

The Trends Trap

An article on a difference between “Web Designer” and “Web Developer” in the fabulous [Website Magazine](#) today got me thinking about the many ways this industry scams the public. Wanna know how to avoid the pitfall of getting charged double for fancy words?

Every industry depends on pushing new trends and creating hypes in order to keep the money flowing and the Internet development is not exempt. A couple of the more recent ones in my field are simply relabeling of what any web designer worth your money should know from day one.

- “**Responsive**”? Yeah, way back in 1998 we considered it a cornerstone of good web design. It simply means that your website should function and be nice looking on all platforms and screen sizes, from desktop to mobile and tablet. *Any* web designer who IS a web designer should know how to do this, though it’s not easy. That’s why you pay a professional.
- “**Ajax**”? It’s simply Javascript talking to whatever the backend language you use (often PHP). Both have been around since the ’90s, and the only new element is an emphasis on dynamic interaction between the two.

WEB DESIGNER VS. WEB DEVELOPER – IS THERE A REAL DIFFERENCE?

In one sense, yes. While many programmers (this is what we used to call them, you know) are not necessarily versed in design, being a **good** web designer by necessity includes aspects of programming, SEO, UI development etc. Creating a pretty site without any knowledge of how design elements and structure effect search engine optimization, including loading speed and “freshness”, what a website can technically **do**, or the viewer interaction with the site gets you a nice web postcard and nothing else. That’s how you end up with an unusable site.

A **web designer** doesn’t have to be master of it all (though it certainly helps), but knowing what’s out there and what is possible certainly helps. I’ve been designing/developing websites for about 18 years, and while my degrees are in Graphic Design & Photography, I had to learn a whole lot of other things in order to call myself a web designer. On top of HTML & CSS (**every** designer must know those), I now have great SEO skills, and can find my way around Javascript, PHP, Mysql etc as needed, as well as knowing some marketing-focused psychology and having an understanding of user interaction. I wouldn’t consider myself a Web Designer without those skills, even though I can create a fabulous looking website layout.

I graduated as an Applied Artist, from a college of Applied Arts. The first thing

that was drummed up into our heads was the difference between Applied and Fine Art: for Fine Art, it's enough that it just sits there. Applied Art must *DO* things. *A website is a *dynamic* entity and a networked entity as opposed to a piece of paper with an ad on it. If all you know is to create a layout, you're NOT a web designer.*

About half the time I get hired to do SEO, for example, I end up having to redesign the basic website functionality and layout too, because someone hired a designer who was capable of designing a website pretty enough to get your money, but with elements that spell search engine disaster. A "real" web designer will know enough not to sabotage your findability.

TIP:

If you're shopping for a web designer, be wary of people who are using a lot of buzzwords, and always ask a prospective designer what their experience and knowledge is in both creative/artistic field AND in SEO, user interface development and website functionality development. While large companies often have these roles split, you can still find a single person versed in all of the above, even a reasonably priced one. They don't have to be a Renaissance Jack-of-all-trades, but do need to know enough to be able to predict your needs in each of these fields, and coordinate with any specialists you might hire down the line.

ALP-Deved.org



Welcome to the website for the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) at the Community College of Baltimore County. ALP is a co-requisite model for developmental writing that began as a faculty initiative in 2007. Since that time, ALP has consistently produced dramatic improvements in student success rates and has demonstrated that it can be scaled up. And the success of ALP is not limited to CCBC. Numerous schools around the country have adopted/adapted ALP, and five states have launched wide-scale ALP adoptions: Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Indiana, Michigan, and Virginia.

Our website offers information for those interested in knowing more about the program, wanting some help with starting an ALP initiative at their school, or looking for classroom materials for ALP classes. Explore the site and contact us if you have questions or would like to know more about our consultation services. Thanks for your interest in ALP.

RECENT NEWS

ALP sourcebook

March 11, 2015

A new sourcebook for ALP instructors is now available in Course Materials. [Continue reading](#) --

Important reminder: Proposals deadline approaching!



March 6, 2015

The deadline to submit a session proposal for the 2015 Conference on Acceleration in Developmental Education is rapidly approaching.

