

# **Survey of Institutional Practices to Promote College-wide Web Accessibility**

**With Recommendations**

**Accessibility Committee  
December 13, 2012**

# Executive Summary

Members of the Augsburg Accessibility Committee are concerned with the accessibility of Augsburg's web presence so that all students, faculty, and staff can access and use it effectively and efficiently without barrier. This includes those individuals who have disabilities. Because of this concern, the Accessibility Committee requested that the GOALS Self-Assessment Team complete The GOALS Benchmarking and Planning Tool based on the Recommended Practice Indicators for Institution-wide Web Accessibility.

This self-study was completed during the Fall 2012. Team members who engaged in this self-study and helped to complete the survey and recommendations for action included:

Erin Voss, Administrative Liaison for Computing  
Tony Bibus, Professor Emeritus  
Micheal Bloomberg, Librarian  
Kelly Crawford, HR Generalist  
Heather Ek, Academic Liaison for Computing  
Nathan Gorr, Director of Graduate Admissions  
Rachel Kruzel, Accommodations Coordinator  
Joseph Mann, Web Manager  
Alicia Pickens, Residence Hall Director  
Jody Sorensen, Associate Professor

The GOALS Benchmarking and Planning tool is designed to assess the presence of key benchmarks that are part of more global indicators of institution-wide web accessibility. Those indicators include: (1) Institutional Vision and Leadership Commitment; (2) Planning and Implementation; (3) Resources and Support; and (4) Assessment.

## Findings

*Indicator 1: Institutional Vision and Leadership Commitment.* Augsburg College demonstrates Average performance across benchmarks for this indicator.

*Indicator 2: Planning and Implementation.* Augsburg College does not yet have any performance data for benchmarks within this indicator.

*Indicator 3: Resources and Support.* Augsburg College demonstrates Below Average performance across benchmarks for this indicator.

*Indicator 4: Assessment.* Augsburg College does not yet have any performance data for benchmarks within this indicator.

## Recommendations

It is the recommendation of the self-study team that work commence on the objectives below. Each of these actions can be started without waiting for prerequisites to be completed, so they are truly “next actions” that can be taken to move Augsburg towards more complete web accessibility.

- Develop a vision and commitment statement regarding accessibility, which specifically mentions web accessibility as a component. Work through the college's governing bodies (e.g., faculty and staff senates, Board of Regents) to enact this statement and begin to include it in institution-wide documents. [Indicator 1: Institutional Vision and Leadership Commitment]
- Appoint a group charged with developing an institution-wide web accessibility policy. This group should include representatives from all stakeholder groups, as well as personnel who will be key in implementing the policy. [Indicator 1: Institutional Vision and Leadership Commitment]
- Raise awareness of, educate about, and promote web accessibility through campus messaging. Publicly recognize the work of the Augsburg Accessibility Committee and its members. [Indicator 1: Institutional Vision and Leadership Commitment AND Indicator 3: Resources and Support]
- Identify laws and regulations that apply to Augsburg, regarding web accessibility, to guide development of a policy and plan. This should include those that apply to the employee experience as well as the student experience, and may also include a review of our accreditation requirements. [Indicator 2: Planning and Implementation]
- Create a group tasked with identifying all college web presences ([www.augsburg.edu](http://www.augsburg.edu) and beyond, including sites such as Records & Registration, Financial Aid gateways, and Parking Services) and conducting an initial base audit of their accessibility for future comparison. [Indicator 4: Assessment]

Moreover, the team recommends revisiting the GOALS survey in Fall 2013.

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**ATTACHED APPENDICES (SEPARATE FILES)**

- Appendix A – Best Practice Indicators*
- Appendix B – Benchmark Questions and Responses*
- Appendix C – Benchmark Performance*

# Survey of Institutional Practices to Promote System-wide Web Accessibility

Accessibility Committee  
December 13, 2012

## Introduction

Students, staff, faculty, and alumni alike use the institutional web for everything from online teaching and learning to critical administrative functions. When those individuals have a disability that affects internet use, it can pose a barrier to individual outcomes and institutional efficiencies. Augsburg College is committed to the principles and practices of equal access in the digital age and works to achieve the institutional mission with cost and personnel efficiencies in mind. Since many issues of access can be prevented by institutional efforts, it is important for us to evaluate how we implement recommended practices for institution-wide web accessibility. This report details the results of an institutional self-study of those practices that both promote, and may inhibit, the accessibility of web content across the enterprise.

