Web Style Guide
www.calstate.edu

Introduction

The California State University's website, Calstate.edu, is its most visible communications asset, a critical tool to reach key constituencies of the nation's largest system of higher education.

The goals of the website are:
- To convey the extraordinary impact that the CSU has on the education, economy, culture and intellectual life of the state;
- To communicate the CSU's tremendous positive impact on the lives of its students, faculty, staff and friends; and
- To make the case why the CSU is the best choice for prospective students, faculty, potential donors, business partners, community agencies and others.

The website is the CSU's primary customer service interface and, therefore, should be easy to navigate, and include relevant, timely content presented in an easily accessible manner. This Web Style Guide aims to achieve that goal by:

1. Helping developers of and contributors to official CSU web pages create and maintain easy-to-use and aesthetically pleasing websites consistent with CSU's digital branding standards.
2. Ensuring all official CSU websites are presented professionally and convey a positive and coherent image of the CSU.

This document describes the following standards for official CSU digital elements:

    I.   Platform and Template
   II.   Design and Style
  III.   Content
  IV.   ADA Compliance

I. Platform and Template

The Calstate.edu website is built on a SharePoint 2013 platform and utilizes master page templates to ensure a consistent structure and styles throughout. As part of the redesign effort launched in 2016, all websites associated with the Calstate.edu platform will move from legacy platforms, including, but not limited to HTML, WordPress and Drupal, by July 2019.

The website template includes a sliding left navigation, a newsfeed (Spotlight), which feeds the latest news to specific pages based on tag/topic, and a fat footer across all pages. Additionally, the site templates are responsive and ADA compliant (WCAG 2.0).

Any CSU website with a Calstate.edu url (or redirect) must utilize the SharePoint template by July 2019 or have a migration plan in place by March 2019. This will ensure a consistent experience for our visitors throughout the site. Any websites that do not follow the Calstate.edu template WILL NOT be linked to from Calstate.edu moving forward.

Please note: As of July 2018, the CSU no longer develops any websites using WordPress due to known security issues. Effective January 2019, the CSU will no longer support or maintain any WordPress websites due to resource demands.

II. Design and Style

Users expect consistent navigation, information flow and presentation when visiting a website. Adhering to these standards provides them with a familiar experience:

- They know what to expect.
- They have an idea of where to go.
- They know how to get there consistently.

For this reason, the calstate.edu website must be predictable and consistent in its design and navigation. Visitors will find it easier to locate the information they need and enjoy a positive experience which will inspire repeat visits. Repetition and simplicity gives the site a consistent graphic identity that creates and reinforces a distinct sense of "place" and makes the CSU site memorable.

Well-designed web pages portray a strong, consistent image of the CSU. Use of templates, fonts, colors, links and imagery is required for all pages on the CSU website, including the following design and style elements:

- Title Tag
- Navigation and Site Organization
- Body/Layout
- Photos/Graphics
- Other Design Elements

A. Title Tag

Each Web page needs a unique title that accurately describes the page. If a proper title is not included, search engines cannot find the page. Each title must include the most detailed information about the content and the CSU name (to identify it as an official CSU resource).

Proper Examples:

Graduation Initiative 2025 | CSU
Diversity | CSU

Improper Examples:
Home

Please note: When using the Calstate.edu SharePoint template, " | CSU" is automatically annotated to the title of the page.

The text in the title tag:

- Appears at the top of the browser screen
- Appears when a user bookmarks the page
- Is what search engines look for
- Is displayed along with search results
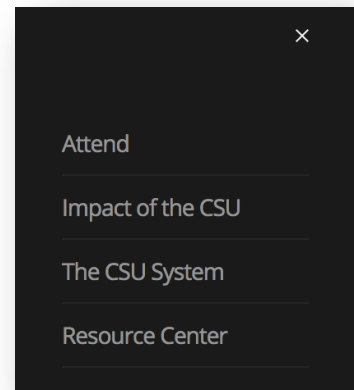
B. Navigation and Site Organization

Clear and easy-to-understand navigation cues ensure visitors can find what they need quickly without the need to bounce back and forth between pages. To accomplish this, Calstate.edu incorporates multiple navigation tools throughout the site:

- Sliding left navigation
- Secondary navigation
- Footer
- On-page navigation
- Right navigation column
- Breadcrumb navigation

Content is organized on the site, not by the department or division that owns or manages it, but by the way our site visitors have told us they would expect to find the information. For example, we link to Tuition and Fees from the Systemwide Budget website, which manages the policies, but the content itself lives under the Paying for College section under "Attend."

