Getting Started

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How to Start a WCU Website

Below are a few details that need to be addressed before the process of creating a website for your department can begin:

- In order to request a website you must have the support and/or permission from your department chair or VP.
- If you already have a website that is currently being supported by a third party, and you now want it to be hosted by West Chester University, please use the Request for Services Form.
- If you are representing a student organization, please visit the Office of Student Leadership & Involvement website.

If you are redesigning your site or starting a new one here are some quick tips to help you get started.

Building Your Ideas
Before the process of building a website can begin, here are a few things you should consider:

- Who is your audience?
- What information is your audience looking for?
- Is the information contained on your page the most relevant for your audience?
- Which pages do you want linked to your page and in what order?

Send Us Your Request
Once you have some ideas formulated for your website you and would like to set up an appointment to discuss them you can contact us by:

- Email Kimberly Slattery
- Call Kimberly Slattery: 610-436-0043
- Use the Request for Services Form

Five Key Steps for a request for a new site and/or redesign of an existing website or online form.

**Phase 1: Analysis**
- A department representative will meet with a member of the WCU web team to discuss goals and objectives for the website, review existing content, and look at competitors and other important aspects impacting the development and maintenance of the site.

**Phase 2: Planning**
- The web team will work with the department representative to develop an information architecture, web strategy, and production schedule.

**Phase 3: Creating**
- The web team will design the site based on the specifications from the Planning and Analysis stages.
- Each individual web page or form:
  - Must adhere to the accessibility guidelines set forth in Executive Order 926 and Coded Memorandum AA-2006-41 or its successors, best evidenced by adherence to guidelines for Section 508 compliance.
  - Must contain content created by the department with the web team and/or Public Relations assistance.
  - Should be constructed using the current official University templates and design.
  - May contain public and/or password-protected content.
Phase 4: Building and Launching
- The web team will build the site/form on a test server (sapphire). Once the site has been tested, reviewed, and approved by the department, it will be moved to the live server. Use of the development system for live content is prohibited.

Phase 5: Maintaining
- While individual departments are responsible for keeping their sites current, the web team will continue to review websites and offer ongoing information and advice to assist content contributors. The web team will train content contributors and give them the necessary access so they can maintain their sites with the software tools available (Adobe Contribute, Dreamweaver, and Photoshop).
- Online forms developed by the web team will need to be maintained by the web team due to the complexity of code. However, it is up to the department representative to provide updates to the form in a timely fashion to the web team.

Regulations
Due to West Chester University policy all WCU websites must be hosted on WCU's servers, so that all of your web pages' URL will begin with www.wcupa.edu/. If you would like to have a shorter "quick" URL, please refer to the Additional Services section.

**Please note:** You cannot go to GoDaddy.com or any other web domain service and register a domain name for your WCU site.

Content should be reviewed at least biannually to ensure accuracy and freshness. Web pages linked from the West Chester University site or stored on a server connected to the university network must comply with applicable laws and with university policies and regulations. The following must not be included in any web pages:

- Copyrightable or licensed materials for which the necessary permissions for use have not been obtained or an exception permitting use applies.
- Material for commercial gain unrelated to the university.
- Material that could lead to illegal activities (unless used in an appropriate academic context).
- Material or speech that is unlawful (unless used in an appropriate academic context).
- Material that is intended to damage, to interfere with, or place an excessive load on a computer system or network.
- Replication and repurposing of original content should be avoided. Instead, links to the original source in the content management system should be used. Policies regarding Intellectual Property, Copyright, and Trademarks should be followed.

Security
Websites hosted by West Chester University are supported with many security features to prevent down time and security breaches. Our test server is only accessible on campus and our live server resides behind a firewall. Our live server is backed up nightly to prevent data loss due to server failure. There are currently two versions of our live server running to minimize potential down time.
WCU web servers are regularly monitored for security vulnerabilities and performance. Web pages that are identified as vulnerable or causing server performance issues may be deactivated until the areas of concern are addressed. New application features and major site releases are to be tested on the test server environment to prevent the introduction of poor performing or vulnerable web resources.

**Website Accessibility**

**Accessibility:** West Chester University is required by Title 2 of the Americans with Disabilities Act to be fully accessible to everyone. For a thorough explanation of accessibility design guidelines, visit the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative website at [www.w3.org/WAI](http://www.w3.org/WAI). Special care should still be taken for audio, video, and multimedia content. Ideally, text transcripts of all web videos should be posted along with video or audio files.

