

Macalester College Policies for Department and Office Web Sites

Introduction

More now than ever before, Macalester's web site serves as the "front door" to the College and provides a first impression for prospective students and their parents, potential donors, and applicants for faculty and staff positions. Using our web site provides a cost effective way for prospective students, alumni, donors and others from around the world to "visit" our campus and find out what we are all about.

One of the most important things we can do with our web site is to go beyond what is traditionally available in marketing brochures and offer detailed information in areas that most closely align with the interests of our audiences. Whether web site visitors find our departments and offices directly via a Google search, or by clicking on links from our home page, site search or Admissions site, we want them to find information that is sensibly organized, attractively presented, and consistently branded.

These policies have been developed by Web Services, in consultation with staff from College Relations and Information Technology Services.

Externally hosted content

Home pages for Macalester departments and offices will be stored on the main Macalester web server and accessed via the standard www.macalester.edu/departmentname URL. A department's home page **may not** be automatically redirected to a page on an external or alternate server. The Athletics web site is an exception to this policy, since hosting arrangements for this site were made prior to the publication of the policy.

Portions of a department's web site may be externally hosted if an external provider is determined to be the best source of content or functionality for that portion of the department site. External hosting of department web content should be the exception rather than the rule. Departments should consult with the Director of Web Services before making decisions to host web content externally. Externally hosted content must conform to the design standards established for department and office web sites (see "Design standards..." below). The Director of Web Services will consult with the Web Advisory Committee as needed when evaluating requests for externally hosted content.

Google Sites and similar hosted web publishing tools should not be used for the primary web presence for College departments and offices. Department and office web sites should follow the guidelines detailed in these policies (see "Design standards..." below).

Design standards and use of College web templates

Macalester College does not currently have a central web content management system. Content providers have file-level access to the web folders for their department or office. This level of access

brings with it a need for design standards in order to establish branding for the College and incorporate the necessary navigational elements to facilitate effective interaction with the web site.

It is recommended that Web sites for Macalester departments and offices be based on one of several standard templates that Web Services makes available via the Template Wizard (<http://www.macalester.edu/web/wizard>). The Template Wizard generates a page template that includes coding to link to Cascading Style Sheets (css), logos and navigation images stored in the web server document root and main web server image repository. Pages generated using the Wizard must be saved according to the Template Wizard instructions in order to guarantee functionality of the template's style sheet and navigation links.

Departments and offices may (but are not required to) supplement the design generated by the Template Wizard to incorporate additional graphic images, customized headers, etc. Upon request, College Relations will provide assistance in customizing a template. Departments are advised to work with Web Services and College Relations when making changes to the standard templates, so that any issues or potential problems can be identified and resolved.

All department and office web sites, whether created using the templates from the Template Wizard or not, must include the following elements on each page:

- Top navigation bar formatted according to the Template Wizard (area designation > department name; and Macalester shield logo; all on white background).
- Area designation, department name and Macalester shield logo in top navigation bar properly linked to the appropriate Macalester web pages.
- Footer with College name, address and comments link formatted according to the Template Wizard. The destination e-mail address for the comments link may be modified to reflect the appropriate point of contact within a department or office.
- Macalester standard style sheet file (top.css) linked via reference to central web server location (<http://www.macalester.edu/top.css>).

In cases where existing department and office web sites do not include these minimum required elements, departments will be encouraged to comply through offers of assistance from Web Services and College Relations. If a plan to bring a site into compliance cannot be agreed upon, the Web Advisory Committee may ask Web Services to intervene and update the affected pages with the required elements.

Style guide

A detailed style guide for web authors is being developed separately and will be made available to the campus community via the Web Services web site (<http://www.macalester.edu/web>).

Web accessibility guidelines

"Accessible" web pages are designed and developed so that they will be accessible to a wide variety of web site visitors and via a wide variety of devices. Web accessibility means that people with visual and

other types of disabilities can access and use information on web sites. Web accessibility may also refer to design decisions that make web content usable on older browsers or non-traditional devices or through slow Internet connections.

A document detailing guidelines for web accessibility will be made available to the campus community via the Web Services web site. Departments and offices are encouraged to consult with Web Services staff for assistance in making needed modifications related to web page accessibility. Accessibility is an area where improvements are needed throughout the campus web site; it is understood that consultation and training will be required as we work together toward the goal of a more accessible campus web site.

Use of the Macalester shield logo

The Macalester signature (the shield and logotype) cannot be altered without permission from College Relations. The shield logo as presented in templates generated by the Template Wizard or in templates provided through a future web content management system represents a proper use of the logo.

Authoritative source for official College information

Official Macalester information such as enrollment figures, tuition, endowment information, etc. should be provided by the office with authority to provide this information. Web sites for departments and offices should use whatever method is most appropriate (links to web pages published by the authoritative source, or use of data sources or server-side include files provided by Web Services) to display this type of College information on department web sites, rather than creating duplicate sources of information which will inevitably become out of date.

Periodic review of web content

All content on department and office web sites should be reviewed at least twice per year, at the start of every semester. Content that is outdated or no longer relevant should be removed and appropriate additional content should be added. Content owners may be contacted by College Relations or Web Services if outdated content is not removed or updated in a timely manner. If content updates can not be scheduled promptly, the Web Advisory Committee may direct Web Services and/or College Relations to intervene and either update or remove outdated content.

document history:

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