

We want to see messages on the Duke.edu site that use the progressive tense to exploit double meanings and alternate readings, while highlighting institutional priorities and featuring Duke research:

Duke is building a new home for the arts.
Duke is growing plants that can water themselves.
Duke is helping farmers raise healthier cattle.
Duke is exploring ways to live without fossil fuels.

This same emphasis on alternate readings and dynamism will come up elsewhere. For example, as part of Duke Today's presentation, we'd like to ask: What is Duke Today?

Addressing President Brodhead's goals

Duke's meaning must be distinguished from its institutional priorities. What we all identify as Duke's essential character should inform and animate all of Duke's public expressions. The latter should be handled in practical ways that may shift and change as institutional goals change.

President Brodhead has outlined anywhere from four to six institutional priorities that are likely to be strongly promoted by the administration in coming years: these include global health, the arts, student engagement, research, financial aid, and interdisciplinarity. In our designs and strategies, we will keep our eyes open for intelligent ways to highlight these areas. But just as the president remarked in his Inaugural Address that "there's no knowing what apparently arcane study will prove to be of burning relevance some future day," we remain open to the possibility that these areas might someday change, and will strive to create a container that is timeless in nature with the flexibility to support multiple messages.

Duke.edu and Duke Today will address the president's goals in a variety of ways: from subtle hierarchies in information placement, to new ways of focusing Duke's news gathering efforts, to inserting "Buy Tickets Now" buttons next to arts events. It's important for us all to understand that expressing Duke's core message— literally, what it means to be Duke— is the main goal of our project. We anticipate finding new and interesting ways to address institutional priorities as we go forward.

President Brodhead has introduced his priorities for Duke in a series of speeches and writings, but they have not yet been formally stated. The forthcoming Strategic Plan is expected to make official some of these institutional goals, including the following:

- *An increased emphasis on the arts at Duke; more participation and attendance at arts events*

- *Promoting communitiy awareness of Duke's involvement in Durham and the surrounding areas*

- *Renewed efforts to promote global health*

- *Cross-disciplinary collaboration*

- *Student engagement*

- *Increasing the endowment to offer financial aid to a wider range of students*

Visual branding standards

Overview

Duke is one of America's very best universities, known for its tradition and history. It is also a progressive institution teeming with youthful energy, innovative methods, and entrepreneurial spirit. The contrast between tradition and innovation is what lends Duke its unique character, and is the core of what this visual treatment needs to capture. To that end, we are focusing on logo, color and photo treatments that all convey that essence— the *juxtaposition of disparate elements*— but work together harmoniously.

Logos (see following page)

In the absence of strong Duke brand standards over a decade or more, many organizations within the Duke umbrella have undertaken branding campaigns of their own (sometimes very involved, and often quite successful). Duke can't swoop in from above and order sweeping change, after a long period of relative silence; if Duke's recommendations are too strict, they simply won't be adopted by the campus community.

For this reason, we are working on a logo treatment that's more a specific type style than a traditional logo. To reflect the contrast that makes Duke what it is, we have selected two fonts:

- **Garamond 3**, an old style typeface based on the sixteenth century moveable type work of Claude Garamond;

- **Interstate**, a sans serif face created in the early 90s based on US government DOT standards for highway signs.

Used together the two fonts complement one another, and generate recognizable letterforms that will serve as the primary element of the Duke logo mark.

In all of our work we are using Garamond exclusively in Title Case, with Interstate in ALL CAPS. Interstate is used in both its regular and condensed faces, and at varying weights; Garamond is used only in its regular weight, but also in its italic form for non-critical words. Both fonts must *always* be used together in Duke logotypes, even if just to a minor degree, to maintain that consistency and recognition.

Garamond 3

Regular
Italic

Interstate

## REGULAR

W I D E   T R A C K I N G

BOLD

BOLD CONDENSED

Duke UNIVERSITY

Duke
UNIVERSITY

Duke
SCHOOL OF
Arts & Design
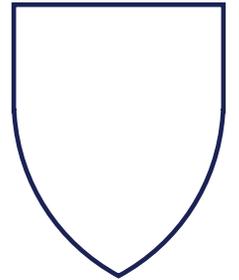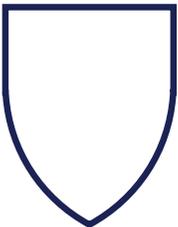
Duke
SCHOOL OF
Arts & Design

DUKE School *of* Design

the Other
BUILDING *at* DUKE

Duke MUSIC STUDIES

DUKE UNIVERSITY
Department of Studies

Duke University
SCIENCE

DUKE Science

DUKE
University

DUKE UNIVERSITY Department of Studies

Any discussion of color relating to Duke must begin and end with blue, and so did our process in creating a color palette for this style guide.

