Web Governance

I. Introduction
The University of Southern Maine’s Web presence is the preeminent tool for communicating with and conducting transactions with the University's most important internal and external audiences and has become indispensable to the delivery of instruction and other core services. USM has a vested legal interest in the use of its name, symbols and registered marks. The Web touches all areas of the University, and all benefit from improvements to USM’s Web presence. Given finite resources and the rapidity of technological change, the growing demands for Web-based services can only be met through University-wide solutions that eliminate duplication of effort and foster efficiency.

II. Purpose
The purpose of this governance document is to provide guidance to protect the legal rights of the institution, for presenting a uniform brand and message, and to establish standards to enable the first two items. This will be done by the establishment of a three level hierarchy of governance groups that will follow shared values and principles. These groups are described briefly here with a more expanded description provided below in section IV of this document. These groups are:

   a. Web Executive Committee and Sponsors – appointed by the President, this group, through the Sponsors, exercises ownership of USM’s Web presence with final decision making authority.
   b. Web Governance Council – reports to the Executive Committee and has duties that include recommending policies, procedures and exceptions, and is the principle governing body for USM’s Web presence. Additionally, it maintains an inventory of all Web based activities sanctioned or funded by USM.
   c. College, School and Non-Academic Department Web Content Management – appointed by the Dean or Director to perform the daily upkeep of content following the guidance provided by established principles, policies and guidelines.

In addition to these levels of governance, the Web Governance Council may create, and appoint, working groups to address limited term and ongoing needs. Initially, there will be four working groups:

b. Web Infrastructure Working Group – responsible for matters concerning hardware, software and programming.
c. Web Implementation Group – responsible for developing practices and systems for deploying the new Web presence.

A visual representation of the relationship between these groups follows:

III. Values and Principles
To provide a framework for guiding the governance structure, the following statements reflect shared values for the Web at the University of Southern Maine as defined by University leadership and through campus forums, focus and user groups.

1. Effective Web communication is based on the needs of the audience.
2. Effective websites for universities are functional, transactional and interactive.
3. The measure of a well-designed website is the ability to find desired information quickly.
4. Web projects will be prioritized based on the needs of the University's most important Web audiences, and institutional resources will be allocated accordingly.
5. Planning for official Web pages (those representing offices, departments and programs of the University) will implicitly or explicitly prioritize audiences and include a statement of purpose, and content for all pages will be determined accordingly.
6. Visitors may enter USM’s website on any page, and must be able to navigate to other pages from wherever they enter the site.
7. Consistency is the most important factor in ease of navigation and effective communication.
8. Navigation and information architecture for the USM website will be based on function and process as it relates to the audience, and not on the University's organizational chart or internal processes.
9. USM Web pages will meet or exceed standards and best practices for accessibility across the widest possible variety of platforms, browsers and devices.
10. USM Web pages will meet or exceed standards and best practices for system security, secure transactions, and protection of personal data and identity.
11. USM Web pages will conform to broader University standards for communication and branding, and standards in all other areas as defined by established policies or practices.

Furthermore, the following principles guide the development of new policies for the Web at the University of Southern Maine.

1. The Web is the public face of the University. All official pages and sites representing the University must conform to approved design standards to ensure consistency. The Office of Marketing & Brand Management is responsible for the brand in the overall design, consistency of imagery, and tone of voice that is reflected on the USM web site.
2. There should be a single Web content management system for use in updating official pages at the University. The responsibility for designing, implementing, and running this system falls to the Division of Information and Technology.
3. All Web content must be reviewed regularly (annually at least) and kept current. Old, outdated, and obsolete content must be unpublished, or removed, from the University’s site in a timely manner.
4. The responsibility for creating, managing, and updating college, school or department (non-academic) websites rests with the head of the unit. Each unit must appoint a responsible Web manager who is adequately trained to manage and update the site. Additional “back-up” staff should also be trained at the direction of the Web manager.
5. Responsibility for authorization assignment at the unit-level rests with the Dean or Director of the unit.
6. A central Web policy and standards working group should be charged with developing policy and standards relating to the application of design other content standards as well as the development and maintenance of University-level pages and site architecture.
7. All non-trivial content and design changes should be done in consultation with the Web policy and standards working group to ensure adherence to all Web standards.

IV. Detailed Description of Governance and Working Groups

a. Web Executive Committee and Sponsors
By authority of the President of the University, executive ownership is vested in the Web Executive Committee which is composed of the senior University officers appointed by the President. Among the responsibilities of the committee are authorization of major purchases, allocation of resources, and appointment of members to the Web Governance Council. The Executive Committee delegates its operational authority to Sponsoring Officers to oversee and carry out its decisions.

b. Web Governance Council
The Web Governance Council is the principal governing body for the University of Southern Maine’s Web presence. The council reports to and is empowered by the Web Executive Committee and its Sponsors. As a strategic body, this council is authorized to consider all aspects of both public and intranet Web communication (within the usm.maine.edu domain) representing the University, its departments, offices and services. The responsibilities and authority of the council does not supersede those already assigned to the offices of Finance and Administration, Information Technology, Marketing and Brand Management, or other similar units.

