

Designing and Implementing a Multi-Campus University Website: A Practitioner's Perspective on the Busitema University Website Development Project

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Abstract

The Busitema University website faced significant challenges, including outdated information, poor user experience, and lack of mobile optimization, hindering effective communication in its multi-campus setting. To address these issues, the university employed a user-centered design approach and iterative development, leveraging Drupal as the content management system. Stakeholder engagement through surveys, focus groups, and workshops ensured the platform met diverse needs across six campuses. The new website features real-time updates, mobile-friendly design, and interactive tools like live chat, significantly improving accessibility and usability. Performance metrics showed a 30% increase in traffic and a 15% reduction in bounce rates within the first month, alongside higher user satisfaction. The project highlights the importance of UCD and stakeholder collaboration in overcoming multi-campus coordination challenges. Future enhancements could include advanced mobile features and immersive technologies like VR campus tours. This initiative underscores the critical role of well-designed university websites in fostering communication, recruitment, and institutional branding.

Keywords- Busitema university, Multi-campus university, Stakeholder engagement, University website design, User experience, Web development

INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, university websites are vital for recruitment, communication, and branding. Busitema University, a multi-campus Ugandan institution, developed a new website to overcome its previous platform's limitations. Addressing challenges from its six specialized campuses, the new site, built on Drupal, employs user-centered design to enhance stakeholder engagement and operational efficiency.

Context

Busitema University, established in 2007, is a leading Ugandan public university

with six campuses specializing in diverse fields such as engineering, health sciences, and agriculture (Busitema University, 2023) [1]. While its multi-campus structure enables tailored academic programs, it also creates challenges in communication and information dissemination, as each campus operates semi-autonomously, leading to fragmented systems. The previous website lacked a centralized structure, making it difficult for users to navigate and access essential information like program details, academic calendars, and policy documents (Thelwall et al., 2006; Jjagwe and L. B. Nanteza., 2024)[2][3]. As digital transformation reshapes higher education (Maliko Kisembo et al., 2025; Kagoya, 2020)[4][5], the need for a centralized, user-

inclusivity and innovation.

Long-term, the website will continue to enhance communication, attract talent, and bolster the university's reputation. Its real-time updates and interactive features ensure it remains a dynamic platform, meeting the evolving needs of its users and stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

The Busitema University website development project created a centralized, user-friendly platform using User-Centered Design (UCD) and iterative development. Addressing issues like outdated information and poor user experience, the new site features real-time updates via Drupal, enhancing communication and accessibility. Stakeholder engagement and iterative testing ensured a functional, mobile-friendly platform, improving recruitment, branding, and user satisfaction.

Future Work

Future work on the Busitema University website could further enhance its usability, accessibility, and functionality. Mobile optimization, including push notifications and location-based services, would improve user satisfaction (Kim, 2024 [46]; S. Al-Khalifa, 2014 [37]). Advanced interactive features like VR campus tours and AR tools could offer immersive experiences, boosting engagement. Expanding analytics and user feedback mechanisms would provide insights for continuous improvement. Streamlining content management through clearer guidelines, a content calendar, and dedicated staff would ensure consistent updates. Enhanced accessibility features, such as advanced screen reader compatibility and voice navigation, would make the site more inclusive. A dedicated section showcasing partnerships and collaborations could highlight research, community engagement, and global initiatives, enhancing the

university's reputation. These improvements would ensure the website remains dynamic, engaging, and responsive to user needs.

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