

# **Building Your Accessibility Roadmap:** A Practical Guide for Higher Ed



# Welcome!

- Housekeeping
  - Your questions and voice are welcome throughout!
    - Share your stories near the end using Q&A
    - Ask anything anonymously in the Q&A area
- Speaker Introductions
- Overview of session
- Key Takeaways

# Presenters



## **Danae Harris - Sr. Digital Accessibility Consultant, University of North Texas**

Danae is a digital accessibility specialist with over 12 years in higher education. She supports faculty in making online courses more inclusive and ensures digital content meets WCAG 2.1, ADA Title II, and Section 508 standards. Her work includes creating accessibility resources for STEM and collaborating with faculty, IT, and vendors to advance accessible learning.



## **Dr. Kris MacDonald - Faculty Consultant, Macmillan Learning**

Dr. Kris MacDonald is an experienced higher education leader with a focus on nontraditional students, accessibility, instructional design, and student success. She has held roles across SUNY, The University of Scranton, and other institutions, and joined Macmillan Learning in 2025. She holds a doctorate in Educational Leadership & Management from Drexel University and has consulted and published widely in the field.



## **Rachel Comerford - Sr. Director of Accessibility, Macmillan Learning**

Rachel Comerford is the Senior Director of Accessibility at Macmillan Learning where she leads cross-functional efforts to ensure students of all abilities have access to their course materials. Under her leadership, Macmillan was recognized by WIPO's Accessible Book Consortium with the International Excellence Award for Accessible Publishing in 2020 for their work towards providing educational materials that any student can use.

# Why Accessibility?

## The Ethical, Strategic, and Legal Imperative

- Accessibility as a Core Educational Value
- Impact on Reputation
- Legislation Bonanza (Title II update, EAA)



# What's Changing?

## New ADA Title II Regulations (Subpart H) for Web & Mobile Accessibility

All state and local governments, including public universities and colleges must make their websites and mobile apps accessible to people with disabilities. The goal is to ensure independent and private access for people with disabilities no more needing someone else's help.

- **Deadline to Comply**
  - By April 24, 2026 if serving a population of 50,000 or more
  - By April 26, 2027 if serving a population of 49,999 or fewer
- **Must meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA Standards**
  - Covers needs like low vision, hearing loss, mobility, cognitive disabilities, and more
- **Third-Party Vendors' Content Should meet WCAG standards**
  - Schools must make sure third party vendors' tools and content are accessible.

# Exceptions

- Old social media posts
- Archived web content
- Password-protected personal documents
- Independent third-party posts (not under contract)
- Pre existing documents not used for services
  - However, Accommodations should still be made upon request.

# Overview ADA and Section 508



## Similarities

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ADA and Section 508 both impact:

- Institutions and instructors
- Lead to fines & lawsuits
- Damage to reputations
- New Regulations



## Differences

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- ADA is a civil right and applies to the right to digital and physical access
  - Individuals make claims
- Section 508 is just about digital materials (EIT) and applies to federal agencies, but states enact too
  - Dept. of Justice makes claims
  - EIT = Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility

# The Cost of Inaction

	ADA	Section 508
<b>Penalties To</b>	Institution and instructors	Institution, instructors
<b>Fines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Federal law allows fines of up to \$75,000 for a first violation and \$150,000 for each additional violation.</li><li>• States and local governments may also impose additional fines.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Federal law allows fines of up to \$55,000 for a first violation and \$110,000 for each additional violation.</li><li>• Federal funding and grants can be revoked</li></ul>
<b>Lawsuits</b>	Individuals can sue the institutions and/or instructors	DOJ can sue institutions and/or instructor
<b>Costs</b>	Court fees, manpower/time to fix course elements	Court fees, manpower/time to fix course elements
<b>Results</b>	Loss of reputation or job; accreditation issues	Creation of regulations (WCAG, EIT*); regulatory scrutiny

\*EIT = Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility



# State Legislation Examples

## Maryland

- MD 7-910 - Each local board of education and public agency shall comply with WCAG 2.1 Level AA when purchasing or selecting digital learning resources. (Same as Title II)

## Missouri

- Missouri State ICT Standard 3.0 (2024)
- State information systems, tools and content shall comply with WCAG 2.1 A/AA (and Section 508) (Same as Title II)
- This includes the Missouri state education policy.

