COAS Web Best Practices

We realize that department or program web preferences and needs will vary. However, we would like to ensure that some basic materials and information are consistently presented and regularly updated across all COAS sites. Also we would like departments to consider how they can minimize their own workload by, wherever possible, using content that is presented and maintained by other offices (e.g. linking to the bulletin or course guides instead of recreating this information).

General Guidelines

- The less time-date sensitive information on websites, the less chance that live pages are outdated or inaccurate.
- The fewer pages that require regular updates reduces the web editor’s work load. This can be done without reducing content.
- All webpages should be reviewed regularly. A biannual review is sufficient for most pages (exceptions below). The reminder function in dotCMS can help with this.
- Long list of links (student resources, graduate programs, faculty resources, etc.), whether internal or external links, must be checked prior to each term.
- Personnel details when provided should be kept up to date. When titles, offices, and such change or an employee is hired or leaves, details on the web should be amended within a month of notification.
- On pages with time-sensitive information or hyperlinked lists, a contact should be provided so that users can inform web editors or a designate when links break or if they need current information. A general departmental email is one option for such contacts.
- Rather than recreating information from other offices or departments, link to the material on the relevant office, department, program, etc. page(s) to reduce the amount of content editors are responsible for keeping current.

Left-Hand Navigation Menu

Most departments have these pages in this order already.

1. Department of xxx (button appears on all page menus so that users can go back easily)
2. About Us (includes mission, goals, and faculty and staff details)
3. Undergraduate Degrees
4. Certificates and Minors (can be included under undergraduate)
5. Graduate Degrees (if applicable)
6. Student Resources (or Student Opportunities)
7. News & Events
8. Faculty Resources (if applicable)
9. Contact Us (with general department information)

Other left-hand, main menu buttons that might be helpful include: Advising, Student Awards, How to Apply, Research, etc.

Updated: November 2013
Often, it is easier to navigate a hyperlinked list than a page with tabs for each degree or certificate offered (please ensure that tabs remain on a single line and do not wrap around). Departments with many degrees and certificates can split degrees and certificates/minors by using a tabbed landing page.

**Images**

Ensure that images used on webpages are:

- Of sufficient resolution so that they are not pixilated (appear blurry/grainy).
- Sized properly using the dotCMS or some other editing program (to avoid a grainy appearance).
- Given a description and a title (both can be the same). Descriptions and titles are needed to ensure pages comply with ADA standards.
- Not from the old IPFW site (no blue swoosh at the top). Clean versions of these images can be obtained from URC by sending them the image (attach to email or provide the link to the page the photo appears on) and requesting it without the blue swoosh.

**Font**

Please use the font options available through dotCMS. The rules regarding fonts reduce the amount of complicated web coding that becomes embedded in pages and ensure compliance with ADA standards. Per URC, there is no flexibility regarding font size, color, etc.

Editors must ensure that they do not:

- Change the font size using numbers (i.e., 12 pt., 14 pt., 8 pt., etc.)
- Change the font color

Editors can, however, change the font style/size by using the headings provided in the drop-down box in the dotCMS editor.

**General Pages**

Students and other visitors to pages prefer short, concise, and easy to understand details. If they have questions about the material on the page, they will need a contact to email or phone for information—often a generic departmental email that can be added to the bottom of relevant pages will suffice (e.g.: For further information, please email COASinfo@ipfw.edu).

- dotCMS provides a reminder function that web editors can set to send them a message about pages that need to be checked weekly, monthly, annually, or on a specific date. This can also be used to remind editors to add/remove time sensitive information.
- Long lists of general education or degree requirements should be avoided. Instead, link to the relevant page(s) in the IPFW bulletin and set a reminder to check the link before each term. Linking this way means web editors will not need to update entire pages every semester.
• Avoid posting general course information, who’s teaching what, when classes are offered this semester, etc. Instead link directly to the “Schedule of Classes” in OASIS at: https://prodoasis.ipfw.edu/pls/PROD/xhwschedule.P_SelectSubject.
• If listing classes is deemed necessary, these lists must be removed before the end of the term in question. Again a reminder can be set that informs web editors when these pages should be removed or updated.
• For an example of an easy-to-maintain page, see these Biology and Chemistry pages: http://new.ipfw.edu/departments/coas/depts/biology/courses/ and http://new.ipfw.edu/departments/coas/depts/chemistry/course/.

Table Guidelines

Sometimes tables can be difficult to format on dotCMS, especially ensuring cell margins space text away from borders. Often there are multiple easy-to-read, viewer-friendly ways to display information. Please remember that tables must follow ADA Compliance standards. For training on how to make tables in dotCMS, please meet with an ITS web trainer. Editors who are still struggling after training can call a COAS webeditor for assistance.

Training & Assistance

• For training, retraining, or major web projects (new pages, global revisions, etc.), please contact the ITS training team.
• For help with minor issues, best practices, web or IPFW web standards, fixing specific problems, please contact Cathleen or Jessica.
• Not sure where to start? Contact Cathleen or Jessica, and we will help or find out who can.

Links

• IPFW ADA / Web Accessibility Policies: http://new.ipfw.edu/offices/equity/accessibility/
• ITS Training Details: http://new.ipfw.edu/offices/its/training/
• URC Web Details: http://new.ipfw.edu/offices/urc/web/

COAS Web Contacts

• Cathleen M. Carosella, Director of COAS Publications, 10686 or caroselc@ipfw.edu
• Jessica Neuenschwander, Publications Assistant, 16743 or neuejm01@ipfw.edu