We first selected a blue that would represent Duke blue well on-screen in a cross platform world (hex value: #001A57). Then we chose two lighter tints which would give some alternate blues and matched those with grays. Add in black and white and you have the beginning of a proper palette. We then identified complementary and analogous colors for those, and their partners in a triadic harmony. The end result is a palette of 22 colors (including black and white) that all work well with Duke blue.

Once again we are looking for contrast in the use of these colors. To that end, and for obvious reasons, Duke blue and white must always be present in designs generated from this style. All other colors are essentially optional, but proper contrast must be reached. Of the four sub-palettes, only the triadic harmonies has enough contrast to pull that off alone. If a design were to hinge around a more monochromatic palette, then it should incorporate vibrant colors using photography, or bring in one of the brighter contrasting colors from the triadic palette in some minor way.
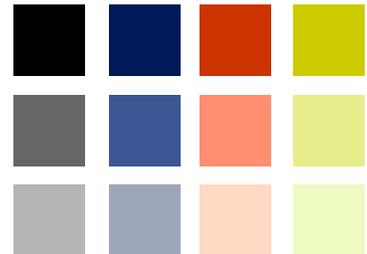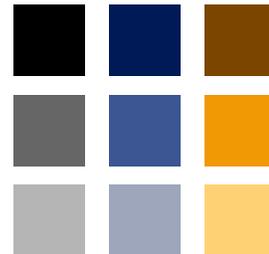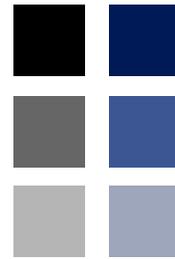
Color palettes

Monochromatic

Dignified, simple, and stoic. Used alone, this palette would be an excellent backdrop for vibrant photos, accentuating the history and tradition of Duke. This palette serves as the foundation for all others.

#000000
#666666
#B5B5B5
#001A57
#3C5693
#9EA6BB
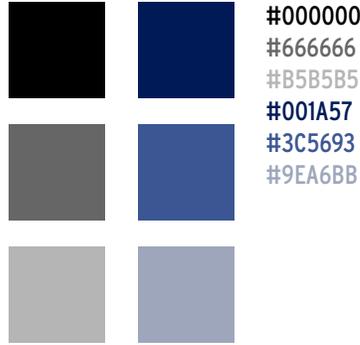
Complementary Colors

The complementary palette is a nice way to broaden range of a design while keeping closest to the historic blue and white of Duke. None of these colors are too wild, but they do represent a full trip around the color wheel, and thus a complete range. It is a passive, but full palette.

#000000   #7B4500
#666666   #F09905
#B5B5B5   #FFD175
#001A57   #3C5693
#9EA6BB

Triadic Harmonies

The triadic palette most symbolizes the more energetic and vibrant elements of Duke. It represents colors from around the color wheel, bringing in connotations of diversity and complexity. The bold red and vibrant green sit equidistant from Duke blue on the wheel, implying balance while adding a youthful and assertive emotional contrast.

#000000   #CC3300
#666666   #FF8F70
#B5B5B5   #FFD9C2
#001A57   #CCCC00
#3C5693   #E6ED8A
#9EA6BB   #EDFAC2
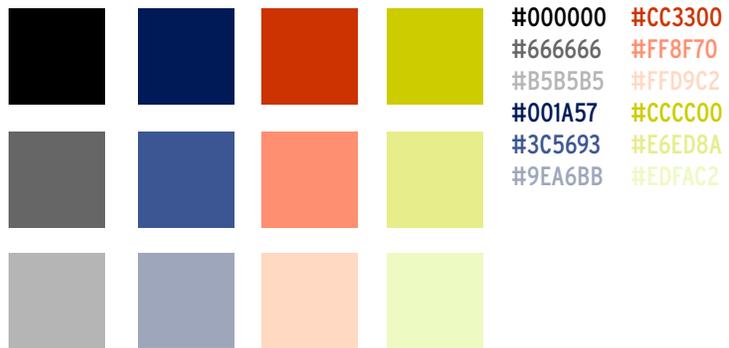
Analogous Colors

The emotional tone sent by this palette is one of safety and security. Analogous colors fall next to one another on the color wheel, limiting range but increasing the feeling of security and stability. This is a contemplative group of colors, showing the stable and thoughtful elements of Duke.

