Understanding issues in online accessibility

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Agenda

- Getting a pulse regarding accessibility
- Laws & university policies that govern accessibility
- Best practices regarding online accessibility
- How to be proactive in regards to accessibility
- Where inaccessibility is most problematic
- Accessibility and academic freedom
- SAS overview and where we fit in with online accessibility
- Questions & resources
What is the BEST description of accessibility in a post-secondary setting, specifically at KSU?

- Accommodations and/or services that Student Accessibility Services (SAS) puts into place for students with disabilities.
- Ensuring that instructional materials, university programs, and/or physical structures are equally accessible to all students regardless of disability.
- Putting the “students with disabilities” statement on the syllabus.
- Access to assigned parking spots for faculty, which are close to their classrooms.
Federal laws that govern accessibility

1. Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504
2. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 1990
3. ADA, As Amended (ADA-AA), 2008
University policies & practices regarding accessibility

1. University policy (3-01.3)

2. Provost’s strategic plan
   “A culture of student success exists when everyone ... approaches every issue, challenge, and opportunity with this initial question: How will this help our students?” ¹

3. Promise we give to students & parents
   “We pride ourselves on providing equal opportunities, so that everyone can benefit from all that the university has to offer.” ²

¹. Our Voice. Our Vision. Academic Affairs Strategic Plan 2013, pg. 11
². http://www.kent.edu/parents: Preparing your student; Academic Resources
1. **Prohibits discrimination on basis of disability**
   1. Admission
   2. Program access
   3. Facilities access
   4. Protection from hostile environment

2. **Simply stated:**
   Regardless of disability, admitted students have the right to equally access university programs, etc.
   Reasonable accommodations must be provided to qualified students with disabilities to ensure equal access.
Running afoul of these laws in Ohio

- University of Cincinnati – December, 2014
- Youngstown State University – December, 2014
- Miami University, Ohio – March, 2015
Running afoul of laws in other states

- Louisiana Tech, 2013
  - Inaccessible course materials
- S. Carolina Tech College System, 2013
  - Inaccessible websites
- U. of Montana, 2012
  - Inaccessible web content and services
- Florida State U., 2012
  - Inaccessible e-learning
Implications of inaccessibility

- Sends the wrong message to students & campus community
- Impacts retention
- Potential lawsuits (for non-compliance)
- Impacts academic achievement (for ALL students)
Best practices re: online accessibility

- Universal design
  - In a nutshell … design considerations used to make products, spaces and environments inherently accessible to all humans

- Principles of universal design, some examples
  - Equitable use / Flexibility in use / Simple & intuitive / Tolerance for error
  - [http://udi.uconn.edu/index.php?q=content/examples-udi-online-and-blended-courses](http://udi.uconn.edu/index.php?q=content/examples-udi-online-and-blended-courses)
Best practices re: online accessibility

- “Baking in” accessibility
  - Building your online course with accessibility in mind so that if/when an accommodation request is made and granted, much of the work will be done
Advantages of “baking in” accessibility

- Time Savings
  - Accommodation requests
  - Use each term

- Benefits to ALL students
  - Additional study/learning materials
  - Transcripts for student comprehension, and ESL students
  - Provides consistency throughout a course
“Baking in” strategies

- Provide transcripts for all audio presentations
- Link to Closed-captions (CC) videos only
- PDF’s in text format (not scanned images)
- Using word “styles”
- Color - [http://accessibility.psu.edu/color/colorvisiondetails/](http://accessibility.psu.edu/color/colorvisiondetails/)
- Descriptions for tables, charts, graphs and hyperlinks
- Using Alt tags for images, tables
- Bullets/numbering – use 1, 2, 3 rather than bullets when more than 3 items
Already “baked in” …

- NBC learn - [http://www.nbclearn.com/portal/site/HigherEd](http://www.nbclearn.com/portal/site/HigherEd)
  - 10,000+ videos spanning wide areas of study/interest
  - Able to be imbedding into BBLeam
  - Able to compile personal playlist of resources
  - Searchable by topic, keyword or date

- Ted Talks - [https://www.ted.com/topics/education](https://www.ted.com/topics/education)
  - Sub-titles and transcripts are available
Where inaccessibility is most problematic

- Content is inaccessible to screen-readers
  - Formatting – headings, tables, etc.
  - Alt text
  - PDF’s as images and not text

- Non-captioned audio content
Content and delivery need to be accessible

Faculty have absolute free to choose their text and content ...

BUT, whatever is taught and however it’s delivered, the materials need to be EQUALLY accessible to students with disabilities.
SAS ...

- **assists** in making accessible a post-secondary education to “otherwise qualified” students with documented disabilities through the provision of reasonable classroom accommodations

[*assists ... our office often spearheads this effort, but the mandate is university-wide, requiring reciprocal cooperation between all offices within the university*]
More specifically, SAS …

- Assesses documentation
- Helps provide access to specific (SAS) students
- Advocates
- Consults
Where we fit …

- Student with disability (& registered with SAS) needs accommodation – closed captioning, text conversion, etc. – SAS works to provide that accommodation

- Depending on volume of work, our office can, in some cases, provide accessible formats (e.g. convert to closed-captioning) or assist with evaluating the accessibility of a course/specific class content
Questions
Just a few resources

- [http://www.kent.edu/onlineteaching](http://www.kent.edu/onlineteaching) - resource for online teaching (OCDE)
- [http://www.kent.edu/sas/accessibility-course-content](http://www.kent.edu/sas/accessibility-course-content) - creating accessible documents (SAS)
- [http://www.osu.edu/resources/web/accessibility/readspeaker-examples.html](http://www.osu.edu/resources/web/accessibility/readspeaker-examples.html) - example of how a screen reader “reads” webpage
- [https://video.kent.edu/media/1_p40v3oo2](https://video.kent.edu/media/1_p40v3oo2) - accessibility matters (examples of accessible and inaccessible course content)