1. Sliding left navigation
The primary navigation for the Calstate.edu website is found in a sliding panel, available by clicking the hamburger menu at the top left of the screen. This navigation panel (pictured at right) presents content in four main expandable sections. These four categories (and the links below each) are set by the CSU Web Team. Changes or additions must be requested in writing to **webservices@calstate.edu**.

2. Secondary navigation
An additional set of links are located on the site, both in the sliding left navigation and at the top of every page. Those five links are Apply, Support the CSU, News, Careers and Contact. They represent key areas of interest for some of our core audiences, including Students, Donors, Media and Potential Employees. Additionally, social media links are located in the secondary navigation, as well as a search box.

3. Footer
A standard footer is included at the bottom of each page of the website. The footer includes links found in the left navigation, the secondary navigation and links to additional information, such as map and directions to the Chancellor's Office, Title IX and Accessibility.

4. On-page navigation
Most Calstate.edu websites incorporate navigation elements on the initial landing page of the site. This gives the opportunity to add context to the links to better inform the visitor of what they might find if they click.

5. Right navigation column
Many subpages of Calstate.edu sites feature a right rail navigation system. This gives visitors the ability to navigate easily between pages on a site without needing to revisit the home page.

6. Breadcrumb navigation
Directly below the CSU logo at the top of each page, a breadcrumb navigation enables visitors to navigate to the top level of a site or section.

C. Body and Layout

To make copy easier to read online:
- Use a white or light gray background with black text.
- Align text to the left.

There are instances where reversed text is needed for emphasis.

1. Fonts
CSU's digital pieces use a few approved fonts:

Headlines: Oswald, HelveticaNeue Open Sans
Body: Open Sans, Helvetica or Verdana

No other fonts are approved for online use for any CSU-branded website or digital medium.

2. Color
A family of colors has been developed specifically for use across the full range of CSU communications materials, including websites. The color palette offers primary, secondary and neutral colors chosen to express the brand of the CSU. Using these colors, and the color combinations or "families," on all website pages, helps to create a consistent, distinctive look and feel for all CSU materials.

CSU Font Colors (in RGB and Hex Values):

Colors

PMS 186	RGB 204,11,42 HEX #CC0B2A CMYK 13,100,94,4	**PMS 124**	RGB 235,169,0 HEX #EBA900 CMYK 8,35,100,0	**PMS 5275**	RGB 87,81,123 HEX #57517b CMYK 74,73,28,11
WARM GREY 11	RGB 110,96,88 HEX #6E6058 CMYK 53,54,58,25	**PMS 1605**	RGB 198,84,32 HEX #A85420 CMYK 25,74,100,16	**PMS 647**	RGB 36,94,144 HEX #245E90 CMYK 91,64,20,4
COOL GREY 9	RGB 118,118,121 HEX #767679 CMYK 55,47,44,11	**PMS 463**	RGB 118,77,39 HEX #764D27 CMYK 39,64,91,35	**PMS 561**	RGB 0,87,74 HEX #00574A CMYK 91,42,70,35
PMS 466	RGB 201,168,118 HEX #C9A876 CMYK 22,32,60,0	**PMS 208**	RGB 136,28,64 HEX #881C40 CMYK 33,98,60,28	**PMS 575**	RGB 103,126,56 HEX #677E38 CMYK 62,33,98,15
BLACK	RGB 0,0,0 HEX #000000 CMYK 100,100,100,100	**NOTE**	Lighter or darker shades of each color will have different RGB, HEX & CMYK value.		

3. Headings

Headings and subheads are used for emphasis on pages and help break up text and divide it into sections. All web pages must include an H1 heading, which is typically the title of the page. If additional headings or subheads are needed, they should appear in descending order:

Heading (H1)

Subhead (H2)

Subhead (H3)

Etc.

4. Emphasis

To emphasize information, only use bold or italic text styles. Never use underlined text online as it confuses users with links, and color should not be the only indicator of information, as it is not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

5. Links

To help our users quickly identify links and get the information they are looking for, use consistent colors and styles for linking. The Calstate.edu style to indicate a link is red text with underline on rollover.