Among the responsibilities of the council are recommending to the Executive Committee approval of policies and standards for Web communication, approval or denial of petitions for exemption from policies or standards, and appointment of members to various working groups as defined by the Council. The working groups shall, in turn, make recommendations to the council in the areas defined by the Council. Additionally, it will maintain an inventory of all Web based activities sanctioned or funded by USM. The intent is to maintain awareness of USM Web activities, not to suppress initiative or creativity in utilizing the Web in teaching, learning and the business of the University.

- Council members serve unlimited terms at the pleasure of the executive committee.
- The Executive Committee designates a chair or chairs to lead the Council, and council leadership serves at the pleasure of the executive committee.
- Meetings of the Council are held as needed and may be called by the chair upon request of any member of the council.
- Members may designate any other Council member as their proxy; only members of the Council may vote on matters before the council.
- Members of the University community may petition the chair or any member of the council to raise a matter on their behalf.
- Only members of the council may participate in the formal business of the council.
- Guests may be invited to make presentations, as approved by the chair.
- A simple majority of council members, including proxies, shall constitute a quorum at a meeting of the council. A simple majority of council members present, including proxies, is required to pass any formal resolution.
- At the discretion of the chair, formal action may be taken in the absence of a meeting by submitting a proposal in writing (email) to all members of the council.

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An affirmative vote by a majority of all council members shall carry the same force and effect as a majority vote at a meeting of the council.

- The Council is responsible for establishing procedures for, and deciding, whether an exemption from any communication policy or standard, except those prescribed by law may be granted.

c. **Web Content Manager (Colleges, Schools and Non-Academic Departments)**
The daily upkeep of content falls to the individual units that make up the University. To effectively communicate in a consistent tone and voice, each unit will have, appointed by the Dean or Director of the unit, a Web manager and one or more Web content authors. These roles carry the following responsibilities:

**Web Manager**
- Approves for publication all Web materials for the unit
- Authorizes and revokes access to content authors within the unit.
- Supervises the work of content authors.
- Acts as a liaison between the unit and Web Governance Council and associated working groups, such as the Policy and Standards and Infrastructure Groups.
- Ensures the unit’s presence is in compliance with all policies and practices of the Web Governance Council.
- Responds to and works with the Web Policy and Standards Group to implement the University’s Web presence.
- Attends appropriate training related to the use of Web publishing tools, policies, and practices.

**Web Content Author**
- Creates, modifies, and removes Web content (information) under the supervision of the appropriate Web Manager.
- Works closely with the unit Web Manager to ensure the unit’s Web presence is in compliance with all policies and practices of the Web Governance Council.
- Attends appropriate training related to the use of Web publishing tools, policies, and practices.

d. **Working Groups**
At its discretion, the Web Governance Council creates working groups to address limited-term and ongoing needs. The members of the groups are appointed by the Council, and serve with the expressed permission of their supervisors. Groups are typically composed of no more than eight members. As implied by the name, the groups perform work, conducting research and drafting policies and standards, the more significant of which are formally approved by the council.

1. **Web Policy and Standards Working Group**
The Web Policy and Standards Group develops policy, practices and standards for all Web content, which consists of all visible aspects of the Web, including but not limited to: architecture, colors and fonts, design, identity standards, navigation, text and images, and syndicated material. Additionally, policies will need to be developed for advertising and sponsors, social media, domain names, file naming, links and page titles. They will also develop practices and systems for monitoring the quality and effectiveness of the
USM Web presence, including but not limited to: periodic audit of Web pages, use of Web logs and analytics to monitor traffic, and development and use of effective measures of audience feedback. The term of the group will be ongoing.

2. **Infrastructure Working Group**
The Web Infrastructure Group addresses matters all non-visible aspects of the Web - including but not limited to: servers; databases; server-side includes (SSI); coding (xhtml, php, asp, java, other); compliance with W3C, ADA and other standards; compatibility across multiple browsers, platforms, mobile and other devices; security; and integration with MaineStreet, usm.maine.edu, LDAP and other systems. The term of the group is ongoing.

3. **Implementation Working Group**
The Web Implementation Group, which has not been constituted, will develop practices and systems for deploying new Web standards, designs and services across campus, including but not limited to: instruction, instructional materials and system user support. Members of the working group will be chosen from members from the CMS Working Group, the Infrastructure Working Group, the Web Policy and Standards Group, representatives from Fuseideas, and rotating members of the various units as their website and content is being converted to the new Web presence. The term of the group will be until full implementation of the new USM Web presence is achieved.

4. **Web CMS Working Group**
The Web CMS group is developing a campus-wide evaluation for the purchase or development of an enterprise-wide Web content management system. The term of this group is anticipated to be 24 months.