Web Standards

Approved by the NIU Web Steering
Committee on December 19, 2016

go.niu.edu/webstandards

Northern Illinois University

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This document was approved by the Web Steering Committee on Dec. 19, 2016.

The standards will be reviewed and updated annually by the committee. Please see the Web Team website at go.niu.edu/webteam for announcements and updates that are released between the annual reviews of this document.

Introduction and purpose

Providing the best content possible

NIU's website is the face of NIU, often the first impression visitors have of the university, and we want their experience to be a positive one. To help provide a positive user-experience, we have the following standards and best practice guidelines in place to assist you and to ensure a consistent and unified user experience for our visitors. The standards were collaboratively written by members of the NIU Web Team, approved by the Web Steering Committee and grounded in thorough research of industry standards and best practices for usability and lawful accessibility compliance.

Our guiding principles for web governance of the niu.edu domain are:

✓   All pages should be audience-centered (student first) and consistently use the NIU brand.

✓   All pages should have a content strategy, featuring an intuitive navigation and relevant (audience focused) and current content that is optimized for search engines.

Content ownership, user access rights and responsibilities

All subdomains and sub-sites within the niu.edu domain belong to, and are representative of, the university. Colleges and divisions serve as caretakers of their websites, experts in their content and stewards of NIU's brand.

The university's central Office of Web and Internal Communications (Web Team) has access to all areas of the niu.edu website and, to ensure quality control, will edit/alter content as needed for clarity, grammar, spelling, usage and style, as well as to conform with university naming conventions and branding. The university reserves the right to revise or delete content housed either on university IT resources or external resources that does not meet acceptable use guidelines or the standards outlined in this policy.

For each site on the niu.edu domain, a primary (and in some cases a secondary) page master will be identified. Access to the Web Content Management System (CMS) will only be granted to and retained by users who have completed Level 1 Web Training and/or the annual refresher training (FY18 and beyond) offered by the Office of Web and Internal Communications. If a site's content director and/or page manager has not completed – or does not wish to complete – the required training, the Web Team will maintain the web property in collaboration with the department, college or division.

Governance and collaboration

Web governance is defined as a system for managing an online presence in an orderly way.

At NIU, web governance is facilitated through the Web Steering Committee. The committee's objective is to provide collaborative centralized governance for the ongoing development, deployment, delivery, and maintenance of the niu.edu domain and to consistently represent the Northern Illinois University brand online through standard processes, roles, responsibilities and practices.

Primary support for niu.edu and associated sites is led by the Office of Web and Internal Communications (Web Team) in the Division of Enrollment Management, Marketing and Communications. The senior director for Web and Internal Communications provides oversight and strategic direction for the university's web presence. The director of web strategy and services reviews requests from academic & administrative stakeholders, sets priorities and apprises the Web Steering Committee of projects and plans.

The Web Team also provides training for page masters, support for all niu.edu web pages, maintains the Web Standards document and provides administrative support for the Web Steering Committee.

Support

We support niu.edu web pages for compatibility with the current version and previous major release of the following browsers:

- Chrome
- Firefox
- Safari
- Internet Explorer
- Edge

Older browser versions may work, but not all web applications may be compatible. For this reason, we recommend that users update to the most recent version of their preferred browser. We also recommend that any web applications utilized meet the same criteria as stated above.

To request an update to a website: go.niu.edu/webupdate

To request a new website: niu.edu/marcomm/resources/request-form.shtml

NIU branding

NIU brand standards

To present a consistent, unified image and reinforce NIU's branding and marketing initiatives, all division, college, school, department and special information web properties must clearly identify their relationship with the university.

All web properties must adhere to NIU's Communication Standards for Institutional Brand Identity.

Use of NIU logos and trademarks

All NIU websites should include the following elements, which are included in NIU's standard templates:

- The NIU logo, implemented according to the university's graphic standards.
- The logo must link back to the NIU homepage (www.niu.edu).
- Copyright information as follows: © 2xxx Board of Trustees of Northern Illinois University. All rights reserved.
- The full name of the university – Northern Illinois University – must appear somewhere on every web page.

Use of the Huskie Athletics logo on sites other than niuhuskies.com is prohibited without written consent from Intercollegiate Athletics, or its designee.

No university trademarks may be altered or manipulated in any way or merged with or placed directly against any other logo.

Huskie Athletics logo

Use of third-party advertising and logos

As a .edu domain, third-party advertising is prohibited on NIU's website. Only Enrollment Management, Marketing and Communications may grant an exception.

Event sponsorship logos are permitted after being cleared by Enrollment Management, Marketing and Communications and must be taken down once the event/sponsorship has ended. A third-party logo must be supplied by the sponsor and must be a high-quality image. Low quality or unofficial logos will be removed.

If a partnership exists between a third-party and NIU, a link (not a logo) may be placed on the NIU website. If the partnership is terminated, the link must be removed.

Compliance

Copyright

Page masters must comply with official copyright laws. Any content, photo, image, logo or media that doesn't meet copyright guidelines will be removed from the NIU website. Before posting any element that may infringe on copyright law, contact the director of the Office of Web and Internal Communications who can make a final determination.

