

## University Policy 5209: University Website Policy

**Category:** Operating Policies

**Subcategory:** Information Technology

**Covered Individuals:** Employees and Students

**Responsible Executives:** Chief Information Officer, Senior Vice President for University Marketing and Communication

**Policy Custodian:** Information Technology Web/CMS Director

**Last Revised:** 2025/08/22

**Previous USU Policy Number:** N/A

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### 5209.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The University's presence on the Web is an essential tool for fulfilling its mission of teaching, research, and student academic success. Administrative and academic units, faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to take full advantage of web technology to support the University's mission and promote specific University units, initiatives, research projects, and public service.

This policy governs all [University Websites](#) conducting [University Business](#) or providing official University information to the University community and the public. This policy outlines the rules and procedures applicable to such University Websites to protect the University's brand and reputation, and to assist in developing and managing websites that comply with federal, state, and local laws.

### 5209.2 POLICY

As the reputation and image of the University are determined, in part, by the quality of the information published on the web, University Websites must be accurate, consistent, accessible, secure, and compliant with the policy outlined below.

#### 2.1 Website Management

All University Websites must be assigned to and managed by a [Website Manager](#). The content published on University Websites must be up-to-date, accurate, and compliant with federal, state, local laws, and University policies. The frequency of website updates will depend on the type of content the University Website features, but University Websites must be reviewed at least annually. Out-of-date content, including documents, links, or other content that is no longer relevant, must be removed. Abandoned web pages must be archived or deleted. URL redirects can be implemented when necessary.

##### 2.1.1 Content Management System (CMS) Usage

To ensure consistency, security, and maintainability across University Websites, all University Websites must utilize the University's established Content Management System (CMS) platform. Use of alternative platforms is not permitted unless the Web Governance Committee has granted an exception. Exceptions may be considered when the required functionality is not reasonably available within the University CMS. Requests for such exceptions must be submitted in writing and must clearly demonstrate the necessity for alternative solutions. Additionally, any exceptions granted are still subject to the standards outlined in the USU Website Policy and must adhere to security, accessibility, and other USU policies.

## 2.2 Web Identity

The [University Web Identity](#) guidelines define the brand standards for University logos, graphic marks, and visual identity elements on the web.

### 2.2.1 University Web Template

All University Websites must be based upon [University Web Templates](#) unless otherwise approved by the [Web Governance Committee](#).

### 2.2.2 Logos and Branding

University Websites must comply with the [University Brand Standards](#) related to the web. An approved [University Web Logo](#) must appear at the top of every page. The logo must link back to the [University homepage](#).

### 2.2.3 Website Footer and Required Links

University Websites must include a footer with links to the webpages set forth in the footer of approved [University Web Templates](#) (e.g., Privacy, Accessibility, Non-Discrimination, etc.) unless otherwise approved by the Web Governance Committee.

## 2.3 Domains

### 2.3.1 Domain Name

All University Websites on the University's servers must use "usu.edu" domain names in the form of xxx.usu.edu or usu.edu/xxx. Domain names must accurately reflect the department, program, or activities to which they refer.

### 2.3.2 Domain Purchasing

All domain names used in connection with University Business must be registered under the name of "Utah State University," not under the names of individuals or outside agencies. Domain names outside usu.edu may be obtained under specific and limited circumstances after review and approval by the Web Governance Committee. Student, faculty, and staff personal sites, not funded by the University, and University initiatives or research centers that are cooperative ventures, are exempt from these requirements.

### 2.3.3 Sub-domains and Vanity URLs

The University will not host outside domains, such as those ending in .com or .org, without an approved exemption from the Web Governance Committee. Website Managers may request a unique host name, vanity URL, or prefix for use within the usu.edu domain. The resulting addresses would provide a concise method for accessing and publicizing University Websites.

If a website is no longer using a subdomain name, the Website Manager must notify the Web Governance Committee so that the domain name can be deactivated. After two years of inactivity, a website may be reviewed and possibly deactivated by the Web Governance Committee.

The Web Governance Committee has administrative discretion to reclaim or reassign a USU subdomain.

## 2.4 Accessibility

University Websites are required to comply with federal and University accessibility standards outlined in [USU Policy 5208: Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility](#).

## 2.5 Contact Information

University Websites must include a clear way to contact the Website Manager for additional information or to report problems on the webpage. The contact information must include an email address and/or a phone number monitored by someone responsible for the content and functionality of the page, who can confirm receipt of the request within 2-3 business days.

## 2.6 Copyright

Creating web content for university websites may involve incorporating original works of third parties (e.g., written works, photographs, music, software code, and video) that are protected by copyright laws. Other than in circumstances wherein third-party works may be permitted under principles of fair use, consistent with applicable law, Website Managers must obtain and maintain a record of written permissions necessary to incorporate such third-party works on University Websites.

