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INTRODUCTION

The following guidelines acknowledge the importance of the Web for open communication and scholarly activity, while also recognizing that users have the responsibility to make use of these resources in an efficient, ethical, and legal manner.

Web page content presents an image of Montana State University – Northern (MSUN) to the world; therefore, official MSUN pages must undergo the same professional scrutiny and careful preparation given to any other official University publication. Content Managers at MSUN are responsible for the content of the pages they publish and are expected to abide by the highest standards of quality and responsibility.

These guidelines are intended to assist Content Managers in professionally and consistently representing MSUN on the Web.

In addition to the publishing guidelines included in this document, all publishers should comply with established Montana University System and institutional policies, as well as state and federal laws.
Montana State University–Northern
Web Guidelines

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL

The Technology Council is responsible for:

- Establishing and articulating institutional technology directions.
- Reviewing and approving technology strategic and operational plans.
- Establishing technology priorities.
- Reviewing and approving proposed technology policies.
- Developing technology budget alternatives for the institution.
- Overseeing information security.

WEB ADVISORY COMMITTEE (WAC)

The Web Advisory Committee is responsible for:

- Developing and assisting with the enforcement of Web policies.
- Overseeing Web infrastructure analysis.
- Assisting with strategic alignment.
- Recommending and prioritizing tactical deployment.
- Making recommendations to the Technology Council.

WEBMASTER

The webmaster is responsible for:

- Maintaining logical and consistent navigation throughout the MSUN Web site.
- Providing guidance and recommendations to the Web Advisory Committee.
- Supporting the faculty and staff in maintaining “official” Web pages.

ADMINISTRATION AND DEPARTMENT HEADS

The Administration and Department Heads are responsible for:

- Assigning Content Managers.
- Assisting the Webmaster and WAC when needed.
THE CONTENT MANAGER

The Content manager is responsible for:

- Creating and/or maintaining content on “official” MSUN Web pages
- Following the guidelines listed in this document

GUIDELINES

All Content Managers assigned to MSUN’s Web site are bound by MSUN and Montana Board of Regents Information Systems and Electronic Resources policies and the SummitNet Acceptable Use policy.

In addition, the following Web-specific guidelines apply:

WEB ADMINISTRATION

Each instructional department, administrative department and recognized student organization may publish to MSUN’s Web site. The respective Administrator, Director, Department Chair, Dean or Faculty Advisor is responsible for designating an individual as a Content Manager for an area. All Content Managers are granted publishing permissions from the Webmaster.

MSUN Web Guidelines may be amended or put into effect by means of the established governance structure. Suggested measures are 1) discussed by the Web Advisory Committee and 2) recommended to and finalized by the Technology Council.

OFFICIAL PAGES VS. UNOFFICIAL PAGES

OFFICIAL PAGES

Official Pages are those Pages created and/or maintained on behalf of instructional departments, administrative departments and recognized student organizations of Montana State University-Northern (MSUN). Further, Official Pages:

- Must reflect the mission, goals and objectives of MSUN.
- Must conform to the guidelines defined within this document.
- Must conform to the image/branding efforts of MSUN as set forth in MSUN policies.

UNOFFICIAL PAGES

Unofficial pages are those pages created by individuals to chronicle professional pursuits or interests, as in the case of faculty and staff pages. Additionally, Unofficial pages:

- Should not be in conflict with the mission, goals, or objectives of MSUN.
- Should feature a text link to the MSUN homepage within the footer region.
• Are bound to conform to guidelines set forth in this document unless expressly stated otherwise.
• May not use MSUN’s logo or mascot or in any way imply that the page is an official document sanctioned by MSUN.

Please note: The amount of time an unofficial page is posted is not guaranteed.

CONTENT MANAGERS
Content managers are responsible for:

• Maintaining the relevance and accuracy of their content.
• Responding to Web user inquiries about their content.

Content managers are prohibited from:

• Adding content to official pages that endorses or otherwise promotes an outside entity.
• Divulging their Content Management System (CMS) login and password to any individual.

