The WHiSTLE

New federal regulations to ensure full usability of electronic and information technologies for disabled

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For someone with a disability, equal access — be it to a physical place or merely to information — can be another, unnecessary hindrance.

A new federal regulation concerning the presentation of information on the web will have a significant impact on Georgia Tech's future online communications. In order to accommodate all users — including those with special needs — campus website developers will need to ensure the full accessibility of their Internet content.

The regulation, Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, complements the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by addressing the convergence of traditional telecommunications technologies with new and advancing electronic and information technologies. Of particular interest to webmasters, professors and other information architects is a set of 15 criteria intended to maximize a site's usability.

"Oftentimes, we think in terms of the architectural barriers disabled individuals encounter," said Dan Carlson, assistant dean of students and coordinator for students with disabilities. "Now, as technology has come to the forefront in our everyday lives, the accessibility of information plays a major role." Currently, there are 200 students registered in Carlson's Access disAbled Assistance Program for Tech Students (ADAPTS) office.

When it was determined that the ADA also applied to the web, the term "public accommodations" expanded into cyberspace. As the federal government becomes increasingly reliant on these convergent technologies, the intent of section 508 is to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access.

In essence, section 508 covers two key issues. The first is that when federal agencies "develop, procure, maintain or use electronic and information technology," this technology must be accessible to federal employees with disabilities. The second is that members of the public who have disabilities must be able to gain access to the information or services offered by each agency. Because the scope of the phrase "electronic and information technology" is understood to include web pages, section 508 means that federally run sites must be designed according to accessibility guidelines and also that vendors must follow these guidelines in order for their services to be procured.

The University System of Georgia, which receives federal funding, is therefore subject to the same regulations as federal agencies and expected to bring its 34 colleges and universities into full compliance.

The Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, known as the Access Board, has made it clear that section 508 standards only apply to sites launched or redesigned after June 21, 2001. Webmasters are not obligated, the Board has said, to retrofit any pre-existing web sites, though older sites must offer an alternative method of access to the information contained within the site.

The Access Board, an independent federal agency responsible for issuing the accessibility standards, draws heavily from a recommendation on the part of the Web Accessibility

Limited hiring freeze will slow process filling some vacancies

Dan Treadaway
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Filling vacant or new staff positions will require more time and preparation, thanks to a limited hiring freeze imposed last month by Gov. Roy Barnes.

Prompted by concerns over how the slowing economy will affect state revenues, the "hiring slowdown" is aimed at heading off any potential budget crisis before it happens. There is no projected date for lifting the hiring freeze.

Requests from campus departments seeking to hire new employees will undergo a review process created by the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB). Positions exempt from the review process include:
• Teaching faculty
• Any position paid fully from non-state funds (including auxiliary enterprise funds, student activity funds, and federal or other non-state-funded grants and contracts)
• Police (public safety officers)
• Facilities, operations, and maintenance staff
• All regular hourly positions
• All temporary positions
• All student positions

All other positions funded through state resources are required to undergo the review process, including research and public service faculty, general administrators, academic administrators, librarians, counselors, and any other positions that hold academic rank.

Associate Vice President for Human Resources Chuck Donbaugh advises all units seeking exceptions to the review policy to contact either Jim Rolen for classified positions or Debbee Lee for faculty positions for assistance.

"We know this policy will have an affect on departments attempting to hire administrative and technical staff in particular," said Donbaugh. "Our staff in Human Resources will do everything within our power to assist those who need to fill vital positions."

Donbaugh said campus units requesting exceptions to the policy must:
• Submit a completed Georgia Tech Classified Job Requisition form or Faculty Position Vacancy Announcement form, per usual practice, and:
• Attach an original and two copies of the completed OPB Request for Approval to Fill a Personnel Vacancy form (available at www.ohr.gatech.edu), signed by the dean, vice president, or other appropriate officer.