## Methodology

During Fall 2012, the GOALS Self-Assessment Team was asked to engage in an institutional self-study of web accessibility for those with disabilities. Erin Voss served as the chair for the self-study. The committee included the following members:

Erin Voss, Administrative Liaison for Computing  
Tony Bibus, Professor Emeritus  
Micheal Bloomberg, Librarian  
Kelly Crawford, HR Generalist  
Heather Ek, Academic Liaison for Computing  
Nathan Gorr, Director of Graduate Admissions  
Rachel Kruzel, Accommodations Coordinator  
Joseph Mann, Web Manager  
Alicia Pickens, Residence Hall Director  
Jody Sorensen, Associate Professor

The committee used the *GOALS Benchmarking and Planning Tool for Institution-wide Web Accessibility*. This web-based tool was built on global indicators of recommended practices in postsecondary education that can result in sustained web accessibility. Those indicators include: (1) Institutional Vision and Leadership Commitment; (2) Planning and Implementation; (3) Resources and Support; and (4) Assessment. The self-study process entailed responses to evidence-based questions and committee discussion as a way to evaluate how the institution performs on the benchmarks that comprise each indicator.

A document describing the indicators in more detail, and a complete set of benchmarking questions along with our answers and rationale, are included as appendices.

Each benchmark was scored on a scale from 0-100%.

Range	Performance
11-25%	Below Average
26-60%	Average
61-80%	Good
81-100%	Excellent

Augsburg’s performance on each benchmark is included within the body of this report in the appropriate section. A full set of benchmark performance information is also included as an appendix.

Once the GOALS Self-Assessment Team completed the benchmarking process within each indicator, we engaged in substantive discussions focused on next steps the institution can take towards improving benchmark performance. We generated recommendations for work the institution should consider as a way to improve the infrastructure that supports web accessibility at Augsburg College.

## Findings

In the sections that follow, we will describe each of the 4 indicators and we will summarize Augsburg’s performance across the benchmarks found within the indicators.

### **Indicator 1: Institutional Vision and Leadership Commitment**

#### **What this Indicator means:**

Institution-wide web accessibility is best attained and sustained when there is leadership to support institution-wide vision and commitment toward accessibility. This support should come from many levels including an institution’s governing board, administrators, and key personnel. Each must actively support, participate, and take ownership in the work and outcomes of accessibility.

#### **What we found:**

<i>Benchmark</i>	Score	Below Avg 11-25%	Average 26-60%	Good 61-80%	Excellent 81-100%
A) Leadership: Commitment of Administrative Leadership	14				
B) Stakeholders: Relevant Stakeholder Participation	47				

2 benchmarks comprise this indicator. In both of these benchmark areas, Augsburg is just beginning the process of focusing on accessibility (web and otherwise) as an institution. Therefore it is unsurprising that our benchmark performance is low, and in fact it is encouraging that we already have some non-zero benchmark results.

## **Benchmark A: Commitment of Administrative Leadership**

On this benchmark, Augsburg evidenced a Below Average rating. Some departments on campus have been working towards web accessibility within their own scopes, but we do not yet have an institution-wide accessibility policy or plan. In addition, while we do have an officially recognized group in the Accessibility at Augsburg committee, it has been in existence only a short time and it is too early to tell if the efforts will be sustainable.

### **Why it is important:**

Administrative leadership begins with a **VISION** and commitment toward change. Typically this vision, and its leadership support, stems from efforts made at top administrative levels within an institution. For some systems this would also include the institution's board of governors or trustees. Over time the leadership commitment results in the development and enforcement of an accessibility **POLICY** and **PLAN**, along with the necessary resources to implement them.

## **Benchmark B: Relevant Stakeholder Participation**

On this benchmark, Augsburg evidenced an Average rating. The fact that at least some of our staff and faculty are aware of their roles related to web accessibility (including accessible documents uploaded to web sites such as moodle) elevates our score in this area. However, it is concerning that large numbers of faculty and staff are unaware that they even have a role in accessible web content.

