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Ferris Web Site Guidelines

Introduction

With the Ferris State University Web site (ferris.edu) serving as our front door to the world, the quality, appearance, accuracy, and legality of the information contained on its pages are of the utmost concern. With thousands of visitors each day from countries around the world, the Ferris Web site plays an important role in shaping the institution's reputation and image.

Specific objectives of the guidelines are to:

Develop a coherent Web structure

Post important information

Maintain current materials

Apply spelling, grammar and style standards

Maintain appropriate and legal use of the Web

These objectives are the responsibility of all publishers, whether colleges, departments, administrative units, faculty or students.

The guidelines in this document are intended to aid web site developers when building, extending or maintaining web pages for Ferris State University. They should be applied to any work relating to the web site, either by internal staff or third party contractors.

Where a particular issue has not been covered here, developers should refer to the Web development team. Developers should also be aware of the context in which this document exists. This document provides web development guidelines; it is not intended to be a web style guide. It is strongly encouraged that a web style guide be used on all of their web development efforts that is consistent with the guidelines provided in this document.

Purpose

This document consists of a set of development and design guidelines for web publishers creating pages intended for an external audience. These guidelines have been developed with input from personnel from University Advancement & Marketing and Information Technology Services.

- I. The Ferris Homepage
 - a. The Ferris Homepage is the "front door" for FSU and is frequently the point of first contact for the many audiences of the University.
 - b. The emphasis is on marketing and student recruitment/retention.
 - c. The look and feel of the Web site is uniform with other Ferris publications.

- d. The primary contacts on the homepage are Ted Halm, Web Content Manager and Terri Aldrich, Web Application Administrator.

II. File Structure

a. File Structure Guidelines

- i. Every Web site should have a "homepage.htm" or "index.htm" (index.htm is preferred) in its main folder. This page serves as a table of contents or an entry page. From the homepage, users can go to other pages on your site. Internal pages on your site should always have a link back to your homepage or index, and a link back to Ferris homepage.
- ii. Most Web sites can be contained in one folder. If your site is going to be large (with over 30 files), it is recommended that subfolders be created. For instance, you can store all of your graphics in one folder (ex. - images), or break your site into separate sections, with each section having its own folder.
- iii. An easy method to get started is to create all the folders you will need for the entire site before you begin. If you decide later to add a completely new section, just create a new folder and store files in it. The main page in the new folder is named index.htm. You cannot make a new section out of existing pages and graphics, and then move those pages and graphics into a new folder. All of the links will be broken.
- iv. If you change any of your file names or move any files from one folder to another, you must re-link any graphics and files whose names or placements have changed. Do this first and test it on your computer before you upload to the Web server.

b. File Naming

- i. Keep your folder names and file names short and do not use more than one word. NEVER USE SPACE IN A FILE NAME. If you need to use more than one word, you can put a dash between the words (bulldog-hockey.htm).
- ii. It is okay to use capital letters, but all-lower case file names look cleaner and are preferred.
- iii. Do not use apostrophes, colons, semicolons, bullets, slashes, or any other characters except letters or numbers.
- iv. The .htm extension is preferred over the .html extension.

c. Organizing Files

- i. Every file contained inside a folder, whether it is HTML, graphic or multi-media, must have an extension (.htm or .html for Web pages, .jpg or .gif for graphics). Your folder should not contain any files (or working files) that are NOT IN USE and that cannot be viewed on your Web site. These are commonly referred to as "orphan files" and could include any Word files that you may have used to make your HTML document. It is important to delete old files and graphics from your folders so that the Web server can be streamlined. The Web server is not intended to be a storage area for unessential files.

