

# Draft AFRE Website Style Manual

**Notes on best practices to enhance website accessibility  
and readability on multiple size browsing devices**

by MT Weber

Sept 2016

- This note briefly documents a set of recommended and implemented best practices for the AFRE website.
- Motivation
  - Assists AFRE to meet essential MSU/CANR website accessibility standards, **and**
  - Improve AFRE's website content readability, regardless of browsing device.
- Draws on suggested best practices/learning tutorials at:
  - MSU Web accessibility guidelines - [Basic Checklist: Online Content Accessibility](#) see key hints on slide 3
  - Rutgers University – Communications and Marketing ([Writing for Websites](#))
  - Hampshire College – [Web Writing Style Guide](#)
  - [9 Simple Tips for Writing Persuasive Web Content](#) by Henneke – Enchanted Marketing

## **Basic Logic of AFRE Proposed Website Style Guide**

- Web readers don't sit in front of their computer screens (or gaze into their mobile phones) and read webpages word-by-word.
- Instead, they scan pages for useful information.
- To provide easily scannable content, use these techniques in web writing:
  - Break information into “chunks” that can be easily accessed and comprehended.
    - (Website Top Level Tabs and corresponding Subtabs)
  - Depending on amount of information to present in a given subtab, consistently partition and label the contents of subtabs
  - Consistently use different size headers to denote the partitioning of content.
  - Use bulleted lists to present content detail.

# AFRE Website Content Map

## By Tabs and Subtabs

- [About](#)
  - [Department Leadership](#)
  - [Biweekly Announcements](#)
  - [Advancing Economics, Transforming Lives](#)
  - [Statement of Values](#)
  - [Publications](#)
  - [Giving](#)
  - [History of AFRE](#)
  - [News](#)
  - [Contact Us](#)
- [People](#)
  - [Faculty](#)
  - [Emeritus/Former Faculty](#)
  - [Staff](#)
  - [Current Graduate Students](#)
  - [Completed Graduate Students](#)
- [Undergraduate Study](#)
  - [Agribusiness Management](#)
  - [Environmental Economics & Management](#)
  - [Food Industry Management](#)
  - [MSU Admissions](#)
  - [Undergraduate Scholarships](#)
  - [Undergraduate Academic Advising Office](#)
  - [Degree Requirements](#)
  - [Minor Requirements](#)
  - [Career Exploration](#)
  - [Study Abroad](#)
- [Graduate Study](#)
  - [M.S. Degree](#)
  - [Ph.D. Degree](#)
  - [Graduate Courses](#)
  - [Dual Major](#)
  - [Graduate Specializations](#)
  - [Applying and Visiting](#)
  - [Financial Aid](#)
  - [Grad Student Organization](#)
  - [Costs](#)
  - [Thesis/Dissertation Award Winners](#)
  - [Program Strengths](#)
  - [Job Placements](#)
- [Events](#)
  - [AFRE Weekly Seminars](#)
  - [AFRE Brown-Bag Seminars](#)
  - [AFRE Graduate Symposium](#)
  - [Development Brown Bag Seminars](#)
  - [AFRE/FSG Seminars](#)
  - [Economics Dept Seminars](#)
  - [CANR/Other MSU Seminars](#)
- [News](#)
- [Projects](#)
  - [Domestic Research & Outreach](#)
  - [International Research & Outreach](#)
  - [AFRE Faculty Specialization](#)
  - [Past Projects](#)
- [Centers & Services](#)
  - [AFRE's Expanding Horizons](#)
  - [Ag Credit Conference](#)
  - [Center for Economic Analysis](#)
  - [Economic Analysis of Sustainable Ag. & Food Systems](#)
  - [Extension/Outreach Programs](#)
  - [Food Security Group - FSG](#)
  - [Elton R. Smith Endowment](#)
  - [Morris Chair in State and Local Government Finance and Policy](#)
  - [MSU Income Tax School](#)
  - [North Central Regional Center for Rural Development](#)
  - [State and Local Government](#)
  - [The Food SCENE](#)
  - [The Product Center](#)
  - [Telfarm](#)
  - [Food Security Policy \(FSP\) Innovation Lab](#)
- [Connect With Us - Quick Links](#)  
[Additional Connect With Us - Quick Links](#)

# Examples – Chunks of Information, Consistent Tab and Subtab Headers, and Presentation of Basic Content via Bullets of Information

 MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Search... 

