

# Managing the Unmanageable: Digital Governance in Higher Education



mark a. greenfield



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[markgr.com](http://markgr.com)

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# .edu

*Digital = Web + Social + Mobile*

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*The web is your most important  
strategic asset*

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What would happen if your website  
disappeared tomorrow?

Could your campus still function?

# True or False: Most College Web Sites Are Bad

by Mark Greenfield | Feb 9, 2011 | Blog, Governance | 14 comments

I was digging through some old files last night and came across the slide deck of a workshop I taught in 1998 on creating quality web sites. The third slide in the deck included the headline from an article that stated “Most Web Sites Are Bad, Really Bad”. It was an accurate description for most college web sites in the late 1990’s.

So how much have college web sites improved over the past 13 years?

In the course of my consulting work I have benchmarked several hundred college web sites over the past few years including main sites, sites for administrative units, and sites for academic departments (which is always my favorite). In addition, I have conducted dozens of site audits. These audits are an expert evaluation of a site, examining the site based on graphic design, navigation, usability, quality of coding, accessibility, and more.

**Well here we are in 2011 and IMHO, most college web sites are still pretty bad.**

I’ll be the first to admit that I am a tough grader. I have high expectations. I expect:

- Basic usability principles to be followed
- A professional design
- Intuitive navigation
- Well written content
- The code to validate (to current standards)
- The CSS to validate
- To never see tables used for layout (yes, I still see this on many sites)
- The site to be fully accessible (pet peeve – when a college’s page on accessibility is itself inaccessible)
- To never find broken links
- To never find outdated content

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Economic systems

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**Full Graphics**

*with slow transmission  
may take long time*

**Low Graphics**

*loads much faster  
but is incomplete*

KYN

against

the **NEW SOCIALISM**  
of the **XXI CENTURY**

QUOTATIONS

Great  
Didactic

*Hatred*

Think  
and do  
the right  
thing!

FREEDOM  
OF  
SPEECH  
AND  
FAITH

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*In the age of Google  
the entire site matters!*

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Having a website is no longer enough

Having a great website fully integrated with  
social and mobile is now essential

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*Most colleges address quality by redesigning their site or investing in infrastructure when the real problem lies in the management practices.*

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*The lack of digital governance is the single biggest reason most college websites are still mediocre at best.*

# Without Governance



The web is thought of as a collection of micro-sites rather than a single entity. Academic departments and administrative units think they have their own sites rather than being part of a larger ecosystem.



Usability suffers because visitors expect a unified digital ecosystem and instead find a site that is graphically diverse and difficult to navigate.



There are no articulated, measurable goals making it difficult to measure the ROI of digital efforts.



With everyone doing their own thing, there are resource inefficiencies that result in wasting time and money.



Not enforcing policies and not following standards  
exposes the institution to risk.



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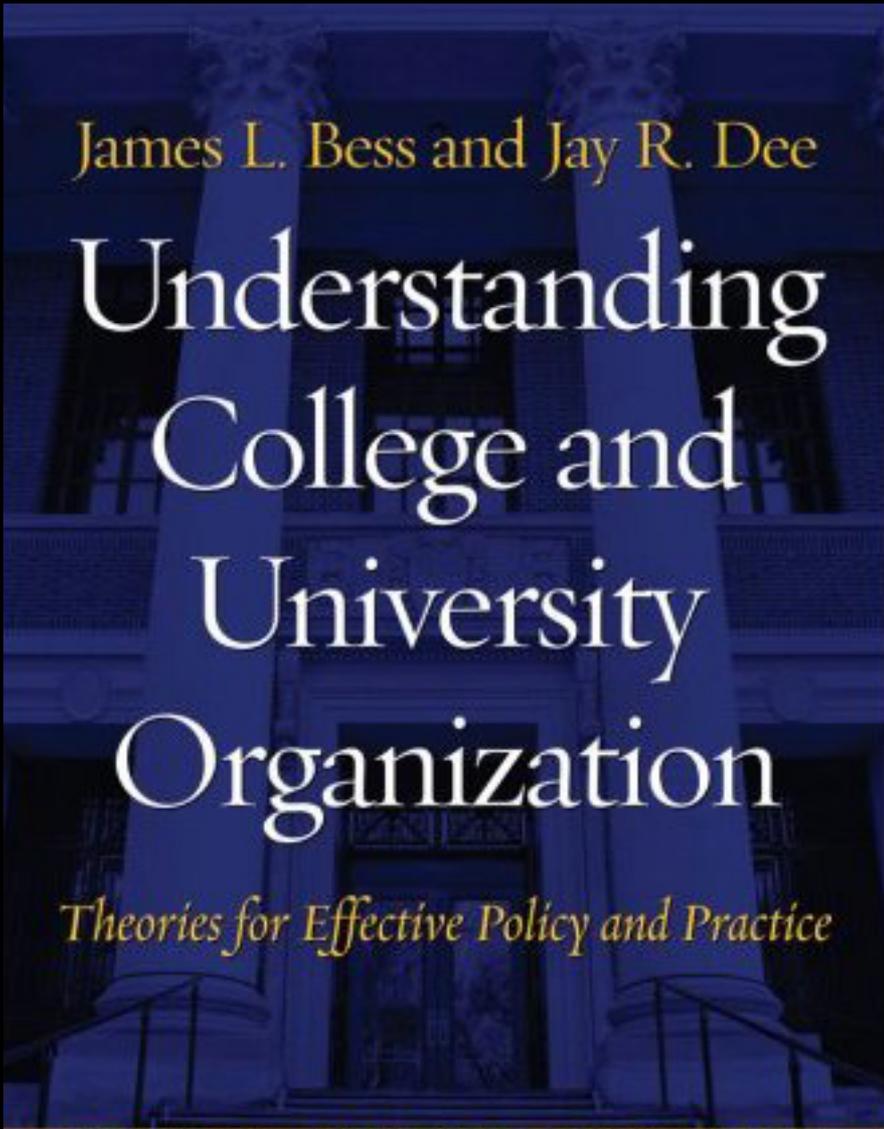
The challenges of implementing  
digital governance in higher education

