

Adopted: June 2, 2020

**ACADEMIC SENATE  
Of  
CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY  
San Luis Obispo, CA**

**AS-899-20**

**RESOLUTION ON ASSESSING COURSE MATERIALS FOR ACCESSIBILITY**

**Impact on Existing Policy: NONE**

- 1 WHEREAS, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the  
2 Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 require that universities make  
3 courses accessible to all students; and  
4
- 5 WHEREAS, California State University Executive Orders 926 (2005) and 1111 (2018)  
6 call for all courses to be accessible to all students; and  
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- 8 WHEREAS, Cal Poly’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion encompasses  
9 providing equitable access to education to all students regardless of  
10 disability status; and  
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- 12 WHEREAS, Accessible course materials are an important component of education and  
13 student success at Cal Poly; and  
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- 15 WHEREAS, Continual measurement and remediation are necessary for continual  
16 improvement in accessibility; and  
17
- 18 WHEREAS, The Canvas LMS is itself accessible, and it will include a tool, Ally, for  
19 evaluating the accessibility of posted course materials and suggesting  
20 possible steps for remediation; and  
21
- 22 WHEREAS, The accessibility of web pages within Cal Poly Drupal can also be  
23 determined by the site administrators, facilitating remediation  
24
- 25 WHEREAS, Some faculty may need help moving course materials to the LMS;  
26 therefore be it  
27
- 28 RESOLVED: The university support the development and implementation of  
29 instructional technology to assess and improve accessibility of teaching  
30 materials both for the faculty in their normal instructional preparation and

31 for students who need course materials to be rendered into accessible  
32 forms.

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34 RESOLVED: The university shall provide instructional design tools and training to  
35 assess course materials for accessibility.

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37 RESOLVED: The university shall provide resources and support to render course  
38 materials accessible if deemed inadequate to meet the requirements for  
39 accessibility.

40  
41 RESOLVED: Faculty who use the LMS and other university sanctioned and supported  
42 tools to assess course materials for accessibility shall meet the requirement  
43 to facilitate the university in rendering course materials accessible.

44  
45 RESOLVED: The university will provide training and support for faculty moving  
46 teaching materials into the LMS.

47  
48 RESOLVED: Faculty who host course materials on platforms or utilize web resources  
49 other than those sanctioned or supported by the university shall facilitate  
50 the university's assessment of the accessibility of their course materials.

Proposed by: Academic Senate Instruction Committee  
Date: April 28, 2020

## Additional Information

### Summary

The purpose of this resolution is to ensure that the university can collect data on the *overall* accessibility of course materials at Cal Poly. Achieving a universally high level of accessibility is a worthy long-term goal, but one that cannot be achieved with a single resolution. This resolution is only a small step towards that goal. However, it will accomplish two things, one of which requires immediate action. First, it will facilitate measurement of our progress. Second, by demonstrating our commitment to accessibility, it may shield the university from legal action as detailed below.

### Background

Many of our students have disabilities; course materials can be designed in such a way that they don't put unnecessary barriers between those students and their learning. Two examples may be helpful.

- A properly designed table can be parsed by a screenreader for student who is blind.
- Captions can make videos accessible for a student who is deaf.

Providing equitable access to learning is consistent with Cal Poly's shared values. It is also required by law and by the policy of the California State University system.

### Law

The most relevant laws are [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#) and Title II of the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) of 1990. Universities that that aren't complying with these laws have been targeted for lawsuits by student plaintiffs. A sampling of these cases can be found [here](#).

### CSU Policy

The CSU Chancellor issued [Executive Orders](#) 926 (2005) and 1111 (2018), which established CSU policy for compliance with disability law. The [Accessible Technology Initiative](#) has more detailed information about implementation at the CSU system level. The Cal Poly [ATI website](#) has information specific to our campus.

### Canvas Ally Tool

The Ally tool within the Canvas LMS will allow instructors to gauge the accessibility of the items that they have posted on their courses. It will also allow the university to see the overall level of accessibility of course materials posted at Cal Poly. Collecting this data will allow the university to gauge the effectiveness of its efforts to improve the overall accessibility of posted course materials at Cal Poly. However, this data will be meaningful only if most faculty post their course materials on the LMS.

### Faculty Workload

Converting all of one's teaching materials from inaccessible to accessible could be for many faculty members a herculean task, a task that should not fall to individual faculty members as an unfunded mandate. This resolution does ask that of them. Instead, it is a request to post materials on the LMS, with aid supplied by the university, so that the Cal Poly can measure progress towards accessibility of *the university as whole*.



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Thomas Gutierrez  
Academic Senate Chair

**Date:** September 25, 2020

**From:** Jeffrey D. Armstrong  
President

**Copies:** C. Jackson-Elmoore  
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**Subject:** Response to AS-899-20 – Resolution on Assessing Course Materials for Accessibility

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I am pleased to acknowledge and accept the above-entitled Academic Senate resolution. I want to mention that the CTLT and the DRC have provided much of the support requested in this resolution although there is still a need for a captioning service.

In conjunction with the Academic Senate, I strongly urge faculty to use the Canvas LMS, which is accessible as a system. It is important to note that the use of the system itself will not ensure that all posted course materials are accessible.

Additionally, the university will not support “faculty who host course materials on platforms or utilize web resources other than those sanctioned or supported by the university.” The university does not have the capacity to assess the accessibility of such course materials as suggested in the resolution’s last resolved clause.

Furthermore, I want to recognize the progress to date in the area of course materials accessibility and note that much work remains. The faculty must continue to play a central role in the process of ensuring that the university is in compliance with federal law and system policy on accessibility of instructional materials.

Please express my thanks to the Academic Senate and the Academic Senate Instruction Committee for their attention to this important curricular matter.