Buffalo State College
SUNY EIT Report 2021

1. <u>Name and Title</u>:

    Lisa Morrison-Fronckowiak, Deputy Chief Diversity Officer, Director, Student Accessibility Services, EIT Officer

    Sumana Silverheels, Technology Accommodations Coordinator, SAS Co-Chair Campus Accessibility and Electronic Information Technology Committee

    Christopher Hulsman, Electronic & Educational Resources Librarian, Co-Chair Campus Accessibility and Electronic Information Technology Committee

2. <u>Email</u>:

    morrislt@buffalostate.edu

    silvers@buffalostate.edu

    hulsmacm@buffalostate.edu

3. <u>Campus</u>: SUNY Buffalo State College

4. Please describe who is currently carrying out the EIT work on your campus (ex. EIT committee, assignment of responsibilities has been broadly distributed or designated, led by the EIT Officer, oversight by chief academic officer, etc)

    Buffalo State's Campus Accessibility and EIT Committee created the EIT Accessibility Plan for the college. The committee, comprised of stakeholders from the various areas identified by the SUNY EIT standards, oversees the planning and implementation of the standards. The committee is comprised of five subcommittees, each responsible for executing the EIT standards as outlined by the Buffalo State College EIT Accessibility Plan.

5. Are your EIT Accessibility Plans guiding your work as envisioned? (Yes/No/Other – please explain)

    Yes. As previously noted, the campus committee has five subcommittees. All members of the subcommittees are key stakeholders in their areas and involved in the day-to-day operations of their respective fields. The EIT Accessibility Plan implements a timetable and an organizational workflow that expedite the integration of accessible standards. Additionally, the EIT plan increases

awareness across campus of proper accessibility policy and vigilance in maintaining current standards. While certain areas and specific goals within the subcommittees are still in a planning phase, the EIT plan spotlights those areas for future escalation of resources to meet and/or exceed goals.

6. Is there understanding of the role of the EIT Officer on campus and their responsibilities? (Yes/No/Other – please explain)

    Yes. The Accessibility Committee was established to create and structure the goals and implementation of the Buffalo State EIT Accessibility Plan. Committee co-chairs work with subcommittee members to monitor the progress and implementation of the plan. The progress is reported to the campus EIT Officer. There is ongoing communication to ensure that the campus is on track with goals and accessibility standards stated in the plan.

    EIT Officer communicates the progress, barriers, and successes of the plan with Chief Academic Officer and Chief Diversity Officer.

7. Is there an awareness on campus of the EIT plans? (Yes/No/Other – please explain)

    Yes. The Buffalo State EIT Accessibility plan is published on the college's Equity and Diversity site.

    The individual subcommittees, as per their charge, are responsible for increasing awareness and training within their areas. The EIT plan has increased transparency within the individual departments and across the campus. Administrative support has aided progress and facilitated the advancement of EIT standards.

    The EIT plan is one of the documents the campus is looking at for the Middle States self-study. This is indicative of Buffalo State's commitment to accessibility on campus and in digital environments.

8. Has your campus utilized the training made available from Deque University? (Yes/No/Other – please explain)

    Yes. Although we have many who have requested and received Deque subscription, only some have utilized and gone through the courses. A list that is specific to our campus and roles to professionals who will benefit from completing certain courses within the curriculum will be developed. The courses will be of high relevance to the subcommittees and their specific target goals according to the EIT plan.

9. Any potential models/best practices to share from your implementation work to date?

Buffalo State created a team of professionals to develop a plan and comply with standards established in all areas listed in the SUNY EIT policy. Five subcommittees were created to develop a plan that best meets the need of the college in the five areas identified by SUNY. A sixth area was initially identified at Buffalo State College – Student Life and Leadership. This area primarily focuses on student experience on campus and in residence halls. Additionally, Student Life and Leadership liaises with the five other subcommittees.

Each subcommittee tracks their compliance and progress as identified in the college's EIT accessibility plan.

The committee meets quarterly as a team. The subcommittee members meet more frequently with the co-chairs of the team to discuss progress, and plan of action.

Communication between the subcommittees, chairs of the campus committee, and the EIT Compliance Officer has created a clear overview on progress made and where to increase efforts.

10. Challenges/Barriers:

   a. **What are the challenges/barriers to Web Accessibility Standards (WAS) plan implementation?**

   Reliance on Third-Party Vendor Technology: Buffalo State College relies upon third-party technology to host digital content. Website managers are required to work diligently to ensure vendor commitment to providing accessible software and documentation of compliance.

   Resources: Buffalo State College's website is comprised of over 150 subsites that are managed and maintained by individual departments or third-party organizations. Performing an internal audit requires a significant investment in time and resources from Marketing & Communications

   Education: Website editors include faculty, staff, and students, many of whom are not aware of Buffalo State College's web accessibility standards. Regular training and ongoing education are required to ensure web managers conform to accessibility standards. Turnaround and changing roles within departments creates inconsistency and a lack of accountability, along with knowledge of accessibility standards.

   Culture: Top-level leadership must communicate that digital accessibility is an ethical and legal priority for all website editors. Accessible websites can assist in attracting students, improve the educational experience for all, and make Buffalo State College's digital presence more intuitive and attractive to end-users.