- d. Domain Name Standards
 - i. All services that are provided by members of the Ferris State University community as part of their official functions and as part of the institutional mission will be registered within the www.ferris.edu domain, except upon permission of the Web Content Manager.
 - ii. All services that are provided by either members or nonmembers of the Ferris State University community, but which are not part of their official functions as members of the community or as part of the mission of the institution, must be registered outside the www.ferris.edu domain.
- III. Graphic Standards
- e. Graphic Overview
 - i. When developing official pages for the Ferris Web site, it is important to remember that information published electronically via the University Web site is representative of Ferris and meets the same high standards of other official University publications. Graphic standards for printed and online documents are available from University Advancement & Marketing and are posted on the Ferris Web site.
 - ii. Uniformity across the Web site can be ensured through the use of approved page templates and graphics.
 - iii. The correct University signature lines, symbols and colors should also be used. These are also available from the Web Content Manager.
 - iv. The Web Content Manager is available to assist in creating pages and to review Web pages.
 - v. The Ferris State University signature line with the flame logo will remain the primary graphic identifier for Ferris State University and should not be altered.
 - vi. The tagline Imagine More can be used beneath the signature line and can also be freestanding.
 - vii. While individual University units may have their own logos developed, this is not recommended. Multiple logos can be confusing to audiences and do not provide the continued repetition of integrated marketing. Use co-branded signature lines.
 - viii. The bulldog logo is primarily intended for use by athletics, admissions, alumni, and student activities when presenting a more casual image of the University is appropriate. The flame logo and primary Ferris State University signature line should be used in other instances.
 - ix. The official colors of Ferris State University are crimson and gold (referred to as Ferris Red and Ferris Gold in the guidelines).
 - x. A Ferris State University Web site header has been developed to reflect the new graphic standards. Uniformity across the Web site through the use of consistent headers, navigation, page layouts and correct application of University signature lines, logos and colors will foster a cohesive, recognizable identity for the University.
 - f. Graphics and Images
 - i. Optimize images and photos for the Web to minimize the file size.

- ii. Ensure that text can always be clearly read at any location against the background.
 - iii. Avoid/Limit using image maps; provide an alternate text-based method of selecting options when image maps are used, e.g., separate HTML page or menu bar.
 - iv. Use meaningful text in the ALT and TITLE of images.
- g. Audio Visual Design
 - i. Provide text transcriptions of all video clips.
 - ii. If possible, include captions or text tracts with a description or sound of the movie.
 - iii. Provide descriptive passages about speakers and events being shown through video clips.
 - iv. Give a written description of any critical information that is contained in audio files contained on your website.
 - v. Give a written description of any critical information that is contained in audio files contained on your website.
 - vi. Multimedia: Provide captioning and transcripts of audio and descriptions of video.
- h. Official University Colors
 - i. The official colors of Ferris State University are crimson and gold (referred to as Ferris Red and Ferris Gold). Web colors are Ferris Red (#BA0C2F) and Ferris Gold (#FFD043).
- i. Banner Headers
 - i. All page headers should have an imbedded link to the main ferris.edu homepage.
- j. Exceptions
 - i. Graphic standards may not apply to all Web pages created or maintained by FSU students, faculty or staff. Some Web pages are meant for academic or informational purposes not associated with the image FSU presents to the public. Examples include the PDF files, budget reports (on-line spreadsheets, etc.), and blogs.
 - ii. Web design standards may not apply to FSU Web publications devoted to special events or services that contain graphic components closely tied to a specific design theme.

IV. Web Page Development

a. Overview

- i. It is the policy of Ferris State University that information and services on the University's web sites are designed to be accessible to people with disabilities. It is the responsibility of the web site developers to become familiar with the guidelines for achieving universal accessibility and to apply those principles in designing the website. The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) provides a list of evaluation tools (<http://www.w3c.org/WAI/ER/existingtools.html>) to

- perform static tests of web sites for compliance with W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and U.S. Section 508 accessibility guidelines. Agencies are strongly encouraged to analyze their web sites and provide validation of compliance through the use of an automated tool prior to production implementation.
- ii. Include a document type declaration (DOCTYPE) in your web pages. This declares what version of HTML you are using in your documents and assists the browser in rendering your pages correctly.
 - iii. All tags should be in lower case to be XHTML compliant.
 - iv. Maintain a standard page layout and navigation method throughout the web site, which does not utilize frames.
 - v. Every Web page must have a page TITLE. The title has nothing to do with the file name you have assigned to your HTML document, but is rather a description of your content that appears at the top of your source code between the TITLE tags.
 - vi. The TITLE is what appears in the (blue) title bar of the window when someone is browsing your Web page. When someone bookmarks your page, the TITLE is what appears as that bookmark or favorite. Search robots look first for your TITLE before indexing your site on popular search engines. Without a TITLE, your pages may not show up in the search results. If you have a good TITLE, it will not be necessary to include META (Search) TAGS in your code.
 - vii. Use plain backgrounds and simple layouts to improve the readability of text.
 - viii. Ensure that foreground and background color combinations provide sufficient contrast when viewed by someone having color deficits or when viewed on a black and white screen.
 - ix. Provide a means of contact and the last date the page was updated.
 - x. Provide a printer friendly version of web page (if needed).
 - xi. Ensure that dynamic content is accessible or provide an alternative presentation of the page.
 - xii. Do not use HTML tags or server-side extensions, which are supported by only one browser.
 - xiii. Check web pages and images at different monitor resolutions, monitor sizes and color depth settings.
 - xiv. Develop Web pages that are platform independent so that the output is available through multiple devices from hand-held devices to high-end workstations.
 - xv. Hyperlinks to downloadable files should show file type.
 - xvi. Downloadable content, such as documents in PDF or forms, must also adhere to W3C and U.S. Section 508 accessibility guidelines.
 - xvii. Validate pages in various browsers to make sure they are formatted correctly.
 - xviii. Use a HTML validator tool to validate your Web pages.
 - xix. Spell check the Web pages.
 - xx. Provide meaningful and descriptive text for hyperlinks, don't use short hand, e.g. "click here"; instead "Follow this link to our News Page". (Screen readers