DEPARTMENT OF  
**AGRICULTURAL, FOOD, AND RESOURCE ECONOMICS**

[Home](#)  
[About](#)  
**[People](#)**  
[Faculty](#)  
[Emeritus/Former Faculty](#)  
[Staff](#)  
[Current Graduate Students](#)  
[Completed Graduate Students](#)  
[Undergraduate Study](#)  
[Graduate Study](#)  
[Events](#)  
[News](#)  
[Projects](#)


## People

### Overview


- Throughout its history, AFRE has been fortunate to have outstanding and dedicated people associated with all the dimensions of its research, outreach and teaching missions.
- Use the navigation bar at the left, or select an option below, to see listings of AFRE current faculty, Emeritus/Formal faculty, staff or graduate students.

### Menu - People

- [Faculty](#)
- [Emeritus/Formal Faculty](#)
- [Staff](#)
- [Current Graduate Students](#)
- [Completed Graduate Students](#)



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 MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Search...

DEPARTMENT OF  
**AGRICULTURAL, FOOD, AND RESOURCE ECONOMICS**

Home

About

Department Leadership

Biweekly Announcements

Advancing Economics, Transforming Lives

Statement of Values

Publications

Giving

History of AFRE

News

Contact Us

People

Undergraduate Study

Graduate Study

Events


News

Projects

About

Our Mission

- We create, preserve, and disseminate knowledge through research, teaching, and outreach.
- We apply knowledge to help individuals lead more productive lives, and to assist in the development and improvement of firms, organizations, communities, and public institutions.
- We seek to contribute to Michigan, the nation, and the world. We emphasize applied and disciplinary contributions especially to the economic and managerial effectiveness of firms in the food and agricultural sector, and to the sustainability of agricultural production, environmental resources, and rural communities.
- As educators, we work with students, leaders, innovators and problem-solvers.
- We are committed to excellence across all our programs, both domestic and international.



Learn About Our Contributions

- Read our semesterly on-line magazine-format publication, [Advancing Economics, Transforming Lives](#), that summarizes the department's news for alumni and other stakeholders.
- View [our bi-weekly newsletter](#) summarizing events and opportunities.
- [Contact Us](#) and/or use [Quick Links](#) to stay in touch with other areas of AFRE's work

Menu About

- Use the navigation bar at the left, and/or below to find other information about the Department.
  - [Department Leadership](#)
  - [Biweekly Announcements](#)
  - [Advancing Economics](#)
  - [Statement of Values](#)
  - [Publications](#)

# Examples – Chunks of Information, Consistent Tab and Subtab Headers, and Presentation of Basic Content via Bullets of Information

Home

About

People

**Undergraduate Study**

Agribusiness Management

Environmental Economics & Management

Food Industry Management

MSU Admissions

Undergraduate Scholarships

Undergraduate Academic Advising Office

Degree Requirements

Minor Requirements

Career Exploration

Study Abroad

Graduate Study

Events

News

Projects

Centers & Services

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL, FOOD, AND RESOURCE ECONOMICS

### Undergraduate Study

#### Degree Options

- Majors: The Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics offers bachelor's degrees in:
  - [Agribusiness Management](#),
  - [Environmental Economics and Management](#), and
  - [Food Industry Management](#).
- Minors: The department also offer minors in the same areas as above. [Learn More](#)

#### Advising and Overrides

- Our advisors are [Ruthi Bloomfield](#) and [Dale Elshoff](#).
- Email us at [AFRE-ADV@anr.msu.edu](mailto:AFRE-ADV@anr.msu.edu).
  - Advising appointments are scheduled [online](#) and are generally 30 minutes.
  - The Undergraduate Advising office is located in Room 1, Justin S Morrill Hall of Agriculture.
  - Walk-in advising is closed for the summer, walk-in advising will resume Wednesday, August 24. [Learn More](#)
- For overrides, please fill out this [form](#) to request an override. ABM, FIM and EEM courses only.


