Location of Athletic Department Link on PAC-12 School Websites



By Gary Horvath January 31, 2013

Origin, Hypothesis, Methodology

Origin of Study

Website layout is a challenging task, particularly at major research universities where many interests are vying for key real estate on the school's home page.

With that in mind, a hypothesis and methodology were developed to evaluate trends in the location of the Athletic Department link on the PAC-12 school homepages.

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis will be tested:

PAC-12 schools with better football programs will place the links to their Athletic Department in a more prominent position on the home page to take advantage of the goodwill established by having a winning program.

Methodology

The home page for each of the PAC-12 schools was visited on January 23, 2013. A copy of that site is included in the pages that follow.

The location of the link to the Athletic Department was identified.

It was determined whether the Athletics link was part of the primary links on the page. (Primary links are identified as the most visible links on the page. They are usually just above or below the main image on the page.) The schools were divided into two categories:

- Athletic department links were part of the primary links.
- Athletic department links were not part of the primary links.

The 2012 football season win-loss records were secured for the teams in the PAC 12.

The win-loss records were compared to the location of the Athletic Department links.

Screen Shots of Websites

Overview of the PAC 12 Home Pages and Location of Athletic Sites

On the evening of January 23, 2013 the home page of each of the PAC 12 websites was queried to identify the location of the link to their athletic program. The schools are listed alphabetically.

Arizona

Athletics and Recreation – located below primary links and image.

Arizona State University

Athletics – located below image within primary links.

California

Cal Athletics – located below image and primary links.

Colorado

Athletics-located above image within primary links.

Oregon

Sports -located below primary links and image.

Oregon State

Athletics - located above image within primary links.

UCLA

Athletics –located above image within primary links.

USC

Sports – located in small secondary links at top of page above primary link and images.

Stanford

Sports -located below primary links and image.

Utah

Athletics – located in the primary links that are above and below the main image.

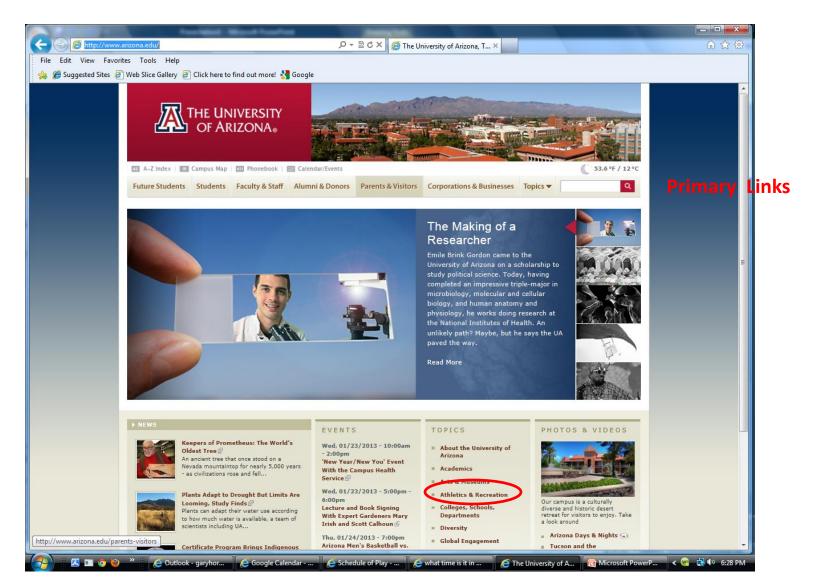
Washington

Husky Sports – located below primary links and image.

