

Accessibility Concerns within Online, Hybrid, and Face-to-Face Courses

Office of AccessAbility Services (AAS)
Faculty Senate Committee on Distance Education
Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching
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Advanced Organizer



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Accessibility Standards and Guidelines

- ADA and Section 508
- Recent Cases

ADA and Section 508

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (**ADA**) is a civil rights legislation governed by the Department of Justice. The goal of the law is to ensure equal access and opportunity of individuals with disabilities to programs, services, and activities.
 - Prohibits discrimination on the basis of a disability
 - Must provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities
- **Section 508** of the Rehabilitation Act, was enacted to eliminate barriers in information technology, to make available new opportunities for people with disabilities, and to encourage development of technologies that will help achieve these goals.
 - Must ensure devices and information technology are accessible
 - Individuals with disabilities must be able to access material with “equivalent or greater” ease as individuals without disabilities



Recent Cases

- Penn State University
 - Case was brought by the National Federation for the Blind (NFB) on behalf of students enrolled at Penn State University
 - Cased identified accessibility problems across the university including; course management software, library catalogue, and departmental websites.
 - The complaint was broad-based and resulted in a wide-ranging settlement agreement.
 - Accessibility audit, procurement process, implement accessible search engine, all websites since 2009 must be accessible according to WCAG 2.0 AA, replace course management system (ANGEL), accessible classroom podiums and LCD equipment, and accessible clicker options
 - Agreement available at: [Penn State Settlement Agreement](#)

***Case illustrates all of the important compliance obligations of postsecondary institutions with respect to the use of electronic and information technology.**



Recent Cases Continued

- South Carolina Technical College
 - Inaccessibility of websites, emails, course management systems, and library resources
 - March 2013 resolution agreement committing South Carolina System and its colleges to adopt system-wide accessibility measures.
 - Websites, emails, course management systems, library resources
 - Agreement available at: [South Carolina Technical College Resolution Agreement](#)



Recent Cases Continued

- University of Montana
 - Complaint about inaccessibility of class assignments and materials, learning management system, live chat and discussion functions, scanned documents posted on webpages and websites, classroom clickers and course registration
 - March 2014 resolution agreement committing University of Montana to:
 - Creating electronic and information technology accessibility policy and procedures
 - Conducting accessibility audit, student surveys and system-wide trainings
 - Creating procurement contract language to ensure accessibility
 - Ensuring web-based technologies comply with WCAG 2.0 AA standards; and Section 508 for all other electronic and information technology systems
 - Resolution agreement available at: [University of Montana Resolution Agreement](#)



Recent Cases Continued

- Louisiana Tech University
 - Complaint against faculty member for using an internet-based application that was not accessible to blind users
 - July 2013 settlement agreement indicating:
 - “The University must implement a policy that requires the deployment of accessible technology and course content in the University setting. To that end, the University shall conduct a review of the accessibility of its technology and instructional materials and shall ensure that, from the effective date of and consistent with the Settlement Agreement, all technology, including websites, instructional materials and online courses, and other electronic and information technology for use by students or prospective students, is accessible.”
 - Settlement agreement available at: [Louisiana Tech University Settlement Agreement](#)



Why is this Important?

- Nearly 20% of the American population report having some type of disability. When using the web or online management systems, many people:
 - Cannot operate a mouse
 - Cannot see text
 - Cannot see graphic
 - Cannot hear audio
 - Cannot easily understand content
- Western has a legal obligation to ensure equal access to the educational benefits and opportunities afforded by technology.
- Faculty members play a vital role in ensuring course accessibility.



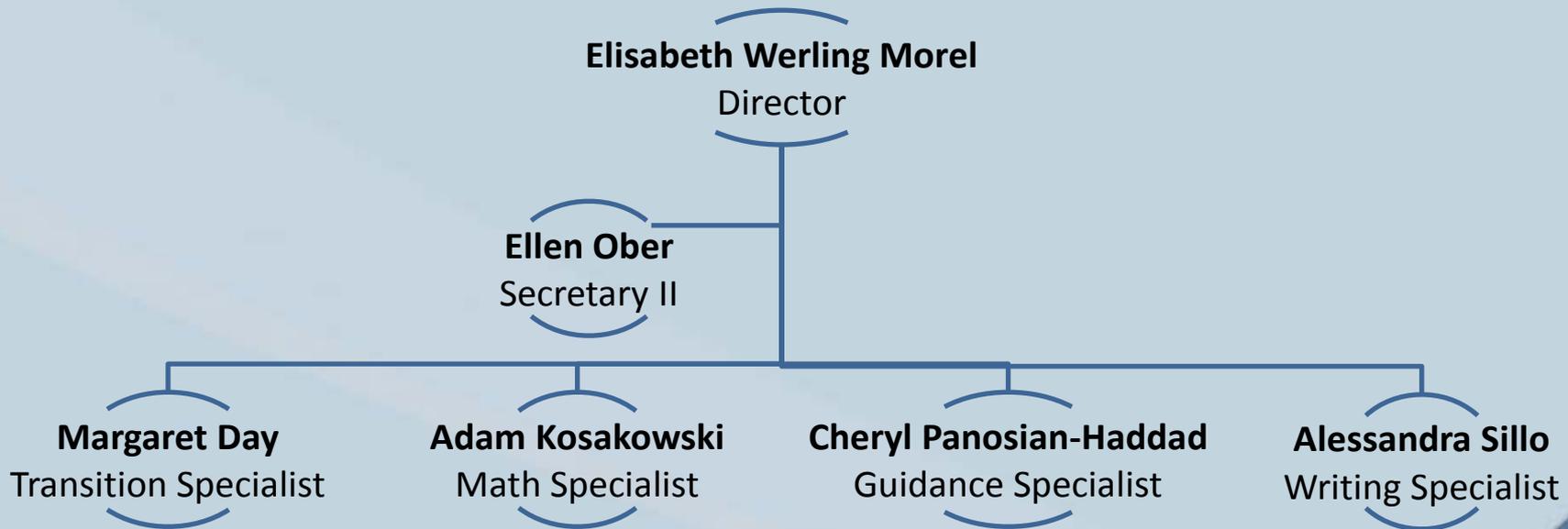
What Role Does AccessAbility Services Play?