#000000   #4D005E
#666666   #945C94
#B5B5B5   #D6ABFF
#001A57   #004D4D
#3C5693   #57BDBD
#9EA6BB   #CFEDED

Photography

Our intuition— backed up by Duke staff that we have spoken with— is that with the possible exception of Stanford, no American university offers Duke's combination of academic renown, athletic achievement, and natural beauty. We will use photography creatively to communicate Duke's unique nature.

Photos in any design should have a clearly defined purpose, otherwise they are simply wasting space. A simple beauty shot of a historic Duke building might serve to "set the scene" in some way, but realistically lends no value to a university of Duke's stature. So we offer a simple rule of thumb for photography in designs generated from this guide: **no beauty shots.**

We will seek in our designs to use photography to convey the conflict of opposites that makes Duke interesting. With this in mind, we believe all photography shot for this project should, in some way, combine two disparate elements or techniques.

This juxtaposition can be achieved either in the realm of photo content (one element vs. another) or in technique (a conventional subject shot unconventionally, or vice versa).

The Duke Chapel is a perfect example. It is easy to take a great shot of the chapel, because it is a beautiful building. But by itself it only conveys the ideas of tradition and history, leaving out the youthful energy and passion of the university. If you were to instead take a photo of students studying, playing Frisbee, or dressed up for a trip to Cameron in front of the venerable chapel, you achieve that goal of contrast. By mixing a quirky youthful foreground with the history of the chapel you get a better picture of Duke.

A similar effect can be achieved through technique. By taking a photo of the chapel with a wide angle lens, you would show the chapel in a modern, innovative light. So where the subject contains no contrast, the style brings it in.

Duke has generated some interesting ideas for photo content— students tracking lemurs with a GPS device, working an fMRI machine, using the Sound Sense room in the CIEMAS building, etc. These shots might classify as 'conventional' in our terminology, and might be best shot in a conventional way. (In fact, it's possible that Duke photography has already taken some shots of that sort.)

That would theoretically break our rule of juxtaposition: however, the fact remains that a good shot is a good shot, and there is a place for photos of that sort. Such shots might not be used on the home page, but could be used elsewhere in any number of ways.

Unconventional techniques (to be used when shooting conventional subjects):

Limited plane of focus
Focus on one subject, blur the rest. For example, we might focus on a single student in a larger group.

Macro lens
Close up on smaller object or detail, with the rest of the world displayed behind.

Slow shutter
A slow shutter speed will give the sense of highly dynamic motion, with motion blurs and light effects.

Various zoom lenses, *shots from unconventional vantage points; distortion of scope resulting from unusual viewpoints*

Foreground/background interplay
Focus on a foreground object with the photo's more conventional subject in the background

Accidental shots
Shots taken in burst mode (several shots in rapid succession) without looking at the viewfinder, or even at the subject of the photo, often result in occasional gems that couldn't have been shot intentionally.

Oversaturation/color effects
Postprocessing of photos to introduce unusual color effects, including oversaturation, desaturation, or monotone/duotone.

Lens flare
We may let the sun hit the camera lens, or position a subject in front of the sun.

Information architecture: Duke.edu

Audience

Duke's goal is to refit Duke.edu as Duke's main vehicle for external communications, while creating Duke Today for Duke's internal audience. This is a good idea, and it will work; however, we can't entirely ignore Duke's internal audience, as www.duke.edu will always be the address that everyone remembers (no matter how simple we make it to get to Duke Today).

As we go forward in the design and planning process for these sites, we certainly consider Duke.edu's primary audience to be external. However, our initial position still holds: that the home page of a major American university has to support an audience of enormous diversity, each member of which feels a personal stake in it. Our site must be, if not all things to all people, appealing to many audiences on many levels.

Overview

Duke has made an interesting decision in its early determination of the Duke.edu site structure. The current Duke home page uses dropdown menus to provide access to a variety of subpages: typically the primary nav item (e.g. Athletics) links to a traditional subpage format in the style of the main page, while an item from the dropdown menu (Athletics > Physical Education) links directly to a separate site.

In the new content map, the burden of linking to other Duke sites is shifted from the home page to the subpages, which themselves consist primarily of a compilation of all relevant links. This removes the architectural (and political) challenge of determining which six or seven links to include in a home page dropdown, and it lets the second tier be fully comprehensive.