## 2.7 Privacy

University Websites must comply with the Mandatory Privacy Standards for USU Websites, [USU Policy 3106: Data Privacy](#), the [USU Privacy Notice](#), and any applicable data protection laws regarding the collection and processing of [personal data](#). Personal data collection should be limited to only what is necessary for a specific, clearly defined purpose.

## 2.8 Legacy Websites

University Websites may be granted legacy status by the Web Governance Committee under limited circumstances and thereby become [Legacy Websites](#). Legacy status allows websites to be subject to a modified set of University standards based on the standards in place at the time of their development for a limited period. If the design of a Legacy Website is materially updated or redesigned, it must be updated to comply with this policy. Requests for legacy status must be submitted in writing to the Web Governance Committee.

## 2.9 Professional Responsibility

Individuals who place content on University Websites must adhere to all applicable USU policies, including [USU Policy 3002: Respectful Workplace](#) and [USU Policy 4002: Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibility](#).

## 2.10 Appropriate Use of Resources

In compliance with [USU Policy 5200: Information Security and Appropriate Use](#), University Websites must only contain current web content that supports University functions or programs. Website Managers will not store personal web pages or non-web files, such as backups, in any space designated for University Websites.

When storing web content, Website Managers must adhere to the University's data retention policies, including [USU Policy 5200: Information Security and Appropriate Use](#). Personal data collected through University Websites should be retained only for as long as necessary to fulfill the purpose for which it was collected. Regular audits of stored data should be conducted to ensure compliance with retention policies and to securely dispose of data that is no longer needed.

## 2.11 Third-Party Web Services

Third-party web services (tools, apps, websites, etc.) are allowed under certain circumstances to provide necessary functions that the University's current systems and platforms are unable to provide.

Before outsourcing all or part of a University Website to an external provider, Website Managers must review the need with the Web Governance Committee executive committee. Additionally, third-party web

services are subject to the same accessibility (see [2.4 Accessibility](#)) and privacy requirements as University Websites (see [2.7 Privacy](#)).

### 2.12 Advertising

To protect the educational nature of University Websites and to preserve their primary role in support of the University's mission, commercial advertising is prohibited on the usu.edu domain or using Utah State University IP address ranges.

Co-branding, hyperlinked logos, link exchanges, and associate, affiliate, and referral programs are among the items that will be considered commercial advertising. Text links provided for informational purposes or as part of a comprehensive list of sources will not be considered commercial advertising unless the purpose is to promote a product or service.

This policy is not intended to prohibit auxiliary-funded departments from providing accurate and relevant information about their products and services.

### 2.13 Sponsorships

Sponsors may be acknowledged on University Websites related to University-sponsored artistic or cultural programs, conferences, athletics, or special events. These acknowledgments must be supported by a written agreement between the sponsor and the University entity that specifies a limited term, typically concluding with the end of an event or series.

Sponsors are not entitled to display University marks on their websites without prior written consent from University Marketing and Communication, Trademark Licensing.

### 2.14 Fundraising

Only fundraising for official University programs is permissible on University Websites.

### 2.15 Personal Web Pages

Personal web pages created by faculty, staff, or students are the sole responsibility of their authors. Comments on the contents of those pages must be directed to the page author. As a service and for informational purposes only, the University may provide links to personal webpages.

The University does not routinely monitor the content of these pages. However, the University investigates complaints and may remove links to web pages that violate local, state, or federal law or university policy.

Personal pages are not hosted on University domains, should not be used to conduct University Business, and must not convey the impression that the author is representing, giving opinions, or otherwise making statements on behalf of the University or any unit of the University. University logos and trademarks must not be used without permission from USU Trademark Licensing. Personal faculty information can be shared on University Websites through individual directory pages.

### 2.16 Links to and from Non-University Websites

Links from a University Website to any non-university site must not imply University endorsement of the site's products or services. A disclaimer, such as "Links on these pages to non-university sites do not represent endorsement by Utah State University or its affiliates," must be included unless it is clear from the context that the University does not endorse the product or service.

The University welcomes links to its websites for educational or informational purposes. However, the link must not imply affiliation with or endorsement by the University.

## 2.17 Social Media

University Social Media Accounts are subject to the requirements in [University Policy 5101: University Social Media Accounts](#).

## 2.18 Exceptions

When compliance with a section of this Policy is not technically possible, may require extraordinary measures, or is inappropriate under the circumstances, the Web Governance Committee executive committee may grant exceptions. Cost alone is not a basis for an exception under this section. Requests for exceptions to this Policy must be made in writing to the Web Governance Committee executive committee. Exceptions related to accessibility for users with disabilities must be submitted through a separate [Accessibility Exception Request](#).