6. File Types

Users expect navigation links on a website to point to a Web page, and not link to another format (Word document, .pdf, etc.). However, there are many times linking to a document is necessary. In those cases, the acceptable file formats for Calstate.edu are as follows:

- PDF (.pdf)
- Microsoft Word (.doc, .docx)
- Excel (.xls, .xlsx)
- Powerpoint (.ppt, .pptx)

Unless there is a business need, documents should be made available online in an accessible, PDF format rather than their native file format (i.e., Word, Excel, etc.).

7. Bullets

If a hierarchy of bullets is needed, use the following structure:

- First-level bullet (standard bullet)
  - Second-level bullet (open circle)
    - Third-level bullet (square)

Black is the only accepted color for bullets.

8. Required Elements

Each Web page must contain the following elements:

a. **"Alt" tag**: Insert text in place of graphics for non-graphical Web browsers and ADA compliance. Spacer gifs should still use "alt" tags – they should just read alt="".
b. **Navigation**: All pages must have navigation (links to other areas of the site) "above fold," or what is visible on the screen without scrolling. Pages should not be a dead end for the user. Be sure to have navigation to other areas within a section on the left or embedded within the copy. For best results, have links in both the navigation (on left) and embedded in the text. Avoid horizontal and bottom-of-the-page navigation, as users don't see them as easily.
c. **Page width:** Pages should be no larger than 720 pixels wide, to ensure that all CSU pages display consistently in browser windows.

D. Photos and Graphics

Calstate.edu uses bold imagery throughout the site to help communicate the mission of the CSU. Great care is taken to ensure photos used on the site represent the mission of the CSU and reflect the messages we seek to convey.

Use the following guidelines for images on all CSU web pages:

1. Photo Usage

- **Format:** .jpg or .png format and condensed for the Web.
- **Use stock photography as a last resort.** Photos should include a campus, student, faculty, staff, etc. when possible.
- **"Alt" tag description:** Mandatory for all photos and graphics. It should describe what is happening in the image. Example: <alt="Photo of students graduating">

- **Linking:** The only photos that should be linked are those that link to a video and only if a video play button overlays the photo.

2. **Copyright Information**
Copyrighted photos owned by anyone other than the CSU may not be used on an official CSU web page unless proper copyright agreements are obtained. Stock photography may require multiple licenses (one for print, one for online use) or only allow for limited licenses (usage for a specified time period).

A photo release form is required for photos that feature identifiable faces. The person in the image must sign the release form, granting permission to use the photo. (This includes teachers, students, etc.)

It is the responsibility of the website content owner to secure the necessary rights and licenses.

Obtain signatures on a photo release form when shooting your own photos for use on the Web. Photo releases are provided through the Communications Department by emailing **webservices@calstate.edu**.

The Communications Department has a subscription to Istock (royalty-free stock imagery), as well as a number of campus shots. Photo shoots may also be scheduled to assist with any photo needs. For more information, contact the Communications Department at 1-4670 or **communications@calstate.edu**.

3. Logo Usage
CSU logos that appear on a website must be officially approved by CSU Communications' web team. This will help prevent incorrect use of the logo or improper branding of a non-CSU website.

- Graphics and logos should be 72 dpi and in .gif,.jpg or .png format. The .gif format works best when using a few colors, such as logos or graphics. The .jpg format is the preferred method when saving files with lots of colors, such as photos and .png files work well when a transparent background is needed..

- Use "alt" tag description to identify images to visually-impaired users or those using text-only browsers.

4. Using the CSU Seal
The seal of the California State University is the official mark of the system. It cannot be altered, reshaped, colored or distorted in any way on a website. For proper use of the seal, refer to this branding guide:
https://www2.calstate.edu/csu-system/csu-branding-standards/Pages/brand-identity.aspx

Permission must be obtained to use the seal for any publication. Contact the Communications Department for more information.

5. Using the CSU Wordmark

The CSU wordmark is the core component of the CSU visual identity system. The wordmark must be used in its entirety on all CSU print and electronic communications. The wordmark does not need to be the dominant element on the page, but the name of the university should appear prominently.

For more information on proper usage of the CSU Wordmark, please refer to the Branding Standards Guide at **https://www2.calstate.edu/csu-system/csu-branding-standards**.