Accessibility

As a state institution, the NIU website is required to comply with the Illinois Information Technology Accessibility Act (IITAA) which requires Illinois agencies and universities to ensure that their websites, information systems and information technologies are accessible to people with disabilities. Page masters should review IITAA requirements on a regular basis.

> **Current practices in accessibility compliance include:**
> - Use of heading tags to structure page content
> - Links introduced in context of text
> - Including alternative text with all images
> - Ensuring any information conveyed by multi-media is also conveyed in text

Privacy policy

Page masters must review the university's Website Privacy Policy to make sure all pages are in compliance. Please note that NIU is prohibited by law from requiring an individual to transmit his or her social security number over the internet, unless the connection is secure or the social security number is encrypted. Please also see the NIU Information Security Procedure.

Web content standards

Style guide

As of April 2015, the NIU website conforms to AP Style*. Grammar and punctuation must follow the latest edition of <u>The Associated Press Stylebook</u>. Online access to the <u>AP Stylebook</u> is free for NIU employees and students through NIU Libraries. References to common university-related usage are provided here for quick reference. If in doubt, check the AP Stylebook.

*With some exceptions, such as using Title Case for headings and the formatting of Uniform Resource Locators (URLs). AP Style calls for the inclusion of "http://" but we do not.

Punctuation, capitalization, spelling and numbers

Punctuation

In accordance with AP Style, don't use the Oxford comma.

Capitalization

Capitalize the complete formal names of NIU colleges and departments, offices, committees, programs, course titles: Department of Marketing, Center for Black Studies.

Lowercase any fragmentary titles: the college, the university, the center, the marketing department. Capitalize "program" in formal names: Honors Program, Advanced Placement Program, General Education Program.

Lowercase "program" in general program names: the department's program in finance.

Lowercase titles that follow a name or stand alone: Derryl Block, dean of the College of Health and Human Sciences; chair of the School of Nursing and Health Studies; director, Health Services.

Capitalize titles preceding names: President Doug Baker, Dean Block.

Seasons and academic semesters or terms are lowercase: fall semester, spring 2008, summer session.

Majors, minors, specializations, emphases, concentrations, options and areas of study are lowercase in text references: major in elementary education, minor in urban studies, specialization in audiology, biochemistry emphasis, concentration in public history, time arts area of study.

Languages are capitalized: major in English, minor in Spanish.

Page navigation labels are written in Title Case.

Spelling

Correct spellings of commonly misspelled words: accountancy (not "accounting" when referring to the academic department), DeKalb, email, Huskie, internet (no longer capitalized), U.S. (when abbreviating United States).

Numbers

Cardinal numbers: spell out whole numbers below 10, use figures for 10 and above.

Ordinal numbers: spell out first through ninth; use figures starting with 10th.

Spell out "percent" or "percentage" in text. Use of symbol (%) is permissible in tables.

Phone numbers should be formatted with hyphens, not parentheses or periods (i.e., 815-555-1234).

Write out a number when it is the first word in a sentence. For example, "Twenty-one is the legal drinking age in the United States." Better yet, rewrite the sentence so that it doesn't start with a number: "The legal drinking age in the United States is 21."

Carry decimals in a grade point average to two digits: 3.50.

Correct time abbreviates are: a.m., p.m., noon and midnight. If the time is on the hour, it should be written as 1 p.m. If the time is on the half hour, it can be written as 1:30 p.m.

Hyphenation

first-year student
student-athlete
nondegree
noncredit

on-campus, on campus: Use the hyphen when phrase is used as an adjective, leave unhyphenated when used as a preposition.

pre and post - leave unhyphenated unless followed by a proper noun or a word that begins with the same vowel: preregistration, postbaccalaureate, pre-establish, post-WWII.

Common phrases

freshman class
freshmen students
freshman orientation
freshman student-athlete

freshmen student-athletes

chair or chairperson

ombudsperson

adviser or advisor (either is accepted but must be used consistently throughout site)

post-traditional students (has replaced non-traditional students)

email (not e-mail)

online

website, web page

course work (not coursework)

gray (not grey)

Degree terminology

Use the terms fall semester, spring semester, summer session.

Upper division and lower division are the correct references for NIU students in junior-senior or freshman-sophomore groups and for NIU courses at the 300-400 or 100-200 levels. Do not use the terms "upper class," "under class" or "lower class" in this context.

For the first mention of grade point average, spell out the entire phrase. For additional references, abbreviate to GPA. Carry decimals in a grade point average to two digits: 3.50.

The proper term is Graduate Record Examinations, not "Exams" or "Examination."

Use periods for all degrees, certificates and licenses: B.S., C.P.A., M.B.A., M.S.Ed., R.N., Ph.D.

Undergraduate Degrees:

Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)

Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.)

Bachelor of General Studies (B.G.S.)

Bachelor of Music (B.M.)

Bachelor of Science (B.S.)

Bachelor of Science in Education (B.S.Ed.)

Advanced Degrees and Certificates:

Doctor of Audiology (Au.D.)

Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

Educational Specialist (Ed.S.)

Master of Accounting Science (M.A.S.)

Master of Arts (M.A.)

Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.)

Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.)

Master of Music (M.M.)

Master of Physical Therapy (M.P.T.)

Master of Public Administration (M.P.A.)

Master of Public Health (M.P.H.)

