

case study**The Upper Iowa University Setting**

Founded in 1857, Upper Iowa University is a private, not-for-profit university which lays claim to providing educational excellence and leadership development. With approximately 6,000 students — both from the US and abroad — Upper Iowa is the largest private university in terms of enrollment in the state.

Upper Iowa maintains its headquarters at the residential campus in the city of Fayette and has 14 nationwide centers, a presence on various military bases as well as multiple international locations. With a global correspondence program, an online program and military students serving overseas, the decentralized nature of the UIU Web presence is a critical component of the university as a whole.

One Man Show

The website for almost a decade was managed by one person: Joel Kunze, Director of Web Services at Upper Iowa University. “I’m the one person web team, webmaster, everything rolled into one,” said Kunze.

While the website contained a vast amount of quality information, the information was difficult to access because the site was based on the organizational structure of the university. Not to mention that one person designing, creating, updating, and keeping track of an entire website was far from ideal.

“It was time to do a number of things. We reached that sort of tipping point, if you will, where something had to happen and we decided the time is right now: major website redesign, but incorporate within that a move to a web content management system,” said Kunze.

The Selection

As UIU initially investigated various solutions, it was apparent that “none of them were nearly as appealing as OmniUpdate,” said Kunze. OmniUpdate provided UIU with a hosted solution that would have very little effect on current IT structure or support staff. The solution is fully compatible with the university’s web design and scalable to grow with the site.

Aside from the technical aspects, the OmniUpdate end user experience was also a contributing factor in UIU’s decision to implement the solution. The interface is similar to that of a word processor and does not bear the weight of a large learning curve. Training of technical and non-technical persons alike can often be completed in less than one hour.

“OmniUpdate really had what we were looking for,” said Kunze.

A New Focus

In January, 2006, UIU formed the university's new marketing and communications department. This creation spawned a significant new focus for the university's Web presence. With the decision to redesign the website and implement a web content management made, "Our goal now is to use the website as a marketing and promotional tool," said Kunze.

For the first time, UIU is using the website as a center point of integrated marketing campaigns and other promotions – to capture data and track the effectiveness of those campaigns.

"I would say about 30% of what we do in our integrated marketing efforts will be engaging our website," said Fedelina Madrid, Associate Vice President for Marketing and Communications. "For us, the website is a very important tool." The university website is "very valuable for us and probably an area that will grow in even more importance going forward," said Madrid.

Going Forward

With so much riding on the university website, Upper Iowa is taking the necessary steps to ensure an effective Web presence and website that supports their marketing and communication objectives. Bringing OmniUpdate on board is empowering the UIU marketing staff, along with the various operating units on campus who use the website, to keep the site fresh, engaging and on-target with the message and mission of the university. Upper Iowa University is now confident that they can meet the challenge of making their website work for them.

"We knew that we needed to leverage and focus and actually turn the website into something that was a useful marketing tool – which we haven't been doing. We really weren't using the site to actually market the university to any great extent," recalled Kunze. "We've turned that around now."