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**Subject: Information Technology Accessibility**

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## **1. Purpose**

This policy is established to support the Virginia Tech community in promoting equal access opportunity to information technology by the application of accessibility standards, guidelines, training, tools and methods consistent with higher education. The aim is to provide this opportunity in a setting that fosters independence and meets the guidelines of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This policy sets forth accessibility standards and guidelines that reflect best practices for achieving the accessibility of information technology for use by persons with disabilities.

The Commonwealth of Virginia Restructured Higher Education Financial and Administrative Operations Act of 2005 grants institutions additional authority over financial and administrative operations, on condition that certain commitments to the Commonwealth are met. Virginia Tech’s Management Agreement with the Commonwealth provides full delegated responsibility for management of the institution’s information technology architecture, infrastructure, and ongoing operations, of which IT accessibility is a part. This delegation includes the authority to conduct these activities in accordance with industry best practices appropriately tailored for the specific circumstances of the University, in lieu of following Commonwealth-determined specifications. This policy documents the industry best practices with which the university will align its IT accessibility activities.

## **2. Policy**

The procurement, development, and/or maintenance of information technology and user support services for persons with disabilities will be aligned with accessibility standards specified in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and "Web Content Accessibility Guidelines" from the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), appropriately tailored to the specific circumstances of the university.

Accessibility standards must be designed to evolve and change, as newer technologies are introduced and user needs change. At the same time, the standards will maintain a consistent framework for accessibility training and support services. University information technology development, maintenance, training, and support personnel who are responsible for information technology procurement, programs, and services will possess professional credentials and/or an appropriate level of technical knowledge and experience related to accessibility standards for persons with disabilities.

### **2.1 Scope**

This policy is applicable to colleges, departments, auxiliaries, research, and administrative entities with the Information Technology organization supporting the programs or services of the university.

### **3. Procedures**

An overview of the university accessibility standards, guidelines, training, tools, and methods is posted on the website [www.it.vt.edu](http://www.it.vt.edu).

### **4. Definitions**

**Accessibility:** refers to the University objective that everyone within the university community, regardless of physical or technological readiness, will have the opportunity for appropriate access to information technology.

### **5. References**

U.S. Government – [Americans with Disability Act](http://www.ada.gov/standards) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 **Section 504** (<http://www.ada.gov/standards>)

U.S. Government – the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 **Section 508** standards (<http://www.section508.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=Content&ID=12>)

The **World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)** (<http://www.w3.org/>) is an international organization that develops inter-operable technologies (technologies that can communicate with each other), e.g., specifications, guidelines, software, and tools, to lead the Web to its full potential. W3C is a forum of information, commerce, communication, and collective understanding. Of particular relevance are the **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0** (<http://www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT>) Copyright © 1999 W3C (MIT, INRIA, Keio) and the **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0** (<http://www.w3.org/TR/2005/WD-WCAG20-20051123/>) Copyright © 2005 W3C ® (MIT, ERCIM, Keio), All Rights Reserved. W3C liability, trademark and document use rules apply.

### **6. Approval and Revisions**

Approved April 28, 2006 by Earving L. Blythe, Vice President for Information Technology.

Approved June 12, 2006 by the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors.