Universal Design for Online Learning

While our college community is experiencing a period of transition mid-way through the semester, SDS wants to promote universal design for learning as a way of ensuring that students with disabilities in your course continue to receive equal access and full accessibility to their courses, even in the online format.

In the interest of ensuring each student has equal and full accessibility as our campus transitions to online learning, below are tips for promoting access in online courses:

Ensuring Equal Access When Using Zoom:

Students with disabilities may not be able to participate at a fast-paced environment such as online courses. Fast-paced courses may pose problems for students who:

- Speak English as an additional language
- Live in areas with slow wifi
- Have limited access to online resources
- Have disabilities in relation to cognitive processing and learning
- Have visual and/or auditory impairments

> Consider pacing your instruction accordingly, and check-in with students about how your pacing is working for them. When using Zoom, ensure equal access by following the tips below.

- Encourage all students to self-identify when speaking in the online class setting ("Hi, this is _ speaking") as they begin comments or questions to make clear who has the floor. This is particularly helpful to students with visual impairments and for remote captioners.

- Describe whatever is happening visually on the screen. This is especially important if an image, diagram, or presentation is being shown. Please remember that students access Zoom from different kinds of devices, and to allow your verbal descriptions to account for these differences.

- The most accessible practice is to caption or subtitle lectures and videos, if feasible for you and your course. Closed captioning assistance is available for Zoom at https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/207279736-Getting-started-with-closed-captioning and for Youtube at https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/100078?co=GENIE.Platform%3DDesktop&hl=en .

How to Make Your Online Course More Accessible through Universal Design

- Upload readings, assignments, and any other course materials to Moodle as a Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) document. This format is more accessible for students who utilize e-readers or other transcription tools to conduct their assignments.

- Create a class communication plan so your students know where to access their course materials and what your expectations will be as we transition to online learning. You may want to address where to send questions, if discussion/forum posts will be utilized, and how you will be available to students. Please remember to keep in regular communication about assignment and project expectations.

- You might consider recording your Zoom or live lectures in recognition that disruptions to our college schedule and format can significantly impact your students' schedules, availability, and responsibilities. Pre-recording your lectures, or recording your live Zoom lectures (which can be done through Zoom) to upload to your course site for future use ensures your students have the access they need to your content and can offer the flexibility students need at this time. Information on how to record your Zoom lectures is available at https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362473-Local-Recording.

- Make yourself available to students for questions or support via virtual office hours or through regular email communication.

- Refer students to the new online CAAS tutoring services for student-to-student support. Creating an online discussion or form for students to ask questions with each other, form study groups, and promote peer support can also assure students they have access to the same support systems despite the online learning environment.

- Create a document with a table that summarizes your syllabi/course material plan moving forward for the semester. The plan should include due dates for assignments, any recorded lectures, and any live Zoom class sessions. Making your course plan and schedule available to your students will not only ease the transition to online learning, but also will give students a viable sense of structure for the remainder of their semester. Communicate this plan with your students to ensure understanding and agreement.

- Keep in mind that online learning may be new to your students as well. Weekly summaries or access to your lecture notes will keep your students up-to-date and provide guidance for your course moving forward, which is imperative to orient yourself and your students to online learning.

- For collaborative assignments and projects, utilize the Google Suite (Google Docs, Google Slides, Google Sheets, etc.) services to ensure accessibility for all students in your course.

Please remember SDS is here to answer your questions and offer advice as you transition your course to an online environment. Email or call us for more resources or information!