

Smart Updates for Higher Ed Websites

Driving Results Without a Redesign

October 10, 2024





Housekeeping

- + 45-minute webinar + 15 minutes for questions and answers
- + Chat and ask questions through the Zoom Control Panel
- + Check your inbox for the webinar recording and slide deck
- + Complete the post-webinar survey

Bill McLaughlin

- + University City, MO
- + Worked in Web since the 90's in many different roles: developer, analyst, architect, configurer, project manager, leader, seller
- + Common threads: always building something new; always in service to clients; always at the intersection of design, content, and technology
- + EVP of Web team at Carnegie, formerly co-owner and COO of mStoner
- + Fan of Metaphors





How My House is Similar to Higher Ed Web

- + Outnumbered
- + Under resourced
- + Chaotic
- + Full of surprises

But It's Okay Because...

“I don't need to organize my closets to throw a dinner party!”

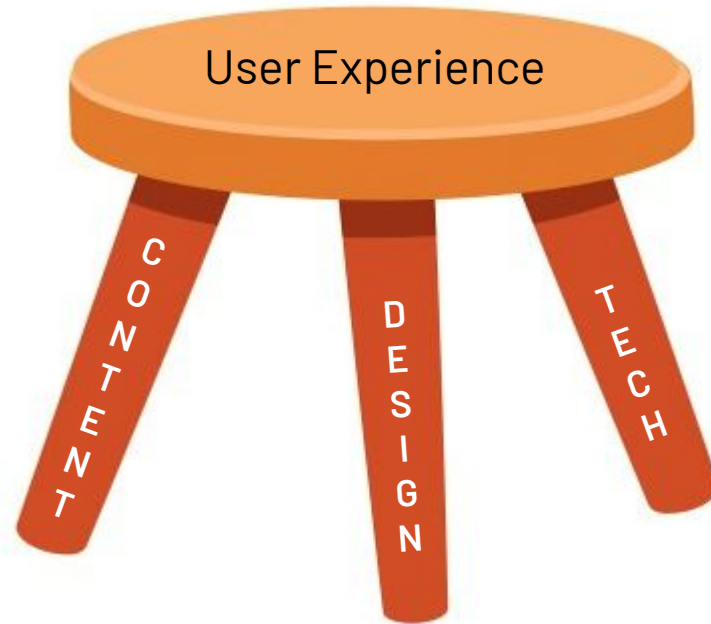
Sylvie Vachon

Director of Digital Communications
McGill University

Prioritization But first, more metaphors

Is incremental change right for your website?

The Three Legs of a Website Stool



It's Time for a Redesign



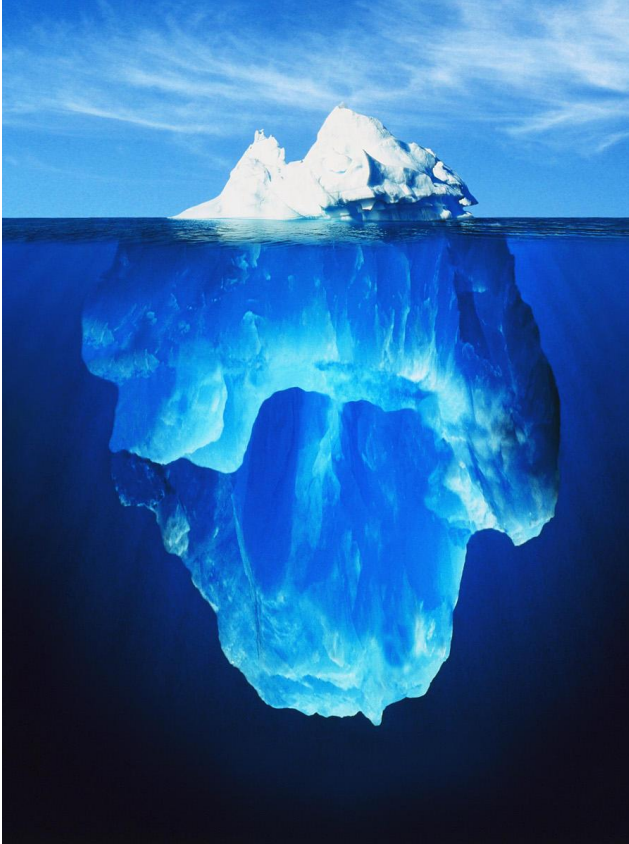
Incremental Improvements For The Win!