Democracy,  
Expertise,  
Academic  
&  
Freedom

A First Amendment  
Jurisprudence for the  
Modern State

ROBERT C. POST



The cover features a photograph of a classical building entrance with two large columns and a set of stairs. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text is positioned in the upper half of the cover.

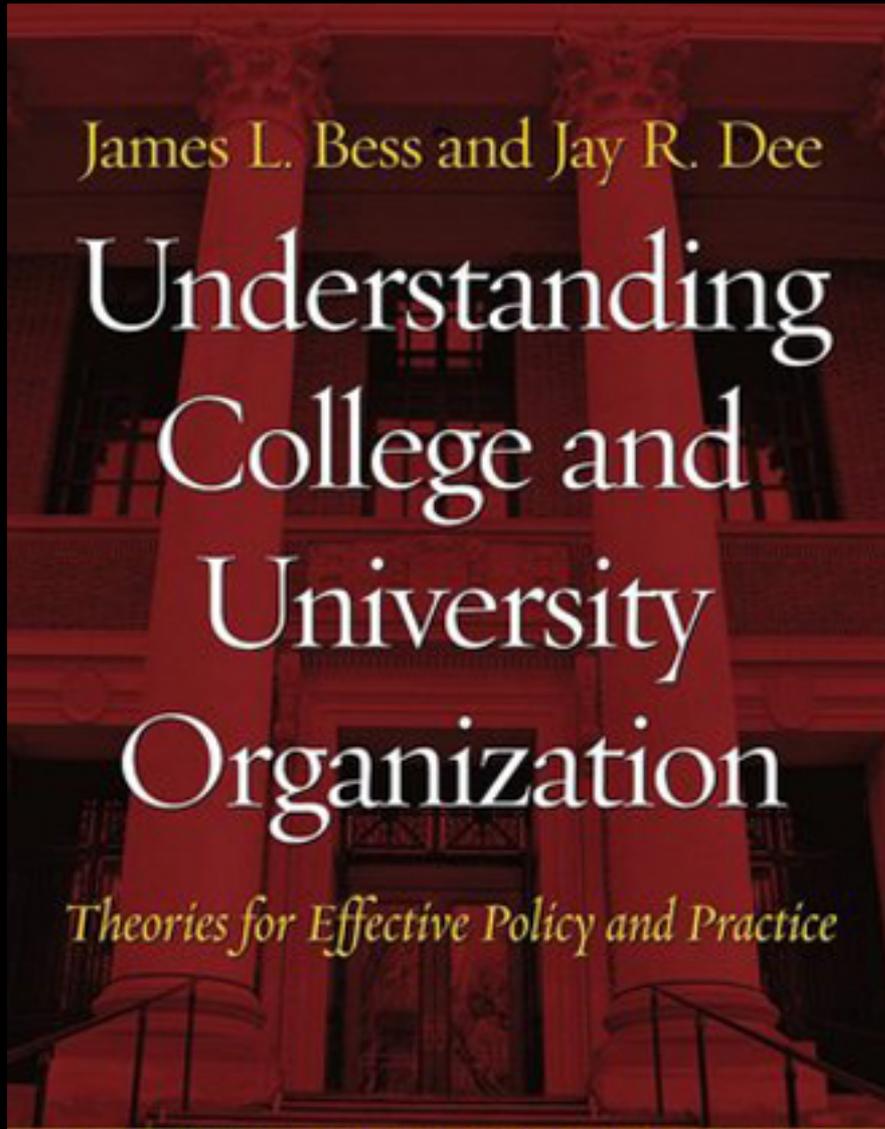
James L. Bess and Jay R. Dee

# Understanding College and University Organization

*Theories for Effective Policy and Practice*

**VOLUME I – THE STATE OF THE SYSTEM**

*Foreword by D. Bruce Johnstone*

The cover features a photograph of a classical building entrance with two large columns and a set of stairs. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. The text is positioned in the upper half of the cover.

