Policy Title:	GEN.013 - Web Standards and Web Governance Policy

Governing Body:	Southern Oregon University	**Date Approved:**	
Policy Contact:	University Advancement and Information Technology	**Approved By:**	
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 student enrollment through a user-centered digital experience on the university's primary enrollment-focused website.
- Support the vision, mission, and values of SOU
- Reflect the SOU brand and strategic plan, and, where applicable, the university's approved 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
- Offer intuitive navigation to dynamic, compelling content and accurate, up-to-date information about the university and its academic and support programs.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for website creation and ongoing maintenance that will help SOU faculty, staff and hired consultants to adhere to the goals stated above. In addition, this policy also assigns the governing body that will oversee this policy, its procedures, and the assignment of policy adherence, compliance, and enforcement. All official SOU websites must meet applicable legal, accessibility, security, and university identity requirements. However, **only** enrollment-focused websites built within the sou.edu ecosystem using SOU's approved web template must comply with the university's Website Content Strategy.

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
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.

Enrollment-Focused Website
An official university website developed within the sou.edu ecosystem using the university's approved web template and intended primarily to support student recruitment, enrollment, and related institutional marketing objectives. Enrollment-focused websites are subject to the university's approved Website Content Strategy.

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.

Auxiliary Website
An official university website that serves a specialized academic, administrative, athletic, or community purpose and is not developed as part of the university's enrollment-focused web environment. Examples include Hannon Library, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), and SOU Athletics. Auxiliary websites are not subject to the university's Website Content Strategy but must comply with applicable accessibility, security, and other university policies.

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 are responsible for reviewing and maintaining content in accordance with applicable university policies, accessibility requirements, and web standards, including the Website Content Strategy where applicable.

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 official university websites must comply with applicable federal and state laws, accessibility requirements, information security standards, and university policies governing the use of SOU's name and visual identity.

Enrollment-focused websites developed within the sou.edu ecosystem using the university's approved web

template must also comply with SOU's Website Content Strategy. Auxiliary websites, including Hannon Library, OLLI, and SOU Athletics, are exempt from the Website Content Strategy but remain subject to applicable legal, accessibility, security, and university identity requirements. 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 Trustee policies and procedures
- SOU marketing and brand standards, and SOU Website Content Strategy

Content Standards

- Website content must support the mission, goals, or official business of Southern Oregon University.
- Content must be accurate, current, relevant, and appropriate for its intended audience.
- Each website or major content area must have an identified content owner responsible for the ongoing review and maintenance of published information.
- Website content must comply with applicable university editorial, branding, and communication standards. Enrollment-focused websites must also comply with the university's approved Website Content Strategy.

Accessibility

- 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.
- Accessibility must be incorporated throughout the planning, design, development, and maintenance of university websites and digital content.

Information Architecture & User Experience

- Enrollment-focused websites must comply with the university's approved information architecture, navigation standards, and user experience requirements as established through the Website Content Strategy.
- Website design, navigation, and content organization shall promote consistency across the university's digital presence and support a user-centered experience.

Branding & Design

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.

Technical Standards

Third-party hosted websites or applications conducting official university business must comply with applicable university security, accessibility, branding, and applicable web governance standards.

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.

- 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 all official Southern Oregon University websites and digital properties, including websites within the sou.edu domain and third-party websites conducting official university business.

All official university websites must comply with applicable legal, accessibility, security, and university identity requirements.

The university's approved Website Content Strategy applies specifically to enrollment-focused websites developed within the sou.edu ecosystem using SOU's approved web template. Auxiliary websites serving specialized academic, administrative, athletic, or community purposes are not required to comply with the Website Content Strategy.

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 Southern Oregon University Web Governance Committee provides oversight of university web standards and governance requirements. The committee is responsible for ensuring that enrollment-focused websites comply with the approved Website Content Strategy and for reviewing requests for exceptions to those standards.
- The committee's membership, responsibilities, decision-making authority, and operating procedures are established in the SOU Web Governance Charter.

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. University departments and designated content owners are responsible for ensuring that information published on their official university websites is accurate, current, accessible, and compliant with applicable university policies.

    Content owners responsible for enrollment-focused websites must also ensure compliance with the university's approved Website Content Strategy.

Policy Enforcement

The Web Governance Committee is responsible for monitoring compliance with this policy, the university's web standards, and related governance procedures. Official university websites that do not comply with applicable university web policies and standards are subject to corrective action in accordance with established university procedures.

Requests for exceptions to the Website Content Strategy for enrollment-focused websites are subject to review and final determination by the Web Governance Committee, as outlined in the SOU Web Governance Charter.

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

D. Relevant Authority

N/A

E. Other Information

N/A

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.