In the purest expression of this idea, no Duke site (with the exception of Duke's schools) would be reachable in one click from the home page, yet every Duke office or department of import would be reachable in two clicks. This strikes us as an ingenious compromise, and we look forward to demonstrating a few different approaches to the particular relationship between Duke.edu and its subpages.

Home page elements

We're looking at a few very different ways of handling the Duke home page itself: our early design concepts range from content-rich to minimalist. So whereas the content of Duke Today can be fairly accurately mapped (see below), the presentation of content on the home page will differ substantially across our design presentation.

We are taking the following elements into consideration for display on the home page:

*Duke.edu
Site plan / page list*

Home Page
Duke Today

Primary navigation pages:

  About Duke
  Admissions & Financial Aid
  Academics
  Medical
  Research
  International
  Athletics
  Arts
  Duke & Durham

Audience-oriented pages:

  Students
  Faculty
  Staff & Employment
  Alumni

Other pages:

  Visiting Duke
  Computing
  Contact Us
  About This Site

Links to existing sites:

  Calendar
  Maps
  News
  Libraries

Common elements

1.   **Title/logo treatment**

2.   **Navigation**

Primary page elements

3.   **Featured image and/or feature story**

It's likely that our proposed home page designs will feature a relatively large image. In some cases, the image treatment may include some editorial content in line with messaging standards; or it may simply serve to set the scene, and to create a sense of institutional dynamism.

In any case, we promise to take Duke's content-generating capacity into consideration; we will not propose feature story treatments that would require significant change to News and Communications' current workflow procedures.

4.   **News headlines**

The new Duke.edu will not be a news center: nonetheless, there is certainly a place for news on the Duke home page. Although our designs will differ in the number and presentation of news items, we generally favor a smaller number of carefully moderated headlines, linked to stories that offer significant payoffs (such as compelling images, multimedia, or particularly timely content relevant to current US and world events). As we have discussed, we may also include news content from Duke Today as an enticement to draw our internal audience there.

Secondary elements

5.   **Links to schools, publications and resources**

Many internal users of the Duke site have requested easier access to frequently accessed pages. As part of Duke's strategy, we are going to try to move the internal audience over to Duke Today for their primary interactions with the Duke community, and a "links" area will play a much larger role in Duke Today.

However, in some of our designs you will see an attempt to address these users as well, by presenting a carefully governed set of links that may include publications, schools and resources. Any page that includes such links will come with strategies to keep the "links" box from becoming a repository for links added at the request of university administrators. One way we will seek to address this issue is through the careful tracking of links clicked by users throughout the secondary pages of the site; we'll talk more about this as part of our discussion of success metrics below.

6.   **Search box**

In our designs the search box is likely to function much as it currently does on the Duke.edu site, although we might suggest a few enhancements depending on the capabilities of Duke's search appliance.

*From the **Black Binder** of Duke's discovery research:*

The most frequently clicked links on Duke.edu are athletics-related.

40% of graduate students visit Duke.edu every day, yet graduate students tend to feel that they are missing out on important information.

There isn't enough communication between units on campus: for example, Fuqua students aren't often exposed to information about the Nicholas School.

Duke is both the most respected school in North Carolina and the most polarizing.

Information architecture: Duke Today

Audience

We are very clear about our audience for Duke Today: the employees of Duke University. This includes the faculty and staff of all of Duke's many incarnations, academic and medical.

Duke students have their own information portal: DukePass, a valuable resource that is constantly being improved and refined by an active staff. There's no point in trying to appeal to undergraduate students with Duke Today: it would likely be viewed as a power grab by the DukePass folks, and trying to provide student-directed content would make it harder to deliver relevant content to staff and faculty. However, we believe that undergraduate students will nonetheless visit the site from time to time: when they do they'll get a glimpse of a busy place, a dynamic and highly operational facility. We think Duke Today can enhance awareness among undergrads of Duke's mission and people, even if they aren't our target audience at all.

Graduate students are a different story. The conclusion reached in Duke's discovery phase--- that "there is a sense among graduate students that they are missing out on important information"--- has come through in our personal contacts with Duke grad students as well. Some of this may be the Graduate School's failure to effectively communicate, but it is also a side effect of grad students' particular position: they occupy a role somewhere between students and faculty. Many of them are in fact employees, with all the attendant concerns; many are themselves teachers; some are on the verge of becoming faculty at other universities. Duke Today can appeal to graduate students in the same way it will appeal to faculty, making them feel more a part of the university community in the process: to this end, for example, we hope to feature the work of graduate students alongside that of faculty in the presentation of Duke research news.