James L. Bess and Jay R. Dee

# Understanding College and University Organization

*Theories for Effective Policy and Practice*

**VOLUME II – DYNAMICS OF THE SYSTEM**

*Foreword by D. Bruce Johnstone*

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Overreliance on consensus decision making

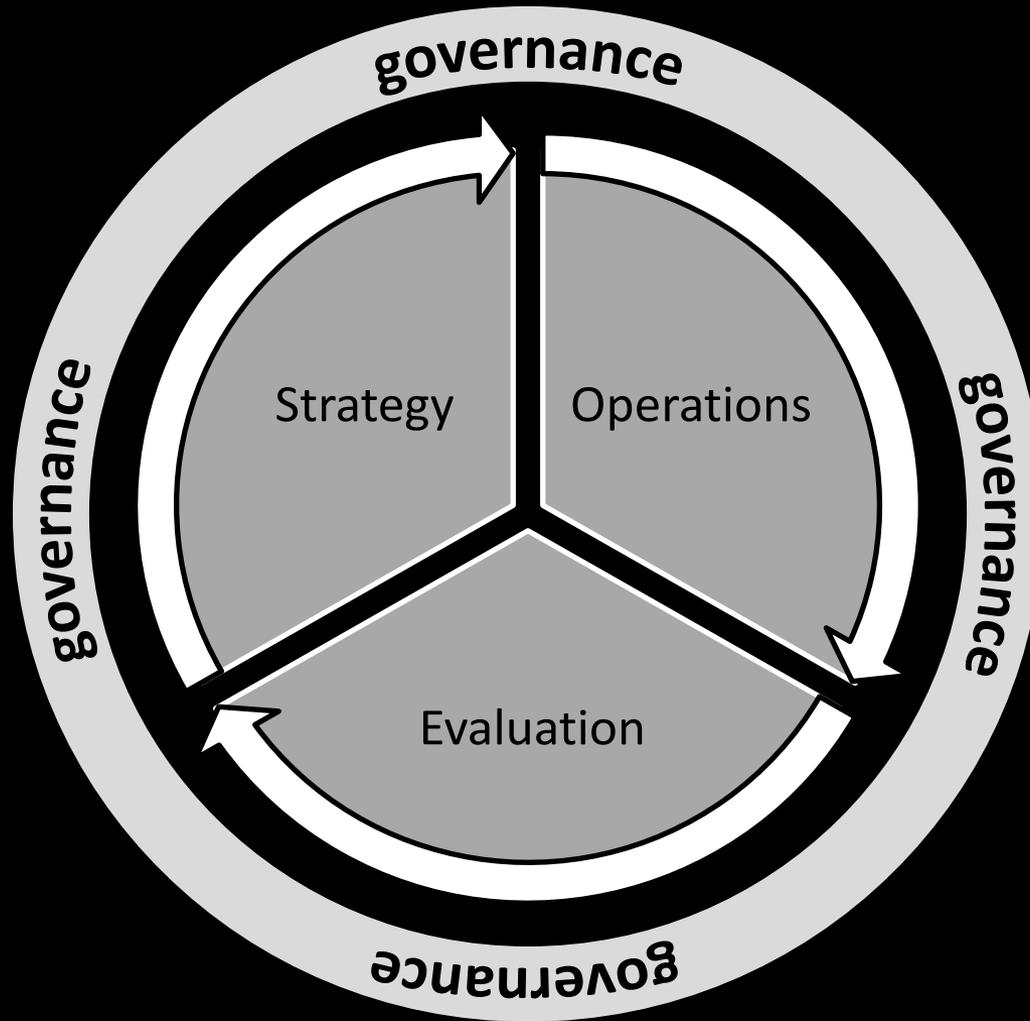
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*Role conflict and role ambiguity are  
the sources of many problems in  
institutions of higher education*

