



3-Year IT Accessibility Plan

Executive Summary

The University of Maryland is committed to strive toward the accessibility of its services and technical resources. To this end, a 3-year plan has been developed to have the best level of accessibility that is reasonable to our systems, applications and services in conformance with applicable state and federal regulations and standards. Accordingly, the Division of Information Technology will seek to provide that level in the planning, designing, maintenance and procurement of technological resources and in the provision of its services. In conforming to the appropriate standards, the level of accessibility will be largely determined by the nature of the technology (hardware or software) or service, and it will be consistent with the obligations to maintain the health of existing systems and to preserve the quality of the user's experience.

The 3-year IT Accessibility Plan to be implemented by the Division of IT outlines steps to improve technical support to achieve accessible IT services. It does not include the establishment of minimum standards on campus or recommendations for enforcement of policies or guidelines related to accessibility. The steps outlined in this plan were defined based on the minimum requirements set forth in laws, rules and regulations. Nonetheless, the division commits to continuously provide the best technical level of accessibility that is reasonable and possible and not simply to provide the minimum level that is required by law.

By following the principles of usability and universal design, the effective level of accessibility is broadened, increasing access to students, faculty, staff and visitors. This is a key component in the university's effort to create and sustain a positive user experience that is available, adaptable and appropriate to the needs of the community.

The 3-year IT Accessibility Plan provides actions and implementation deadlines contingent on the final approval date (11/25/2015). It is expected that the plan will be respectively endorsed and approved, by the President's Commission on Disability Issues, and the Information Technology Council. Excluding extenuating circumstances, it is expected that the actions described on this plan will be implemented within the next 3 years. The DIT accessibility committee will have the role of oversight of implementation of this plan, and to iteratively evaluate IT resources and user experience related to accessibility on campus. In addition, the University will remain attentive to new developments in accessible technologies to prove the institutional commitment to equity and diversity and the full inclusion of people with diverse abilities and differing capacities for accessing information and engaging with learning and technological resources.

Based on the recommendations of the University of Maryland IT Accessibility Committee, composed of a diverse group of individuals from across the campus, the plan focuses on the following strategic areas:

1. Web Accessibility
2. Course (re)Design
3. Multimedia Development
4. eLearning Tools
5. Assistive Technology Tools



Strategic Area 1: Web Accessibility

Individuals who have disabilities should be able to successfully access and interact with the information available online. To facilitate creation and dissemination of accessible information, DIT is committed to have enterprise software that enables scanning to automatically discover violations of guidelines and standards. This tool will make it easy for web site developers to learn where websites have features that are not accessible to people with disabilities, and it will also provide suggestions for how to improve the website - making the website more accessible for everyone, whether they have disabilities or not. This software will assist website developers and content contributors to make websites and Web applications accessible and usable to everyone, including people who use assistive technologies such as screen readers, text readers, and voice-activated devices to browse online information. Although DIT is committed to provide such a resource, an institutional policy needs to be developed (along with related procedures) to establish appropriate standards for Web accessibility.

Principles

- Web accessibility standards should be widely recognized throughout the campus community
- Web designers, developers and Web content managers should be able to scan existing and new websites and Web applications for common accessibility guidelines such as WCAG and U.S. federal standards such as Section 508.

Deadline	Actions
03/2016	<p>Provide the necessary technical information to enable UMD leaders to create a policy that establishes appropriate standards for the accessibility of Web-based information and services and ensure compliance with applicable state and federal regulations.</p> <p>Partner with the University Relations, Department of Marketing and Communications to develop a business process that ensures newly created websites and applications, whether developed by UMD or procured from an external vendor, follow appropriate accessibility standards until a UMD policy is created and implemented.</p>
07/2016	<p>Pilot Web accessibility software (HiSoftware Compliance Sheriff, already procured by DIT) with one academic (Office of Undergraduate Studies) and one administrative (Student Affairs Division) unit on campus and report strengths and weakness related to system/tool administration, effectiveness and usability.</p> <p>Design and communicate DIT services related to Web accessibility on campus.</p>
08/2016	<p>Deploy an enterprise-wide software solution (and IT support) that enables legacy and new Web pages published by any college, department, program or unit to assess their Web accessibility compliance based on appropriate accessibility standards until a UMD policy is created and implemented.</p>

Resources:

Technical

Enterprise-wide licensed software (e.g., HiSoftware Compliance Sheriff) that enables UMD users to scan public and password-protected UMD-hosted websites and applications for accessibility compliance.

Personnel

One full-time employee to design the Web accessibility services on campus and work as the system administrator for the enterprise compliance tool. Additionally, a full-time graduate assistant to provide tier 2 and 3 support for Web content managers and Web application developers on campus.



Strategic Area 2: Course (re)Design

Canvas by Instructure® is the university's official Enterprise Learning Management System (ELMS). The challenge with making learning accessible arises not with the delivery system, but, rather, with the kinds of content that are uploaded or linked into ELMS such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint and PDF documents, Web pages and digital media. Instructional designers and instructors on campus should be encouraged and enabled to (re)design accessible course spaces.

Principles:

- Web-based (ELMS) instructional materials should be accessible.
- Instructors should have abundant and usable resources and information to help them (re)design accessible courses hosted on ELMS.
- Instructors should have abundant learning opportunities and personalized instructional design services to help them (re)design accessible courses hosted on ELMS.
- Accessible course content should improve the accessibility experience of students learning with technology at UMD.