OR



Hopefully you are in
the right place...



Marketing-critical .edu content
(100's of pages)

All other content
(1,000's of pages)

Antidote to Content Sprawl

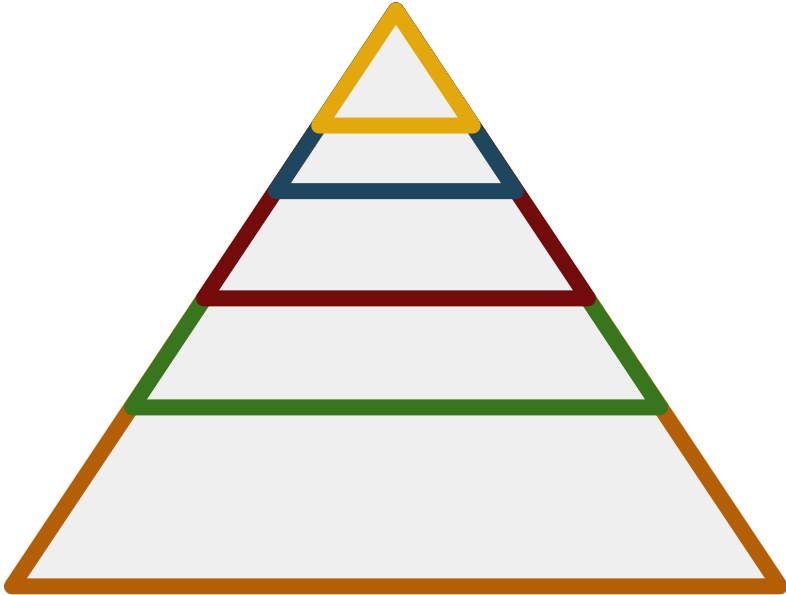
“Every page needs an audience, a strategy, an individual owner, and an agreed-upon review cycle.”

