QA Accessibility Review of http://research.umich.edu/initiatives

Run through each page with the WAVE Chrome Extension

Wave reveals 11 errors on the page. 9 of these result from a lack of alt text for the category thumbnails. The additional 2 come from empty links

User should be able to navigate through content using their keyboard

All links and buttons appear to be navigable. Focus states are ambiguous in some places. While the top navigation features focus outlines around links and the "GO" buttons for each research category turn blue on focus, the text for links in the "Other Key Initiatives" section and footer changes color very slightly on focus, making it difficult to tell where the user is.

User should be able to navigate content using a screen reader

The page supports the use of a screen reader. However, because keyboard navigation is only supported for links on the page, it would be difficult for a visually impaired person to actually find any of the content on the page. Furthermore, the link buttons in the "Interdisciplinary Research Initiatives" section are simply read as "Go" by the screen reader, with no description of where the links lead. This would make it nearly impossible for someone to find a specific category by relying on a screen reader alone.

The general architecture and hierarchy of the content should make sense

The page has a good header structure. Content is generally organized well. The "University of Michigan Research" banner in the middle of the page, however, uses divs and spans for it's text content, rather than more appropriate tags like paragraphs and headers. In the same section, the words "University of Michigan Research" are blue, on a blue background. Although the shade is slightly different, the text is difficult to read under poor lighting conditions. Otherwise, text is generally readable.

Charts and images should all have alt-text so that users with screen readers or users on a slow connection will still be able to understand the images

As mentioned above, the images in the "Interdisciplinary Research Initiatives" section lack alt text.

Decorative images should not be visible to screen readers

All images on the page are picked up by the screen reader, although they are not navigable using the keyboard. Most of the images are decorative in nature.

Suggestions

The most important suggestion would be for the developer to determine how they want to qualify the images on the page. If the images are meant to be decorative, they should be made invisible to the screen reader. Furthermore, alt text needs to added to the images, whether it is empty or descriptive.

Keyboard navigation should also be improved so that users can access all the content on the page, not just the links. This would be particularly important for users relying on screen readers. It is likely that such users have a vision impairment, which would make it difficult for them to identify blocks of content

so as to click them with the mouse. Additionally, links should be made more descriptive so that screen reader users understand where they lead.

A few color contrast issues should be revisited as well. The color of the "University of Michigan Research" header should be changed so as to make it stand out more from the background. Furthermore, the color of some links on focus should be adjusted to be more different than the original color of the text.