FY09 Web Accessibility Report

Western Illinois University's web accessibility efforts over the past year have been coordinated by the Web Accessibility Committee. The university also continued to work with the IBHE Accessibility Consortium in the finalization of reporting requirements of the Illinois Information Technology Accessibility Act (IITA).

Campus Involvement
Web accessibility is integrated into technology planning and implementation in all areas on campus. WIU's Institutional Strategic Plan for Technology, last revised in Summer 2008, specifically refers to web accessibility as an action item.

One of the priorities of WIU Institutional Strategic Plan for Technology is the need for increased and enhanced communication. Enhanced communication is defined as efficient and effective technology tools such as email, calendars, groupware, etc., and an enhanced web presence. It is understood that the use of technology-based or web-based communication tools requires the awareness that these communication tools need to be used by all members of the campus community. With this awareness as a baseline understanding, the Institutional Strategic Plan for Technology lists the following as an action item:

> *Goal 1: Item 12: Demonstrate institutional compliance with Illinois Web Accessibility Standards as part of the website redesign. The Executive Director of University Technology will lead an institutional task force to bring WIU into compliance with Illinois web accessibility standards.*

In addition to the need to increase the communication surrounding web accessibility, there is also an understanding of the need to support the students, faculty and staff in their use of technology. Increased support takes the form of raising awareness and providing training to the campus community and is currently being specifically addressed in the Web Accessibility Committee and the Internet Technology Advisory Committee. With this awareness, the Institutional Strategic Plan for Technology lists the following as an action item:

> *Goal II: Item 20: Implement Illinois Web Accessibility Standards.*

The current Institutional Strategic Plan for Technology refers to the former guideless, the Illinois Web Accessibility Standards, which will be changed to the Illinois Internet Technology Accessibility Act in the next version. Currently, all campus web developers are using the current Illinois Internet Technology Accessibility Act as their standard.

Several campus committees assist with coordination of technology on campus as it relates to access. (See Appendix A for a complete listing of committee memberships)

The Web Accessibility Committee (WAC), formed in the spring of 2007, is the primary coordinating group for campus-wide technology accessibility efforts and has responsibility for monitoring the overall implementation of accessibility. This committee works under the direction of the University President and is co-chaired by the Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access, and the Executive Director of University Technology. The committee membership includes; the academic colleges, Libraries, the Vice President's offices, Disability Support Services, Athletics, the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research, Office of the Registrar, various campus technical offices/centers, and faculty from various departments.

The WAC involves key site developers from campus departments whose sites have been identified as priority sites. Committee members share best practices and serve as resources to faculty and staff in their departments on accessibility questions and design. Audits are conducted on priority sites and assistance is provided in identifying ways to improve site access.

The President's Technology Advisory Group is a forum for users of technology at WIU to plan, share ideas and concerns, and provides feedback to the technical groups on campus. They work under the direction of the University President and focus on technical and support issues as they relate to the users of technology resources throughout campus. This committee is comprised of representatives from the academic colleges, faculty, technical service providers (academic, student services, and administrative), the Office of the Registrar, and Libraries.

The Internet Technology Advisory Committee's charge is to revise the look and feel of WIU's web presence for issues of purpose, quality, consistency, accessibility and usability, and to implement other technologies that support the revised presence using both existing and emerging technologies. This committee is comprised of representatives from the academic colleges, faculty, technical service providers (academic, student services, and administrative), the Office of the Registrar, and Libraries.

Activities Related to Web Accessibility
Western Illinois University is actively involved in providing accessible web content based on real-world web accessibility issues. The foundation of these efforts is the university's Web Accessibility Policy, which establishes access as a priority and provides guidelines for compliance. The Policy, Appendix B, is being amended to reflect IITAA guidelines.

During the past year, several strategies have been employed to raise awareness of the need to address accessibility in technology. The Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research (CITR) has facilitated multiple training sessions for faculty to familiarize them with IITAA requirements and to provide training on accessible design. Disability Support Services has integrated web accessibility awareness and training into Disability Awareness Week programming. New initiatives in distance learning have encouraged connections between faculty designing courses and web developers in the Center for the Application of Instructional Technologies. These developers have received training in universal design by WebAIM.

In addition, during the past year the Web Accessibility Committee began design of an accessibility website to include comprehensive information about accessibility. This site will have links to the IITAA guidelines, the university policy, and development guides for creating accessible Word™ and PDF documents, guides for formatting tables on the web, guides for testing web pages for accessibility, and best practice tips.