CONTENT

DEPARTMENT LOGOS AND GRAPHIC BANNERS
In order to portray a professional and consistent look for all MSUN web pages, the Web Advisory Committee advises Content Managers not to place graphic banners, logos, and/or clipart on official MSUN web pages; logos are more appropriate for Intranet web pages. Official MSUN web pages should remain simple, concise, and free of distracting elements.

MULTIMEDIA ELEMENTS
With a plethora of technologies now supporting audio, video and animation on the Web, multimedia is steadily gaining popularity. This increased access to multimedia design elements provides page designers with far more options than static text and photos; however, it requires greater design discipline. Unconstrained use of multimedia results in user interfaces that confuse users and makes it harder for them to understand the information. Multimedia elements used for educational or teaching purposes should reside on “unofficial” web pages. On the other hand, videos produced and approved by the University for the purpose of promoting schools, departments, programs, and student success stories could reside on the main MSUN web server.

• The Web Advisory Committee suggests Content Managers:
  o Avoid using animation on Official MSUN web pages, as it may distract viewers from reading vital text. Slideshows with slow, smooth transitions are an exception.
  o Not use music as a standalone multimedia element.

PHOTOGRAPHS
The general recommendation for the placement of a photograph is the top right side of the page content area. The size should be 144w x 216h pixels. Additional related photographs should be placed on a separate photo gallery page with a thumbnail size of 150w x 100h pixels or
incorporated into a slideshow. Any and all photographs depicting students, faculty, and staff will be in accordance with MSUN Policy 605.1, Photo Usage Policy.

CONTENT DISPUTES

MSUN’s Web Advisory Committee is responsible for assisting with the enforcement of Web Guidelines and may, at their discretion, recommend the editing or removal of material or the suspension of a Content Manager's access. In such instances, a written (e-mail) notice will be sent by the WAC chair to the Content Manager’s Administrator or Department Head. Disputes will be resolved by the appropriate administrator, director, department chair, and dean or faculty advisor.

DISCLAIMERS AND PRIVACY

Unofficial pages must include the following disclaimer: The page you are viewing is not sanctioned by MSUN.

The University will not be held responsible for the content of personal web pages. Personal web pages shall not imply that they are representing or speaking on behalf of the University or any part of the University without prior written authorization from the WAC to do so.

The University does not actively monitor web page content; however, it reserves the right to remove a web page from any MSUN server found to be in violation of federal, state or local law, or any MBoR/MSUN regulation, policy, or procedure.

WEB HOSTING

MSUN will not host a web page/site for any external organization unless exception is made in writing by the Web Advisory Committee. In that case, the WAC chair will send a written recommendation to the Technology Council.

MISUSE

Web pages cannot be used to single out individuals or groups for degradation or harassment in violation of Federal or State laws.

Web pages cannot be used to engage in any illegal activity.

ACCESSIBILITY (SECTION 508 COMPLIANCE)

Section 508 of the Disabilities Act requires that federal agencies or agencies receiving federal funds have electronic and information technology that is accessible to people with disabilities. Web accessibility addresses the needs of people with visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, or neurological disabilities, which may affect their interaction with the web. These measures should be taken where appropriate:
• Images/buttons should contain alt-text to convey their function to screen reader programs (which reads pages for blind or visually impaired persons).
• Avoid using frames to control your layout (not easily understood by screen readers).
• Do not rely on colors to convey information (e.g., Select the text highlighted in red).
• Text and background should have a strong contrast.
• Refrain from blinking or scrolling text (epileptic seizures can be caused by blinking text; scrolling text can freeze screen readers).
• Audio/video should be accompanied by captions and/or transcriptions if possible.
• Designate headings on web pages.
• Keep table data simple and understandable as if it were to be read line-by-line.
• Use intuitive text for hyperlinks (avoid “click here”).
• Refrain from centering paragraph text. Centering should only be considered for headings.
• The use of animation (including Flash) should be limited. If vital information is conveyed within an animated element the same information should be available online in text format as well.

