THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Applies to: Staff, faculty, and student employees

Responsible Office	**Office of Marketing and Communications**

POLICY

Issued: 06/29/2008
Revised: 06/01/2025

In an increasingly interconnected digital landscape, maintaining a consistent and responsible web presence is essential. The university recognizes the significant impact that its **websites** have in conveying the university's vision, mission, and values. This policy establishes governance for the creation and management of all **university websites** on the domains osu.edu (excluding u.osu.edu sites), ohio-state.edu, and osumc.edu. Establishing roles, responsibilities, systems, and processes enables staff, faculty, and student employees to create and maintain websites that comply with university policies and rules, as well as local, state, and federal laws.

Purpose of the Policy

To set forth requirements regarding the creation and management of university websites on the domains osu.edu (excluding u.osu.edu sites), ohio-state.edu, and osumc.edu.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Domain name (Domain)	A string that identifies a realm of control or autonomy, commonly used in URLs. "osu.edu" is an example of a domain name.
Digital Inventory System	A software tool designed to manage and track university websites to enable administrators and managers to organize, store, and retrieve organization and policy compliance information related to websites.
Footer	The bottom-most section of a webpage that remains consistent across multiple pages on a website and contains various essential elements that provide information, navigation, and additional context to visitors. Typically, a website footer includes contact information, links to required information, and other legal information.
Header	The top section of a webpage (sometimes referred to as a website header, page header, or site header) that appears consistently across all or most pages of a website. It typically contains various elements that provide important information and navigation options for visitors such as a unit name, navigation menu, and search bar.
Legacy content	A page or website developed using older technologies or design practices, or outdated content. Legacy content is typically referred to as five years or older.
Ohio State navbar (OSU Navbar)	A standardized navigation component used across official webpages of Ohio State's digital properties to help users easily navigate between different university websites, providing a seamless experience and maintaining a cohesive visual identity throughout the Ohio State digital ecosystem. The OSU Navbar typically appears at the topmost part of the webpage and provides consistent navigation options and branding elements, such as the university logo, fonts, and colors for users accessing various university websites. It also includes links to important university websites and pages.
Primary menu navigation	The main menu or set of links prominently displayed at the top of a webpage, helping users navigate through the website's structure and find the information they need quickly and efficiently.
Subdomain	A part of a larger domain that can be used to organize or categorize content on a website. It appears before the main domain name and is separated by a dot. For instance, in "news.osu.edu," "news" is the subdomain of the "osu.edu" domain. A fourth-level domain is also considered a subdomain. For instance, in performance.oaa.osu.edu, "performance" is the 4th level and "oaa" is the 3rd level.
Technical manager	An individual or entity responsible for overseeing and managing the technical aspects of a website's operation, maintenance, and development. This role ensures that the website functions optimally, remains secure, and meets the needs of the organization and its users.

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Term	Definition
Third-party tool	External software, application, or service integrated into a website to provide additional functionality or enhance existing features, such as analytics tracking and payment gateways. These tools are developed and maintained by other companies.
Unit	General term for a college, office, school, department, center, regional campus, or other organization at Ohio State. Examples include the Department of Athletics, School of Music, Office of Marketing and Communications, Office of Student Life, and The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center.
Unit logo	A distinct graphic used to identify a unit and made up of the Block O, the full name of the university, and the unit's name. Unit logos adhere to the university's brand guidelines and are provided by the Office of Marketing and Communications. Units may not create their own unit logos.
University websites	Websites of the university on the domains osu.edu (excluding u.osu.edu sites), ohio-state.edu, and osumc.edu.
Web lead	Sometimes referred to as a web manager or owner, this individual or entity has the ultimate responsibility for the overall management of the website and complying with this policy, and serves as the main point of contact regarding a website's content, design, and compliance.
Webpage	A page within a website that may contain various types of content and can be located using a specific web address, also known as a URL. Webpages are the building blocks of websites and serve as the containers for presenting information, delivering content, and facilitating user interactions.
Website	A collection of interconnected webpages, files, and multimedia content that is accessible over the internet through a specific domain or URL and accessed through web browsers.

Policy Details

I. Governance of University Websites

    A. This policy aims to advance the security, reliability, compliance, and impact of university websites. Faculty, staff, and student employees must comply with this policy.