Overview

The relationship between Duke.edu and Duke Today will be addressed in different ways in different designs. In some designs they will be (almost literally) two sides of the same coin, and both directly accessible from the same Duke.edu address; in another the two may be completely separate entities. We look forward to illustrating the possible relationships between the two.

The basic elements of Duke Today's interface are the following: logo, site title and navigation; news; events; 'news you can use'; alerts; feedback; search; and weather. We'll discuss each of these in turn, with an emphasis on the primary challenges and goals of each section. Then we'll use some simple diagrams to illustrate how Duke Today's content might be organized.

Some sample Duke Today users:

DUMC physician
Primary interest: Duke news
Top link: Sports scores

Foodservice employee
Primary interest: HR/benefits
Top link: Parking/transportation

Classics grad student
Primary interest: Lectures and events on campus
Top link: Blackboard

Biology professsor
Primary interest: Research news in other disciplines
Top links: Policies, STORM

Department administrator
Primary interest: Virus alerts, faculty deadlines, events
Top link: Faculty handbook
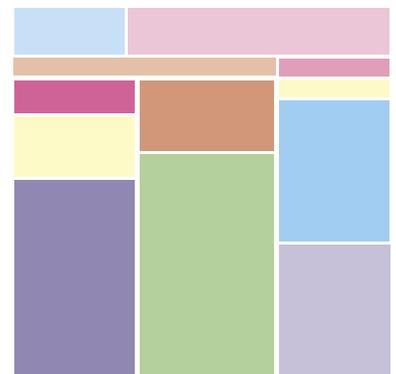
Common elements

1. **Title/logo treatment**

Clearly Duke Today and Duke.edu will be visually aligned, with the distinction between the two a matter of degree that will be addressed in our designs. The "Duke Today" title may be treated differently from the main Duke logo (an approach similar to that of Northwestern and Wake Forest's news sites) or Duke Today may be the title of the entire site.

Logo

2. **Navigation**

Duke Today may or may not incorporate all of the Duke.edu navigation, but it's likely that the primary Duke.edu navigation (Academics, Research, etc.) will be included.
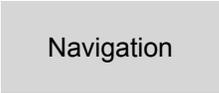
Navigation

"Fresh daily" elements

Not every piece of information in Duke Today will be updated daily. For this reason, we've found it helpful to distinguish daily updated content from "evergreen" content that won't be expected to change daily. In our designs we may separate this fresh daily content from the rest of the site, in effect creating a "Duke Today" within Duke Today.

3. **News**

In our current vision of Duke Today, a set of items will rotate in the primary news area. We don't think it makes sense to feature one item for a day and then have it disappear into an archive; if that happens, Duke Today users who don't visit the site every day will miss it. What we'd do instead is let the Duke Today editor maintain a list of several "top stories," each including a feature image and appropriate headline, and have Duke Today feature one at a time with the others available for viewing as well. (The Web site for the LA Weekly--- laweekly.com--- exemplifies one of many ways this might work, albeit in Flash.) The choice of which article to feature might be made daily, or at random: this all depends on Duke's needs and capacities. It will always be possible for the editor to rush a top story to front and center, if something good happens that Duke wants to let the community know about right away.

Top story
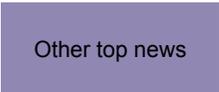
Other top news
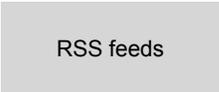
RSS feeds

 Using a simple PHP application that we will create (already working in a beta version), the editor of Duke Today will view all available news feeds and select particular articles for display above the fold in what we call the "primary news area." He will have the ability to add images and perform a fairly robust set of modifications to those news items he selects.

Following the style of the New York Times site, news will be treated in two ways: a moderated selection of news items above the fold, and a more straightforward listing of RSS-driven news items lower on the page that users can scroll down to read. The RSS feeds displayed below the fold can be interspersed with occasional graphics, links to multimedia features, or other content "ads" as needed.

4.   **Events**

Duke Today will include functionality to display events happening today on the Duke campus, as well as Duke-related events in Durham and the surrounding area.

A graphic calendar image should be part of the Duke Today site design, with today's date highlighted; by default, users should be presented with a list of events of general interest, happening today (or, perhaps, today and tomorrow). The user should be able to select categories of event from a pull-down menu, which should make the list of events refresh (without reloading the page) to show the selected set of events.