**Site Locations:** All University, academic department, and administrative web pages must reside on a registered server with the required current security software installed. Hosting of WCU web pages on non-WCU servers should only occur rarely, and must be approved by the Vice President of Information Technology. Student organization web pages reside on [www.orgsync.com](http://www.orgsync.com). The WCU search appliance only drills down to sites on the web server.

**Identification:** Each website's association with West Chester University must be clearly identified. The name of the department must be on every page it creates. The Department Head's or Director's e-mail address must be displayed on the department’s main page or "contact us" page. To preserve anonymity, generic e-mail addresses may be used.
Choosing Content

A successful website is one that provides useful information in an easily read and accessible format. If a website has useful information but poor organization, that information becomes lost and therefore useless.

If a website doesn't have any useful information but has a clean design, the website itself is still essentially useless.

This section will teach the fundamentals of how to create a well organized and useful website. No programming knowledge is required to learn any of what you are about to read. If you are looking for the guide that explains how to implement these design fundamentals into your website, please read either the Using Adobe Contribute or Using Dreamweaver guide.

Choosing Content

Before you put any content on your page you should ask yourself these questions:

- Why are people coming to your site?
- What information is most important?
- Will the readers benefit from the information on your site?

Another important aspect to be aware of is the purpose of your website. The content found on your website should coincide with its purpose.

If you are getting content from a document you cannot simply copy and paste the text verbatim because people do not read the web like they would a hard copy. A rule of thumb is that the web version of a document should be half as long as the original. Paragraphs should be kept to a maximum of four to five rows that are 12 words long each.

If you would like to keep the document as it was originally written, you can put the document online as a PDF that can be downloaded and viewed offline.

Web Standards

Content: Content should be reviewed at least biannually to ensure accuracy and freshness. Web pages linked from the West Chester University site or stored on a server connected to the university network must comply with applicable laws and with university policies and regulations. The following must not be included in any web pages:

- Copyrightable or licensed materials for which the necessary permissions for use have not been obtained or an exception permitting use applies.
- Material for commercial gain unrelated to the university.
- Material that could lead to illegal activities (unless used in an appropriate academic context).
- Material or speech that is unlawful (unless used in an appropriate academic context).
- Material that is intended to damage, to interfere with, or place an excessive load on a computer system or network.
- Replication and repurposing of original content should be avoided. Instead, links to the original source in the content management system should be used. Policies regarding Intellectual Property, Copyright, and Trademarks should be followed.
Organizing Content

Homepage Layout
What a good homepage layout should contain:

- Information that the viewer can immediately discern as useful
- As little text as possible while still providing relevant information
- A brief summary of the website, or organization and/or the current news of the organization

**Note:** It is not a good idea to make a viewer scroll down on a homepage to read its contents. So keep it short and sweet.

It is also recommended that you add a little "call to action" somewhere on the page to encourage users to explore further into your website (sign up today, check out these new links, etc.).

Navigation Links
Most likely your navigation links will be discussed by you and the Web Team during the initial meeting before your website is built. In most cases, there isn't a need to re-organize your links, but this section provides you with more information in case you do want to make changes to your navigation links.

All West Chester University web pages use the same navigation setup with a vertical navigation bar to the left of the content area. Currently, if a user wants to add or remove links they will have to submit a request to the Web Team since it requires changes to the code.

The links for your navigation should be clear and descriptive. The most important links should be at the top with a link to the homepage of your site being the first. You don't want too many links since users will only scan the top ones. We recommend no more than 7 links. The current layout only allows for one level of drop downs. Please keep that in mind when designing your navigation.

Headings
The use of headings for each section of a web page is crucial. Without a heading your readers will become lost in a sea of text.

Headings should be uniform in size, color, and, in most cases, font type. It is OK to use different sizes of headings when you want to drill down further in your content. An example of using two different types of headings can be found at http://wcupa.edu/_ADMISSIONS/SCH_DGR/. Notice how the heading for Announcements is different than the headings for each announcement.

Tables
Tables are used to display tabular data. Tabular data means anything that can be displayed in a spreadsheet. If your data needs to be in columns and/or rows with headings, a table should be used.

