AU Policy: Responsible Use of University Web site and Content Management System

Subject: Requirements and standards for use of University Web Resources.

Office Responsible for Annual Review of This Policy: University Communications and Marketing (UCM)

Procedures: Web Steering Committee Procedures for Quality Assurance: Meeting Security and Performance

Related University Policies: Information Technology Security Policies, Computer Use and Copyright, Intellectual Property, Data Classification, Advertising and Trademark.

I. SCOPE

This policy governs the use of the University Web site, www.american.edu. The University's Web site is distinctive for its integrated user experience, widely distributed publishing responsibility and flexibility to allow customized content. With such distributed publishing responsibility comes shared responsibility for quality assurance, usability, performance and security. The actions of one individual or department can affect the entire system. Therefore, expectations are set to ensure quality, manage risk, and present the university's Web content to users in the most effective ways.

II. POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of this policy is to establish basic requirements for use of university Web resources in a manner that maintains quality and appropriately reduces risk to the confidentiality, integrity and availability of university data, as well as the system. The requirements of this policy deal with university standards for Web content, including visual identity, design and editorial quality, accessibility, management applications and databases, security and advertising.

III. DEFINITIONS

Web Content Management System (CMS): Software application used to store, edit and publish Web pages, including html, text, photos, video, and other media via a series of managed templates. American University has adopted PaperThin's CommonSpot as its Web CMS solution.

Domain: A domain name locates an organization or an entity on the Internet. In case of American University our domain name is www.american.edu. The domain name represents the labeling used to identify multiple computer addresses under single umbrella, allowing nearly unlimited sub domains. Web sites that use a name that includes amerian.edu are considered part of the domain.

University Web site: Web sites that represent administrative and academic units of the university. These Web sites are university assets and should follow university policies and procedures.

University Web Content: Any content or data created by university faculty and staff and published on the university Web site to represent the work of the university, school, department or unit. Such content is owned by the university (with the exception of intellectual property of the faculty, which is licensed for use by the university). Web content is primarily hosted by the university on the domain www.american.edu. In addition, some university Web content is externally hosted by outside firms. Such hosting relationships are managed and guided by university contracts.

University Data (Refer to Data Classification Policy)

Externally Hosted Web Content: University Web content hosted by external service providers, managed through university owned contracts. University Web content that is externally hosted is also governed by this policy.

Content Publisher: A university representative with authorized access to the content management system who enters data (text, photos, video,) into approved modules or templates, so that the information is displayed on the university Web site.

Content Publishing Committee: The group of content publishers who have been trained and authorized to use the content management system, and who provide user input to the Web Steering Committee at monthly meetings.

Content Owner: The academic or administrative unit head with primary responsibility for the department or unit.

Web Steering Committee (WSC): An advisory group reporting to the President that provides overall governance and program management (scope, schedule, budget) for the university's Web site, www.american.edu and all sub-sites hosted on the server for this domain. The WSC is responsible for creating, recommending and implementing policies and procedures to guide: use of the content management system; content migration; editorial, design, branding and sub branding considerations; security and risk management; training and leadership of content publishers; quality assurance; performance; measurement, tracking and evaluation. The WSC is led by the Executive Director, University Communications and Marketing, and includes representatives from OIT, Academic Affairs, Campus Life, and the Office of the President.

IV. POLICY

All university Web content presented on the Internet will be governed by this policy. Web content will be supported on the domain www.american.edu, which is the primary domain to which this policy pertains. [Existing personal faculty pages and student organization pages on the old university server, www1.american.edu, are not university Web content and are specifically exempted from this policy. (See Policy on Ownership of Copyright.) Other exemptions will be made by the President, at the recommendation of the WSC.]