can search specifically for linked text, "click here" provides no indication of where the link will take them.) If documents are provided in a specialized format (e.g. PDF (Portable Document Format), etc.) provide the equivalent text in plain text or HTML format.

- xxi. Tables: Make line-by-by reading sensible.
- xxii. Graphs & Charts: Summarize or use the longdesc attribute.
- xxiii. End all sentences, headers, list items, etc. with a period or other suitable punctuation.
- xxiv. Chose a standard font and size for general text (Verdana or Arial preferred).
- xxv. Minimize the number of hyperlinks that appear in the body.

b. Relative URLs vs. Absolute URLs

- i. The Absolute URL looks like the following:
- ii. Production - ``
- iii. Development - ``
- iv. The Relative URL links to the file ``.
- v. The Relative URL would be the same on production and development.
- vi. It is best practice to use relative URL links when transferring files from development to production.

c. Mailto Tags

- i. Do not use Mailto tags on your websites. (Provide form for email.)

V. Application Development

a. Forms

- i. Comment Your Code to include the document name, author's name, date created, and purpose.
- ii. ColdFusion comment tags use 3 dashes whereas HTML tags use 2 dashes.
- iii. Form field validation should never be optional. Get in the habit of always using some type of validation in each and every form you create. Failure to do so will cause errors and broken applications.
- iv. On a form, you should enter a form focus field for user accessibility.
- v. Mix and match validation types to secure applications.
- vi. Manual server-side validation is your last defense.
- i. Use Session Management to require a person to be logged in to use the form.

b. Login Pages

- i. All login pages must be approved by Application Technology Services.

VI. Databases

a. SQL and/or Banner is the accepted database storage.

- i. Code pages properly to prevent SQL injections. Security

a. FERPA

- i. Personable identifiable information should not be collected on the Web on an insecure Web site. All personable identifiable information should be gathered on the Secure server, <https://www.ferris.edu/>
- ii. Personable identifiable information may not be stored on the server. All personable data collected will be stored in a secure environment; either in a

- Banner table or and SQL database that is located behind the University's firewall.
 - iii. When email is used to transfer information, a University email server that is housed behind a firewall will be used.
 - iv. The Ferris Web pages may collect personal information such as a name, address, email address, telephone numbers, and personal interest; however, such information will be collected for administrative purposes.
 - v. When collecting Credit card information, you must use a University-approved merchant account.
 - vi. When a user visits a Web page, the Internet Protocol (IP) address is collected and used for statistics and troubleshooting purposes. Some Ferris Web pages may use "cookies" which are used for delivering Web content to specific users and to track their online purchasing transactions.
 - vii. Ferris will not sell personal information to third-party organizations.
- b. Data Security
 - i. Ferris takes reasonable steps to protect the security, integrity, and privacy of information submitted via a Ferris Web page; however, Web users need to be aware of the difficulty of maintaining data confidentiality over a public Internet.
 - ii. Ferris Web page editors are directed to use industry standard security protocol (SSL) and to store data behind a firewall.
 - iii. We recommend the user to use the latest versions of Microsoft Internet Explorer and Firefox and keep their security and virus applications up to date to prevent security vulnerabilities.

VII. Legalities

- a. Commercial or promotional activity
 - i. The sale of goods and services to non-University entities must be directly related to the mission of the University.
 - ii. The University Business Policy Letter on Conflict of Interest defines conditions under which faculty and staff use of official position and influence to further personal gain or that of families or associates constitutes unacceptable behavior.
 - iii. Except for donations to the University, no online fund raising is allowed. All online solicitation for donations for Ferris from University employees or others must be approved by University Advancement & Marketing.
- b. Advertising, endorsements, and publishing
 - i. Although very limited advertising and proprietary information is posted on the official Ferris Web site, future considerations of advertisements will be made by the University Webmaster in consultation with the Associate Vice President for Marketing and Communications. The posting of advertisements will be made on a case-by-case basis and is subject to review.
 - ii. In general, the following types of advertising will not be accepted:
 - 1. "Head shops" and/or other purveyors of legal paraphernalia associated with illegal drugs, or for drugs other than registered pharmaceuticals;