The events that display by default should be moderated. We urge an emphasis on participatory, non-exclusive, general interest events (arts events and public lectures), as well as internal dates and deadlines of interest to staff.

Events happening later in the week can also be displayed; Duke has suggested treating one or two upcoming events as "featured," with an image and more prominent type treatment. That's a fine idea; in general, though, we believe that Duke Today's main job should be to notify users about events that day, with prominent links to "Show All Events" that open the newly refurbished Calendar site.

Calendar graphic

Events

5.   **News You Can Use**

This section of Duke Today constitutes a carefully moderated combination of RSS feeds from campus sources and articles generated by the editor (who will likely have his own RSS feed to generate content himself). Again, we will explore ideas for limited customization, though editorial oversight is important here.

The editor will have an administrative interface to view all available data from a fixed set of News You Can Use content providers. He will select articles for display above the fold much in the same way he does with general news, though these articles may display differently; he can also generate articles himself for display on Duke Today.

We will work to automate as much of the News You Can Use-gathering process as possible. However, in this case, some old-fashioned networking will likely be required, as the editor will have to track down useful information from various sources, some of which may not be fully automated.

For this reason, we think it's important for the editor to work with a carefully specified hierarchy of content providers: he should only have to be in contact with four or five key communicators to know he's got the most current information. (These key figures will have their own go-to people for specific information.)

News You
Can Use

6.   **Alerts**

We are defining "alerts" here as "information about temporary conditions that is important enough to be made immediately available to Duke Today users." This includes crisis communications (virus alerts, traffic warnings, power outages, short-term construction notices, etc.), but might also include non-critical information such as textbook deadlines, Duke Stores sales and employee discounts, and new bus routes.

This new category is differentiated from "News You Can Use" in a few important ways.   For example, alerts are not dated: rather, they are added to the site as needed and removed when no longer needed. If there are no active alerts, the space reserved for them will be used for other content.

Alerts are often of crucial importance to the community, especially in the case of crisis communications. It's also the case that Facilities Management, the department that would be responsible for some of the most important alerts, is one the least technologically advanced administrative departments, relying on webmasters and hard coded Web pages to get the word out about construction updates. (The inefficiency of FMD's "Alert Notices" is a major complaint around campus.)

For this reason, we propose to create a very simple data-driven application for the single purpose of posting campus alerts. Using an address like www.duke.edu/alerts, a set group of authenticated users could log in, view all active alerts, and post new ones as needed. These alerts could then be approved by the Duke Today editor and displayed on the site (and could in fact be pushed out to the community in any number of ways).

We understand that the technology to handle this functionality is already in place via the CMS tools that Duke is adopting. We also know that communicators with more advanced tools (such as Leonora in the Duke Police office) are already doing some of this. We're simply talking about giving non-tech-savvy administrators a simple and fool-proof way to get important information out without worrying about the longer learning curve of a full-featured CMS.

Alerts

7.   **Links**

The list of links that appears on Duke Today should be completely customizable. We will begin with an agreed-upon set of general interest links, with a prominent link to "Customize This List" or "Add/Modify Links"; clicking that link will let a user select from a long list of links to add to her Duke Today page. (There may be preset combinations of links for faculty, staff, students, medical staff, and other relevant groups.) More on customization follows.

Links

8.   **Feedback**

Duke Today should encourage its users to express their opinions. We want to devote a substantial portion of site real estate to feedback-related content; this will give the impression (hopefully correct) that Duke is genuinely interested in the ideas of its faculty and staff.

Feedback

This can take a number of forms. Certainly there will be surveys and polls, whose form and content can be set by ONC staff; there will also be an open suggestion box, and a tool to measure user satisfaction with Duke Today itself. We will encourage users to submit events and notices to Duke Today (these may be routed into the Duke calendar or other databases, but could be described to the user as participation in creating Duke Today).

Secondary elements

9.   **Search**

The search box will likely be in the same position as the Duke.edu search box, but will also allow the option of searching Duke Today. A Duke Today search would have to include the Web sites of its content providers, so that past or archived stories would still be found in a search.
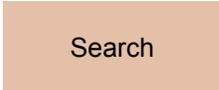
More important than the ability to search Duke Today, we think, is that the search box contain the same search options as the main site search (the Duke web and phone listings). This will increase the likelihood of adoption by the Duke Today user base, as that's just another useful feature at their fingertips. For this reason, the search box will have a prominent place in the design.

