

# User-Centered Web Design – Winter 2021

*DRAFT Updated: January 2, 2021*

**Section:** 501

**Location:** Remote

**Meeting time:** Nominally on Monday & Wednesday, 1:30PM - 3:00PM

**Meeting place:** Zoom URL

## WHY YOU SHOULD READ THE SYLLABUS

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**The syllabus is a contract between me, the instructor, and you, the student.** I am obligated to teach the course I describe in this syllabus. If I don't, you will likely win any grade appeal you file. Flip side: if you take the course, you are bound by attendance, performance, and grading rules I lay out. So, you might want to know what those rules are before you commit to the course. And after you commit to the course, you need to know the rules to be able to fulfill them.

## NOTES ON TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

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### *The Pandemic, and other existential issues*

There is a lot going on in the world and in many of our personal lives right now. It is my desire to be sensitive to the idea what all of us are processing what is happening in the world and that some of us may be impacted in direct ways that I may not know about. Please know that you can safely share with me anything that is going on in your life that is impacting your abilities to focus and learn in this course. I will work with you to address them as best I can. Please also know you are not obligated to share with me anything you are uncomfortable sharing.

### *Assumptions*

I will assume that, because you are embarking on a career (most of you are in UX, HCI, or related) for which strong, current web design skills are important to you. Therefore, I anticipate:

- You are **not** here to do as little as possible to get an acceptable passing grade. Rather, you are here because you genuinely want to learn as much as you can about HTML/CSS web design, *given real world life constraints*.
- That you will take a mature approach to the course and course materials.
- That you are interested in building community with your classmates as they are going to become your MS program mates for the next couple of years AND your career network following that.
- That you are intellectually curious about this material and will, *given real world life constraints*, go beyond the minimal to learn as much as you can.

### *My Approach*

My approach to teaching this material is going to be challenged by the pandemic. I am trying out some new approaches; and many of us remain impacted by world events. That said, I've taught the course online-only before, so this experience is not completely new to me.

Each week I will provide you with a set of readings, some PowerPoint, a demonstration or workshop, and a weekly lab assignment to help you exercise new skills. Further, I will be available via the online D2L discussion forum and email to answer questions as they arise. And I will block some time for live synchronous interaction. I will do the lab assignments as you do them, and I will post my own annotated solution for you to inspect.

However, for some of you this will not be sufficient to master the material. Additional "optional" material can be provided—but **the onus is on you** to read the extra readings or do the extra exercises when they are necessary for you.

Everyone comes into this course with different background and different learning abilities related to web design. Some of you will pick up the material quickly. For others, repetition and multi-faceted explanation may be required. **YOU need to take the lead if you fall into the latter camp. And YOU need to invest the time to learn the material.** *This is especially true for remote students.*

It is up to you to be proactive and ask questions when you are struggling. If you do not, I may not notice in time (though I will try) you need extra attention or help. *This is especially true for remote students.*

One of my teaching goals is to support you in learning how to teach yourself web design after this course ends. After all, the field is continually evolving. Tools and techniques that are cutting edge this year will be dated in two years and replaced in four. You will need to know how to stay current on your own. My approach encourages you to learn from peers, to teach peers when you know something extra, and to mine online resources for what technologies and techniques are current and what is coming.

### *NOTES FOR STUDENTS WHO ALREADY KNOW SOME HTML/CSS*

And, if you are coming in with an HTML background, take note that I'm going to want you to **UNLEARN** some old habits in this course. If you aren't paying attention, you won't notice my requests to unlearn those habits until you find it show up negatively on a graded assignment. Learning modern semantic and responsive web design in this course is often harder for students who already know HTML than students learning it new as you guys have to unlearn several old habits. Want to know more detail? Ask me.

### *NOTES ON THIS BEING AN ONLINE COURSE*

Students in online courses need to be more proactive and more self-starting than students in traditional classroom courses. It is up to you to stay current with the material, though I have things organized in a way to encourage that. And it is up to you to be proactive and reach out to me if you are struggling with course material or your schedule. If we discuss early, we can often address the issues. If you wait until

late in the course to tell me you've been struggling for weeks, there is much less we can do at that point to fix things.

