



Strategic Brief

Seton Hill University Website Redesign

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Website Concept

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

A website concept gives our work a center of gravity upon which other aspects of our strategy can balance. It should confirm what we've learned and answer the questions, "what is Seton Hill trying to say with this website," and "why?"

The Concept:

Seton Hill University shapes students into exceptional professionals and people. We welcome students as they are, but then fine tune each aspect of the learning experience around who they want to become.

Great professional development is great personal development — the two are inseparable. There are many schools that can make you an accountant, physician assistant, graphic designer, engineer, or any number of other jobs. Seton Hill's liberal arts foundation helps you explore possibilities, get to know your own motivations, and find a path of loving what you do for the rest of your life (even if it changes).

We educate the whole person — intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually — so that you can celebrate who you are in your profession rather than just make a paycheck. And, we know this is the right strategy for your education, because we have a nearly perfect job placement rate. These things are made possible by our small teacher-to-student ratio, tightly knit community, Catholic social teaching, and seamless integration of technology that touches every part of the student experience.

Strategic Approach

GIVING THE CONCEPT FORM & FUNCTION

How does a concept turn into a real website? The following strategic approach translates the concept into real decisions governing content, information architecture, art direction, and even development.

The Strategy:

The new site should balance presentation of the “before” and the “after” parts of the equation. “Before” includes everything that your prospective audience is thinking about, right now. Can I afford this? What am I interested in studying? What does “Catholic perspective” mean to me at this point in my life? “After” is just far enough in the future that it can be imagined, but not so far that it seems unreal. What will my first job be after undergraduate school? How can I be an entrepreneur in my field? When will I transition to the next major phase of my life?

The site will empathize where the audience is now, and give them a vision for where they could go. It will do this by contrasting tradition and innovation in ways that emphasize the connection between the two, instead of pushing one or the other.

Content Strategy

Content will begin from a starting point of answering immediate questions that prospective audiences have, and then continue the conversation into unexpected territory. Content will expand or challenge the audience to embrace different perspectives along key points in the messaging architecture, including diversity, student focus, Catholicism, and technology.

For example, undergraduate students might learn how their expectations regarding a Catholic education will be met, but also exceeded in surprising ways. They might assume that technology means getting an iPad and a MacBook, but not realize how integrated that technology is into their daily lives and what that technology enables.

Information Architecture

Create navigable relationships between academics and student life via storytelling. Use narrative elements (such as short block quotes and student profiles) that create pathways into and out of deeper pages, and make it easy to

connect complementary concepts. Focus more on carefully considered recirculation possibilities: rather than stamping “apply now” everywhere, let’s think about what makes each part of your site sticky. For example, when reading about a particular major, emphasize the variety of outcomes and opportunities of that major.

Extend the conversation in ways that are useful to your audience, and not just aimed at conversions to inquiries and applications. They should be present but play more of a secondary role; a safety net that presents itself when the user feels like they’ve read enough, or read what they need to read.

Art Direction

Humanize (personalize) excellence. Contrast tradition against the ability to embrace change. Photography should be evidentiary, and not posed, but emblematic of a story, prompting the person to wonder what’s happening behind the image. Some visuals should evolve or even challenge preconceptions. For example, visuals of the picturesque campus can reveal hidden aspects and interesting detail. School colors

should be referenced as part of your historic tradition, but the overall look and feel should be flexible, not oppressive or light, and open-minded, just like the curriculum.

Imagine the way the stunning new McKenna facility is grafted onto an older building, but comes across as one experience when you are inside. This is what the site should look and feel like. Without this approach, you risk fading into the background of dozens of competing sites and not accurately portraying the soul of your identity.

Development

Layouts should emphasize logical comparisons over lists, and simple visualizations over long blocks of text. Things should align horizontally to encourage comparison. A responsive design approach assumes that aspects of the layout will be liquid, filling space and re-stacking in different ways. Special care should be taken to keep related concepts as related while they reorganize in response to smaller (or larger) screen sizes.

Objectives & Key Results

WHY AND HOW

Companies such as Intel and Google use a framework known as Objectives & Key Results—or OKRs for short—to create an effective connection between site results and organization goals. OKRs help teams to focus and prioritize around a specific outcome.