#### Change your Major

- Freshman or Sophomore - either <http://www.uud.msu.edu/advising.html> and click on "Major change Form"
- Or go to any UUD advising office in the Neighborhood Engagement Center to request a major change.
- Junior (56 minimum credits) or Senior - email Ellen Schueller - [schuell2@msu.edu](mailto:schuell2@msu.edu)

#### Undergraduate Scholarships and Study Abroad

- Undergraduate scholarships are available to ABM, FIM and EEM - These scholarship applications will be available in spring. [Learn More](#).
- Study Abroad: [MSU](#) offers several study abroad opportunities.
- Our department also offers the Jake and Maxine Ferris Undergraduate Study Abroad scholarships which are available in the Fall (winterbreak and spring) and in the Spring (summer and fall). [Learn More](#).

#### Menu Undergraduate Study





## Examples – Chunks of Information, Consistent Tab and Subtab Headers, and Presentation of Basic Content via Bullets of Information

DEPARTMENT OF  
**AGRICULTURAL, FOOD, AND RESOURCE ECONOMICS**

[Home](#)  
[About](#)  
**[People](#)**  
**[Undergraduate Study](#)**  
[Agribusiness Management](#)  
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[Study Abroad](#)  
[Graduate Study](#)  
[Events](#)

### Agribusiness Management

#### Degree Requirement

- For students who declared Agribusiness Management as their major on or before September 1, 2015, the degree requirements: [Agribusiness Management Degree Requirements \(pdf\)](#)
- For students who declared Agribusiness Management as their major on or after September 2, 2015 (first day of classes of Fall 2015), the degree requirements: [Agribusiness Management Degree Requirements \(on or after September 2\) \(pdf\)](#)

#### Degree Focus

- The Agribusiness Management major is designed to meet the needs of students who are interested in careers with agricultural input supply, agricultural production, commodity assembly and processing, and agricultural marketing organizations. The program, which focuses on the managerial functions performed by organizations throughout the agribusiness sector, provides a system-wide perspective of managerial problems confronting such organizations. Faculty members associated with the program maintain close relationships with agribusiness companies.

#### Careers Opportunities

- The US Department of Agriculture estimates that many more agribusiness careers are available than there are qualified people to fill them. The shortage will be greatest for managers, financial specialists and marketing/sales representatives — the careers upon which our program focuses.

#### Advisors

- Ruthi Bloomfield - [bloomff9@msu.edu](mailto:bloomff9@msu.edu) - 517-432-5298
- Dale Elshoff - [elshoff@msu.edu](mailto:elshoff@msu.edu) - 517-884-8976
- Advising Office - Justin S Morrill Hall of Agriculture, 446 W. Circle Dr., Room 1.  
Advising appointments are scheduled [online](#). Walk-in advising is closed for the summer, walk-in advising will start Wednesday, August 24.

#### Recent Training and Career Information

- Salary Range: \$36,000 – \$60,000
- Career Positions
  - Commodity Trader



# Implementing Consistent Headers For Titles, Tabs and Subtabs

Title of Website [ <h1> header assigned by EE software] White on Green Background

“About” Top Level Tab [ <h2> header assigned by EE software] **Green and Bold**

“Department Leadership” Subtab [<h2> header assigned by EE software) **Green and Bold** ]

- Subtab partitioning – sublabel a [<h3> header assigned by user] **Black & Bold**
- Subtab partitioning – sublabel b <h3> header (assigned by user) **Black & Bold**
- Subtab partitioning – sublabel c <h3> header (assigned by user) **Black & Bold**

“Biweekly Announcements” Subtab [<h2> header assigned by EE software) **Green and Bold** ]

1. Heading where EE controls size of font : <h1> white and <h2> green and bolded.
2. Headings where users have control <h3> and below: Use only one color in text – black .
3. Heading <h3> is automatically bolded by EE. Consistently use <h3> on all sublabels on a given page
4. Text entered below sub-headers is organized by bullets and is the EE default font size

The screenshot shows the website for the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics (AFRE) at Michigan State University. The header is green with the MSU logo and the department name in white. A search bar is in the top right. The left sidebar contains a navigation menu with links like Home, About, Department Leadership, Biweekly Announcements, Advancing Economics, Transforming Lives, Statement of Values, Publications, Giving, History of AFRE, News, Contact Us, and People. The main content area has a green 'About' header, followed by 'Our Mission' and a list of bullet points. A photo of a meeting is shown next to the mission statement. Below the mission statement is 'Learn About Our Contributions' with another list of bullet points. At the bottom is 'Other Information'. Red circles and lines highlight specific HTML tags and their corresponding text on the page.

**Annotations:**

- <h1> EE**: Points to the main header "DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL, FOOD, AND RESOURCE ECONOMICS".
- <h2> EE**: Points to the sub-header "About".
- <h3> Sublabel a**: Points to the sub-header "Our Mission".
- <h3> Sublabel b**: Points to the sub-header "Learn About Our Contributions".

1. Heading where EE controls size of font : <h1> white and <h2> green and bolded.
2. Headings where users have control <3> and below: Use only one color in text – black .
3. Heading <h3> is automatically bolded by EE. Consistently use <h3> on all sublabels on a given page
4. Text entered below sub-headers is organized by bullets and is the EE default font size

The screenshot shows the website for the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics at Michigan State University. The header is green with the MSU logo and a search bar. A left sidebar contains navigation links. The main content area has three sections: 'Giving', 'Thanks For Your Help', and 'Decide On a Gift'. Red circles and lines highlight specific HTML tags and content areas as follows:

- <h1> EE**: Points to the main department heading 'DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL, FOOD, AND RESOURCE ECONOMICS' in the green header.
- <h2> EE**: Points to the section heading 'Giving' in the main content area.
- <h3> Subcontent a**: Points to the subheading 'Gifts Make a Difference' under the 'Giving' section.
- <h3> Subcontent b**: Points to the subheading 'Thanks For Your Help'.
- <h3> Subcontent c**: Points to the subheading 'Decide On a Gift'.

The sidebar navigation links are: Home, About (highlighted), Department Leadership, Biweekly Announcements, Advancing Economics, Transforming Lives, Statement of Values, Publications, Giving, History of AFRE, News, Contact Us, People, and Undergraduate Study.

The 'Giving' section contains three bullet points about the importance of private gifts and the revenue they generate for the department.

The 'Thanks For Your Help' section contains two bullet points about the department's appreciation for donors and a link to learn more about giving.

The 'Decide On a Gift' section contains two bullet points about making annual gifts and a link to the 'Chair's Discretionary Fund'.

## Example of selecting ,<h3> (Heading 3) when posting text on a given page in EE.

Generally, let EE set defaults for “Font Family” and for “Font Size”

The screenshot shows the 'Edit Entry' interface in EE. The top navigation bar includes 'Structure', 'Create', 'Edit', and 'Metadata'. The breadcrumb trail shows 'Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics' > 'CP Home' > 'Publish' > 'Edit Entry'. The 'Edit Entry' section has tabs for 'Publish', 'Date', 'Categories', 'Options', 'Revisions', 'Structure', 'Metadata', and 'Sitemap'. The 'Content' section is active, showing a rich text editor with a toolbar. The 'Styles' dropdown is open, showing 'Heading 3' selected. The page content includes a title 'Giving', a URL title 'giving', and a body with a heading 'Gifts Make a Difference' and a list of bullet points.

Structure Create Edit Metadata

Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics CP Home Publish Edit Entry

Edit Entry

Publish Date Categories Options Revisions Structure Metadata Sitemap

Title

Giving

URL Title

giving

Content

Instructions: This is the page content.

Heading 3 Font Family Font Size

Gifts Make a Difference

- Private gifts play a critical
- Your donations in support
- Private financial support from

Thanks For Your Help

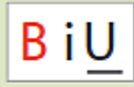
- AFRE appreciates dedicated supporters who know and value our high-quality research and extension in

## QUICK TIPS: Online Content Accessibility



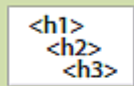
### Text and Contrast

Check that text has a strong contrast against the page background.



### Text Styles

Use more than color to denote differences, emphasis, and content meaning.



### Heading Styles

Use descriptive heading styles to designate content organization.



### List Styles

Use bulleted or numbered list styles to denote list structure.



### Alternative Text

Provide alternative text for images, graphs, and charts.



### Multiple Avenues for Multimedia

Supply multiple avenues for multimedia content (e.g., audio with a transcript or video with captioning).



### Added Context

Use descriptive titles, headers, and link text to provide added context.

