1. Program Mission

The mission of the Web Design Program is to provide students the foundational principles and skills needed to design effective web pages for diverse audiences. Because technology changes so rapidly, the goal of the Program is to provide students with general knowledge and practice using programs and applications currently available; then, when students encounter new technologies later, they can build upon what they have learned to further enhance their skills. The Program’s mission is also to provide students with the abilities to analyze the audience and purpose for their web pages and base them on effective design strategies that increase readability, understandability, and accessibility.

2. The Program/Student Learning Goals and Objectives are as follows:

Program Goals

The following list includes Web Design Program Goals, assessment methods for the goals, and ways the assessment results have been used from 2006-2011:

Increase enrollment in the Program so that graduation rates reflect 10 per year.
While the Program has had a fairly healthy enrollment (enrollment reached the high 50s during the first few years after the Program’s inception), the Program never did reach its goal of graduating 10 students per year. Initially, part of the problem was that once students attained a certain skill level, they left the University to take high-paying industry jobs. Some students also changed majors, once they learned about the programming and pre-calculus requirements. Later and more recently, the enrollment has declined to the high 30s, making the goal of graduating 10 students per year even less feasible. This goal is measured via the Office of Institutional Research at TTU, which tracks enrollment.

Identify support for and space for a technology lab.
Some progress toward this goal was made before the previous director left mid-year in 2007; that director had several industry contacts that might have been willing to contribute to such a lab. However, finding space for the lab and University licensing issues were obstacles during that time. While finding funding and space continued to be focuses after the past director left, eventually, this program goal was left behind as more students purchased laptops, based on course requirements in Computer Science, which focuses on learning in a cloud-based environment. Now, Web Design students purchase their own laptops, as well as the software required for their courses.
**Determine strategies for keeping pace with industry developments in Web Design.**
This program goal is currently being met by internship contacts, as well as by communication with the Technology Institute at TTU. One of the new media specialists there is a graduate of TTU’s Web Design Program and has been helpful in informing the current interim director about helpful contacts, new standards, and evolving technological tools. While these strategies have proven helpful so far, as can be seen through internship examples and contacts made through the Institute (such as communication/collaboration with a relatively local site designer and professor at a nearby university), more contacts would be even more useful, and the current director is attempting to find more internship opportunities/contacts within the area.

**Hire a permanent director for the Program.**
This Program goal was met in August of 2010, when a new faculty member was hired to direct the Program; however, in August of 2011, he left his position. Plans are in progress to search again for a permanent director.

**Develop a more permanent home (departmental versus college) for the Program.**
Since 2006, a decision has been made at the college level (College of Arts and Sciences) to house the Web Design Program within the Department of English and Communications. Determining this home has allowed for a greater focus in searching for a more permanent director of the Program (the Program has been led by an interim director since 2007, excluding the academic year 2010-2011). A director with a Journalism background was hired in the fall of 2010, and efforts to integrate him not only into the Web Design Program but also into the Department were working well before his departure. Plans are underway to search for a new director once again, so this program goal is in progress.

**Student Learning Goals and Objectives**
Students will learn and demonstrate knowledge of the following student learning outcomes:

**Accessibility**
Students will learn the issues of compliance as they pertain to legal and ethical responsibilities of web designers. All student work should be compliant with Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the guidelines established by the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Access Initiative, and any additional standards established during the students’ residence in the program.

**Excellence of Content**
Students will learn to write effectively and use the tools of the World Wide Web to effectively communicate messages.
**Innovation**

Students will learn the fine balance between meeting audience expectations and common practices with innovation and the use of new tools and techniques. All student work should be original and innovative. Within this core value students are also expected to learn the importance of intellectual property and use the work of others only with proper citation and permission within the province of legal and ethical standards.

**Organization**

Students will learn the importance of organizing a web site for clear and effective navigation. All student creations should be clear and effective in their organization.

**Usability**

Students will be familiar with usability and usability testing. All student work should meet the usability criteria in common usage by internet professionals at the time of their residence. Additionally, sites should reflect a careful eye toward usability in design and have no issues which appropriate usability testing would have caught.

3. **Assessment Methods for measuring progress on objectives**

The current, main, program-specific venue of assessment is the internship course (WEBD 4995). All students are required to complete a three-credit-hour internship in a professional setting. Feedback from the employer is used to assess the student and to determine the appropriateness of curriculum to the skills required in the field.