March 15, 2015

We're California dreamin' and hope you are, too. Submit your proposal today!

[Submit proposal](#) [Continue reading](#) --

2015 Conference on Acceleration in Developmental Education



December 20, 2014

REGISTRATION

June 25th-26th, pre-conference workshops June 24th, Costa Mesa, California.

Plenary Speakers:

Mike Rose, Ph. D and John HETS, Ph. D. [Continue reading](#) --

2015 Plenary Speakers



December 19, 2014

We are excited to announce Mike Rose, Ph. D. and John J. Hets, Ph.D. as our Plenary Speakers! [Continue reading](#) --

2015 Conference Schedule

December 20, 2014

Tentative schedule for the 2015 Conference on Acceleration in Developmental Education. Please check back for the updates. Wednesday, June 24th Time Event Location 8:30 - 12:00 Registration Pacific Ballroom Foyer PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS 9:00-12:00 Intro to ALP A half-day workshop for anyone contemplating... [Continue reading](#) --

Dakota State University
Madison, SD

Lake Michigan College
Benton Harbor, MI
School size: 0 - 5000
ALP started January 14, 2004

SPOTLIGHT ON ALP SCHOOLS

LOGIN

[Log In](#)

[Register](#)

ALP RESOURCES

[ALP on Facebook](#)

[ALP on Twitter](#)

RELATED LINKS

[California Acceleration Project](#)

[Council on Basic Writing Blog](#)

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OUR PARTNERS:

Achieving the Dream
Arkansas Assoc. of Two-Year College Center for Student Success
California Acceleration Project
The Center for Applied Research
Community College Research Center
Community College Survey on Student Engagement
Complete College America

Completion by Design
Conference on College Composition and Communication
Connecticut State Colleges and Universities
Council on Basic Writing
Developmental Education Initiative
by Tech Community College
Jobs for the Future

League for Innovation in the Community College
MDRC
Michigan Center for Student Success
National Association for Developmental Education
The Research and Planning Group
Two-Year College English Association



Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) is a nationwide educational program launched by the Community College of Baltimore County, with annual conferences and highly successful track record. It has been honored by numerous awards, and was recognized in [testimony](#) to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions as a top innovation.

This WordPress based web site was originally created for the 2012 ALP Conference in less than a week. Since then, it has grown into a resource center for the Accelerated Learning Program with videos, faculty resources including past conference presentations in PDF & PowerPoint form, and an online ALP Directory with a dynamic map of participating schools. Users can submit ALP Directory entries, Classroom materials, and Conference presentation proposals through forms, with automatic email routing & controlled, formatted posting.

JadeConcept was also contracted for an intense SEO optimizing and the social/newsletter setup. The website currently (2015) appears on the first page of organic Google results for the field term "ALP", beating the Alp (mountain), the Merriam-Webster online definition of term, as well as any other accelerated learning programs worldwide, and is in the first place overall for the competitive "Accelerated Learning Program" keyphrase.

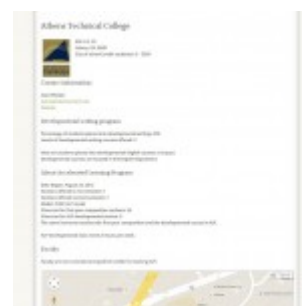
Site was redesigned in 2014 with new features and some visual changes, and now includes an administrative back end with project collaboration tools. Continuously under development with a number of new features planned. Client has been working with JadeConcept since 2012 to maintain the quality and usability of the website. We post most articles, create or edit images, and do general maintenance and updates as needed.