Once the forms are submitted, Human Resources will discuss requests with either the provost or senior vice president for Administration and Finance, submit approved requests through the Board of Regents to the OPB, and notify the campus unit of OPB action. Donbaugh said that OPB has not published its review procedures or anticipated response time. Campus units should expect a delay of at least several weeks beyond normal time frames.

"We appreciate the inconvenience and even possible extended delay that this process may impose on filling vacancies," Donbaugh said. "We will do our best to ensure that the on-campus approval process works efficiently and will advocate with OPB on Tech's behalf at every opportunity."

For more information...

Office of Human Resources:
http://www.ohr.gatech.edu

Professional development program seeks to retain employees

Theresa Harvard Johnson
Office of Information Technology

With the continued shortage of skilled information technology workers in the state and across the nation, holding on to qualified employees is becoming increasingly challenging. Governmental agencies, meanwhile, face the added challenge of operating within budgets that are significantly less than their corporate counterparts. To level the playing field, novel solutions are required.

Office of Information Technology Directors Linda Cabot, Barbara Roper, and Associate Director Lori Sundal will join technology professionals, managers and executives from higher education institutions this month at the "Developing the Next Generation of Leaders" conference, presenting OIT's new Professional Development Program (PDP).

"This is an enormous opportunity for Georgia Tech," said Cabot, director of Customer Support. "As a premier university, we're walking into another leadership role in which we're sharing a critical program as a model for other institutions across the country."

The web-based PDP took several years to develop, and involved a team of OIT employees and the Office of Human Resources, with the intent to provide guidance and tools employees need to explore career enhancement and advancement opportunities within OIT. Among other things, the site provides detailed information about OIT policies and procedures; the ability to explore career paths inside OIT, complete with general job descriptions by title and suggested career paths; downloadable worksheets to assist with assessing current job skills; and an opportunity to explore the numerous educational avenues available to enhance current job skills or assist in obtaining new ones.

"Retention is a large problem in the IT field … at least for those of us that are state agencies constrained by budget," said Roper, director of Resource Management. "So we've had to be creative in developing this program. When we lose staff, we usually lose them to higher-paying agencies. In the past couple of years, employees left making an average 26 percent more than what they were earning here. So naturally, we had to find other incentives that would help us hold on to them."

Roper indicated OIT employees did not want a career development program that was strictly technical or strictly management in nature.

"We understood their concerns and worked to offer more than that to them," said Sundal, associate director of Enterprise Information Systems. "If an employee wants to move from one career path to another, they can do it. The PDP covers a broad spectrum of development options, and helps employees develop strong plans. They can also work at their own pace, and obtain multiple skills in a broad range of areas."

"We have a diverse work group in the IT environment," Roper said. "Skills vary, and a specialized PDP tailored to their needs is a necessity."

Prior to the project completion, OIT's Planning and Programs directorate conducted a benchmark survey of 20 peer institutions. Some declined to participate.

"We didn't know what other peer institutions were doing with regard to professional development and for employees," Cabot said. "So our benchmarking effort identified the voids and confirmed OIT's efforts in this arena."

OIT also pinpointed critical areas of development in the PDP using results from its 1998 workplace satisfaction survey, which showed that its employees were unclear about career advancement and enhancement opportunities within the organization.

The project, the directors agreed, fits nicely with existing opportunities for advancement offered through Tech for all employees.

"This program offers something for all OIT employees," said Sundal. "Our employees can now say, 'I am aware of where to find the information to advance my career at OIT, and I know what options are available to me.'"

The trio plans to host a workshop entitled "A Professional Development Program for IT Employees" on June 28 in Orlando, where they will review the basics of the PDP program.

> For more information...
>
> OIT's Professional Development Program
> **www.careeradvance.oit.gatech.edu**

Georgia Tech

The Whistle

Initiative, a project of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). Founded in 1994, the W3C endeavors "to lead the web to its full potential as a forum for information, commerce, communication and collective understanding."

