

RESOLUTION AGREEMENT

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Case Number 02-17-2145

In order to resolve Case No. 02-17-2145, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (the Institute) assures the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR), that it will take the actions detailed below pursuant to the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and its implementing regulation at 34 C.F.R. Part 104.

Assurances of Nondiscrimination. The Institute hereby reaffirms its commitment to ensure that people with disabilities have an opportunity equal to that of their nondisabled peers to participate in the Institute's programs, benefits, and services, including those delivered through electronic and information technology, except where doing so would impose an undue burden or create a fundamental alteration.

Benchmarks for Measuring Accessibility. For the purposes of this Agreement, the accessibility of online content and functionality will be measured according to the W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA and the Web Accessibility Initiative Accessible Rich Internet Applications Suite (WAI-ARIA) 1.0 for web content, which are incorporated by reference.

Adherence to these accessible technology standards is one way to ensure compliance with the Institute's underlying legal obligations to ensure that people with disabilities are able to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same benefits and services within the same timeframe as their nondisabled peers, with substantially equivalent ease of use; that they are not excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to discrimination in any Institute programs, services, and activities delivered online, as required by Section 504 and its implementing regulation; and that they receive effective communication of the Institute's programs, services, and activities delivered online.

Remedies and Reporting Requirements

- 1) Proposed Policies and Procedures Regarding New Online Content and Functionality. By, November 30, 2017, the Institute will submit to OCR for its review and approval proposed policies and procedures ("the Plan for New Content") to ensure that all new, newly-added, or modified online content and functionality related to all Institute electronic and information technology used to conduct Institute academic and business programs, services, and activities will be accessible to people with disabilities as measured by conformance to the Benchmarks for Measuring Accessibility set forth above, except where doing so would impose a fundamental alteration or undue burden.
 - a) When fundamental alteration or undue burden defenses apply, the Plan for New Content will require the Institute to provide equally effective alternative access. The Plan for New Content will require the Institute, in providing equally effective alternate

access, to take any actions that do not result in a fundamental alteration or undue financial and administrative burdens, but nevertheless ensure that, to the maximum extent possible, individuals with disabilities receive the same benefits or services as their nondisabled peers. To provide equally effective alternate access, alternates are not required to produce the identical result or level of achievement for persons with and without disabilities, but must afford persons with disabilities equal opportunity to obtain the same result, to gain the same benefit, or to reach the same level of achievement, in the most integrated setting appropriate to the person's needs.

- b) The Plan for New Content must include sufficient quality assurance procedures, backed by adequate personnel and financial resources, for full implementation. This provision also applies to the Institute's online content and functionality developed by, maintained by, or offered through a third-party vendor or by using open sources.
- c) Within sixty (60) days of receiving OCR's approval of the Plan for New Content, the Institute will officially adopt, and fully implement the amended policies and procedures.

Reporting Requirement: Within 90 days of receiving OCR's approval, the Institute will submit to OCR the approved policies and procedures, evidence of their adoption and distribution, and a description of how they are being implemented.

- 2) Undue Burden and Fundamental Alteration. For any technology-related requirement in this Agreement for which the Institute asserts an undue burden or fundamental alteration defense, such assertion may only be made by the President of the Institute or by an individual designated by the President and who has budgetary authority after considering all resources available for use in the funding and operation of the service, program, or activity, and must be accompanied by a written statement of the reasons for reaching that conclusion. The written statement will be certified by the determining official. If such a determination is made, the certifying official will describe in the written statement how it will provide equally effective alternate access, *i.e.*, other action that would not result in such an alteration or such burdens but would nevertheless ensure that, to the maximum extent possible, individuals with disabilities receive the same benefits or services provided by the Institute as their nondisabled peers.
- 3) Audit of Existing Content and Functionality. By September 1, 2017, the Institute will propose for OCR's review and approval the identity and bona fides of an Auditor (corporation or individual) to audit content and functionality related to all Institute electronic and information technology used to conduct Institute academic and business program, services, and activities on its website, including, but not limited to, the home page, all subordinate pages, and intranet pages and sites, to identify any online content or functionality that is inaccessible to persons with disabilities, including online content and functionality developed by, maintained by, or offered through a third party vendor or an open source. The audit may utilize sampling and other techniques to provide a representative result and to avoid unnecessary redundancy. The Auditor will have sufficient knowledge and experience in website accessibility for people with disabilities to

carry out all related tasks, including developing a Proposed Corrective Action Plan. The Audit will use the Benchmarks for Measuring Accessibility set out above, unless the Institute receives prior permission from OCR to use a different standard as a benchmark. During the Audit, the Institute will also seek input from members of the public with disabilities, including parents, students, employees, and others associated with the Institute, and other persons knowledgeable about website accessibility, regarding the accessibility of its online content and functionality.