E. Other Design Elements

Adhering to visual and developmental standards reinforces the CSU's image of professionalism, quality and academic integrity. The Calstate.edu website is an extension of the CSU and reflects other official communications that come from the office. To that end, avoid "gimmicky" web features such as scrolling marquees, blinking text and visible hit counters. In each of these cases there are better, more professional ways to achieve the desired goal:

- **Animated images or blinking text** distract a user and are sometimes not ADA compliant. If the use of animated images is warranted, this design element must be created by the Communications Department. The Communications Department has final approval on use and implementation of all graphic and design elements.
  Use Instead: Proper placement, bold or italics to emphasize information.
- **Scrolling news** cuts user productivity and is not ADA compliant.
  Use Instead: Proper placement, bold or italics to emphasize information.
- **Pop-ups** should be avoided, as they have a tendency to annoy the user. Also, many users have pop-up blockers to prevent them from getting pop-up content.
  Use Instead: Proper placement, bold or italics to present critical information.
- **Visible hit counters** distract and are unnecessary for users.
  Use Instead: To track your site's traffic; contact the Communications Department to set up a schedule.
- **Unnecessary punctuation** such as excessive exclamation points diverts from your site's content.
  Use Instead: Concise informative text and subject headings convey your message without needing additional punctuation. In the rare occasion where an exclamation point is needed, use only one.
- **"Coming soon," "Under construction," etc.** should be avoided. If the web pages are not ready or being built, they should not be linked.
- *Use Instead:* Offer more explanation of the information coming. For example, "Registration information will be available June 30," can be placed on an existing Web page.
- **Introductory sentences** such as "Welcome to the CSU website" are unnecessary. (You never see "Welcome to my press release," or "Welcome to my brochure.") The user knows what the website is, the extra words clutter the page, and it takes the user longer to get your message.
- **Acknowledgment or credits page** appears self-serving and is not included in other Chancellor's Office official communications. (Contact information should be provided on at least one page so the user can request additional information.)
  Only Use: If contractually obligated such as a sponsorship.

- **"Click here"** should be avoided. The words and phrase don't mean anything for persons with disabilities since the user may not 'click' to navigate.
  Use: Keywords of information in the text link such as: "More information on Cal State Teach" as the link.
- **Database** requirements need to be coordinated through the web team at **webservices@calstate.edu**.
- **Extraneous audio** such as sound effects and background music can distract and are unnecessary.
  Use: Audio for functional purposes such as "Listen to the Chancellor's presentation to Wang Faculty." Preferred audio file format is .mp3.
- **Electronic or PDF forms** must be designed to allow assistive technology to access information within the forms.

CSU The California State University

II. Content

All content on CSU websites should be timely, accurate and of interest to the end user. A user judges the value of a Web page based upon the appropriateness and usefulness of the content it provides. Content should drive the design of the Web page. The two primary questions to ask when planning a website are:

1. What do the users want (or need) to know?
2. What do we have (or need) to say?

The organization of information should be well thought out before construction on pages begins, and the Communications Department is available to help with the planning.

A. Web Content Owners

- A designated person in each department will maintain web content.
- Each Web section or Web page must have someone assigned to it. (Others can contribute and help update, but one person needs to be the sole owner.)
- When a new Web page or website is created, a production plan including updates should be developed.

B. Formatting Content

Users tend to scan text online rather than reading word for word.

1. **Place important information first:** Place the most important information or content at or near the top of the page, preferably in the first two paragraphs. This is the information the user will see first when the page downloads.
2. **Start subheads, paragraphs and bullet points with most important information:** Use key words that your audience will recognize when scanning down the left side of your content.
3. **Provide descriptive text:** When providing information on other services or programs, include brief descriptive text so a user doesn't have to click on a link to find out what it is.
4. **Develop an information hierarchy:** Arrange content so it follows a logical order of general information to specific. Categorize or group similar pages of information together. Initial Web pages should begin with index pages that are broad and cover all lower-level documents; subsequent pages should have more precise information in greater detail. Information about the layout of the site (i.e., site map) should be readily available on the site.

C. Chunking Content

"Chunking" is the process of dividing up large portions of text into smaller portions, making text easier to read. Large portions of text overwhelm readers.

- Keep copy short, since Web users prefer to scan.
- Use bulleted lists to make copy "scannable."
- Use simple, easy-to-understand language.

- Keep to one idea per paragraph.
- Break paragraphs into subheaded sections and utilize anchor links for long pages of information that are broken into subsections.
- When using icons, graphics or bullets, make sure the text links, not just the icon.
- Avoid using acronyms and other terms that are internal to the CSU. Acronyms should be spelled out on first reference.
- Don't separate users from the information they need and want. Present information in a logical format and recognize that not many people will take the time to read lengthy copy or "filler" material.

Example:

Original copy:

Nebraska is filled with internationally recognized attractions that draw large crowds of people every year, without fail. In 1996, some of the most popular places were Fort Robinson State Park (355,000 visitors), Scotts Bluff National Monument (132,166), Arbor Lodge State Historical Park & Museum (100,000), Carhenge (86,598), Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer (60,002), and Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park (28,446).

Revised copy:

In 1996, six of the most-visited places in Nebraska were:
- Fort Robinson State Park
- Scotts Bluff National Monument
- Arbor Lodge State Historical Park & Museum
- Carhenge
- Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer
- Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park

In a study, the revised format saw a 124 percent increase in usability—task time and errors decreased, while user memory, recall and satisfaction increased.

D. About Copyrights

1. What is Copyright?

Copyright is a federal law (17 U.S.C. 101 et. seq.). It allows authors to control the use of their works for a limited time period (see Fact 4). Copyright law gives the owner the right to protect copies of his or her work. It also protects the author by preventing others from making derivative works, distributing the work to the public in writing or through digital means, and performing the work in public. Once that time period has expired, the public is allowed to use the work without paying royalties or obtaining permission from the copyright holder.

CSU employees must ensure all content used on any CSU website does not violate any copyright laws.

Copyright, Public Domain and Fair Use

CSU employees who wish to copy or post copyrighted material (including, but not limited to text, photos, graphics and documents) to the Internet are responsible for adhering to state and federal laws respecting copyright. Copyright laws protect materials recorded in any form, including written and digital records. For more information on copyright laws, visit **www.copyright.gov**. To see the entire Copyright Act, go to **www.copyright.gov/title17/**. If you have specific questions regarding using materials on your website, please contact the Communications Department.

E. Web Content Owner Responsibilities

1. **Content Quality**
   - Content should be presented with the target audience in mind. Place the most pertinent information prominently. (As a general rule, the most important information should be placed high enough on the page so that the user does not have to scroll to see it.)
   - Content must be accurate. Any errors (grammatical, factual, typos, etc.) or outdated information should be corrected within 24 hours of notification.
   - Failure to keep sites current and compliant with CSU Web guidelines (after notification) will result in the removal of pages and/or sections from the site.
   - Content must be accessible. If you cannot create an accessible page, provide a link to an alternative page with equivalent information that is accessible.
   - Refer to traffic reports, feedback, surveys and other data from your users to help guide content decisions. The goal is to make information easy to find.

2. **Events and Timing**
   - Change wording that promotes an upcoming event ("Annual conference coming in May") to past tense no later than 24 hours after the conclusion of the event ("Annual conference a success"). Think of event websites as having three versions:
        Pre-event: Promoting event with details, keynote speakers, registration information
        During event: Continue to provide pertinent information
        Post-event: Recap event with key highlights, photos
   - Be as specific as possible with time indicators. Avoid using nonspecific words such as today, tomorrow, soon, Wednesday, etc. ("Updated financial aid information will be available June 30.")

3. **Updates**
   When a new section is created for the Web, the department website content owner should create a production schedule that will help track timeliness of content, update requirements, technical needs and more.
   - Keep track of posting information that changes regularly, including student fees, financial aid information, academic majors, enrollment numbers, statistics, etc. ("The CSU has 405,000 students and 44,000 faculty and staff" will need to be updated yearly.) When posting dated material, specify the date or time period. ("Student fees accurate as of June 30, 2010." or "Academic majors updated each January and July.")
   - Web content owners are responsible for keeping site content current. For some this will mean every day or several times during the day. If a site has not been updated or verified in more than a year, the Communications Department, after notification to the site's maintainer, will remove links to the site.

