



OFFICE OF THE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT –
BUSINESS AND FINANCE

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
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Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to invite you to join a Universitywide group to help shape and promote University policy on accessibility in the electronic environment. As a public institution, the University has an obligation to ensure that its services, programs, and informational materials may be accessible to everyone, including individuals with disabilities. President Atkinson confirmed this principle in a letter to the chancellors in August 2001 informing them of a letter to President Clinton that he had signed along with twenty-four other university presidents. He wrote to the chancellors that "We pledged that our institutions would develop and seek funding for research programs on accessible technology; educate computer scientists and engineers to incorporate accessibility into product design; and ensure that the digital technologies we use for academic and administrative purposes are accessible to all of our students, faculty and staff."

At present, though, standards for ensuring the accessibility of electronic information are not clearly defined for the University of California. Both the California State University and the California Community Colleges are required by state law to comply with section 508 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act, which identifies technical standards in several areas, including the Web. Many within the University believe the section 508 standards are becoming a *community standard* that UC should follow as well.

Over the past year, campus and UCOP personnel representing IT and disabled student services interests have engaged in discussions about how the University can facilitate electronic accessibility. These discussions have illuminated the need for systemwide policy direction to dispel confusion about legal or other obligations, provide authority for proceeding with accessibility initiatives, and develop a consistent Universitywide approach to electronic accessibility.

With the support of the UC Information Technology Leadership Council (ITLC), I am launching an initiative to establish University policy on accessibility in the electronic environment, accompanied by guidelines that, phased in over time, will incorporate the section 508 technical standards for accessible Web sites, software applications and operating systems, telecommunications products, video and multimedia products, self-contained/closed products, and desktop and portable computers. Because the University's Web presence is so public and far reaching, we intend to address Web accessibility first.

This initiative, of course, requires the support of many constituencies throughout the University to be successful. Your guidance in shaping policy concepts and developing a strategy for review and implementation will be essential in promoting and securing Universitywide commitment. I anticipate that your participation in this effort will entail an initial meeting, several conference call, and e-mail discussion of drafts. Policy Director Jacqueline Craig will spearhead the initiative; and she and staff in my office will assist with draft revision and other work. I will convene a meeting of the Electronic Accessibility Policy Review Group in February 2007 to review electronic accessibility issues at UC, including legal questions, discuss a draft policy statement and implementation approach, and develop next steps for policy revision and Universitywide review.

Please let Yvonne Tevis in my office know by January 5 if you will be able to participate in this effort. She may be reached at Yvonne.Tevis@ucop.edu or (510) 987-0638. I hope you will be able to join me in this truly important initiative.

Sincerely,



Kristine Hafner
Associate Vice President
Information Resources and Communications

cc: IT Leadership Council Members
Executive Assistant Tevis