New Legal Requirements for your Electronic Documents – 12/11/2018

Did you know that there are Federal laws that require us to make all instructional documents usable by people with disabilities?

These laws aren't actually new, they were signed into law in the 1990's. What's new is that the Chancellor's office is implementing stricter oversight that community colleges actually follow these laws.
Additionally, there have some lawsuits brought by disabled students against public institutions that have not made their electronic documents **accessible** (i.e. usable by students with disabilities.)

At Palomar College, Vice President for Instruction, Jack Kahn, has formed an "Accessibility Workgroup" that has been planning how to move forward with getting the faculty the training and guidance they need to begin the process of checking and correcting any current electronic documents they are distributing and how to properly create and new electronic document they may need in the future.

The purpose of this email is to give you a "Preview of Coming Attractions" regarding what you to do to make your electronic documents accessible. The major rollout of training, etc. is scheduled to begin in early March.

There are **three major categories of disabilities** that need to be accommodated: visual, auditory, and motor (e.g. An inability to have full use of one's hands)

This applies to **all** electronic documents (e.g. Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Google Docs, videos, web pages, etc.), this is **not just for online classes**! If you are teaching a **lecture class** and distribute your Syllabus as an MS Word document you **must** make the document **accessible** to people who have disabilities.

At this point, many of you are probably thinking, **"Yeah, right... how do I do that?"**

Fortunately, we are going to provide the training and support you need.   The ATRC is developing workshops for each situation that needs to be handled, there will be self-paced online tutorials provided, and one-on-one in-person help when requested.

While the major rollout of the training materials will not happen until March, there will be a few workshops during the Spring plenary that you may want to take to get a head start on this.

You will not be expected to do everything!   For example, all videos must be captioned.   There are free resources available that will caption your videos for you. We will show you how to get that done.

Another thing to consider is that, **accessibility** not only applies to documents that **you create**, all documents from **outside sources must be made accessible.**

I'm sure everyone is wondering, "**How much work will this all be?"**

If the only documents you distribute electronically are your Syllabus, and perhaps a few assignments in MS Word, this probably won't take too much time.   You'll probably need a couple hours of training on MS Word Accessibility and then you will use that training to remediate the few documents you distribute.

If you are like me, however, and have many web pages, videos, images, PDFs, etc. that are distributed to students, this task will take significantly more time.

Fortunately, everything does not need to be done at once.   You can remediate one document at time.

I recommend that you begin to **make a list** of what **electronic documents you do distribute.** Consider putting the files on the list into **categories** based on what **type of document** they are, e.g. Canvas content page, PDF, MS Word, etc. since you can get separate training on each document type you will need to deal with.

More information about the timeline for getting this work completed will be provided in the Spring.

Get used to hearing/seeing the words **Accessible** and **Accessibility.**   They don't just mean that your documents are easy to use, they mean that **students with disabilities are able to use them** and that there are **Federal laws** that require that we make **all instructional electronically distributed documents accessible.**

- Steve

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