4. **Linking Policy**
   The calstate.edu website contains links to other Internet sites and resources, and welcomes links to the CSU website from third-party sites.

   a. Notes on Linking
   - Linking provides users with additional related information.
   - Links include those pointing to related areas within the CSU website and those to an unrelated third-party site.
   - Links are most valuable when they enhance the information on a site and should not be used to replace it.

   b. Third-party Link Criteria
   - The link should go to a site that provides additional, related, relevant information that is useful and of value.
   - The link should not express or imply an endorsement to any third-party business or service.
   - The CSU cannot link to any politically related sites (even for bond campaigns supported by the CSU Board of Trustees) because state resources cannot be used for partisan purposes.
   - Links should go to specific information on a website, rather than just the home page. The idea is to directly take users to the relevant information.
   - Avoid using an entire URL in a link, as they can be long and unwieldy, and aren't helpful to search engines. If a URL needs to be used, avoid http:// and link to **www.nameoflink.com** or just nameoflink.com.
   - Avoid "click here" and "more." Use keywords and names in the link text so the user and search engines know what they are:

     Internal: When linking to an area on the CSU site, use keywords and names in the link text so the user and search engines have an idea of where the links are going. In the HTML source code, use relative links, which do not include **http://www.calstate.edu**, but start with the directory name. For example:

     > Relative link in HTML:
     > More information: Community Service Learning

     > Appears on website as:
     > More information: **Community Service Learning**

     External: Provide details on the information a user will be getting on another website, as well as the name of that site. Use absolute links, which include the entire URL (including http://). For example:

     > Absolute link in HTML:
     > More information: Washington Post

     > Appears on website as:
     > More information: **Washington Post**

     Or explain the relevance of the linked material, while maintaining context:

Contact your senator
Under "Feedback," locate contact information for Senator Smith and Senator Jones to voice your support for the CSU. (*www.senate.gov*)

External links **must** open in a new window. Use the following coding in the link:
link

5. **Maintaining Links**
- Adding links to a Web page requires maintenance by the Web page manager. Since links often become outdated and files move, each link should be checked at least once a month to ensure it still works.
- Broken links must be fixed within 24 hours of notification, or the page will be removed from the site.
- It is acceptable to ask for reciprocal links when linking to a third party, such as a teacher credentialing association.

6. **Multimedia Files**

a. **Audio**
- Audio files should be in .wav or .mp3 format, and link to the CSU Download page, **http://www.calstate.edu/resources.shtml**, which will link to Windows Media Player or Real Player.
- When posting audio clips, provide a transcript as well for disabled users. Transcripts need to be updated when audio clips are updated.
- Use of audio files on the site should be approved by the Communications Department.
- The Web content owner must obtain permission to use any music (even if background music) to avoid copyright violations.

b. **Video**
- When posting video clips, provide captioning for disabled users. Captioning needs to be updated when video clips are updated.
- Video files should be in .mpg format, and link to the CSU Download page, which will link to Windows Media Player or Real Player.
- Use of video files on the site should be approved by the Communications Department.

7. **Placement**
Before a website or Web page is created, consider where it should be linked up on the main calstate.edu website. Based on the purpose of the site and the audience, there are many factors to consider:

a. Each program and subdepartment should be linked from a main department page. For example, Student Academic Support should be linked from the Academic Affairs site, since it is a department of that division.
b. Consider how a user would find your site from the home page. Try to link up your site in a place that makes sense. For example, Financial Aid should be linked under "Students," since that is information a student would search for.
c. In order for items to be listed under the drop-down menus on the homepage, the following criteria must be met:

- Must be a major department or larger category of departments, rather than a singular program.
- Drop-down menu items are not changed frequently and should not reflect events. (There are more effective ways of promoting events.)
- If a larger department is featured in a drop-down menu, the smaller department and/or program can be featured on that larger department's main page.
- Drop-down menu changes must be approved by the Communications Department.

d. In order for items to be posted on the home page of calstate.edu, the following criteria must be met:

- Information must be of interest to the public and/or of significant systemwide interest.
- Link must be timely and have a predetermined date when it will be removed.
- Intuitive wording for the general public (non-CSU) user must be used. The wording should explain the content of the page and avoid use of CSU insider terms and acronyms.
- An item under "News and Events" should either be news (recent press release) or an event (Fall Counselor Conference). Due to limited space, items may be shifted by Communications Department as needed.
- All events listed shall have a predetermined removal date agreed upon prior to posting.