Reporting Requirement:

- (a) By September 1, 2017, the Institute will submit the *bona fides* of its proposed Auditor to OCR for review and approval. OCR will evaluate whether the proposed Auditor has the requisite experience and knowledge to carry out an appropriate Audit and to develop a Proposed Corrective Action Plan.
 - (b) Within 180 days of receiving OCR's approval of the proposed Auditor, the Institute will submit to OCR documentation of the steps taken by the Auditor during the Audit, a description of the outreach it undertook and the input it received, and a detailed accounting of the results of the Audit.
- 4) Proposed Corrective Action Plan. Ninety (90) days after the submission of the Audit, the Institute will submit to OCR for its review and approval a proposed Corrective Action Plan to address all inaccessible content and functionality identified during the Institute's Audit. The proposed Corrective Action Plan will set out a detailed schedule for:
- (a) addressing problems, taking into account identified priorities, with all corrective actions to be completed within 36 months of the date OCR approved the Corrective Action Plan;
 - (b) setting up systems of accountability and verifying claims of accessibility by vendors or open sources; and
 - (c) setting up a system of testing and accountability to maintain the accessibility of all online content and functionality on an ongoing basis.
- 5) Within 30 days of receiving OCR's approval of the proposed Corrective Action Plan, the Institute will officially adopt and implement the Corrective Action Plan.

Reporting Requirement:

- (a) Within 45 days of receiving OCR's approval of the proposed Corrective Action Plan, the Institute will submit to OCR the approved Corrective Action Plan, and documentation establishing that the approved Corrective Action Plan is being implemented according to the approved schedule.
- (b) Reports will be due every six months thereafter until the Corrective Action Plan has been completed. During any of these reports, the Institute may submit to OCR for

its review and approval a request for an extension of time of no more than six months to address problems identified during the implementation of the Corrective Action Plan that require additional time to resolve; such a request must be accompanied by a written statement identifying the problem and explaining why it cannot be resolved within the proposed timeframe.

- 6) Notice. By September 15, 2017, the Institute will submit to OCR for review and approval a proposed notice to persons with disabilities (Notice) regarding how to request the webmaster or other appropriate person to provide access to (or notify the Institute regarding) online information or functionality that is currently inaccessible. The proposed Notice will also include information or an accessible link to information instructing people how to file formal grievances under Section 504. Within 10 days of receiving OCR's approval of the proposed Notice, the Institute will officially adopt and prominently post the approved Notice on its home page and throughout its website (including all subordinate pages and intranet sites).

Reporting Requirement: Within 15 days of receiving OCR's approval of the Institute's proposed Notice, the Institute will provide documentation to OCR regarding the locations and content of its published Notice.

- 7) Training. Starting no later than 30 days from this date of this Agreement, and annually thereafter, the Institute will deliver website accessibility training to all appropriate personnel, including, but not limited to: content developers, webmasters, procurement officials, and all others responsible for developing, loading, maintaining, or auditing web content and functionality.

Reporting Requirement:

- (a) For each training session required by this Agreement, until such time as OCR closes the monitoring of this Agreement, the Institute will submit to OCR documentation that it has been delivered.
- (b) The documentation will include a list of invitees and attendees, including titles; a description of the delivered training content; and the presenters' credentials for giving such training.

The Institute understands that OCR will not close the monitoring of this Agreement until OCR determines that the Institute has fulfilled the terms of this Agreement and is in compliance with the regulations implementing Section 504, at 34 C.F.R. §§ 104.4 (a) and (b), and 104.43, which were at issue in this case. The Institute also understands that by signing this Agreement, it agrees to provide data and other information in a timely manner in accordance with the reporting requirements of this Agreement. Further, the Institute understands that during the monitoring of this Agreement, if necessary, OCR may visit the Institute, interview staff, and request such additional reports or data, including simulated website accounts and passwords, as are necessary for OCR to determine whether the Institute has fulfilled the terms of this Agreement and is in compliance with the regulations implementing Section 504, at 34 C.F.R. §§ 104.4 (a) and (b), which were at issue in this case. The Institute understands and acknowledges

that OCR may initiate administrative enforcement or judicial proceedings, including to enforce the specific terms and obligations of this Agreement. Before initiating administrative enforcement (34 C.F.R. §§ 100.9, 100.10), or judicial proceedings, including to enforce this Agreement, OCR shall give the Institute written notice of the alleged breach and sixty (60) calendar days to cure the alleged breach.

/s/

8/4/2017

Shirley Ann Jackson, Ph.D.
President
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Date