You would use a table for example to display a department’s contact information. The columns could contain names, phone numbers and emails addresses.
Lists (Bulleted / Ordered)
Lists are very useful in organizing content and it is highly recommended to use them whenever possible because web users usually scan sites instead of reading them. Any list of data should be put into either a bulleted list or an ordered list.

An example of a bulleted list:

- Data item one
- Data item two
- Data item three

An example of an ordered list:

1. Data item one
2. Data item two
3. Data item three

Using lists in a web page is a great way to draw attention to your writing. Lists help break up content on a page so users see more than just paragraphs of text.

Paragraphs
Text should be formatted in a way that is easy to scan and read. Formatting your text into paragraphs with spaces in between them is a great way to make your text readable.

Some tips for good paragraphs:
- Use short simple positive sentences
- Sentences should be straightforward
- Use plain language while composing sentences
- Boldface headings will break paragraphs into sections for readers to easily navigate through the text

Web Content Writer
The web team has a dedicated Web Content Writer who would be happy to assist you with the creation and or editing of the content on your web page. Email the webmaster for more information or to make an appointment.

Web Content Writing Class
A web content writing class is offered multiple times throughout the year. This class is designed to provide you with guidelines and best practices for good content writing. If you are interested in attending the class email the webmaster for dates and times.

Here are some helpful tips for good content writing.
Website Design

Using Different Color Text, Backgrounds, and Styles
All West Chester University web pages must follow a similar standard look and use the default styles for all backgrounds and text including links and headers, but not tables.

This rule is here to enforce consistency for all WCU web pages. Our styles have also been tested for support on all web browsers and screen resolutions so they are compatible with the vast majority of web users. We also used ADA testing to make sure our styles are ADA compliant.

ADA Design
West Chester University is required to follow the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and make all of its web pages ADA accessible. If the default styles for text and links are used (which you are required to follow) your website will be ADA accessible.

If images are used on your website you are required to provide alternative text to describe what the image is. It is not recommended to use blinking or moving images as these are difficult for some people to decipher.

Text should be formatted with the default styles to make sure the background color and the font color don't blend together. Non-default color text should also be avoided because some colors cannot be viewed by those with colorblindness. Blinking and scrolling (marquee) text should be avoided as it may cause seizures in some people. Small text sizes should also be avoided as many people have difficulties reading small text.

If you have not already, please read the paragraphs section above to get an understanding of how to format text so it is easier to read on your web page.

Web Standards

Page Design: All web pages must maintain an integrated user experience and look across the site. Adjustments or additions to the templates or questions about whether a website violates applicable policies are referred to the WCU web team and the Web Advisory Committee. In addition, non-university web content should not use or replicate the University's templates in a manner that confuses content ownership.

Logo: The WCU logo is a marketing symbol meant to convey, at a glance, that the page is a representation of West Chester University. Refer to the university Logo Policies for more information.

Under Construction Sites: Under construction messages or image signs should not be used.

Internal Hyperlinking: A meaningful hyperlink, describing where the user will be directed to, should be used rather than the words "Click Here."
Using Media

Images
Images are a great way to make your website more visual. They can be used for navigation, to display data, and to improve the aesthetics of a web page. The use of images on your website is highly recommended. Any image that you own or have the rights to use can be put on your website. The following sections will explain how to use images and how to obtain them.

Please note that any WCU student or staff member pictured in any image on your website must fill out a photo release form. The completed form should be kept by the head of your department or organization.

Proper Use of Images
The most common way people misuse images on the web is by putting a very large image on their pages and leaving it to the web browser to shrink them down. This forces the user to download a larger image than they are actually seeing. This leads to longer loading times and more strain on our servers. If you know how to use an image editing program please resize your images to the actual size they will be displayed on your page. If you do not know how to resize an image email the image to the webmaster@wcupa.edu account. A web team specialist will resize the photo for you.

Generally speaking the use of animated images for decoration is frowned upon. These images are very distracting and generally serve no useful purpose.

How to Obtain Images
Images you own or images you have the right to use may be put on your website. If you need more images for your website they can be obtained several different ways.

- Photographs can be taken for you at your request by the web team.
- Stock photo websites are also a good resource for more images.
- As stated above any image you own can be put on your website, so feel free to take your own photographs for the web.

