

Accessibility in the Classroom

There are many ways you can make your class more accessible to all students without changing your teaching goals. The Accessibility and Technology Committee has put together these resources to help get you started.

Overall Course Design

Consider using Universal Design for Learning (UDL). This is a set of principles that provides maximum accessibility for all students regardless of disability status. The main premise of UDL is that offering multiple modes for instruction and assessment can improve student learning. This does not eliminate any modes of learning or assessment, rather it helps faculty focus on assessing what is most relevant to the subject and skills at hand. Here is a good basic description of UDL:

<http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/universaldesign/?Page=about-udl/index.php&SM=about-udl/submenu.html>

More resources can be found on our Disability Resource Blog. <http://blogs.berkshirecc.edu/drc/>

Helping Screen Readers

Many students, including blind, dyslexic, and brain-injured students, use computers to read their documents to them since reading may be a very inefficient way for them to take in information. Many of our students use the “Read Out Loud” feature (under the View menu) in Adobe Acrobat. Adobe has written an extensive document about how to make accessible PDFs that can be found here:

http://www.adobe.com/enterprise/accessibility/pdfs/acro7_pg_ue.pdf

1. Use styles in word processing documents when creating documents that might be read electronically. This makes documents read by screen readers more comprehensible because they can see the structure of the document (e.g., headings and tables). Here is a tutorial on using styles in Microsoft Word <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word-help/format-your-document-with-styles-RZ001103924.aspx>
2. Make sure handouts are free of handwritten notes and the text is clear and legible whenever possible so that they will scan well.
3. When using graphics in Moodle, make sure your alt-tag description is clear. This is what screen readers use to describe what a graphic is to a visually impaired student.

Using Multi-Media in the Classroom

1. Make sure that you know how to use the closed captioning for the equipment in your classroom.
2. Check to see if a video is closed-captioned before you purchase it. Look for alternate titles if there are no captions whenever possible.
3. Some video companies offer transcripts and some transcripts provided by others can be found online.

Disability Resource Center (DRC)

Stay connected to the DRC. Students with documented disabilities work with the DRC to determine appropriate accommodations. They will bring you an Academic Accommodation form to read and sign. There is a wealth of information about that process on the DRC blog. The FAQ can be found at <http://blogs.berkshirecc.edu/drc/faculty/frequently-asked-questions/> You can also find information on various disabilities, teaching strategies, policies, and find resources for your students.

For more information you can contact Pam Farron, Coordinator of Disability Services, at pfarron@berkshirecc.edu or 236-1608