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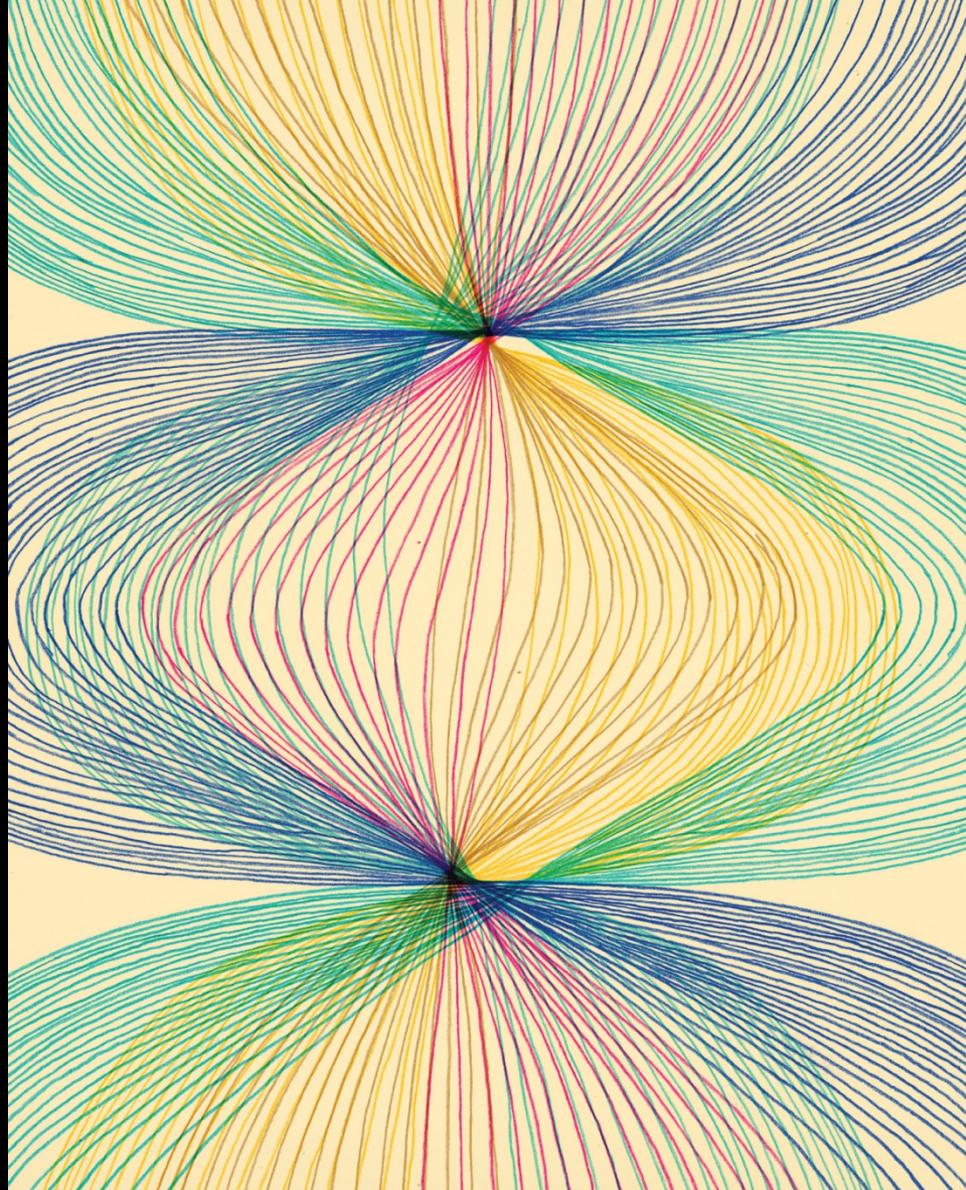
***colleges and universities as  
“organized anarchies”***

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*The web is not a project*



## MANAGING CHAOS

Digital Governance by Design

by LISA WELCHMAN

 Rosenfeld

# Digital Governance

A discipline that focuses on establishing clear accountability for digital strategy, policy and standards



# Digital Governance

Deciding who gets to decide

(assigning roles and responsibilities, then holding those people accountable)



# Governance

- Who decides about the approach to digital (budget, project prioritization, reporting structures)?
- Who decides the direction for digital (strategy)?
- Who specifies what your campus can and can not do online (policy)?
- Who makes decisions about design, content, information architecture, etc. (standards)

# The Digital Dichotomy

- Business stakeholders assume that because they have a vested interest in the outcome they get to make the decisions.
- Digital staff assume that because they do the work they get to make the decisions.

# The Digital Dichotomy

- Most managers lack the expertise to make informed decisions around digital.
- Most digital workers lack the business and management expertise to make informed decisions around ROI.

