

IT ACCESSIBILITY TASK FORCE 2019 REPORT

Date: February 19, 2020

To: Aaron Powell, Vice President for UW Information Technology and CIO, &
Randy Hodgins, Vice President, Office of External Affairs
University of Washington (UW)

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DESCRIPTION OF TASK FORCE

CHARGE

Develop and implement plans for promoting the procurement, development and use of accessible information technology (IT) and establish best practices campus-wide.

OBJECTIVES

- Take steps toward the procurement, development, and use of accessible websites, documents, videos, commercial software, and other IT and institutionalize cooperative relationships between key stakeholder groups at the UW.
- Develop strategies that can be applied campus-wide, such as accessibility audits and the availability of training and IT accessibility tools (e.g., Siteimprove, SensusAccess, Ally).
- Recommend steps toward a more comprehensive and coordinated campus-wide effort in promoting the development, procurement, and use of accessible IT.

SAMPLE OF ACTIVITIES

- Review the UW home page and other high level pages to ensure that they reflect a high level of accessibility.
- Ensure that current and future templates for UW web pages, presentation slides, and other documents are designed to be accessible.
- Review the UW's Accessible Technology website (uw.edu/accessibility/) and recommend the addition of content useful to the campus community (e.g., best practices, templates, guidelines, standards).
- Develop plans for promoting web, document, and video accessibility, including who should be involved and what processes should be institutionalized.
- Submit annual progress reports to project sponsors.

MEMBERSHIP

The original members of the task force represented UW External Affairs and UW Information Technology (UW-IT). The number of stakeholder groups engaged in the task force has gradually increased to include the following members who include representation from all three UW campuses:

UNIVERSITY MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

- Thomas Winston Thorpe, Director, Web Strategy, twthorpe@uw.edu

UW-IT

- Sheryl Burgstahler, Director, Accessible Technology Services (ATS), sherylb@uw.edu (chair)
- Doug Hayman, Technology Specialist (with a specialty in captioning), ATS, dhayman@uw.edu
- Terrill Thompson, Manager, IT Accessibility Team, ATS, tft@uw.edu
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HUMAN RESOURCES

- Ian Campbell, Manager, Disability Services Office (DSO), campian@uw.edu

STUDENT SERVICES

- Jack Nguyen, Assistant Director, Disability Resources for Students, jack18@uw.edu

COMPLIANCE SERVICES

- Bree Callahan, ADA Coordinator, breec@uw.edu

PROCUREMENT SERVICES

- Raymond Hsu, Director, Strategic Sourcing and Contracting, rayhsu@uw.edu

CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Karen Freisem, Instructional Consultant, kfreisem@uw.edu

FACULTY

- Torey Gilbertson, Lecturer, Rehabilitation Medicine, gilbet@uw.edu

CONTINUUM COLLEGE

- Danielle Allsop, Interim Senior Director, Academic Excellence, Instructional Excellence

UW MEDICINE

- Trina Johnson Marsh, Technology Manager, UW Medicine IT Services

UW BOTHELL

- Ana Thompson, Learning & Access Designer, thomana@uw.edu

UW TACOMA

- Patrick Pow, Vice Chancellor, Information Technology, ppow@uw.edu

RECOMMENDATIONS TO SPONSORS

The task force asks that its sponsors help to:

- Increase awareness of and promote compliance with State Policy #188–IT Accessibility and UW’s IT Accessibility Guidelines. Specifically, help educate leadership groups, perhaps by inviting ATS staff or task force members to deliver presentations.
- Encourage more units to take ownership of accessibility of their IT, either by hiring new staff or assigning accessibility roles to existing staff.
- Support efforts to increase efficiencies (e.g., through the purchase of IT accessibility tools) and to provide adequate central support to ensure IT procured, developed and used at the UW is accessible to people with disabilities.

Thank you for your continued support of task force efforts.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND FUTURE PLANS

As shared in annual reports since 2012, the full task force meets monthly and subgroups meet regularly to make progress within three areas of concern: exploration of policies/processes, enhancement and promotion of online resources, and promotion of accessible IT.

Accomplishments since the last report are summarized below.

SUMMARY

The task force has made significant contributions since its inception in 2012, particularly in developing campus guidelines and resources; creating and following system-wide IT accessibility plans; increasing campus awareness; developing proactive processes that promote the accessibility of websites, videos, and documents; and engaging accessibility enthusiasts system-wide as IT Accessibility Liaisons. However, we are far from reaching a high level of accessibility of the UW’s collection of IT. Tens of thousands of UW websites and documents

(mostly PDFs) are not accessible to individuals with disabilities, hundreds of videos remain uncaptioned, and many software products in use are not accessible to people with disabilities. Peer institutions making the greatest progress toward accessible IT, with adequate staff to sustain their efforts, are often those who have faced legal action or formal civil rights complaints regarding accessibility of their IT. We have not received a formal complaint, at least in part because of how ATS and the task force have used the resolutions resulting from complaints at other institutions as our guide toward making our campuses compliant with legal mandates as well as adhering to the requirements of Washington State Policy #188 on IT accessibility. We are satisfied with our approach, but lack adequate staff and technology resources to make the progress we consider necessary for an institution of our size.

