

Governing Body:	Southern Oregon University	Date Approved:	September 15, 2026
Policy Contact:	Vice President of Advancement		
Custodial Office:	University Advancement and Information Technology		
Related Policy:			

A. Description

Southern Oregon University's presence on the World Wide Web is essential to its mission of serving students from a variety of backgrounds and interests. The overarching goal of the university's primary and secondary websites are to:

- Support the vision, mission, and values of SOU
- Offer intuitive navigation to dynamic, compelling content and accurate, up-to-date information about the university and its academic and support programs.
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- Drive student enrollment through a user-centered design, digital experience, accessibility, and consistency across all digital properties
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- Reflect the SOU brand, strategic plan, and website [content strategy](#)
- Drive engagement with SOU's core external partners, including students, alumni, parents, donors
- Facilitate, where appropriate, the official business of the university and appropriate online transactions

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for website creation and ongoing maintenance that will help SOU faculty, staff and other authorized team members to adhere to the goals stated above. In addition, this policy also dedicated authority that will oversee this policy, its procedures, and the assignment of policy adherence, compliance, and enforcement.

B. Definition(s)

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

Content Management System (CMS) Editor

An authorized university employee or designee who has completed required training and has permission to create, edit, or publish content within the university's content management system in accordance with this policy and related procedures.

Information Architecture

The organization, structure, labeling, and navigation of website content to support a logical, intuitive, and user-centered experience across Southern Oregon University's digital properties.

Official University Website / Primary Website

Any website or web application representing Southern Oregon University that is hosted within the **sou.edu** domain or otherwise designated by the university as an official digital property.

Secondary Website/Intranet

In the absence of an official “intranet,” SOU will use subdomains hosted on the old iteration of the sou.edu website to house information that is not intended for enrollment purposes but must have a public-facing website presence. Examples of this would be Business Services and Human Resources.

Web Governance

The framework of policies, standards, procedures, roles, and decision-making processes that guide the creation, management, maintenance, and continuous improvement of Southern Oregon University's official websites and digital properties.

Web Governance Committee

The university committee responsible for providing strategic oversight of web governance, establishing web standards, reviewing requests for exceptions, and ensuring compliance with this policy and related procedures.

Content Owner / Subject Matter Expert (SME)

The university department, office, or designated individual responsible for the accuracy, completeness, timeliness, and ongoing maintenance of specific website content. Content Owners/SMEs serve as the primary point of contact for their content area and are responsible for reviewing and updating content in accordance with university web governance policies, content strategy, accessibility standards, and editorial guidelines.

C. Policy Statement

Southern Oregon University's Web Standards and Web Governance Policy establishes the standards governing the creation, management, maintenance, and continuous improvement of the university's official websites. These standards are intended to provide a consistent, accessible, user-centered digital experience while supporting the university's mission, strategic priorities, and institutional brand.

All official university websites must comply with applicable federal and state laws, university policies, and the standards established by the Web Governance Committee.

General Standards

All websites published within the **sou.edu** domain or otherwise designated by leadership and/or the Web Governance Policy as official Southern Oregon University websites (any website or web application within the **sou.edu** domain or otherwise designated as an official university digital property) must comply with the following standards:

- Federal and State laws
- Applicable copyright, licensing, personal privacy laws, Americans with Disability Act, etc.
- Governing Board of Trustees policies and procedures
- SOU marketing and brand standards, and SOU Website Content Strategy

Content Standards

1. Website content must support the mission, goals, or official business of Southern Oregon University.
2. Content must be accurate, current, relevant, and appropriate for its intended audience.
3. Each website or major content area must have an identified content owner responsible for the ongoing review and maintenance of published information.
4. Content owners are responsible for routinely reviewing, updating, archiving, or removing outdated,

redundant, or inaccurate content.

5. Website content must comply with university editorial, branding, and communication standards.

Accessibility

6. All university websites must meet or exceed applicable accessibility requirements, including the current Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), applicable federal and state laws, and Southern Oregon University's Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Policy.
7. Accessibility must be incorporated throughout the planning, design, development, and maintenance of university websites and digital content.

