Accessibility Suggestions for Faculty

Higher education is now in the midst of inevitable change due to the health risks around the country, and I want to provide as many resources to you all as possible. First and foremost, remember – we are in this together and I'm happy to start a dialogue with you via phone or email. However, I'd like to begin by sharing this information I've gathered in discussions with colleagues in disability services from around the country. Remember, the design is different for online vs. face to face. The barriers that exist at the intersection of the disability and course design may no longer exist *or* may be different from the original. Accommodations used before may no longer apply and accommodations not considered before may need to be considered. If you or your students have questions, please contact Student Disability Services.

First Thoughts

1. Start with this Web Accessibility Checklist from the A11y Project.
2. If you post a PDF, make sure it is selectable text and not just an image. Create accessible PDFs. Also, know when to use a PDF. If preserving the appearance of the document is not essential, consider using an alternate format such as HTML. **PDFs with OCR** (Optical Character Recognition) for screen reader access is important.
3. Describe content that is otherwise only accessible to people who can see it. Examples: Words on the screen, critical actions, other critical details about the setting, etc.
4. Use a color contrast checker. Be sure foreground and background have adequate contrast.
5. If you post a video, make sure it has captions or a transcript. Also, think about image descriptions and alt text for all images and videos. Use alt text to provide access to the content of images for individuals using screen readers, or students with low vision, or color deficiency. Alt text is supported by most document formats, including HTML, Microsoft Word, and Adobe PDF.
6. Use text instead of pictures of text. Pictures of text become blurry when enlarged, take longer to download, and are inefficient for the website author to edit.
7. If you post audio, make sure to post a transcript too. Also, use audio descriptions or record a slide show with narration. (Also post the transcript.)
8. Respect white space. Providing plenty of space between lines and blocks of text assists with tracking text.
9. If you are building new documents, test them with screen readers: NVDA (Free!), VoiceOver (built into Mac); or overall screen reader accessibility with a tool such as Webaim.
10. Choose media players that support accessibility. Ask questions like: Does this player support closed captions? Does it support description? Can it be operated with a mouse? Are buttons and controls accessible to screen reader users?
11. Use headings properly. They help non-visual users understand how the page is organized, and make it easy for screen reader users to navigate.
12. Test pages on mobile devices: Almost 72% of screen reader users do so on a mobile device. Use these Checkers:
    W3C mobileOK Checker
    W3C Web Content Accessibility & Mobile Web (Quick Reference Guide)

Other Things to Consider

1. Lockdown browser accessibility with screen readers for testing accommodations: Electronic teaching platforms such as CANVAS allow faculty to do their own proctoring. Will Sakai allow this? ExamSoft is not compatible to a screen reader on a PC, but it does work with VoiceOver built into Mac products. **Respondus works with JAWS and NVDA.**

2. Note Taking accommodations (faculty should be prepared to share lecture notes): Note takers address barriers when face2face lectures are offered at one moment in time and a person with a disability may not be able to capture relevant notes and listen to the lecture at the same time. How is the online course designed? Videos? Reading? Chat groups? What is asked of the student? How would you take notes? What barriers exist? If the online class has videos, the student could watch the video on repeat to capture everything?

3. How are we adjusting assignment deadlines during the transition?

4. Reader/Scribe – what does this look like online? Software or audio recordings?

5. Deaf/Hard of Hearing students are not able to access audio, video, or live stream lecture. Also, the use of videos that aren't captioned or audio files not accompanied by transcripts are issues.

6. Accessible videos/Captioning:
   - Captions provide benefits to all users.
   - Provide Transcripts: Benefits all users by allowing access to content quickly and also benefits individuals with low Internet bandwidth.

7. Students who are blind or low vision will not be able to access videos without quality audio.

8. Auxiliary aids – are there students using items in class that may look different online?

9. Accessible documents/Course content – refer to the previous information and links.

10. Students on Clinical Rotations - students' w/health-related diagnoses, especially compromised immune systems. Do you postpone rotations? Do you relocate?

Items borrowed from **30 Web Accessibility Tips** article from Washington University's Do-It Center.

Another helpful article: Accessible Teaching in the Time of COVID-19

Again, reach out for help!
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