2. Advertising that promotes alcoholic beverages or alcohol use and/or tobacco products. The advertising of University-sponsored events that may involve the serving of alcohol, such as a banquet or fundraiser, are not precluded by this policy;
 3. Religious and/or political organizations;
 4. Gambling and/or other high-risk ventures;
 5. Racist and/or sexist themes or stereotypes, selling sex as a product, even by implication;
 6. Dishonest and/or misleading information.
- iii. Several principles underlie the University's policies regarding publication on the Internet. The University upholds an individual's constitutional right to freedom of speech. The University also recognizes that information/publications created by units and individuals acting in an official capacity are representative of the University and to the greater academic and public community. Therefore, an effort has been made to maintain a balance of good stewardship of institutional assets and individual freedom of expression in Internet publishing policies.
 - iv. The Ferris Web site provides a framework and mechanisms for structured retrieval of officially authorized information resources of the Institution. Publications and other information resources created by an official unit or other recognized organization of the University or an individually created information resource which is sponsored by an official unit, faculty member, or registered organization are authorized for inclusion in the Ferris Web site environment.
- c. Disclaimers
- i. Information representing a point of view differing from an established University policy or position must include a standard disclaimer. Samples of appropriate disclaimers include:
 - ii. "Volunteers generally do maintenance of this information. As such, some information may be incomplete and/or outdated. Please address requests for corrections or other comments to <e-mail address>."
 - iii. "The <Department of _____> disclaims any liability whatsoever for any of the information, documentation, programs, software or other material ("information") which is or may become a part of this system; and does not warrant or guarantee that the information will not be offensive to any user."
 - iv. "The user is hereby put on notice that by accessing and using this system, the user assumes the risk that the information and documentation contained on the system may be offensive and/or may not meet the needs and requirements of the user. The user assumes the entire risk as to use of the system."
- d. Proper use of information resources, information technology, and networks
- i. University policy governing the Proper Use of Information Resources, Information Technology, and Networks at Ferris State University (Business Policy Letter) details the appropriate uses of institutional resources, including information, computing, and networks.

- e. Offensive material
 - i. All information must be free of inflammatory, derogatory, or offensive text, images, or sounds. Inflammatory behavior, as often seen in newsgroups, could be interpreted as libel. All information must be free of any unlawful or immoral purposes which include, but are not limited to, obscene materials, pornographic materials, threatening, harassing or discriminatory materials.
 - ii. The Web Content Manager will review specific cases of potentially offensive material being posted on the Ferris Web site on a case-by case basis.
- f. Licensing/Copyrights
 - i. Copyright
 - 7. Any work created in the United States after March 1, 1989 is automatically protected by copyright, even if there is no copyright notice attached to the work. (17. USC §§ 102, 401, and 405).
 - ii. Intellectual property rights
 - 8. The Ferris State University Board Policy (Part 10, Subpart 10-11) on Intellectual Property Rights applies to all material on the Ferris Web site.
 - iii. Licensed resources
 - 9. Some information and software resources available through the Ferris State University network are licensed solely for use of the Ferris community. Redistribution of licensed resources to external communities is not permitted, unless specifically authorized in the license agreement.
- g. Enforcement and Adjudication
 - i. Routine monitoring of the accuracy and currency of FSU Web site content and conformity with the provisions of these policies shall be the responsibility of the creating units, departments, programs, colleges and/or divisions of the University.
 - ii. Misuse or policy violations shall be brought first to the attention of the information provider and then to the attention of the Web Content Manager. If resolution cannot be reached, the Chief Technology Officer will arbitrate a final solution.
 - iii. In accordance with established University practices, policies and procedures, such misuse of the FSU Gateway may result in termination of access, disciplinary review, suspension, dismissal, termination of employment, legal action or other disciplinary action.

Resources

- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
- <http://www.w3.org/TR/1999/WAI-WEBCONTENT-19990505/wai-pageauth.html>
- WC3 Standards: www.w3.org
- Validator: <http://validator.w3.org/>
- Web Accessibility Guidelines: <http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG/>
- Checklist of checkpoints for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0
- Web Accessibility Evaluation Tools: <http://www.w3.org/WAI/ER/tools/>
- Mailto Reference: <http://www.cmu.edu/computing/doc/email/spam/mailto-tag.html>