

WCET Webcast: [Accessibility in Courses and Services: The Exploration Begins](#)

March 20, 2018

Q&A

Q: Aside from the concerns of those who are working so genuinely hard and doing the research to make education inclusive, what kind of first-person representation is there in the decision making, evaluation points, and design on the front end when carrying out these initiatives? i.e. How conscious are the committees/departments about having persons with accessibility needs at the table and not just being data-drivers?

A: Mark Jenkins: This is variable in our colleges and there's no one-size answer. I will say that staff are very cognizant of the need to have actual customers of these services at the table during decision making -- it's still early days in our system, though, and I can't speak to policies or process on individual campuses very accurately.

A: Kelly Hermann: To a certain extent, I think it is our job to ask whether an individual who uses assistive technology or has a disability is included in these campus-wide committees and activities. And if those individuals have not been included, we should suggest that we expand membership and find someone who would be willing to join the conversation to provide their perspective. I support the disability rights notion of "nothing about us without us" but I am also sensitive to the fact that we cannot expect one person with a disability to speak for all students with disabilities. We need to include multiple voices but we also have to be cognizant of the fact that one you have met one blind student, you have only met one blind student.

Q: Did the OCIO Accessibility policy include systems for students as well as faculty/staff?

A: Mark Jenkins: The OCIO policy (Policy 188) addresses all systems in all state agencies, and it uses a concept of "covered technology" to define what's addressed in the policy and the responsibility of the agencies. Covered technologies include:

"Websites, web applications, software systems, electronic documents, E-learning, multimedia and programmable user interfaces. This includes interacting with the technology, access and content. It does not include content that a user may encounter after leaving the covered technology (example: links to other web content)."

At SBCTC we take this to mean ALL systems, staff, student or public facing

Q: Is the caption hub a purchased software or custom built?

A: Mark Jenkins: The caption hub was custom built by our staff developer and is embedded as an LTI tool in Canvas. Currently, it's not available on GitHub, though that's something we're considering. This is a short introduction to the hub -- <https://youtu.be/XshmABMi2A4>

Q: We are trying to put together a plan to move forward with captioning. Do you recommend on this point forward, or do we need to back track? What have the OCR complaints required?

A: Mark Jenkins: Our colleges to date have not been forthcoming about the complaints they've received, and we don't manage the colleges' approach to captioning their archive of video instruction. Our recommendation would be that colleges' prioritize captioning their archive based on use/re-use data. This won't capture everything, but we realize the massive problem these archives present. Certainly colleges' should ALSO adopt a "from this point forward" policy as well.

I moderated a session with some folks from Wichita State University – they've been extraordinarily open about their finding – contacting their IDA office will give the best information. But there were no exceptions in the finding – ALL materials had to be made accessible within the finding's timeline.

I think an important corollary to this is best practices information about how best to use instructional video – we all know that an unedited hour long lecture capture video without navigation support is not only a costly accessibility problem, but also is likely ineffective as instruction. In short, more effective instructional use of video will likely result in more efficient use of captioning funds.

A: Kelly Herman: the only thing that I would add here is that many of the resolution agreements reached with OCR in the last several years have required institutions to develop plans to implement new content that meets the WCAG 2.0 AA standards and to have an iterative plan to remediate existing content. Many of these resolution agreements are available on OCR's website and can be downloaded for review.

Q: What tools and resources are being used for Assessibility?

A: Mark Jenkins: Right now, Bb Ally is our primary tool for instructional accessibility, though the SBCTC and many colleges are using SiteImprove to guide website remediation. Whatcom Community College has developed a software inventory tool to help identify and prioritize remediation on college software and we're looking at using a cloud based version of that tool for system level reporting. As far as resources . . .we've nt identified a budget line for this work and it's currently being funded by college budgets and by one-time SBCTC money. Our main resource at this point are the champions on the individual campuses who've taken up this work.

A: Kelly Hermann: Much of our evaluation work happens by using a screen reader and keyboard navigation. We also use the WAVE toolbar from WebAIM, especially in our web development activities. Our IT staff wrote an accessibility checker that works similarly to other accessibiity checkers and compares the website or tool to the WCAG 2.0 AA standards. For document conversion, we currently contract with Sensus Access but I have seen demos of BB Ally and think it is a great tool.

Q: Where might we access the openly-licenced Accessibility 101 course?

A: Mark Jenkins: <http://bit.ly/sbctcaccess>

Jess Thompson, the designer of the training, requests that you fill out the 1 Minute User Survey in the course so we can track out-of-system interest.

A: Kelly Hermann: When I was at SUNY Empire State College, we had a grant from SUNY to develop a MOOC with Buffalo State College on accessibility. It is currently available as a self-paced tutorial through Canvas.

Accessibility: Designing and Teaching Courses for All Learners

(<https://www.canvas.net/browse/empirestate/empirestate-buffalostate/courses/accessibility-designing-teaching-2>)

Q: Are there any grants available for funding these initiatives?

A: Kelly Hermann: Grant money has been somewhat scarce for accessibility initiatives. I am not aware of any specific programs that are funding right now with this as a competition priority. I have seen institutions go to the Lumina Foundation or to the Gates Foundation with innovative proposals to address accessibility needs as part of an overall project but I haven't seen that be the primary focus.

Q: What approach would you suggest to get faculty/union buy-in to allow for accessibility reviews of course content?

A: Mark Jenkins: That's a great question, but I don't have a great answer -- the colleges in the Washington CTC system all bargain separately; I know there are some incentive programs around universal design, but so far we don't have enough data to fully understand faculty usage of Ally, which is our primary instruction-focused accessibility tool. We're optimistic because of the high enrollment numbers in our Accessibility 101 course and the ways that course is being adapted to fit the needs of individual colleges.

A: Kelly Hermann: I think this is always going to be a steep hill for us to climb. We ask a lot of our faculty, especially when it comes to ways that we think they should do something better or ways that we need them to approach something. For me, my first approach is to always look at what value can I add and how can I support what I am asking them to do. We require our faculty to go through an accessibility training every year. We go to great lengths to be sure that the topic we select is timely, relevant and offers practical guidance and support for the role they play in the classroom. When I worked in a more traditional university setting, I often used my students to tell their stories and to demonstrate assistive technology they used to try and build awareness and support. Ultimately, it is going to come down to what is effective on your campus and within your culture. You may need to partner with your unions or it may be more effective to work through faculty governance. I would recommend that you start having more conversations with your academic colleagues and learn what the pain points are from their perspective so you can meet their needs.