Deadline	Actions
03/2016	<p>Develop targeted documentation and training on accessible course design on ELMS.</p> <p>Develop new instructional videos, workshops and documentation that explores multiple modes of accessibility on content creation and course (re)design on ELMS.</p> <p>Develop course design accessibility compliance checklist for instructors who are hosting content on ELMS.</p> <p>Train DIT instructional designers to provide consultation on accessible course (re)design on ELMS.</p> <p>Launch the Access Learning website as a repository for eLearning accessibility support (http://blog.umd.edu/accesslearning/).</p>
07/2017	All legacy DIT instructional materials used to support faculty in course development will be accessible.

Resources:

Technical

JAWS and/or other screen reader tools for DIT staff to use when supporting faculty with accessible course (re)design. Desktop computer (Windows) dedicated for testing of assistive technology applications.

Personnel

One full-time dedicated instructional designer to focus on accessibility issues and coordinate instructional content compliance efforts. A full-time graduate assistant to provide technical support for assistive technology tools, as well as for video (screen capture) production software.



Strategic Area 3: Multimedia Development

To provide equal opportunity for access to individuals with disabilities, accessible information also encompasses the development of multimedia (audio and video) available to our campus community. Therefore it is imperative that multimedia resources are accessible and reachable from a variety of devices and applications. For instance, individuals who have hearing loss will need access to captioning, sign-translated, or other appropriate resources. Similarly, individuals who are visually impaired should be able to fully access video-only products by using audio descriptions of the video content or transcripts that can be accessed using screen reader software or other appropriate resources.

Principles:

- Technological resources for closed captioning and audio descriptions should be made available for instructors.
- Academic and administrative units should make existing and new public (procured and developed) multimedia accessible when possible.

Deadline	Actions
03/2016	Video captioning service will be available to instructors who are aware of enrollment of student(s) requiring accommodation in their courses to ensure access to course content.
07/2016	Video captioning services will be available to all individuals or instructors in charge of developing and/or streaming multimedia content (audio and video). Development of documentation/instruction pertaining to the use of public video sharing web sites and screen captioning software options will be made available on the Web.

Resources:

Technical

Captioning and transcription service contract with vendor that supports on-demand, rapid turnaround for instructional content as well as standard turnaround (approx. 4-5 business days). Identification of companies that provide captioning services.

Personnel

Individual to coordinate the procurement and oversight of these service vendors.



Strategic Area 4: eLearning Tools

The use of eLearning tools provides students with the opportunity to engage with their peers and gain a rich learning experience. To be truly collaborative, students of all abilities must be provided the opportunity to participate and contribute. Therefore, enterprise-wide eLearning tools at UMD should be accessible to students and faculty with disabilities.

Principles:

- eLearning tools (existing and new) should meet appropriate accessibility requirements for compliance.
- Faculty and staff currently using eLearning tools that do not meet appropriate requirements should be provided with alternative compliant tools.

Deadline	Actions
03/2016	<p>Identify and assess adopted eLearning tools according for compliance with the appropriate requirements.</p> <p>Identify and document alternative tools or strategies that provide similar functionality and that are compliant to replace the non-compliant tools.</p>
12/2016	<p>Develop guidelines to assist faculty and staff in the integration of learning tools and software into their courses to ensure information accessibility to all users.</p> <p>Provide the necessary information to the Office of Procurement and Strategic Sourcing so that new products and services are procured in conformance with applicable state and federal accessibility regulations and standards.</p>

Resources:

Technical

Access to enterprise-wide eLearning tools for testing.

Personnel

DIT staff to assess new learning tools for accessibility.



Strategic Area 5: Assistive/Adaptive Technology Tools

The University of Maryland already provides necessary accommodations for our Disability Support Service (DSS)-registered students, faculty and staff and visitors as required by Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as amended. However, by broadening delivery of and access to information throughout the university, we will enrich learning and research experiences and increase community inclusion for any student, faculty, staff member or visitor with different information access needs.

Principles:

- The UMD user experience should be positively impacted by maintenance of accessible facilities and services through the broad campus utilization and availability of universally designed tools that allow for the presence of flexible information technology environments.
- Students, faculty and staff and visitors with disabilities should have equal opportunity to attend, interact and succeed through access to UMD assistive/adaptive technology resources and services.

Deadline	Actions
03/2016	Identify existing assistive technology tools currently being used at UMD and assess how these resources are meeting the needs for all DSS-registered students, faculty and staff.
07/2016	Develop a plan for procurement, deployment and maintenance of adaptive/assistive technologies at UMD. The plan should include, but not be limited to, the following software categories: Dictation, Scan and Read, Screen Readers, Visual Outlining and Concept Organization, and Voiced Screen Magnification.
12/2016	Procure, deploy and maintain adaptive/assistive technologies on campus. Partner with Disability Support Services to continuously deploy and maintain assistive devices and software available for use or checkout.

Resources:

Technical

Assistive/Adaptive Technologies needed: Dragon Naturally-Speaking Professional V13; Inspiration; Window-Eyes or NVDA (free); Kurzweil 3000; Windows and Apple Built-In Screen Magnifiers

Personnel

DIT project leader to coordinate the plan with the campus partners.



Contributors

The Division of IT would like to thank the following members of the UMD-IT Accessibility Committee for all their contributions to this plan.

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The President's Commission on Disability Issues (PCDI) has endorsed this plan.