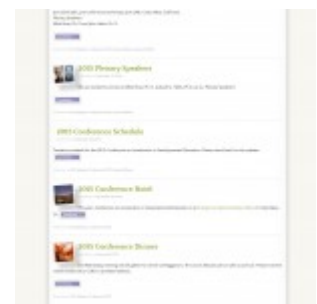
Consultation services



Conference dinner page



ALP Directory, single school page



2015 conference article section



ALP Homepage

WEBSITE

AP Platform

A screenshot of the CCBC APP homepage. The page has a dark blue header with the text 'Community College of Baltimore County Annual Performance Platform' and 'CCBC APP'. Navigation buttons for 'HOME', 'SIGN UP', 'HELP', and 'BULLETIN' are visible. The main content area is white and contains the following text: 'Current deadline is February 16, 2015', 'Evaluation Period: January 1st, 2014 – December 31, 2014', 'Welcome to CCBC Annual Performance Platform.', and 'You must register to start creating your Annual Performance Summary. Please see the Quick Start Guide for a short introduction to our user friendly interface.' Below this text are 'SIGN UP' and 'LOG IN' buttons. A 'Recent News' section is partially visible with a link to '2014 changes in Category weighing'. The footer contains 'Link1 | Link2 | Link3', 'Copyright © 2014. All Rights Reserved.', and 'Designed by JadeConnect'.

Community College of Baltimore County Annual Performance Platform

CCBC APP

HOME SIGN UP HELP BULLETIN

Current deadline is February 16, 2015

Evaluation Period: January 1st, 2014 – December 31, 2014

Welcome to CCBC Annual Performance Platform.

You must register to start creating your Annual Performance Summary. Please see the [Quick Start Guide](#) for a short introduction to our user friendly interface.

SIGN UP LOG IN

Recent News

- 2014 changes in Category weighing

Link1 | Link2 | Link3
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Designed by JadeConnect

Homepage before logging in

The Annual Performance Platform is a simple, efficient way to smooth the transition of your faculty and administration to digital annual performance review format. This beta system was custom built for CCBC, but can be adjusted to any school or program

that wishes to streamline and modernize the annual reviews process without a steep learning curve. Built specifically for ease of use by low-level computer users, APP also has the advanced features for the savvy user; the ability to upload and display videos, pdfs and more.

Highlights:

- User-friendly signup and easy online help
- Choosing the discipline during signup displays the available coordinators
- Coordinators signing up are matched to the list and automatically promoted. Coordinator back-end includes a page with all submitted annual reports that are ready for review. They also receive an email whenever a report is marked as “Ready for review”.
- Printed annual reviews are automatically formatted for paper output with all relevant information. [See example](#)
- Simple administration back-end to enter schools, campuses, departments, disciplines and coordinators.

Based on the most used worldwide and flexible web platform, WordPress, APP is ready for extensive customization and expansion, as well as the future upgrades – you will not be at the mercy of a walled-in, completely proprietary software that becomes obsolete within a couple of years. Please [contact us](#) if you’re interested in an APP for your educational institution or program.

Page samples:



APP Homepage before signing in



APP Homepage after signing in



Sign up page



“My profile” page with user information and the list of reports



Easy Annual Performance form



Sample web view of an Annual Performance report



Coordinator dashboard with reports ready for review



Administrator screen - departments

CRT Program

CCBC wins Leah Meyer Austin Award at Dream 2015

CRT is among programs honored



WHAT IS THE CRT? The Culturally Responsive Teaching Program (CRT) is a dynamic partnership involving both the Office of Instruction and the Office of Enrollment and Student Services. It is a multi-faceted initiative engaging faculty, staff, administrators and students in the recursive process of self-reflection, dialogue, change, and growth regarding cultural understanding and cooperation. Since inception in 2004, the CRT Program has led 425+ faculty and staff and thousands of students to actively address individual and collective self-awareness, attitudes and beliefs, knowledge of others, and the skills needed to implement new understandings through best practices of cultural competence.

Our domain name crt-cc.org captures the synergies of fields connected to **culturally responsive teaching and training for cultural competence**. Visitors to this web site may already be engaged in work in the related fields of **culturally relevant teaching**, **critically reflective teaching** and **cultural competence training** for school, workplace, community and global understanding.



CRT in action, training trainers who are now training colleagues at their college.



New! Call for Proposals 2015

Please click title to download this.pdf of the call for proposals Thank you!
[CRT 2015 Conference Call](#)

Follow Us



Log In

Username

Password

Remember Me

- [Register](#)
- [Lost your password?](#)

The success of the Culturally Responsive Teaching and Training Program at CCBC can be attributed to an institutional model actively encouraged and sustained by CCBC's administration, the Board of Trustees, and the working relationship between "both sides of the house" at the highest levels of Enrollment and Student Services and the Office of Instruction.