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- Put people with institutional knowledge and business savvy and people with digital expertise around the table.
- The one-two punch of digital expertise and business acumen is a powerful combination

- Lisa Welchman

# HiPPO



Highest Paid Person's Opinion

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*Decisions must be based on expertise,  
not power*

# RACI Matrix

- **Responsible** – who will perform the work
- **Accountable** – The person who has final decision making authority
- **Consulted** – the people who provide information and feedback (two way communication)
- **Informed** – the people who are kept informed (one way communication)

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*Be clear about the role and responsibilities of digital councils and committees from the beginning*

# Digital Governance Process

- Perform a web governance audit
- Perform a web governance self-assessment
- Create a web governance charter
- Develop policies and standards

# Policies

- A set of legal, compliance related, editorial and technical constraints for web development
- Focus is on mitigating risk
- A well written policy explains why the rule exists, when to apply it, to whom they apply, and what are the consequences if the rules are broken

# Standards

- Should be created by a team of digital experts with informed input from campus stakeholders
- Should involve the entire campus
- Real standards are enforced, but with the approach of enabler rather than naysayer
- Standards often fail because they are bad standards

# Standards

1. Editorial
2. Design
3. Information Architecture
4. Web Tools and Applications
5. Network and Server Infrastructure

**TABLE 5.1 IS IT A POLICY, A STANDARD, OR A GUIDELINE?**

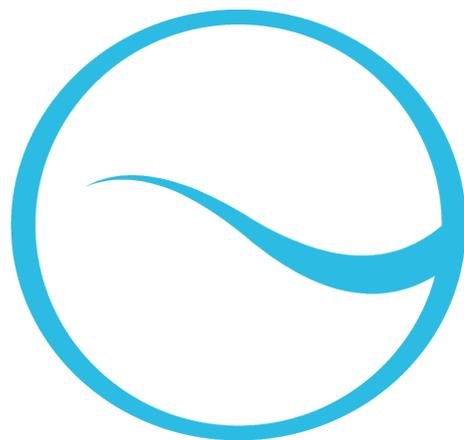
	<b>Policy</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Guideline</b>
What is its function?	To manage organizational risk associated with operating online	To specify development protocols	To steer resources into making the “correct” decision in a subjective context
What does it protect?	The enterprise	The quality and effectiveness of the digital presence	Digital quality and organizational norms
Who codifies and maintains it?	Legal; senior management or compliance division; board; human resources	Digital subject matter experts; technologists; marketing experts; communications experts	Guidelines are often not formally codified but are recommended to stakeholders
Who informs?	Legal; compliance; various digital and organizational subject matter experts	Business and digital stakeholders; industry expert best practices; W3C and other technology standards and protocols	Industry best practices; organizational cultural norms

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If there is no benefit in following a policy or standard, or consequence for violating it, it becomes nothing more than an institutional artifact.

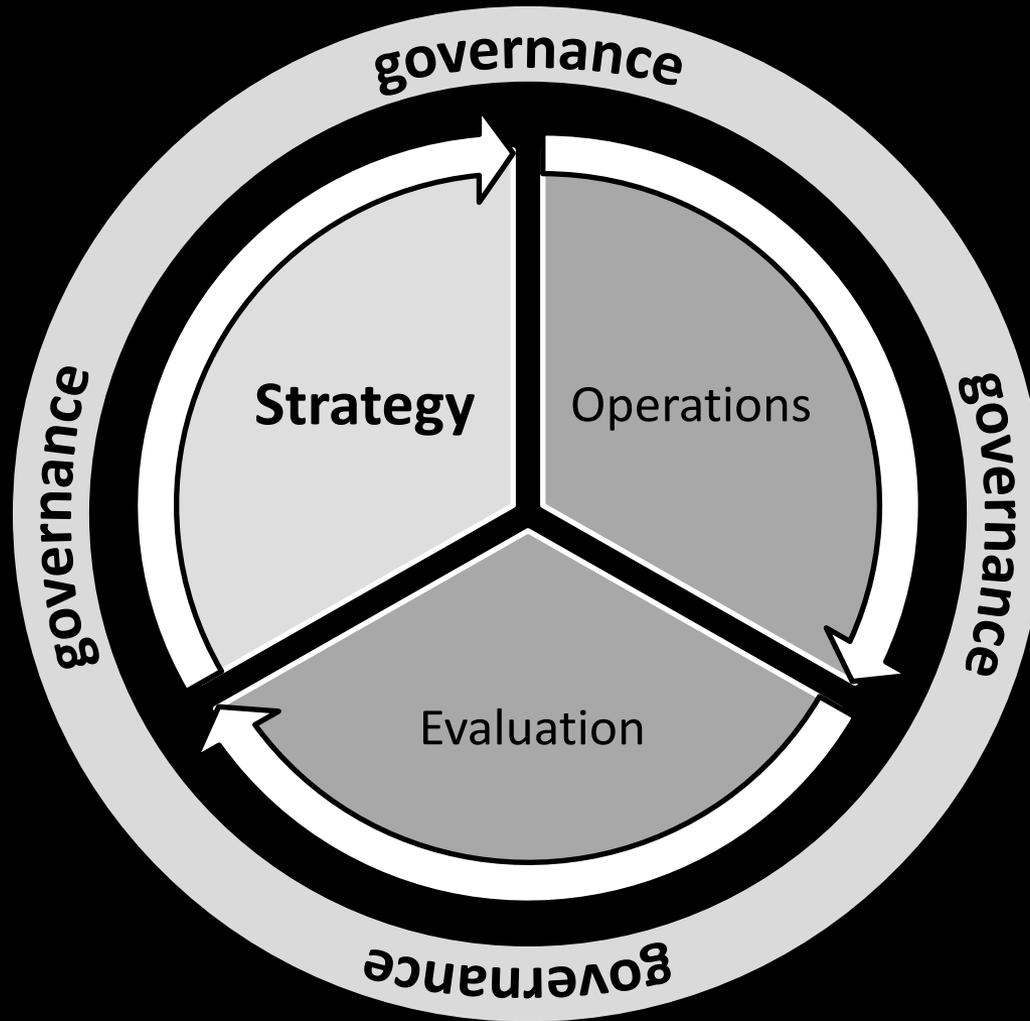
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Establish a process for monitoring policy and standards compliance in a consistent and automated way.