### **Why it is important:**

Including relevant personnel in the planning, implementation, and maintenance of web accessibility provides vital input, fosters ownership across stakeholders, and assists in sustaining the goal of an accessible web presence. Faculty, staff, and students are stakeholders as they are involved in the development, maintenance or use of institutional web content. Stakeholder knowledge and ownership of their role is important, as each will likely have slightly different responsibilities in planning for and achieving overall accessibility. These responsibilities encompass wide-ranging behaviors, including technical staff who design accessible web pages, faculty who identify and upload accessible materials into course management tools, staff who create accessible documents intended for the web, procurement staff who ensure that institutional purchases meet the accessibility standard, and individuals with disabilities who provide feedback on the outcomes. The participation of all these diverse individuals is an important key for success and underscores the vision and commitment of leadership to the end goal of institution-wide accessibility.

## **Indicator 2: Planning and Implementation**

### **What this Indicator means:**

Web accessibility requires strategic planning. Administrators must establish policies and procedures along with a systematic plan to develop, institute, and maintain web accessibility across the organization.

**What we found:**

<i>Benchmark</i>	Score	Below Avg 11-25%	Average 26-60%	Good 61-80%	Excellent 81-100%
A) Personnel: Inclusion of Key Personnel	0				
B) Policy: Comprehensive Accessibility POLICY	0				
C) Plan: Comprehensive Written Accessibility PLAN	0				
D) Implementation: Implementation of the Written PLAN	0				

4 benchmarks comprise this indicator. After reviewing the benchmark questions, we concluded that none of these four benchmarks apply to Augsburg yet, since we do not have an accessibility POLICY or PLAN, and are not yet actively developing either one. Therefore, we have effectively zero performance on these benchmarks. However, these benchmarks will be useful as a guide when we do develop an accessibility policy and plan.

**Benchmark A: Inclusion of Key Personnel**

**Why it is important:**

Identifying and involving personnel who represent key constituent groups at an institution is essential during both the planning and implementation process. Key accessibility personnel may come from many departments or units and represent disability advocates as well as leaders representing technical, faculty, and staff positions. Administrators identify and include these individuals for input as the institution moves from planning to implementation and maintenance of an institution-wide accessible web presence.

The broader group of stakeholders is also included as important feedback mechanisms to the web accessibility efforts. Stakeholders are those who are either end users of web content or those who will implement the institution-wide plan.

**Note:** This benchmark can be differentiated from that found in Indicator 1, as the administrative vision exerted to include a variety of stakeholders is different from the actual participation of key personnel representing different stakeholders throughout the process.

**Benchmark B: Comprehensive Accessibility POLICY**

**Why it is important:**

A stated policy that provides specific guidelines and standards for web accessibility is necessary in order to ensure all administrators and stakeholders understand what is required of them. The web accessibility policy appears in the same set of governing documents as other institution-wide policies, rather than as a separate unit. Once established, the institutional policy is promoted and enforced.

**Benchmark C: Comprehensive Written Accessibility PLAN**

**Why it is important:**

An institution-wide effort requires a systematic plan of action. This plan includes strategies for all aspects of implementation including: goals, timelines, budgeting, materials, personnel, ongoing assessment, and, when necessary, revision of the plan. For institutions that require a business plan for use during cycles of continuous improvement, these elements can serve as the basis for a prospectus that includes concept, marketing, position and market analysis, financial planning, and implementation.

**Benchmark D: Implementation of the Written PLAN**

**Why it is important:**

Once the accessibility policy and plan are in place, administrators and others put that plan into action, ensuring it stays on track by continually monitoring and assessing its progress.

**Indicator 3: Resources and Support**

**What this Indicator means:**

An institution-wide web accessibility plan requires adequate resources and support. Administrators must provide the resources necessary to implement the web accessibility plan with provisions to ensure that the system is sustainable and will remain accessible.

**What we found:**

<i>Benchmark</i>	Score	Below Avg 11-25%	Average 26-60%	Good 61-80%	Excellent 81-100%
A) Allocation: Sufficient Time and Effort Allocated to Personnel	0				
B) Personnel: Focus on Personnel	0				
C) Budget: Budget Sufficient for Institution-Wide Efforts	0				
D) Training: Training and Technical Support	36				
E) Procurement: Procurement, Development, and Use of Technologies That Will Result in Acces	16				

5 benchmarks comprise this indicator. Our performance on these is generally low; this is not surprising given that we do not yet have an accessibility POLICY or PLAN. However, some existing structures already in place can easily be used as scaffolding to support future web accessibility efforts, and these structures show in the better results on indicators D and E.