Master of Science (M.S.)

Master of Science in Education (M.S.Ed.)

Master of Science in Taxation (M.S.T.)

Performer's Certificate (do not abbreviate as P.C.)

College of Law professional degree:

Juris Doctor (J.D.)

Examples of degree terminology:

bachelor's degree/baccalaureate degree/Bachelor of Arts degree

master's degree/Master of Science degree

doctoral degree/doctorate/Doctor of Education degree

law degree/Juris Doctor degree

A Performer's Certificate is not a graduate degree, but is designed to permit students to attain greater mastery of their chosen fields than achievable with the master's degree. "Performer's Certificate" is not abbreviated.

A Certificate of Graduate Study is a course of study, not linked to the pursuit of a degree, consisting of a coherent set of courses, fewer than for a major, addressing a specific theme.

A concentration is a course of study, typically interdisciplinary, linked to the pursuit of a specific graduate degree.

Use the word "degree" with the abbreviation, rather than the abbreviation alone: Ph.D. degree, B.S. degree.

Content management

Audience

Content published to NIU websites should be geared primarily toward recruitment and retention of students. Content for which the audience is inter-office would be better suited offline or on an intranet system (see Document retention and storage, below).

Official university content

Do not recreate content that exists elsewhere on the NIU website. Always link to the official online source. For example, link to the official, current catalog for course descriptions and degree requirements; link to the Bursar for current tuition and fees information; link to Housing and Residential Services for current room and board rates.

Outdated content

Content should be reviewed every six months to ensure information is accurate. The Web Team and page masters will periodically perform content assessments, working with the subject matter expert (SME) to determine a plan for updating outdated content. If the SME is unresponsive, the page master will update or delete the content as necessary.

If a web property has not been updated in 12 months, the Web Team may send out a notification to the user associated with the subdomain. If the user does not respond within 10 business days, the Web Team will delete the site from the server.

Content readability

Website content should be written for a 5th-8th grade reading level. This is not to "dumb down" the content. Rather, it acknowledges that the majority of website visitors are scanning pages quickly for specific information.

Content should further be made easily scannable by keeping sentences and paragraphs short, using relevant and descriptive headings and using formatted lists whenever appropriate. Use brand voice and avoid jargon and/or difficult-to-read words when less complex words can easily substitute.

Document retention and storage

The Cascade website is a web content management system, not a records management/retention tool. All offices should have an offline or intranet storage system, such as SharePoint, Blackboard, Dropbox or an O365 group and follow the Records Retention and Administration Guidelines. The type of storage system should be determined by the colleges, divisions, departments and/or schools managing the documents.

For current information on file sharing and linking internally or externally from a website, check the [NIU web resources](#).

Publishing and unpublishing

Pages and assets must be submitted prior to publishing. If a page is saved as "draft," it will not publish.

If an asset needs to be reviewed prior to publishing live, uncheck the "PROD" (production server) destination when publishing and push it only to the quality assurance server ("QA") destination.

Moving, renaming or deleting

When deleting an asset, you must first unpublish it.

If an asset will not be used again, delete it (and unpublish it). If unsure if the asset will be used again, unpublish it and move it to an archive folder, which will be reviewed annually.

If an asset is used annually, but shouldn't be published live at all times, do not add that asset to any navigation menus, as removing it when not active will require the entire site to be republished.

Redirects should stay in place no longer than six months.

Event listings

All events promoted on campus should be published on the NIU Calendar. The Web Team can install a calendar feed on any NIU web property to pull in events related to a department, school or organization.

Pages in Cascade may only be created for major annual events or event types (such as an information page about a conference or about a colloquium series). Once the date of an event has passed, the event page should be unpublished and deleted from the website. If the page will be updated and republished for a future recurrence, the page should be unpublished and moved to an events folder within the site's file structure.

Faculty, lab and student organization websites

All faculty, lab and student organization websites must comply with the NIU Web Standards and corresponding [Style Guide](#).

Websites for student organizations formally recognized and/or funded by the Student Association (SA) are maintained on [Huskie Link](#), not through Cascade.

The Web Team recommends that student organizations be given a landing page on their college/department sponsored site that will be maintained by the college/department page master.

The landing page may link to Huskie Link and/or to an optional external website managed by the organization.

Research lab websites must comply with any additional standards determined by their related department or college.

Research lab and faculty websites should be maintained by their division or college's page master and linked to/from their department's primary website.

Event websites

Websites for conferences, symposiums, meetings and similar one-time or annual events will be built and maintained in Cascade using standard NIU templates only if all of the following criteria are met:

- The event is sponsored by NIU and/or takes place on an NIU campus.
- The website abides by the NIU Communication Standards and the NIU Web Standards.
- The website will remain live only until the next recurrence takes place (i.e., a conference held every two years will have its website live for 24 months) and then it will be updated or removed. If the event will not reoccur, the site will be removed after 12 months.

Website structure

Sites are divided into folders and subfolders, where every folder corresponds to a site section.

Each folder should have a landing page with the system name "index." A web browser will default to (or "land on") this page if only the site URL and folder are entered (for example, niu.edu/marcomm/services/, where "services" is a folder under the "/marcomm" website, will actually land on niu.edu/marcomm/services/index.shtml). This is also necessary for usable breadcrumbs.