In the internship course, students, in consultation with their internship supervisor, identify goals to be accomplished during the internship; these goals coincide with the learning outcomes goals for the Web Design Program as a whole. At the end of the internship, the student writes a report that details the work completed for the internship; most of these reports relate the internship accomplishments to the learning outcomes goals in some way (for example, students discuss the process of developing web content for a client’s needs, new software learned, and usability testing conducted, such as ensuring the site can be viewed and navigated successfully using a variety of web browsers). The internship supervisor verifies the completion of the tasks and recommends a grade for the internship, based on the work accomplished. Although not required, many students also submit samples of their internship work to the director of the Web Design Program with the final report so that the director can evaluate the progress made on the learning outcomes goals, as well. Because the field of Web Design is so diverse, the director currently allows students to choose the areas of focus for the internship to ensure students are able to interact with industry innovations, software, and expectations.

There have been cases in which a student’s internship has not been successful from the point of view of the internship supervisor; this evaluation resulted in a reduced grade for the student and an evaluation indicating areas of weakness. Likewise, some students experience difficulty pursuing the learning outcomes goals when they meet some obstacle within the internship (for example, learning a new software program or database management system takes time away from developing the content for a site). While some of these difficulties are hard to avoid, the
director and students both make efforts to ensure the internships are efficient and valuable in supplementing course content within the Web Design Program as much as possible.

In the past (prior to 2007), students kept electronic portfolios of their work using ionfolio to aid in the assessment process. However, complicated issues arose as to which university server would house the portfolios and how students would be given permission to access it, especially since Web Design was originally an independent major that had been housed just within the College of Arts and Sciences. Only recently has the Program been located within the Department of English and Communications.

4. Results of assessment

When students complete the internship, their supervisors write letters to the director of the Web Design Program detailing what students have accomplished and recommending a grade. At this time, if there were overall issues and concerns that were not addressed during the course of the semester, the supervisors will mention those in the final letter. While the supervisors may not refer to specific learning outcomes in their letters, the outcomes were designed to reflect current industry standards and expectations regarding the effective use of Web page design and communication. The employers’ assessments of these qualities reflect students’ overall progress on these learning outcomes that have been focused on throughout students’ academic careers (students usually complete the internship when they are seniors).

In addition to the supervisors’ letters, the students themselves write a report at the end of the internship detailing their accomplishments, successes, problems encountered, and an overall evaluation of the internship. Here, the students can mention difficulties they had with certain software programs, for example, that they may have encountered in the workplace but did not have access to in an academic setting. They also evaluate their own work and the suitability of it for their workplace audiences, based on the learning outcomes they have been focusing on.

The overall assessment of ways student learning outcomes goals have been accomplished focuses on these two types of reports, as well as the final grade given for the internship. Student A, for example, worked in the Alumni Relations Office at TTU. During her internship, the student encountered some problems with learning a new content management system used by the Alumni Office. Learning this new content management system relates to all of the learning outcomes goals but especially innovation. She also created content for a site for the College of Business’s Board of Trustees, a process which accomplished the outcomes goals of accessibility, excellence of content (as evaluated by the student’s supervisor and the intended audience for the site), organization, and usability. In this case, the student had the added benefit of receiving dual input from her internship supervisor as well as the Board of Trustees audience. The student’s report detailed the problems encountered as well as successes in achieving these goals and others such as addressing the needs of multiple audiences during one internship.

Student B describes in his internship report that he learned “new skills” as a web designer as well as “many useful life skills.” While the internship was described to him as “Social Media Intern” by the potential supervisor, the work he focused on was updating the mortgage companies’ current sites and ensuring design and content guidelines were being maintained consistently on all of the companies’ pages. This student also learned more about working within a content
management system template that the company required him to use, redesigning a site for home sales, and posting and deleting real estate listings on Craigslist. During his internship, this student learned also about communicating effectively with his supervisor, who did not have a background in Web Design. When talking with his supervisor, the student realized that when the supervisor was describing certain changes to be made and tools to use, the supervisor actually meant something else but didn’t have the discipline-specific vocabulary necessary to fully describe what he wanted. This student’s internship also met all of the learning outcomes, since he was required to make the mortgage company’s site accessible to all audience members, update the sites with current, relevant information, include effective content on the site, use new, innovative tools, such as the new content management template, and ensure the site was accessible to all.

