

# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

September 8, 2014

To: Deans, Directors, Chairs and Executive Management

From: Paulette Granberry Russell, Senior Advisor to the President and  
Director, Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives

Subject: Policy on Web Accessibility

On August 20, 2014, President Simon approved revisions to the Web Accessibility Policy (**attached**). Please distribute broadly within your department/unit.

## **Background**

Web accessibility means that web content is universally designed to provide the greatest access for the broadest possible audience. As we move toward a higher degree of dependence on the web for access to programs, services, businesses and activities, it becomes increasingly important to ensure a web site is accessible. Our student population is increasingly diverse; more and more students will have disabilities and many will not register with RCPD, but will need accessibility.

To this end, as you know, MSU passed a Web Accessibility Policy in 2009 that applies to all university web pages used to conduct core university business *and* academic activities as defined in the policy.

## **What is new and required now?**

Federal standards have changed. WCAG 2.0 AA is the standard with which institutions are now expected to comply. The policy has been modified to require compliance with the technical guidelines listed on [www.webaccess.msu.edu](http://www.webaccess.msu.edu), currently WCAG 2.0 AA. If the federal standards change in the future, we will update the web site and communicate the change without the need for a new policy each time.

Because of this federal change, the Web Accessibility Working Group has overhauled [www.webaccess.msu.edu](http://www.webaccess.msu.edu) to provide policy information, tutorials, links to training and resources to help with compliance with the new standards. In addition, the working group created a “quick start guide” for faculty and non-developers to support faculty in their individual compliance efforts. Finally, the group has updated the FAQ’s and included those on the website as well.

In addition, our office and the Office of the General Counsel presented a draft of the policy modification to the University Committee on Faculty Affairs (UCFA) in November 2013 and sought feedback from the group. We will continue to seek feedback from faculty, IT professionals, web developers and others in order to provide the best resources and support to those who need it.



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The legal landscape has changed since the policy was enacted. Legal compliance efforts federally have been significant in this area. Penn State University, for example, was sued and entered into a resolution agreement with the federal government that is extensive and very broad in scope. Many other businesses, universities and other entities have realized that compliance with current standards is not optional. It is also clear that applications and electronic communications of any type should be accessible.

**What do you need to do?**

1. Appoint someone within your college/unit (college level only at this point) as a Web Accessibility Policy liaison. The person serving in this role will generally be a lead IT professional within the unit. The liaison will be expected to obtain training and should be able to answer some questions and assist faculty and individuals publishing web pages in your unit. They should become familiar with content on [www.webaccess.msu.edu](http://www.webaccess.msu.edu). We will have supportive resources for the liaison, but would like to build capacity to handle compliance with the policy within units since the policy is an ongoing expectation. Please provide this name to working group member Jiatyan Chen through this link: <http://goo.gl/ooO92e> **by September 30**. You may also email Ms. Chen with questions, [chenjiat@msu.edu](mailto:chenjiat@msu.edu).
2. Those of you with faculty and other individuals who use ANGEL or D2L, conduct courses online and/or publish web pages in your units, alert them to this policy and the changing standards. Alert faculty that they should begin with the "Getting Started" guide on the [www.webaccess.msu.edu](http://www.webaccess.msu.edu) website and reassure them that there are numerous resources available to them to assist them with compliance, including your unit liaison.
3. Look for compliance and remediation report requirements in the near future. We used what was referred to as a WARF form (Web Accessibility and Remediation Form) in the past. We required units to complete these forms and provide them to our office. **We will no longer use the same WARF form.** We will be communicating soon about ways units and faculty can demonstrate compliance.

If you have other questions or would like assistance, please contact our office.

Encl.