Accessibility and Disability at the University of Utah: Guidelines and Resources for Faculty and Staff
Universal Design and Access Committee

This is a working document that will be extended and updated in subsequent years. It is a list of suggestions for extending accessibility in workplace and teaching practices. Please share with your colleges and departments. Suggestions for changes or additions happily received: contact Angela M. Smith, Director of Disability Studies, ang.smith@utah.edu.

Accessibility Website

For an overview of accessibility resources at the University of Utah, please go to our Accessible U page. This page can also be accessed from the University of Utah home page: select the menu at top right and click on the last menu item: Accessibility.

Universal Design and Access Committee

The Universal Design and Access Committee at the University of Utah is a campus-wide group of staff, faculty, and students dedicated to improving accessibility, supporting disabled members of the university community, and enacting and encouraging universal design principles throughout the university's policies and practices. Recent and current issues taken on by the committee include:
- Accessibility website (see above)
- Accessible electronic communications/social media practices, including provision of alt-text for images
- Clear signage in parking areas regarding accessible shuttle options for Huntsman Cancer Institute employees
- Campus pathways data gathering and app development
- Supporting newly created student disability groups

University Policies and Practices

The suggestions in this document are intended to complement and extend the accessibility required and enabled by existing laws and university policies, including:

Nondiscrimination & Accessibility Statement
Policy 5-106: Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Employment
Policy 5-117: ADA Policy, Reasonable Accommodation and Access
Workplace Accommodations: Disability Access and Accommodation
Student Accommodations: Center for Disability and Access

How Colleges, Departments, and Other Units Can Improve Accessibility

Electronic Communications, Websites, and Social Media

A new rule is in development by the UDA committee, Rule 4-003A: Implementing Web Site Accessibility, as part of Policy 4-003: World Wide Web Resources Policy. It is anticipated that the rule will be presented to the Academic Senate in December 2022 or January 2023. Some anticipated components of the rule include:

- Provide alt-text for all images on webpages and social media posts
- Provide accurate captions on videos
- Provide accurate transcripts for videos
- Capitalize the first letter of hashtags: #YouBelongHere
- Replace long links with shorter links or hyperlinked text

Some guides for these accessibility practices:
- WebAim Resources
- WebAim Alt-Text Techniques
- Create Accessible Content (University of Minnesota)
- Accessibility Best Practices (University of Utah)

Physical Accessibility

Routinely check that
  o Pathways to buildings and building entrances are free from snow, ice, and other barriers
  o Power doors and elevators are operational
  o Hallways are uncluttered and enable wheelchair passage
  o Accessible bathroom stalls are clean and functional
  o ADA parking stalls are accessible

If you discover problems, contact Facilities Dispatch (801) 581-7221.

Hosting Events

Access Requests: Ask guest speakers, presenters, or any event participants if they have any access requests or preferences around time and scheduling
- Build in time for the visitor(s) to use the bathroom, have snacks or downtime in peace, have rest time in their accommodation, etc. Allow for walking slowly between locations and using elevators where available.

<u>Event Sites:</u> Book locations that have
- Nearby accessible public transportation and accessible parking
- Accessible entrances (easy to find, well signposted, not requiring "special" access)
- Microphones and sound systems
- Nearby clearly signposted accessible bathrooms with gender-neutral options (for the bathroom, ensure there is a wide power door, flat entrance, and a toilet in a bigger stall that is lowered and/or with a grab bar).
- Wheelchair access and multiple spaces for wheelchair seating
- Seating that includes wider chairs, space for people to stand and move around, and space for people to sit on the floor or lie down.
- Elevator access, if not on the same floor as the main entrance

<u>Event Planning</u>
- Consider proactively providing ASL interpretation and person-provided captioning (CART)
- Advertise events with a note about what accessibility provisions will be made and the person to contact with questions about accessibility.
- Advertise events in multiple venues and formats, making sure to provide text-based advertisements (and image descriptions) that can be read by screen-readers.
- If food is provided, provide clear signage labelling allergen ingredients and indicating if dishes are meat/vegetarian/vegan.
- Consider asking/requiring people to go scent-free at the event and providing scent-free soap in the bathrooms.

<u>Online Events</u>
- Ahead of time, have the host turn on Captions in their Zoom settings (log into Zoom account, go to Settings, scroll to Closed captioning, toggle it on, and check the boxes "Allow live transcription service to transcribe meeting automatically" and "Allow viewing of full transcript in the in-meeting side panel.")
    o When starting the meeting, click CC and turn on "Enable Live Transcription."
- For larger online events open to the public, consider providing ASL interpretation and a live-captioning service.
- Advertise events with a note about what accessibility provisions will be made and the person to contact with accessibility questions.
- Encourage and model spoken descriptions and reading of PowerPoint slides or other shared visuals.

