

RESOLUTION AGREEMENT

Washington State University
OCR Reference No. 10162215

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) of the U.S. Department of Education initiated an investigation into an allegation that Washington State University (University) violated Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and that statute's implementing regulations at 34 C.F.R. pt. 104, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Title II) and that statute's implementing regulations at 28 C.F.R. pt. 35. Specifically, the complainant alleges that the University's website contains barriers to access for people with disabilities, thereby denying them an equal opportunity to participate in the University's programs, services, and activities, and denying them effective communication necessary for full participation in the University's programs, services, and activities.

The University denies the foregoing allegations and denies that it violated Title II, Section 504, or any other law as otherwise asserted. The University avers that it has been and remains committed to providing equal access to qualified individuals with disabilities, and that it has already undertaken many of the requirements of this Resolution Agreement (Agreement). The University makes no admission of liability by entering into this Agreement.

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 World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA and the Web Accessibility Initiative Accessible Rich Internet Applications Suite (WAI-ARIA) 1.0 techniques for web content, which are incorporated by reference.

Adherence to these accessible technology standards is one way to ensure compliance with the University's underlying legal obligations to ensure 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 University programs, services, and activities delivered online, as required by Section 504 and Title II

and those statutes' implementing regulations; and that they can effectively communicate and engage with the University's programs, services, and activities delivered online.

The University voluntarily agrees to take the actions set forth below.

1. **Undue Burden and Fundamental Alteration.** 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 University president, or by individuals designated by the University president who have budgetary authority, after considering all resources available for use in the funding and operation of the service, program, or activity. If the University asserts either defense, the University must provide a written statement of the reasons for reaching that conclusion and its plan for providing equally effective alternate access. Where relevant, the University will also include in its written statement the cost of meeting the requirement and the available funding and other resources. To provide equally effective alternate access, alternatives are not required to produce the identical result or level of achievement for persons with and without disabilities, but must afford qualified persons with disabilities an 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 persons' needs. The written statement will be certified by the University president or designee.

2. **Policies and Procedures for New Online Content and Functionality.** By April 30, 2017, the University will submit to OCR for its review and approval proposed policies and procedures (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.

The Plan for New Content must include sufficient quality assurance procedures for full implementation, set up a system of testing and accountability to maintain the accessibility of all online content and functionality on an ongoing basis, and be backed by adequate personnel and financial resources. The Plan for New Content also applies to the University's online content and functionality developed by, maintained by, or offered through a third-party vendor or through the use of open sources, and includes setting up systems of accountability and verifying claims of accessibility by vendors or open sources.

- 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 or administrative burden, but nevertheless ensure that, to the maximum extent possible, qualified individuals with disabilities receive the same benefits or services as their nondisabled peers.

- b) Within ninety (90) calendar days of receiving OCR's approval of the Plan for New Content, the University will officially adopt, and fully implement, the amended policies and procedures.
- c) Reporting: Within one hundred twenty (120) calendar days of receiving OCR's approval, the University will submit to OCR the approved policies and procedures, evidence of their adoption and distribution, and a description of how they are being implemented.

3. **Designation of Auditor**. By March 31, 2017, the University will propose for OCR's review and approval the identity and bona fides of an auditor (corporation or individual) (Auditor) to audit a Representative Sample of its website to assess the existing content and functionality of its website and to identify any online content or functionality that is inaccessible to persons with disabilities. The Auditor will have sufficient knowledge and experience in website accessibility to carry out all related tasks, including development of a proposed Corrective Action Plan. 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.

- a) Reporting: Within sixty (60) calendar days of receiving OCR's approval of the proposed Auditor, the University will submit to OCR documentation that it has assigned or retained the Auditor approved by OCR to conduct the audit of existing content and functionality.

4. **Audit of Existing Content and Functionality**. The Auditor approved by OCR will audit a Representative Sample of the University's website and subordinate pages to assess the content and functionality of its website. The Representative Sample is defined as the home page; all other pages specifically referenced in OCR's notice of complaint; each colleges' main website and at least three departments' websites within each college; and all main websites of departments that report to the President and at least three departmental sites within each reporting area, but will not include the University's intranet pages and sites. The Auditor will identify 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 will be conducted using 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 seek input regarding the accessibility of its website from persons knowledgeable about website accessibility, including employees, parents, students, and members of the public with disabilities.

- a) **Reporting:** Within one hundred fifty (150) calendar 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.

5. **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 for its website to address all inaccessible content and functionality identified during the University's audit. The Corrective Action Plan will not address or include Legacy Pages however. "Legacy Pages" are defined as webpages that were published prior to January 1, [2014-2013](#) and have not been edited, updated, or modified in any way since that date. In lieu of the Corrective Action Plan addressing Legacy Pages, the University agrees that if requested by a qualified individual with a disability, it will conform the Legacy Page to the Benchmarks for Measuring Accessibility or otherwise provide equally effective alternate access to the identified Legacy Pages. The proposed Corrective Action Plan will set out a detailed schedule for addressing problems, taking into account identified priorities, with all corrective actions to be completed within twenty-four (24) months of the date OCR approved the Corrective Action Plan.

- a) Within thirty (30) calendar days of receiving OCR's approval of the proposed Corrective Action Plan, the University will officially adopt and begin to implement the Corrective Action Plan.
- b) **Reporting:** Within forty-five (45) calendar 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 six (6) months thereafter until the Corrective Action Plan has been completed.

6. **Notice.** Within sixty (60) calendar days of the date of this Agreement, the University will submit to OCR for review and approval a proposed Notice for its website to persons with disabilities regarding how to notify the University regarding online information or functionality that is currently inaccessible and

request the appropriate person or office provide access. The proposed Notice will also include information about, or an accessible link to information about, how to file a formal grievance with the University pursuant to the requirements of Section 504 and Title II. Within ten (10) calendar days of receiving OCR's approval of the proposed Notice, the University will officially adopt and publish the approved Notice by prominently posting the approved Notice or a conspicuous link to the Notice on its home page and throughout its website (including all subordinate pages but excepting Legacy Pages).

c) **Reporting.** Within fifteen (15) calendar 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.

6. **Training.** Starting no later than September 1, 2017, and annually thereafter, the University 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. The training will include information about how to comply with the Benchmarks for Measuring Accessibility set forth above.

a) **Reporting:** Within ninety (90) calendar days of conducting each training session required by this Agreement, until such time as OCR closes its monitoring of this Agreement, the University will submit to OCR documentation that the training has been delivered. The documentation will include a list of invitees and attendees and their position titles, a description of the delivered training content, and the presenters' credentials for providing such training.

7. The University understands that OCR will not close the monitoring of this Agreement until OCR determines that 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 and the regulations implementing Title II at 28 C.F.R. §§ 35.130 and 35.160(a), which were at issue in this case.

8. The University 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 University understands that during the monitoring of this Agreement, if necessary, OCR may visit the University, interview staff members, and request such additional reports or data, including simulated website accounts and passwords, 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 and the regulations implementing Title II at 28 C.F.R. §§ 35.130 and 35.160(a), which are at issue in this case.

9. 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 and 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.

/s/
Dr. Kirk H. Schulz, President
Washington State University

December 19, 2016
Date