Building a Culture of Accessibility & Inclusion

The Governors State University BCA Initiative

Ice Breaker – Accessibility JENGA!

- Please share one word that you feel is impactful when you think of accessibility or inclusion.

- What does this word mean to either your role OR for students? Please explain.

Image Source: https://www.graphicraft.com.hk/index.php/services/accessibility

Accessibility is a Challenge for Courses

An ongoing effort of [The GSU Center for Teaching & Learning](#) is to improve the quality of teaching at Governors State University. The primary goal of this initiative is to improve awareness of accessibility among GSU faculty to reduce barriers that students may face in courses. The BCA Initiative seeks to resolve challenges with accessibility in online and hybrid courses at GSU. Further, with a focus on [Universal Design for Learning](#) and [Quality Matters™ Standard 8: Accessibility](#), this initiative will benefit all students, not just those with disabilities.

Learning Objectives for this Presentation:

1) Participants will explain factors of accessibility and inclusion at their institutions.

2) Participants will outline and develop training processes and resources for professional development staff, faculty and course designers.

3) Participants will discuss the current situations at their institutions and how to address opportunities for accessibility and inclusion.

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The DEI Mini-grant

- The GSU Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Council awards mini-grants each year to campus departments and programs wishing to promote and improve accessibility and inclusive practices.

- The Center for Teaching & Learning completed the application and proposal for the grant in Summer 2023.

- In August 2023, at the annual campus-wide Convocation ceremony, CTL was one of several departments to be awarded this mini-grant.

CTL Staff Training

Funding from the mini-grant was used to "train the trainers". Members of the CTL staff participated in [Digital Accessibility for Educators](#) training courses offered through ION in late Fall 2023 and early Spring 2024.

After training, CTL staff developed professional development opportunities for GSU faculty.

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DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY FOR EDUCATORS

4-Week Courses

8-Week Course

- Foundations of Accessibility for Educators
- Creating Accessibility Documents
- Creating Accessible Videos

- Universal Design

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Training Options for GSU Faculty

- Lunch 'n Learns

- BCA Cohorts

- Regularly scheduled 1-hour workshops

  - Already existing workshops now address relevant accessibility topics where applicable.

  - Additional specific workshops addressing accessibility are now regularly scheduled.

Motivating Faculty Participation

Regularly Scheduled Workshops

Certificates of Attendance are provided to participants documenting 1 clock hour of professional development, which can be included on evaluation materials and CV's.

Lunch 'n Learns

In addition to a Certificate of Attendance as described above, participants also get free food paid for by the mini-grant! ☺

BCA Cohorts

Certificates of Completion are provided documenting 10 clock hours of professional development, **AND...**

← A Credly badge, **AND...**

Stipends funded by the mini-grant for the top 3 participants based on culminating project evaluations:

- *1st Place = $500*
- *2nd Place = $300*
- *3rd Place = $200*

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Lunch 'n Learn Schedule & Topics

3/7/24: Overview of Accessibility

An overview of accessibility, with definitions, legalities, and approaches for addressing this issue in online courses.

3/21/24: Universal Design for Learning

An overview of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Guidelines, an inclusive approach to course design that helps address accessibility in course materials.

4/25/24: Building Accessible Videos

A demonstration of how to build PowerPoint presentations with the purpose of narrating slides and outputting videos to Panopto for auto-captioning and chapter markers for navigation.

5/2/24: AI and Accessibility

A discussion of available tools that use AI to address accessibility, and a demonstration of accessibility tools in common applications.

5/29/24: BCA Cohort Awards & Participant Celebration

Panopto BCA Recordings Playlist

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BCA Asynchronous Training Cohorts

Faculty volunteers registered for one of two 3-week workshops offered in March and April through Blackboard.

Topics included a summary of accessibility and inclusion topics and resources, including federal and state legalities, UDL Guidelines, and QM Standard 8: Accessibility.

Activities included:

- Discussions for sharing resources and approaches to course design with other participants.

- A vocabulary and concepts quiz.

- Creating one accessible Blackboard item (considered practice for the culminating project).

- A media and materials reflection essay.

- The culminating project resulted in adjusting one Blackboard shell to meet accessibility guidelines.

Evaluating BCA Culminating Projects

- Rubric containing 10 criteria based on UDL Guidelines and QM Standard 8.

- Submissions are evaluated by three CTL staff members who participated in ION Training.

- Each criterion could be either "not met" and earning a score of 0, or "met" and scored from 1 to 5, 1 being "acceptable" and 5 being "exemplary".

- The three scores for each criterion were averaged. The 10 averages were added together to get an overall score out of 50 possible points.

- Participants were offered one opportunity to make revisions based on rubric comments.

- The top 3 overall scores between both cohorts, after all submissions and revisions are evaluated, were awarded stipends.

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BCA Stipend Award Winners

- **First Place – $500:**
Sheree Sanderson
Interdisciplinary Studies

- **Second Place – $300:**
Jillian Klean Zwilling
Communications

- **Third Place – $200:**
Quenna Barrett
Theatre & Performance Studies

L-R: Scott Thesen (CTL), Jillian Klean Zwilling, Sheree Sanderson, Quenna Barrett, and Nikki LaGrone (CTL)

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Discussion Questions

How are your institutions currently addressing accessibility?

- Institutional policies?

- Training of trainers, staff, and/or faculty?

- Implementation in courses?

- Evaluation?

- Legal issues?

Any ideas or plans in place to address these topics in the future?
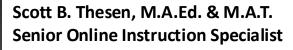
Thank you for your time and attention! ☺

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Director of CTL

Scott B. Thesen, M.A.Ed. & M.A.T.
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