III. ADA Compliance

The Web was created to be accessible to everyone regardless of disability. These Web guidelines has been created with accessible design in mind, so, to the best of our abilities, CSU websites are available to all users. The basic rule in designing websites for accessibility is if information is provided in any medium other than plain text, an alternate version should also be provided. Examples include:

- Alternate text describing images
- Transcripts of multimedia clips
- Text-only versions of graphics-laden pages or .pdfs

People with disabilities use a variety of assistive technology to help them navigate the Web. These include:

Screen readers: Visually impaired users have specially designed software that allows Web pages to be read to them (via synthesized speech). This is why it is important to use "alt" text: Since the user can't see the image, the screen reader lets them know there is an image and what it consists of.

Text-only browsers: These browsers display no graphics, images or photos and will see the alternate text in place of the visual content. If you use graphic menu systems for navigation, these text-based alternate menus are an especially important aid to users who cannot see your graphics.

Navigating without a mouse: Users with mobility disabilities may not be able to navigate by pointing and clicking a mouse. Therefore, the tab key can be used to navigate to links.

Overriding CSS: Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) allow users to easily apply personalized formatting to Web documents. The contrast between text and background colors may be difficult for color-blind users to see, so if pages are designed with a CSS, color-blind users can manually set their browser preferences to override the settings and apply their own style sheet to the page instead.

A. Why ADA Compliance is Important

1. Serving all constituents: One of the missions of the CSU is to provide access to all. Making small adjustments in Web pages helps create an environment that supports all members of the CSU community.

2. Saves money: Inaccessible websites are a liability that can permanently damage the CSU brand. Not complying with these guidelines can lead to complaints, lawsuits, intervention by regulatory agencies, negative publicity and expensive site redesigns.

3. New technology: As Web access expands beyond the desktop computer, accessible design makes it easier to deliver resources and services through various forms of new technology such as:

- Mobile devices (i.e., smartphones, PDAs, handheld computers, etc.)
- Voice access services
- Assistive and adaptive technologies

4. Easier search: Search engines will be able to index the site more easily because of well-structured design and text alternatives to multimedia content.

5. The future: Since the site will be structured with accepted and established standards, future Web applications will be able to access the site, keeping the CSU ahead of the curve as HTML and XML continue to evolve.

6. It's the law: The Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act require that public institutions have accessible resources and services, including websites. Section 508 of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 sets "standards for accessibility and establishes requirements for electronic and information technology ... to be accessible to people with disabilities, including employees and members of the public."

In fall 2003, Governor Davis signed SB 302, the bill that specifically extends the requirements of Section 508 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act to the CSU. Section 508:

- Prohibits denial of equal access to programs or activities conducted by the state on the basis of race, national origin, ethnic group identification, religion, age, sex, color or disability.
- Requires accessible websites.
- Requires accessibility in other technology areas (online instruction, student services, etc.).
- Requires consideration of accessibility in all IT purchases. (It does not demand retrofit of existing technology or sites.)

C. Using .pdfs on a CSU Website

Portable Document Format files (.pdfs) need to be available to users with disabilities. First, determine if a .pdf is the only format that will work for posting the document. Usually, converting the .pdf to HTML will work better for all users (easier to download, doesn't require a plug-in, quicker to get information, searchable), especially those with disabilities. Other preferred formats are Word, PowerPoint, or Excel.

D. Suggestions for Accessibility

1. Is it absolutely necessary? Decide whether posting a .pdf is necessary. If it's being posted as a shortcut, it may be easier and more user friendly to post it as HTML, or post both options so users can choose the format that best suits their needs.

2. Structure, structure, structure: Converting documents for accessibility compliance requires well-marked-up documents. Use real headings rather than larger, bolder fonts. Consider structure, not just visual output. (Use the "header1," options in Word, for example.)

3. Text only: For top-hit pages on the site, or a respective section site, consider creating a text-only version of the home page for easier navigation. When using text-only documents, ensure that they are updated when the dynamic content changes.

4. Quick load: Effort should be made to ensure fast downloading Web pages. Break up large documents into smaller sections.

E. Checking Compliance
Departments are responsible for ensuring their pages are ADA compliant. The CSU is legally required to ensure all of our online materials are accessible to everyone. If your site is found to not be compliant, it will be flagged for changes. Changes will need to be made within 24 hours or pages will be removed from the site.