Carlson makes it clear that the new standards aren't intended to hinder the artistic whims of campus web developers.

"[These regulations] shouldn't in any way impact the aesthetic look of a web site if it is done correctly," Carlson said, "as long as adjustments are made on the front end to meet accessibility criteria."

Each department on campus has been working for several months to tailor its web presence around these new regulations. The Library and Information Center, for example, is tailoring its sites to accommodate the use of screen readers, devices that aid the visually impaired by translating text into speech. In addition to retooling its site, the Office of Information Technology (OIT) has evaluated each campus computer cluster for physical access and added accessible computer equipment.

Because the reach of section 508 will be so wide, there are numerous resources available for self-education:
• On its website, ADAPTS has put together a brief tutorial on web accessibility, detailing those basic needs to which future site designers must adhere.
• A document prepared by Institute Communications and Public Affairs provides an overview of the legislation and the criteria web authors should follow when creating or amending their sites.
• The AWARE Center, a facet of the HTML Writers Guild, offers web authors specific information for implementing the new guidelines.
• Bobby, a website analysis tool developed by the non-profit Center for Applied Special Technology, acts as a spell checker, identifying most problems or barriers with a site's accessibility.

In the College of Architecture, Tech's Center for Rehabilitation Technology (CRT) is a major player in this endeavor, establishing the Information Technology Technical Assistance and Training Center (ITTATC) to work with federal authorities to promote the understanding of these new standards within the IT industry.

John Goldthwaite, a research scientist in CRT, said that while vendors are under no obligation to manufacture electronic and information technologies that conform to section 508 standards, basic economics will create sufficient demand among vendors.

"If the government is [a vendor's] biggest customer, then they have a large incentive to make just about everything they produce more accessible," he said.

Carlson is pleased with the efforts that are being made to bring Tech into compliance and the example that is being set.

"As a leader in technology, we need to be at the forefront of making people aware of these accessibility issues," he said.

> For more information...
>
> Federal IT Accessibility Initiative:
> **http://www.section508.gov/**
>
> Web Accessibility Initiative:
> **http://www.w3.org/WAI/**
>
> Access disAbled Assistance Program for Tech Students:
> **http://www.adapts.gatech.edu/**
>
> Accessibility of Tech's Web Presence
> **http://www.gatech.edu/accessibility/**
>
> Accessible Web Authoring Resources and Education
> **http://www.awarecenter.org/**
>
> CAST's Bobby application:
> **http://www.cast.org/bobby/**
>
> Information Technology Technical Assistance and Training Center
> **http://www.ittatc.org/**

Ferst Center's 10th anniversary: broader tastes, bigger names

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Continuing a tradition of high-quality performers while expanding its appeal to broader tastes, the Robert Ferst Center for the Arts recently announced the upcoming schedule for its tenth anniversary season.

For the past several years, students have voiced complaints that, as part of a university setting, the Ferst Center did not adequately represent their interests. This season, in addition to the more traditional series — classical, jazz and dance/musical theater — that the Ferst Center has offered, the staff entertained the opinions and suggestions of several student

**Magicians
Penn & Teller**

organizations as well as the Music Department.

"[Interim Director] Andrea Hoffer was very big about asking the students what they would like to see," said Sharon Ahmed, marketing manager of the Ferst Center.

With their mantra of "Ferst quality," the staff wanted to accommodate the students' opinions without compromising their own vision. The synthesis evolved into a variety series of performing artists with a more youthful edge.

"We wanted to develop a category with more student appeal," Ahmed said.

Those acts are mixed with some of the more popular programs the Ferst Center has hosted in past years. Due to the overwhelming demand from saxophonist Dave Koz's Christmas performance in 2000, he will return this December for two shows. Christopher Parkening, who sold out his most recent performance, will also return. Undoubtedly, the one performance that the Ferst Center is most excited about is billed as "A Special Evening with Jose Carreras."

