

Calvin College Web Site Redesign Request for Proposal

November 16, 2007

1 Request Overview

Calvin College wants to relaunch our Web site (www.calvin.edu) with a new focus on our audience's goals, tasks and expectations. We are requesting proposals from qualified firms or individuals who can provide the expert consultation, assessment, evaluation and recommendations necessary for us to accomplish this ambitious goal.

Specific questions or clarifications related to this Request for Proposal (RFP) may be directed to <mailto:webproject@calvin.edu>. Answers to inquiries will be made available on the project blog, <http://www.calvin.edu/weblogs/webproject>.

1.1 Time Line

November 30, 2007	Questions due 5 p.m. EST
December 3, 2007	Responses to questions posted by 5 p.m. EST
December 12, 2007	Response to RFP due 5 p.m. EST
Early January, 2008.....	Finalist interviews at Calvin
January 15, 2008	Expected award of contract
April 15, 2008	Anticipated receipt of final deliverables

1.2 Submission Instructions

Five copies of proposals are due to Calvin by the proposal deadline, 5 p.m. EST, Wednesday, December 12, 2007. Proposals should be addressed as follows:

Calvin College
Communications & Marketing
Attn: Barb Palsrok
3201 Burton St SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

2 Terminology and Language

In order for us to work well with any consultant we must be on the same page with some terms used throughout this RFP. A modest set of definitions:

Web site or site: www.calvin.edu

Web presence: any site (including sub-domains) at calvin.edu, public or internal

audience or end-user: individuals or groups who come to the Web site or one of many sites within the college Web presence

author(s) or producer(s): Calvin employees, and sometimes freelance web developers, who maintain the Web presence

top-level pages: vital pages of the Web site that are centrally owned and maintained by the Communications and Marketing team

3 About Calvin College

Calvin College has developed a beautiful 390-acre campus in Grand Rapids, Mich., where 4,200 students from across the nation and around the world join a faculty of more than 300 committed and caring Christian professors for an education that grounds first-rate academics on a firm foundation of faith.

Today Calvin holds a distinctive place in Christian higher education. There are many good liberal arts colleges in North America, but few if any that prepare their alumni, as Calvin does, for its specific kind of Christian engagement with modern culture. At Calvin, faith and curriculum come together in an academic climate where a different kind of learning flourishes—learning that can change the world. Rooted in this climate, students develop into transformative leaders, eager to work for renewal wherever they are called.

Calvin offers over 100 majors and programs (everything from Asian Studies to zoology) with about half of our graduates majoring in the traditional liberal arts and half majoring in professional programs. Calvin offers a number of semester-long off campus study programs to such countries as China, Ghana and Honduras, and in 2007 was one of just four colleges and universities nationwide to be honored with a 2007 Senator Paul Simon Award for Campus Internationalization.

For further information, see: <http://www.calvin.edu/about/>.

4 Description of Current Web Presence

Both the organization of Calvin's Web site and the supporting technology are relatively unchanged since we launched www.calvin.edu in the mid 1990s, but usage of the Web site and the number of pages (and sites) that now make up Calvin's expanded Web presence have increased dramatically. Traffic to the site has been increasing 35 percent or more annually, while the number of pages within www.calvin.edu is more than 40,000.

Calvin's Web site has been developed primarily by Calvin staff and faculty, and is maintained in a distributed framework, with each department bearing responsibility for its respective area of the site. Top-level pages, overall structure, best practices, central branding, templates and guidelines are the responsibility of the Web Manager (a member of the Communications & Marketing team) with operational support from the college's central IT department and others.

Inherent in a Web site using this distributed model is an information architecture mirroring the college's internal structure. We value the authenticity and organic nature of distributed authorship, but are challenged to balance the site organization it produces with the needs of Web site audiences (some of whom do not understand the college's structure). No significant assessment, measurement or survey of Web audiences and their respective priorities and needs has been completed.

In an effort to adapt Calvin's Web site to meet growing demands, many independent solutions have been implemented to extend this framework (i.e. standard Dreamweaver templates, blogs, photo galleries, inquiry forms, calendars, and ecommerce). No content management system is in place.

5 Project Description

This is the first phase of a larger project to relaunch Calvin's Web site, including architecture, organization, visual design, and production. Included in this process is addressing how the site will eventually be relaunched and how it will be maintained.

The larger project is broken down into three phases. Those phases are:

1. Assess Calvin's Web presence, recommend audience-focused improvements, implement recommendations to top-level Web site areas, and make recommendations for following phases.
2. Implement a strategy for content management (and likely a content management system) with focus on scalability, sustainability, and efficiency for authors and producers. Extend the implementation of Phase 1 recommendations.
3. Establish an environment for continuous improvement.

Note: This RFP focuses on only Phase 1 of the larger project.

The phases of this project loosely align with the overall project goals. See the Project Initiation Report on our project blog, <http://www.calvin.edu/weblogs/webproject/> for more information on the scope, goals, and objectives of this larger project.

6 Deliverables

The consultant will develop and conduct research-based activities to provide insight and analysis of audiences and authors related to their tasks (how they work), their needs (what tasks are required), and their interests (what sparks their curiosity). Deliverables will make recommendations for long-term organization, prioritization, and maintenance in the area of user experience (UX).

6.1 Audience Research Study

We need a consultant who can help us understand how people use www.calvin.edu currently and how changes to our Web site might benefit both end-users and authors. This research should include such things as:

- the overall usability of www.calvin.edu
- audiences and their goals and tasks
- a competitive analysis
- recommendations on the usage of emerging Web technologies

6.2 Information Architecture (IA) Plan

Closely connected to any study of the user experience will be recommendations on the structure and organization of decentralized, college-owned information and how that model can be adjusted to lead toward a better user experience. We would like our consultant to consider such things as:

- how users find, and re-find, information within the Web site

- how best to structure content ownership, distribution and maintenance
- the overall site map/blueprint
- the information hierarchy

6.3 User Interface (UI) Recommendations

Lastly the selected consultant will help us think about how best to integrate what we know and learn about our users and what we know and learn about our authors. Important to this idea will be considerations such as:

- user goals and priorities
- user patterns and flowchart
- layout patterns
- navigation labels
- page types
- wireframes

7 Company Information

In addition to specifics outlined in this document, proposals must also address the following:

- Company name, description of services, and brief history
- Company philosophy
- Biographies of proposed team members
- References from similar projects
- Portfolio of similar projects, including time line and completion date
- Total number of company staff, by role

If selected as a finalist, you may also be required to provide the following:

- List of current projects, with scope and status of each project
- Disclosure of company financial statements
- Disclosure of current or pending complaints, legal or otherwise
- Disclosure of possible conflicts of interest