This is not a course you can take a week off from, go on vacation, and expect to catch up. Material builds from one week to the next. You absolutely must stay current. **Talk to me by email or Zoom during week one of the course if you wish to discuss this further.**

## COURSE INSTRUCTOR

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**Name:** Daniel Mittleman, Ph.D.  
**Email:** [danny@cdm.depaul.edu](mailto:danny@cdm.depaul.edu)  
**Zoom:** <https://depaul.zoom.us/my/dmittleman>  
**Skype:** dmittleman I am not on Skype much anymore as I mostly use Zoom.  
**Address:** CDM Building Room 743 [but I won't be there at all]  
**Phone:** 312.208-3164 Cell I won't be using my office this Winter, so calling there won't work.  
**LinkedIn:** [www.linkedin.com/in/dannymittleman](http://www.linkedin.com/in/dannymittleman)  
**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/dmittleman](http://www.facebook.com/dmittleman) [and I use Facebook Messenger--*you can text me there*]

### Professional Background

I have been building websites since 1997. I also build sites using CMS (primarily Joomla, sometimes WordPress). I've taught web design at probably 40 times prior to this quarter.<sup>1</sup>

My primary research area is virtual collaboration. To that end I've built about a dozen web platforms that support collaborative work. Prior to getting my PhD I worked for several years in applications development and systems support at Ticketmaster.

### Personal:

Check out my Facebook stream to get a view of my three principal distractions. You are welcome to friend me on [Facebook](#) or [LinkedIn](#) if you wish to.<sup>2</sup>

### HOW BEST TO REACH ME?

**Text:** You can text me at my cell number or via Facebook Messenger. If you text, do sign your name!

**Email:** I am usually pretty good about responding to email, but not perfect. Feel free to ping me after 36 hours if I haven't responded.

**Telephone:** I do not anticipate spending much time in my office this year. So my office phone will not be any use to you. Since I've started using Zoom, I hardly ever check my Skype account anymore. You can

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<sup>1</sup> And I am amazed by how much new I continue to learn each time I teach the course.

<sup>2</sup> My policy about friending students on LinkedIn and Facebook is that I won't initiate it but will accept if you initiate.

also call my cell, but I usually don't pick up calls. **Text me** rather than voice mail, as I am months behind listening to voice mail.

**Office Hours:**

1. I am always available on Zoom at 7pm on Sunday evenings. You all are invited to virtually drop in and ask questions about anything.
2. I will have advising hours on Tuesday mornings. You can block out 30 minutes of time then (via BlueStar) to meet with me.
3. Rather than schedule additional office hours for individual appointments, I'd rather sync up to talk at times mutually convenient with each of you. Send me an email or text to let me know you want to meet. You can suggest a day and time, and I will either accept or make a counter-proposal.

*My virtual meetings will be on Zoom (at <https://depaul.zoom.us/my/dmittleman>) or any other channel you prefer. I can meet by phone, but if we are going to discuss lab work, having access to a shared computer screen is helpful.*

## OTHER WAYS TO GET HELP WITH THE COURSE

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**D2L Discussion Forum:** Post course content questions to the D2L forum so I can answer you and share the answer with the class [posting to the Board is better than emailing me as *someone else in the class might answer you before I do*--plus any answer I give is available to everyone].

**CDM Tutors:** CDM offers virtual tutoring. Course D2L page has information about this.

**Study Groups:** While rarely done at DePaul CDM, I encourage you to form study groups to work with others in the class. All lab work **MUST** be individual work, but you are encouraged to find others who want to discuss assignments and co-tutor each other. This may be helpful for labs and projects and should be extremely helpful in preparing for the final exam.

You are all able to email the entire class via the ROSTER menu item in D2L. Also, you can raise the idea of a study group in the COURSE MECHANICS DISCUSSION FORUM if you like.

**Extra Reading, viewing, exercises:** If you feel you need more reading, viewing, or exercises than I assign, email me and I will find/create more materials to help you along.

## MATERIALS NEEDED FOR THE COURSE: WEBHOSTING, VIEWING, AND READING

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### **D2L COURSE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

The course (and most all of your courses at CDM) use the DESIRE2LEARN Course Management System (abbreviated as D2L). You access D2L at <http://d2l.depaul.edu> and log in with your CampusConnection ID. The landing page should list HCI 406 as one of your current courses. D2L documentation and resources are at <https://goo.gl/oJAvDM>. If you are new to DePaul and need help with D2L, contact me

and I'll help you push through it. Also, the DePaul Help Desk [helpdesk@depaul.edu](mailto:helpdesk@depaul.edu) and 312-362-8765 should be able to provide D2L help.

### WEBHOSTING

You are required to have a webhosting account for this class. I've arranged for **free** student accounts at SiteGround, a well-known and respected webhosting company. *These accounts are not the cheap, slow, feature-poor, advertising infested free accounts that you might have seen elsewhere.* Rather they are identical (with **one good exception**) to the standard SiteGround entry level shared hosting accounts that retail for \$10 a month (though almost no one pays retail.)

