Guidelines for Publishing Faculty Web Pages at Richland Community College

The web is an important resource for providing information. Prospective students and parents use the web in deciding where to apply, alumni use the web as part of their ongoing interest in Richland, journalists and members of the press use the web to seek information about Richland. The web is also useful for faculty to provide current students with course materials and general materials about the department and the discipline.

All faculty may request space on the College’s web server to post academic information. However, there are standards and guidelines to which you must adhere. This document covers guidelines for both content and accessibility.

Content Guidelines

The College’s website, including your pages, is an official College publication, and should be treated as such. Many of the procedures you use to create and review printed information can and should be applied to this electronic medium. In fact, some of your printed information can be translated into HTML and put on the web (with a little work).

When creating your pages, here are a few points to keep in mind.

- Review other sites
- Consider your audience
- Be professional and academically oriented
- Follow all appropriate guidelines for style
- Follow design principles for web pages
- Create pages that are accessible to all
- Create navigational aids, including a link to Richland’s Home Page
- Check for spelling, grammar, accuracy
- Regularly update your pages
- Create navigational links
- Adhere to copyright restrictions

Review other sites

The first step in designing a good web page is to browse other pages, specifically those which may be similar to the type of page you want to create. Look at other Richland faculty pages, as well as faculty pages at other community colleges & universities. Look at the content, the layout, the graphics, and other parts of the presentation. Notice the features you like, as well as those you find less appealing. Jot down addresses for sites you found especially helpful; you can create links to these pages from your own pages.
Consider your audience

Current students, prospective students, former students, neighbors, colleagues at other institutions, curious on-lookers, and disoriented web surfers will all have access to your web pages. Everybody looking at your page will have their own interests. Since you have limited time and resources to create your pages, you must decide which audiences are most important to you. Start by targeting information toward these groups. You can always add more information later.

Be professional, and academically oriented

Faculty web pages, while somewhat personal, are still an official representation of Richland Community College. As such, they should be academically oriented. While some personal information may be appropriate on faculty home pages, such information should be kept to a minimum. Do not discuss private commercial interests (i.e. business ventures other than those which Richland Community College is directly involved in) in any of your pages.

Links to commercial interests outside of Richland Community College may be appropriate in a limited number of cases. Use your judgment. With all pages, ask yourself (and others in your department):

1. Do the contents of this web page fit within the mission of my department and Richland Community College?
2. Are the contents of this web page presented in a clear, professional manner?

Follow all appropriate guidelines for style

Richland Community College has a style guide that includes recommended colors, fonts, & graphics to be used on RCC pages. The Style Guide can currently be found on the Q: drive in the RCC\StyleGuide folder. You may direct questions regarding the style guide to Steve Vandiver in Marketing.

Follow design principles

Some of the rules for designing written pages carry over well to web pages; others do not. Web pages can have lots of bells and whistles: fancy backgrounds, pictures, sounds, even video. They can also be interactive with the user.

Many of these bells and whistles can enhance a page in ways that cannot be duplicated on paper, or even video. Yet, many times these bells and whistles are visually distracting and accomplish little other than confusing your reader. Unless you have a specific goal, and are willing to spend a lot of time making your web page, your best bet is to keep it simple. Remember, people will read this information on computer screens. Conservative use of color, generous use of white space, and restrained use of fonts go a long way toward making your page interesting and readable.
Avoid features like blinking text (which many people find annoying), large graphics (which take a long time to load, especially over dial-in phone lines), unusual backgrounds (you'll see why after browsing some pages), and non-essential audio or video (which takes a long time to download, and will not work on many systems).

Many web pages discuss style. Here are a few:

- **The Style Guide for On-Line Hypertext**. Written by Tim Berners-Lee. This guide covers a lot of information. It is an excellent reference for serious web authors. «http://www.w3.org/hypertext/Web/Provider/Style/»
- **Review of Web Style Guides**. Written by the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA) this site is more a style guide than a review. If you can get past the ugly layout, you'll find good suggestions on creating a site. «http://archive.ncsa.uiuc.edu/edu/trg/styleguide/»
- **100 Do's and Don'ts in Web Design**. Found on the Spider Pro site, maintained by Jan Kampherbeek, this site gives some quick and helpful tips.

As these style guides mention, there are several components to good web design. One component is layout; the page should look appealing and readable. However, a well designed web page is also accurate, up-to-date, well labeled, and has clearly-written, relevant content.