Do not rely solely on references to shape, size, or position to describe content.



### Tables

Format and use simple tables with column and row headers.

The “Basic Checklist: Online Content Accessibility” with more details is at [webaccess.msu.edu/basiclist](http://webaccess.msu.edu/basiclist).



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Web Accessibility — [webaccess.msu.edu](http://webaccess.msu.edu)


## Key hints on editing AFRE’s site in EE


1. Use black text on white background & use bolding carefully and sparingly.
2. Don’t use colored fonts to get attention . Avoid All CAPS.
3. EE defaults for <h1> and <h2>. User selects <h3>
4. Use bullets for text rather than numbers. Avoid paragraphs of text
5. Insert alternative text as meta data on all images.
6. When uploading AFRE videos, use captioning. Links to outside videos w/out captioning ok
7. Don’t use “click here”. Use “view xxxxxx” so users know what information appears at this link.
8. Don’t use tables to present info – Not workable in responsive mode



# Why Does the Style Include a “Menu – XXXX” Subheader on Each Top-Level Tab

Short Answer – This is a short-term fix waiting for a longer-term ANR/Tec fix.

 MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Search... 

DEPARTMENT OF  
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[Home](#)  
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[Completed Graduate Students](#)  
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[Graduate Study](#)  
[Events](#)  
[News](#)  
[Projects](#)


## People

### Overview

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- Use the navigation bar at the left, or select an option below, to see listings of AFRE current faculty, Emeritus/Former faculty, staff or graduate students.


### Menu - People

- [Faculty](#)
- [Emeritus/Former Faculty](#)
- [Staff](#)
- [Current Graduate Students](#)
- [Completed Graduate Students](#)






“Menu – XXXX” Subheader on Each Top-Level Tab is Redundant When Viewing The AFRE Website on a Desktop or Larger Screen. Menu Options are Seen on the Left

 MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF  
**AGRICULTURAL, FOOD, AND RESOURCE ECONOMICS**

Search... 

Home

About

**People**

Faculty

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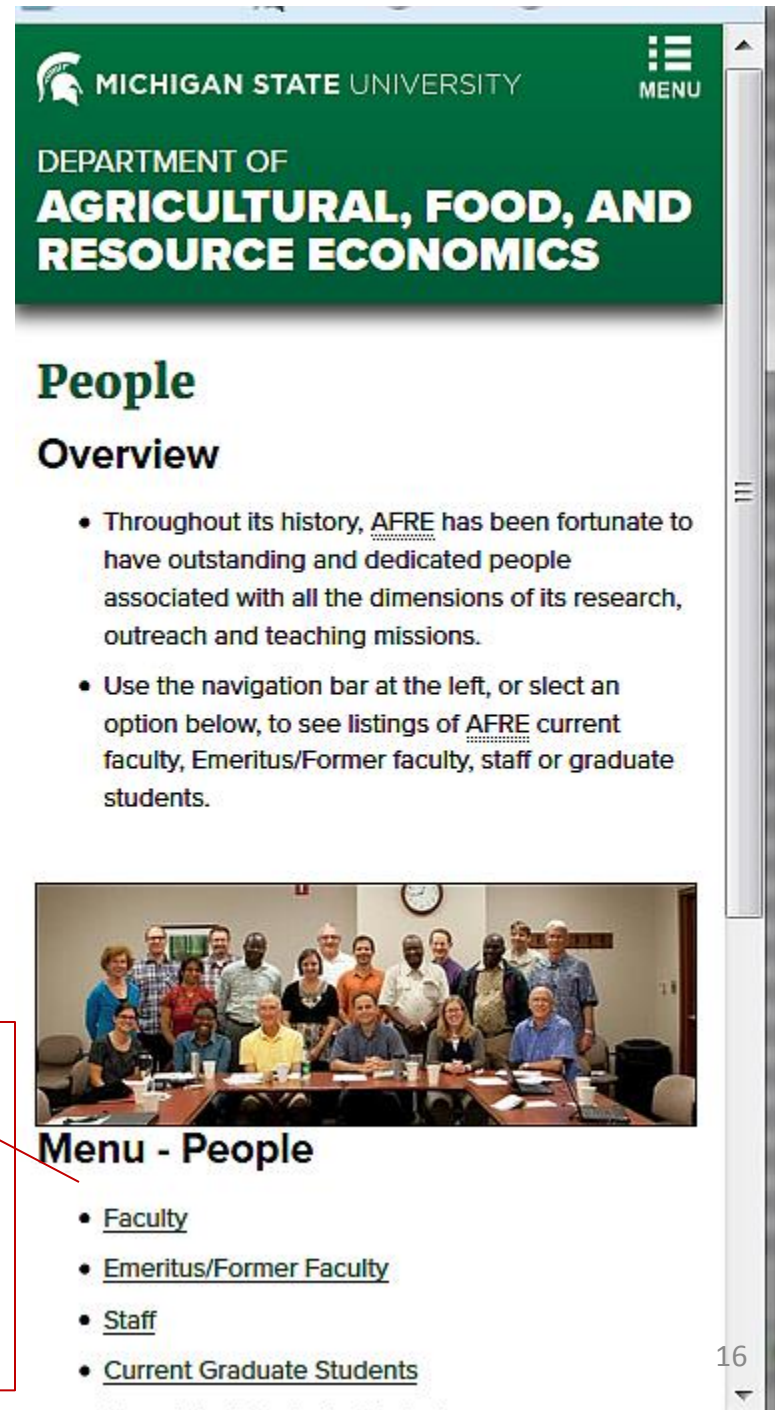