"We wanted a huge name for our tenth anniversary," Ahmed said, "and Carreras is one of the premier tenors in the world." Though tickets for this show will be more expensive than others at the Ferst Center, students will be able to enter a special lottery to purchase a

Ferst Center 2001-02 Schedule

Sandra Bernhard November 3, 2001	**The Ahn Trio** February 1, 2002
Dance Theatre of Harlem November 12, 2001	**George Winston** February 2, 2002
Diane Schuur November 27, 2001	**Lazer Vaudeville** February 8, 2002
Katia & Marielle Labeque December 5, 2001	**Parsons Dance Company** February 23, 2002
Dave Koz December 8-9, 2001	**G. Verdi's Rigoletto,** **Teatro Lirico D'Europa** March 1, 2002
Penn & Teller January 11-12, 2002	**Branford Marsalis** March 2, 2002
The Merry Widow, **London City Opera** January 18, 2002	**Cabaret** March 16, 2002
Christopher Parkening & **Jubilant Sykes** January 19, 2002	**Rockapella** March 23, 2002
Jose Carreras January 25, 2002	**MOMIX "Classics"** April 6, 2002
Gato Barbieri January 26, 2002	**Les Ballets Trockadero** **de Monte Carlo** April 17, 2002

ticket to the performance at a reduced cost.

Among the other performers:
• Jazz vocalist Diane Schuur, a two-time Grammy winner, will perform a big band program backed by the Georgia Tech Jazz Ensemble.
• Actress and comedian Sandra Bernhard performs her monologues on pop culture.
• Jazzman Branford Marsalis, in addition to his stage shows, hosts an award-winning weekly contemporary jazz radio series.

Series tickets go on sale June 19, with individual tickets going on sale August 14. Subscriber forms are available at http://www.ferstcenter.gatech.edu/.

William Long named new chair of International Affairs

Elizabeth Campell
Institute Communications and Public Affairs

Ensuring a smooth transition, Professor William J. Long has been named chair of the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs in Ivan Allen College, effective June 1. Long has been a professor in the Sam Nunn School since 1991 and brings extensive experience and leadership in numerous administrative capacities within the School. He has served as associate chair, graduate studies director, acting chair, and director of the European Union Center.

"We are pleased to have an individual with the strong scholarly background, significant administrative experience, and knowledge of the daily workings of the Sam Nunn School as its new chair," said Sue V. Rosser, dean of Ivan Allen College. "Bill's leadership and ability to work with the faculty will allow the School to continue to expand its research, to build its undergraduate and graduate programs, and sustain its community outreach without a loss of momentum."

Long fills the opening left by Linda Brady, who was named dean of Humanities and Social Sciences at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, N.C.

Long's research focuses on international relations theory, international trade and

Professor William Long

technology transfer. His latest book, "War and Reconciliation," examines the role of reconciliation processes in conflict resolution. He is the author of two other books: "U.S. Export Control Policy" and "Economic Incentives and Bilateral Cooperation," and numerous articles and book chapters. He is the recipient of research and teaching awards from the Hewlett, Pew, and Hitachi

Foundations, the Fulbright Commission, the Council on Foreign Relations, the U.S. Department of Education, and the Georgia Board of Regents. Before entering academia, Long practiced international law at the Washington, D.C., offices of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison and Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld.

Long received his Ph.D. in political science from Columbia University in 1986 and his J.D. from Georgetown University in 1984. In 1978 he completed his bachelor's degree at American University.

Said Long, "I am delighted to be assuming the leadership of the Sam Nunn School. Since its inception, the School has made great strides in establishing a new model of professional education in international affairs that is theoretically grounded, practice and policy oriented, and that exploits the unique opportunities provided by its location within a premier technological university."

The Sam Nunn School of International Affairs was created in 1990 and named in honor of former U.S. Senator Sam Nunn in 1996. Its programs focus on understanding the global context of advances in science and technology and preparing students to address pressing concerns at the nexus of science, technology, and policy.