University Policies and Procedures

06-23.00 – Website Advertising Policy

I. Policy Statement:

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for placing digital advertising on Towson University (TU) owned webpages. The university's website advertising policy is intended to apply to all TU webpages signified by the address "towson.edu" and where the content on the site is created and/or owned by TU. University departments or units with websites hosted on non-university servers must comply with the terms of this policy in order to be linked from the university’s site structure.

TU’s website is registered using an “.edu” domain, which is intended for accredited, post-secondary institutions to have non-commercial, academic websites. As a public higher education institution, it’s important for Towson University to maintain an independence from commercial, political, religious, and similar types of entities. Therefore, commercial advertising on TU’s website cannot be sold at any level.

There are, however, specific situations where links to commercial vendors may be made, including:

(i) Licensed software required for web viewing: The logo and/or link that represents licensed software required for using the page, e.g., Adobe Acrobat Reader.

(ii) Links to separately contracted vendor: The logo and/or link is to a vendor or other entity separately contracted to provide services to the university.

(iii) Sponsorship recognition: A logo and/or link can be displayed at college or department's second level page or lower to acknowledge support of their mission-related activities through sponsorship. Such logos or links are deemed to be in recognition of corporate or other external sponsorship; sponsorship agreement must be in place and include a reference to the placement of the logo/link.

(iv) Partnership recognition: A logo and/or link representing an affinity program or business partnership that has been approved by appropriate officers of the university.
(v) **Educational purposes:** A logo and/or text link providing information for educational or other mission-related purposes where the university receives no direct monetary compensation for incorporating that link.

II. **Definitions:**

The following definitions should be considered general and applicable to this policy only.

i) **Towson University Webpage:** A page created or maintained by or on behalf of Towson University or an office, department or division of Towson University and located within the Towson University Office of Technology Services (OTS) environment; i.e., signified by the address "towson.edu" or within the range of Internet addresses assigned to Towson University. Note: Webpage and website may be used interchangeably for this policy.

ii) **Link, Hyperlink or Hypertext Link:** A logo, text or other identifier incorporating a link to a website external to Towson University's website and placed on a TU webpage without compensation.

iii) **Advertisement:** A logo, text, digital graphic or other identifier incorporating a link to a website external to Towson University's website, placed on a TU webpage in exchange for payment or gifts in kind, where that placement is intended to promote or market a service, facility or product offered by the entity's website for a commercial purpose. Advertising includes messages containing qualitative or comparative language, price information or other indications of savings or value, an endorsement or an influence to purchase, sell or use any company, service, facility or product.

**Qualified Sponsorship:** A logo, text or other identifier incorporating a link to a website external to Towson University's website, placed on a TU webpage to acknowledge donation of services, products/financial/research support to TU or an office, center, department or division of Towson University.

III. **Responsible Executive and Office:**

**Responsible Executive:** Vice President of University Marketing and Communications

**Responsible Office:** Department of Digital Strategy in the Division of University Marketing and Communications

IV. **Entities Affected by this Policy:** All members of the Towson University community.

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V. Procedures:

i) Advertising will not be accepted for alcohol products, tobacco products, gambling, weapons, predatory lending or anything illegal. Advertising will not be accepted for any products and services so close to the mission of TU that an implied endorsement might be perceived without the prior written approval of the Vice President of University Marketing & Communications. Examples of such products would be test preparation services and student loans. As with any form of advertising, TU reserves the right to reject any advertising for any reason, or to request revisions, even after an advertising agreement has been signed.

ii) Political advertising is expressly prohibited on all Towson University websites and pages. This restriction does not extend to:
   (a) materials presented as part of closely related academic instruction
   (b) political or public policy information presented in a factual, nonpartisan fashion
   (c) publicity of political speakers or events at TU
   (d) views expressed on personal, non-TU affiliated pages
   (e) views expressed on webpages of registered student organizations

iii) There are some instances in which links are a legitimate service to the TU campus community, such as links to area hotels and motels found on visit TU related pages. To help assure consistency, all requests for links to third-party commercial sites should be sent to TU’s Office of Administration & Finance, for review and approval.

iv) Final approval of advertisers and the ads themselves rests with the Vice President of University Marketing & Communications.

Application and enforcement: The purpose of this policy is to have a set of standards for advertising and sponsor listings on TU webpages that can be applied equitably across all areas of the university. If absolutely necessary, the university may remove any noncompliant or offending material from university web properties without notice or cause.

Related Policies:

Approval Date: 9/12/2019
Effective Date: 9/12/2019
Approved by: President’s Council

Kim Schatzel, Ph.D.
President

9/12/19
Date