The only folders in a website that do not need an "index" page are folders for the purpose of organizing files (i.e., image folders, PDF folders, etc.).

The **BASE** folder (aka, "/") is the location where all of your site's content is housed. The base folder's index page is your site homepage.

Images should be stored in a folder with the system name "_image" under the base folder, not within site section folders.

Likewise, PDFs should be stored in a folder with the system name "_pdf" in the base folder, not within site section folders.

Your site will also have a folder with the system name "_internal" where your navigation blocks will be housed.

> **Best practices for website structure:**
> When you keep all of your images and PDFs stored in a centralized location, it helps keep your site organized and avoids accidental file duplication. You may break up your "_image" and "_pdf" folders into subfolders that correspond with site sections, if you wish, for further organization.

Navigation

The site's navigation should reflect the site's folder structure. Changes to navigation should not be made lightly, as doing so can result in broken links and/or major architectural changes.

All navigation items should be formatted in Title Case.

TOP NAVIGATION appears horizontally at the top of your website. This is created using a custom navigation block. A website may have only one top navigation menu and it must appear consistently on every page.

The order of items in the top navigation menu should be as follows:

- Home icon* (🏠): this should link to your site's homepage
- About*
- Customized labels
- Contact Us (if needed and not already present as a dropdown option under About)

 *The Home icon and About items are required in top navigation menus.

BREADCRUMBS appear directly beneath your top navigation menu. Items are generated automatically using the display names for pages and folders. Breadcrumbs must be enabled for any page of folder that is three or more levels down from the base folder.

Best practices for website navigation:

- For consistency, use the following labels in top navigation:

    About (not About Us)

    Contact Us (not Contact)

- Left navigation menus are optional, as the top navigation menu has dropdown menu options. However, if a left navigation menu is used in one site section, all site sections should have left navigation menus as well, to maintain consistency. The same left navigation menu should be used on each page of a site section.

- If you wish to change your site's overall navigation, or the navigation for a specific site section, please contact the Web Team or your division's page master to assist you. Navigation changes should only occur when a site is undergoing major reconstructions, as it will affect any internal links within the site and external links from other NIU sites and beyond. Thus, updates beyond the scope of your site may need to occur that the web team must be made aware of.

Naming conventions

There are various types of "names" in Cascade, which can lead to confusion.

The **SYSTEM NAME** corresponds to the asset's URL and should be formatted with all lower-case characters and no spaces. If the asset is the landing page for a folder, its system name must be "index." If the system name for an asset contains multiple words, words should be separated by hyphens rather than formatted as all one word (for example, "contact-us").

The **DISPLAY NAME** for a page appears in navigation elements, such as in breadcrumbs. Display names should be simple but descriptive and can be formatted in title case (for example, "Policies and Fees"). Display names are required for pages and folders in Cascade CMS, but are generally unused for other assets, such as files and blocks.

The page **TITLE** (also known as the meta title tag) appears at the top of a user's web browser or tab and is useful for Google search indexing and relaying a user's location on the site in relation to the niu.edu domain. Titles must be formatted in the following way:

[Page Name] – NIU – [Website Name]

(for example, "Contact Us – NIU – Enrollment Management, Marketing and Communications").

Best practices for naming:
- System names should be kept short and relevant to the page content
- Display names for pages should not contain the same phrases as the display name for their parent folders, otherwise breadcrumbs will appear repetitive (i.e., "Academic Affairs > Newsletters > Newsletter Archives").
- Title formatting should be consistent across the site (for example, if you use "[Page] – NIU – Academic Affairs" on one page, don't use "[Page] – NIU – Division of Academic Affairs" on another page).

Meta content

For search engine optimization (SEO) and accessibility value, pages must have unique meta titles and descriptions.

Title tags (also referred to as page titles) are approximately 55 characters with spaces.

Descriptions are approximately 115 characters with spaces. Descriptions should be formatted as 1-2 sentences that briefly summarize the importance of the page.

Heading tags

Use **<h*>** tags for the following page elements:

h2: Main Heading (when you place text in the Main Heading field in Cascade, this is automatically formatted). h2 should only be used once on a page. If you put text in the Main Heading field, do not use the h2 tag anywhere else. If you do not use the Main Heading field, you may use the h2 once in the Main Content Area as a page heading.

h3: Sub heading, buttons, feature box headings

h4: Lower sub heading

Do not use **h1**. This heading is used automatically by the meta title tag.

Do not add additional formatting (i.e., bolding, underlining, italicizing, etc.) to headings.

Best practices for headings:

The proper use of heading tags is crucial for accessibility and usability. Headings relay important information, such as the hierarchy and structure of content, to the user.

Because heading tags are read by screen readers to users with visual impairments, text that heads a section should be formatted as such, rather than as bolded text, which only emphasizes that word or phrase.

Likewise, text that is not designated as a section heading should not be formatted as one. Do not use headings as styled or emphasized text. If you must change the appearance of your text, use a custom Cascading Style Sheet (CSS) after receiving approval from the Web Team.

Links

Do not bold links.

Do not use "Read more", "Click here", or "For more information..." as your linked text. Rather, link an appropriate chunk or snippet of the text within the paragraph or sentence.