Information Architecture & User Experience

8. Website navigation and information architecture shall be organized according to user needs and institutional priorities rather than university organizational structure.
9. New websites, major navigation changes, and significant modifications to information architecture require approval through the university's established web governance process.
10. Website design, navigation, and content organization shall promote consistency across the university's digital presence and support a user-centered experience.

Branding & Design

11. Official university websites must comply with Southern Oregon University's Brand Identity Standards, including the appropriate use of university names, logos, colors, typography, and visual identity.
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Technical Standards

13. All Content Management System (CMS) editors must successfully complete required training before editing or publishing content.
14. Official university websites must utilize approved university domains unless otherwise authorized by the Web Governance Committee.
15. Third-party hosted websites or applications conducting official university business must comply with applicable university security, accessibility, branding, and web governance standards.

Search & Performance

16. Website content should be developed using established search engine optimization (SEO) and content strategy best practices to improve discoverability and support user success.
17. University websites shall utilize approved analytics and reporting tools to evaluate website performance, inform continuous improvement efforts, and support institutional decision-making.

Website Security & Maintenance

All official university websites and web applications must be secured and maintained in accordance with industry best practices and SOU Information Technology security standards.

18. **Software Updates:** Technical administrators and content hosting partners are responsible for ensuring that the underlying Content Management System (CMS), server software, plugins, themes, and code libraries are promptly updated with the latest stable security patches.
19. **Access Control:** CMS Editors and administrators must utilize strong, secure authentication methods (e.g.,

strong passwords, MFA) that meet SOU's authentication standards. User access permissions should be periodically audited to ensure only authorized personnel have active publishing credentials. Publishing credentials must be revoked immediately upon separation.

20. **Vulnerability Management:** Any website or web application found to have critical, unpatched security vulnerabilities may be temporarily suspended or taken offline by IT until compliance is achieved to protect the integrity of SOU's web presence and the university network. Vulnerability severity, age, likelihood of exploitation, and potential for harm are factors that influence these decisions.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- Websites located within the **sou.edu** domain.
- Official university web applications and digital properties.
- Third-party websites or web applications conducting official Southern Oregon University business on behalf of the university.

All web pages must follow these guidelines:

1. All website content must follow standards of appropriateness. Content must present a unified and consistent image of SOU.
2. University Websites must be branded as Southern Oregon University websites and use of the University's name and logos must comply with the Web Requirements and the Brand Identity Standards: Guidelines & Usage, provided by the University's department of Marketing and Communications
3. All web pages should be compliant with the current SOU Electronic and Information Technology Policy, FAD.087.
4. Strategic direction for the overall information architecture will be set by the professionals in the departments of Marketing and Information Technology (IT). All SOU pages must follow the navigation structure. Navigation and information architecture for SOU's web presence is primarily based on function and process as it relates to the intended audience, and not on an organizational chart or internal processes.
5. All Content Management System (CMS) editors must successfully complete proper training before Web user accounts are enabled. Such credentials are for the sole purpose of advancing SOU's academic and administrative responsibilities. Using SOU resources for commercial or personal use is prohibited.
6. Acceptable analytics tools will be determined by a Web Governance Committee.
7. When outsourcing hosting and/or development, provider should be informed of this policy and asked to provide information related to the provider's compliance status and process for addressing compliance gaps.
8. University Websites must use a University Domain. Requests for new websites need to be approved by the Web Governance Committee.

This policy and its procedures apply to:

- Websites located on the sou.edu domain, the official web presence of Southern Oregon University
- Websites conducting SOU business with exception for commercial (.com) sites.

This policy may be revised at any time without notice. All revisions supersede prior policy and are effective immediately upon approval.

D. Policy Enforcement

There are two layers of policy enforcement—first at the university level and second at the program level.

University Level: Southern Oregon University Web Governance Committee

A Web Governance Committee will provide oversight of SOU administrative web policies and standards.

Purpose

- The Web Governance Committee provides strategic oversight for Southern Oregon University's digital presence by establishing governance policies, ensuring alignment with institutional priorities, maintaining accessibility and brand standards, and promoting a user-centered experience that supports enrollment, student success, and the university's mission.