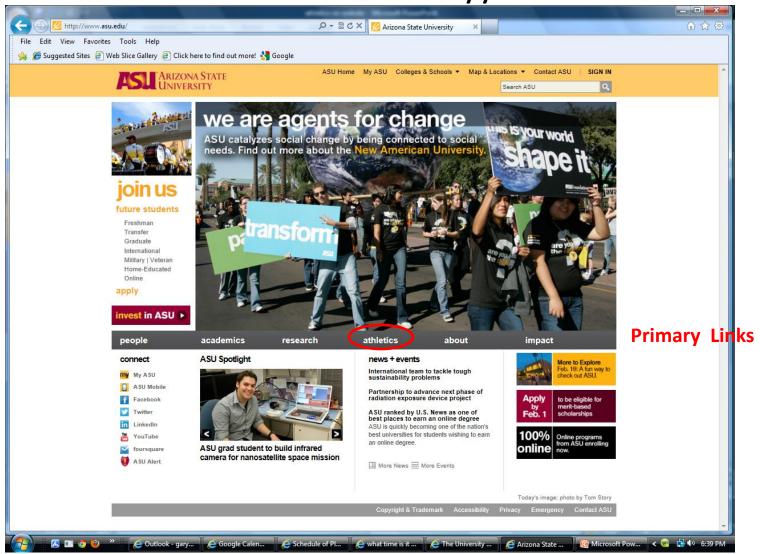
Washington State

Athletics – located below image and primary links (in small print).

University of Arizona www.arizona.edu/



Arizona State University www.asu.edu//



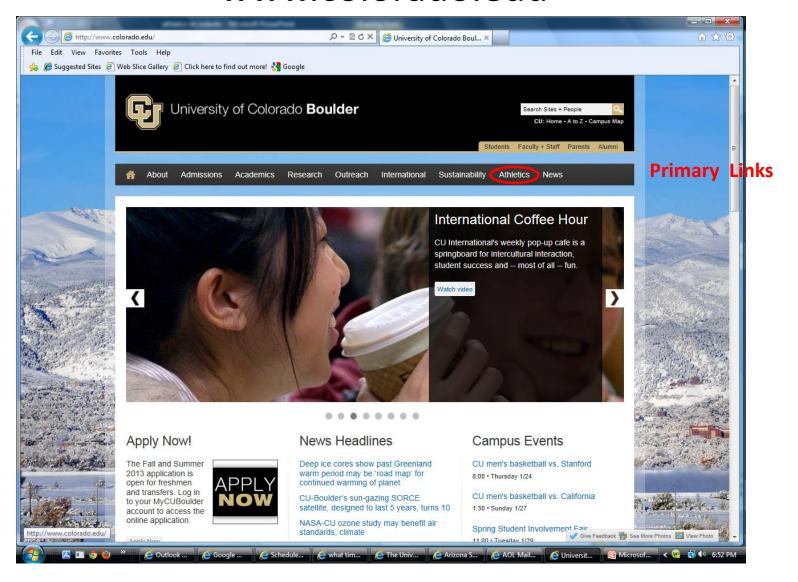
University of California at Berkeley www.berkeley.edu/