## Colorado

- HB21-1110
- Digital materials must conform to Office of Information Technology rules for accessibility. (Aligned with WCAG 2.1 AA)

# Where Are You Now?

## Readiness Assessment



**Do instructors and administrators understand the relevant legal requirements and upcoming deadlines?**



**Are most instructional materials and digital tools actively maintained for accessibility?**



**Do staff and faculty have access to training for accessibility and compliance?**



**Do students know how to request accommodations or report access issues?**



**Is accessibility integrated into institutional planning, reviews, or goals?**

# What does Accessibility Look Like?

## State It

Accessibility extends the invitation to students with disabilities and being fully equipped to support them when they arrive. It reflects a commitment to inclusivity. It's taking the stance, saying we provide an inclusive environment, and we expect everyone to have a user-friendly experience when engaging with our services.

Includes students with hidden or non-apparent disabilities, students who don't declare their disability, and students who aren't disabled but will still benefit from these policies.

## Comply

Ensure that services provided have been properly tested and remediated to meet WCAG 2.1 standards.

## Accommodate

When your users encounter issues or barriers while using your services or content, find a way to remove the barrier in a reasonable time frame.

# A11y Classroom

## Physical Space

- Tables and chairs with casters are most accessible classroom furniture
- Projectors aimed elsewhere than whiteboard
- Enough room to walk/roll between tables
- Allow students to stand, walk in back of room if needed
- Don't reprimand students for wearing 1 earbud, drawing, doodling or sticking their fingertips out of a window! Your sign of disrespect may be how they cope
- Be creative in use of floor, table designs, etc. but provide options

# A11y Courses

- OPTIONS in assessments - gives everyone equal opportunity based on access
- Create *all* course materials (Word docs, PPTs) accessible first – *then* convert
- Avoid scanned content if possible – can OCR, but still not fully tagged
- Software like YuJa Panorama or Blackboard Ally can be integrated into any LMS to check accessibility of items, individual & institution courses
- Visolve free for color-blindness; Read/Write or OrbitNote great screen readers
- Activate magnifier in Windows using Window icon and + or - signs!
- Use Color Contrast tools if unsure
- Providing audio files + transcript & videos + caption aren't just for disabled
- This isn't "babying" anyone – it's providing opportunities to succeed

# Key Milestones in the Accessibility Roadmap

**Phase 1:** Awareness and assessment

**Phase 2:** Planning and prioritization

**Phase 3:** Capacity building (training, hiring, toolkits)

**Phase 4:** Implementation and monitoring

**Phase 5:** Evaluation and continuous improvement

Awareness and  
Assessment

# 1

- Get everyone involved
- Remember and repeat - the goal is student success
- Build a comms strategy
- Run a needs assessment

Planning and Prioritizing

# 2

- Establish a governance plan
- Assign roles
- Get vested interest from faculty

Capacity Building

# 3

- Be strategic in hires
- Remember this is a marathon not a sprint
- Introduce training programs

Implementation and  
Monitoring

# 4

- Change is hard and likely to meet resistance
- Use workflows (ie agile sprints) that fit your org
- Track and celebrate progress

Evaluation and  
Continuous Improvement

# 5

- Check new content/tools before they are introduced
- Stay up to date with evolving standards
- Continue outreach and training

# Key Takeaways

- **Accessibility is an Ethical, Strategic, and Legal Imperative**
- **Compliance Deadlines Are Approaching**
- **Inaction Comes with High Costs**
- **Accessibility Benefits All Learners**
- **Roadmaps Require Coordination and Commitment**



