NCCU URL Naming Standard

Objective

The primary objective of the following document is to ensure that Web-based information is structured in a way that provides effective access to that information. This standard defines the framework upon which North Carolina Central University web-based infrastructure is built and applies to URLs assigned within the **www.nccu.edu** domain.

A consistent approach to the structuring and wording of URLs brings a number of benefits to the University website, such as the following:

- Improved website visitor orientation within the site; URL structure and wording helps provide context for the page being viewed
- Support for website visitor navigation; trimming URLs is a means for website visitors to navigate 'up' through the site
- Enhanced web page performance in search engines; URL paths are a factor in page ranking

Naming Guidelines

URLs should be intuitive to end-users and describe a university-level department or service.

- When a user visits **www.nccu.edu/psychology**, they should be looking at the university department's website, and not the Psychology Club's website.

URLs should not be duplicated across domains, or across departmental or organizational URLs.

- For example, if there is an existing URL for the Department of Psychology at **www.nccu.edu/psychology**, creating a similar URL for the Psychology Club at **www.nccu.edu/psych** is unnecessary and confusing to end-users.

Acronyms should be used as part of a URL only when the acronym in question is commonly used **outside** the university community to name an organization or department.

- For example, **www.nccu.edu/brite** makes sense, because the Biomanfacturing Research Institute and Technology Enterprise (BRITE) acronym appears regularly in their marketing materials.

URLs should be comprised of letters, hyphens and numbers — no other characters, i.e. underscore, tilda, etc. URLs should be in lower-case.

- **www.nccu.edu/psychology** rather than **www.nccu.edu/~psychology** or **www.nccu.edu/Psychology**

URLs should be short and memorable, when possible.

- **www.nccu.edu/psychology** rather than **www.departments.nccu.edu/las/psychology**
- **www.nccu.edu/prospective** rather than **www.nccu.edu/prospective/students.html**

With the exception of the URL "NCCU.edu" often used in marketing materials, all URLs should use only lowercase characters. For example, **http://www.NCCU.edu/SOE** should be **http://www.nccu.edu/soe**.

URL Length Guidelines

URL length should be limited by reducing subdirectory and file name length to no more than 20 characters each (not counting file extension length), and omitting excessive subdirectories. For example, the URL **http://www.nccu.edu/ academics/sc/soe/departments/curriculum-and-instruction/curriculum-and-instruction-index.cfm** can be reduced to **http://www.nccu.edu/academics/sc/soe/ci**.

Custom Aliases

- A custom alias is an address that points to a page on your real site, and takes the format of **www.nccu.edu/customalias**. Custom aliases help users reach your content more easily and can be used to help market your website.
- Only official entities and faculty members are eligible for custom aliases.
- All custom aliases will be redirect aliases — in other words, they will automatically redirect the user to your real site.
- Custom aliases are free and guaranteed indefinitely.
- Custom aliases must be used sparingly because they have a performance and administrative overhead. Therefore, a custom alias will only be set up when it is needed to facilitate or promote access to the site. Necessity is determined by ITS.

Subdirectories

URLs must reflect logical web site organization, not NCCU's hierarchical structure. Additionally, if customers perceive a particular entity as a separate entity, or if customers regularly contact the entity directly, the entity should have its own sub-directory at the root the website. For example, **http://www.nccu.edu/academics/sc/soe** can be shortened to **http://www.nccu.edu/soe**.

Domain Names

NCCU does not issue unique domain names. Sub-domain names may be issued for any particular web service such as email, Blackboard or Banner. Sub-domain names may also be issued for any particular University program that has received explicit approval from the Office of Public Relations to brand itself independently of the University.