ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: 11/8/2024
Time: 10:00am-11:00am
Facilitator: Colin Dory

In Attendance

Colin Dory, DeAnne Hamilton, Brian Umpstead, Seth Anderson (ASG Representative), Beth Reichenbach, Wen Zhao-Pliske, Michelle Earthwright, Aubrie Swain

1.) College Work Plan

The feedback from the College Council was mostly positive, though we still need to take steps to turn work plan goals into actionable tasks, particularly with training and bridging accessibility gaps.

2.) Federal Rights Discussion

The topics covered by the Federal Disability Rights Law in the Digital Space webinar are very helpful in crafting approaches to how to tackle accessibility gaps in education. Though the following list is of exceptions to the new regulation, all content must be made accessible upon request. A student researching 20-year-old survey data, therefore, can request that it be made accessible if it previously was not.

- **Archived Web Content** made before the date of the new law, only kept for records and not used currently, and reproduces current content available in other forms. It must clearly be labelled as archived and cannot be changed once archived.
- **Pre-Existing Conventional Documents** not currently used, such as PowerPoints, Word Processor documents, and PDFs. If the content is available in an accessible form (for example, a PDF that contains the same content a screen-readable web page), you do not have to also make the PDF accessible unless requested.
- **Third-Party Content Not Used for Educational Purposes**. Please note that this is a *very* limited category that includes personal documents (court papers, invoices, pay stubs, etc).

- **Pre-Existing Social Media Posts**. Communications does not have to make tweets from 2019 accessible. They must, however, ensure all videos posted to social media have ADA-compliant captions going forward.
- **Personal Password Protected Content**. Individual student tuition receipts, a password-locked Excel sheet that only one person uses, etc.

The following tips were given in the webinar:

1. Make materials accessible now – Spending time to learn how to incorporate accessibility into your material ahead of time will save you hours of trying to do it after the fact.
2. Have a Point of Contact for both students and staff on accessibility, with a clear chain of who to contact for what and with follow-up.
3. Make lists of vendors and services that are great on accessibility, and those that do not have accessible features. Better alternatives may need to be sought out. Some recommended services to check would be:
    - Time and Attendance Trackers
    - AI/Plagiarism Checkers
    - Applications/Transcript services
4. When tackling accessibility, prioritize the highest trafficked/most used material. Remove and archive outdated and unused material when possible.

3.) Professional Development Day

During the November Professional Development Day for Faculty, the break-out sessions on Accessibility were positively received, prompting good questions and some topics that should be followed up. Some of the most common questions were on:

- **Accessibility and Academic Rigor**. A common assumption is incorporating accessibility into the classroom endangers academic rigor. However, choosing to be focused on accessibility in various ways, such as expanding test period times, using screen readers and captions, and being flexible for all students does not undermine academic rigor.
- **Difference between Accessibility and Accommodation**. It's easy to confuse these two concepts. An accommodation is reactive and exists to bridge gaps in inaccessible design. Accessibility, on the other hand, is proactive, intended to remove barriers upfront. Using methods such as Universal Design and a proactive Accessibility approach will lessen the need for accommodations.
- **Syllabus Policies and Procedures**. By being upfront and clear about exceptions and accommodations in the syllabus, faculty can build accessibility into their class ahead of time and avoid accusations of unfairness.

Potential training follow-ups could include:

- Accessibility-Focused Syllabus Policies and Procedures
- Accessible Approaches to Academic Rigor

4.) New Members and Committee Workload

The committee will need to seek more members in order to encourage more buy-in from the college community. In addition, with only two members of OLC remaining, we will need to create better processes for reviewing accessibility, such as peer-to-peer mentoring and possible events to allow faculty to work on their course material.

Seth Anderson, our ASG rep, has suggested getting student feedback on online material and programs that need to improve accessibility. Perhaps a student worker could assist IT with this?

The committee will continue to discuss this in the future.

5.) Accessibility Toolbox

The Accessibility Toolbox is a fantastic resource, but promoting it has always been a challenge. Some possible ideas include

- Adding it as a sidebar option in Canvas courses, suggested by Beth.
- Promote it in the quarterly OLC newsletter.
- Highlight it in campus meetings.
- Promote it during the program effectiveness review as part of the accessibility review.

6.) Bates Syllabus Template

The Bates syllabus template does not meet the new accessibility standards and will have to be changed. However, it will be a challenge to roll out that change to faculty. The committee will have to further discuss how to assist faculty in upgrading their syllabi to meet accessibility standards without overtaxing ourselves.

7.) Good of the Order

a. We will further discuss changing the meeting time and/or day to be able to accommodate schedules in the next meeting.
b. The next meeting will be held Friday, December 13th, 2024.