Generally speaking the use of animated images for decoration is frowned upon. These images are very distracting and generally serve no useful purpose.

Video / Audio
Video and audio usage on websites has vastly increased in the past few years. Video and audio files will bring exciting, dynamic content to your page and are recommended if you have them.

If you would like to have an audio or video file embedded on your webpage you can submit a request or email the webmaster and someone from the web team will assist you.

To meet ADA requirements, videos and audio clips should be accompanied by a transcript if possible.

Blog / Forums
Blogs and forums provide a way for a community of web users to openly express opinions and share knowledge with each other. Due to current legal issues, West Chester University cannot support open blogging or forums. We do however encourage one way blogging and third party options such as https://www.blogger.com/ for open blogging. A link can be provided on your web page to direct users to your blog or forum.
**Web Standards**

**Images:** All images used on the WCU website should accurately reflect the mission of the University. Images should be reviewed as not to display illegal activities, offensive, obscene, or threatening slogans or logos on clothing, and verify proper attire is worn on the students/faculty/staff in the image. Images should be sent to the WCU web team for proper sizing.

**Video:** All videos used on the WCU website should accurately reflect the mission of the University. All videos must be reviewed as not to display illegal activities, offensive, obscene or threatening slogans or logos on clothing, and verify proper attire is worn on the students/faculty/staff in the video. Videos are to be housed on YouTube since West Chester University does not have access to their own streaming server.

**Use of Copyrighted or Licensed Material:** For the use of any and all copyrighted materials not belonging to West Chester University, written permission must be obtained from the copyright holder and kept on file. Appropriate copyright notices must be prominently displayed as necessary. It should not be assumed that images or photographs used in other University publications are the property of West Chester University.

**University Content Copyrighted:** All content on the University website is property of the University. Permission to use images on the website for publications, presentations, social media, etc. must be given by the WCU web team. Appropriate copyright notices must be prominently displayed as necessary.
Online Forms

Online forms are available for your website upon request. Online forms collect data from users. This data can be stored in a database and exported into an excel spreadsheet for further use. Online forms can be found all over the internet. Request an online form. Below is an example of an online form:

```
Title of Form

This is a text box: [Textbox]

These are checkboxes: [Checkbox 1] [Checkbox 2] [Checkbox 3]

These are radio buttons: [Radio Button 1] [Radio Button 2] [Radio Button 3]

This is a text area: [TextArea]

This is a file input: [Input] [Browse...]

This is a button: [Click me!]
```

Web Standards
Online forms developed by the web team will need to be maintained by the web team due to the complexity of code. However, it is up to the department representative to provide updates to the form in a timely fashion to the web team.
### Additional Services

**Website Analytics**
The web team tracks statistics for the University's website as a whole. However, if you would like to know traffic statistics for your specific site, they can be requested.

The Web Team uses Google Analytics and StatCounter for this task. The most common data used is the number of page views your website receives. This data is collected every day and can be viewed by day, week, month, or year. The Web Team will establish an account for you in either Google Analytics or StatCounter so that you can view your own web statistics at any time. It should be noted that page views are just one of many statistics available from these services.

**Web Page Aliases/Short URLs**
Web Page Aliases/Short URLs are shorter, easier to remember web addresses that take users to your website. For example, the housing department website is located at [http://www.wcupa.edu/_services/stu.lif/](http://www.wcupa.edu/_services/stu.lif/). This may be difficult for users to remember; however the housing department has a quick URL of [www.wcupa.edu/housing](http://www.wcupa.edu/housing). Users can easily find the housing department because of its short and logical web address.
It should be noted that it is West Chester University policy for all websites to begin with [http://www.wcupa.edu/](http://www.wcupa.edu/). You cannot go to GoDaddy.com or any other web domain service and register a domain name for your site.

**Google Search**
West Chester University owns a Google search appliance, which results in faster and more customized searches. It is limited to searching only web pages and documents that reside on the WCU server. A custom search box for your website is available upon request.

**Unique Headers**
Any department may use a unique header for their website upon request. Some examples of websites with unique headers can be found at the graduate studies website and the provost site. Unique Headers provide a unique look for your website that will distinguish it from others.

**Web Standards**
**Web Page Aliases/Short URLs:** Web page aliases (short names or short-cuts) can be created by the web team to enhance the marketing of the site. In general, shorter names are preferred to longer names.