Contact Us

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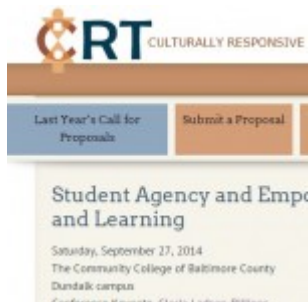
CRT Program is a national cultural awareness program for faculty and students, by Community College of Baltimore County. In 2015, CRT has accomplished its Second Annual National Conference, and have been one of the programs honored through Leah Meyer Austin Award, by Achieving the Dream initiative that encompasses over 4 million US colleges.

CRT-CC was built to visually represent the multi-cultural awareness, as well as be the meeting point for CRT updates, training and conference related activities. JadeConcept also donated the logo design for the organization.

This is a WordPress based website with a simplified and proofed back-end and admin flow for ease of use by non-technical users.



CRT-CC List of articles



General page

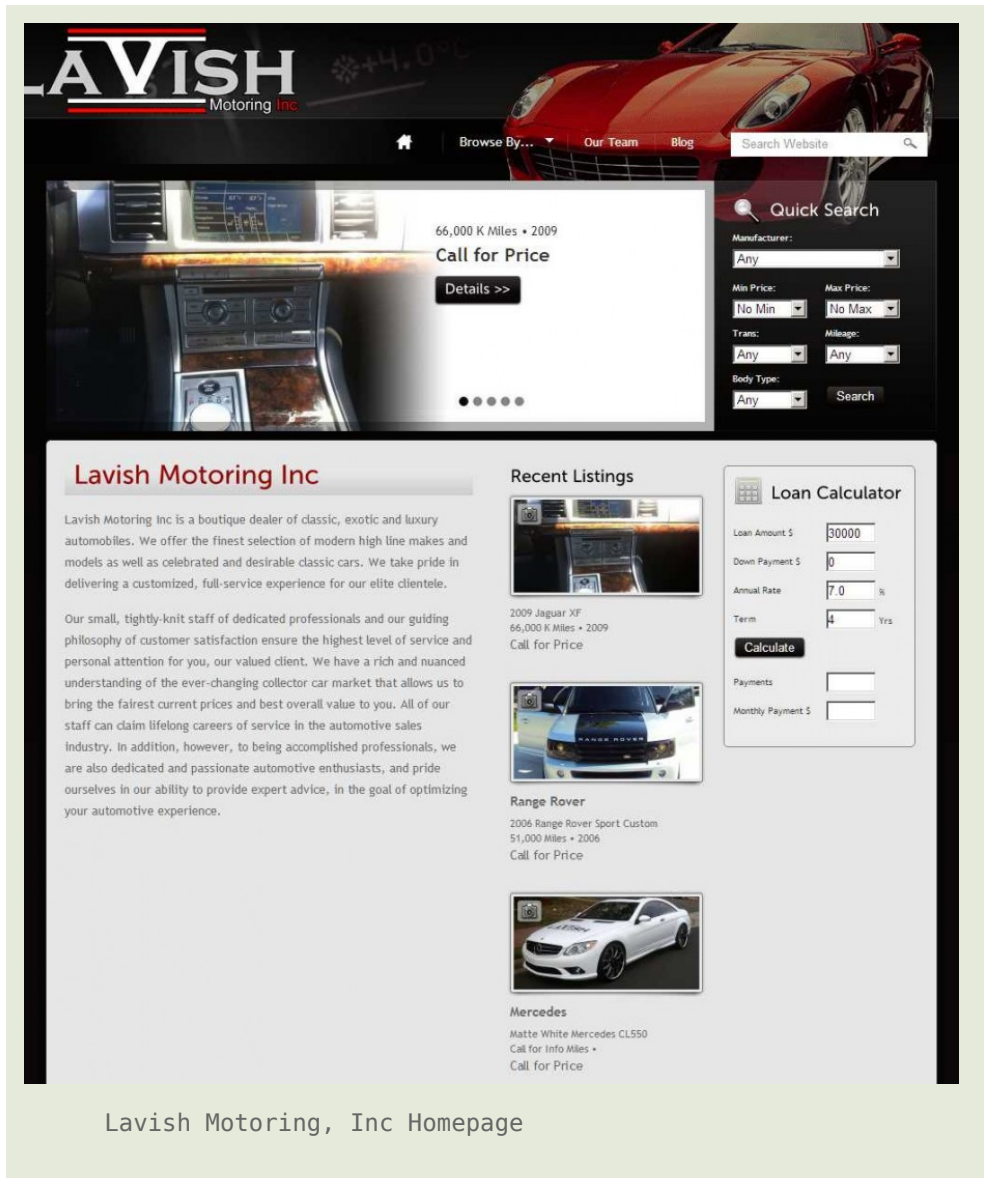


CRT-CC.org Homepage

WEBSITE

**Please note, this is user maintained website. JadeConcept is not responsible for missing content or changes in layout and usability.*

Lavish Motoring, Inc



Lavish Motoring is a luxury pre-owned car seller. The company wanted the website to reflect the elegant, high-end image, while at the same time creating a modern, cutting edge impression. Elements such as advanced search and loan calculator are an additional incentive for buyers.

WEBSITE

6 questions to ask your future Web Designer



What the...???

Over the many years we've been in this business, we've heard many horror stories from people who didn't use care choosing their web design provider. Never finished websites, deadlines extending into months, sites that can't be updated without professional help and major expense, "invisible" sites on page 236 of Google search results, and sometimes plain robbery – "web designers" who vanish after they take your money.

About 20% of our customers come to us to fix or finish someone else's work. Yikes! Here are the 6 questions you should have on your checklist.

How to avoid having a bad web design experience:

1. **Always ask to see a portfolio.** Every professional web design company has one. This will also give you an idea about whether the designer's style matches your vision.
2. **Ask for references.** A designer should be able to get you in touch with at least one satisfied customer.
3. **Ask for search engine results.** A designer should be able to show you at least a couple of examples of websites that place on first or second page of Google – you'd get a couple of search terms (keywords) a site is "primed" for, and find the given site in the results yourself. Please note that the exact placement changes over time, as Google changes its search engine parameters constantly. Still, a well SEO'd site should show up high and stay there.