Web Accessibility Improvements and Plans
Web Accessibility Committee WAC projects and goals for FY09 included:

1. Development of a consistent evaluation protocol
2. Identification of training needs
3. Development of a WAC website
4. Enhanced coordination with Disability Support Services to increase student involvement
5. Enhanced coordination and programming with the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research
6. Implementation of IITAA purchasing guidelines
7. Identification of faculty and staff with web development responsibilities
8. Update and review priority website listing

WIU has made important gains this past year in attitude and awareness of the need to develop accessible web resources. There is a growing consensus among campus web developers of the need to approach web accessibility in a planned and coordinated effort. Campus staff are being trained in Universal Design, some attending training at WebAim, with others being sent for additional training yet in FY 09. These trained staff are then providing assistance to other campus developers. Staff has been, and continues to be, trained in the accessible development of PDF files. Accessible PDF development is seen as a high need on our campus.

A standard testing protocol for campus is being developed and is scheduled to be completed in 2009. This standard protocol will not only provide evaluation consistency for campus web resources, but also will provide metrics that can be used to accurately measure our progress year to year in web accessibility.

Our evaluation of web resources this year shows that progress was made in our web deployment, but with the realization that there is still room for improvement. As the web is a dynamic medium, that by nature is constantly being updated and revised, a single snapshot of a site's accessibility is a static measure. A review of our most utilized sites shows a slight improvement in our overall accessibility, but as the new IITAA standards are more restrictive, we did not make the gains we had hoped because of the higher requirements of IITAA over the old Illinois Web Accessibility Standards we had been designing for over the past several years. Our expectation is that as we continue to revise our web resources in alignment with the IITAA guidelines, we will again see continued success in deployment of accessible websites.

Goals for FY10 include revisiting the top one hundred utilized and high priority websites at WIU and ensuring all of them meet our accessibility guidelines. Secondly, to expand our review to include the next most utilized university websites. A third consideration is to review the implementation of a content management system to house the institutional websites and, if this is a viable option, to develop plans to move WIU's web presence into a content management system.

In the next year, the University is planning to deploy a content management system and redesign its web presence. Part of the screening process for a content management system is the need for it to able to provide some base-level support of our accessibility design needs. It is expected that the deployment of a content management system will provide the users of that system immediate feedback on accessibility as they build web resources within the system.

As part of the move to the content management system, a total redesign of the look and feel of the University website will enable us to ensure the base template for University websites will meet our accessibility needs.

The expected deployment of a content management system coupled with a redesign of the standard University web template should have a significant positive effect on ability to deploy accessible web resources. With the addition of our ever-expanding training and awareness campaigns, and continually upgrading our staffs' technical skills with advanced training, we are positioned to continue to improve our accessible deployment of web resources.

The University is approaching web accessibility compliance on a broad front. The Web Accessibility Committee meets monthly to discuss new issues, develop plans for training and awareness events, and provide for the testing and development protocols for campus. The Internet Technology Advisory Committee (iTAC) is working to develop a technical and developmental infrastructure that will assist all campus web developers. iTAC is working to deploy a content management system that will contain compliance tools, and a testing and evaluation protocol that will provide a framework that campus developers can use to benchmark their own work.

Our approach focuses on best practices that will provide campus developers the tools, resources and a forum for discussion that allows us to work together proactively and collaboratively.

Web Application Accessibility

Western Illinois University uses a variety of enterprise level web applications. In addition to our custom administrative systems, WIU uses WebCT™ Vista as a learning management system, and Zimbra™ as an email system.

WebCT™ Vista has known accessibility issues. These issues are well documented by the Illinois Center for Information Technology Accessibility (CITA) at the University of Illinois, Champaign/Urbana. CITA is currently working with Blackboard™, owner of WebCT Vista™, in an ongoing discussion of these known issues. WIU has been working with CITA for almost two years as part of an IBHE accessibility project and is developing a web development best practices document. WIU's Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research will be working on informing faculty, who use WebCT Vista™, about the accessibility issues that are currently unavoidable.

The Zimbra™ email system, which was implemented at WIU in 2007, has some known accessibility issues. Working with the developers of Zimbra™, WIU has assisted them in becoming more aware of the email systems accessibility issues and is currently working with their development group and administrative officers to resolve these issues. This awareness led Zimbra™ to create an HTML version of their software, versus an AJAX version, which has fewer accessibility roadblocks. WIU is still currently working, along with Zimbra™ developers, to refine and update the accessibility of their software.

WIU will continue its active partnership with Dr. Jon Gunderson, from the CITA at the University of Illinois, Champaign/Urbana, to work on the broad range of web accessibility issues. WIU staff will continue to collaborate with CITA across a broad spectrum of accessibility activities, including email and learning management systems.

WIU staff will also be engaged in raising awareness of accessibility issues at Midwest Educause in March of 2009, by participating in a presentation on how we are improving compliance with IITAA standards and leverage attention to accessibility to generally improve the quality of our web resources.

