# From the Ground Up Handout

Kate DeForest

Web/Digital Content Coordinator, SUNY Oswego

[kathleen.deforest@oswego.edu](mailto:kathleen.deforest@oswego.edu)

[linkedin.com/in/kate-deforest/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/kate-deforest/)

Luz Española

Accessibility Specialist, CSU Monterey Bay

[luzespanola@CSU Monterey Bay.edu](mailto:luzespanola@csumb.edu)

[linkedin.com/in/luzespanola](https://www.linkedin.com/in/luzespanola?lipi=urn%3Ali%3Apage%3Ad_flagship3_profile_view_base_contact_details%3B02gPmuiRRHS%2B4SWunqi8bw%3D%3D)

## Intros - Slide 1

* Kate DeForest, Web/Digital Content Coordinator for SUNY Oswego. Member of the IT Accessibility Steering Committee and Workgroup on Accessibility Practices. Former chair of the Workgroup and the Remediation team.
* Luz Espanola, Accessibility Specialist with an Instructional Design background. Member of the Accessible Technology Initiative and Digital Accessibility Policy Committee. Membership coordinator for ATHEN.
* We met at AHG 2022. As we got talking, we realized we have a lot of parallels between us, our responsibilities, and our universities.

## Strategies - Slide 2

Steps each university has taken to:

* Create partnerships across multiple departments
* Broaden the understanding of the terms “accessible” and “accessibility” in relation to equality and inclusion
* Shift the narrative to encourage and empower others to remove barriers and push the momentum forward

## Background - Slide 3

*Very brief description of how each university started our accessibility efforts*

### Oswego:

* OCR complaint in 2017 for inaccessible web pages
* Corrected issues, became very proactive to avoid being in that position again
* In 2019, the State University system mandated all SUNY campuses name EIT officer and create a digital accessibility plan

### CSU Monterey Bay:

* University leadership wanted to uphold our mission statement (equal and inclusive access to education).
* Push from CSU Chancellor's office to complete Assistive Technology Initiative (ATI) reporting for all 23 campuses.
* Need to hire and create new positions for campus efforts with digital accessibility and ATI reporting.

## Create partnerships - Slide 4

*How we create and maintain partnerships and allies across departments and continue to grow the people involved with the accessibility initiative*

* **Form committees and groups**
* **Network with professionals**

### Oswego:

* Workgroup on Accessibility Practices
  + Troubleshoots accessibility issues, helps educate campus community, brainstorms new ideas of how to spread initiative
* Actively recruit for Accessibility Faculty Fellows
  + Volunteer group, advocates for accessibility and liaisons for their departments
  + They incorporate accessibility into course materials and teach it in classes
  + Receive course reduction or stipend for meeting program requirements
* Provide professional development opportunities whenever possible
  + Take advantage of knowledge hierarchy

### CSU Monterey Bay:

* Assistive Technology Initiative (ATI) Committee
  + Business office managers
  + Information Technology Chief Officer
  + Web folk
  + Information Technology Security
  + Instructional academic support
* Collaboration between IT marketing team, Student Disability Resources, Instructional Designers, Accessibility Specialist
* Present at every opportunity
* Network outside of the university community

## Broaden the Understanding - Slide 5

*How do we help people understand the inclusive definition of the terms “accessible” and “accessibility”*

* **Be intentional**
* **Adapt your message**
* **Be an advocate**

### Oswego:

* Make accessibility an automatic part of conversation
  + People generally don’t realize or understand that they need this information
  + Include in course developments, regular department meetings, and web editor training
* Be very specific when talking about digital accessibility
* Provide resources on how to make content accessible
  + Tutorials
  + Checklists
  + LinkedIn
  + Deque University

### CSU Monterey Bay:

* Be intentional with your verbiage and adapt the message to your audience
  + Provide a glossary of terms for accessibility if necessary
  + The concept is universal but can have a different lens from a faculty to a student perspective
* Don’t be afraid to be the squeaky wheel
  + 99% of the time it is welcomed
  + Don’t want to wait until a complaint or lawsuit comes, be proactive
* Get as involved as you can with accessibility efforts on your campus.
  + Opportunities will make themselves available as you take on this effort

## Shift the Narrative - Slide 6

*Encourage people to join, rather than forcing them*

* **Create a positive experience**
* **Words and phrasing matter**
* **Meet audience where they are**

### Oswego:

* Make the content creators the Good Guy
  + Use positive language around digital accessibility
  + Rather than stating “You need to make your materials more accessible,” tell people they are creating a positive experience for others by making materials more inclusive.
* Explain the benefits digital accessibility has to a wide audience
  + Design for outlying circumstances, and more people will benefit
* Break it down
  + Focus on one or two aspects at a time, not the whole mountain

### CSU Monterey Bay:

* Make it an “Us” thing - Community
  + Build an awareness. By creating for the web, we are all responsible for accessible content.
  + For example, having faculty realize they are content creators and have responsibility to provide accessible course content
* Create digestible training, awareness campaigns: easy to use and learn from
* Demystify accessibility every chance you get!
  + One on one opportunities
  + Group workshops
  + Campus marketing

## Get Started with Small Steps- Slide 7

*Small, “easy” ways to start incorporating digital accessibility for the audience*

* **Start where you are**
* **Don’t make assumptions**
* **Ask for help**

### Oswego:

* Use opportunities that are already available to introduce and talk about accessibility.
  + Slip it into meetings. Plant the seed. Make it an automatic part of the conversation.
* Use real-world examples to demonstrate that accessibility helps everyone, not just those with disabilities
  + Automatic doors
  + Hands-free GPS
  + Captions
* Network, connect with, and learn from others, both within and outside of your organization

### CSU Monterey Bay:

* Start with platforms you have access to.
  + Faculty and staff training, one on one consultations, procurement opportunities, web training, web design, instructional design courses
* Know your audience and be intentional in how accessibility is relatable to what they do
* It is ok to start with low stakes opportunities, Word of Mouth will get around!