4. **Always ask for a written legal contract.** Contract should specify the project's price, deadlines, and scope of work, as well as procedure in case of extra work needed, or the breach of contract. It doesn't matter if you're getting a tiny personal website or a huge online mall – always, always get a contract. A designer who doesn't want to provide one, or doesn't have a standard contract ready is *not* a professional.
5. **Ask how the website will be updated.** You should be able to add or change the basic content yourself – write new articles, change in-page photos and such. Don't expect to be able to change the basic look of the site – if you could do this, you wouldn't be needing a professional designer to begin with :-). A cheap

website that only a pro can update will very soon become either out of date, or very expensive.

6. **Payment** should not be 100% down, except maybe in case of a very small sum. For example, we require 1/2 down for smaller projects, 1/3 down, then 1/3 on the first approved draft for medium size ones, and arrange for a similarly reasonable payment schedule for large projects. The final payment is always made upon delivery – once the website is up, and you’ve seen it work. Some designers will not like that – we often have to spend months trying to wrestle that last payment from a customer; so please be professional too. After all, your web designer is someone you’ll likely need in the future (and they have full access to your new site!).

You have a website. Now what?

Once your web site is “live”, you need to let people know about it. There are millions of web sites out there – you need to announce yours.

We build sites that place well in the search engines. In addition to this free advertising, consider adding a links section, in which the sites of the same kind as yours can exchange links with you. We can install a linking script that will handle the entire process automatically – you don’t have to lift a finger. Link exchange will also improve your web site’s search engine placement.

Think of your web site as one piece in your complete business promotion effort. Include your new web site address everywhere – your business cards, mailers, commercials.

Consider spending some time and/or money on developing a strong Internet advertising campaign. This can include paid advertising in search engines (such as Google AdWords), online classifieds such as Craigslist.org and Backpage.com, and social networking on Myspace, Facebook or Twitter (social networking is free, but expect to spend a lot of time maintaining and building your online persona, offering real, valuable information in your field). Hire a designer to set up your Facebook page or Twitter account with custom backgrounds, sections and images, and find the first dozen or more “friends” and follow exchanges. Add the social buttons on your site too – Likes and Tweets are hard advertising currency for modern Internet marketing. Consider creating a discount you can give away on Facebook in exchange for a Like.