Recruitment and Hiring Practices
Be aware of ways that unyielding academic/professional norms and expectations about "fit" can serve as barriers to making our fields and departments more diverse. Make sure that judgements about dress, appearance, comportment, facial expressions, eye contact, perceived stamina, speaking style, and other such aspects of presentation, embodiment, or behavior are not displacing attention to the relevant aspects of a candidate's accomplishments and experience.
<u>Scheduling Zoom Interviews</u>
- Ask candidates' preferred name and pronouns ahead of time

- Ask if candidates have any access requests for the Zoom interview (and meet these requests). These might include
    - ASL interpretation
    - live/CART captioning (not just auto-captions)
    - an option for the candidate to leave their video off
    - a scheduled break during the interview
    - and many other possibilities
- Allow candidates to choose times that work with their schedules/time zones, where possible
- Consider providing questions ahead of time, or at least a loose agenda, along with information about who will be present at the interview and their role in the hiring department

Conducting Zoom Interviews
- Have the host turn on auto-captions in their settings and then enable live transcription at the start of the meeting
- If multiple interviewers are sitting around one computer, make sure they are close enough to be heard clearly, or consider using microphones to enhance audio
- Offer a break if one is not scheduled

Scheduling On-Campus Visits
- During Covid: make a virtual option available. (Genuine accessibility would extend this option beyond the pandemic.)
- Ask if candidates have any access requests for any part of their visit. These may include
    - booking direct flights where possible; providing aisle or window seating
    - provision of ASL interpretation
    - travel/accommodation for a personal assistant
    - providing an accessible hotel room and/or shower
    - accessible transport, parking, and/or entrances and pathways around campus/within buildings
    - holding all activities in buildings with accessible entrances, rooms, bathrooms, and working elevators
    - not scheduling events at certain times of day
    - providing seating for the candidate during a job-talk or other events
    - and many other possibilities
- Ask if candidates have food/eating/restaurant preferences that should guide choice of restaurants/meal options
    - Allows people to state that they are vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, etc., but also to request, for instance, a restaurant that is quiet
- Build in plentiful rests and breaks to the candidate's schedule, including opportunities to visit the bathroom.

Conducting On-Campus Visits
- Check in on candidates' access needs a few times during the visit in case they have changed
- Offer frequent breaks, above and beyond scheduled breaks
- Point out the location of bathrooms to the candidate as they arrive at each site during the visit
- Avoid combining mealtimes with rigorous interviewing

How Faculty and Instructors Can Improve Accessibility and Provide Support for Disabled Students

Providing Accommodations

For full information about the accommodations process, see the Center for Disability and Access.

Faculty role and responsibilities:

- The right to ask for verification from the Center for Disability & Access when the student requests an accommodation in their course or program.
- The responsibility to inform the student of the procedure to request accommodations.
- The responsibility to maintain confidentiality about any information disclosed in discussions with the student or their Disabilities Advisor.
- The right to consult the Center for Disability & Access to discuss requested accommodations.
- The responsibility to provide accommodations in a timely manner once they have been verified by the Center for Disability & Access.
- The responsibility to inform students that all course material can be made available in alternative format with prior request.
- The right and responsibility to identify and determine the abilities, skills and knowledge that are essential and fundamental to academic courses and programs. *(These standards are not subject to modification based upon disability.)*
- The right to expect the student with a disability to meet the same academic standards as peers in the course.
- Faculty are not permitted to deny an approved accommodation issued by the Center for Disability & Access without engaging with CDA to discuss their concerns.
- Faculty are not entitled to know the diagnosis of a student and should not ask students to disclose the specifics of their disability. CDA may or may not authorize alternative accommodations based on the outcome of this discussion and any additional analysis.

Course Design/Classroom and Online Practices

Resources

- Inclusive Design and Design Justice Resources, University of Utah (2021)
- CAST, Universal Design for Learning Guidelines
- Jay Dolmage, "Universal Design: Places to Start," and Appendix (2015)
- Accessible Syllabus Project, by a collective at Tulane University
- Critical Design Lab, Accessible Teaching in the Time of COVID-19, (2020)
- Margaret Price, *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life* (2011)

General Principles

- Build in options, flexibility, and feedback opportunities
- Build in redundancy: repeat important information/content and communicate it in multiple ways
- Universal Design for Learning principles advocate for:
  - Multiple means of engagement, to tap into learners' interests and increase motivation
  - Multiple means of representation, to give learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge
  - Multiple means of action and expression, to provide learners alternatives for demonstrating what they know
    - Jay Dolmage, Universal Design: Places to Start
    - See also Universal Design for Learning Guidelines

