ACCESSIBILITY FOR INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS: GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR DOCUMENTS

Providing accessible instructional materials for your classes is for the benefit of all of your students as accessibility removes the barriers students may face from obtaining the information you provide as a professor. Making your instructional materials accessible allows assistive technology—such as screen-reading software—to read aloud the content for users who cannot see the content. Screen-reading software is commonly used by people with visual impairments and sometimes those with learning disabilities.

Addressing accessibility in documents you are using as instructional material can be accomplished with features and tools in Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat Professional. Though the actual implementation may differ between software applications, a number of concepts are similar, and it is therefore important to understand the technical foundation of accessibility.

There are five general components to keep in mind when considering accessibility in documents that you distribute for your courses.

1. DOCUMENT STRUCTURE – Structure in a document refers to creating and maintaining a logical reading order for your documents. Sighted users have the benefit of being able to scan a document for certain information and automatically bypass information not pertinent to what they are looking for. Non-sighted users rely on assistive technology such as screen-reading software to have the contents read to them. A properly structured document involves the consistent use of **heading** and **paragraph** tags, which provide a **logical reading order** for the document.

2. ALTERNATE TEXT\CAPTIONS FOR IMAGES – Images in documents are effective for conveying visual data. In order for the information to still be useful to someone who cannot see the image, it is necessary to explain the image as completely as possible. This can be done using **alternate text** or **captions** to provide a **title for the image** or a **brief description of what the image depicts**.

3. DOCUMENT NAVIGATION ASSISTANCE – Providing a **table of contents** or **bookmarks** will assist users in navigating your documents better. Table of contents and bookmarks work together with document structure to allow users to find the information they need quickly.

4. COLOR CHOICES – When choosing colors for your documents, remember that some users may have trouble seeing certain colors or distinguishing between contrasting colors. Therefore, choose foreground and background color combinations that provide **sufficient contrast** to allow low vision or color blind users to **distinguish between color differences**. Another suggestion is to consider how the document would appear when viewed on a black and white screen.

5. WEB LINKS – If you are providing links to outside resources on the web, ensure that you create meaningful labels to adequately describe the link you have included. Avoid using phrases such as *Click here* and instead use phrases such as *Click here for more information on Universal Design for Learning*.

The Center for Teaching and Faculty Development offers a number of guidelines online to assist you in creating accessible instructional materials. Following these guidelines will help you provide the best possible instruction for all of your students. For a list of all the accessibility guidelines and other helpful resources, please visit the Center's web site.

➢ Visit the Center for Teaching and Faculty Development web site at http://ctfd.sfsu.edu