University of California at Los Angeles www.ucla.edu/



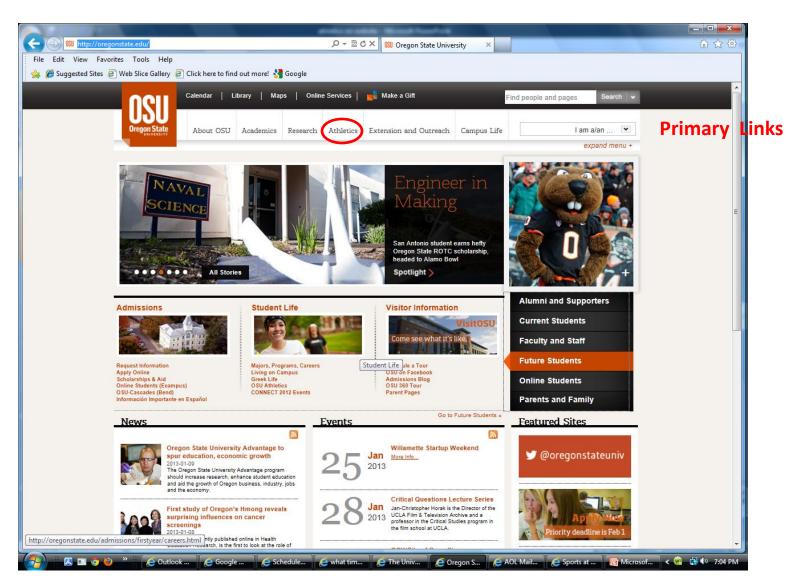
University of Colorado www.colorado.edu



University of Oregon http://uoregon.edu/



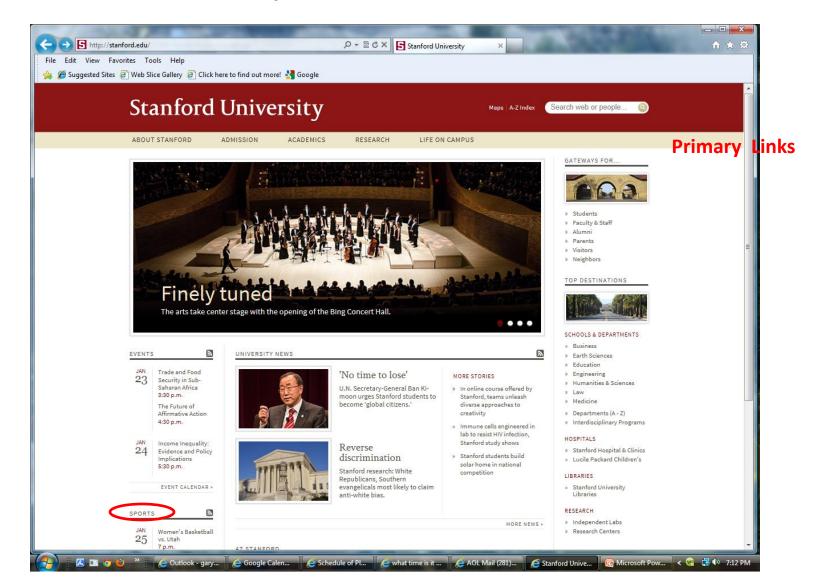
Oregon State University http://oregonstate.edu/



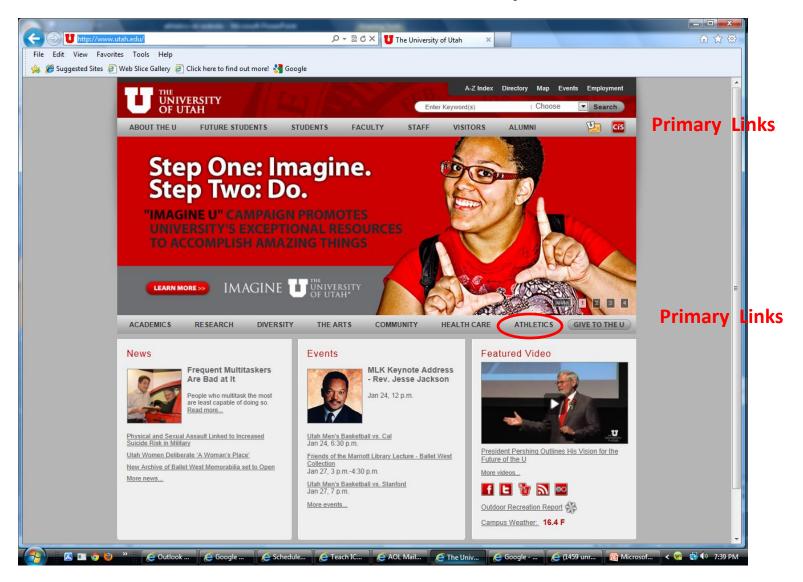
University of Southern California http://www.usc.edu/



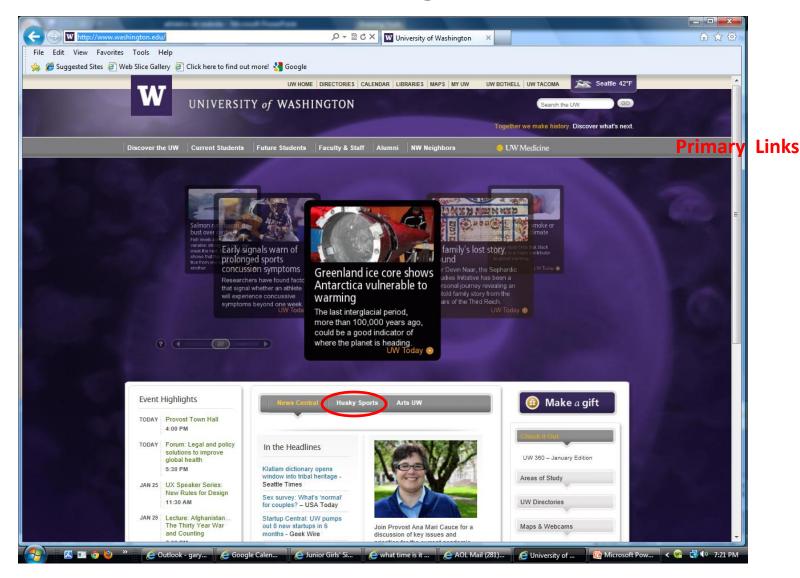
Stanford University http://stanford.edu/



