

Click three times: There's no place like 'home' at Saint Mary College's renovated web site

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Think of it as home remodeling without the dust: updating, rearranging and redecorating to make things easier to use and more inviting to all who enter.

However, this is not a house — it's a home page. Saint Mary College's web site on the Internet is undergoing complete renovation, and while you may not see the changes just yet, you can be sure that www.smcks.edu will seem like a whole new place this fall.

That's what Dr. Serena Roberts, associate professor in the Education Department, and Brenda Tietze, web developer, are promising as the result of months of effort shepherding Saint Mary College's Internet presence to new levels of technological sophistication and user-friendliness.

While the current site offers basic on-line access to numerous aspects of the college, it "doesn't have a unified presence," remarks Dr. Roberts. "It doesn't look like we all teach at the same college, and it's not an accurate representation of who we are."

For one thing, she says, "It should take no more than three mouse clicks to get where you want to go in a web site — the rule of thumb in the electronic community."

Ease of access will be just one of the amenities offered by the "kinder, gentler" site, she adds. "We're improving not only the organization of what's there, but also the content, because we have a lot of different audiences. We've met with other members of the faculty to get input on what they want in their section of the site. Each program will still have some freedom regarding what's on their front page, and where you can go within their area."

But the overall appearance of the site will possess some uniformity. "We're not introducing the new site in stages," Tietze explains. "We're waiting until it's finished so we can have quality control, and present it as a whole."

To reach the college's multitude of on-line audiences — current and prospective students, faculty, alumni, or simply web surfers with a special interest, to name a few — the site will offer infinite opportunities for adding pages and links to other sites. As the remodeled home page unfolds, "anyone

may suggest that a page or a hot link be added,” Dr. Roberts says. “For example, if there’s an alumna who has her own web site and wants it to be linked to ours, she can do it.”

Creating such a link would entail submitting a form and receiving initial approval from the appropriate department head; development of the actual electronic connection by web developer Tietze; proofreading of the linked site, and final approval. While the process offers no guarantees, Dr. Roberts believes that “if someone can make a good argument why their site should link to Saint Mary College, we can do it.”

The web site itself will change from day to day — so much so that Tietze will shift from part-time to full-time responsibilities in the fall to meet its demands. “Athletics alone will keep me pretty busy,” she laughs.

But Tietze emphasizes that, like Saint Mary College itself, the web site “is a work in progress, featuring new events, new faculty, highlighting students and their work. That’s what people want to see — that we’re changing, adapting, growing.”

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