Web Accessibility Committee

- Richard Chamberlain, University Technology (Co-Chair)
- Tim Adams, Administrative Information Management Systems
- Patrick Clerkin, College of Education and Human Services
- Cathy Couza, Equal Opportunity and Access (Co-Chair)
- Jeff Damhoff, Electronic Student Services
- Chad Dennis, Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research
- Bradley Dilger, Department of English & Journalism
- Amber Dodds, Equal Opportunity and Access
- Hunt Dunlap, University Libraries
- Kathryn Kane, Athletics
- JoHyun Kim, Planning, Budget & Institutional Research
- Scott Lawson, Document and Publication Services
- Suzanne Litchfield, University Registrar
- Schuyler Meixner, College of Business and Technology
- Jeremy Merritt, Web Services
- Tara Miller, Disability Support Services
- Vicki Nicholson, Office of the Provost
- Zachary Pratt, University Technology
- Khaing Saw, College of Fine Arts and Communication
- Fred Seaton, University Technology
- Amanda Shoemaker, Alumni Association

Internet Technology Advisory Committee

- Richard Chamberlain, University Technology - Chair
- Tim Adams, Administrative Information Management Systems
- Rick Carter, School of Extended Studies
- Eric Campbell, Admissions
- Jeff Damhoff, Electronic Student Services
- Jeff Dodd, College of Arts and Sciences
- Hunt Dunlap, University Libraries
- Kristin Dunstan, University Marketing
- Scott Lawson, Document and Publication Services
- Suzanne Litchfield, Office of the Registrar
- Schuyler Meixner, College of Business and Technology
- Jeremy Merritt, Web Services
- Dana Moon, College of Education and Human Services
- Tere North, University Technology
- Cathy Null, College of Fine Arts and Communication
- Brenda Parks, Administrative Information Management Systems
- Christopher Pynes, College of Arts and Sciences
- Dan Romano, University Technology
- Joe Ryner, Center for the Application of Information Technologies
- Darcie Shinberger, University Relations
- Kim Sikes, Center for the Application of Information Technologies
- TJ Urbanski, University Libraries
- Kerry Yadgar, President's Office

President's Technology Advisory Group

- Joe Rives, Quad Cities, Planning and Technology - Chair
- Andrea Allison, College of Arts and Sciences
- Richard Chamberlain, University Technology
- Christopher David, WIU-Quad Cities
- Michael Dickson, University Technology
- Hunt Dunlap, University Libraries
- Bob Emmert, Electronic Student Services
- John Hemingway, College of Education and Human Services
- Suzanne Litchfield, Office of the Registrar
- Kathy Neumann, Chair, Computer Science
- Brenda Parks, Administrative Information Management Systems
- Dan Romano, University Technology
- Khaing Saw, College of Fine Arts and Communication
- Jim Schmidt, College of Arts and Sciences
- Dawn Sweet, College of Education and Human Services
- Jeanne Stierman, University Libraries

WIU Web Accessibility Policy
Approval Date: 10/3/07
Effective 10/3/07
Approved By: President

Purpose
Western Illinois University utilizes technology, including the World Wide Web, to enhance the educational experience and to communicate University information; therefore, we are committed to ensuring that information and resources provided via the official University web presence are accessible to all students, faculty, staff, and visitors.

Definitions
An accessible web presence provides information and/or services for a variety of users with minimal differences between delivered content. The University's web presence includes web applications, web interfaces, and other resources delivered via the web.

The Web Accessibility Committee identifies priority websites based upon use, those which provide core institutional functions, and those deemed as critical-need websites. Therefore, priority websites include:

1. University websites which are critical points of access to users of University resources such as Admissions, Financial Aid, Disability Support Services, and
2. Other high traffic University websites.

Scope
In order to meet this accessibility commitment, University web pages as well as associated web-based services developed by or for a College, Department, program, course, or unit of the University must comply with the University's Web Accessibility Policy.

Policy
All priority websites, as well as new or redesigned websites, must meet or exceed current Illinois Web Accessibility Standards (IWAS), http://www.illinois.gov/iwas/.

Those who are responsible for the identified priority websites must develop implementation plans for ensuring accessibility of these websites, and if requested by a user, provide website information in an alternative format in a timely manner until the identified website meets accessibility guidelines.

All websites not identified as a priority by the Web Accessibility Committee must include contact information for an individual who can provide requested information in an alternative format in a timely manner. Those responsible for such websites must create and attempt to adhere to a reasonable timeline to bring these websites into compliance.

Review
The Web Accessibility Committee will establish evaluation and reporting guidelines for determining compliance with this policy. The Office of Equal Opportunity and Access will stay abreast of changes in accessibility standards and, in conjunction with the Web Accessibility Committee, will review and revise this policy as necessary.