

California State University Ensures Web Accessibility with Compliance Sheriff



Background

As one of the largest and most diverse public university systems in the country, California State University (CSU) is committed to providing access for their entire university community. CSU's Accessible Technology Initiative (ATI) was formed to guarantee compliance with federal Section 508 accessibility standards across the millions of web pages maintained by the system and its vendors.

CSU's online presence includes millions of web pages that are vital information sources for more than 450,000 students, faculty and staff across 23 campuses. With so many people creating and consuming content, promoting awareness of the accessibility requirements, plus training, testing and monitoring, presented huge challenges.

"With increasingly limited resources, the ATI needed a creative solution that wouldn't require duplication 23 times," said Cheryl Pruitt, Director of the Accessible Technology Initiative at CSU. "We knew automated monitoring combined with manual testing was the key, but we also recognized we needed a partner that would work to develop customized requirements that fit our specific needs."

The Challenge

CSU strives to provide all its students with an equal education. Providing accessible online services and materials is an important part of meeting this goal. To meet an accessibility mandate of this scope, the ATI sought an automated compliance testing tool.

CSU chose Compliance Sheriff to best serve the university community. The robust functionality of Compliance Sheriff is well suited to a 23-campus system with a wide range of content and web page designs.

"We evaluated four enterprise-level web accessibility tools. Compliance Sheriff was ultimately selected for its robust functionality, reasonable price and excellent customer service," said Pruitt.

Quick Facts:

Organization

- CSU is a leader in high-quality, accessible, student-focused higher education
- One of the largest, most diverse and affordable university systems in the country
- 23 campuses with more than 450,000 students, faculty and staffs

Industry

Higher Education

Challenges

CSU strives to provide all students with an equal education. Accessible online services and materials is an important part of meeting this goal.

Solution

Compliance Sheriff

Benefits

- Standardized web accessibility requirements across 23 campuses and thousands of websites
- Wide-based user adoption to ensure accessibility at point of publishing
- Measureable increases in cross-campus collaboration

Deployment, Training and Adoption

When kicking-off its deployment, CSU established a goal: strive to make all campus websites accessible at the time of publishing, and vendor websites accessible at the time of purchase. To ensure they remain accessible, both university-owned and vendor sites are proactively monitored.

Despite this simple goal, CSU faced substantial hurdles, leading ATI to develop three key objectives:

1. Establish standardized baseline testing requirements across all 23 CSU campuses;
2. Create a plan for university-wide deployment with campus user groups to enable self-testing; and
3. Develop a comprehensive training program across the system to ensure successful adoption and application use moving forward.

Standardized Requirements

Leveraging Compliance Sheriff's rules engine, CSU created a customized set of testing guidelines that included both automated and manual criteria, as well as repair resources. CSU mapped the Section 508 requirements and CSU's Manual Evaluation requirements to the WCAG 2.0 guidelines. The customized requirements were then deployed to the campuses to ensure system-wide standardization of testing criteria in Compliance Sheriff.

System Wide Deployment

The success of the project hinged upon wide adoption among the 23 campuses. A number of steps were put in place to help facilitate this. A deployment strategy for campus installation and initial training was executed to ensure that each campus had a successful installation. Next, the standardized requirements were developed and shared with campuses. Finally, a campus process for:

- Web designers and developers who need access to the testing tools and resources during development;
- Content contributors who test content before publishing to the web; and
- Compliance personnel who test vendor sites and prepare reports for executives.

Working closely with the CSU team, an expanded set of user roles and permissions was created that gives campus staff fine-tuned control to meet the separate needs of web designers and developers, content contributors and compliance personnel.

Effective Training and Collaboration

"We worked closely with Compliance Sheriff experts for training and to develop a customized support portal, map the system to our specific accessibility requirements, and collaborate with various CSU work groups to create and implement our system wide deployment strategies," said Pruitt. "Their deep involvement mirrored CSU's commitment to its students and helped implementation move forward successfully."

"This project is a large undertaking and we learned to celebrate our accomplishments along the way. We now have almost a half-million students and employees at CSU with full access to the university's websites and services. We are empowering equal education for students across our campuses in California – our top priority."

– Cheryl Pruitt
Director Accessible Technology Initiative, CSU

Results with Compliance Sheriff

Compliance Sheriff now automates monitoring of previously published pages (numbered in the millions) against the customized requirements that CSU created, and flags issues for remediation. All users are able to automatically test new content prior to publication to ensure accessibility for the widest possible audience.

The CSU accessibility rules go beyond automated testing to include separate manual testing requirements as well. As a result, CSU users now have the knowledge and technology tools in place to understand when web accessibility errors occur and how best to correct them.

Lessons Learned

CSU learned a great deal from their experience deploying Compliance Sheriff. With 21 out of 23 campuses opting into the program, this was a huge project and one that required patience. CSU empowered a student group to help them test, study and fully explore the functionality of the product. This valuable support helped move the project along and also provided students with valuable problem analysis and project management experience to add to their resumes.

“Organizations as large as ours take advantage of the variety of administrative features within Compliance Sheriff to accommodate various roles and access restrictions,” Pruitt said. “Some of these features take time to develop and the student team played a critical role in understanding the needs of CSU and proposing changes that will make it possible for all of the CSU user groups to easily use Compliance Sheriff.”

“This project was a large undertaking and we learned to celebrate our accomplishments along the way. The end result will be that almost a half-million students and employees at CSU will have full access to the university system’s websites and services. We are empowering equal education for students across our campuses in California – our top priority,” said Pruitt.

Learn more at www.compliancesheriff.com



+1.857.327.9347 / www.cyxtera.com

© 2017 Cyxtera Technologies, Inc. All Rights Reserved. The Cyxtera mark and name are the property of Cyxtera. All other marks are the property of their respective owners.