DRS and DSO have made significant efforts, often in cooperation with ATS, in providing accommodations to specific students, faculty and staff with disabilities who encounter IT accessibility barriers, but more efforts are needed to make the IT we develop, procure and use at the UW accessible so that many of these accommodations are not required. Proactive approaches such as universal design are consistent with the social model of disability and UW efforts toward a more inclusive campuses. For example, if captioning videos and using accessible documents were standard practices at the UW, remediation of these products for students with disabilities would no longer be required. We are far from that end state, but do not doubt the importance of making progress in that direction.

EXPLORATION OF POLICIES/PROCESSES

- **State Policy #188** (ocio.wa.gov/policy/accessibility), adopted in August of 2016, establishes “the expectation for state agencies that people with disabilities have access to and use of information and data and be provided access to the same services and content that is available to persons without disabilities...” Sheryl Burgstahler continues to serve as UW Coordinator with respect to Policy #188 and ensures that Policy requirements and deadlines are met by the UW.
- **Accessible IT Plans and Progress** are regularly posted on the IT Accessibility website at <https://uw.edu/accessibility/plan>.
- **Procurement Guidelines** developed in cooperation with the task force are summarized on the Accessible Technology website at <https://uw.edu/accessibility/procurement> and are included in Section 7.2.15 of the Purchasing Policies and Procedures Manual at <https://finance.uw.edu/ps/resources/policies-and-procedures>.
- **Annual IT Accessibility Report.** ATS’s 2019 report includes data reflecting the state of accessibility at the UW that suggests that much more needs to be done to promote the use of accessible IT on UW campuses.
- **DRS and ATS Processes.** The collaboration between DRS and ATS continues to be strong and led to a plan for a collaborative Accessible Media Center in 2019, however space has not been secured for the effort.
- **Feedback Mechanism.** The earlier established procedure for reporting IT accessibility barriers continues to be featured prominently on the home page of the Accessible Technology site.
- **Future Plans.** The task force will continue exploring ways to, on all three campuses:

- Promote implementation of the State Policy #188, IT accessibility guidelines, and IT accessibility in procurement policy in units and in specific workflows.
- Consolidate and coordinate policies, regulations, and other information relevant to IT to make it easier for users to find information.
- Locate channels through which to connect with department coordinators and/or department instructional designers to promote accessibility as part of their workflows and join the IT Accessibility Liaisons group.

ENHANCEMENT AND PROMOTION OF ONLINE RESOURCES

- **SensusAccess.** ATS and DRS continue to co-fund a license for this web-based product that converts documents from inaccessible formats (e.g., a scanned PDF image) to more accessible formats. The service continues to be promoted through DRS, DSO, and ATS. The UW Document Conversion Service (tinyurl.com/uw-doc-convert) is linked from the DRS, Accessible Technology at the UW, ATC and other UW websites. Since unveiling the service in December 2014, it has been utilized by over 1000 unique users, including 91 users who have converted 10 or more documents.
- **Blackboard Ally.** This year UW-IT, a plug-in for promoting accessibility of online instruction within Canvas, was fully implemented system-wide. It has been favorably received by students, faculty, and administrators and has increased awareness of accessibility issues and solutions.
- **Siteimprove.** This online service—which crawls websites and reports broken links, spelling errors and accessibility issues—continues to be funded by University Advancement and used by multiple campus units. As of December 2019, 119 websites at the UW were using Siteimprove. Of these, 30 sites (25%) showed improvement since December 2018. An ongoing limitation of the impact of Siteimprove is that our current license covers the scanning of no more than 50,000 pages, which is a tiny fraction of the overall UW web. A subgroup of the task force continues to actively explore sources of funding to expand to an unlimited license enabling access for all UW website owners.
- **Accessible Technology Website Improvements.** Task force members and their associates continued to improve the UW’s Accessible Technology website. In particular, new pages were added on social media accessibility and captioning in Zoom, and dozens of other pages were edited to reflect changes in IT accessibility best practices. Also, a new dedicated page was created for the IT Accessibility Liaisons network. Additional work began in 2019 on website features that would be introduced in 2020, including a UW Accessible Technology Blog, an IT Accessibility Pledge, and a significant update to the IT Accessibility Guidelines to address new requirements introduced in WCAG 2.1. The website attracted 235,391 page views in 2019.
- **Future Plans.** The task force will continue to:
 - Update the Accessible Technology website to provide relevant content for various stakeholder groups.
 - Recommend automated tools for testing the accessibility of IT and remediating IT products.
 - Explore funding sources for expanding our Siteimprove license or purchasing other licenses to be used by all UW website owners to test the accessibility of their websites.
 - Increase levels of promotion of the use of Siteimprove, Ally, SensusAccess, YouTube Caption Auditor (YTCA), and Able Player (accessible HTML media player). Both

YTCA and Able Player are free, open-source tools created and maintained by ATS with support from AccessComputing.

