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LAURIER Inspiring Lives.

Speak to Your Students

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Laurier's new web properties are user-based, meaning we have different websites for the main audiences we deal with at the university:

- **wlu.ca** for prospective students and other external visitors (public).
- **students.wlu.ca** for current students (public).
- **connect.wlu.ca** for faculty and staff (login required).

"I felt that Laurier was the only university site that was speaking directly to me."

– *Grade 11 student*

Increased Enrolment

- First year after launch: +21.7% acceptances.
- Second year after launch: +7.4% acceptances.
  - Plus +16.5% first choice picks.
- Third year after launch: +16.1% acceptances.

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Web Content Strategy

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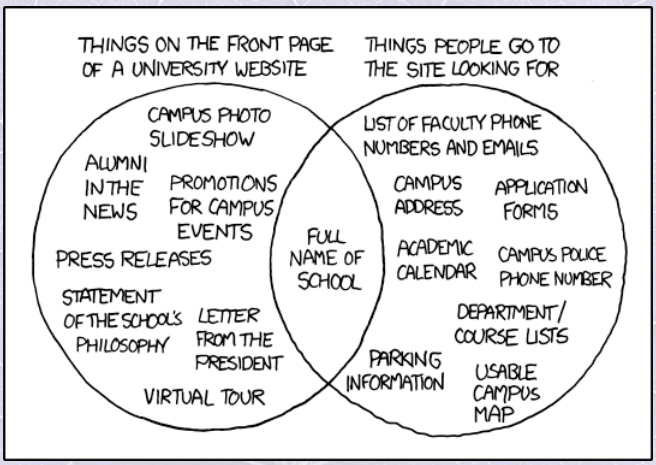

Source: xkcd.com

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"I don't want to read stuff."

– *Grade 12 student*

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Website Visitors…

- Tend to skim, not read.
- Expect consistency from section to section.
- Don't always start at the home page.
- Care more about clear than clever.
- Expect link accuracy.

Voice and Tone for your Audience

- Always write with the audience in mind.
- Our voice targets our audience of undergraduate and graduate prospective students (ages 17-30).
- We write in a first-person plural voice ("we").
- Our voice is conversational, concise and clear.
- Our tone is welcoming and not unnecessarily official.

Writing for the Web

- Avoid long, grammatically complicated sentences.
- Write in active voice:
  - **Active voice:** The student wrote the exam.
  - **Passive voice:** The exam was written by the student.
- Less is more.
- Break up large sections of text into smaller paragraphs.
- Use intuitive headings/subheadings.

Writing for the Web (Continued)

- Use bullet points to break up long sentences containing list elements.
- Make proper use of page features such as accordions and tabs.
- Avoid academic jargon whenever possible.
- Aim for 250-500 words/page (though there are exceptions).
- Be consistent (follow a style guide).

Hyperlinks

- Embed hyperlinks naturally in the text.
- Hyperlinks should be accurately descriptive.
- **Good** example: John Smith, a Communication Studies student, was the recipient of the President's Gold Scholarship.
- **Bad** example: John Smith, a Communication Studies student, was the recipient of the President's Gold Scholarship. Click here to find out more information about the President's Gold Scholarship, and find out more information about Laurier's Communication Studies program on our programs page.

Keywords and Bolding

- Embed keywords/search terms **sparingly** and **naturally** into your body copy.
- You may also enter keywords into the metadata (but this is not as important).
- Always **spell out** any **acronyms** on first reference on every page.
- Consider bolding keywords in the body copy, such as **names**, **organizations**, **dates**, and other pertinent keywords/**search terms**.

Good example:

WATERLOO – Autobiographical artifacts produced as part of an intergenerational pilot project between Wilfrid Laurier University's **English department** and the **Grand River Council on Aging** (GRCOA) are featured in one of **THEMUSEUM's** current exhibits. Titled *The Aging Dialogues: Sharing Wisdom, Preserving Our Legacies*, the collection, which focuses on human connections and creativity that spans generations, will be on display at the Kitchener cultural site until **May 23**. As a complement to the exhibit, THEMUSEUM will present a community talk on **Sunday, April 10**.