Voltaire Santos Miran

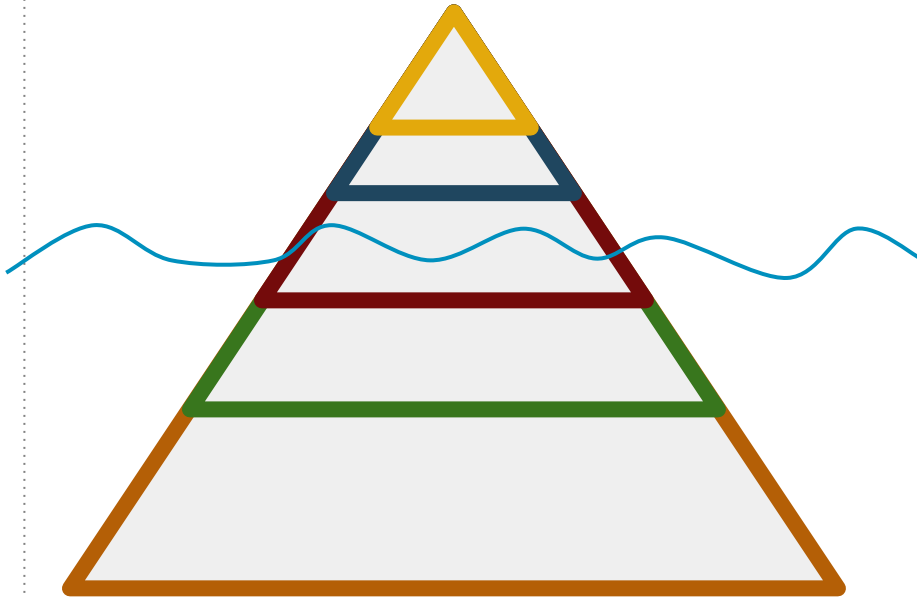
EVP of Creative
Carnegie

Establishing a
prioritized review
cycle is often the
hardest part

Prioritized Review Cycle



Prioritized Review Cycle



Centralized: top priority

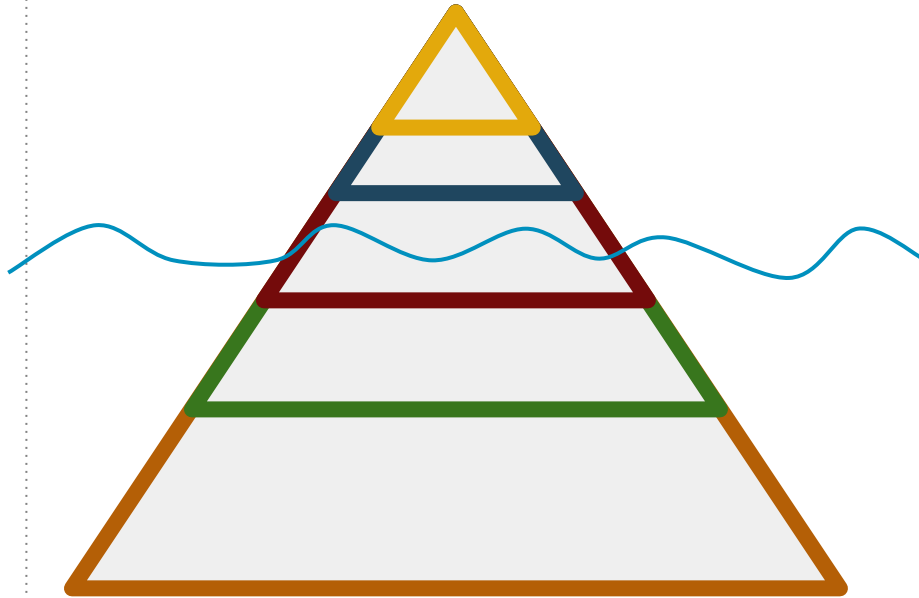
Centralized: quarterly cadence

Centralized: calendar cadence

Decentralized: periodic sit downs

Decentralized: policies, guidelines,
and spot checks

Prioritized Review Cycle



Centralized: top priority

< 25 pages

Centralized: quarterly cadence

50 - 100

Centralized: calendar cadence

200 - 300

Decentralized: periodic sit down

20 sections

Decentralized: policies, guidelines, and spot checks

1,000's

Your numbers will depend on team size and the number of academic programs

How Do I Decide Marketing Criticality?

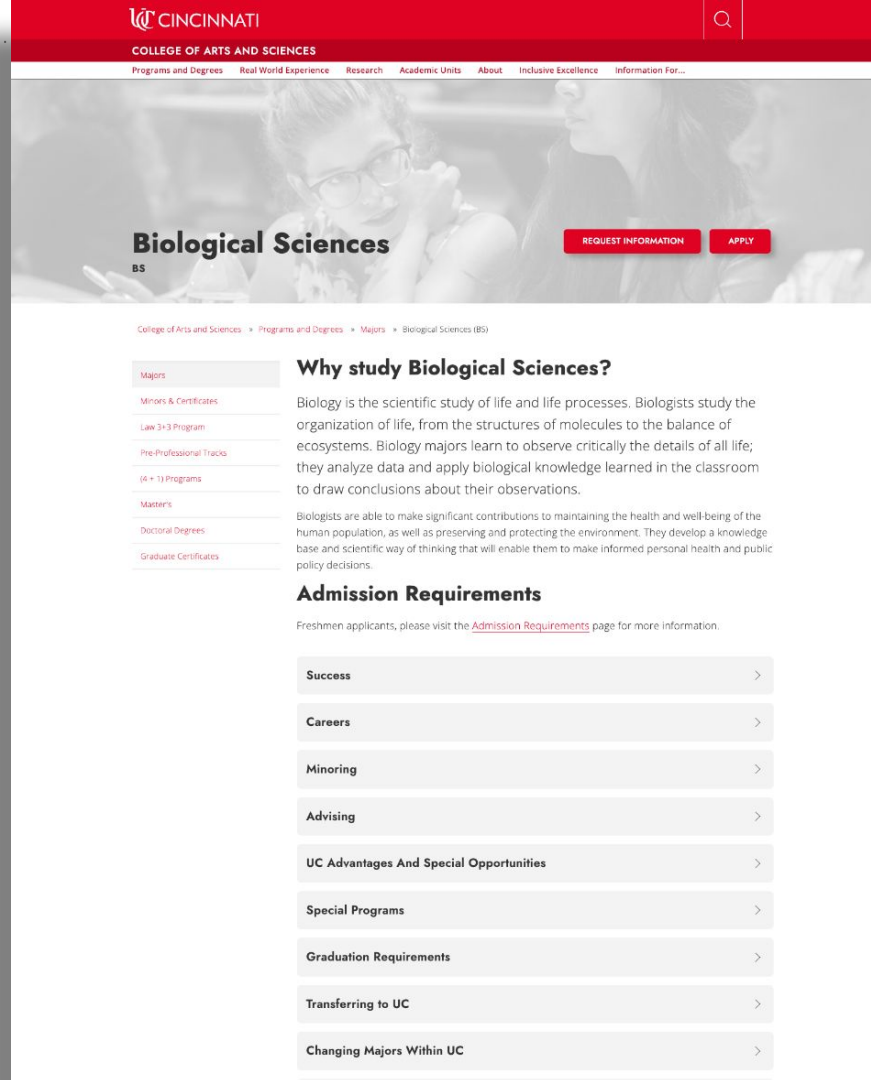
- + Look at your analytics, identify your most visited pages
- + The homepage and any pages that are one-click off the homepage from the header navigation
- + Admissions and Aid pages that a) rank highly in your analytics, b) are positioned prominently in that section of the site, or c) provide information that is critical to prospective students and their decisions and next steps
- + Emerging, fledgling, or flagship academic programs