Faculty, staff and students using university resources to develop and present university Web content will abide by standards designed to assure quality, performance, usability and security. Standards are developed and maintained by the WSC. An integrated user experience is assured through the use of a content management system and a series of design templates that provide reasonable publishing flexibility. Editorial and design standards ensure consistency of the experience for users across the site. Standards for timeliness and accuracy assure quality as well. Content publishers will be provided training and on-going support to effectively use these tools and standards. Content publishers and owners will be notified in the event that standards are not being met.

Performance and security standards assure that the site functions properly and the university's data, including personal student data, is protected, as well as the university's reputation and good name. Performance problems, security risks or poorly presented content on one part of the site can affect the entire domain. University Web content will be reviewed for quality assurance, including loading times, presentation, and security risks, prior to publishing content. Successful review by the W SC's Quality Assurance Process is required for the content to go live on the University's site. On-going security and performance review, as well as periodic content and design review, will monitor live content and problems. Issues of concern will be raised with the content publisher and owner so they may be promptly addressed.

Replication and repurposing of original content should be avoided; rather links to the original source in the content management system should be used. Policies regarding Intellectual Property, Copyright, and Trademarks should be followed.

Special Web applications and databases presented on the site will adhere to university standards referenced in this policy. Applications that rely on university data, including confidential, official use only and unrestricted data (see Data Classification Policy) will follow appropriate requirements. Applications that in the judgment of the WSC pose security risk, hinder performance or confuse the user will not be hosted on the site.

External hosted university Web content should be explicitly reviewed and approved by the WSC, following review of unique requirements that would warrant such hosting.

Content that is linked from the university's Web site to another entity or organization's site should clearly identify a departure from university pages. Non-university Web content should not use or replicate the University's templates in a manner that confuses content ownership.

The university is a non-profit organization and is strictly limited in terms of accepting advertising revenue that would compromise its non-profit status for tax purposes. As such, advertising is not appropriate for any part of the university site. (See Advertising Policy.) In addition, messages that imply university endorsement should be avoided. Links to partners and affiliates should be provided as resources, and should avoid advertisement or official endorsement.

V. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Office of University Communications and Marketing provides standards for design, editorial, visual identity and advertising, as well as leadership for the university's Web site. UCM is the service owner of the CommonSpot content management system and associated performance

(See Service Level Agreement for CommonSpot). UCM leads the Content Publishing Committee and quality assurance review process.

The Office of Information Technology provides management and development of the application environment (and related infrastructure) that is used to run the university's Web site and publish university Web content. OIT is also responsible for ensuring performance, availability, and the on-going monitoring and assessment of issues related to security of the university Web site (refer to Service Level Agreement for CommonSpot).

The Web Steering Committee establishes governance mechanisms for use of university Web resources, including policy dealing with university standards for Web content. Sets policies and procedures. Leads working groups managing development of new features. Monitors migration of content to site.

VI. STANDARDS

Design standards for university Web pages maintain an integrated user experience and look across the site. (link)

Editorial standards for headlines, copy, style and content maintain an integrated user experience and voice across the site. See the Editorial Tool Kit at (link)

Digital media standards (link)

Quality Assurance

1) **Timeliness and Accuracy:** Content owners and content publishers are responsible for maintaining Web content that is accurate and timely. Publishers should ensure proper maintenance, and follow all published university standards of form and content. The WSC will notify content publishers and owners of any sites that have not been updated for a period of one year or more, so that the content can be reviewed, updated, or deleted.

2) **Web Security and Performance**: AU Web servers are regularly monitored for security vulnerabilities and performance. Web pages that are identified as vulnerable or causing server performance issues may be deactivated until the areas of concern are addressed. Software upgrades, new application features and major site releases are to be tested on the quality assurance server environment to prevent the introduction of poor performing or vulnerable Web resources.

VII. EFFECTIVE DATE

Policy effective August 31, 2010.

Policy last reviewed August 2015, no updates.

VIII. APPROVAL

Approved:

Teresa M. Flannery

Executive Director, University Communications and Marketing
Date approved: August 31, 2010