## 2.19 Policy Violations

Violations of this policy should be reported to the Web Governance Committee for review and consideration. Failure to comply with this policy may result in the University editing, hiding, or temporarily or permanently deleting a University web page or website, or any content on a University web page or website, with or without notification. It may also result in the requirement to secure centrally supported web services at the department's expense and the suspension of departmental access to the website.

# 5209.3 RESPONSIBILITIES

## 3.1 University Marketing and Communication

The Director of Web Strategy is responsible for maintaining the primary University pages, including the homepage. The Web Strategy Team is responsible for maintaining the functionality, content quality, and user experience of high-impact web pages, as well as ensuring brand identity through oversight of the University Web Templates across various properties. Additionally, this office collaborates with other advisory groups and technology governing bodies to ensure effective web management and seamless integration.

## 3.2 Information Technology and IT Web/Content Management System

The Office of Information Technology provides tools and infrastructures appropriate to support the University's web efforts and advises on security and privacy issues related to Web content. The IT Web/Content Management System Team supports and manages the university content management system (CMS). In this role, they install and maintain the University Web Templates released by the Director of Web Strategy and provide support to CMS managers for the development and maintenance of their websites.

## 3.3 Web Governance Committee

The Web Governance Committee (WGC) aims to enhance communication and collaboration among University entities with web-related responsibilities. This committee recommends procedures and guidelines related to the University's online presence.

All exceptions to this policy must be reviewed and approved by the WGC.

## 3.4 University Units and Website Managers

University Unit administrators are responsible for ensuring that each University Website connected with their unit is assigned to a competent and trained Website Manager. Website Managers must ensure that all University Websites and content they create, control, and maintain are compliant with this policy and related standards and guidelines.

## 5209.4 REFERENCES

- Title IX of the Higher Education Amendments of 1972
- Privacy Act of 1974
- Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504 and 508
- Americans with Disabilities Act, Title II
- Digital Millennium Copyright Act
- Freedom of Information Act

## 5209.5 RELATED USU POLICIES

- [Interim University Policy 2101: Discrimination based on Protected Characteristics](#)
- [Policy 5100: Trademark Licensing](#)
- [Policy 5102: Advertising](#)
- [Policy 5101: University Social Media Accounts](#)
- [Policy 5200: Information Security and Appropriate Use](#)
- Other [Information Technology Policies \(5000s\)](#)
- [Policy 3016: Information Privacy](#)
- [Policy 5208: Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility](#)
- [Policy 4106: Intellectual Property](#)

## 5209.6 DEFINITIONS

- **Legacy Websites.** University Websites and web pages published before the effective date or that have been granted special status to temporarily follow older design and content standards from the time it was created, instead of current university policies.
- **University Business.** University Business refers to Utah State University's essential functions, including teaching, research, scholarly communications, student and personnel recruitment, alumni relations, development, public relations, and various projects, centers, labs, courses, and initiatives.
- **University Web Templates.** Web templates developed and approved by University Marketing and Communications. University Web Templates include all necessary branding and required links.
- **University Websites.** Any website created, maintained, or managed by a Website Manager through which the University conducts University Business. For avoidance of doubt, University Websites include all Legacy Websites and research websites; University Websites do not include (i) faculty members' personal websites, (ii) student organization websites, and (iii) students' personal websites.
- **Web Governance Committee.** The Web Governance Committee includes an executive committee consisting of the Director of Web Strategy, the IT Web/CMS Director, and a representative from the IT Enterprise Systems and Security team. The Executive Committee works closely together to review and maintain the Website Policy while ensuring effective oversight of the Policy. Other members will be appointed to the Web Governance Committee by the executive committee as needed.
- **Web Identity.** The University's identity guidelines define the brand standards for using USU's logos, graphic marks, and visual identity elements on the web. Brand standards can be found at <https://usu.edu/brand/standards/web/>.
- **Website Managers.** University employees with responsibility for creating, maintaining, or managing University Websites and Web-Enabled content. For University Websites, Website Managers are designated as Data Stewards, as outlined in [USU Policy 5200: Information Security](#).
- **Personal Data.** Personal data is all data associated with an individual as defined by [USU Policy 3016: Information Privacy](#).

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Information below is not included as part of the contents of the official policy. It is provided only as a convenience for readers/users and may be changed at any time by persons authorized by the president.

## RESOURCES

## Procedures

- Web Standards – <https://usu.edu/brand/standards/web>
- University CMS Procedures and Processes – <https://it.usu.edu/web>

## Guidance

- University Website Policy Guidance Documents – <https://it.usu.edu/web/policy> (under development)
- Website Accessibility – <https://usu.edu/accessibility>
- Web Templates Toolkit – <https://usu.edu/brand/toolkit/templates/web>
- Mandatory Privacy Standards for USU Websites - (working with Privacy Office on this, not yet developed)

## Contacts

- Web Governance Committee – [web-governance@usu.edu](mailto:web-governance@usu.edu)

## POLICY HISTORY

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