    B. Each **unit** must assign a **web lead** and a **technical manager** for each of its university websites. The web lead and technical manager may be assigned to more than one website, and, in some units, the same individual may serve both roles. These web leads and technical managers implement the requirements of this policy.

    C. All university websites must be catalogued in the **Digital Inventory System** with units, web leads, and technical managers identified.

    D. The Web Governance Council is responsible for enforcing this policy and addressing university website concerns or questions that cannot be resolved at the local level.

        1. The Web Governance Council, in consultation with the Office of Legal Affairs (OLA), may proactively review university websites and reserves the right to take appropriate action to enforce this policy and address noncompliance.

        2. When notified by the Web Governance Council, web leads must remove or correct pages and links containing material that violates university policy or local, state, or federal laws and regulations. Failure to comply may result in the removal of hosting services, domain network, or other appropriate actions, as determined by the Web Governance Council and OLA.

        3. The Web Governance Council is formed by the Office of Marketing and Communications (OMC) with advisory leaders from across the university. The Council is comprised of the following core members.

            a. Two co-chairs: One provided by OMC and one provided by the Office of Technology and Digital Innovation (OTDI)

            b. Representative(s) from: College of Arts and Sciences; College of Engineering; College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences; College of Nursing; Enterprise for Research, Innovation and Knowledge; Faculty Council; Office of Academic Affairs; Office of Administration and Planning; Office of Business and Finance; Office of Human Resources; OLA; OMC; Office of Student Life; OTDI; Athletics; University Libraries; and The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center (OSUWMC).

            c. Additional Council members may be nominated by the Web Governance Council and approved by the Senior Vice President for Marketing and Communications.

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    E. Any exceptions to this policy require the advance approval of the Web Governance Council in consultation with OLA. Exception requests must be emailed to webgovernance@osu.edu for consideration.

    F. OMC and OTDI, in collaboration with the Web Governance Council, will provide outreach and training on this policy and best practices.

II. Additional Requirements and Guidance
    A. All university websites are subject to university policies including but not limited to:
        1. Digital Accessibility
        2. Information Technology (IT) Security
        3. Responsible Use of University Computing and Network Resources
        4. Institutional Data
        5. Intellectual Property
        6. Payment Card Compliance
        7. Records Management
        8. Research Data
        9. Supplier Advertising
        10. Public Records
    B. University websites are also subject to the following requirements and guidelines to nurture best practices and mitigate risk:
        1. University Websites Standards and Guidelines
        2. Brand Guidelines
        3. General Records Retention Schedule
        4. Minimum Digital Accessibility Standards
        5. Digital Accessibility Services Guidance
        6. Security Framework
        7. University Cookie Statement
        8. Web Privacy Statement

PROCEDURE

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I. Registration
    A. Units must register their university websites and request **subdomains** as set forth in the University Websites Standards and Guidelines.
    B. Technical managers oversee the website registration process, including requesting subdomains.
    C. Requesting subdomains
        1. OTDI provides domain name service (DNS) hosting. Websites are primarily issued for subdomains in the osu.edu domain. Such usage identifies the website as part of the Ohio State system and enables the university to govern DNS address management effectively.
        2. OMC approves osu.edu and ohio-state.edu subdomains and may consult the Web Governance Council regarding subdomain requests. OSUWMC's Information Technology and Marketing unit approves subdomain requests related to osumc.edu.

II. Hosting
    A. Technical managers oversee infrastructure and ensure websites comply with the Information Technology (IT) Security policy, which includes the security of the website as well as its hosting environment.
    B. University websites must be secured with an SSL certificate to provide a secure browsing experience over the https protocol.

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III. Content
   A. Web leads must ensure that website content complies with this policy. Web leads should periodically review content and provide support to content owners and editors to ensure compliance with this policy.
   B. **Legacy content** can present challenges when it comes to maintenance, security, keeping up with current web standards, and complying with this policy. Web leads must evaluate legacy content to ascertain its relevance to the **webpage** or the website's objectives and its support of the university's mission and values. If the content no longer serves a purpose, is non-compliant with university policies, has outdated information, or creates confusion for the user, the web lead must ensure the legacy content is updated or removed.
   C. University websites must contain all the following information:
      1. Identification of the university
      2. Unit name publishing the site
      3. Primary menu navigation, including Site Header and Ohio State Navbar
      4. **Footer**, including
         a. University logo or **unit logo**
         b. Identifying unit or department information, such as unit name and unit address location. If a specific address is not applicable for a unit or site, use a city for location (e.g., Columbus, OH).
         c. Accessibility Statement that complies with the Digital Accessibility policy
         d. Link to university's Privacy Statement
         e. Link to university's Non-discrimination Notice
         f. Link to university's cookie settings
         g. Copyright information (e.g., © 2024 The Ohio State University)
         h. Contact link, see University Websites Standards and Guidelines