- Develop and promote the use of accessible UW-branded templates and themes for websites, documents, events, and presentations.

PROMOTION OF ACCESSIBLE IT

- **Captioning Videos.** ATS continues to manage central funds for captioning high-traffic, high impact videos. In 2019, ITAT staff captioned 179 videos with over 71 hours of run time, estimated to impact over 59,000 viewers. ITAT staff also audio-described 2 videos, a service that helps individuals with visual impairments. ATS conducted periodic audits of known UW-affiliated YouTube channels using YTCA. As of December 2019, we now have over 37,000 videos (nearly 12,000 hours of programming) across 87 known channels. Only 25.8% of these videos are captioned, yet it represents a significant increase from March 2019 (20.7%), and much higher than when we started keeping track in August 2015 (7.6%). Note, however that the December report does not include the "UDUBTV (Athletics)" channel, which has more videos than any other channel (1,665 in March). In November, Google significantly reduced our daily quota for using the YouTube Data API, and the "UDUBTV (Athletics)" channel is too large to be included in the report given our new quota. A revised March 2019 report, excluding that same channel, found that 23.1% of videos had been captioned then. The increase to 25.8% between March and December is still significant. Also of note, 15 channels have captioned over 50% of their videos, which is three fewer channels than the 18 that met this threshold in March. The three channels that slipped beneath 50% seem to have uploaded new videos to their channel in 2019 without captioning them. There are also 36 channels in the December report that have captioned none of their videos. That's less than in the March report, when there were 39 channels in this group. One of those was "UDUBTV (Athletics)", which as noted above is no longer included in the report. The two channels that have started captioning are "University of Washington Dept. of Philosophy" and "UW Spanish & Portuguese". ITAT staff utilize this data as they reach out to channel owners in an effort to persuade them to caption their videos. Also, using data collected over time with YTCA, ITAT staff have identified 31 YouTube channels that seem to be inactive (they have not uploaded any new videos over the past year or more and have not responded to our efforts to contact channel owners). These channels will be audited separately in 2020, in order to ensure we're focusing our efforts on active channels.
- **Inaccessible PDFs.** The task force continues to identify the proliferation of inaccessible PDF files to be a high-level concern. In Fall 2019, ITAT staff began providing free remediation of PDF documents that are highly-visible, high-impact, multiple use, and/or strategic. This year, ITAT staff members have remediated 3862 PDF pages, positively affecting thousands of students, faculty, staff, and visitors as they access public-facing documents. Creating accessible documents helps individuals who have disabilities (e.g., individuals with specific learning disabilities or visual disabilities) and others, such as English language learners. ITAT continues to offer resources and tools to teach others how to create accessible documents using software provided by the UW.
- **Campus Web Accessibility Support.** ATS staff continues to provide individualized and group support to web designers and developers both on request and through targeted outreach. UW web designers and developers are offered various means of receiving

accessibility support, including the monthly UW Web Accessibility and Usability Meetup, the AccessibleWeb Mailman list, and individual website reviewed offered on request by ATS staff. Starting in 2020, ATS staff will also be offering drop-in office hours as part of the monthly Morning of Web, a monthly series of web-focused meetings that include Web Council, Drupal and WordPress User Groups, and Office Hours for both ATS and University Marketing and Communications (UMAC).