**Siteimprove**

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***“There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all.”***

***- Peter Drucker***

# Digital Strategy

Articulates an organization's approach to leverage the capabilities of the Internet and World Wide Web



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Why do you have a website?

Why are you using Facebook, Twitter, etc.?

Why are you developing mobile apps?

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*know the problem you are trying to solve*

RICHARD P. RUMELT

"A giant in the field of strategy." —*McKinsey Quarterly*

GOOD  
STRATEGY  
BAD  
STRATEGY

The Difference and Why It Matters

# Strategy

- True strategy identifies the biggest challenges to forward progress and provides a cohesive approach to overcoming them.
- True strategy leverages institutional strengths.
- Simply being ambitious is not a strategy.
- Many bad strategies are just statements of desire rather than plans for overcoming obstacles.

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*“We want to increase the levels of engagement with our constituents”*

# Kernel of a Strategy

1. Problem to solve
2. Guiding principles and values
3. Specific action required

# Guiding Principles

1. Understand the business
2. Understand the user
3. Understand the medium

## Government Digital Service

# Design Principles

Listed below are our design principles and examples of how we've used them so far. These build on, and add to, our original [7 digital principles](#).

- 1 **Start with needs\***
- 2 **Do less**
- 3 **Design with data**
- 4 **Do the hard work to make it simple**
- 5 **Iterate. Then iterate again.**
- 6 **Build for inclusion**
- 7 **Understand context**
- 8 **Build digital services, not websites**
- 9 **Be consistent, not uniform**
- 10 **Make things open: it makes things better**

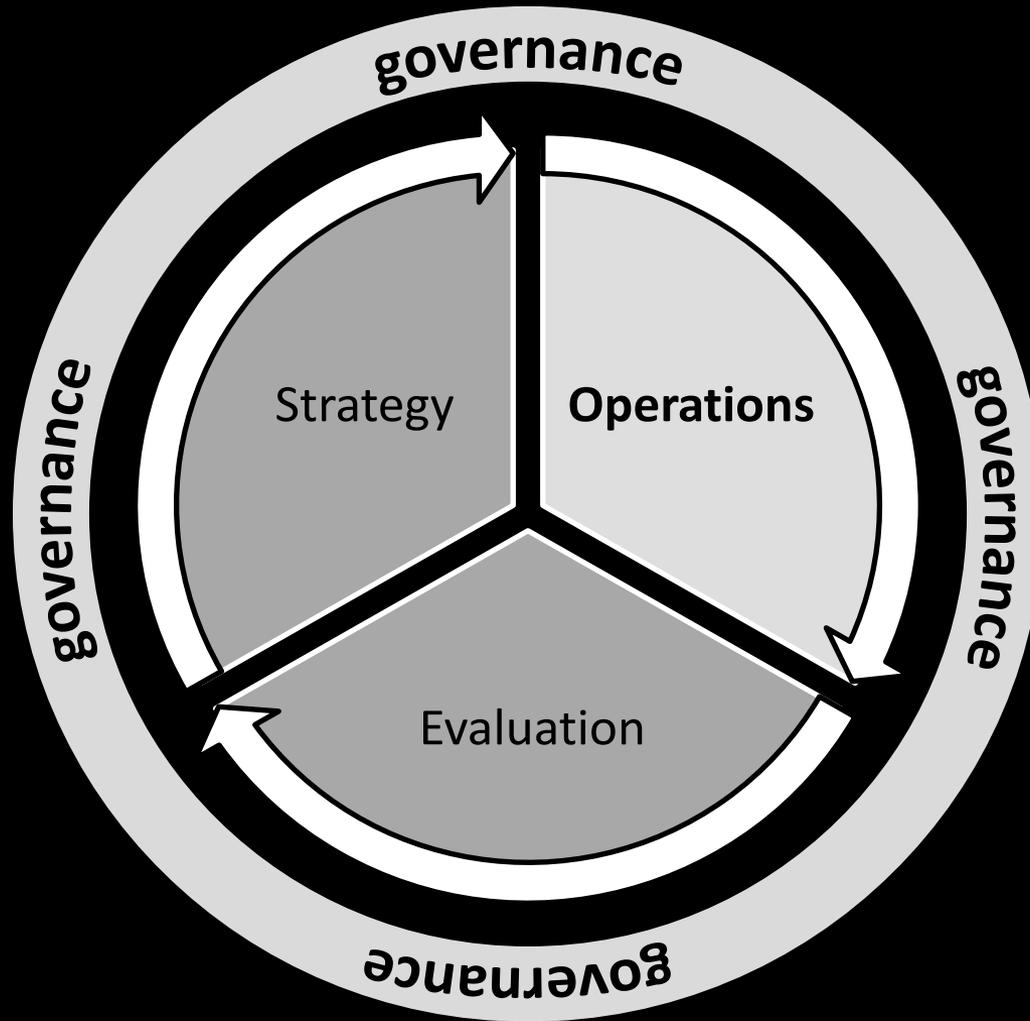
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Digital strategy is not a one off process

