

Critiquing Accessibility Implementation Paper

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IDT 4000: Accessible Design

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In what ways do you believe the institution did a good job in describing and providing resources for accessibility?

The McBurney Disability Resource Center (MBDRC) at UW-Madison does a great job describing and providing resources for accessibility. First, the MBDRC has created "[a centralized location for accessibility and disability resources](#)" by dedicating one website for all these services to UW-Madison stakeholders (Accessibility @ UW-Madison 2023). Second, most, if not all, UW-Madison stakeholders can discover abundant resources, so relevant information is provided to "people with disabilities, whether a student, employee, program participant or visitor, to request reasonable accommodations" (Accessibility @ UW-Madison 2023). For instance, students with disabilities can request academic, housing, and other accommodations on this website. Moreover, faculty and staff can help make UW-Madison a more inclusive university by accessing content specific to "in the classroom," "employment questions," and "policies, accommodations, and appeals" (Accessibility @ UW-Madison, 2023). Finally, as a former educator and future instructional designer, I appreciated the numerous training opportunities for "creating accessible digital experiences" and "creating accessible in-person experiences" (Accessibility @ UW-Madison 2023).

UW-Madison provides a first-year students orientation. As stated on its website, "The McBurney Orientation and Service Training (MOST) Program helps new freshmen and their parents and guardians get the MOST out of their transition to UW-Madison" (McBurney Disability Resource Center at UW_Madison). The orientation can be done onsite or virtually and includes topics such as how to use classroom accommodations, understanding faculty expectations and perspectives, navigating campus resources, and implementing accommodations. I appreciated UW-Madison's proactive stance toward accommodations before first-year students arrived on campus (Gin et al., 2020).

A student can sign-up on the McBurney Disability Center website for sign language interpreting or live captioning at university or public events. Additionally, students could experience a more inclusive learning experience with resources that included alternative formats, alternative testing, sign language interpreting, captioning, notetaking accommodations, study and learning skills program, and other accommodations. Alternative formats included three types of accessible course reading materials (audio, enlarged text, Braille) in three formats (recorded audio, electronic text, and Braille). Alternative Testing accommodations provide access to course tests, mid-terms, quizzes, final exams, and other assessments (McBurney Disability Resource Center at UW_Madison).

Identify and report on at least three components of checklists or standards discussed in this course that indicate such success in accessibility implementation.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 govern program and course access for all students. Also, Section 509 of the Rehabilitation Act focuses on accessibility guidelines concerning technology.

Standard 2.15 of the OSCQR Rubric states, "Any technology tools included in the course need to meet federal and state standards and have the capability of delivering the same functionality to all learners" (SUNY Online Teaching 2017). According to Yesilada et al. (2012), technology is considered accessible if users with disabilities and without disabilities can use it equally well. Further, Standard 2.15 of the OSCQR Rubric provides information on creating an "Accessible Online Course Design" developed by Effective Practice from the Online Learning Consortium (OLC). This platform incorporates the Universal Design for Learning and "...whose baseline is accessible to a range of learning styles, abilities, and technical proficiency" (SUNY

Online Teaching 2017). Finally, The OLC guidelines help meet the needs of learners with visual impairments, hearing impairments, learning disabilities, and heritage languages other than English.

The Accessibility @ UW-Madison (2023) portal provides user guides on designing accessible content, designing for digital accessibility, making course content digitally accessible, and procuring accessible technology. These topics directly relate to Standard 2.15 of the OSCQR Rubric (SUNY Online Teaching, 2017). For instance, the website guides users on "when and how to make video and audio content accessible with captions, transcripts, and audio descriptions" (Accessibility @ UW-Madison 2023). Other specific information is provided to create accessible online presentations and digital materials that enable screen reader access and help users with low vision and color blindness. I especially appreciated the information in this section on procuring accessible technology, which can alleviate issues proactively. Finally, the Accessibility @ UW-Madison website provided thorough overviews of accessibility language in "Request For Proposal" (RFP), purchasing contracts, and Voluntary Product Accessibility Templates (VPATs).

For IDT 4000 Accessible Design, one academic guideline we studied provided detailed knowledge about Voluntary Product Accessibility Template. This guideline was entitled "*What Is a VPAT? A VPAT Primer*" (2020) by Sanja Nasta. Additionally, we implemented and practiced our VPAT skills by examining online VPATs for our favorite educational tools. The Nasta (2020) primer suggested that higher education procurements must be attentive to mobile web and mobile app accessibility since students depend on mobile devices to learn. Since this is the case, Nasta commented, "These customers will likely ask for the VPAT WCAG edition and request conformance reporting to the WCAG 2.1 Level AA guidelines" (Nasta 2020).