Links that point off-site (including any other NIU sites that are not your specific site) should be created as an external link and the target should be set to "open in a new window."

PDFs should be created as internal links, but because they are not pages with breadcrumbs or navigation menus, they should be set to open in a new window.
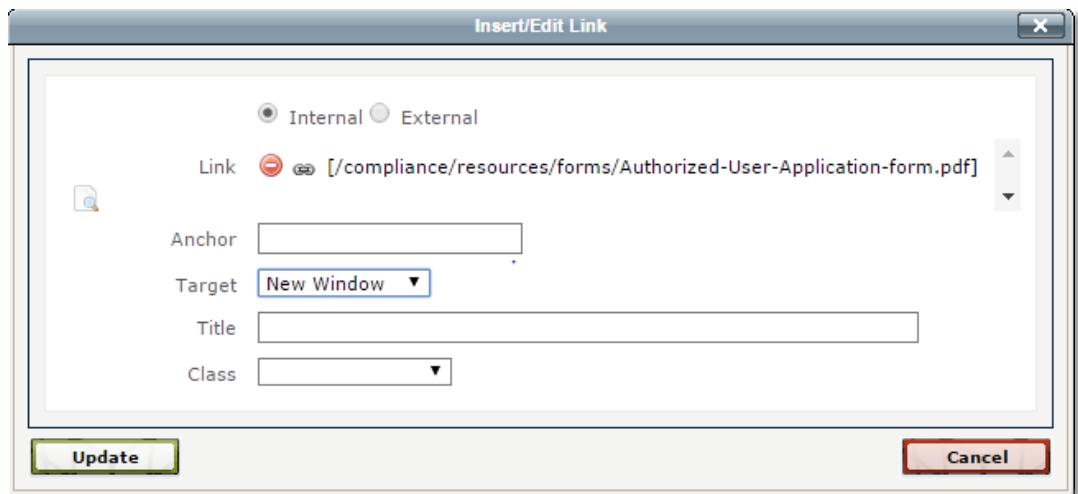
Linked text should be relevant words or phrases, not full URLs (with the exception of email addresses* and "go.NIU" URLs).

Good	Not good
go.niu.edu/campuscommunications	Visit the Web and Internal Communications website (http://niu.edu/marcomm/services/campus-communications /index.shtml) for information about maintaining your web presence.
Visit Web and Internal Communications for information about maintaining your web presence.	
Contact us at webcommunications@niu.edu.	Click here for more information about web support!

Best practices for links:

Links should be understandable out of context because website visitors using assistive technologies, such as screen reading software, may tab through all links on a page.

Files

File types

PDF is the most preferred text-based file type.

Other text-based file types, such as DOC, XLS and PPTX should be converted to PDF format before being uploaded into Cascade.

Best practices for files:

Non-PDF file types typically require another program to open, which the user may not have access to. Non-PDF files also, in most cases, automatically download from the browser, which may be alarming to the user if they are unsure whether the source can be trusted.

However, some files are easier to maintain as Word DOCs or other editable file types. See the NIU web resources for up to date information on document management and sharing.

Documents that get updated periodically should include a "last updated" note in the footer to indicate the version.

Naming and renaming

Use simple, descriptive names. Do not include dates or references in the name.

Don't use spaces in file names. Separate words with hyphens (-), not underscores (_).

When renaming files, they must be unpublished first. After the file is renamed, republish all relationships. Find any off-site links and update them to the new file name.

Storage and management

Files uploaded to Cascade must be in use. Files that are not in use or that haven't been updated in more than two years should be deleted. Files must be unpublished before deleting.

Don't store multiple versions of a file in Cascade. Rather, replace existing files with their updated versions.

Files uploaded to Cascade must be accessible for persons with disabilities and must not infringe on copyright.

Images

Image file formats

We recommend using the following types on the NIU websites. For help determining the file type for your project, contact the Office of Web and Internal Communications.

- JPG is the most common image format and recommended for photos.
- PNG can be used for flat art images, but is most useful for supporting transparencies.
- GIF is used most often for flat art images. Do not use animated GIFs on your NIU website.

Image sizes

To shorten download times and conserve server space, keep image files small – from 2KB to 225KB in size.

Use the following dimensions for images:

Full width banner – 1200 x 420 px
Banner on page with left nav – 850 x 300 px
Column image – 640 x 420 px (ideal) or 250 x 125 px
Staff profile image – 320 x 480 px

For websites that use the older (beige/gray, responsive/non-responsive) templates, please consult the templates appendix.

