

Website Development & Governance Policy

Policy Version: 5.1

Revision Of: Website Development Policy

Effective date: 10/1/2024

Purpose

The Feinberg Office of Communications is charged with maintaining a consistent online presence throughout a rapidly evolving network of Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine websites.

This policy is intended to:

- Create a more comprehensive, centralized understanding of Feinberg’s online presence.
- Ensure that Feinberg’s visual identity and name are correctly and consistently portrayed and all Feinberg-associated sites comply with current University-wide and federal guidelines.

Audience

Feinberg faculty, staff, students and trainees.

Policy Statement

Units that are fully or partially part of the medical school must coordinate the development of websites with the Office of Communications.

A unit is defined as a:

- Department, institute, center, program or core with leaders who have Feinberg appointments
- Lab or research project maintained by faculty with Feinberg appointments

Feinberg units may not engage outside vendors, build their site internally and/or use commercial platforms (e.g., Squarespace, Weebly), unless they have documented permission from the Office of Communications to do so. Requests for approval must be sent to medweb@northwestern.edu. Feinberg-related websites previously built outside of our Cascade content management system will not receive Office of Communications support and are subject to review before they can be linked to from Feinberg websites (detailed in the section “Linking on Cascade Sites & Faculty Profile” below).

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Policy Implementation

Establishing or Redesigning a Website Via Cascade

There are three options for building and hosting medical school websites within Cascade:

- **Programs or projects within a unit or departments:** If your project falls under an existing unit, it does not qualify for a standalone site. Please contact your unit's website owner for assistance in incorporating it into the existing website.
- **Academic or administrative units with the dean's approval:** These sites may be built in Cascade with Office of Communications support. Complete the [website project request form](#) to confirm your next steps regarding a new site's creation or an existing site's redesign.
- **Research labs:** Lab sites may be built in Cascade with Office of Communications support. Please note: You must have a full-time lab staff member assigned to be trained to keep the site updated in Cascade, and you must collect all necessary site content prior to getting into our project queue. Depending on the queue, there may be a significant wait time. Download [a list of lab site content requirements](#) for information on next steps.

Establishing a Lab Site Via NUSites

Labs with urgent needs may build their own site on [NUSites](#). NUSites is a WordPress-based solution for building and managing websites and blogs. It is free of charge to University faculty and staff and offers comprehensive training documentation to assist a unit with the development of a site. Neither the Office of Communications nor Feinberg IT offers maintenance support to site owners who use this solution. This option may be appropriate for small, informational sites that do not have special technical requirements. The Office of Communications reserves the right to change NUSites content to align with the medical school's naming conventions, style or messaging. The site name must not include the words "department," "division," "center" or "institute" without approval from the Office of Communications.

Logo Usage on Websites

Correct usage of the Feinberg logo is built into the Cascade templates. **No other logos may be used within Cascade** without documented permission from the Office of Communications. Requests for approval must be sent to medweb@northwestern.edu.

Outside of Office of Communications-managed templates, the NM/Feinberg logo must not be used on any website, including in conjunction with other logos or as a decorative element, without documented permission. Northwestern University has a permissions process for using Northwestern logos on third-party websites. While permission is assessed on an individual basis, the use of University marks and logos is typically limited to events sponsored by the school and

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electronic or print communications produced by the school. Requests for approval must be sent to medweb@northwestern.edu.

Custom Domains & Redirects

The URL structure of Feinberg-affiliated sites must follow a standard structure.

- All department and center sites at Feinberg follow the same URL structure: feinberg.northwestern.edu/sites/NAME.
- Lab sites can follow the standard Feinberg Lab URL structure (<https://labs.feinberg.northwestern.edu/NAME>) or stay with the default structure provided by NUSites (sites.northwestern.edu/NAME).

Sites with established custom domains prior to the adoption of this policy are not required to change to the standard format.

Redirects will also not be granted to any sites maintained outside of Cascade.

Cascade User Access & Updates

Any site supported by the Office of Communications and built within Cascade must have one full-time staff or faculty member designated as the “site owner.” Each website may have a total of five full-time employees trained on Cascade. Students and temporary employees are not eligible for Cascade access. Request user support or training via [the Office of Communications website](#). Access to Cascade may be revoked and content overridden by the Office of Communications at any time.

Digital Accessibility

Updates made by all users are subject to and must be compliant with [the University's Digital Accessibility Policy](#). This policy applies to all digital content, including websites, videos, podcasts and Canvas content. Content may be removed if it does not comply.

Embedding Forms

Only forms created via MachForm should be embedded on Cascade sites. Create external links to forms created using other tools.

Create a MachForm Account

To create a MachForm account, [submit a request to the Feinberg IT Help Desk](#). Your request will then be sent to the Office of Communications for approval. Only requests from shared/unit-wide NetIDs ([departmental NetIDs](#)) will be approved.