Syllabus and Syllabus Presentation/Discussion

- In presenting the syllabus to the class, acknowledge disability accommodations and the role of the Center for Disability and Access.
- Along with the institutional disability accommodations statement, you may provide your own access statement
  - Access Statement Example: "I am committed to making this course as flexible and accessible as possible. If you are finding some aspect of the course inaccessible, please let me know, and we can discuss possible alternatives. You are also encouraged to let me know if any circumstances affect your participation in the course or your ability to keep up with coursework. You do not need to share private information unless you choose to; we will focus on alternative arrangements and adjustments as needed." (Angela M. Smith)

  - Access Statement Example: "I assume that all of us learn in different ways, and that the organization of any course will accommodate each student differently. For example, you may prefer to process information by speaking and listening, so that some of the written handouts I provide may be difficult to absorb. Please talk to me as soon as you can about your individual learning needs and how this course can best accommodate them. If you do not have a documented disability, remember that other support services, including the Writing Center and the Learning Resources Center, are available to all students." (Margaret Price, cited in Wood and Madden)

Class Norms and Expectations

Make expectations/norms explicit in conversations/communications about
- how information will be shared
- expectations around attendance/presence
- what constitutes discussion and participation (e.g., valuing not just new ideas but also thoughtful paraphrasing)
- use of devices

Consider having a class discussion about collective access and creating a collective policy for the course around access and the course or classroom environment

Expand Options for Presence and Participation

- Create ways for students who miss class or who struggle with verbal participation to receive content and demonstrate their learning:
  o Collective notetaking
  o Online posting of class materials
  o Online discussion boards for posts by absent students; online tasks to complete in lieu of attending/speaking in class.
  o Options for remote access to class sessions
- Allow students to use the devices that work best for them to read class materials or take notes.

Create Multiple Channels of Feedback

  o Request feedback about students' learning process via impromptu writes, emails individual conferences, online chat spaces, letters.
    ▪ Incorporate feedback and self-reflection into assignments
  o Provide feedback: Communicate to students how they are doing in assignments, participation, and classroom interactions; redesign aspects of course where many students are not meeting expectations.

Create Options and Flexibility for Assignments

- Offer assignments in varied modes: digital formats, creative exercises, collaborative exam design, etc. (Price 97)
  o Options for written papers, but also podcasts, recorded video or PowerPoint presentations, creative options with reflective/written elements
  o Varied presentation options (in-person, video recording, audio recording, recorded PowerPoint)
- Share models of successful work
- Provide clear and generous extension policies
- Drop the lowest scores in some kinds of assignments
- Scaffold assignments; provide options for practice and review

<u>Provide Accessible Course Materials</u>

- **PDFS**
    - **Use OCR** (Optical Character Recognition) to turn image-based PDFs into text
    - **BUT:** be aware that it's best to have PDFs that are text-based from the beginning, from online sources such as journals or e-books.
- **Word Documents (e.g. handouts, lectures)**
    - Use headings (not just bold/underline, but the "Headings" function under "Styles") to provide a structure that allows people using screen readers to skip to relevant parts of the document.
    - Provide alt-text or captions for images. (To add alt-text, right-click the image and choose "Edit Alt Text")
- **PowerPoints/Visual Media**
    - Provide clear, uncluttered, large-font slides
    - Provide verbal descriptions/read aloud in class
    - Provide text (captions or alt-text) for images
    - Play/assign videos with captions
- **Alternative Formats**
    - Be aware of the option on Canvas to turn documents into audio files and other formats
    - Be prepared to convert documents to formats that work better for students' needs
    - **Screen Reader Testing:** Try out <u>NVDA for Windows</u> **or** <u>Voiceover for Mac</u>**.**
- **Post materials online, record/Zoom in-person classes, etc.**
- **See also** <u>Digital Learning Accessibility</u>**, University of Utah**

Professional Presentations

When presenting at a conference, invited lecture, panel, workshop:

- Ask organizers about accessibility provisions and practices
- Provide a copy of the talk ahead of time for interpreters and/or captioners; at a minimum, provide interpreters/captioners with a list of key terms, proper names, non-English terms, and field-specific terms you may use
- For PowerPoints or other projected material, use large fonts and create uncluttered slides; verbally describe all visual material
- If providing handouts, use sans-serif fonts and large print (or at least have some large-print versions available); describe handouts
- If showing video, include captions, and provide audio description of the clips.