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*decisions need to be made based on **strategy**,  
not historical precedent or politics*

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The web is not a project

After your redesigned site is launched  
the real work begins

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*Is your site sustainable?*

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All because you can add a web page or social media channel doesn't mean you should.

No content is better than outdated or inaccurate content.

# Operations

Processes and procedures that ensure the operational integrity of the website and digital properties.

# Quality Assurance

- *Outdated Content*
- *Editorial (spelling, grammar, etc.)*
- *Broken Links*
- *Compatibility with all browsers and platforms*
- *Infrastructure*

- 74% of consumers pay attention to the correctness of the prose on company websites.
- 59% of respondents said they would avoid doing business with a company that's made obvious errors.

# Operations

- How are you performing quality assurance?
- How are you monitoring compliance with policies and standards?
- How efficient are daily operations?
- Is information published on a timely manner?
- Are all processes and procedures documented?
- Is there appropriate backup and redundancy?

# Web Services Work Order Request System

User: Administrator [ [Log Out](#) | [Go to projects site](#) ]

Home Projects Tasks Clients Reports Search Calendar Bookmarks Timesheet Person Evaluations Preferences Admin

[Projects](#) > Admissions Main Site - Maintenance

## Project : Admissions Main Site - Maintenance



**Details**

Name : Admissions Main Site - Maintenance  
 Project ID : 1  
 Priority : High  
 Phase Enabled : False  
 Description :  
 Development site url :  
 Final site url : [admissions.buffalo.edu](#)  
 Owner : Administrator (admin)  
 Created : 2007-04-19 13:23:10  
 Modified : 2007-08-08 15:55:18  
 Client Organization : [Undergraduate Admissions](#)  
 Status : Maintenance  
 Type : External project  
 Max file size [\[Help\]](#) : 4 MB  
 Project folder size [\[Help\]](#) : 162.39 KB  
 Estimated Time : 184 hours  
 Actual Time : 15.45 hours  
 Scope creep [\[Help\]](#) : -168.55 hours  
 Project Site : <[Details](#)>

**Support**

New requests : 1 - [Manage new requests](#)  
 Open requests : 0 - [Manage open requests](#)  
 Complete requests : 0 - [Manage complete requests](#)

## Tasks



ID	Name	Priority	Status	Completion	Due Date	Assigned to	Published
<input type="checkbox"/> 132	Add IM Screen Names	Medium	Completed	100 %	2007-08-09	henesey	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> 177	Add message board to homepage	High	Completed	100 %	2007-09-07	henesey	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> 17	Another test for documentation	Medium	Completed	100 %	2007-05-04	mw6	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> 55	Client task test	Very high	Completed	100 %	2007-05-28	mw6	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> 217	Counselors flash map	None	Open	50 %	2007-10-03	difrey	No

1 2 3 4

[Show All](#)

## Discussions



Topic	Owner	Posts	Last Post	Status	Published
<input type="checkbox"/> test of bulletin board	mw6	3	2007-05-29 14:24:20 (Mary Pitts)	Open	Yes

## Team



Full name	Title	User Name	Work Phone	Connected	Published
<input type="checkbox"/> Administrator	None	admin	None	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Dan Frey	Assistant Director of Web Services	difrey	645-5657	No	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Mark Greenfield	Director of Web Services	markqr	716.645.2811	No	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Mary Henesey	Assistant Director of Web Services	henesey	716-645-5658	No	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Michael Conroy	Asst. Dir. Web Services	mconroy	716.645.5661	No	No

