SUBJECT: Access to Electronic and Information Technology for Persons with Disabilities

Dear Colleagues,

Attached to this email you will find a copy of a recent coded memorandum from the CSU Chancellor's Office on Access to Electronic and Information Technology for Persons with Disabilities, which outlines a roadmap for campus implementation of the CSU Accessible Technology Initiative. I encourage you to read it.

CSU Policy states: "It is the policy of the CSU to make information technology resources and services accessible to all CSU students, faculty, staff and the general public regardless of disability.” This policy is premised on several federal and state laws mandating such accessibility. In January 2006, the CSU launched the Accessible Technology Initiative (ATI) in order to develop a work plan for implementing this policy.

Three priorities have been identified:

- Web Accessibility
- Instructional Materials Accessibility
- Accessible Electronic and Information Technology (E&IT) Procurement

Of most relevance to faculty is accessibility of instructional materials, which include textbooks, course "readers" and "handouts," and online materials. As the memorandum notes, "the CSU is required to make its instructional materials and online course materials accessible to persons with disabilities in order to provide them with effective communication. Communication should be, to the extent possible, as effective for persons with disabilities as it is for persons without disabilities. An essential component of effective communication is timeliness of delivery of accessible formats. To the extent possible, instructional materials, including online course materials, must be accessible to students with disabilities at the same time it is available to any other student enrolled in that program. Recent Office for Civil Rights resolutions with four CSU campuses emphasize the importance of campus support for the timely provision of accessible instructional materials to students with disabilities."

It is important to stress that the law does not permit us to address these concerns only after a student with a disability has been identified in a class. Instead, we are bound to make provisions for accessibility before students enroll.

The Academic Senate will be working with the Provost to develop a plan to facilitate such accessibility in accordance with the guidelines found in the memorandum. Specifically, the CIC Subcommittee on Technology and Instruction is being asked to address this. An important part of the plan will be to develop essential support structures for faculty, including mechanisms through which faculty can learn how best to provide accessible instructional materials.

In the meantime, however, the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate believes it is imperative that all teaching faculty begin NOW to think about how best to make course materials more accessible to students with disabilities. Here are some things to consider:

1) Some students with visual and other disabilities cannot directly access printed materials, including textbooks. Therefore electronic versions of such materials, compatible with Braille
translation and speech synthesis software, are most desirable. If you can, consider using textbooks that are also available from the publisher in suitable electronic format. Some instructors are making inquiries of publishers and informing them that preference will be given to such texts.

2) Textbooks that are not available in electronic form must be scanned and corrected so that they can be made available electronically or, alternately, be reproduced in a recorded oral version. Several rooms in the basement of the Library are currently devoted to these often time-consuming and expensive efforts. Faculty can help by getting their book orders in as early as possible and by not making last-minute changes in text orders. In some cases, late book orders have meant that a student with a disability does not have access to the text until several weeks into the course -- in a few cases students have received accessible texts as late as the 8th or 9th week of the quarter. This is something we will need to improve. In departments where instructors (usually part-time lecturers) are sometimes assigned to classes relatively late, or a substitute instructor needs to be appointed, consideration should be given to departmental designation of texts in advance of the appointment. The importance of early submission of textbook orders cannot be overemphasized.

3) If you use a photocopied "course reader," you should understand that it may be especially time-consuming and costly to make such a reader available to students with disabilities because these are not easily scanned. Please consider whether it might be possible to replace such a reader with suitable electronic materials posted to Blackboard.

4) Class handouts and similar in-class materials should be prepared with enough lead time to ensure that they too can be made available in appropriate formats for students with disabilities.

5) If you show films in class, please endeavor to use copies with closed captioning accessibility for students with hearing disorders.

You can find additional helpful suggestions on accessibility issues in the ADA Faculty Handbook on the website of the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC). It can be accessed at: [http://wwwsa.csuhayward.edu/~sdrcweb/faculty.shtml](http://wwwsa.csuhayward.edu/~sdrcweb/faculty.shtml)

Do also feel free to contact the SDRC with any questions you may have or if you need assistance. The Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) is located in Library Complex 2400 and can be reached by phone or TTY at (510)-885-3868. The Contra Costa SDRC can be reached by phone at (925) 602-6716.

In conclusion, I want to stress that nothing in the law or CSU policy compels any instructor to select or avoid any specific kind of instructional material. But whatever materials you choose to use, we are obliged to make these available in a timely manner to all students, including those with disabilities. Please keep this in mind as you prepare courses and select instructional materials.

Thank you.

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