# On Cell Phone Viewing of AFRE Website, No First Hand View of Navigating to Subtabs

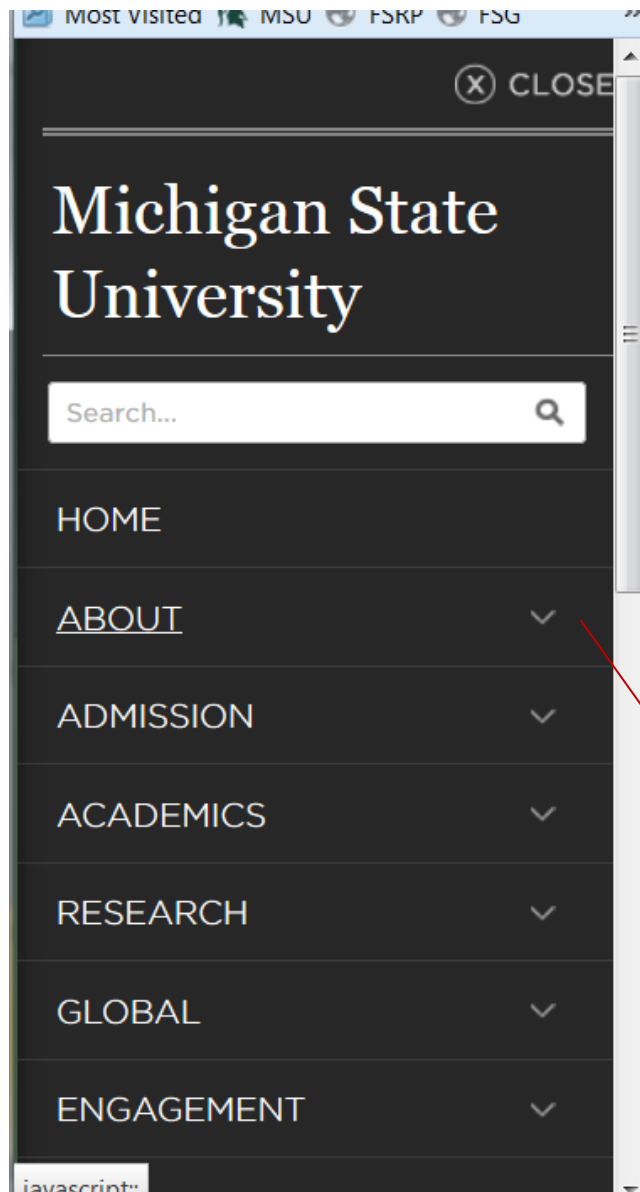
ANR/TEC May Setup CANR Websites Similar to the MSU Website