BEST PRACTICES

• When developing content for the site, pay careful attention to spelling, grammar, punctuation and word use.
• Maintain editorial consistency throughout your web site.
• Avoid long pages — especially for your initial or “home” page. It is better to have several small documents linked from a table of contents than one large document.
• Organizations creating pages should provide links, if necessary, to pages containing authoritative information outside their areas of responsibility (i.e. policies, admissions, university mission and history, etc.) rather than creating the pages themselves. This is to ensure that the most up-to-date and accurate information is being provided.
• Proprietary files – Creating files for public download that are in proprietary formats like Word, Excel or Publisher is discouraged. These files require the user to own a particular application in order to view them. Some document file types to consider include PDF files and rich text files.
• For more information, please contact the Webmaster.

TEMPLATES

Web page templates will be provided to help Content Managers create an attractive page for their department or organization.

INTRANET

MSUN reserves the right to designate certain content to be for internal use only. This type of information must be published to protected areas within MSUN’s intranet to prevent it being accessed by the general public. Recommendation on what content is more appropriate for an intranet should come from the WAC.
COPYRIGHT MATERIAL
Content Managers cannot include material that is owned by another on their web site without the express written consent of the original author. You should assume that materials you find on the web are copyrighted unless a disclaimer or waiver is expressly stated. If you want to include something from another web page, it is recommended that you link to it rather than copy it.

PROCEDURES

REQUESTING A PAGE

OFFICIAL PAGE
The appropriate Administrator, Director, Department Chair, Dean or Faculty Advisor should contact the Webmaster using their MSUN e-mail account to request a page and provide the name of the page’s Content Manager for a particular area. The Webmaster will contact the Content Manager with the date and location of the next Content Management system training as required. Access will be granted after the Content Manager has completed the training.

UNOFFICIAL PAGE
Those individuals who are eligible for personal pages should contact the Webmaster for further instruction. Maximum amount of server storage will be defined by WAC.

CREATING A PAGE
Every page should have a unique title to make it easy to find through search. For example, if Financial Aid has a scholarship and FAFSA page they should each be titled accordingly -- not both named “Financial Aid.”

Every page should have a purpose. A page that scrolls on for what would be 10 printed pages and covers every topic under the sun is not useful or professional. For advice on organizing your department’s navigation, please contact the Webmaster.

FORMS
If you wish to have a form (to collect user information) added to a page within your section, please contact the Webmaster for assistance.

SITE MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS
Content Managers are expected to adhere to the following minimum maintenance procedures:

- Review web pages and the related navigation links at least once a month to ensure they are functional, accurate and up-to-date.
- Only pages that are ready for the public should be published. Do not use apologies or teasers such as "under construction" or "coming soon."
- Provide contact information for someone capable of replying to questions in a timely fashion. Ideally, the e-mail address on an official page should be a department alias, such as admission@msun.edu, so that the address may remain the same despite staffing changes.
• Keep web pages free of spelling and grammatical errors. Please use the Content Management System spell checker before publishing or consult with University Relations.
• Use an appropriate name when saving a file. Do not include spaces or special characters (< > ( ) [] {} : ; ? ! # & % + * = @ ~ ^ $ / ).
• Do not use gimmicky features like "hit" counters or “welcome to my page” message.

PROMOTION ON THE HOME PAGE
To request that a particular piece of information be included within the NEWS or EVENTS sections of the home page, contact MSUN's University Relations.

REQUESTING A DIFFERENT IMAGE FOR THE HEADER REGION
Content Managers using the Content Management System will not have access to edit the header section. Contact the Web Master for approval and execution of header section changes.

EXPIRED CONTENT
Content Managers are asked to remove their department’s or organization’s expired content (such as old versions of PDF files which will never be used again) for the sake of conserving server space and ensuring search engines cannot find and index outdated content. Please be sure that all links to the expired file are removed first (before file deletion) to avoid “page not found” messages to your users.

CONTACT INFORMATION
Please direct questions regarding MSUN's Web Guidelines to the Web Advisory Committee at web.committee@msun.edu.