**The good exception** is this: With the paid account, you are REQUIRED to spend \$15 on a domain name (or transfer a domain you already own). With the student account, the domain name is optional--you can acquire the account with or without a domain. (Or acquire a domain name later if you decide to keep the account after the course.)

I'll take you through the sign up process during class in week one, so you don't have to do anything prior to the course. But if you wish to explore this on your own, go to <http://www.siteground.com/depauluniversity>. Note that when you sign up for a free student account, you **MUST** use your DePaul email address as your contact as they use that address to validate you are a DePaul student. You **MUST** do this even if you otherwise do not use that address (which means you will want to forward that address to your regular one so you see emails coming into it.)

To acquire a DePaul email account, go to <https://mail.depaul.edu> and follow instructions to create an account.

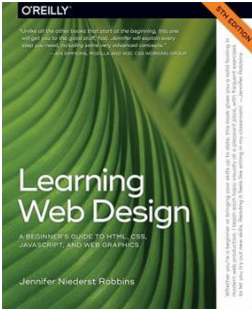
You are expected to use this free SiteGround account even If you already have a webhosting account elsewhere. My reasons for this are:

1. You should use an account that you have 100% access to;
2. You should use an account for class that is **NOT** hosting a live production site;
3. If you use an account that belongs to someone else or is cross-purposed, you may be limited in permitting me access to help you troubleshoot issues;
4. My classroom examples will be at SiteGround--another webhost may not have a similar look and feel.

**Given the SiteGround account is free, there is no reason not to use it.** *[Discuss with me offline if you have major issues with this.]*

## TEXTBOOK

The required text for the course this Winter is



Jennifer Robbins, **Learning Web Design: A Beginner's Guide to HTML, CSS, JavaScript, and Web Graphics** (5th Edition), O'Reilly Media, 2018.  
ISBN:9781491960158

You may purchase this 5<sup>th</sup> edition new or used. Or you may rent the text through one of the large bookstores. Also, it is available as an eBook through [O'Reilly for Higher Education](#) via the DePaul Library.

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

### LABS:

**50 PERCENT**

There will be about 8 (+/-1) labs assignments, one for each Weekly Module.. Lab grading follows this scheme:

- **Gold:** Successfully completed (completely right): (100%)
- **Gold Minus:** Full Credit (but has some minor issues): (95%)
- **Silver:** Completed (but has a significant error or omission or is late): (85%)
- **Bronze:** Effort made (but has substantial errors or deficiencies): (70%)
- **Not Acceptable:** (not submitted, or materially problematic): (0%)

*The "percentage" is how it is multiplied out when calculating your course grade. I reserve the right to tweak numeric values.*

Gold Minus exists as my intention (and the reality) is that most people get full credit for most Lab assignments, even with minor mistakes. But I actually want you to know there are subtle things you are doing wrong. I want you to realize that even if I'm giving you full credit for a Lab, if I note a mistake or omission—or you see it yourself comparing your work to my model solution—those errors are things you need to address in the long run. A **"Gold Minus"** means **you got almost full credit, but there remain issues you need to address to actually get the work right.**

I may not be able to provide detailed individual feedback on each lab submission before you are on to the next one (there are too many that come in too fast), but will post my heavily commented solution as quickly as possible after the due date. You may peruse that code to enhance your feedback.<sup>3</sup>

Late lab submissions receive a reduced grade or may not be graded.<sup>4</sup> *Each lab will also require a short Dropbox submission with a brief learning reflection and outstanding questions*. As a Dropbox entry is necessary for me to have a place to attach a grade, **your lab will not be graded without the Dropbox submission**.

### *Notes about Completing Labs*

Lab submission is time stamped WHEN you submit your comments/reflection to the Dropbox. I do not track uploads to your webhost account as I have no convenient way of doing so. You may continue to refine your solution on the webhost after due date. You are encouraged to continue working on labs until you are able to solve the lab's problem--as mastering the lab skillsets is how you will best learn the course material. [I find it depressing when I revisit labs at end of course and many are still in disarray at this point--the student submitted something they hadn't yet learned then never went back to figure out the lesson.]

*There are no shortcuts to learning HTML/CSS. You have to dive in and figure it out.* It takes time to fully integrate the concepts into your thinking. If you take the time, you will learn it; if you don't take the time you will not. Granted, it will come faster for some of you than for others; but there are no concepts here too difficult for you to learn well.