- **The University Marketing and Communications Web Development Team** has continued its efforts to increase the accessibility of its products and services, in collaboration with ATS staff. Accessibility improvements were made to the UW Boundless WordPress theme, PowerPoint templates, and to multiple feature stories that were highlighted on the home page. Multiple members of the team participated in the UW Drupal/WordPress Accessibility Sprint, a full-day event organized jointly by the UW Drupal and WordPress User Groups and held in December 2019. The event was very well attended, with 35 attendees fixing numerous accessibility bugs. Planning is already underway for future similar events in 2020.
- **Campus Presentations and Events.** Task force members delivered multiple accessibility-focused presentations, trainings, and meetings in 2019, including those hosted by the UW Web Council, UW Bothell, UW Tacoma, Continuum College, the UW Engineering Department, Learning Technologies, UW Libraries, the Siteimprove Users Group, WordPress Users Group, Drupal Users Group, UW Assessment Working Group, Front-End Developers Community of Practice, and the UW Elearning Special Interest Group. A collaborative presentation occurred at TechConnect, a system-wide event where the IT community learns and shares content and promising practices. ATS staff led courses for UW-IT Learning Technologies, covering topics that include accessible document creation, website accessibility, and PDF accessibility and remediation. UW Bothell Office of Digital Learning and Innovation (DLI) led workshops on Canvas accessibility, Document and PDF accessibility/remediation, a week-long online course on accessibility basics for instructors, a presentation with librarians on inclusive teaching, JIT training for the new ASUWB marketing team on accessible content and user-centered design, a workshop of accessible MS Office documents for the P&A Web Team, Introduction to Ally Canvas course and workshop, Open Learning Lab (OLL) student lab redesign to provide accessible options for students and Web Communications provided training on web content accessibility. ATS also continued to host monthly Web Accessibility and Usability Meetups in which campus web developers shared their projects in progress, asked questions related to coding practices, and discussed challenging issues in accessible web design and development.
- **Off Campus Presentations and Events.** Task force members and their colleagues delivered presentations, hosted booths, and organized pre-conference events at various academic conferences including Accessing Higher Ground, the California State University Northridge (CSUN) Assistive Technology Conference, the Northwest Academic Computing Consortium, EDUCAUSE, and the Access Technology Higher Education Network (ATHEN) Virtual Conference. Webinar presentations included those hosted by the University of Washington, Technical1ly.org, and 3PlayMedia.
- **Capacity Building Institutes (CBIs).** The task force gave input and recruited participants for the Washington State Online Learning CBI held in May 2019 at the University of Washington, Seattle. The CBI brought together a total of more than twenty instructors, administrators, and technology developers, to share ideas and expertise

regarding instruction and use of creation of online learning tools that create welcoming and accessible experiences that everyone can use and participate in, including those with disabilities. Most attendees represented colleges and universities across Washington State.

- **IT Accessibility Liaisons.** The task force and ATS worked together to increase the number of UW staff volunteering as IT Accessibility Liaisons to more than 130 members. Each Liaison formally agrees to communicate online, meet about three times per year and promote accessible IT in their units. Three half-day meetings of IT Accessibility Liaisons were held in 2019, focusing on Ally, accessible forms, and implementing IT accessibility within units and departments, respectively.
- **Future Plans.** Along with ongoing activities, future work includes these tasks:
 - Continue to identify the proliferation of videos that lack captions and audio description and to provide financial and technical support for addressing accessibility of high-impact, high-use videos. Consider offering other incentives for improving accessibility of collections of UW videos.
 - Encourage faculty and staff to use accessible HTML as the primary means of sharing content and, if desirable, attach PDFs as a secondary option for the user, especially those who wish a printed version of the content. Continue to document and share efficient workflows for reducing the need for PDFs as the primary means for sharing content continue to explore costs for using outside vendors in remediating PDFs.
 - Deliver more presentations and other outreach, including effective training and support for Ally.
 - Recruit more IT Accessibility Liaisons and continue to engage and support them through various activities, including 3 half-day meetings per year.
 - Offer capacity building institutes (CBIs) for Washington state postsecondary institutions on IT accessibility and accessible online learning. Consider developing a new half day, full day, or online training which provides an overview of accessible IT issues for people at the UW new to this content, including those who wish to become IT Accessibility Liaisons.
 - Consider offering a Canvas course on accessible online learning.
 - Consider offering a UW Professional Organizational Development course on accessible IT.
 - Organize an IT Accessibility Awards event to coincide with Global Accessibility Awareness Day (May 21, 2020). In addition to other awards presented at this event, present an *Accessible IT Capacity Building Award* for promoting the accessible design of IT and universal design of instruction both onsite and online. Recipients of these awards are groups of people at the UW who have promoted the procurement, development, deployment and use of IT that is accessible to faculty, staff, students and visitors with disabilities.

The task force will continue its practice of supporting several focused projects on critical areas of need. Thus far we have organized the following special projects (the name of the person leading each project appears in parentheses):

- Math/STEM Accessibility Project to explore practices and tools for the creating and

- remediation of accessible math and STEM materials. (Terrill)
- Hardware Accessibility Project to explore the accessibility of hardware system-wide. (Terrill)
 - Forms Accessibility Project to promote the use of accessible forms system-wide. (Terrill)
 - Maps Accessibility Project to promote the accessibility of campus maps. (Terrill)
 - Exploration of possibility for a high-level IT Accessibility Policy for UW. (Bree)