I. Introduction: What Makes a Good Web Site?

A good Web site is not about technology, coding, or learning to use software. A Web site is a communication tool, and an effective Web site meets the needs of its readers. Good writing will engage your readers and help them quickly gather the information they came to your pages for.

Explain here briefly the roles and responsibilities, and the role our office plays

II. Tips on Writing for the Web

Know Your Audience

The first thing to think about when creating Web pages is your audience. Who are your readers? What style of writing do they relate to? What are they looking for? What are they trying to accomplish?

What Do You Want To Say?

After you have identified your audience and their goals, give some thought to your message. What information do you need to get to your readers? What goals would you like your pages to accomplish?

Keep It Short

Keep in mind that your reader’s attention span is much shorter on the Web than for paper documents. Readers are bombarded with a lot of information on each page – images, links, banners – so you have to cut through the clutter. Some basic rules are:

- Always speak directly to your reader. Address their needs and goals.
- Use plain English.
- Write simple and direct sentences.
- Keep your paragraphs short.
- Avoid passive voice and run-on sentences.
- A good rule of thumb for web writing is to write a first draft, then editing that in half
III. Structuring Your Pages

Headlines and Subheads

Pages need a headline which is not only interesting but also hints at what can be found on the page. Subheadings help readers quickly scan the page and decide if they want to continue reading. Choose heading numbers in a logical order:

**Heading 1:** is generated automatically from the page’s title and does not appear in content objects or on the Web. It is for search engine optimization (SEO) and is only visible to search engines. To help your page be found, use natural English and incorporate keywords when naming your pages.

**EXAMPLE** for a page of forms for student accounts

**GOOD:** Student Accounts Forms at SUNY Plattsburgh

Why? It contains all the keywords a person might enter when looking for this page.

**BAD:** Forms

Why? No keywords. Whose forms are they? No one would ever enter just “forms” in a search engine – they would get millions of results!

**Heading 2:** use this for content titles only and only on the first line of the page.

**Heading 3:** for subheadings after the title.

**Heading 4:** used as a heading for sub-categories related to the heading 3 directly above it.

**Headings 5 & 6:** avoid these headings. If your page needs this much subdivision, you should think about making it simpler.
Example of a Properly Structured Page

Canadian Studies at SUNY Plattsburgh [Heading 2 – Page Title]

Canada: Our Friendly Neighbor to the North [Heading 3 - first subhead]

Did you know? [Heading 4 – facts about “our friendly neighbor”]

• Canada is the second largest country in the world…?
• Canada calls its “native Canadians” the “First Nations”?

Learn about Canada through Experience [Heading 3 – a new subject]

The Canadian Studies program is the most comprehensive multidisciplinary undergraduate program in the United States. It has a national reputation for its innovative and unique courses in every discipline developed...

Internships [Heading 4 – a specific example about learning through experience]

Students can acquire international opportunities and experiences in Canada through internships in Canadian and American Consulates, Quebec Delegations, Trade and Economic development offices, Historical...

Questions, Comments, Suggestions? [Heading 4 – contact block]

For further information about Canadian Studies at SUNY Plattsburgh, please contact:

Dr. Mark Richard
Coordinator, Canadian Studies Program
Office: Ward Hall 217B
Phone: (518) 564-2226
Fax: (518) 564-2300
E-mail: mark.richard@plattsburgh.edu
Numbers & Bullets
Bullets are a great way to call out small bits of information. They are easy to read and are ideal for lists. Whenever you can, use bullets instead of writing out a list in a paragraph. Try to keep your bullets to 7 or fewer (our brains have difficulty processing more than 7 items in a list).

When you create numbered lists or sections, always use the Insert Numbered List button in the content editor instead of writing in the numbers manually. This helps screen readers for the visually impaired present your page properly.

IV. Official Content & Required Pages and Elements

Official Content
All official Web content must be on the main server. This includes any recruitment marketing, college policies, catalog information, and college-provided student services. These items are never appropriate on faculty Web pages. Always link to pages on the main server instead of reproducing them on other servers.

Do not replicate pages from other parts of the website in your site. Link to them instead. This prevents conflicting information from being out there when the original page is updated but yours isn’t.

Also, keep in mind that the faculty server is not an official communication channel with prospective students. Its purpose is for communication with current students and colleagues and also to provide space for your personal Web content.
V. Required Pages & Elements
To be truly useful to your readers, all Web sites need to have the following pages and elements:

Pages

**Home page:** Needs to be clear, engaging and provide an overview of your site. This page is must have the file name “index.php.”

**Staff or faculty directory:** A list of the people who work in your department and how to contact them.

Elements

**Title:** This should be interesting and sum up the page’s contents.

**Engaging and informative content:** Without this, your page can not accomplish your goals.

**Clear call to action:** What do you want readers to do with your information? How should they accomplish your page’s goal – by contacting you, registering for class, sending an e-mail, filling out a form, etc.?

**Contact information:** All pages must have a contact block at the bottom of the page. Designate a single contact person and be sure to include campus phone number, official campus e-mail address and the person’s name.

**Navigation bar:** Without this, your readers are quickly lost. Also, pages that are not linked to anywhere cannot be found in our search engine.
Required Pages for Academic Programs
Academic program pages need to have all the above plus:

About [Program/Field]: This page describes your field in a general way and its purpose is to give high schools students a rounded idea of the field

Careers: Describes typical and non-typical careers in the field, includes a short list of recent employers and titles; a link to the career center is required

Student profiles: Showcase a few students to inspire prospective students

Alumni profiles: Highlight a few of your successful/interesting alumni

Majors & minors: One for each degree your department offers, describe the degree and what benefits students can expect to gain; links to the online catalog page and course descriptions is required

Admissions links:
   Apply for Admission
   Request Information
   Quick Facts
   Visiting & Open Houses
   Virtual Tour
   Register for Courses

Additional pages: You can add as many pages to your site as you need to accomplish your site’s and your reader’s goals. These pages must also include contact blocks and required navigation elements.
VI. CSS Styles

In the content editor there is a drop down menu of styles you can apply to your content. Here are the styles you can choose from and when to use them:

**Red**
Use sparingly for emphasis

**Contact Information**
Use for the title of contact blocks, works only with H4 format

To make the dotted line go all the way across the page, go into the source code and change:

```html
<h4><span class="contact">Contact Information</span></h4>
```
to

```html
<h4 class="contact">Contact Information</h4>
```
(remove the span tag)

**Student Profiles**
Use for the title of news stories, student and alumni profiles, works only with H3 format

To make the solid underline go all the way across the page, go into the source code and change:

```html
<h3><span class="profiles">Student Profiles</span></h3>
```
to

```html
<h3 class="profiles">Student Profiles</h3>
```
(remove the span tag)
**Section Break**

Marks a new section on your page, works with all formats

To make the box go all the way across the page, go into the source code and change:

```html
<h3><span class="sectionbreak">Section Break</span></h3>
```
to

```html
<h3 class="sectionbreak">Section Break</h3> (remove the span tag)
```

**Pull Quotes**

Pull quote styles move small sections of text to a box on either the right or left of the page.

- **Pull Quote Left**  
  Use for special call outs

- **Pull Quote Right**  
  Use for special call outs

- **Pull Quote Plain Left**  
  Use for special call outs

- **Pull Quote Plain Right**  
  Use for special call outs