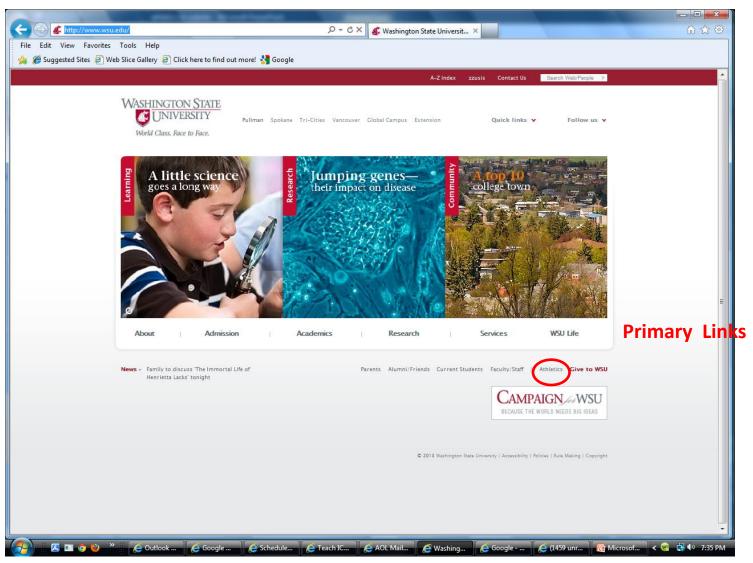
University of Utah www.utah.edu/



University of Washington www.washington.edu/



Washington State University www.wsu.edu/



Results

Overview of the PAC 12 Home Pages and Location of Athletics Sites

Five of the PAC-12 schools had their link to their athletic program within their primary links. The other half had their link somewhere other than within their primary links. The W-L record for the 2012 football season is also included.

ATHLETICS LINK ARE NOT LOCATED IN THE PRIMARY LINKS

Arizona (8-5)

Athletics and Recreation – located below primary links and image.

California (3-9)

Cal Athletics – located below image and primary links.

Oregon (12-1)

Sports -located below primary links and image.

Stanford (12-2)

Sports -located below primary links and image.

USC (7-6)

Sports – located in small secondary links at top of page above primary link and images.

Washington (7-6)

Husky Sports – located below primary links and image.

Washington State (3-9)

Athletics – located below image and primary links (in small print).

ATHLETICS LINK ARE LOCATED IN THE PRIMARY LINKS

Arizona State University (8-5)

Athletics – located below image within primary links.

Colorado (1-11)

Athletics-located above image within primary links.

Oregon State (9-4)

Athletics - located above image within primary links.

UCLA (9-5)

Athletics –located above image within primary links.

Utah (5-7)

Athletics – located in the primary links that are above and below the main image.

Summary of Results

- The Athletics link for 7 of the 12 schools is not located in the primary links. Five of these 7 schools had winning records. These 7 schools had a 49-38 record.
- The Athletics link for 5 of the 12 schools is located in the primary links. Three of these 5 schools had winning records. These 5 schools had a 32-32 record.
- Stanford and Oregon had the best records. Neither school had their Athletics link in the primary links.
- Eight schools refer to their programs as Athletic Programs
 - Athletics and Recreation (Arizona)
 - Athletics (ASU, CU, OSU, UCLA, Utah, WSU)
 - Cal Athletics (California)
- Four schools refer to their programs as Sports Programs
 - Sports (Oregon, Stanford, USC)
 - Husky Sports (Washington)

Conclusions

The following hypothesis was shown to be false.

PAC-12 schools with better football programs will place the links to their Athletic Departments in a more prominent position on the home page to take advantage of the good will established by having a winning program.

Clearly, there are many ways to effectively lay out a website. All PAC-12 schools provide easy access to their Athletics program from the home page.

For the 2012 season, there was a tendency for the PAC-12 schools with better performing football programs to downplay their success by positioning their Athletics link in a less conspicuous position on their home page. Generally speaking, the weaker performing schools positioned their Athletics link in a more prominent position on their home page.