# Resources

## Accessibility Conferences / Courses

- [M-Enabling Summit \(October 2025\)](#)
- [Accessing Higher Ground \(November 2025\)](#)
- [CSUN Assistive Technology Conference \(March\)](#)
- [Axe-Con \(Free - not scheduled yet for 2026\)](#)
- [AccessU \(May - not scheduled yet for 2026\)](#)
- [Learning Lab | Digital Accessibility Program Planning: October 2025](#)

## Guidelines and How-Tos

- ["Accessibility Resources" section of the Macmillan Learning Accessibility web page for guidelines and checklists](#)
- [Universal Design and Accessibility \(Section 508\)](#)
- [Accessibility Fundamentals Training \(Microsoft Learn\)](#)
- [Creating Content for Everyone \(PDF Guide by Microsoft\):](#)
- [Where to Start When Designing an Accessible Course \(Macmillan Learning Blog\)](#)
- [W3C WCAG Overview](#)

# FAQ

## Are EEAAPs (Equally Effective Alternative Access Plans) included in Title II?

- It's important to note that this response does not constitute legal advice and the presenters are not lawyers. EEAAPs are not formally mentioned as a part of the Title II legislative update. However, they continue to play a role in the *spirit* of accessible classrooms. A student with current migraines may need an EEAAP that allows them access to content offline. This isn't a requirement under WCAG or Title II but still provides an accessible experience for a student with chronic illness.

## Will automated tools fix my problems?

- Automated tools are a great starting point for your accessibility roadmap. Research varies on how effective it is and reports range anywhere from 20% to 80% depending on who you talk to and what you're using. No tool will find or fix all accessibility issues though. So manual testing remains extremely important.

## Are there helpful resources for Art and Music accessibility?

- [Perkins School for the Blind offers some interesting resources for accessible arts and music for younger students](#). I have also learned a lot about art education accessibility from public museum programs like [The Met's accessible learning program](#). Some great resources for music accessibility include [Sound without Sight](#), [OpenScore](#), and the [Veroniiiica with Four Eyes blog](#). American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) has also done some reviewing of the [effectiveness of sheet music apps](#).

## How can I learn more about making math accessible? Are there helpful tools?

- Our speakers recommended checking out [EquatIQ](#), [CUNY offers some great resources in math accessibility](#), as does [the DIAGRAM Center](#), and [CAST](#).

## Are AI platforms subject to the same regulations? Are there any differences between paid versus free tools for these regulations?

- It's important to note that this response does not constitute legal advice and the presenters are not lawyers. The legislation does not appear to differentiate between paid versus free tools. Ultimately, the goal is that if a tool is a resource for some, it can be a resource for anyone. This also means that AI based tools are also subject to the Title II legislation.

## **From Planning to Progress: Implementing Your Accessibility Strategy**

Turn Accessibility Goals Into Sustainable Action

Thursday, October 02 | 12 pm ET

Ready to move beyond awareness and start making meaningful progress? This session dives into the "how" of accessibility implementation. We'll explore practical frameworks, collaboration models, and tools to help your institution meet ADA Title II requirements and create more inclusive learning environments. Whether you attended our first session or are jumping in here, you'll leave with clear next steps to advance your accessibility strategy—and the support structures to sustain it.

## **Choosing the Right EdTech Partners for Accessibility Success**

Find Vendors Who Help You Meet—and Sustain—ADA Title II Go

Thursday, October 23 | 12 pm ET

The right technology partners can make or break your institution's accessibility strategy. In this session, you'll learn how to evaluate edtech vendors through the lens of ADA Title II compliance. We'll cover what to look for in transparency, product design, and long-term collaboration—and how to ask the right questions to get beyond surface-level promises. You'll leave with clear criteria and practical tips for building partnerships that support inclusive, sustainable progress.

<https://go.macmillanlearning.com/register-building-an-accessible-campus.html>

# Next Steps