IV. Editorial Style and Page Design
   A. University website copy must follow the university's Editorial Style Guide published by OMC.
   B. University websites must follow university logo and registered marks requirements set forth in the university's Brand Guidelines. Exceptions may be considered by the Web Governance Council and Brand Stewardship in OMC. Additional guidelines and standards for university name and registered marks can be found in the University Websites Standards and Guidelines.

V. Accessibility and Security
   A. All university websites must comply with the university's Digital Accessibility policy, Information Technology (IT) Security policy, Research Data policy, and Institutional Data policy.
   B. Web developers and content creators are advised to consult with their unit's digital accessibility coordinator and security coordinator for the latest university guidance and training prior to developing new websites or substantially updating existing websites. Digital accessibility resources are available on the Digital Accessibility Services website and in the University Websites Standards and Guidelines.

VI. Third-Party Integrations and Advertising
   A. When integrating **third-party tools** into a university website, faculty, staff, or student employees must ensure that the third party follows applicable policies on the use of university computing and network resources, institutional data, information security, digital accessibility, and records management, as well as state and federal regulations regarding the same.
   B. Advertising for third parties in the form of placing display advertisements on webpages based on targeted consumer behaviors and demographics is not permitted on university websites without the approval of Trademark & Licensing.

VII. Online Payments
   A. Any online payment acceptance must be approved as set forth in the Payment Card Compliance policy.

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VIII. Digital Inventory System
   A. Web leads must ensure all information required by the university's [Digital Inventory System](#) is submitted.
   B. Web leads must ensure the information in the [Digital Inventory System](#) is current, including any web lead and technical manager transitions.

IX. Management
   A. When creating, updating, deleting, and maintaining university webpages and websites, web leads and technical managers must follow:
      1. University policies, including [Responsible Use of University Computing and Network Resources](#), [Institutional Data](#), [Information Technology (IT) Security](#), [Digital Accessibility](#), and [Records Management](#), as well as state and federal regulations regarding the same;
      2. The [University Websites Standards and Guidelines](#); and
      3. The [General Records Retention Schedule](#) maintained by University Archives.
   B. Units must request and obtain approval from the Web Governance Council prior to hiring an outside vendor to build or redesign a university website. Such requests must be emailed to webgovernance@osu.edu for consideration.
   C. Proper management of a university website includes evaluating whether to sunset the website due to low usage, high upkeep costs, lack of resources, or other reasons. Web leads must follow the sunsetting provisions in the [University Websites Standards and Guidelines](#) to make this determination and, when appropriate, sunset the website.

X. Policy Enforcement
   A. Failure to comply with this policy may result in the suspension of hosting services or domain network or both and may also result in corrective or disciplinary action in accordance with applicable university policies or rules.

Responsibilities

Position or Office	Responsibilities
Office of Legal Affairs (OLA)	Consult with the Web Governance Council as set forth in the policy.
Office of Marketing and Communications (OMC)	1. Form Web Governance Council as set forth in the policy. 2. In collaboration with OTDI and Web Governance Council, provide outreach and train on policy and best practices. 3. Approve osu.edu and ohio-state.edu subdomains as appropriate, consulting with Web Governance Council as needed. 4. Publish the university's Editorial Style Guide.
Office of Technology and Digital Innovation (OTDI)	1. In collaboration with OMC and Web Governance Council, provide outreach and train on policy and best practices. 2. Provide domain name service (DNS) hosting.
Technical manager	1. Oversee and manage technical aspects of a website's operation, maintenance, and development. 2. Ensure the website functions optimally, remains secure, and meets the needs of the organization and its users. 3. Oversee the website registration process, including requesting subdomains. 4. Oversee infrastructure and ensure compliance with the IT Security policy as set forth in the policy.
Unit	1. Assign a web lead and a technical manager for each of its university websites. 2. Register its university websites and request subdomains as set forth in the University Websites Standards and Guidelines. 3. Request and obtain approval from Web Governance Council prior to hiring an outside vendor to build or redesign a university website.
Web Governance Council	1. Enforce the policy and address university website concerns or questions that cannot be resolved at the local level.