Image dimensions for black and white website template:

We recommend using Photoshop or other editing software to size your images to the exact (or close to exact) size they will be displayed at on your page prior to uploading the image into Cascade.
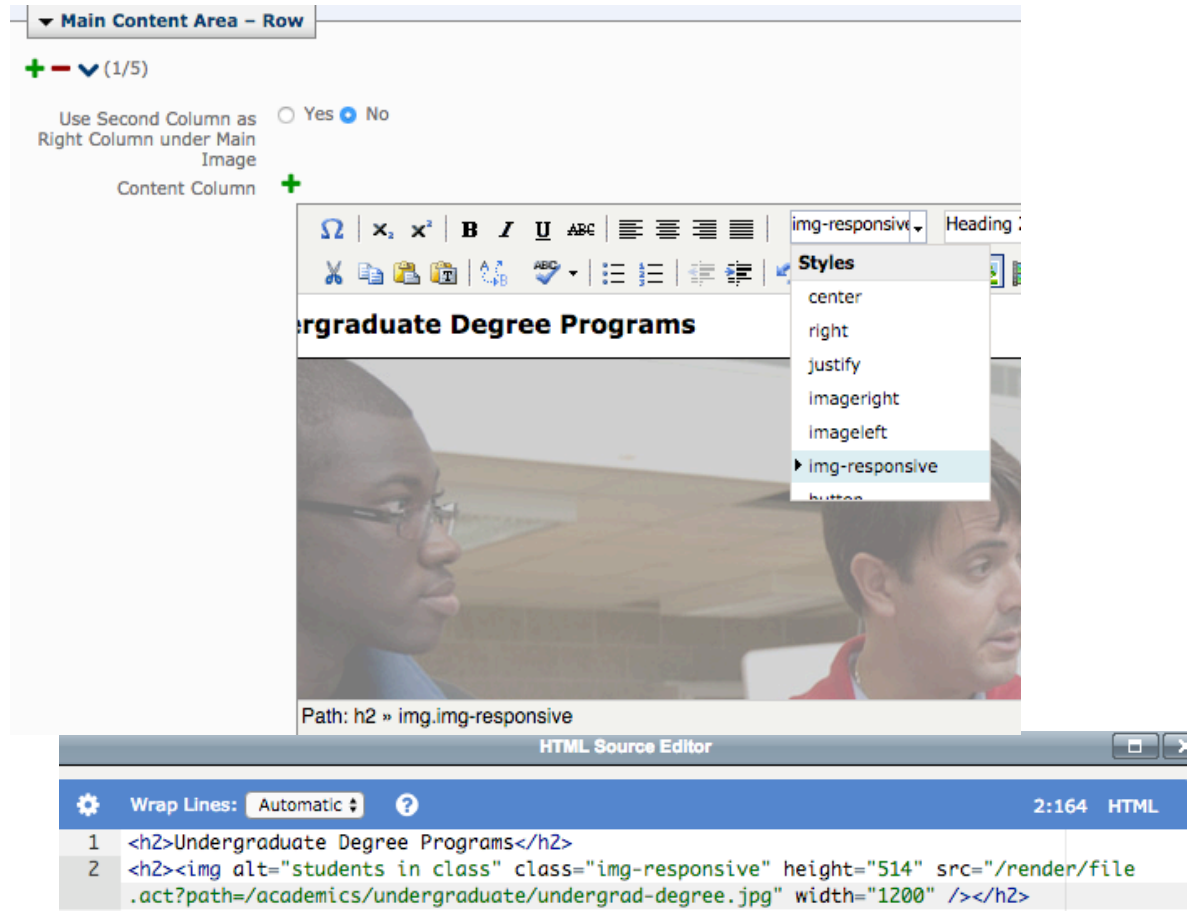
Don't use Cascade's file sizing dialogue box to resize your image. By doing so, you won't change the size of the file, only the instance of the display on the page in question, and it can cause photos to appear pixelated or blurry if you increase the display size to a size that is larger than the uploaded file.

However, if you intend to use the same image in multiple places but displayed at different sizes (i.e., a faculty portrait that will be displayed smaller on the Contact Us page and larger on the faculty member's biography page), upload the image at the largest size needed, then use the file sizing dialogue box to display a smaller version of it on the other page.

Responsive and accessible images

All new NIU websites are created in templates that utilize responsive web design (RWD). This is done so that content is always optimized for whichever device and screen-size it is being viewed on.

To optimize images for RWD, the "img-responsive" class must be added to the image tag in the HTML or via the Styles Dropdown menu.

To ensure that images are accessible for assistive technologies, use alternative text (or alt tags). This can be done in the "alternative text" field on the "Insert Image" pop-up or within the <img> tag in the HTML editor.

Do not simply describe the photo, but provide information equivalent to that which the image conveys.

Bad example: "John Smith in classroom."

Good example: "Professor John Smith leads [class] in a lively discussion."

Don't use "image of…" or "photo of…" phrases, as they are unnecessary.

Don't include redundant information that is conveyed in the surrounding textual content.

Best practices for accessible images:

Alt tags are one of the easiest things to get lackadaisical with when creating web content because they take thoughtful consideration to use correctly but can quickly and easily be used incorrectly. However, it's very important that we do whatever is in our power to make our pages accessible for persons using assistive technologies.

One reason alt tags are often used incorrectly is because we often assume that every image needs one. On the contrary, most of the images on our websites won't require alternative text because they either don't convey information and are simply decorative or the information they do convey is presented elsewhere in the context of the page (i.e., in the textual content). Use the chart below to get an idea of what types of images require alt tags:

No alt text required (Must be marked as "decorative" in the Insert Image window or tagged `alt=""` in the HTML)

- Decorative images (i.e. a close-up on Bunsen burners placed on a chemistry department web page)
- Images where the message or information being conveyed is present in the surrounding text (i.e., a photo of a staff member next to his/her name and bio or contact info)

Required

- Images conveying information that is not present anywhere else on the page (i.e., an infographic or a staff photo that is **not** followed by the staff member's name)
- Images that serve a particular function, such as icons or buttons, for which the alt text should simply state that function (i.e., an arrow icon indicating that the user should advance to the next page would have an alt text of "next page")

Optional*

Alt text is optional when it is not required, but adding content to the alt tag would enhance search engine optimization (i.e., a decorative image of students in the bleachers at a football game might have an alt text such as, "No football game is complete without its sea of red and black, proud Huskies cheering enthusiastically in the stands.")