And even if you don't plan to become an everyday website designer, knowing these concepts deeply will help you with whatever aspect of UX design/evaluation you decide to specialize in. These concepts make up much of the underlying skeletal structure of websites.

The pre-course reading “**Why Learning to Code is So Damn Hard**” offers the best advice I’ve seen for working through these learning issues.

### *WORKSHOPS:*

*20 PERCENT*

There are about 8 (+/-1) workshops in the course. Workshops are smaller than labs and intentionally worth less credit. The intention is for you to do the workshop each week before doing the lab. To that end, the workshop is due earlier in the week than the lab is due, and **workshops are not accepted late**.

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<sup>3</sup> Submitting a lab consisting of another student's code—or code changed so slightly it does not reflect any significant personal learning—is considered plagiarism. To avoid this, do not code your lab solution with another student's code in front of you. Do not copy and paste from another student's code.

<sup>4</sup> As my solution will have been posted.



Workshops are code demonstrations where you follow along with me and do the exercise at my direction. **Your task is to repeat what I've done and, perhaps, add a bit to it.** Once complete, you submit your code to show you have completed the work. Workshops are not graded for quality as labs are. Rather you receive full credit if you have made honest legitimate effort to do the work. You receive half credit if something decidedly incomplete is submitted, and no credit if you do not submit on time.

Workshops, like labs, must be published to your webhost account AND a reflection must be submitted to the corresponding D2L submission box.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT LABS AND WORKSHOPS**

#### ***Grace Period for Submitting Labs***

You may submit a Lab late for full credit as long as I have not yet posted my solution to the assignment. I will post my solution prior to the next class period (usually within 24 hours of the deadline). *Any Lab submitted after I have posted my solution may receive a top grade of SILVER.* Any late Lab that is largely a submission of my solution will receive a grade of zero—so don't look at my solution before submitting.

This does not apply to workshops. They must be turned in by deadline with no grace period.

#### ***Lab Grading Guarantee***

If your Lab is turned in on time and I have not graded it within ten days, you will receive at least a “Gold Minus” for that assignment. *Legalese for this offer: There is zero grace period, and zero excused absences for this offer. The labs MUST have a D2L submission box time stamp that precedes the deadline stated in D2L. Labs accepted late due to any extenuating circumstances will be graded as usual, even if it takes over ten days to do so.* This offer is made only for the course labs, not for the course project (which is generally graded within ten days as it is due near the end of the course.)

### **QUIZZES AND EXAMS**

**25 PERCENT**

There will be a midterm quiz and a final exam. They will be delivered via D2L, so will not require scheduling a proctor. You will have about a two day window for each, but the actual quiz/exam will take you about an hour or two to complete. Midterm is worth 5% and final is worth 20%.

### **PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE**

**5 PERCENT (PLUS)**

There is course credit associated with online discussion forum participation, I value your contribution to the class community. Therefore, your course is partially dependent upon being a contributing member of that community. *[But don't contribute for the points—contribute because it is the right thing to do.]*

#### ***What do I mean by "contribution to the community"?***

- Provide useful and timely feedback and advice to other students as they ask questions about course materials and related topics. ***[This is the most important thing you can do]***

- Contribute “found resources” such as websites and tutorial videos that may be helpful to other students trying to understand the course material. (Note: a list of links that you haven’t actually checked out yourself is not useful; links you have explored and present with enough annotation to describe the value provided by it may well be useful.)
- Providing examples of useful code related to the topic of the current module.
- Ask provoking thought questions.
  - Comment on or answer the questions of others.

**If you can help other students, you are providing real value.**

### *Rating Contributions is an Important aspect of community discussion*



The D2L Discussion Forums permit you to give posts and comments “thumbs up” ratings. I strongly encourage you to make use of this ratings system to help me evaluate who has been most helpful to you in the discussions in terms of providing guidance and insight and to help you know which contribution to focus your reading on.

## CHANGES TO SYLLABUS

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***This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter.*** If that occurs, reasons for the change and options available to students will be thoroughly addressed on the course D2L site and/or in class. This point is very true during the pandemic. Anticipate a learning curve for all of us which may necessitate some revisions down the road.

## BLUESTAR

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Course Instructors are expected to respond to two Progress Surveys (Attendance Verification and Academic Progress Report) each quarter addressing students’ participation and progress in their classes. These surveys are part of BlueStar in Campus Connect, an online system to support academic advising. Should you receive an email through the BlueStar system it is because of the response your instructor made on a survey.