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Position or Office	Responsibilities
	2. Consult with OLA as set forth in the policy. 3. Notify web leads to remove or correct non-compliant pages and links. 4. In collaboration with OMC and OTDI, provide outreach and train on policy and best practices. 5. Approve unit requests for outside vendors to build or redesign university websites as appropriate.
Web lead	1. Manage the website overall, including content, design, and compliance. 2. Follow university policies and guidelines when managing websites and ensure compliance with this policy. 3. Review content periodically and support content owners and editors. 4. Evaluate and update or remove legacy content as needed. 5. Ensure all required information is submitted to the Digital Inventory System. 6. Keep the Digital Inventory System information current as set forth in the policy. 7. Evaluate whether to sunset websites following sunsetting provisions.
Wexner Medical Center's Information and Marketing unit	Approve subdomain requests related to osumc.edu as appropriate.

Resources

Forms
  Digital Inventory System, go.osu.edu/web_inventory_form
  Request osu.edu Subdomain, go.osu.edu/url-request

University Policies, policies.osu.edu
  Digital Accessibility, go.osu.edu/accessibility-policy
  Information Security Incident Response Management, go.osu.edu/infosec-isirmp
  Information Technology (IT) Security, go.osu.edu/infosec-itsp
  Institutional Data, go.osu.edu/idp
  Intellectual Property, go.osu.edu/intellectual-property-policy
  Payment Card Compliance, go.osu.edu/payment-card-compliance-policy
  Responsible Use of University Computing and Network Resources, go.osu.edu/rup
  Public Records, go.osu.edu/public-records-policy
  Records Management, go.osu.edu/records-mgmt-policy
  Research Data, go.osu.edu/researchdatapolicy
  Supplier Advertising, go.osu.edu/supplier-advertising-policy
  Naming University Spaces and Entities, go.osu.edu/naming-policy

Additional Governance Documents
  Brand Guidelines, go.osu.edu/brand
  General Records Retention Schedule, go.osu.edu/retention-schedules
  Information Security Control Requirements, go.osu.edu/iscr
  Information Security Standard, it.osu.edu/security/policies/security-framework/information-security-standard
  Editorial Style Guide, go.osu.edu/editorial-style
  Minimum Digital Accessibility Standards, go.osu.edu/mdas
  Mobile Governance Memorandum of Understanding, go.osu.edu/mobile-apps-mou
  PCI Quick Start Guide, busfin.osu.edu/sites/default/files/quick-start-guide-pci-requirements.pdf
  Privacy Statement, go.osu.edu/app-privacy-policy
  Retention Schedules, go.osu.edu/retention-schedules
  Security Framework, go.osu.edu/securityframework
  University Cookie Statement, it.osu.edu/privacy/cookie-statement
  University Websites Standards and Guidelines, go.osu.edu/web_governance_guidelines
  Web Privacy Statement, it.osu.edu/privacy/web-privacy-statement

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Additional Resources
  Buckeye UX (BUX) Design System, bux.osu.edu
  Cybersecurity for Ohio State webpage, cybersecurity.osu.edu/cybersecurity-ohio-state
  Digital Accessibility Services, das.osu.edu
  Office of Business and Finance tax compliance, busfin.osu.edu/university-business/tax-office
  Ohio State Digital Accessibility Center, accessibility.osu.edu
  Ohio State Web Channel webpage, go.osu.edu/web-channel
  SEO Best Practices, go.osu.edu/seo
  Unrelated Business Income Tax (UBIT), irs.gov/charities-non-profits/unrelated-business-income-tax
  UX Community of Practice, go.osu.edu/ux-cop

Contacts

Subject	Office	Telephone	E-mail/URL
Policy administration; general questions	Office of Marketing and Communications		webgovernance@osu.edu
Privacy; intellectual property; removal of posted information	Office of Legal Affairs	614-292-0611	legal@osu.edu

History

Issued:	06/29/2008	Issued as Web Policy and Guidelines
Transferred:	11/01/2021	Transferred ownership from University Advancement to Office of Marketing and Communications
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