View more information about alt text at WebAim.org.

Image storage and management

Images uploaded to Cascade must be in use. Images that are not in use or that haven't been updated in more than two years should be deleted. Images must be unpublished before deleting.

Don't store multiple versions of an image in Cascade. Rather, replace existing images with their updated versions.

Approved image sources

The Creative Services Image Library is a catalog of images taken by the university's photographers. For access to the image library, register on the site as a user. To limit duplication of images on different NIU websites when downloading a photo, add a comment listing the page/site where you expect to use the photo. You may also tag images and create a shared gallery to organize your photos. If you cannot find what you need in the Image Library, please contact Creative Services for help or to schedule a photoshoot.

Photos used on NIU web pages must meet the guidelines for photos established in the NIU Communications Standards and have adequate image resolution. Always select photos that reinforce NIU's brand personality and narrative. Imagery should convey student engagement that is authentic and creates an emotional connection with our audience. Look for photos that are warm and full of spirit and energy. Photos of people interacting with each other are preferred over photos of buildings.

Page masters should take the time to check whether an image is being used on another page before uploading it to their site.

Personal photos taken by a member of the department/office should not be used, nor should images available through the public domain or Internet image searches like Google or Bing. For assistance in locating copyright-free photos, please contact the Office of Web and Internal Communications.

Rotating banners and slideshows

Rotating banners, or slideshows, appear only on the homepage of a site and are limited to three banner images. Each image should relate to an event, department or program and should link to the appropriate page on the site. Captions are optional. The Office of Web and Internal Communications has several default rotating banner scripts available and will help set up the banners upon request.

Best practices for banners and slideshows:

Current research in user experience and best practices find that slideshows add little to the usefulness of a web page and that only a small percentage of users click through to view each slide.

Even fewer users remain on a web page long enough to view each banner rotation for banners that don't have advancing slides.

Thus, rotations and slides are limited to three elements, and websites are limited to one rotating banner/slideshow per site.

We recommend having unique, diverse and engaging static banner images for each of your site's index pages rather than using a slideshow/rotation.

A slideshow is most useful for highlighting pages in the site that are not otherwise featured, such as student success stories, recent news appearances or featured faculty profiles.

Slideshows/rotations should not be used solely for aesthetic appeal, rather they should serve a purpose. Only use a slideshow/rotating banner if you have specific content in mind that you'd like to highlight.

Icons, buttons and graphic text

Don't use image files as icons or buttons. Instead, use Bootstrap compatible glyphicons and button classes. There are many options to choose from. To see examples, check out how we've included icons in buttons.

Don't embed text inside a flattened image or use an image as word art. This is for usability and accessibility purposes. Assistive technologies, such as screen readers, will not be able to recognize text in images as text. Additionally, embedded text is neither searchable by browsers nor able to be translated for non-English speaking users.

Best practices for graphic text:

Image files as icons and text present numerous problems, not only with storage and maintenance in Cascade, but with usability in responsive design as well as many accessibility issues. For example, let's say you want a big "Apply" button, so you open up Photoshop, click the "add text" button, and type out "Apply" in a fancy font and color, then save it as a .JPG to embed on your web page. A person with perfect vision will be able to see the image, recognize it as a word and read the message it conveys.

A person with a visual impairment, however, may have trouble seeing the color of the image, the size of the image or the image at all, thus preventing them from receiving the message being conveyed in it.

Alt text will help in providing the message that the image conveys, but best practice is to not include information in images that can't be accessed by other means.

There are more accessible options to choose from dependent upon your needs, including custom CSS, web fonts and html text overlays. Please contact the Office of Web and Internal Communications and we will be happy to assist you.

Photo galleries

Cascade does not have a native photo gallery option. Therefore, photo galleries may be hosted on a third-party site, such as Flickr, Facebook or Wordpress. Page masters can link to the photo gallery from their NIU site.

Don't create a makeshift gallery by adding rows of images to a page in Cascade. Instead, use one of the options above.

Social media icons

Use flat, unrounded social media icons provided for you in the social media directory. Do not modify or use alternative icons without approval from the Web Team.

Video

Videos for educational purposes should be uploaded to the MEDIAL video server accessible through Blackboard. Videos for promotional purposes, or shorter than five minutes, should be posted to NIU's official YouTube channel, which is managed by the social media team in Institutional Communications, or the college or division's YouTube channel (when applicable). All videos embedded on NIU websites must be closed-captioned to meet accessibility guidelines. Contact the social media

team in Institutional Communications for guidance on how to closed-caption videos.