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Protected Health Information in Forms

No protected health information (as identified by the Standards for Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information, developed by the Department of Health and Human Services as part of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996) should be gathered or listed via MachForm. [See the HIPAA privacy rule for more information.](#)

Data Retention in Forms

To comply with state and international laws and to minimize the amount of data stored, Feinberg keeps information for as long as needed to fulfill the particular purpose for which it was collected. As such, entries in form tools (e.g., MachForm) are automatically and permanently deleted within MachForm 24 months after they are submitted. While the entries will be deleted, the forms themselves will remain active until deleted from the tool or your webpage and you may download your data before its deletion. We may retain records if legally required or to fulfill a legitimate interest. If you have any concerns regarding specific forms, please contact medweb@northwestern.edu.

Linking on Cascade Sites & Faculty Profiles

Official University pages may not link to commercial sites that advertise/sell products or services and may not accept sponsorship from commercial entities in exchange for advertising or links to commercial sites.

Specific exceptions may be allowed if the commercial links support the University's missions or provide an essential service to the Northwestern community.

All are subject to review by the Feinberg Office of Communications.

Credits such as "Site powered by..." or "Site created by..." are prohibited.

Cascade sites and faculty profiles may include links to professional websites with approval from the Faculty Affairs Office. FAO and the Office of Communications reserve the right to remove any site that does not meet any of the following faculty site guidelines:

Only sites predominantly focused on research or education topics with a direct connection to Northwestern University and/or Feinberg will be considered (not personal clinical sites, not sales sites, etc.)

- The site should not be primarily about selling books/videos/anything for personal gain — those types of sites can exist; they just should not have a University and/or Feinberg connection

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- The site can, but does not need to be, University- and/or Feinberg-branded
- If the site includes a University and/or Feinberg logo, it must be reviewed by the Office of Communications for approval
- The site will need to meet the Office of Communications general content guidelines, comply with the Feinberg patient care content directive (see “Clinical Sites” below), and be clearly labeled as a lab or education site
- If the site includes a link for donations, the link must go to the Feinberg Giving site, not directed to personal research

Requests to add a site to a faculty profile should be sent to fao@northwestern.edu.

Faculty Listings in Cascade

All Feinberg websites for departments, centers and institutes without sub-centers must include an A-Z faculty list, which is an alphabetical list of **all** active faculty appointed in the department, center or institute, as recorded in the faculty database maintained by the Faculty Affairs Office.

Chairs/directors may request an alternative faculty list limited to the names of faculty who contribute most centrally to the unit's mission areas. The creation of such a list must meet the following parameters established by Feinberg.

General Requirements

All units must include an A-Z list of faculty on their website.

Units may additionally choose to display a list that contains the subset comprising their “core” or “principal” faculty. Faculty will be included in this list based on their appointment type, and Feinberg has set a minimum standard for the appointment types that must be included in this list (see next section). Units can expand the list to include additional appointment types, but Feinberg does not permit the creation of a custom faculty list assembled by choosing a select group of individuals across varying appointment types. **Everyone who has the same appointment type must receive the same treatment on the department website.**

Core/Principal Department Listings

When implementing a limited faculty list, departments can choose the label “core faculty” or “principal faculty.” All departments who opt to show such a faculty list must include faculty who meet these conditions:

- Status = Active
- Appointment Type = Primary
- Category = Regular
- Basis = FT or PT-G (the latter means part-time with 50% or more effort)
- Rank = Instructor, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Professor

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Departments may include more faculty on the list but cannot subtract from it. When adding, all individuals in a group must be given the same treatment (e.g., if a department wants to add one person who has a secondary appointment, then all secondary appointments need to be included).

Clinical Sites

Clinically focused, patient-facing sites may not be built in Cascade or NUSites. Individuals should work with the Feinberg Office of Communications to coordinate the appropriate solution.

Intranets

Feinberg's solution for internal information sharing is Microsoft's SharePoint tool. Sites characterized as an intranet and requiring credentials to access must be built within SharePoint. SharePoint is a fully supported and fully secure environment. The SharePoint site owner is fully responsible for managing the site content, giving users access and assigning permissions.

Emeritus Faculty Sites

Emeritus faculty with websites built on University platforms (Cascade or NUSites) can maintain the web presence as long as they have an active NetID. The Office of Communications is not responsible for maintaining access to legacy sites built outside of these platforms. Should an emeritus faculty member have a website hosted on a University server, but not in Cascade or NU sites, they must migrate their research website information to NUSites. When a faculty member's NetID is deactivated, their website will be removed from University platforms.

Policy Update Schedule

This policy will be assessed one year from its effective date; thereafter, reviews will be completed at least once every three years.

Revision History

This is a full revision of the Website Development Policy, version 5.1, which was effective as of 10/31/2023.

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Relevant References

- [Website Project Request Form](#)
- [NUSites](#)
- [Cascade Training & Support](#)
- [Northwestern University Digital Accessibility Policy](#)