Scope

Responsible for overall information architecture, navigation standards, page creation standards, accessibility compliance, SEO standards, user experience, content lifecycle, governance training, approval of new web features, prioritization of enhancement requests.

- Oversee adherence to SOU's web [content strategy](#), including tone, messaging, accessibility, and brand standards.
- Review and approve/deny requests for exceptions or changes that do not align with established standards.
- Recommend updates to policies, procedures, and guidelines as needed to keep pace with evolving industry best practices.
- Serve as a resource for campus stakeholders in navigating web governance policies.

Membership

- Director of Marketing (chair)
- Website Communications Manager
- Representatives from IT/Web Services
 - CMS
 - Hosting
 - Security
 - Integrations
 - Technical Infrastructure
- At least one academic department representative
- At least one student services representative
- Other members appointed by the committee chair as needed

Decision Making

The committee will review:

- Requests falling outside the approved content strategy.
- Requests for exceptions to governance standards.
- Major navigation changes.
- Creation of new top-level sections.
- Significant policy changes.
- Enterprise digital initiatives.

- Each voting member will have one vote. Decisions will be made by majority vote of the members present.
- Approved exceptions will be documented and shared with relevant stakeholders.
- When consensus cannot be reached on issues with significant institutional impact, the matter may be escalated to the Vice President of University Advancement for further review.

Accountability

Committee members are expected to:

- Attend meetings regularly.
- Represent the interests of their departments and programs.
- Communicate governance decisions back to their units.
- Solicit feedback from campus stakeholders.
- Champion the adoption of web standards across the university.

The Web Governance Committee reports to the SOU Provost. Recommendations and decisions are intended to uphold institutional goals and protect the integrity of SOU's digital presence.

For more details on the SOU Website Governance Committee, see the full Governance Charter (link to Box file once finalized).

Program Level

Content Management System (CMS) users are SOU staff who use sou.edu websites to share information and communicate with internal and external audiences.

Responsibilities:

1. Abide by web policies and content strategies adopted by the university
2. Serve as liaisons with the Web Governance Committee, providing feedback on the efficacy of current policies, processes, standards, and guidelines.
3. Ensure all posted content reflects the integrity of SOU and abides by consistency standards and the established SOU Acceptable Use and Privacy Policies.
4. Create and maintain content that supports SOU's mission by informing and engaging stakeholders.
5. Create and maintain content that is ADA compliant and meets all Federal and State laws, as well as web governance policies.
6. Review site regularly and track community site metrics in [Site Improve](#) to ensure content is engaging, consistent, relevant, timely, current, and accurate.
7. Develop and implement short- and long-term content plans that include a clearance and review process within the respective department/office/unit to ensure all posted content has the appropriate management approval and contains no errors.
8. Routinely eliminate, update, or revise content that is outdated, redundant, or trivial.
9. Coordinate with the Website Communications Manager to continuously improve the efficiency and performance of web content.
10. Participate in an annual audit of departmental websites.
11. Coordinate with other internal departments/CMS users to eliminate redundant or confusing navigation and information.
12. Attend regularly scheduled trainings and informational meetings provided by IT in order to stay current with new developments and standards as they are implemented across SOU.

Policy Enforcement

The Web Governance Committee is responsible for monitoring compliance with this policy, the university's web standards, and related governance procedures.

13. When a website, digital property, or published content is determined to be out of compliance, the committee will work collaboratively with the appropriate website owner, content owner, and responsible department to develop a plan for achieving compliance. The university's goal is to support continuous improvement while maintaining a consistent, accessible, user-centered digital experience.
14. If compliance cannot be achieved through consultation, the Web Governance Committee may require corrective action, including modification or removal of non-compliant content, denial of requests for exceptions, suspension of publishing privileges, or other actions necessary to protect the integrity of the university's digital presence.
15. Requests for exceptions to this policy, established web standards, or the university's approved content strategy shall be submitted to the Web Governance Committee for review. The committee serves as the university's final authority on such requests unless otherwise directed by the Provost.
16. Failure to address identified compliance issues may be referred to the appropriate vice president or administrative leader responsible for the website or content area for resolution.

The Policy Contact, defined above, will write and maintain the procedures related to this policy and these procedures will be made available within the Custodial Office.