ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: 12/13/2024
Time: 10:00am-11:00am
Facilitator: Tim Trussler

In Attendance

Colin Dory, DeAnne Hamilton, Elizabeth Weiss, Aubrie Swain, Michelle Earthwright

1.) Training

In order to work out training for the upcoming quarter, it will be critical to hammer down what type of training should be focused on and how to deliver this training.

1. Topics for Training
    - Aubrie recommends starting with one piece of web accessibility, such as Microsoft Word documents, the basics of video captioning, or using the Ally accessibility checker in Canvas.
    - Michelle wonders if tackling the subject of common accommodations could be useful for faculty. Aubrie notes that it's better to focus on more widespread accessibility for training, as that can lessen the need for accommodation, and faculty need to meet accommodation requests regardless when they are made.
2. Method of Delivery
    - Aubrie suggests pushing the college-wide effort to meet the new standards with required trainings and practices. One thing we could do is to hyper-focus on just one task at a time, like captioning or making Word and Email accessible.
    - Something like a self-paced Canvas course, with modules focused on one aspect of accessibility, may be the most effective. However, we will have to consider how to ensure participation (perhaps by getting dean buy-in) and how to monitor class progress with limited availability from the OLC.

2.) Budget

The college has run out of funds from external grants, limiting services such as hotspots. Though this does not impact the committee, we may have to keep budget constraints in mind when pursuing future accessibility measures.

3.) DSS Update

The Professional Development Day trainings went well. Aubrie revisited the topic of Accessibility and Academic Rigor in December, and received a lot of good feedback and questions.

In Winter Quarter, Aubrie will do class visits to estimate gaps in accessibility that may be overlooked. She will also adjust her work hours on Wednesdays to be more present for South Campus evening courses.

Aubrie is still working on getting AIM, the Accessible Information Management tracking system, in place, but it has faced some IT challenges. AIM is designed to better track accommodation and disability data in a secure manner.

4.) Accessibility Tools

One thing that will be useful to do is to promote the usage of the accessibility tools we already have:

- **Readspeaker** is a screen-reader that also provides a text highlighter, a web-reader, a document-reader, a page mask (a feature that narrows down the screen to just the text being read, supports multiple languages, and offers features such as downloading the text as an audio podcast, and more. Since we have recently updated to the newest LTI, usage has jumped, but we would still benefit from promoting the tool more to faculty and students. Some steps that could be taken are:
    - Creating or sourcing a new walkthrough video promoting the features.
    - Promoting via global announcement when classes start.
    - Asking faculty to demonstrate the features or promote them using a new version of Mod Zero.
- **Ally** is an accessibility checker built into Canvas. It allows faculty to check the accessibility of images and documents by giving them a color-graded rating and making suggestions on how to improve accessibility. All faculty have access to its basic features.
    - Some features are limited to only admin use, like tracking accessibility percentages in multiple classes. The OLC will need to have further discussion before making these features available for all.

5.) ADA Compliance Throughout Bates

There are some gaps in accessibility and accommodation that both the DSS (mainly student focused) and the Accessibility Committee are not able to cover, such as identifying access issues for staff and guests. HR, for example, does not currently have standard language to address accommodation. While tackling this issue will take time and discussion on it will have to continue, some ideas proposed are:

- Look into how other colleges bridge this gap and what policies and procedures we could adapt.
- Involve Communications into standardizing language throughout Bates.

- Look into the requirements for a Compliance Officer, and perhaps explore if it can be a shared role between multiple people across campuses.

6.) Good of the Order

a. Elizabeth will be taking over for Marcus as the HR representative on the committee. Welcome, Elizabeth!
b. The next meeting will be held January 10th, 2025, although the time may be adjusted to accommodate committee members.