Example

University of Cincinnati Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences

- + **Audience:** Prospective undergraduate students
- + **Strategy:** Generate enthusiasm for the program, capture inquiries
- + **Individual Owner:** Sam Hillman, Digital Content Specialist
- + **Review Cycle:** Once per semester

Note: Review is not limited to content. It's about taking a fresh look and assessing the overall quality and effectiveness of a page (or section), and what can be done to make it better.



Optimizing your pages Three Incremental Approaches

DIY, Team Tasks, Projects



Do It Yourself (DIY)

Recommended Toolbox

- + Chrome browser extensions for readability, accessibility, SEO
- + A quality assurance tool
- + Heat maps
- + Google Analytics
- + Google Search Console
- + Qualitative user feedback as often as feasible

DUBBIT Features DubBlog Leadership Team Partners [Request a Demo](#) [Login](#)

Explore Features

- Web Accessibility Checks**
Helping to ensure your website is, at a minimum, WCAG 2.1 compliant and building a more inclusive space for everyone.
- Web Governance Policies**
Ensuring your content is consistent and complies with established policies is crucial for maintaining relevance and credibility.
- Broken Link Checks**
Uncover and correct broken links to ensure a flawless browsing experience, enhance your website's credibility, and boost your SEO rankings.
- Spelling & Readability Checks**
Stay on brand and develop content that offers superior readability and enhances user engagement.
- SEO Checks**
Elevate your rankings, connect with your target audience, and amplify your website visibility, all while forging a path toward sustainable online success.
- Task Management**
Organize, prioritize, and track remediation activities and responsibilities to increase productivity and achieve goals efficiently.
- Uptime Monitoring**
Uptime Monitoring will notify you of changes in the status of your website. A reliable website fosters a positive user experience, customer satisfaction, and overall business success.
- PDF Checks**
Accessible PDFs are crucial in enhancing user experience and demonstrating a commitment to accessibility.