> ### Best practices for video embedding:
> Make sure the YouTube URL in your iframe src attribute has
>
> ```
> ?rel=0&amp;wmode=transparent
> ```
>
> added to the end of it. This does two things: disables the suggested videos that display after a video finishes playing (which don't always show NIU videos), and fixes an issue where dropdowns appear behind embedded videos.
>
> So for example, instead of this:
>
> ```
> <iframe src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/RbZ-Y-0QzSA">
> </iframe>
> ```
>
> You will want to use this:
>
> ```
> <iframe src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/RbZ-Y-
> 0QzSA?rel=0&amp;wmode=transparent"></iframe>
> ```

Blogs

Cascade does not support blogs. You are welcome to create your own blog offsite with a third-party program and link to it from your site. If your blogging platform supplies you with an RSS feed export, you may also include that feed on your Cascade site. Guidelines for creating an NIU blog can be found in the Social Media Toolkit.

Web communication tools

Social media

All online social media campaigns should follow NIU's official <u>Social Media Policy</u>.

Content posted on social media outlets, such as news updates or events, should not be duplicated in Cascade, rather, they can be shared via RSS feeds, if necessary.

Google Analytics

NIU uses Google Analytics to track its web data. All page masters may request access, training and/or monthly reports by submitting a request form to the Office of Web and Internal Communications.

If a college, division or department has a unique Google Analytics account ID, they must grant administrative access to Enrollment Management, Marketing and Communications upon request. Before a web property with a unique account ID converts to the newest NIU templates, the page master must alert Enrollment Management, Marketing and Communications and/or DoIT so that the unique tracking code is implemented.

Go URLs

<u>Go.NIU</u> is a URL shortener similar to TinyURL or Bitly. It can be used for any niu.edu URL to shorten the URL and provide a stable reference for print materials.

To create a new Go URL:

1. Log in with your NIU authentication.
2. Paste or type the full URL you wish to shorten into the field.
3. Select "More Options" (optional) to create a custom alias or tie the URL to a Google campaign.

    To modify an existing Go URL*:

1. Log in with your NIU authentication.
2. In the left-navigation menu, select "Manage My Go.NIU URLs."
3. Select "Edit" or "Delete" next to the URL you wish to modify.

Tracking your traffic:

You can add parameters to your URL to tag a specific Google Analytics marketing campaign. When users click on your URL or enter your short URL into a browser, your traffic will be recorded in the

Google Analytics *Acquisition>Campaigns* report. **Campaign, Source and Medium are required fields**.

*You will only be able to modify Go URLs that you've created. For URLs you did not create, contact the Office of Web and Internal Communications for support.

Mobile apps

NIU Mobile is the university's official mobile app and is strategically managed by the Division of Enrollment Management, Marketing and Communications and developed by DoIT. Requests for module development in NIU Mobile should be submitted to NIUMobile@niu.edu for consideration.

Any apps using the NIU or Northern Illinois University name or branding must be approved by Enrollment Management, Marketing and Communications prior to being developed and submitted to mobile app stores.

Repurposing of data or content – both static and real-time – from any NIU website, or which is otherwise owned or controlled by NIU, through a mobile application is prohibited without prior written consent from the authorized university department or official that owns or controls the original data or content. The written consent should address: 1) the period of time for which the consent applies; 2) how recognition of the data/content owner(s) will be provided in the app; 3) whether there is an obligation on the part of the data owner to provide notification of a change to the data or the mechanism through which it is shared and 4) who is responsible for the accuracy of the repurposed data or content.

Unauthorized use of data or content by a mobile application is monitored by and should be reported to Enrollment Management, Marketing and Communications. Apps found in violation of this policy will be reported to the appropriate app store(s) as cause for removal. The university reserves the right to take any additional actions it deems necessary in furtherance of the protection of its data, content, intellectual property or other university interests (NIU Information Security Procedures).

Appendix I. Non-standard sites and templates

Image dimensions

Beige/gray non-responsive (non-RWD) templates

Full width banner – 944 x 270 px

Banner on page with left nav – 690 x 280 px

Column image – 210 x 110 px

Staff profile image – 210 x 110 px

Beige/gray responsive (RWD) templates

Full width banner – 960 x 275 px

Banner on page with left nav – 714 x 290 px

Column image – 210 x 110 px

Staff profile image – 210 x 110 px

Banner image corners

In the beige/gray templates, image corners are rounded. For the RWD templates, the rounded corners are applied in the site's CSS file. In the non-RWD sites, however, rounded corners must be applied before uploading to Cascade. Contact the Office of Web and Internal Communications for assistance with rounding corners.

Appendix II. Resources

CSS tools

Beginning the fall semester of 2014, we integrated the Bootstrap responsive framework into the new Cascade templates (NIU's standard black and white as well as several custom templates). The following links are some Bootstrap components and functions that may be implemented on NIU sites:

- NIU/Bootstrap button classes
- NIU/Bootstrap tables resource
- NIU/Bootstrap headings and typography
- Bootstrap components
- Bootstrap grid system
- Bootstrap responsive images and image shapes
- Bootstrap "lead" body copy (for enlarged text without misusing headings)
- Bootstrap uniform address/contact-info formatting

Web CMS support and resources

Hannon Hill, the company behind Cascade CMS, offers a multitude of helpful resources for using Cascade. They are:

- Cascade CMS Knowledge Base
- FAQ & Troubleshooting Articles
- Whitepapers
- Glossary