- Ensure equal access of individuals with disabilities to programs and activities.
- Work with approximately 400 students with disabilities.
- Provide accommodations and support services to any student with a documented temporary or permanent disability.
 - Disabilities include learning disabilities, traumatic brain injuries, ADHD, autism spectrum disorders, visual and hearing impairments, and/or other psychiatric disabilities (anxiety, depression, OCD, bipolar).
 - Accommodations and services can include testing accommodations, classroom accommodations, academic coaching and referrals to other campus and community resources.
- Notify faculty members through electronic accommodation letters.



AccessAbility Services Staffing

- One full-time Director
- One full-time Secretary II
- Four part-time University Assistants



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Design Suggestions

- Universal Design for Learning
- Readability
- Accessibility Tips

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- UDL is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunity to learn.
- UDL provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone – not a single, one-size-fits-all solution but rather a flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs.
 - UDL will not eliminate the need for individualized accommodations

[CAST](#)



UDL Principles

- **Multiple Means of Representation**
 - Diverse options for acquiring info
 - Audio, close captioning, alt text, long description
- **Multiple Means of Action & Expression**
 - Diverse options for demonstrating knowledge
 - Assistive technology, audio assignments, etc.
- **Multiple Means of Engagement**
 - Engage interests, offer appropriate challenges, & increase motivation
 - Individual choice, relevancy, goal setting.

508 Compliance for eLearning manual



Readability

Accessible online web pages are those that differentiate between content, structure, and presentation.

- **Content**
 - Information you are trying to communicate
 - Text, graphics and media
- **Structure**
 - How you organize all the content
 - Properly label headings, paragraphs, and supporting content
 - Group relevant information together
- **Presentation**
 - The “look and feel” of the course
 - Control spacing, images, and tables

508 Compliance for eLearning manual



Accessibility Tips

- **Format Appropriately**
 - Upload documents that have been formatted correctly
 - page title, headings, lists converted to PDFs
- **Navigation**
 - Use a consistent navigation technique throughout the course
 - Can you navigate through your course without using the back button?
 - Do you have alt text if you use images for buttons or icons?
 - Use clear links
 - [Accessibility Checklist for Web Content](#) vs. [Click here](#) to see a checklist on web accessibility.
- **Graphics**
 - Use alt tags and/or long descriptions to describe graphics
- **Video Clips**
 - Include captions for students who are deaf or hard of hearing and a script of the video for student who are blind or have low vision.
- **Color and Contrast**
 - Use black text on a white or light background
 - Avoid using color to convey meaning
- **Flickering Objects**
 - Flashing or flickering graphics and text can trigger seizures for people who have seizure disorders.





Faculty Resources & Support

- Mini Video Tutorials
- Blackboard Assistance
- General Support



Mini Video Tutorials

AccessAbility Services, Faculty Senate Committee on Distance Education, and Media Services have put together 5 video tutorials:

- AccessAbility Services Overview
- Legal Mandates
- Disability Impact and Teaching Strategies
- Extending Online Quiz and Exam Timing in Blackboard
- Providing an Additional Attempt at an Assignment in Blackboard



Blackboard Assistance

- Support for Blackboard can be found on the [WCSU E-Learning website](#).
- Blackboard training can be conducted in person, via online, or by self-paced tutorials and videos. Helpful resources include [Blackboard Learn support from ConnSCU](#) or support from [Blackboard Learn Videos](#).
- For in person support from Western, email training@wcsu.edu.
- A self-paced online resource course for instructors on Blackboard is available through the Board of Regents. Email tkrutt@commnet.edu to be enrolled in the course.



Online and Distance Learning Tips

Reminder: Individuals with disabilities must be afforded “an equal opportunity to obtain the same result, to gain the same benefit, or to reach the same level of achievement as individuals without disabilities.”

- What to consider?
 - Alternate Text for Images: [Alt Text Guide](#)
 - Accessible Videos – AccessAbility Services and Media Services can caption videos for educational purposes. Faculty members are encouraged to contact the publisher directly to see if an accessible version of the video is available.
 - Be careful with YouTube captions!
 - Accessible Word Documents: [Word Guide](#)
 - Accessible PDF Documents: [PDF Guide](#)
 - Accessible PowerPoint Presentations: [PowerPoint Guide](#)



Online and Distance Learning Tips

- How to check your web content?
 - The [Accessibility Checklist for Web Content and Online Courses](#) is a great self-assessment tool.
 - [WAVE web accessibility evaluation tool](#)
 - A comprehensive list of tools is available from Web Accessibility Initiative: [Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool List](#)
- How to check MS Office Documents?
 - [Microsoft Accessibility Checker](#)



General Support

- Free monthly technology workshops are offered throughout the ConnSCU system. A complete list of workshops are available on the [Learning Technology Training Calendar](#).
- Resources on creating accessible course material including; Word documents, PDF documents, PowerPoints, and more can be found on the AccessAbility Services website under [Creating Accessible Course Material](#).
- [Faculty and Staff](#) section on AccessAbility Services website provides a variety of support links and information.





Questions?