Objectives are the qualitative part of the equation. They should be ambitious but vague, and occasionally uncomfortable because they force you to reflect on your own opinions. To help teams realize those Objectives, they are paired with quantitative Key Results. Good key results are hard to reach, but not unrealistic. Usually they are graded on a score from 0 to 1, and a good score is between 0.6 and 0.8. Scoring a 1 means it wasn't tough enough, but scoring less than a 0, it might have been too tough.

Seton Hill Objectives & Key Results

These objectives are based on what was provided in the RFP, but refined further based on everything we've learned about you from interview research, metrics analysis, and our great experiences during the kickoff. Each objective is measured by the key results that follow. Metrics are based on a three month (one quarter) duration, averaged for the new site against the old for an identical quarter.

1. Establish and maintain SetonHill.edu as a tool for addressing and improving enrollment.

The website will no longer be a full representation of every single aspect of Seton Hill, nor will it serve every audience. You will need to create other websites, micro sites, or social media strategies to supplement this refocusing of the primary .edu.

Key Results for Objective 1

- Increase repeat visitors by 10%. This will drive early funnel acquisitions for undergraduate, graduate, and adult programs. Setonhill.edu currently gets 92,000 repeat visitors per quarter (Q1 2015); the new site should see 101,000 repeat visitors within the first quarter in 2016.
- Increase inquiry rates (number of information requests against total unique users) by 150% for the same time period.

2. The site tells the most important parts of the story, not the whole story.

In order to recruit more of the right undergraduate, graduate, and adult students, we'll focus on representing a limited number of key aspects of your identity as articulated in the messaging architecture (see the content strategy document). We will use those to inform what the experience is like, including decisions around content and look and feel. "Nice for prospective students to know" is not a sufficient reason to put it on the site. Data that proves the value of different information guides decisions about what goes on each page and why.

Key Results for Objective 2

- Reprioritize content in academics that results in 2% or better of external traffic contacting the department, or contacting admissions (inquiry or application). Regularly evaluate what types of content within an area of study achieves that conversion rate (someone takes one of the above actions on the page) by integrating analysis of this metric into existing admissions strategy meetings. Be sure to filter out bounced and internal traffic.
- Increase direct collaboration between admissions staff and academic content owners around this reprioritization of content based on metrics. Performance metrics for each content section (courses, success stories, etc.) of a single department should be added to existing meetings. Each department must establish a "metrics advocate" in admissions that knows how to run basic Google analytics reports filtered for that department, demonstrating top performing pages by quarter.

3. Widen the reach and improve the perception of Seton Hill by using a more diverse group of people telling real stories and making a bold statement with selection of imagery.

To increase perception of quality across the University, it should feel authentic as opposed to staged, and celebrate a diverse collection of examples of excellence, including students of different backgrounds achieving unique outcomes. When choosing photographs, don't settle for "just o.k." Each visual should make you pause for a moment.

Key Results for Objective 3

- At least half of non-bounce, external visitors should spend more than 1 minute on the site, which is an increase over current analytics.
- Increase non-regional traffic by 25%.

Appendix 1: Interview Findings

ALL THE DETAIL THAT'S FIT TO PRINT

Interview Research Approach

We performed stakeholder and audience research interviews with nearly 24 different individuals, including

- Freshmen (providing insight on prospective student stakeholders and current students)
- Juniors & Seniors
- Alumni
- Faculty & department heads
- Core staff
- Administration

Our interview findings summarize what we heard from people across the board, and some observations based on what we heard. These observations are broken into the following categories

- Current Site and Workflow
- Audience Insights
- Business Strategy
- Content and Desired Experience
- Design Direction
- CMS & Technology Strategy

Current Site and Workflow

Current Site

- The current home page is cluttered, confusing, and overwhelming. It tries to do too many things at once for too many people.
- Subpages and subsections are under-designed, as a result of insufficient complexity of content modules.
- Content is shallow, too much timely content is hidden in Griffin's lair.
- Difficult to navigate, search, and find content. Poor IA was noted almost universally

Working Culture

- We need to make more of a sea change than a slight evolution. How much of a sea change can you manage? Let's decide that together.
- The administrative culture is in transition towards better management practices, more accountability, and service mindedness.
- The intimacy of the community only serves to exacerbate frustration with missed deadlines and slow processes.

Sustainability; Workflow

- Current workflow is highly bottlenecked, with wait times reported of upwards of two months. Faculty blame the system, and the staff; some recognize the limited human resource issue. There is some resentment around "unpredictable changes" and communication.
- We don't think the system is to blame, we think it's the strategy.
- Becca is the primary point person for sculpting voice and tone for the brand how do we scale Becca?
- Solve the "I just want to fix a typo on my webpage" dilemma!