Student C worked with a small design firm that requested his help with web programming, web layout, troubleshooting, and upgrading. This design firm is an especially busy one, and the student noted in his report that he would have to manage several projects at once, sometimes jumping from one to the other to fix small problems. In projects for which he was the lead web programmer, though, he focused on the same project from start to finish. One innovative task that this student worked on that illustrates especially the application of all of the learning outcomes was designing a photo and video gallery that was sortable and searchable. In order to address the client’s needs, the student had to create a custom administrative panel so that the client could add to the galleries. Another project the student worked on was developing a user management system that required a password encryptions process. Although all of the learning outcomes goals were met during this internship, the goal of innovation seems to be the most prominent one that was accomplished during this student’s internship.

The supervisors’ reports verify the students’ progress and accomplishments in achieving the student learning outcomes goals. The supervisors don’t always refer to the outcomes goals in their final letters/reports; more specific references to them would be helpful.

More examples from these reports can be given from the past five or so years; however, the internships have been a reliable tool overall for determining the success of skills learned in the Program.

The director hopes to use this information to improve this major assessment component in the following ways:

- Design an evaluation rubric that would be completed by the supervisors in addition to the final letter/report that measures progress toward the outcomes goals.
- More explicitly discuss the learning outcomes goals with the students as well as the supervisors before the internship begins.
- Encourage the students to more explicitly discuss the outcomes goals in their final reports.
- Review the students’ final projects to ensure learning outcomes are being met.
- Continue to find additional internship opportunities for students as well as contacts that would be useful for the Program.
5. **Summary of key continuous improvement achievements and their impact on the program**

The Program has undergone several curriculum changes since the last SACSCOC review:

- The internship became three credit hours (instead of six) in order to add more elective hours to the curriculum (currently, there are 15 hours). Students still work the same number of hours to complete the internship as they did before (150).
  - Rationale: In order to increase enrollment in the Web Design Program, more elective hours were needed to encourage transfer students (from other colleges/universities as well as current students changing majors) to enroll in the Program; the low number of elective hours was discouraging some students who had already been taking courses in other programs from enrolling in the Program.

- The Computer Science curriculum underwent a revision in 2008, and the new curriculum reflects inclusion of the new courses.
  - Rationale: This change, as it applied to the Web Design curriculum, was involuntary; the Computer Science curriculum was changed to meet the needs of the Computer Science majors, and these changes were automatically/involuntarily applied to the Web Design Program.

- SPCH 3120, Visual Communication, was added to the curriculum, and an upper-level Sociology course that was no longer being offered was deleted. SPCH 3120 has been offered only once, so SPCH 3000 (Computer-Mediated Communication) has proven to be a useful substitute.
  - Rationale: These changes address the program outcome goals of keeping pace with industry and including a lab. Those teaching within the Program realized that more instruction in visual communication would be helpful preparation for working within industry, and, since designating a lab for Web Design has not been feasible, the SPCH 3000 course (taught in an online environment) allows for more integration of technology into the course. This course is not an ideal substitute for the lab but does offer opportunities for the instructor to emphasize the implementation of technology (such as illustrating examples of effective communication via websites) via pedagogy.

- CIS 113 (Visual Basic, offered through the Regents Online Degree Program) and PC 3700 (Information Design in the Professions) were approved as possible substitutions for CSC 2120 and 2121, for students who either prefer a greater design focus (PC 3700) or need a foundation in Visual Basic to prepare for DS 3870 (Business Web Applications and Development).
  - Rationale: To maintain enrollment in the Program, instructors connected with the Web Design Program recommended that CIS 113 be encouraged for students who do not already have a background in Visual Basic; ensuring this knowledge is gained will increase students’ success in the upper-division course, DS 3870. Because many of the Web Design students are interested in more of a design focus, they often have difficulty with programming courses, so including relevant
courses that will encourage students’ success later in the curriculum is important. In the past, CSC 1070 was included in the Web Design curriculum and covered Visual Basic, but CSC 1070 is now not being offered and is not a feasible alternative. PC 3700 supports all of the learning outcomes listed in that it includes specific assignments for Web Design majors highlighting the different outcomes; this recent redesign of the course targets the Web Design majors specifically by addressing design concepts that other courses within the curriculum currently do not.

Based on student input, the Program is moving more toward a design focus, rather than a programming focus. A decision has been made to make Web Design a concentration within the Journalism Bachelor of Science Program in the Department of English and Communications, mainly due to a need to associate the Program more closely with a specific academic area and also due to low numbers of graduates since the Program’s inception in 2003.

Several of the courses in the curriculum (or approved substitutions) are offered online: SPCH 3000, PC/WEBD 3500, and PC 3700.