Ten tips for a better website

1. It's not for YOU, it's for THEM

Your website is only good if the people visiting it get what they need or accomplish the goals you have for them (apply, give, learn more).

Think about who they are, what they want, and empathize with them.

2. Be a guide

Clearly step people through each bit of information.

Guide readers from one idea to the next.

Use in-text links and direct language.

(Talk to the people who answer the phone in your office, find out what's being asked and how they answer).

3. Be concise

People are distracted. The fewer words you use, the more likely they'll be read and remembered.

4. Be clear

Use straightforward language. Be direct. Why risk confusion or loss of interest?

5. Make the page scannable

People skip down a page looking for things they need. Use section headers, shorter paragraphs, and bulleted lists. Guide the eye.

6. Be conversational

The most popular websites facilitate conversation. People want an interaction, make it feel that way. Seek to build relationships, forge connections.

7. Be smart

Show your readers you know your stuff AND understand their interests and needs. Give them cues that YOU GOT THIS. Build trust. Show some personality.

8. Share stories

Stories about students, faculty, staff, alumni make your general statements more believable. Stories connect with people emotionally and make the biggest impression.

9. Think beyond the text box

Consider other ways to get your point across:

- photos (with <u>captions</u>) or video
- events (with <u>catchy titles</u>)
- news (with <u>catchy headlines</u>)
- simple lists of links...

Each can serve a different purpose/audience.

10. Read your web copy out loud.

Really, we mean it. OUT LOUD. If you stumble over words or feel awkward saying something, rewrite it.

It's a garden not a painting

Web content needs to be tended.

Plan for regular review and upkeep. Keep it manageable. Downsize if necessary.