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Redesigning an Image: Meredith's Revamped Online Presence Amy Hruby, Editor in Chief

Three Meredith departments recently launched redesigned websites with the aims of enabling recruitment and publicizing departmental information and activities. On October 7th, Meredith Athletics unveiled a new website backed by PrestoSports technology, and over the summer, Meredith Marketing spearheaded an effort to redesign the Admissions and Financial Aid pages that culminated in the recent launch of both sites.

According to Greg Jarvis, Assistant Athletics Director, the creation of the new Athletics website was motivated by a need to improve score-reporting technology and to present a more current image of Meredith Athletics. The new website is hosted by PrestoSports and has many innovative features including networked schedules, social media options and streaming video feeds. A key feature of the website is that it allows for automatic score updates to the USA South Athletic Conference site via online entry or submission from coaches' cell phones. Additionally the website acts as a "sports newsletter" and helps with recruiting incoming athletes to various sports. Jarvis reports being especially pleased with the ease of use and the increased traffic to the site which he believes is a largely result of the new engagement with alums through social media. The success of the Athletics site within its first month will only be increased by two forthcoming additions: a new mobile site and a Meredith Marketplace which will feature sports and alumnae merchandise through a PrestoSports-developed online storefront. Visit www.goavengingangels.com to explore the new site.

The movement to redesign the Admissions and Financial Aid websites was rooted in Marketing but developed as a collaborative process between all three departments with Horizon Productions—a full service video production and web design company based in Durham, NC—guiding the discussions and accomplishing the technical aspects of the project. Karen Dunton, Managing Director of Marketing, reported that "based on enrollment goals, [Marketing] needed to turn [its] attention to supporting admission's recruitment strategies." The intention of the project was not just to redesign the website, but to rework its content to support future goals and recruitment strategies. Dunton articulated three specific goals: representation of Meredith student voices, functionality for users, and increased specialization of pages to bring out different audiences. The first goal was accomplished with the help of Horizon Productions by creating video of student experiences through directed question and answer settings and candid student filming of their daily experiences. Functionality was improved by emphasizing a consistent experience throughout the sites, by working to more clearly define the pages needed to best present information to visitors, and by integrating social media options into the websites. The third goal of increased specialization began by articulating the specific audiences for each page. During this process, Marketing realized that the Admissions and Financial Aid departments had different audiences and Financial Aid should no longer be a subsidiary page to the admission website. From this point, each department worked with Marketing and Horizon Productions to develop over-

Screenshots of the new Admissions and Athletics websites



arching questions and determine how to organize the pages to suit the various groups of viewers. This led to Financial Aid increasing emphasis on current students and Admissions creating new pages for guidance counselors, parents and alumnae in addition to expanding the pages for transfer and readmitted students.

Megan Greer, Co-director of Admissions, reports that her department wanted the new website to "allow greater access to campus through the internet in an effort to increase geographic diversity," and the new features on both sites allow greater opportunity for interaction with students, admis-

sions counselors and financial aid staff members specifically targeted to all interested parties. Additionally the new Content Management System provides increased ease of updating which allows departments to more easily supply up-to-date news and current events to viewers while working with Marketing to project a unified vision of Meredith College. Furthering this progress, Dunton says that the long-term-project is to transition the entire Meredith website to this model: "Our goal is to look at Meredith.edu as a whole and see what's next. What does Meredith College need, and how can we accomplish this?"

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