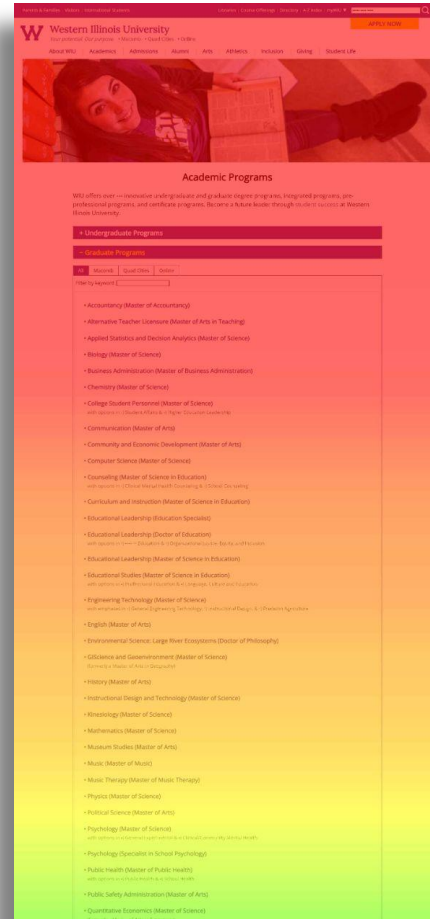
Process for Reviewing a Page

- + Tell yourself you've never been to this page before. Think like your audience would.
- + Take a deep breath, pause, note your initial impressions, and then take it all in from top to bottom relatively quickly.
- + Regroup. What is the purpose of this page? What are the desired outcomes?
- + How well does the page deliver on its purpose?
- + Jot notes of your unstructured observations.

Key Questions When Reviewing a Page

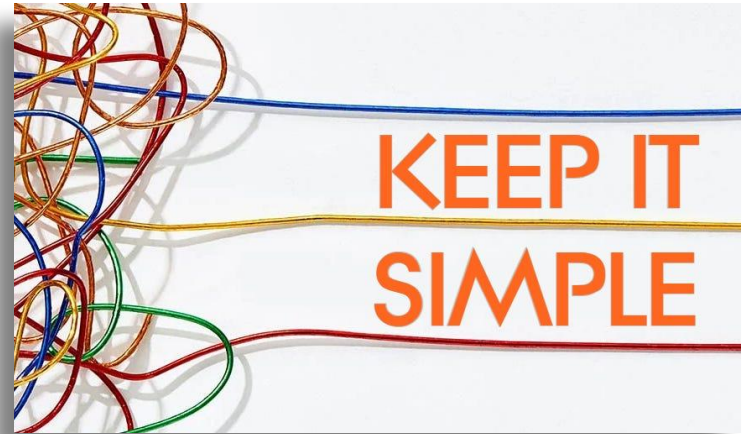
- + Is there effective visual hierarchy?
- + Is the content easy to “sip and dine”?
- + Does the content support the page’s purpose?
- + Are points of conversion clear and overt?
- + Are points of conversion clear and overt?
- + Are there formatting or grammatical errors?
- + What is different when on a mobile device?
- + What can be gleaned from tools and data?

Jot notes of your structured observations.



Every Page Can Be Improved

- + Look for low-hanging fruit, such as replacing images, fixing formatting issues, updating metadata, or editing copy.
- + Ensure subheadings are used correctly.
- + Use available components to establish hierarchy and introduce visual variety.
- + Make sure that Calls To Action stand out and are at the top of the page.
- + Keep shared lists! Blocking issues, Enhancements, Larger DIY improvement jobs.



Exercise

Thanks to Cara Robinson for submitting this page!

The screenshot shows a website for the UNC School of Government Master of Public Administration (MPA) program. The header includes a search bar, 'FAQ', 'APPLY NOW', and 'REQUEST INFO' buttons. Navigation links for 'Admissions', 'Academics', 'Careers', 'Alumni', and 'About' are present. The main content area features a large image of graduates in blue and purple regalia. The title 'Tuition and Scholarships' is prominently displayed. Below the image, there are two text boxes: one on the left with a white background and one on the right with a blue background. The right box contains a call to action in bold blue text.

The program offers a variety of scholarships and research assistantships, and all students are automatically considered when they apply.

