ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Policy Statement

The University of Southern Mississippi is committed to providing equal access to its programs, activities, services and information through its technologies and equipment.

Reason for Policy/Purpose

This policy is required for the effective communication of university policies regarding technology accessibility.

Who Needs to Know This Policy

All University employees responsible for the procurement, development, and services of electronic and information technology.

Website Address for this Policy

www.usm.edu/institutional-policies/policy-acaf-it-017

Definitions

Policy/Procedures

With the goal of ensuring access for all, the university is guided by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, and guidelines set forth by Section 508.
University employees responsible for the procurement, development, and services of electronic and information technology will adhere to standards set by Section 508. Accessibility will be a determining factor in all purchases, agreements or contracts for goods or services that will impact the institutional Web. Items in which accessibility will be considered, but are not limited to, include:

- Content Creation and Delivery Tools: word processing, presentation software, video streaming, podcasting
- Authoring Tools: software programs used to develop a website
- Course or Learning Management Systems: systems that house, organize or deliver courses or learning objectives
- Student, Financial and Administrative Tools: systems used in admissions, registration & enrollment, campus financial, human resource, student financial aid, purchasing, student grading and transcripts

Course resources that are shared but originate from other institutions and products developed by the institution will be reviewed to ensure access.

In addition to adhering to guidance provided by Section 508, when evaluating the accessibility of a product, technology or service, consideration must be given to a variety of possible features. Below is a list of such considerations:

1. Does the manufacturer provide a VPAT (Voluntary Product Accessibility Template)? VPAT is a vendor-generated statement using a required template that provides relevant information on how a vendor’s product or service claims to conform to Section 508 standards. Example can be found at http://www.state.gov/m/irm/impact/c32157.htm
2. Does the product or software disable any accessible features of software or equipment that is critical for use by persons with disabilities?
3. Does the product or software provide technical support for persons with disabilities who rely on assistive technology?
4. Does the product or software offer to provide user manuals or instructions in alternate formats (i.e. accessible electronic files, audio, enlarged text, braille)?
5. Does the product or software have a variety of settings to adjust the font size, color or contrast to meet needs of users with disabilities?
6. Does the product or software have other accessibility features available, including closed captioning, voice activated commands, options for keyboards (large, adaptive, or braille keyboards) or text to speech options.
7. Does the software have written descriptions for icons, pictures, graphs, word art, maps or figures that can be read by screen readers? Screen readers are a type of assistive technology used by persons with visual impairments or print disorders.
8. Does the software have written descriptions for all elements in the program, including check boxes, menus, toolbars, scroll bars, fillable forms and other navigational elements?
9. Does the software or product have short cuts or “hot keys” for commonly used commands (i.e., “ctrl +p” for print; “F12” for save)?
10. When interactive software has components for submitting answers, are there options to adjust the response time for answering questions?
11. Does the product have a demo that can be used to test the product?
12. Ask the vendor about other universities who have used this product, software or service. It is highly recommended to contact those institutions to inquire about any disability access challenges that they may have had when using this product, software or service. It’s important to find out about how any access challenges were resolved. Departments should keep records of their efforts in ensuring disability access in products, software and services.

**Review**

The Chief Information Officer is responsible for the review of this policy every four years (or whenever circumstances require immediate review).

**Forms/Instructions**

N/A

**Appendices**

N/A

**Related Information**

N/A

**History**

1. 02/20/12: Formatted for Institutional Policies website.
2. 02/19/13: Formatted for template. Minor editing of punctuation and usage throughout.

**Amendments:** Month, Day, Year – summary of changes
Authorization

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As the Responsible Officer, I have reviewed this policy and believe it represents the current policy.

Responsible Officer

Date

4/30/13