Audience Insights

Desired Audience

- Everything we do for one audience is at the expense of clarity for a different audience. "Nice for them to know" is not an audience information need. Shrinking audience, more competitive marketplace.
- Primary audience: prospective undergrad/grad/adult, parents of prospective undergrad/grad
- Distinctions between prospective undergrad and graduate students? It might be too soon into the process for that, but it is an enormous distinction/challenge and very easy to overlook in content and design.
- Secondary audience: local community, news media
- Consider reducing importance, or sending elsewhere: internal audiences, alumni, prospective faculty/job seekers

Activity Cycles

- Related to the audience, consider adjusting admissions related messaging around funnel behaviors.

- Articulate key messaging goals month-to-month. Use that to guide departments what to update and focus on. Use slow periods (e.g. June) to focus more on brand identity, and busy periods to focus more on business.

Mobile

- The new website must be responsive, mobile first, and sustainable. It doesn't mean cramming everything you've got into a small screen; it means considering mobile context and working up from there.

Business Strategy

Business Strategy

- Increase in repeat visitors to drive early funnel increases.
- Address decrease in adult enrollment.
- Increase brand awareness. Make a better first impression by measuring first time engagement as time on site.
- "Increase brand awareness" summary regarding expanding recruitment. Multiple interviews mentioned the need to look beyond southwestern PA, where Seton Hill is more naturally known as a brand, and how recruitment nationally and internationally is a serious business goal right now.
- Establish baseline measurements for each key business goal.
- More direct contact with the right people (admissions staff, faculty, etc.). Measure by phone referrals, possibly UTM code.

Metrics

- Admissions staff should take the lead in providing analytics analysis and analytics to academic departments.
- Relate program enrollment numbers to content behaviors.
- Focus on interest to inquiry and inquiry to application metrics. Focus less on app. to deposit and deposit to arrival metrics.
- Non-analytics methods for collecting data? i.e. informal discussions with students, surveys of front-line staff, etc.—things that staff and faculty can do to support their claims that they are interested in metrics?

Content & Desired Experience

Website Examples: Good

- Many websites considered "good" by the audience are content sites you would use daily. In higher ed, smart use of a diverse design system (e.g. CMU) is valued.

Content/IA Strategy

- Faculty control over strengths of program and representation.
- Make it about 1) calls to action that articulate the funnel, and 2) contacting people.
- Think about the minimum amount of content that will do the job. Don't worry about what other higher ed sites do.
- Consider better content connections via tagging, recirculation. "You might also like."
- First impressions are good, but repeat visitors are better. Encourage more frequent, thoughtful, on voice publishing.
- What is our approach to Create Once Publish Everywhere (COPE)?

Content Priorities

- Academic programs need to be organized around disciplines, not reporting structures. Departments need flexibility in addressing their strengths, but guidance in how to do so.
- Student life should include Catholic identity, sports/intramural/housing (on and off)/city.
- Entrepreneurialism is an important theme, for current students and alumni
- For each type of photograph, there should be a guiding principle. E.g. facilities hidden treasures. People show them in action.
- Events need to be presented in an actionable way, limited to a certain distance into the future, and with a clear next step.
- What is the best way to experience an academic building? Residential building? What is a sustainable way to build those things?
- Latest news needs a shared taxonomy for tagging across the entire system of digital properties (e.g. same tagging on public site and on Griffin's lair)

- Outcomes need to be surfaced in departments but reused strategically in admissions, student life, community service, etc.

Academic Program Content

- Each program needs to be able to tell stories with media/pictures, and prioritize their strengths, which vary across departments.

Functionality

- Navigation and search—being able to find the content they wanted.
- Make sure the basics work. What are the basics? (Define them)
- Live chat.
- Simpler forms.
- Promoted search results for certain terms.
- Site should aggregate or integrate social media

Social Media

- For recruitment, focus on Twitter, Instagram, Youtube. For other audiences, Facebook.

- Focus more on sharing the culture and key messages identified by the content strategy.
- Consider limited use of video on a single, external, easily embeddable platform. Youtube or Vimeo. You aren't Netflix, so you don't need that kind of stability.

