NIU Web Standards

August, 2015
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NIU’s website is the face of the university 24 hours a day; 7 days a week. All subdomains and subsites within the NIU domain belong to the university. Colleges and divisions serve as caretakers of their websites, experts in their content and stewards of NIU’s brand.

The website is often a visitor’s first impression of NIU, and visitors may enter on any of the thousands of pages on the site, therefore the NIU web standards exist to create a unified web experience that resonates with our users, regardless of subdomain or subsite URL.

Colleges and divisions may create their own standards, policies, rules and requirements that build on the NIU Web Standards but cannot conflict with the guidelines in this document.

**Audience**
Primarily, the NIU website is a retention and recruitment tool for the university. The main audiences are current and potential students, therefore, the majority of the content should be designed for students.

Secondary audiences include faculty, staff, alumni, donors and community members. Content geared toward secondary audiences should be limited to websites and pages with clear connections to that audience.

**Voice**
For each page on the site, the author should match the content and the tone to its audience. For example, content written for student recruitment should resonate with young adults. Refer to the Brand Voice section of the Communication Standards For Institutional Brand Identity.

**Web Content Management System (CMS)**
Cascade Server is NIU’s official web content management system (CMS).

**User Access**
As existing sites are converted to the newest templates, a primary (and in some cases a secondary) Page Master will be identified. CMS access will be restricted to these intermediate and advanced Cascade users. No new undergraduate or graduate students will be given access to the CMS. Trained students who are intermediate or advanced Cascade users will be allowed access until they graduate from NIU or no longer work on a department’s web property. If there is no qualified Page Master, the Web Team will maintain the web property in collaboration with the college or division.
Training
The Web Team will provide training for Page Masters each year in a variety of topics which may include advanced Cascade skills, image management, writing for the web, landing page optimization, search engine optimization, usability testing, social media and analytics.

In most cases, representatives in the Web Governance Committee will be trained and will train Page Masters within their colleges and divisions.

Update Requests
Any user can request help from the Web Team by submitting a website update request.

Web Templates
University departments and related organizations are required to use official NIU-branded web templates. Exceptions include—but are not limited to—the Barsema Alumni & Visitors Center, the Convocation Center, Econ Illinois, Intercollegiate Athletics, the NIU Alumni Association, the NIU Foundation and Northern Public Radio, which have their own brand identities. For a current list, or to request an exception, contact Creative Services.

Custom templates that adhere to our graphics and brand standards and web standards may be developed at the college or division level with approval from Marketing & Communications. Design assistance is available from Creative Services.

University departments that host any of the official NIU-branded templates outside of Cascade Server are required to ensure that the templates reflect the most recent global content and design requirements, especially the global navigation at the top of each web page and the content and links in the template footer.

Logos and 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.
NIU Logos & 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.

3rd Party Advertising and Logos
As a .edu domain, third party advertising is prohibited on NIU's website. Only Marketing and Communications may grant an exception.

Event sponsorship logos are permitted after being cleared by 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.

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 Creative Services 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.
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 Policy.

Domain Names
All NIU websites must reside in the niu.edu domain unless granted approval by Marketing & Communications.

Domain names should be brief and search-engine friendly. All centrally-hosted websites are automatically set up with URLs in the format of: www.niu.edu/sitename as well as niu.edu/sitename. The Web Team can provide site name recommendations. Additionally, site managers may request special URLs within the niu.edu domain, such as sitename.niu.edu.

Domain name requests for public-facing websites are approved by Marketing & Communications. Domain name requests for internal systems, utilities and applications are approved by DoIT.

Marketing & Communications purchases and holds certain NIU-specific domain names to maintain the integrity of the NIU brand. Contact Creative Services with recommendations.

Content
Grammar and punctuation must follow the latest edition of the Associated Press style guide. University-related word use must adhere to the guidelines in the NIU Web Style Guide.

Web content formatting must adhere to NIU's Web Style Guide. Navigation and information architecture should be audience-based, determined by user behavior and best practices, not internal processes.

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 Dining for current room and board rates and information.

Outdated Content
Content should be reviewed every six months to make sure 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 content if necessary.

If a web property has not been updated in 12 months, The Web Team will 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.

**Broken Links**
NIU uses Siteimprove to compile and send broken link reports. Page Masters will be responsible for reviewing and fixing broken links on their web properties. The Web Team will monitor pages for broken links that have not been fixed within 90 days and will remove the link.

**Event Listings**
All events promoted on campus should be published on the NIU Event Calendar. The Web Team can install a calendar widget on any NIU web property to pull in events related to a department, college, school or organization. Once the date of an event has passed, the event page should be unpublished and deleted from the NIU website. If the page will be updated and republished for a future event, the page should be unpublished and moved into an Events folder within the site’s file structure.

**Conference 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 guidelines are met:

- The event is sponsored by NIU and/or takes place on an NIU campus.
- The website abides by the NIU Communications Standards and the NIU Web Style Guide and Best Practices.
- The website is will remain live only until the next event takes place (e.g. 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.

**Document Retention and Storage**
The website is not a records management/retention tool. All offices should have an offline or intranet storage system, such as SharePoint, Blackboard, Dropbox or OneDrive 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.
Student Organization and Research Lab Websites

Student Organizations
Websites for student organizations formally recognized by and/or funded by the Student Association (SA) or temporarily recognized by the SA are maintained on HuskieLink, not through Cascade.

The NIU 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 HuskieLink (if the organization is SA recognized) and/or to an optional external website managed by the student organization.

Research Labs
Research lab websites must comply with the NIU web standards. Additional standards may be determined by the college or department that oversees the research lab.

Photos, Images and Videos
Photos & Images
All photography must comply with Creative Services best practices regarding university photography and personal privacy.

Photos are available from NIU’s Web Image Library. For photographs of an upcoming event, Page Masters may request a photographer from Creative Services.

Refer to the Web Style Guide for a list of image dimensions that coordinate with the newest templates.

Website photos should be unique. Page Masters should take the time to check whether an image is being used on another page before uploading it to their site. Photos of people are preferred over photos of buildings.

Videos
All embedded videos should be linked to NIU’s YouTube channel or the college/division’s YouTube channel. For new videos, Creative Services provides video production and support services.

All new videos must be closed-captioned to meet accessibility guidelines. Contact Creative Services for closed-captioning services.
Social Media
All online social media campaigns should follow NIU’s official Social Media Policy.

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 Creative Services.

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

Mobile Apps
NIU Mobile is the university’s official mobile app and is strategically managed by the Division of Marketing & 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 Creative Services 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 Marketing & 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. University disciplinary actions for unauthorized use of data or content are outlined in Section 6 (Violations of Policy and Misuse of Information) of the NIU Information Security Policy.
Compliance
Primary and secondary Page Masters who do not adhere to NIU’s Web Standards will be contacted by Creative Services. If the website is not updated to meet the standards, the Web Team will remove the offending content from the web property and may address the infraction with the Web Governance Council.

Acceptance
By signing this document, you agree that you have read, understand and accept NIU’s Web Standards. You must agree and adhere to these standards to receive access to and remain a user of the NIU’s content management system. Marketing & Communications may amend these policies at any time and will notify you of any such changes.

Signature & Date: _______________________________________

Website: ______________________________________________