



# Introduction to Digital Accessibility: Supporting Every Student

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# Today's Goals

1. Review updates to the Illinois Information Technology Accessibility Act (IITAA) & define WCAG 2.1.
2. Identify support systems (Help Desk, Training, Tools) available to assist you.
3. Explore Universal Design for Learning (UDL) best practices and the 'Why' behind this work.



# Illinois Information Technology Accessibility Act (IITAA)

## Accessibility Defined By IITAA:

The ability to receive, use, and manipulate data and operate controls included in electronic and information technology in a manner equivalent to that of individuals who do not have disabilities.

## Who does the IITAA apply to?

The IITAA applies to all State of Illinois governmental entities, including:

- executive, legislative, and judicial branches
- agencies, departments, divisions, etc.
- constitutional offices
- public universities



# Illinois Information Technology Accessibility Act (IITAA) Continued

## What does IITAA cover?

- The IITAA covers all "information and communication technology," including:
  - websites, electronic documents & videos
  - software & applications
  - computers and peripherals
  - information kiosks
  - multifunction office machines
  - telecommunications equipment
- The IITAA 2.1 Standards, which require conformance with WCAG 2.1 AA, went into effect on June 24, 2024.
- The date of enforcement for full compliance with WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards is April 24, 2026.



# Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1

## What are they?

- The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA are a set of internationally recognized standards developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) to ensure that digital content is accessible to all users, including those with disabilities.
- These guidelines provide a comprehensive framework for making web content more accessible and user-friendly. The ADA Title II regulatory rule, published to the Federal Register in April 2024, establishes WCAG 2.1 Level AA as the technical standard for accessibility compliance. The IITAA 2.1 Standards, which require conformance with WCAG 2.1 AA, went into effect on June 24, 2024.
  - Accessibility involves a wide range of disabilities, including visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, language, learning, and neurological disabilities.



# Foundation of WCAG 2.1 : POUR Principles

- **PERCEIVABLE:** Information and user interface components must be presentable to users in ways they can perceive
- **OPERABLE:** User interface components and navigation must be operable.
- **UNDERSTANDABLE:** Information and the operation of user interface must be understandable.
- **ROBUST:** Content must be robust enough that it can be interpreted reliably by a wide variety of user agents, including assistive technologies.



# Perceivable

Information and user interface components must be presented in ways that users can perceive. This includes providing text alternatives for non-text content, creating content that can be presented in different ways (e.g., simpler layout) without losing information, and making it easier for users to see and hear content. Key success criteria include:

- **Text Alternatives:** Provide text alternatives for non-text content, such as images and multimedia.
- **Time-Based Media:** Offer alternatives for time-based media, including captions for videos and transcripts for audio.
- **Adaptable:** Create content that can be presented in different ways without losing information or structure.
- **Distinguishable:** Make it easier for users to see and hear content, including using sufficient contrast and allowing users to resize text.



# Operable

User interface components and navigation must be operable. This means making all functionality available from a keyboard, giving users enough time to read and use content, and helping users navigate and find content. Key success criteria include:

- **Keyboard Accessible:** Ensure all functionality is available from a keyboard.
- **Enough Time:** Provide users with enough time to read and use content, including options to pause or extend time limits.
- **Seizures and Physical Reactions:** Avoid content that can cause seizures, such as flashing elements.
- **Navigable:** Help users navigate, find content, and determine where they are, including providing clear headings and consistent navigation.
- **Input Modalities:** Make it easier for users to operate functionality through various inputs beyond the keyboard, such as touch or voice.



# Understandable

Information and the operation of the user interface must be understandable. This involves making text readable and understandable, ensuring web pages appear and operate in predictable ways, and helping users avoid and correct mistakes. Key success criteria include:

- **Readable:** Make text content readable and understandable, using clear language and expandable abbreviations.
- **Predictable:** Ensure web pages appear and operate in predictable ways, maintaining consistency across the site.
- **Input Assistance:** Help users avoid and correct mistakes, providing error identification, suggestions, and prevention mechanisms.



# Robust

Content must be robust enough to be interpreted reliably by a wide variety of user agents, including assistive technologies. This means ensuring compatibility with current and future user tools. Key success criteria include:

- **Compatibility:** Ensure compatibility with current and future user agents, including using well-formed HTML and ensuring all elements have start and end tags.
- **Accessibility Supported:** Use technologies that support accessibility and are compatible with assistive technologies.



# How Do We Get To Compliance?

- DIAGNOSTICS (Identifying the Need)
- COMPETENCE (Learning & Support)
- ACTION (Remediation)
- COMPLIANCE



# Step 1: Diagnostics

Understanding that there have been changes to accessibility expectations is one thing, knowing where to start remediating your course content is another. A good place to start is to seek out the built-in accessibility checkers available in many of the programs you use every day. Examples include

**MICROSOFT OFFICE:** Use the built-in 'Check Accessibility' ribbon.

**ANTHOLOGY ALLY:** Look for gauge indicators in Blackboard (Red/Orange/Green).



## Step 2: Competence (Training Series)

Once you know what to fix, we at the CFDI can help with the how. This won't be a linear process where you learn once and are on your own. We are here when you get stuck.