Calls to Action

- We should consider the primary and secondary desired behavior(s) for each page, and design for them.
- CTAs include the inquiry form, application, planning a visit, contacting an admissions staff member, contacting faculty. Some will need to connect to third party systems.

Design Direction

- Possible Art Direction, Hidden Seton Hill - what are the interesting details around campus that might not be obvious at first?
- More photographs. Smarter composition of photos that tell an unfinished story, e.g. what will happen next?
- More modern look and feel. This could mean lighter, brighter, flatter/material approaches, typeface choices, smarter use of colors, or all of the above.
- Don't let traditional thinking about school colors dictate the user experience.

CMS & Technology Strategy

Recommended Technology Stack

- Recommend starting with LAMP stack CMS options that handle security well, and can absorb and produce APIs easily. It will be important to have easily buildable/customizable UTM codes.

Content Management System (CMS)

- Faculty and staff want CMS training, more guidance and models for creating content, and clear editorial guidelines to follow
- The CMS should provide clear editorial guidelines for entry of key types of content. Filling out each template should provide guidance for telling a good story
- Requirements include form building, workflow with author and approval roles by element/page/template, distributed content ownership, responsive across the board, and preview and rollback capabilities.
- Faculty and staff without detailed web/technical expertise will use the system.

- API consumption and production are a requirement.
- UTM codes need to be created and implemented without technical assistance from a developer.
- Jenzabar integration is a plus.

Technology Strategy

- Admissions staff should take the lead in providing analytics analysis and analytics to academic departments.
- Each and every piece of content should be responsive and successful on any device.

Appendix 2: Kickoff Outcomes

IDEAS WE BUILT TOGETHER

The following ideas and images were captured in the afternoon kickoff sessions.

Responsive Content Prioritization

This is an overview of content prioritization results for an academic department website that was engineered to communicate effectively to prospective students. Each result was developed by a group which included Seven Heads Design consultants, faculty, staff, and students. These will guide our information architecture strategy for academic content.

Group 1

Top Priority Content

1. Curriculum/Course Descriptions
2. Faculty Biographies
3. Facilities/Buildings
4. Student Outcomes after Graduation
5. Call to Action to Apply

Secondary Priority Content

1. Events
2. Social Media Content

Additional Content

Internship Opportunities

Group 2

Top Priority Content

1. Curriculum/Course Descriptions
2. News and Announcements
3. Call to Action to Apply
4. Social Media Content
5. Facilities/Buildings

Secondary Priority Content

1. Student Outcomes after Graduation
2. Student Profiles

Additional Content

Call to Action to Contact Admissions

Group 3

Top Priority Content

1. Call to Action to Contact Admissions
2. Curriculum/Course Descriptions
3. Video Overview
4. Faculty Biographies
5. Facilities/Buildings

Secondary Priority Content

1. Social Media Content
2. Internship Opportunities

Additional Content

3. News and Announcements

Group 4

Top Priority Content

1. Call to Action to Apply
2. News and Announcements
3. Student Outcomes after Graduation
4. Photography of Students
5. Student Profiles

Secondary Priority Content

1. Facilities/Buildings
2. Curriculum/Course Descriptions

Additional Content

Video Overview

Group 5

Top Priority Content

1. Curriculum/Course Descriptions
2. News and Announcements
3. Video Overview
4. Student Profiles
5. Call to Action to Apply

Secondary Priority Content

1. Student Outcomes after Graduation
2. Faculty Biographies

Additional Content

Facilities/Buildings

Group 6

Top Priority Content

1. Curriculum/Course Descriptions
2. News and Announcements
3. Facilities/Buildings
4. Photography of Students
5. Call to Action to Contact Admissions

Secondary Priority Content

1. Student Outcomes after Graduation
2. Faculty Biographies

Additional Content

Student Profiles

Home Page Inspirations

We showed a large group of diverse constituencies 20 different website home pages with the Seton Hill logo in place of the actual site logo. Here's what the group liked, what the group didn't like, and what sites inspired the most disagreement and discussion.