10.   **Weather**

Duke Today will include a weather feature. Eventually we'd like to illustrate the current weather with a campus photograph taken in similar conditions (and at the current time of day); we've done similar things before with fascinating results. But it would take some time to build an appropriate reserve of photos, so for now we'll plan on a simple, elegant illustration of today's weather.

Search

Weather

Disclaimer:

We don't want the information design phase of this project to impose limits on our graphic design. The wireframes that follow are intended to give Duke an idea of how we might address the content organization issues that are part of Duke Today. However, we reserve the right to come up with new solutions to these challenges, which we hope we have clearly defined.

There's a lot that we can do on the Web that can't be illustrated on paper: in particular we're thinking of the opportunities afforded by new technologies (including the much-discussed AJAX) for presenting content multidimensionally. So these schematics shouldn't be viewed as "final," though they're a good start.

Finally, the following layouts take for granted a fixed placement of Duke logo and primary navigation (horizontal and top-aligned) that is by no means assured.

Sample 3-column Duke Today layout

Duke logo

Navigation

Search (Duke Today, Duke Web, Phone listings)

Alerts (when needed)

Daily updated content

Weather

Title (Duke Today) and date

Interactive calendar graphic

Top Story

News You Can Use

Other top news

Events

Feature

Links (with option to customize list)

Feedback
(polls, suggestion box, etc.)

RSS feeds, with interspersed featured stories and multimedia items

the "fold" (average bottom of browser window; of course, window sizes vary widely)

Sample 4-column Duke Today layout

Logo

Navigation

Title (Duke Today) and date

Search (Duke Today, Duke Web, Phone listings)

Daily updated content

Weather

Alerts (when needed)

Interactive calendar graphic

Feature

News You Can Use

Top Story

Events

Feedback (polls, suggestion box, etc.)

Other top news

Links (with option to customize list)

RSS feeds, with interspersed featured stories and multimedia items

Customization

Duke Today has the best chance of success if it is viewed by the community not as a one-way vehicle of communications from the Allen Building, but rather as a *useful tool*. For this reason, we are interested in exploring smart ways for users to customize the information they receive.

Because part of Duke Today's mission is to promote the right messages at the right time, it doesn't make sense to make the news component completely customizable; however, there are certainly several ways we can let a user customize her experience--- creating a sort of "My Duke Today." One example is the list of links mentioned above; if a user can get to her most frequently used link with a single click, and get the weather and relevant Duke news to boot, it increases her likelihood of adoption considerably. We might also let users select which news feeds are displayed, or select areas of interest which might influence the presentation of items across categories.

We've all agreed that user authentication isn't appropriate for Duke Today at this stage; thus we'd likely use a cookie to store link preferences. Some Web portals, such as Google's customized Start page, use a sort of "light authentication," collecting an email address and password but setting a cookie as well. In this way a user almost never has to enter a password, but can if needed (when logging on from another computer, for example).

Content providers

What follows is our initial plan for the flow of News You Can Use in Duke Today. We envision Duke Today's editor, Geoffrey Mock, making final decisions about content and placement for Duke Today, supported by an Internal Communications Coordinator who manages the flow of information from a small circle of content providers.

These communications and tech professionals will work with their own staff (and with the offices within their umbrella) to compile news of interest to Duke Today users, entered using RSS (or similar tools) for placement on Duke Today.

For Duke Today to work, we need to coordinate a lot of information from different sources; for this reason, a properly maintained contact hierarchy is crucial. Our map of projected content provision is shown on the following page.

Duke Today: Content provision plan

Geoffrey Mock
Editor

• Makes final selections on Duke Today content
• Generates new content as needed
• Coordinates goals/messaging with Allen Building as needed

Supported by Internal Communications Coordinator.

News sources outside Duke Today contact tree that should be available to editorial staff:

Inside DUMC
Duke Med Center News Office
DukePass

Internal Communications Coordinator
(personnel TBD)

• Compiles data from various sources and formats
• Generates new content as needed
• Corresponds daily with chief content managers (below)
• Uses all avaliable resources to maintain a broad knowledge of "what's going on at Duke" on any given day

Managers of internal communications for Duke Today areas of interest (supported by their own communications staff as needed):

Paul Grantham *HR*	**George Oberlander** *Campus/Aux. Services*	**Leonora Minai** *Duke Police*	**David Menzies** *OIT*	**Mike Woodard** *Financial*
• Benefits • Payroll • Employee human interest features	• Facilities Mgmt. • Parking • Transportation • Duke Stores • Event Management • Dining Services • DukeCard	• Campus safety • Community policing issues	• Virus warnings • Software releases • Tech tips	• Accounting • Resources for office administrators

Overview

The goal of the templates piece is to allow the greater Duke Web community to participate in Duke's new Web branding as easily as possible. We will produce as many alternative templates as needed to correspond to the varying needs and capabilities of Duke's many Web authors, as well as outside agencies hired to create new Duke sites.

