

## **Resolution Agreement**

### **Syracuse University Case Number 02-17-2628**

In order to resolve Case No. 02-17-2628, Syracuse University (the University) assures the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) that it will take the following actions.

Assurances of Nondiscrimination. The University hereby reaffirms its commitment to ensure that people with disabilities have an opportunity equal to that of their nondisabled peers to participate in the University'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) 1.1 for web content, which are incorporated by reference.

Adherence to these accessible technology standards is one way 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 of the University programs, services, and activities delivered online, as required by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and its implementing regulation at 34 C.F.R. Part 104; and that they receive effective communication of the University's programs, services, and activities delivered online.

### **Definitions**

The following definitions apply to this Agreement:

"Accessible" means that individuals with disabilities are able to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services within the same timeframe as individuals without disabilities, with substantially equivalent ease of use.

"Equally effective alternate access," with respect to information and communication technology, means an alternative format, medium, or other aid that timely and accurately communicates the same content as does the original format or medium, and which is appropriate to an individual's disability. To provide equally effective alternate access, the University need not take any actions that result in a fundamental alteration or undue financial and administrative burdens, but must 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.

“Fundamental alteration” means a change to a University service, program, or activity that significantly alters the essential nature of the service, program, or activity, which includes academic courses or technology. Where a fundamental alteration can be documented, the University will take any other action that would not result in such an alteration but would nevertheless, ensure that, to the maximum extent possible, qualified individuals with disabilities receive the benefits of services provided by the University.

“Undue burden” means significant difficulty or expense.

### **Remedies and Reporting Requirements**

- 1) Proposed Policies and Procedures Regarding New Online Content and Functionality. On January 1, 2018, the University adopted its Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Accessibility Policy, which requires online content and functionality published by the University on or after January 1, 2018 be compliant with the WCAG 2.0 AA accessibility standards, unless doing so would result in an undue burden or fundamental alteration. By April 30, 2018, the University will submit to OCR for its review and approval a proposed plan (“the Plan for New Content”) to ensure that all new, newly-added, or modified online content and functionality 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 University to provide equally effective alternate access. The Plan for New Content will require the University, 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.
  - 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 University’s online content and functionality developed or maintained by a third-party vendor on behalf of the University, or by using open sources.
  - c) Within thirty (30) days of receiving OCR’s approval of the Plan for New Content, the University will officially adopt, and fully implement the plan.

Reporting Requirement: Within forty-five (45) days of receiving OCR’s approval, the University will submit to OCR the approved plan, evidence of its adoption and distribution, and a description of how it is being implemented.

- 2) Undue Burden and Fundamental Alteration Defense Process. For any technology-related requirement in this Agreement for which the University asserts an undue burden or fundamental alteration defense, such assertion may only be made by the President of the University or by an individual designated by the President 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, including the cost of meeting the requirement and the available funding and other resources. 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 University as their nondisabled peers.
- 3) Audit of Existing Content and Functionality. By June 30, 2018, the University will propose for OCR’s review and approval the identity and *bona fides* of an Auditor (corporation or individual) to audit all content and functionality on its websites. The Audit scope will include the home page (www.syracuse.edu) and its subordinate pages, the top 100 most-visited University websites, which account for more than 95% of all web traffic to University websites, and the University websites that otherwise provide essential academic functions, to identify any online content or functionality that is inaccessible to persons with disabilities, including online content and functionality developed or maintained by a third-party vendor on behalf of the University, or by using open sources (collectively, the “Primary Website Properties”). 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 University receives prior permission from OCR to use a different standard as a benchmark. During the Audit, the University will also seek input from members of the University community with disabilities, including students, employees, and others associated with the University, and other persons knowledgeable about website accessibility, regarding the accessibility of its online content and functionality.

Reporting Requirements:

- a) By June 30, 2018, the University 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 ninety (90) days of receiving OCR’s approval of the proposed Auditor, the University 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. Simultaneously with the submission of the Audit, the University will submit to OCR for its review and approval a proposed Corrective Action Plan to address all inaccessible content and functionality identified during the University's Audit. The proposed Corrective Action Plan will set out a detailed schedule for: (a) bringing content and functionality on the University's websites described above into compliance with the WCAG 2.0 AA standards, taking into account identified priorities, and subject to any undue burden or fundamental alteration defenses, with all corrective actions to be completed within 24 months of the date OCR approved the Corrective Action Plan; (b) setting up a system for individuals with disabilities to request that the University make compliant with the WCAG 2.0 AA standards content or functionality on its websites developed prior to January 1, 2018, and not among the University's Primary Website Properties; (c) setting up systems of accountability and verifying claims of accessibility by vendors or open sources; and (d) setting up a system of testing and accountability to maintain the accessibility of all online content and functionality on an ongoing basis. If after implementation of the Corrective Action Plan it appears that not all corrective actions will be completed within 24 months of the University's adoption and implementation of the Corrective Action Plan, the University may request reasonable extension(s) of time to complete all corrective actions required by the Corrective Action Plan. If the University requests such an extension, it will be accompanied by a summary of corrective actions completed to date, a list of corrective actions yet to be completed, and an explanation as to why the extension of time is necessary.
- 5) Within thirty (30) days of receiving OCR's approval of the proposed Corrective Action Plan, the University will officially adopt and implement the Corrective Action Plan.

Reporting Requirement: Within forty-five (45) days of receiving OCR's approval of the proposed Corrective Action Plan, the University 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. Reports will be due every sixth months thereafter until the Corrective Action Plan has been completed.

- 6) Notice. Within thirty (30) days of the date of this Agreement, the University will submit to OCR for review and approval a proposed Notice to persons with disabilities regarding how to request the webmaster or other appropriate person to provide access to (or notify the University 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 ten (10) days of receiving OCR's approval of the proposed Notice, the University 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 fifteen (15) days of receiving OCR’s approval of the University’s proposed Notice, the University will provide documentation to OCR regarding the locations and content of its published Notice.

- 7) Training. The University asserts that it began website accessibility training on October 17, 2017 for its employees responsible for web development, content creation, and procurement. The University will continue to deliver, on at least an annual basis, 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: For each training session required by this Agreement, and the trainings that occurred on October 17, October 20, November 1, November 7, November 9, November 29, December 1, 2017, January 22, January 23, January 24, January 26, January 29, January 31, February 2, February 5, February 7, February 9, February 12, February 19, February 21, February 28, and March 1, 2018, as referenced above, until such time as OCR closes the monitoring of this Agreement, the University will submit to OCR documentation that it has been delivered. 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 University understands that by signing this Agreement, it agrees to provide the foregoing information in a timely manner in accordance with the reporting requirements of this Agreement. Further, the University understands that during the monitoring of this Agreement, if necessary, OCR may visit the University, interview staff and students, and request such additional reports or data as are necessary for OCR to determine whether the University 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). Upon completion of the obligations under this Agreement, OCR shall close this case.

The University understands and acknowledges that OCR may initiate administrative enforcement or judicial proceedings 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 to enforce this Agreement, OCR shall give the University written notice of the alleged breach and sixty (60) calendar days to cure the alleged breach.

This Agreement will become effective immediately upon the signature of the University’s representative below.

March 22, 2018

/s/

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Date

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Syracuse University  
Daniel J. French  
Sr. Vice President and General Counsel