In the fall of 2015 **Michael Ackerman**, a professor at **Laurier's Brantford campus**, used Laurier's partnership with the GRCOA to develop a community component to an existing course on early American

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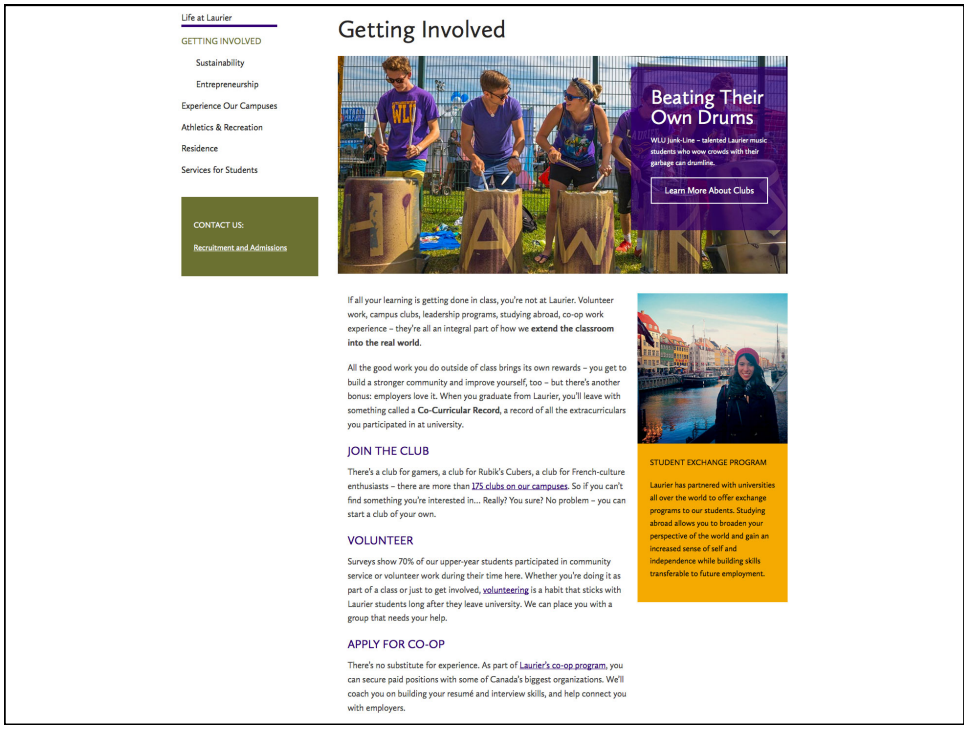
Bad example:


Life at Laurier
GETTING INVOLVED
Sustainability
Entrepreneurship
Experience Our Campuses
Athletics & Recreation
Residence
Services for Students
CONTACT US:
Recruitment and Admissions
Getting Involved
Beating Their Own Drums
WLU Jink-Line – talented Laurier music students who wow crowds with their garbage can drumline.
Learn More About Clubs
If all your learning is getting done in class, you're not at Laurier. Volunteer work, campus clubs, leadership programs, studying abroad, co-op work experience – they're all an integral part of how we extend the classroom into the real world.
All the good work you do outside of class brings its own rewards – you get to build a stronger community and improve yourself, too – but there's another bonus: employers love it. When you graduate from Laurier, you'll leave with something called a Co-Curricular Record, a record of all the extracurriculars you participated in at university.
JOIN THE CLUB
There's a club for gamers, a club for Rubik's Cubers, a club for French-culture enthusiasts – there are more than 175 clubs on our campuses. So if you can't find something you're interested in... Really? You sure? No problem – you can start a club of your own.
VOLUNTEER
Surveys show 70% of our upper-year students participated in community service or volunteer work during their time here. Whether you're doing it as part of a class or just to get involved, volunteering is a habit that sticks with Laurier students long after they leave university. We can place you with a group that needs your help.
APPLY FOR CO-OP
There's no substitute for experience. As part of Laurier's co-op program, you can secure paid positions with some of Canada's biggest organizations. We'll coach you on building your resumé and interview skills, and help connect you with employers.
STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM
Laurier has partnered with universities all over the world to offer exchange programs to our students. Studying abroad allows you to broaden your perspective of the world and gain an increased sense of self and independence while building skills transferable to future employment.

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Accessibility and Universal Design

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Accessible Design is Good for All

- Better able to reach all members of target audience.
- Leads to better search engine optimization (SEO).
- Works well with mobile design.
- Helps people less fluent online, in language of site, with low literacy, or with lower bandwidths.

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Making it Work in Practice

What We Do to Make it Work

- Use accessibility legislation to enforce web best practices.
- Highlight the user-centred approach as an opportunity to tailor messaging.
- Use the right web tool for the job.
- Work with user experience designers to back up decisions with data.

Central Web Team Overview

- User Interface Designer
- User Experience Designer
- Multiple Web Content Specialists
- CMS Administrator
- ICT Developers
- Army of Web Content Editors throughout the university

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Web Content Specialist Job Overview

- Create/edit all new page content.
- Support user experience designers with user research, IA and labeling decisions.
- Train editors and offer ongoing support.
- Audit sections manually and with QA software.
- Create, update and uphold Laurier's web style guide.

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Thank You!

Mallory O'Brien, Senior Web Content Specialist
mobrien@wlu.ca

Sources:

- Enabling Access Through Web Renewal Handbook
- The Laurier Web Style Guide
- *Web Word Wizardry: A Guide to Writing for the Web and Intranet*