**Benchmark A: Sufficient Time and Effort Allocated to Personnel**

On this benchmark, Augsburg evidenced a Below Average rating. After a review of job descriptions for personnel who would be involved in web accessibility work, it appears that web

accessibility is not specifically mentioned in any job descriptions (though there are mentions of related or peripheral duties such as “suggesting appropriate technology” or “facilitating accommodations.”)

**Why it is important:**

The process to move to an accessible web presence takes time. Both the time and effort required for this work is identified when allocating faculty and staff responsibilities.

**Benchmark B: Focus on Personnel**

On this benchmark, Augsburg evidenced a Below Average rating. This is linked to Benchmark A – because job descriptions do not specify web accessibility duties, job postings also do not mention skills or experience in web accessibility work as a requirement. We also do not have data on retention of key personnel who contribute to web accessibility.

**Why it is important:**

An effective plan cannot be carried out without personnel who have the expertise to implement it. Make sure you focus on hiring, retaining, and supporting personnel at all levels who will help you attain accessibility goals. For example you need to have technical individuals, and those with special responsibilities, to implement the web accessibility plan. Moreover, typical faculty and staff have multiple responsibilities that require their time and attention. Therefore, it is important to provide them with clear and helpful information, sufficient time and support, and the motivation or incentives to ensure that they give the accessibility work in the plan the necessary attention.

**Benchmark C: Budget Sufficient for Institution-Wide Efforts**

On this benchmark, Augsburg evidenced a Below Average rating. Augsburg does not appear to have a specific budget line or category to support web accessibility work (or accessibility work in general) beyond the CLASS office. There is also no feedback system to determine if the current model of distributed funding is sufficient to promote an accessible web presence.

**Why it is important:**

Administration takes financial requirements into account when developing the written accessibility plan and budgets are designed accordingly. Necessary materials, licenses, equipment, personnel, and training are considered. The funding necessary to sustain accessibility of the system is also factored into the budget.

**Benchmark D: Training and Technical Support**

On this benchmark, Augsburg evidenced an Average rating. In large part, this is due to the use of the LFC model which provides technical support tailored to each faculty and staff member’s roles at the College. As web accessibility efforts move forward, support for such efforts will likely fall easily into the existing model.

**Why it is important:**

All personnel (*i.e., faculty and staff*) must be provided with the knowledge, support, and materials they require to carry out their roles in implementing institution-wide web accessibility.

**Benchmark E: Procurement, Development, and Use of Technologies That Will Result in Access**

On this benchmark, Augsburg evidenced a Below Average rating. Our current procurement processes ask questions about accessibility on a case-by-case basis, but these questions are not applied consistently across the board.

**Why it is important:**

To create and maintain an accessible web architecture, personnel choose tools that render accessible web content. Failing to procure or develop accessible technologies perpetuates new and existing problems. A strong procurement policy, with language included in contracts, helps ensure that personnel use the institution’s resources wisely and purchase products and services that are in line with institution-wide web accessibility efforts, including programs such as open source, shareware, and freeware that don’t go through the traditional procurement process.

**Indicator 4: Assessment**

**What this Indicator means:**

Ongoing assessment is necessary to ensure that a web accessibility plan is working and on track. Processes must be in place to measure progress, constituent satisfaction, and outcomes. This information is then used to help determine the sustainability of the current efforts and make improvements to the overall program.

**What we found:**

<i>Benchmark</i>	Score	Below Avg 11-25%	Average 26-60%	Good 61-80%	Excellent 81-100%
A) Progress: Evaluation of Implementation Progress	0				
B) Outcomes: Evaluation of Web Accessibility Outcomes	0				
C) Improvement: Assessment Results Are Used To Improve Institutional Accessibility	0				

3 benchmarks comprise this indicator. After reviewing the benchmark questions, we concluded that none of these four benchmarks apply to Augsburg yet, since we do not have an accessibility POLICY or PLAN to measure progress against. Therefore, we have effectively zero performance on these benchmarks. However, these benchmarks will give us a checklist of items to keep in mind as we move forward.

