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Colleges and Universities' Use of the World Wide Web:
A Public Relations Tool for School Excellence for the Digital Age

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Abstract

This study explores college and university Web sites to determine the extent institutions utilize the Web to accomplish public relations goals. A sample of the 129 best national universities in the United States compiled by the *US News and World Report* was used for analysis. The study found university Web sites excelling in ease of interface functions and largely acceptable in information provider capabilities. The universities' relational communication capabilities, however, were not fully explored. The results show that schools with the small-medium level of excellent student recruitment and alumni giving in school characteristics are more likely than schools with high levels of these characteristics to actively utilize the Web to reach prospective students and parents. In this light, schools behind in school excellence strive to use the Web as an important public relations tool to overcome their inferiority to superior schools.