

Best Practices/FAQ's from Disability Support Services

from Hilary Phelps

As we look toward classes, I wanted to share some information and recommendations to facilitate learning online for our students, those with and without special accommodations.

- I encourage all faculty to consider having their assignments be submitted through Blackboard.
- I recommend primary usage of Blackboard for on-ground courses including the delivery of exams. If we have to pivot to an online environment, this would be one less disruptive transition for the students.
- In developing course content, please consider utilizing principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) designed to assist in removing barriers for students with diagnosed and undiagnosed disabilities which benefits all learners. The UDL recommendations provide all students more accessibility. Focus on small changes that have maximum impact <http://www.cast.org/our-work/about-udl.html> <https://teaching.cornell.edu/.../designing-your-course/universal-design-learning>
- Facilitating access to screen reader technology, such as Read and Write, and speech to text programs such as Dragon removes the input/output barrier and allows students to focus on demonstrating their knowledge. My office can facilitate Read and Write access. Many phones/tablets have built in speech to text capability. Additionally there are several low or no cost resources I can provide.

Please find below some primary questions to consider along with my recommendations.

Regardless of mode of delivery students with identified disabilities are entitled to approved accommodations. What are the accommodations?

Quizzes/Exams/Tests: Extended time must be arranged for these assessments. For online classes, there is a mechanism in Blackboard that allows for the set up for extended time. .

Other accommodations: Students approved for other accommodations such as notetaking assistance and audio recording are entitled to those accommodations. Please work with my office to discuss what this looks like in an online environment.

What are some simple things I can do as I build my course to make it more accessible?

- Use clear, consistent layouts and organization schemes for your courses.
- Structure headings and lists using features built into Blackboard, Word, Pdf, etc.
- Use descriptive wording for hyperlink text *i.e. directions for group project instead of "click here"*
- Provide concise text descriptions of content presented within images.
- Use large, bold fonts on uncluttered pages with plain backgrounds.
- Use color combinations that are high contrast and can be read by those who are colorblind

- Caption videos and transcribe audio content.

What things should I remember as I instruct online?

- Consider assessments that ask students to think about the content more than those that focus on memorization.
- Don't assume even after the events of this semester that students have the technology skills to easily adapt to a shift midstream.
- Provide options for learning by presenting content in multiple ways e.g. combination of text, video, audio and image format
- Provide options for communicating and collaborating that are accessible to individuals with a variety of disabilities.
- Provide options for demonstrating learning i.e. different types of test items, portfolio, presentation, single-topic discussion
- Address a wide range of language skills as you write content i.e. spell acronyms, define terms etc.
- Make instructions and expectations clear for activities, projects, discussion questions, and assigned readings. This is especially important if our classes transition to online during the fall semester—don't count on discussing the plan before the move meaning your students understand if your class is asynchronous/synchronous and what their responsibilities are.
- Make examples and assignments relevant to learners with a wide variety of interests and backgrounds.
- Offer outlines and other scaffolding tools to help students learn.
- Provide adequate opportunities to practice.
- Allow adequate time for activities, projects, and tests i.e. give details of project assignments in the syllabus so that students can start working on them early.
- Provide feedback on project parts and offer corrective opportunities.

Tips for web accessibility that address technology versus pedagogy

https://www.washington.edu/doit/sites/default/files/atoms/files/30_Web_Tips_03_17_2020%28Accessible%29_0.pdf

How Colleges Can Improve Accessibility in Remote Courses

<https://www.edsurge.com/news/2020-04-30-how-colleges-can-improve-accessibility-in-remote-courses>

Incorporating UDL into digital design.

<https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/how-to-front-load-your-digital-content-with-udl-principles/>

<https://pandamn.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Making-Presentations-Accessible-Through-Universal-Design-for-Learning.pdf>