Our templates deliverable is as follows: "Completed and approved design for at least three CSS-based templates for use by departments and offices around campus as needed."   In fact, we expect to deliver three types of template: there will likely be different options within each category of template.

1.	**CSS/Javascript include** (also known as the "instant template")

We propose to create a simple code object--- perhaps eight or 10 lines of CSS and Javascript code in all--- that, when dropped into *any currently active Duke web page,* would automatically apply a template treatment to that site. Although we haven't finalized the design yet, it would be possible to use CSS and Javascript to create space at the top of a Web page, use that space to brand the site as part of the Duke community, and perhaps include a search box, while leaving the site otherwise intact. Although this won't be the right solution for every site under Duke's umbrella, it is an easy way to bring quick consistency without technological requirements.

2.	**Traditional HTML site template**

We will create a 2-tier site template (with basic variations in colors and layout, drawing from the style standards that we will develop) that can be downloaded to create new Duke sites. These templates will include all the ingredients for producing a professional and consistent site, including HTML, stylesheets, images and Javascript functions, as well as Photoshop documents for creating navigation and text headers (if our design requires text set as images).

3.	**Specialized ContentXML template**

We don't yet know all the particulars of Duke's newly adopted CMS tool. However, we expect to provide templates optimized for ContentXML use, for those institutions within the Duke community that adopt that tool; we can also provide templates for use with Dreamweaver, if there are institutions not yet ready for ContentXML whose comfort level with Dreamweaver is high.

Success metrics

How will we measure the success of this project? On the one hand, the tools we propose to create represent a triumph by their very existence. It has taken Duke years to build the institutional momentum for this effort, and the clearest and simplest measure of success is the launch of the project itself, of Duke Today and the new Duke.edu.

But institutional realities require more precise metrics: we must be able to look back in a year's time and accurately gauge the success or failure of our efforts. With this in mind, here are a few ideas about how we might measure the effectiveness of our work down the road.

1. **Feedback and surveys**

Sometimes the best way to measure user satisfaction is to ask the user if she's satisfied. We plan to include plenty of feedback tools into Duke Today, some of which are mentioned above; we plan to make user feedback an ongoing and integral part of the Duke web experience (rather than simply asking "What do you think of our new Web site?" after the launch, although we may do that as well).

2. **For Duke Today: Direct requests of Duke Today compared to referrals from Duke.edu; percentage of Duke Today users that customize their layouts**

If users request Duke Today directly, it means they're bookmarking the site--- this means it's working. And if users are using our customization functions, that's another signal of adoption of the tool.

3. **For Duke.edu: Obsessive-compulsive link tracking**

One of the interesting things about Duke's reorganization of Duke.edu content is that there is a very precise, and functionally complete, list of links on each secondary page of the site. Certainly it's reasonable to expect some links to be added or removed over time: however, we know that the list of links to be included on the site is the product of much deliberation, and Duke's presentation of this content has the air of finality.

This gives us an intriguing opportunity. We propose to track every link clicked from Duke.edu (including secondary pages) and store that information in a database. It would then be available for Duke staff to track the flow of user click-behaviors; we can also use that information to display a concise list of the most commonly followed links on the Duke. edu home page (using rule-based monitoring to ensure they're not all basketball-related).

Beyond that goal of quick access to popular information, we may include a random selection of the *least* frequently used links as well (not labeled as such, of course, but perhaps as "other links of interest"); in this way we might bring light to unexplored corners of the Duke Web, while promoting a diversity of interests in general.

On the Importance of Stats Tracking to Measuring User Satisfaction

It's vital for Duke to collect user opinions on these newly redesigned sites after they launch. In fact, much of the Black Binder's most compelling content comes from post-launch user surveys, and user opinions have had a significant influence on this document and our ideas about the Duke Web in general.

However, users also tell a story simply by using the site: the Duke.edu Web statistics can serve as an equally important measure of satisfaction. If we find that users are getting to the information they need faster and more efficiently than they have in the past, or that features and sites that communicate the University's core message are getting more traffic, then we'll know we've done a good job.