Top 3

- Clarion University
<http://www.clarion.edu/>
- Carnegie Mellon University
<http://www.cmu.edu/>
- Columbia College of Chicago
<http://www.colum.edu>

Bottom 3

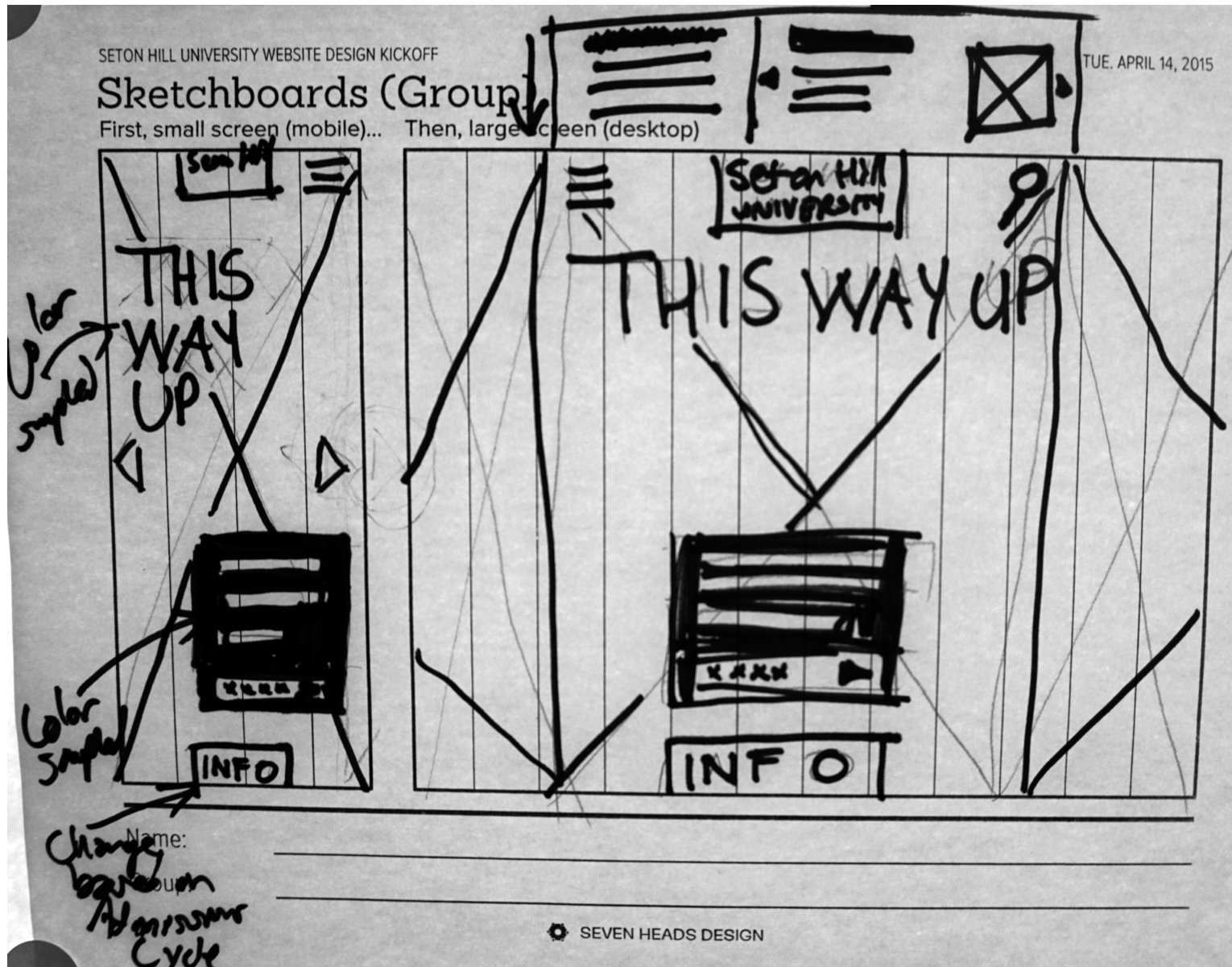
- The New York Times
<http://www.nytimes.com>
- Library of Congress
<http://www.loc.gov>
- Reddit
<http://www.reddit.com>