### Session 2: Text-Based Resources (Word, PDF, Headings)

- In-Person: Feb 4 | Online: Feb 10

### Session 3: Digital Media (Video, Captions, Alt Text)

- In-Person: Feb 18 | Online: Feb 24

### Session 4: Anthology Ally Training

- In-Person: Mar 4 | Online: Mar 17



## Step 2: Competence (Support)

### DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY WALK-IN HELP DESK

- Opens: February 1st
- Where: CFDI
- When: 8-4:30 M-F
- Staff: Trained student workers & CFDI Staff

### OPEN LABS

We will be visiting buildings on campus for troubleshooting sessions.

- Friday, February 6th 3-5pm
  - Engineering Building 1160
- Tuesday, February 17th 11am-1pm
  - Alumni Hall 1201
- Wednesday, March 4th 8-10am
  - Science East 2268
- Thursday, March 19th 2-4pm
  - Founders Hall 0303
- Monday, April 6th 10am-12pm
  - Dunham Hall 2009



## Step 3: Action

- Time to put that knowledge to use by:
  - Remediation of Course Content: Working independently, through the use of checkers and any assistance from CFDI bring course content into compliance.
  - Join colleagues in Open Labs, at the Continuous Improvement Conference, or in the CFDI for parallel work.
- Not Linear: Anytime you need assistance, please reach out to us here at the CFDI.



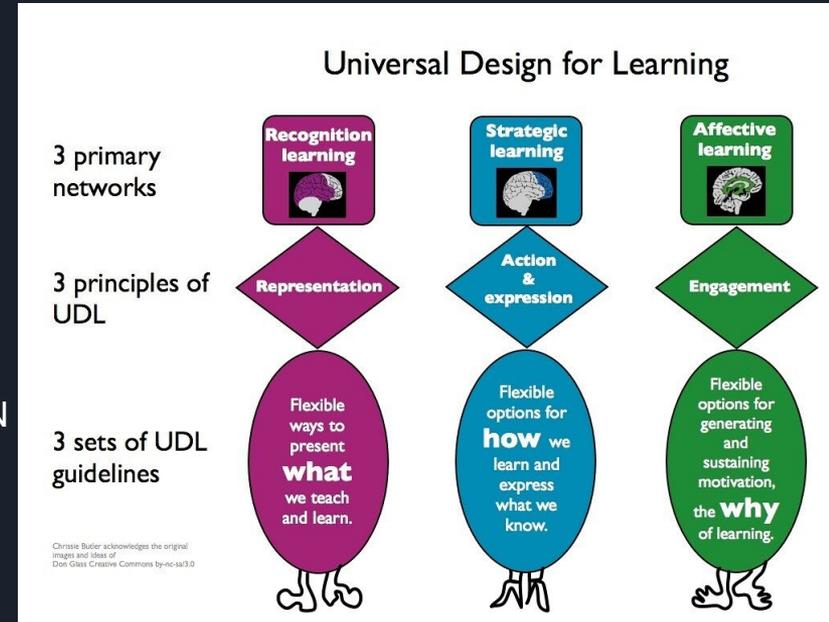
## Step 4: Compliance

- Upload your newly remediated course content to Blackboard
  - Celebrate all the green Ally meters!

# What Does 'Born Accessible' Look Like?

For all future course content:

- Lean on principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) when designing new course content to build course content that is “Born Accessible”
- UDL means building course content with
  - Multiple means of ENGAGEMENT
    - The “Why” of Learning
  - Multiple means of REPRESENTATION
    - The “What” Learning
  - Multiple means of ACTION & EXPRESSION
    - The “How” of Learning





# “Born Accessible” Continued

## “Born Accessible”

- The goal is to design a course so that barriers are removed from the start.
- If you make sure all new materials are born accessible, you stop the backlog from growing. Then, we can work together to remediate and previously created content using these same best practices.

## Examples of Born Accessible:

**Structure:** When formatting a Word document, use Headings (H1, H2) instead of just bolding text. Bolding text should generally be avoided when you want to convey meaning in documents you create.

**Visuals:** When you inserting an image, add Alt Text immediately OR when conducting remediation make sure all images have an appropriate and meaningful description.

**Media:** When you record a video, ensure captions are immediately and accurately generated OR when remediating a video to ensure captions are not only generated/enabled, but also ensure they accurately reflect the audio of the video.



# The 'Why': Access as Equity and Empathy

- We've talked about mandates, deadlines, and tools. But before we close, let's talk about why we ought to do this work, regardless of the law.
- Even if the deadline didn't exist, these are interventions we should be making because folks of all backgrounds deserve access to higher education.
- You may be surprised how these small changes can make a world of difference to some of your students.
- When we design course content that is “Born Accessible”, we design better learning experiences for everyone. This is the WHY behind this work—it's about ensuring every student feels they have the tools they need to succeed in every classroom on our campus.



# Questions & Next Steps

## DISCUSSION:

What is one barrier you anticipate facing in making this shift?

What questions or concerns do you have?

What kinds of resources would you like made available?

## REMINDER:

Help Desk Opens February 1st!