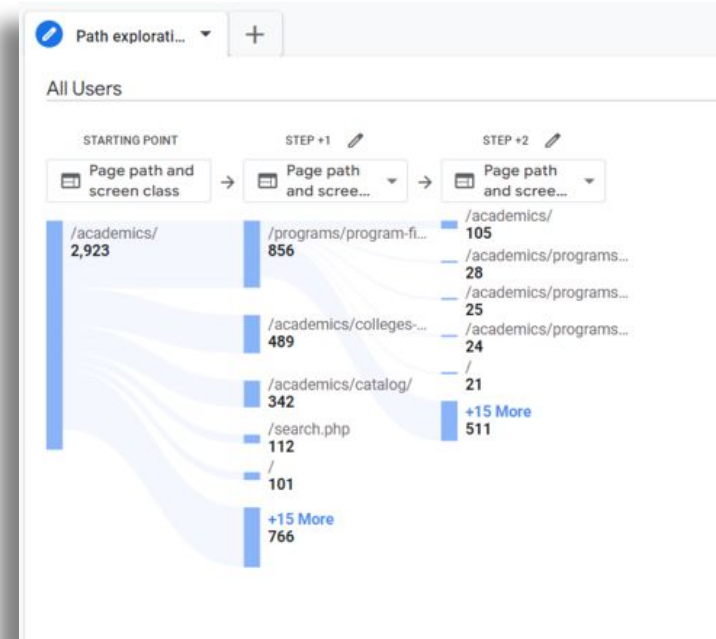
Tuition rates and available scholarship funds vary depending on whether a student is enrolled in the on-campus or online format.

The MPA program is committed to recruiting exceptional candidates from a wide range of backgrounds, regardless of income level.



Reviewing a Section is Similar

- + What is the purpose of this section?
- + What are the desired outcomes?
- + Are the pages arranged to support the purpose and outcomes?
 - Too many links?
 - Confusing or inconsistent labels?
 - Hodge podge?
- + Are points of conversion clear?
- + What can be gleaned from available data?





Team Tasks

Team Tasks

Set aside ongoing capacity within your team for tasks and small projects. Establish and maintain a network of people you can call when a need goes beyond your team's skill set or level of access.

- + Metrics: analysis, synthesis, insights, and recommendations
- + Small adjustments to formatting, functionality, or design
- + Resolution of technical issues such as security patches, error messages, bugs

Projects



Projects

Make time and save budget for projects that you cannot tackle on your own.

- + Regularly modify or extend your existing design and functionality: template adjustments, new components, style changes. *Quarterly*
- + Occasionally introduce new and improved functionality. *Annually*

The screenshot displays the UT Tyler website's program search interface. At the top right, the Carnegie logo is visible. The navigation bar includes links for 'Current Students', 'Faculty & Staff', 'Alumni', 'Health', and 'Información en Español'. A secondary navigation bar contains 'Request Info', 'Visit', 'Apply', and 'Give'. The main header features the UT Tyler logo and a menu with 'Academics', 'Admissions & Aid', 'Student Life', 'Research', and 'About'. Below the header, a search bar is present with the text 'Search by program keyword'. To the left of the search results, there are three filter sections: 'FILTER BY PROGRAM' with a 'Select Program Type' dropdown, 'FILTER BY SCHOOL/COLLEGE' with a 'SCHOOL/COLLEGE' dropdown, and 'FILTER BY LOCATION' with a 'Location' dropdown. The search results are titled 'Find Your Program' and include a brief introduction: 'The University of Texas at Tyler offers more than 90 degree and certificate programs through eight colleges and four locations...'. The results list several programs, each with a small image and a description: 'Accounting, BBA', 'Applied Arts & Sciences, BAAS', 'Art History, BA', 'Art, MA and Coordinated MFA', 'Biochemistry, BS', 'Biology, BS', 'Biology, MS', and 'Biotechnology, MS'. At the bottom of the results, it indicates 'showing 8 out of 99 results' and provides buttons for 'Load More Programs' and 'Load All Programs'.

Site Search

- + Many people go straight to the search
- + Important part of experience even when information architecture is excellent
- + Investing in a licensed search tool will give you better features, more control, more accurate results

For the latest updates on Augusta campuses reopening and resources available, please visit [Jagwire Alerts](#). Latest update: Friday, Oct. 4, 4:00 p.m.

AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY [CURRENT STUDENTS](#) [ALUMNI](#) [COMMUNITY](#) [FACULTY & STAFF](#) [MILITARY](#) [PATIENTS](#) [Resources](#)

[Admissions](#) / [Academics](#) / [About](#) / [Student Life](#) / [Athletics](#) / [Research](#) / [Health](#) / [Giving](#)

Search Results [A-Z Index](#) [People Finder](#) [Portals](#)

Augusta University / Search Results

Search Results

Your search for **'biology'** returned **664** results

College of Science and Mathematics

The College of Science and Mathematics provides students with strong foundations in the sciences as well as preparation for careers, citizenship, and a life-long love of learning.