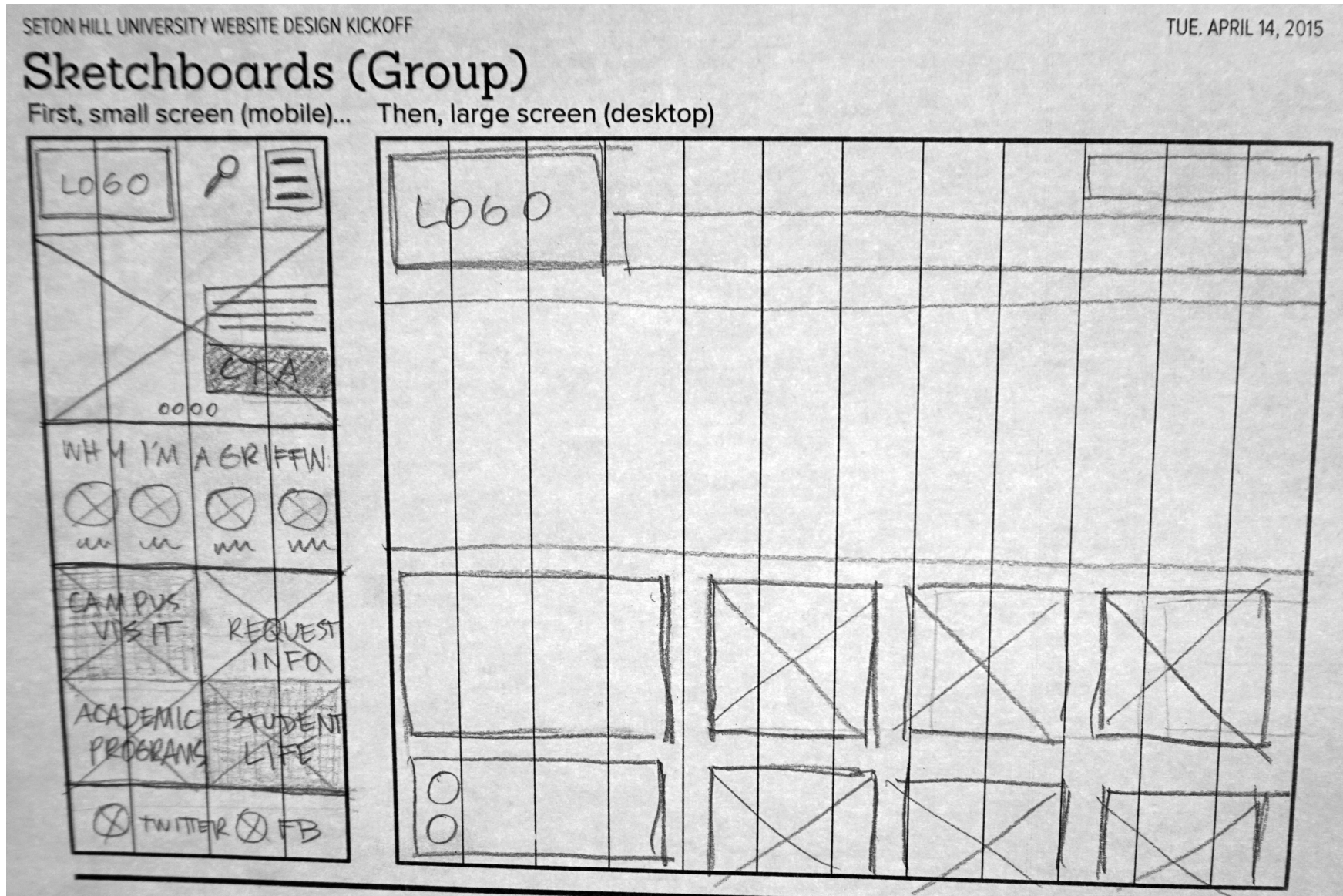
Most Varied Opinions

- Cornell University
<http://www.cornell.edu/>
- Microsoft
<http://www.microsoft.com>
- Fox Entertainment
<http://www.fox.com>
- Ithaca College
<http://www.ithaca.edu>

Home Page Concepts

These four home page concept sketches were developed by the core Seton Hill team in collaboration with Seven Heads Design consultants. Consider them as “springboards” upon which will dive in and further articulate our design direction.





SETON HILL UNIVERSITY WEBSITE DESIGN KICKOFF

TUE. APRIL 14, 2015

Sketchboards (Group)

First, small screen (mobile)... Then, large screen (desktop)

SETON HILL

EDITORIAL MOD.

TEXT

TEXT

TEXT

TEXT

DEPTS

EVENTS

LIVECHAT

SEARCH

FOOTER

SETON HILL

NAV

NAV

NAV

NAV

EDITORIAL MOD.

TEXT

TEXT

TEXT

DEPTS

EVENTS

CHAT

SEARCH

FOOTER

Name: TIM / BECKY / ROBERT / BRETT

Group:

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