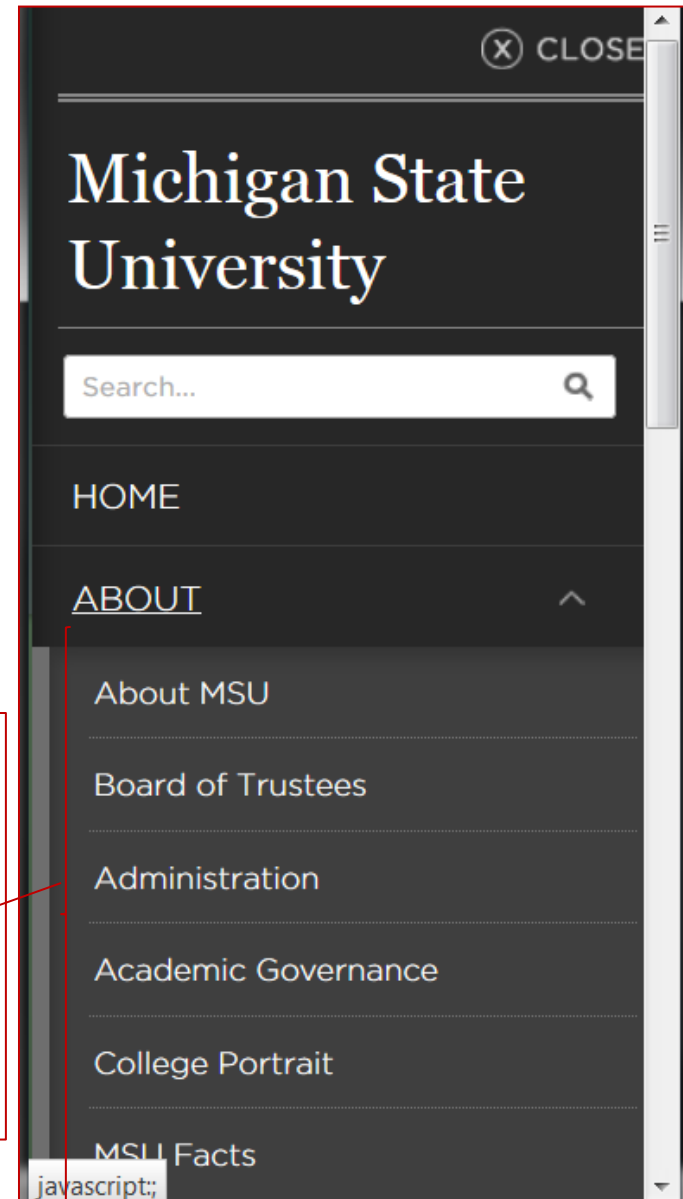
Adding  
Menu-  
People  
Allows Easy  
Onward  
Navigation



# How The MSU Main Website Facilitates Navigation in Responsive Mode



Down  
Marks  
Allow  
Clicking  
To View  
Subtab  
Contents



## Going Forward:

- Who is Responsible for Website Posting of Materials Developed by Selected Faculty in Different Sections of the AFRE Website?
  - **Home** - News (Taylor Logan and others? Helped by Ellen
  - **People** - Current and Emeritus Faculty, and Staff - Taylor Logan
    - Retiring/Departing Faculty need to be move from Current to Emeritus Section
  - **People** - Students - Debbie Conway
  - **Undergraduate** - Ellen Schueller
  - **Graduate** - Debbie Conway – also maintains the graduate thesis/dissertation data base
  - **Events** - Nancy Creed and others?
  - **News** - Taylor Logan and others? Helped by Ellen
  - **Projects** - Domestic - Michael Graff
    - Completed Projects need to be archived instead of removed.
  - **Projects** - International - To be determined given Weber's move to Florida?
    - Completed Projects need to be archived instead of removed.
  - **Centers and Services** - Taylor Logan
    - **Getting Good Pictures** – How to do this more systematically?
    - **AFRE Newsletter: Advancing Economics, Transforming Lives** – AFRE drafts, Eileen Gianiodis and Fran Adelaja process this for CANR and AFRE news items and put it into the AFRE Newsletter format. But Constant Contact, the version of the software used is not responsive - the newsletter cannot be read on a cell phone. According to Eileen Gianiodis, CANR is in the process of updating this over the next couple of months. Need to follow up on this. Food Security Group could also use this new version of the software for their newsletter.
- Who is Responsible for Overall Website Coordination and Oversight, and News Story Writing? -Possible new AFRE communication staff position?