



## **Home Page Content: Strategy and Guidelines**

Version 1.0 – September 2011

### **Overview**

This document outlines the basic approach for creating, publishing, and governing web content that appears on the university's home page.

The principles and approaches outlined in this document were developed as the result of extensive research into user behavior, user needs, and web content best practices. All content considered for use on the university's home page should follow the guidelines included in this document.

### **Why the University Needs a Home Page Content Strategy**

The university's home page exists primarily to accomplish two key tasks: establish our credibility as an excellent institution of higher education, and to give our web visitors (especially new visitors) the content and navigation they need to accomplish the things they've come to the site to do.

In order to ensure that we do those things in the most optimal way possible, a content strategy is needed. In this context, a content strategy is a set of standard processes and guidelines that allow university communicators to consistently ensure that home page content meets audience needs and advances university objectives.

## Home Page: Content Zones

There are two primary non-navigation content zones on the university's home page, referred to in this document as Zone 1 and Zone 2. The following graphic illustrates important content considerations for each zone. Further content criteria can be found below.

**Zone 1**

- Content needs to establish university as a credible institution of higher learning and research with prospective students, parents, new users
- Engaging content: answers the questions “why should I consider NAU?” or “how does NAU help people like me get where I want to go?”
- Rarely event-driven; event topics included only with a human interest angle

**Zone 2**

- Intended to communicate fit, community, authentic life at NAU
- Intended for wider audience than Area 1; can be targeted at current students, alumni, internal influencers
- Content helps users make a “fit” determination - needs to communicate what it feels like here

## Content Criteria - Zone 1

Content that lives in Zone 1 should meet the following criteria. Content in this zone:

- should help answer the questions “why should I consider NAU?” or “how does NAU help people like me get where I want to get to?”
- seeks to establish NAU as a credible institution of higher learning, research
- is directed primarily at prospective students, parents, new users
- should tie to/advance university strategic objectives
- is impact driven – gives people a reason to care
- is rarely event-driven, though event topics may complement human interest angles
- focuses on people, and often uses human interest stories that relay research achievements, creative activity, and other student/faculty/university accomplishments
- focuses on the university's role in making a positive difference on society/in the lives of others
- seeks broadly to demonstrate the following:
  - benefits of enrolling at NAU
  - how the university community makes a difference in the world (on individuals, communities, etc. – can be research impact, community work, features, etc.)
  - points of difference/features (i.e., why are we different and why should you care?)
  - university pride/mission – with a human interest angle

## Content Criteria – Zone 2

Content that lives in Zone 2 should meet the following criteria. Content in this zone:

- seeks to help users make a “fit” determination by demonstrating authentic life at the university (e.g. faces of campus, student life, university experience, extracurricular opportunities, cultural events)
- illustrates university culture – i.e. close-knit relationships, small feel with big resources
- addresses a potentially wider audience than in Zone 1; content here can also target current students, alumni, internal influencers (President, ABOR, etc.)
- answers the question, “what can I do at the university?”
- answers the question, “what types of people can I meet at the university?”
- answers the question, “what’s going on at the university?”
- exists within one of the following categories
  - Research
  - Sustainability
  - University life
  - Athletics
  - Community
  - News & Events

## Home Page Content: Management Essentials

- **Content Ownership**
  - Home page content is managed jointly by University Marketing (UM) and the Office of Public Affairs (OPA).
  - Zone 1: UM creates, curates, publishes, approves, and manages content.
  - Zone 2: UM and OPA create, curate, publish, and manage content.
  - Both teams work together to ensure adherence to content strategy.
- **Content Sourcing**
  - UM and OPA have resources dedicated to generating new content for the home page.
  - Members of the university community are strongly encouraged to submit content that meets the guidelines outlined in this document.
    - To submit a story for home page publication consideration, please email Nate Cairney (UM) at [nate.cairney@nau.edu](mailto:nate.cairney@nau.edu).
- **Content Publishing**
  - For Zone 1, an editorial calendar will be publicly available for review. Stories here are designed to be more evergreen.
  - Zone 2 will have a rolling editorial calendar. Content in this area will typically be less evergreen than that found in Zone 1, and will usually be updated more frequently.