Building a strong Internet advertising and/or branding campaign does cost money, but it’s still much cheaper than a print, radio or television campaign of comparable advertising value.

You can still use print advertising (newspapers, Yellow Pages). Ultimately, your advertising costs will go down, as you can now publish all the details in your web site and leave the newspaper ad for the bare basics.

Still, don't expect a million visitors the day your web site goes up. Search engines take anywhere between a couple of weeks and a couple of months to list all of your pages. Building your visitor numbers is an ongoing effort.

Don't trust web designers that promise you a million in a week, whether it's dollars or visitors – web business is just like any other business; there is no free lunch. We will make sure to let you know what to expect, and to have a realistic flight plan for your site's success. Our web design contract includes a cost estimate and a deadline we stick to. We deliver what we promise.

Updates and maintenance

After your web site is built, expect periodic updates. Sites that offer useful and interesting content and/or services that are often updated are the most successful ones. Think about this – how can you entice your site visitor to come back? Search engines such as Google also like useful content and text pages, and will rank you higher for it.

We can build you a web site you can update yourself with a minimal computer knowledge, or you can pay someone (or us) to update your pages. Having a “News” or “Blog” section is almost a must these days. Adding a discussion forum or reviews if appropriate is a good way to get “free” site content – your visitors will chat about your products and/or services and update your web site for you :-).

This is one of the many reasons we recommend a WordPress based website – if you can update your site in your sleep (or at least, your slippers), it's more likely that you'll be doing it on a regular basis.

Updates are what makes a difference between a live site and a “dead” one!

Domain name & hosting

We can help you find a domain name that “sticks”. It should be related to your business, or showcase your name. Ideally, it would also contain the most important

keyword related to your business for purposes of search engine optimization – however, this is not worth having a long domain people will have trouble spelling out right. The biggest, most popular sites out there all have a short and simple domain (think Amazon or Twitter).

The easiest way to get one is to let us register it with the same company that will be hosting your web site. A domain name needs to be occasionally renewed – pay your domain fee on time (you’ll be notified)! If you are late, you’ll lose it – this is a disaster for a popular, established web site.

A host is a company that keeps your web site on their computers and makes it available on the Internet. Expect to pay a small monthly hosting fee (about \$8/month). We can help you find an excellent host with a good reputation, low cost & lots of value-added extras.*

Free or super-low cost hosts are NOT recommended. Unfortunately, you get what you pay for, and a great looking web site that is often off line, or that gets hacked is of no value to you.

***Please, please, MAKE SURE YOU PAY YOUR HOSTING BILL!** Over 70% of our design customers (some with web sites that had cost up to \$8,000 to build) lose their web sites simply because they forgot to pay their hosting company. We WILL NOT have a backup of your web site two or five years after we built it unless you’re under the current maintenance contract – especially if you have a dynamic site you’ve been adding content to yourself.

Hosting bill is like your rent – you’ll have to pay it on a regular, ongoing basis. If you don’t pay, you can’t come back a year later and expect the landlord (hosting company) to have saved all your furniture (your web site pages).

If you’re not sure you’d be able to keep on top of all the bills and other maintenance, we’ll be happy to do it for you for a small fee, but we’ll need to know so in advance.

What is the purpose of your web site? (Site planning)

This question may sound funny, but many people don’t have a clear idea of what exactly their web site is supposed to do. Remember, a fun and great looking site with many “bells and whistles” that is slow to load and very difficult to find your way around will make people leave and never come back. The main purpose of any web

site is its usability and content.

Is it a commercial web site? Plan for it to be straightforward, clear and easy to get around. Find your competition and learn from them – what is it that you like about their web sites, and what doesn't work. Bring some samples of the sites you like.

What makes you stand out? Think about your business strengths, and plan to showcase them. Include a mission statement and information about your business ("About us" page), to build customer trust and confidence.

Determine what pages/sections you need, and how important each is.