## COURSE WITHDRAWAL

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Students who withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connection system (<http://campusconnect.depaul.edu>). Withdrawals processed via this system are effective the day on which they are made. Simply ceasing to attend, or notifying the instructor, or nonpayment of tuition, does not constitute an official withdrawal from class and will result in academic as well as financial penalty.

## EXCUSED ABSENCE

In order to petition for an excused absence, students who miss class due to illness or significant personal circumstances should complete the Absence Notification process through the Dean of Students office. The form can be accessed at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/dos/forms.html>. Students must submit supporting documentation alongside the form. The professor reserves the sole right whether to offer an excused absence and/or academic accommodations for an excused absence.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

All students are expected to abide by the University's Academic Integrity Policy which prohibits cheating and other misconduct in student coursework. More information can be found at <https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching/academic-integrity/Pages/default.aspx>.

The policy states that publicly sharing or posting online any prior or current materials from this course (including exam questions or answers), is considered to be providing unauthorized assistance prohibited by the policy. And that both students who share/post and students who access or use such materials are considered to be cheating under the Policy and will be subject to sanctions for violations of Academic Integrity.

In this course I may post your workshop or lab submission links on D2L so they are available to the rest of the class. Viewing and learning from your classmates' work is not a violation of the policy. Directly taking code from another student assignment is a violation. Any small indirect borrowing of code must be acknowledged in a source code comment.

Further, I encourage students to share code for trouble-shooting purposes and exam study guide answers in the class D2L forum. Doing so does not violate the policy.

## INCOMPLETE AND FX GRADES:

An incomplete grade is a special, temporary grade that may be assigned by an instructor when unforeseeable circumstances prevent a student from completing course requirements by the end of the term and when otherwise the student had a record of satisfactory progress in the course. All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptions cases will receive such approval. Information about the Incomplete Grades policy can be found at <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/Grading-Policies.aspx>

DePaul CDM policy is that all incompletes must be requested by the student using an online form and initiated prior to the last day of the quarter before final exams. See CDM grading policies at <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/Grading-Policies.aspx>

## PREFERRED NAME & GENDER PRONOUNS

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Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the quarter so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. Please also note that students may choose to identify within the University community with a preferred first name that differs from their legal name and may also update their gender. The preferred first name will appear in University related systems and documents except where the use of the legal name is necessitated or required by University business or legal need. For more information and instructions on how to do so, please see the Student Preferred Name and Gender Policy at <http://policies.depaul.edu/policy/policy.aspx?pid=332>

## MENTAL HEALTH AND ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE

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Balancing the hard work of achieving your educational goals with the other demands of life is difficult at the best of times. For many of us, for a variety of reasons, things are even more difficult now. I want to make sure you feel comfortable, not embarrassed, reaching out to me for support. I will also point out where the University has great resources just a phone call or email away. These have been created and maintained for you, so use them. Sometimes people feel like their situation isn't the worst possible, so they assume they do not need help, but don't let that prevent you from reaching out.

- DePaul University Counseling Services – mental health is as important as physical health, and we have professionals just a phone call away: <https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/ucs.aspx> (call (773) 325-7779 or 911 for emergency).
- The kind people at the Office of the Dean of Students can help you with a wide range of topics, including figuring out if you should withdraw or apply for an incomplete: <https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/dos.aspx>.
- There are lots of additional, more specific resources listed here with the Office of Student Affairs, including crisis hotlines and sexual assault resources (note Title IX refers to a law protecting you from sex discrimination, including harassment and assault): <https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/support-services/counseling/Pages/Crisis-Hotlines.aspx>.

### • ACADEMIC POLICIES

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- All students are required to manage their class schedules each term in accordance with the deadlines for enrolling and withdrawing as indicated in the University Academic Calendar. Information on enrollment, withdrawal, grading and incompletes can be found at: <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/PoliciesandProcedures.aspx>

## STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential.

To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at:

Student Center, LPC, Suite #370

Phone number: (773)325.1677

Fax: (773)325.3720

TTY: (773)325.7296

## ONLINE COURSE EVALUATIONS

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Evaluations are a way for students to provide valuable feedback regarding their instructor and the course. Detailed feedback will enable the instructor to continuously tailor teaching methods and course content to meet the learning goals of the course and the academic needs of the students. They are a requirement of the course and are key to continue to provide you with the highest quality of teaching. The evaluations are anonymous; the instructor and administration do not track who entered what responses. A program is used to check if the student completed the evaluations, but the evaluation is completely separate from the student's identity. Since 100% participation is our goal, students are sent periodic reminders over three weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Please see <https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching/Pages/online-teaching-evaluations.aspx> for additional information.