**Lessons Learned: How the University of Colorado Boulder is Addressing Digital Accessibility**

Presenters:

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# Learning Outcomes:

Attendees will understand the University of Colorado’s Department of Justice investigation regarding information and communication technology accessibility barriers and will be able to identify key remediation techniques that the institution is implementing to address the investigation.

Attendees will be able to identify information and communication technology accessibility barriers at their institutions and discuss potential solutions.

Abstract:With information and communication technology (ICT) evolving at a rapid pace, institutions are finding it difficult to remain proactive in implementing digital accessibility standards. This group of IT and DS staff will share the University of Colorado Boulder’s Department of Justice investigation and what your institution is experiencing regarding ICT accessibility (Google apps, placement exams, learning management systems, etc.).

# Summary/Outline of presentation

## Introduction:

In February 2014, the University of Colorado Boulder received a Department of Justice (DOJ) investigation letter that addressed the institutions accessibility concerning information and communication technology (ICT). These accessibility shortcomings were taken to the DOJ by students with low vision/blindness at CU-Boulder after continued ICT barriers. This presentation will explain what led to the DOJ investigation, what the DOJ investigation letter entailed, and what the institution is doing to ensure a sustainable and inclusive environment for the CU-Boulder community regarding ICT accessibility and usability.

By attending this presentation, it is the hope of the presenters that attendees will feel comfortable in engaging in conversation throughout the session about ICT accessibility and usability at their respective institutions as well as discussing ways in which all of our institutions can become more proactive and ICT accessibility minded.

A definition of “ICT” and “Accessible” will be provided for attendees. In addition, the DOJ letter will also be provided as well as a brief overview of the ICT barriers identified in the letter.

## How CU-Boulder got here:

While many theories can be put to play here, a common theme has arisen throughout CU-Boulder’s ICT accessibility initiative, strategic communication. We will present the historical organizational structure of CU-Boulder for departments who are currently involved in the ICT accessibility initiative. We will also address challenges that have arisen with having a large infrastructure of those providing some form of ICT to the CU-Boulder campus: Office of Information Technology (OIT), University Communications (UComm), Disability Services (DS), the ADA Coordinator’s office, and the Arts and Sciences Support of Education through Technology (ASSETT). Our goal in pulling these departments together is to implement structural and cultural change in addition to authority over ICT accessibility. While accessibility is a campus responsibility and collaboration to meet the needs of individuals will always be a team effort, it is our finding that ICT accessibility belongs within OIT on the CU-Boulder campus. Collaboration and strategic communication has been key for this initiative and we will provide examples of our successes and shortfalls regarding our progress leading up to and prior to the DOJ investigation, including an overview CU-Boulder’s 2012 ICT Accessibility Study Report—a study of ICT accessibility findings before the DOJ investigation.

## How CU-Boulder is addressing the investigation:

Upon receipt of the DOJ letter, teams were formed and external consultants were hired. As a result of the initiative, the following working teams are in place in order of hierarchy and their roles in remediation, implementation, and decision-making will be discussed in depth:

Executive Team-includes Provost, Chancellors, General Counsel

Steering Team: includes management staff from OIT, ADA Office, Disability Services

Working Group: includes staff from OIT, ADA Office, Disability Services

Core Teams: includes staff from OIT, ADA Office, Disability Services, UComm, ASSETT, Procurement Services, Faculty

The Core Teams are responsible for ensuring that CU-Boulder addresses the barriers identified in the DOJ letter with the end goal of becoming a leader in ICT accessibility. The processes and solutions that the four Core Teams are engaged in will be discussed in depth:

1.      **ICT Policy:**This team is working on policy development and the accompanying documents needed to guide and enforce legal requirements as well as best practices and standards for ICT accessibility. The most up-to-date draft policy will be presented during this session.

2.      **ICT Support Services:**This team is working on developing and assisting in implementing a formal ICT support services unit and consultation structure for campus constituents using accessibility features of digital technologies on campus—a formal structure has not existed on campus previously. This team has completed a gap analysis of ICT accessibility services and has made formal recommendations to the Working Group regarding next steps, including the creation of a Universal Design Coordinator position and an ICT Accessibility Coordinator position.

3.      **ICT Applications and Technical Remediation:**This team is identifying needed technical remediations (Google Applications, Learning Management Systems like Desire2Learn, placement tests such as Aleks) and determining the process for ensuring their accessibility. This team is working to determine resources to manage vendor requests and fix the barriers that can be fixed by Boulder campus resources.  This team will also continue to work on recommending communications and/or workarounds in cases where technical remediations are not possible.

4.      **ICT Communication and Documentation:**This team is in the process of developing, distributing, managing and maintaining communications processes, training resources and distribution channels in support of ICT accessibility capabilities and requirements for supported digital technologies on campus.

# Conclusion

Because information and communication technology evolve at a rapid pace, it is difficult for institutions to remain proactive. By sharing the developments currently unfolding at CU-Boulder, we will conclude with an open discussion regarding CU-Boulder’s next steps for structural and cultural change and what attendees are doing to ensure equal access at their institutions.