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 cutting through the clutter is key. 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 hint 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 at SUNY Plattsburgh – Forms
  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 “form” 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.

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]

**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 – “Learn about Canada through experience” specific example]

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 3 – contact block]

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

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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.

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.

Also, keep in mind that anything you put on the faculty server will not be indexed by any search Web sites. No one would be able to find your pages through Google or any other search engine.
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 be named “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. Give an example of good and bad page titles (do we need to explain difference between page name and page title?)

**Engaging and informative content:** Without this, you 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. Be sure to include campus phone number, e-mail address and a contact person

**Navigation bar:** Without this, your readers are quickly lost. Also, pages that are not linked to 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 of your 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 the required content and elements above.
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:

**Block:** Adds 15 pixels of space below the text it is applied to

**Blue:** Use sparingly and don’t use it in paragraphs because it will look like a link

**Red:** Use sparingly

**Contact:** Use for the title of contact blocks

**Headline:** Use sparingly for emphasis. Do not apply to page headlines (use H2 instead)

**Indent:** Indents text

**Profiles:** used for the title of student and alumni profiles

**Section Break:** marks a new section on your page, the bar’s color will vary depending on your site’s template

**Smaller:** reduces text size.

**Students:** this style is reserved for the student life home page only

**Students H3:** this style is reserved for the student life home page only

**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