

# Website to receive new design

**Redesign team to assemble to improve PUC website for marketing, usability reasons**

**Richard Chambers**  
News Editor

Meetings have begun for the purpose of gathering perspectives about the problems and potential of the PUC website and forming a Web Redesign Task Force. After meetings in February, this task force will work based on suggestions to improve the appearance, content and organization of the site.

Kris Falzone, interim associate vice chancellor for marketing, said the website's design, which is several years old and out of date in Web terms, should be made competitive with the designs of other educational institutions. She may incorporate surveys and focus groups or open sessions into her research during February.

Falzone expects the redesign to be complete by the end of the semester or soon after it. The timeline corresponds with her marketing goal of preparing the site for the summer search by prospective fall students.

"So it's a pretty aggressive timeline – especially for a university," Falzone said.

Falzone expects the

interim time to be divided into forming the initial updated designs by the end of March, testing the designs in the first half of April and refining in the last half. The task force will consist of administrators, staff, faculty, an SGA representative and student representatives from the different colleges.

Falzone said a major problem with the current site is that its design is not intuitive. The site contains much information, but it is not in places visitors expect to find it. She said items for which visitors look may be inside a series of several pages, so the visitor may need to already know the steps to take.

"In a best-practice world, the way people measure their experience with a website is, 'How many clicks did it take from the home page?'" Falzone said.

Falzone said long series of pages quickly frustrate visitors and might reduce the number of

both prospective students and community members who will become involved with PUC.

**Adam Cooper, president** of the SGA, has been attending the meetings. He spoke of his difficulty finding the plan of study for his major in accounting. He suggests the plan be accessible from the College of Business page, not letting the search engine to be the easiest place to find it.

William Law, dean of the College of Engineering, Mathematics and Science, said he has been working for about nine months to improve consistency just within his department's Web content. He believes that the effort should expand across the colleges and agrees with Falzone that the effort will be most efficient if everything is done together.

Law said the

prior layout was more unclear than it is now to students and prospective students because each set of major requirements and lists of faculty were different between departments, even departments as similar as mechanical engineering and electrical and computer engineering.

"And I don't think through any intent to make it unfriendly. It was just because everybody kind of thought their site was the best thing," Law said.

Law gave the example of a student who wanted to take a mathematics course and a biology course. The student would find the information for the first course and then would visit the biological sciences pages to look in the same place and would not find the same sort of information.

Law asked his departments to make core information consistent.

"There should be a sense of sameness on an

institution's website – for information, at least. So—and I think most of the colleges agree with that principle," Law said.

Law has not heard much student feedback on the changes his college has made, so he has formed a Student Advisory Council and asked it, for one of its tasks, to have students navigate the website and report what was easy or difficult to find. He has ensured some of these same students are involved in the university-wide redesign project.

Falzone identified the scrolling news feature, the sparing use of social media and the scarcity of images as other drawbacks to the current design. She said, since the process should be open, she will not point to specific models to follow or features to add, but she suggested the site, in general, would probably benefit from more images, more news and more highlights of faculty, staff and student accomplishments.

Cooper suggested the PUC directory be updated to include students.



photo illustration: Virginia Eib

## Author Arnold August sees 'democracy in motion' in Cuba, Venezuela

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News Editor

Arnold August, writer and lecturer from Canada, compared democracy in Cuba and Venezuela to that in the United States in a presentation on Feb. 5 in the YJean Chambers Hall.

August said that Fidel Castro's 1959 rise to power occurred through democratic means. He criticized U.S. journalism for not making

people aware that Cuba continues to have elections.

August argued against claims that the United States has the ideal democracy because the nation operates under a Constitution that was written and ratified by a small minority.

August said he opposed the nation's distinction between felonies and misdemeanors. He said the distinction targets minorities and harms democracy because

those convicted of felonies cannot vote for life.

August praised Venezuela's system that in 1998 elected Hugo Chavez president and in 1999 led to a new Constitution. He said elections continue to be trustworthy in Venezuela.

August called for more accurate media in the United States.

Associate professor Kathleen Tobin, scholar of Latin American history,

agreed that U.S. called for listeners to seek our fairer media.

"Often issues such as continuing free education and access to health care for all are the goals. Cubans and Venezuelans who support equal access in these areas consider their efforts highly democratic and a U.S. system that fosters education and health care only for people 'who can afford it' as highly undemocratic," Tobin said.

August called for fairer media coverage. He observed that what many in the United States think of as democracy is the type based on private property, whereas nationalization policies are democratically supported in Cuba and Venezuela.

His recent book is titled "Cuba and Its Neighbors: Democracy in Motion."

Lee Artz, communication professor, organized the presentation.