1 2

[Show All](#)

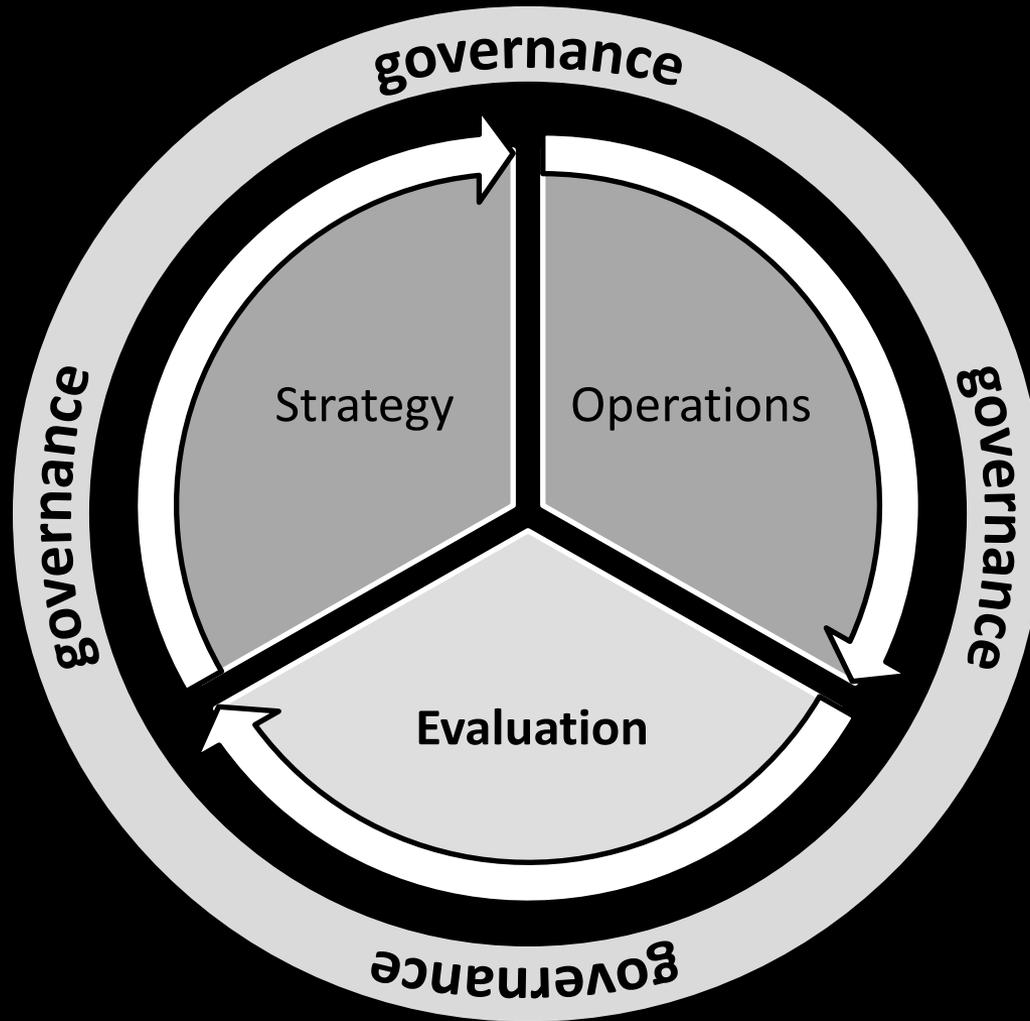
## Linked Content



Type	Name	Task	Date	Approval Tracking	Published
<input type="checkbox"/>	1--grading memo 011807.doc		2007-04-20 09:06	<a href="#">Needs Approval</a>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	2--toeflplacement.doc		2007-04-20 09:07	<a href="#">Needs Approval</a>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	4--blockreaproc.pdf		2007-05-04 11:04	<a href="#">Needs Approval</a>	Yes

## Notes

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# Evaluation

- Measure both the product and the process
- Measure both web and business metrics
- All data must be actionable
- Use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies
- Include increased efficiencies and cost savings



In 2012, we surveyed over 1,000 web professionals and their number one challenge was not competitors but their own senior management's lack of engagement and understanding.

- Gerry McGovern

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*We need to change the conversation from thinking about the web and digital as a cost center to thinking about the web and digital as the campus's most important strategic asset.*

# Keys to Successful Web Governance

- Understand higher education
- Understand your campus dynamics
- Focus on value
- Find an executive sponsor
- Develop leadership skills
- Keep fighting the good fight
- Think post launch

# *Thank You*



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