Achieving Accessibility

Issue

Inaccessible websites or web content in any PCC website (including online courses) is a violation of two federal disability laws: ADA Title II and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Dr. Chris Chairsell asked Distance Education to devise a shared-responsibility solution to allow PCC to progress towards compliance.

Background

Although the Desire2Learn learning management system has built-in accessibility, things that are added: documents, images, videos, Camtasia modules etc, must themselves be made accessible to students with disabilities. However, waiting until a student with an identified disability registers in a class, and then having Distance Education and Disability Access Services staff scramble through the courses looking for items that need to be made accessible and doing this just-in-time is NOT working for faculty or for students. When the workload exceeds our capacity, items that are not available to a student with an identified disability must be removed from the course, and then are not available for any students (because to do otherwise would run afoul of ADA law). A better approach is to make sure that all of the materials in every course are accessible from the outset, as a matter of common practice. In addition, making the online components of all courses universally accessible will aid students without identified disabilities by offering additional ways of accessing the material.

There is some urgency in addressing this issue, and the need to wrestle with the gradient between comfortable and perfect, sooner than later. Lawsuits are increasingly common in this area, and large colleges are seen as good targets. We need to be able to demonstrate that we are truly working towards the goal of ensuring appropriate access for all students.

In this large collaborative project, input and ideas from multiple areas of the college are needed. A Guiding Team of 13 members met during the summer to gather information, feedback, address questions and plan a path for implementation:

- Sue Quast, Media Production Manager for Distance Learning;
- Karen Sorensen, Instructional Technology Specialist;
- Greg Kaminski, Instructional Developer (Alternate: Melany Budiman, Instructional Technology Specialist);
- Frank Roberts, CIS Instructor, online;
- Kathy Bernunzio, Math Instructor;
- Tanya Mead, Education Instructor, online;
- Scott McBeth, CG Instructor;
- Rebecca Robinson, MSD Instructor, Online Faculty Mentor;
- Maria Wagner, Library Technology Manager;
- Wendy Palmer, Disability Services Coordinator;
- Tammy Dowd, Disability Services Counselor;
- Dan Findley, Division Dean, Math and Industrial Technology;
- Luis Menchu, Web Services Manager

The Implementation Strategy on the back of this document is the result of their hard work.
Phase I: Implementation Strategy for Accessibility of Online Content

Current Accommodation Requests from Disability Services

1. Courses launched prior to Spring 2012
   - Updates to content will be made by Distance Learning/Instructional Support in collaboration with instructors and Disability Services.

2. Courses launched Spring 2012 and beyond
   - DL/IS gives instructors an accessibility report. Instructors need to fix identified issues or remove them before the course begins.

New Online Course Development

- New and veteran online instructors work with Distance Learning/Instructional Support staff to address accessibility issues to be compliant. If gaps exist, recommendations for correction are provided to the instructor.
- Information is included in the Online Instructor Orientation for new online faculty.

Accessibility Education and Awareness Effort

- Information sessions provided at fall in-service events including: New Faculty Institute, Part-time faculty institutes at Sylvania, Cascade and Rock Creek campuses, and Faculty Department Chair Institute.
- Training sessions held throughout the year to increase awareness about requirement, creating accessible content, media development guidelines and best practices.
- See [www.pcc.edu/access](http://www.pcc.edu/access) for more information.

Impact Assessment

- Distance Learning and Disability Services staff will work with faculty to begin to assess the impact of accessibility in online courses.
- Surveys or pilots may be conducted to provide PCC with information about the depth and breadth of resources needed to address compliance.
- PCC will pursue participation in a self-study as part of a national project.
If a student with a disability enrolls in your course, it must be accessible to them and help is available. As of Spring term 2012, all content in new online courses must adhere to the accessibility guidelines listed below. Visit: http://www.pcc.edu/access for resources and support on meeting these guidelines.

**ACCESSIBLE DOCUMENT GUIDELINES**

Web Pages, Word Docs, Presentations & PDFs

- Use text formatting styles provided.
- Contrast between text and background colors is strong.
- Use meaningful link text that tells the user where they will be taken if they click. (Content that is linked to should also be accessible.)
- Tables are kept small. Large tables are broken into multiple smaller tables.
- Instructions don’t depend on solely visual or solely auditory information.
- The page is navigable with just a keyboard (no mouse or touchpad necessary).
- Alternative text is provided for all images and graphics.
- Navigation is clear and consistent.

**ACCESSIBLE MEDIA GUIDELINES**

Audio Recordings, Videos, Slide Shows & Animations

- Flashing Content is limited and only used when necessary.
- Text transcripts are provided for all audio*
- Captions are provided for all video*
- The site is functional with just a keyboard (no mouse or touchpad necessary).
- Contrast between text and background colors is strong.
- Operation doesn’t depend on solely visual or solely auditory information.
- Alternative text is provided for all still images and graphics.
- Navigation is clear and consistent.

*Media that is not PCC employee-produced and is not available captioned (to buy or borrow), will be accommodated on case-by-case basis by Disability Services and Distance Education/Instructional Support.

**SUPPORT, RESOURCES, TOOLS & TRAININGS**

Online faculty developing new courses will have support in meeting these guidelines from Instructional Support, Distance Learning, Disability Services, the Faculty Help Desks and online faculty mentors. A training schedule will be provided at In-Service and online.

- **ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES OVERVIEW**
  This training will review the new accessibility guidelines for online courses.

- **HOW TO MAKE YOUR DOCUMENTS ACCESSIBLE**
  This training will teach you how to make your PDFs, Microsoft Word documents and PowerPoints accessible.

- **VIDEO CAPTIONING**
  This training will demonstrate how to caption your own videos and suggest resources for finding already captioned videos.
**Approach to Accessibility**

- **Build Awareness of Accessibility Issues**
- **Now: Last minute accommodations**
- **By Spring 2012: New Online Courses are accessible**
- **Conduct accessibility assessment on existing online courses**
- **Refine best practices for accessibility in web page & media development**
- **Advanced instructor trainings**
- **By Fall 2013: All online courses are accessible**
- **By Fall 2014: All hybrid and web-enhanced courses are accessible**
- **All instructional content is accessible**