Eastern Michigan University
Website Development Process and Guidelines

Overview
The Eastern Michigan University website, and our collection of college, division, and program websites, are highly visible communications and marketing tools with a primary purpose of:

- attracting prospective students
- providing accurate and timely information
- enhancing the image of the university

As such, all EMU websites must present professional and relevant content in a consistent design that meets our brand objectives and guidelines, and is easy to use and navigate.

Section 1: Website Development Process

Integrated Content as part of the Division of Communications manages all phases of website development at EMU. Colleges, departments or units needing new websites must first submit an online request. Project requests are reviewed and evaluated as they are received with priority given to projects directly impacting student enrollment.

The Integrated Content team is made up of highly trained industry professionals who have a deep understanding of current web design and content trends, particularly as they apply to the higher education web platforms and the recruitment of potential students. The team routinely reviews and evaluates best practices in web development at other universities and across all industries in order to bring these skills and knowledge to the Eastern Michigan University website strategy and development process.

The website development process followed by the Integrated Content team includes the following:

- initial planning meeting, including critique of existing website
- education about best practices in website development (as necessary)
- research
- site mapping
- site build out
- content migration (where appropriate)
- styling of content elements
- editorial review of content elements (text, photo, video, social)
- test and launch
- CMS training

Section 2: CMS and Templates

Content Management System
Integrated Content uses a content management system called OU Campus. The system provides an easy way to manage web pages using a What-You-See-Is-What-You-Get (WYSIWYG) editor. No HTML knowledge is needed.

Templates
Integrated Content makes all design and template decisions. The team has developed templates adhering to EMU branding guidelines and best practices in website development. The templates are fully responsive and adapt to screen size (desktop, tablet, mobile). They allow for tweaking and fit the communications needs for most departments, programs and centers.

Permission Levels
Administrative Level access in OU Campus is restricted to members of the Integrated Content team.

Most OU Campus users will be either contributors (Level 4) or editors (Level 6). The Integrated Content team reserves the right to remove user permission should users fail to properly manage their sites.

Section 3: Official vs. Unofficial Websites

Official Websites
Official University websites are defined as those created by Eastern Michigan University's Division of Communications using the CMS and hosted on the University server (emich.edu). In some instances, official websites may be hosted on other servers, but in those cases the project must be managed and approved by the Division of Communications.

Unofficial Websites
Unofficial websites include those created by individual employees, faculty and students to represent individuals, groups or organizations. These sites are not hosted on the University server. All unofficial sites must contain this disclaimer: "The views, opinions and conclusions expressed on this website are those of the author or organization and are not those of Eastern Michigan University or its Regents."

Student Organization Websites
All student organizations should use the OrgSync portal for their organization websites.

Section 4: Training/Education

OU Campus Training

Only individuals who have been formally trained on OU Campus will be given access to manage content. The Integrated Content team leads training and online registration is available.

After training is completed, page editors should not rely on Integrated Content for daily editing needs. Resources and tutorials are online and page editors are responsible for knowing how to properly manage their pages.

Section 5: Accessibility

Official Web Accessibility Policy

Eastern Michigan University is committed to providing equal access to information delivered through its website. Under the guidance of the web accessibility coordinator, the University is working to comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA. All content editors must read the official accessibility policy.

ALT Tags

ALT tags are descriptions of images that are read aloud to blind users on a screen reader. It's important to include accurate and concise information in ALT tags. Do not leave blank and do not include generic marketing text.

Page Title Standards

Each page title should be specific to the content on the page.

Section 6: Content and Writing for the Web

Navigation

Too many navigation choices can overwhelm users. The Integrated Content team will help you organize your content based on how users will look for information. Best practices dictate that your site navigation should not match your internal structure, but meet customer needs and expectations. Navigation names will be kept simple and short.

Navigation choices must stay internal to Eastern Michigan University. All navigation choices must also lead to an EMU webpage. They cannot link to PDFs.

The Integrated Content team manages navigation and it's not able to be edited by content editors.

New Pages

New pages should only go live once they're populated with content. If the new page is part of the navigation, the navigation will only be updated after the page content is complete. The Integrated Content team will not link to empty or incomplete pages.

Text

Writing for the web is different than academic writing or writing for print. Users come to websites to find information quickly and complete tasks. Don't make them hunt or read long passages. Remember to:

- Keep text brief and scannable by using headings and bullet points.
- Write in "chunks" and group primary information together. If more in-depth text is needed, add the text to a secondary page and link to the page.
- Write for an external audience. If you want to communicate with colleagues, use email or an Intranet site.

Unlike static print, websites are fluid and page editors must update and edit regularly.

Text Links

Text links on pages should link to the word or phrase that defines the link. Instead of "click here to find a map," write "use our map…" and then make "use our map" the hyperlink.

Academic Program Information

All academic departments must link to the official EMU Catalog for course descriptions and degree requirements. Page editors should not link to course description PDFs or any information source other than the EMU Catalog.

Individual Course Content

All academic course content must be on Canvas. It may not be housed on the EMU server.

Section 7: Multimedia

Photos

Only high-quality photographic images should be used on the EMU website. The photos should appeal to prospective students and should help create a positive image of the university. Integrated Content will select all branding photos that appear on web banners and rotations.

Individual page editors are responsible for all other photos on their pages. The photo gallery tool should be used whenever possible. Make sure photo choices are relevant and engaging and that the file size is small enough to load quickly (less than 200KB). Images should not exceed 250 pixels wide. Images should be used sparingly and should contribute to the content of the page. OU Campus provides the capability to produce the correct image size.

All faculty biography pages should use official photos taken by the university photographer. Anyone needing a headshot should submit a request online.

Video

All videos must be captioned. Captions must convey not only the content of spoken language, but also equivalents for non-dialogue audio information needed to understand the content, including sound effects, music, laughter, speaker identification and location. All videos must have alt tags and descriptions.

Section 8: After Launch

Quality Control

The Integrated Content team will use a third-party tool to scan sites in search of misspelled words, broken links and other technical issues. Page editors receive weekly reports and must immediately fix the errors in question.

The Integrated Content team will also carefully review each website three months after launch, paying specific attention to text, visual content and folder organization.

Page editors may lose access if they fail to fix issues identified by the Integrated Content team.

Site Analytics

Google Analytics is embedded in all templates and tracks and reports website traffic. Page editors who wish to view and utilize this data should contact webcomm@emich.edu.

Redevelopment

Once a website launches, the Integrated Content team will not consider template or design element changes for at least one year.

After one year, departments wishing to redevelop a site need to submit a new request and get back in the project queue.