[Overview](#) [Academic Programs](#) [Faculty](#)

Vascular Biology | Degree Program

In the Vascular **Biology** program you'll be guided by an international team of established, well-funded investigators using state-of-the-art equipment and novel techniques to better understand the mechanisms of disease and the development of new treatments...Vascular **biology** students study the function of the cardiovascular system in health and disease, with research ranging from heart failure and kidney disease to acute lung injury and sickle cell disease...By choosing to earn you...

<https://www.augusta.edu/programs/vascular-biology-phd.php>

BS in Biology | Degree Program

Do you want to take the fundamentals of **biology** that you learn in the classroom and through hands-on learning in laboratories and on field sites and apply them in the working world?

<https://www.augusta.edu/programs/biology-bs.php>

Biochemistry and Cancer Biology | Degree Program

With a doctorate in Biochemistry and Cancer **Biology**, you'll be prepared to make your mark as a translational researcher...The program's two areas of concentration allow students to focus on the research they're passionate about, either biochemistry or cancer **biology**...By choosing to earn your doctorate in Biochemistry and Cancer **Biology** from the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University, you'll be working alongside world-class researchers in state-of-the-art...

<https://www.augusta.edu/programs/biochemistry-cancer-biology-phd.php>

Filter Results By

- [All Results \(664\)](#)
- [Faculty \(261\)](#)
- [Intranet \(7\)](#)
- [News \(3\)](#)
- [University \(190\)](#)
- [Documents \(203\)](#)

Chat Bot

- + Young people use chat to get answers any time, and to explore on their own terms
- + Important part of meeting your audience where they are
- + Emerging as an effective way to capture leads

The screenshot displays the SDSU website's Admissions section. At the top, the SDSU logo and navigation links (Apply, Visit, Info, Give, Menu) are visible. A large banner image shows a courtyard with the text "Tours & Events". A chat bot window titled "Hi, I'm Admissions Bot!" is open, offering assistance with questions. Below the banner, the heading "We Can't Wait to Meet You!" is followed by five event tiles:

- Campus Tours & Virtual Visits >**: A group of people in red SDSU shirts.
- Out-of-State Events >**: A woman looking at a globe.
- International Student Events >**: Three people, one in traditional Middle Eastern attire.
- Preview Day >**: Three people holding "SDSU Board!" signs.
- Explore SDSU Admitted Student Day >**: An aerial view of the campus courtyard.



Conclusion

Back to the Start, Our House

- + We're always behind on bills and laundry, yet we keep plugging away.
- + We keep the kitchen stocked and clean on the daily, it's the hub of all activity.
- + We outsource for help with regular cleaning, and when our appliances break.
- + We saved money and converted our garage to a bonus room for hanging out and having fun.
- + We completely neglect the yard and it's a total mess.

It's not perfect but it works. For us, our kids, our friends, and our extended family.





Questions?

Resources



Dive Deeper

[Fixing Common Accessibility Issues](#)

[Conducting Keyword Research](#)

[Creating High-performing Program Pages](#)

[Measuring Page Performance](#)

Learn More

[Carnegie's Website Services](#)

Explore

[Partner with Carnegie](#)

[Connect with Bill](#)

More Resources



Tools

Heat maps: [Microsoft Clarity](#)

Quality assurance: [DubBot](#)

Accessibility Extension: [WAVE Evaluation Tool](#)

Readability Extension: [TRAY](#)

SEO Extensions: [META SEO inspector](#), [SEOquake](#)

[Free Resources from Nielsen Norman Group](#)

Slate Tiny Training | Making Accessibility Accessible

Tuesday, October 15 from 2:00 - 4:00 pm ET | Virtual

Back by popular demand from Slate Summit! The philosophy is simple: A Slate database and website created with people with disabilities in mind will benefit everyone. Join us as we embark on a journey of best practices to make sure your website, portals, and Deliver mailings are meeting (and exceeding) current WCAG standards. We promise that anyone can do this work and that you will leave with more than a dozen concrete takeaways.

Cost: \$100

Register Today 





Thank You!

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