## **Benchmark A: Evaluation of Implementation Progress**

### **Why it is important:**

Provisions are made to ensure that the plan is implemented as intended (e.g., scope, training, and support of staff, timelines). Progress is monitored and evaluated to ascertain if implementation is occurring at predicted levels, and that alterations in planned implementation are identified and communicated.

## **Benchmark B: Evaluation of Web Accessibility Outcomes**

### **Why it is important:**

No plan or policy is useful if it does not provide the intended outcome. Those tasked by the institution to improve web accessibility must periodically monitor and evaluate its status to determine if it is meeting the institution-wide web accessibility standard. Because automated web accessibility tools don't provide a complete assessment picture, key accessibility personnel should include manual checks in their evaluation plans. As technology and standards change over time, it is also important that the institution determine if the stated outcome is sufficient or if alterations could bring it more in line with current standards and practices.

## **Benchmark C: Assessment Results Are Used To Improve Institutional Accessibility**

### **Why it is important:**

Data gathered from evaluations of both the process and the outcomes of web accessibility are of little value unless they are used to improve and inform what is to happen in the future. Those tasked by the institution to improve web accessibility use ongoing oversight and review of data sources continually to revise procedures to ensure the institution can create and maintain institution-wide web accessibility. Moreover, these same data can be used for future changes in institutional policy.

## Recommendations

It is the recommendation of the self-study team that work commence on the objectives below. Each of these actions could be started immediately and none require monetary investment, so they are truly “next actions” that can be taken to move Augsburg towards more complete web accessibility. They are listed in order of the Indicators they would fall under, rather than a recommended priority list.

It should be noted that these are not the only things Augsburg could or should be doing to promote web accessibility. We see these recommendations as first steps in a journey; completion of each will trigger new actions that we can undertake, as well as facilitating other parallel actions.

- Develop a vision and commitment statement regarding accessibility, which specifically mentions web accessibility as a component. Work through the college's governing bodies (e.g., faculty and staff senates, Board of Regents) to enact this statement and begin to include it in institution-wide documents. [Indicator 1: Institutional Vision and Leadership Commitment]
- Appoint a group charged with developing an institution-wide web accessibility policy. This group should include representatives from all stakeholder groups, as well as personnel who will be key in implementing the policy. [Indicator 1: Institutional Vision and Leadership Commitment]
- Raise awareness of, educate about, and promote web accessibility through campus messaging. Publicly recognize the work of the Augsburg Accessibility Committee and its members. [Indicator 1: Institutional Vision and Leadership Commitment AND Indicator 3: Resources and Support]
- Identify laws and regulations that apply to Augsburg, regarding web accessibility, to guide development of a policy and plan. This should include those that apply to the employee experience as well as the student experience, and may also include a review of our accreditation requirements. [Indicator 2: Planning and Implementation]
- Create a group tasked with identifying all college web presences ([www.augsburg.edu](http://www.augsburg.edu) and beyond, including sites such as Records & Registration, Financial Aid gateways, and Parking Services) and conducting an initial base audit of their accessibility for future comparison. [Indicator 4: Assessment]

Moreover, the team recommends revisiting the GOALS survey in Fall 2013.

## **Summary and Recommendations**

The Accessibility Committee is committed to the accessibility of institutional web content for all persons, including those with disabilities. This work is aligned with the Mission of the institution and supported by our core ethics and desires. The GOALS Self-Assessment Team completed the GOALS Benchmarking and Planning tool with a diverse membership to ensure that information was coming into the study from across the institution.

While Augsburg currently has generally low performance on these benchmarks, we are only beginning the process of focusing on accessibility (web and otherwise). It is encouraging that we have positive benchmark results in some areas; these areas give us a platform from which to build up our web accessibility efforts.

As a self-study team, we acknowledge that could work on any number of different benchmarks to improve College-wide web accessibility. However, it is the recommendation of the self-study team that work commence on 5 immediately available objectives (“next actions”) which do not require monetary investment to complete.

Additionally, the team recommends revisiting the GOALS survey in Fall 2013.