Further, it is important that "...a VPAT must be completed by someone who understands the WCAG and Section 508 requirement" (Nasta 2020), as VPATs have been known to be completed by salespeople or non-technical staff. The VPAT has two major sections: "The first section includes extensive instructions for completing the VPAT, including essential requirements, best practices, and posting instructions" (Nasta 2020). The second section of the VPAT includes the Accessibility Conformance Report (ACR). As Nasta states, "The ACR is what is made available as documentation of a product's conformance to accessibility requirements" (Nasta 2020). A common misunderstanding is how a customer, such as UW-Madison, evaluates accessibility during procurement. Documents like the ACR should guide "conversations centered around risk and usage" (Nasta 2020).

As mentioned previously, the Accessibility @ UW-Madison (2023) portal provides a user guide for "... those responsible for making decisions about which vendor products to procure must consider accessibility early and throughout the process as one of the criteria for acquisition" (Accessibility @ UW-Madison, 2023). This procurement guide provides steps in the procurement process, accessibility language for instructional technology Requests for Proposals (RFPs), and requesting accessibility information from vendors. Also, UW-Madison provides an additional resource of an "accessibility subject matter expert" who "...provides the RFP team with an accessibility evaluation report which includes the accessibility status of the product and initial recommendations for accommodation and communication planning if the product was purchased" (Accessibility @ UW-Madison, 2023).

The Accessibility for Online Teaching and Learning, published by the University of Illinois, provides an "Accessibility Checklist for Faculty" (University of Illinois, 2023). This checklist provides instructional considerations incorporating the Universal Design for Learning principles and guidelines. Some of the elements in this list include "Equitable use, flexibility in use, simple and intuitive use, perceptible information, tolerance for error, low physical effort, and size and space for approach and use" (University of Illinois, 2023). Similarly, the UW-Madison Accessibility website offers university policy guidelines, training, and guides on "creating accessible digital content, planning accessible virtual events, developing accessible websites, and more" (Accessibility @ UW-Madison, 2023). Further, checklists are available for the following subjects: developing accessible websites, mobile application accessibility, virtual event accessibility, image and visualization accessibility, etcetera.

In what ways do you believe the institution can improve upon how they are implementing accessibility through what you can see?

The McBurney Disability Resource Center (MBDRC) at UW-Madison website states, "Students should discuss and arrange their test accommodations with faculty as early as possible (generally, no later than the end of the third week of the semester)," which is not ideal. Most common alternative testing accommodations at UW-Madison are provided within the academic departments. I would think that professors are notified of students with accommodations prior to the beginning of the course. It does not seem reasonable to put the burden solely on the students. A more balanced approach is presented in the "Creating Accessible Learning Environments at Vanderbilt University," article where it states, "When you [professor] receive notification from your campus disability services office that a student has requested accommodations in your course, reach out to the student individually, in private, to discuss how accommodations may

work best for them" (Thurber & Bandy, 2018). My concern with the McBurney Disability Center website wording is that student disclosure of a disability is always voluntary. Some students may feel nervous about disclosing sensitive medical information to an instructor and never receive the appropriate accommodations.

As I researched the McBurney Disability Resource Center (MBDRC) website, I discovered that students "Learn how to select the accommodations you [they] wish to use for each class. Covered topics include: logging in to McBurney Connect, viewing the accommodations for which you are eligible, and sending Faculty Notification Letters" (McBurney Disability Resource Center at UW_Madison). This approach to meeting a student's accommodations burdens the student. Moreover, the McBurney Disability Center website does provide a course syllabus statement with the following wording "Faculty and students share responsibility in the accommodation process. Students are expected to inform faculty of their need for instructional accommodations during the beginning of the semester, or as soon as possible after being approved for accommodations" (McBurney Disability Resource Center at UW_Madison).

Overall, the McBurney Disability Resource Center (MBDRC) at UW-Madison and the Accessibility @ UW-Madison (2023) portal provide abundant resources for UW-Madison students, faculty, and staff. The undergraduate enrollment is enormous, at 35,000 students, with a total of 50,000 students. While UW-Madison has ample in-person and online resources for accessibility and accommodations, much is expected of students to initiate. With such an enormous student population, I am unsure if student accessibility and accommodations could be met otherwise.

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