**Create pages that are accessible to all**

Either due to a physical disability, an old computer, or a state of the art handheld computer, users may be unable to read some content. Most problems are avoided easily by keeping pages simple, adding ALT tags wherever graphics are used, and offering text links in addition to graphic links. However, there are a wide variety of people who may need to access your web pages. Remember that some readers may be blind, deaf, colorblind, or simply using technology which does not allow them to view large, high-resolution graphics.

The following resources will help you create accessible pages:

- **Designing More Usable Web Sites**. Written by the Trace Center. This site talks about making web sites available to all users, including those with a variety of disabilities. Founded in 1971, Trace has been a pioneer in the field of technology and disability. Their site has good advice, and links to a variety or other helpful sites, some of which are noted below. «http://trace.wisc.edu/world/web/»
- **Checklist of Checkpoints for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0**. Written by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). As the name suggests, this page provides a checklist you can use to see if your page is accessible. Because making
pages accessible can create more work for the designer, the checklist categorizes items as higher or lower priority. **Even if you don't have time to read anything else on accessibility, read this page.** Whether or not you follow all the suggestions, it’s important to know what they are. The W3C is the organization which creates web standards. The checklist is the product of lots of input and debate by those who study and care about this issue.  
«http://www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT/full-checklist.html»

- WebXACT – (formerly known as Bobby) Written by CAST. This site provides a tool to check your site for accessibility problems. A number of similar tools exist, but WebXACT has been around a long time and is one of the best. CAST is an educational, not-for-profit organization that uses technology to expand opportunities for all people, including those with disabilities.  
«http://webxact.watchfire.com//»

- Universal Usability - This website has resources to make content and functionality accessible and usable for everyone. Universal Usability fuses accessibility and design so that anyone using the web can access information whether they are using aging equipment, mobile devices, slow connections like dial-up, or the most modern and up-to-date technologies. See their resources page for a list of links to other resources on accessibility.  
<<http://www.universalusability.com>>

**Check for Accuracy**

As with any document or publication, all your web pages should be accurate. Check spelling and grammar, as well as content.

**Regularly update your pages**

If you aren’t adding or updating pages on a weekly basis, it’s easy to forget that your pages are even out there. Make an effort to update your pages at least once a semester, removing outdated materials and checking and updating links to other pages. One suggestion is to include the **date** your page was last updated. This will help the reader identify how current the information is.

**Create navigational links**

Navigational links help people find their way back from the many links they tend to follow. It also helps people locate where they are. Since your pages are hosted on the College web server, they should provide a link back to our home page.

**Adhere to copyright restrictions**

Copyright restrictions are tricky in any medium. They are especially tricky on the web, where electronics and links make data so malleable. If in doubt about whether you can
put something on your page, request permission from the publisher of that item. The traditional "fair use" policy for educational purposes may apply differently on the web, because your pages are accessible from many sites.

Because the web is brimming with freely available, easily copied information, even those who make the best of efforts to adhere to copyrights have difficulty. Yet, however difficult copyright issues are to understand and to apply, they are just as important on the web as they are when working with other media. One does not have to browse the web long before seeing notes explaining that such-and-such a resource is no longer available because of a copyright complaint.

When creating pages for the college’s website, keep in mind that your pages will almost always be available to a world-wide audience. This means that whatever photographs you use, text you quote, or other media you put on your pages may be viewed by millions of people. This is quite different from photocopying a page to hand out to a small class (already a tricky copyright issue).

A few very quick rules of thumb to use when creating web pages:

- You can link to any web page without permission from the owner, provided it is clear to those reading the initial page that they are linking to a different site.
- Before including any photos, text, or other materials created by anyone other than you, ask permission from whoever owns that material.
- Cite all your sources and date your pages.

A number of web sites deal with copyright issues. Here are a few helpful sites:

**United States Copyright Office**
The official site of the United States government.
<http://www.copyright.gov>

**Copyright & Fair Use**
Created by Stanford University Library, this web site provides links to information on current laws, pending copyright cases, and various Web sites with additional information.
This page provides information of interest to educators and others relating to copyright, including access to Copyright Resources for Education Online (CREDO), a database of original material developed by ILT (The Institute for Learning Technologies) for educators providing important basic information and useful tips on how to protect one's work and how to comply with the existing rules for the use others' copyrighted material.
<http://fairuse.stanford.edu>

**The Copyright Website.**
Created and maintained by intellectual property attorney Benedict O'Mahoney, this site gives you a wealth of easily accessible copyright information.
<http://www.benedict.com>