Campus departments need to adhere to college-wide branding for digital accessibility to maintain a cohesive look and ensure accessible content.

b. **What are the challenges/barriers to Digital Content: Digital Content Accessibility Standards (DCAS) plan implementation?**

Outreach & Education: The campus typically tends to be primarily focused and engaged in building and delivering course content. While pedagogy is extremely important, some may tend to overlook accessibility due to lack of awareness and/or lack of technological skills to deliver accessible digital content. Additionally, accessibility workshops have been poorly attended due to time constraints and challenges created by the pandemic.

Maintaining Consistency in Accessibility Across Multiple Departments: Creating a consistent message of accessibility across multiple departments and including all stakeholders has been difficult.

Time & Resources: The pandemic has created multiple challenges that has made it difficult to identify the status of accessible course material. Additionally, creating a baseline of accessibility for course materials has been difficult during remote phases of work.

c. **What are the challenges/barriers to Classroom Technology & Design: Classroom Accessibility Standards (CAS) plan implementation?**

Structural Accessibility: Providing accessibility for mobility impaired people to our classrooms in buildings constructed prior to 1991, when the ADA Act was signed into law by President George H.W. Bush. Those academic buildings weren't originally constructed for access for which renovation and upgrade projects requires us make accessible. At times we have encountered structural and constructability issues requiring extensive engineering and construction costs.

Providing the infrastructure in old buildings to support the new accessibility classroom technology. Most campus buildings have asbestos containing materials requiring costly abatement before new IT infrastructure is installed.

d. **What are the challenges/barriers to Libraries: Library Accessibility Guidelines (LAG) plan implementation?**

Reliance on Vendors: Digital resources that are purchased and subscribed to are typically hosted on third-party vendor sites. While a VPAT repository has

been established, there is a lack of resources to conduct internal reviews. We must rely on SUNY documentation and vendor updates to track accessibility.

Training & Communication: The pandemic has disrupted normal workflows. As a result, we struggle to create a consistent training schedule and maximize communication regarding best practices in accessibility. However, we have a form set up on the accessibility website to record all accessibility issues experienced by patrons.

Opportunity for Collaboration with Partner Stakeholders: The pandemic has impeded progress for collaborations with Student Accessibility Services, especially in assessment of physical spaces and the Assistive Technology Lab. Resources and time are barriers to setting up collaborative meetings to assess certain library accessibility resources.

Training & Awareness: Planning internal workshops for Butler Library faculty and staff has proven difficult. Resources and time are barriers to creating a robust program of information sessions and training workshops.

e. **What are the challenges/barriers to Procurement: Procurement Accessibility Conformance Standards (PACS) plan implementation?**

IT Procurement Information: Typically, IT collects information from the individual vendors to track and assess accessibility. Currently, there are no resources to conduct internal testing.

Time & Resources: There is not enough personnel to consistently track and assess accessibility. There is a heavy reliance on the vendors to be vigilant about creating accessible products. So far, there has typically been success in making statements and VPATs available.

11. Are there additional challenges/barriers to overall plan implementation you would like to mention?

There has been a significant impact on access due to the changes brought about by the pandemic. As a result, individual departments have changed their focus to adjust daily workflows of faculty and staff to comply with rapidly changing safety regulations. The accessibility standards supported the creation of accessible content. The transition to remote learning revealed that some course content fell short of desired accessibility standards. However, this increased awareness and improved accessibility scores across campus.

12. The initial EIT accessibility plan template asked you to note progress for each *goal* in each of the five standards according a five-point scale:
    1. No Activity - No action has been taken yet.
    2. Planning - Preparation is underway.
    3. Developing - Substantive work is underway to complete the action item.
    4. Operational - The campus has a standard practice. Procedures are consistent and formal.
    5. Accomplished/ongoing - The campus has an established practice that is regularly assessed.

For the purposes of the report, we are asking you to rate overall progress in meeting each *standard*, according to the same scale:

Standard	Progress (1-5)
A. Websites and Software: Web Accessibility Standards (WAS)	3
B. Digital Content: Digital Content Accessibility Standards (DCAS)	3
C. Classroom Technology & Design: Classroom Accessibility Standards (CAS)	3
D. Libraries: Library Accessibility Guidelines (LAG)	4
E. Procurement: Procurement Accessibility Conformance Standards (PACS)	4

13. Any other updates you would like to provide?

Effectiveness of Ally: Institutional reports from Ally reveal areas of improvement and areas that need attention. It also shows the increased commitment to accessibility.

Migration to New LMS and DLE to Help with Setting Baseline for Accessibility: This committee is currently focusing on how the process of transitioning to Brightspace can be used to increase awareness of accessibility issues in course content and inspire positive change.

Remote Learning: How can EIT committees utilize what we've learned from the shift to remote to improve accessibility across campus, including how we facilitate face to face instruction. We can work on implementing UDL techniques in all aspects of course delivery.

Student Participation & Engagement: The EIT committee is exploring options to increase student participation and feedback in EIT assessment. This will deliver a baseline of user-experience information.