

Title: LourdesWorld.com

Category: 18a. Teresa Du Bois Exline Award for Best Practices in Communications and Marketing, 2,999 FTE or fewer

Institution: Lourdes College

Contact:

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Description:

LourdesWorld.com is an interactive mini-website designed for students, alumni, and other members of the Lourdes community. It's a way for visitors to stay connected to the Lourdes family by sharing photos, videos, podcasts, and stories about the Lourdes College experience. The website pulls together many aspects of Web 2.0 technology, including mash-ups with popular websites such as Flickr and YouTube and links to the College's presence on MySpace and Facebook.

Goals and objectives:

As a commuter college with a growing number of traditional-age students, Lourdes was eager to provide an easy way for our constituents to stay connected to the campus. On LourdesWorld.com, visitors can communicate, create, and collaborate by reading and responding to blogs from students, alumni, faculty and staff; downloading podcasts from the president of the College; reading profiles of our students and faculty; and voting in interactive polls. The new site is not intended to replace our official web presence (lourdes.edu) but instead enhances the current website by providing a more social, interactive, and hands-on view of the College.

Alignment with institutional and/or advancement goals:

Since many of our students and alumni lead busy lives and have many commitments to work and family, it can be difficult to bring them to our physical campus outside of class time. LourdesWorld provides a way for those individuals to feel a sense of community through a virtual environment – joining discussions, sharing content and ideas, and keeping up-to-date on news and events surrounding the College. The website also brings the larger community (including prospective students) into the conversation, allowing them to learn about the faculty, staff, students, and alumni who make Lourdes such a great place to learn. Lourdes is known for personal attention and caring faculty;

LourdesWorld helps to showcase those unique qualities to a larger audience while strengthening connections with our students and alumni.

Audience: current and potential students, faculty & staff, alumni, and the surrounding community

of Staff:

Development, design, and programming of LourdesWorld.com was performed by Thread Information Design, a local agency. The site is updated regularly by the Web Content Administrator for the College. Student, faculty/staff, and alumni bloggers provide blog content, and the ability to post comments is open to all visitors (monitored by the Web Content Administrator).

Program budget:

The overall cost for the development of the website was \$12,500. Updates are made regularly by the Web Content Administrator for the College.

Challenges:

Because of their open and candid nature, blogs have presented something of a challenge for the College in that we do not have control over what our bloggers may write. While we do moderate comments posted to the blogs, posts made by our bloggers are made public immediately. Overall, the majority of posts and comments have been positive, and visitors seem to appreciate the freedom of speech granted them through this new medium.

Results:

Since its launch in August, 2007, LourdesWorld has consistently received between 900 – 1,300 visits per month, with nearly 40% of that number being new visitors (an impressive number for a small college whose enrollment in fall 2007 was 2,183 students). On average, visitors view three or more pages per visit. We currently have 11 student bloggers, 19 faculty/staff bloggers, and 5 alumni bloggers. The blogs are the most popular section of the site, averaging over 1000 pageviews per month (all web statistics obtained through Google Analytics). The website has also received favorable coverage in the [Toledo Blade](#).