



"One of the best series for faculty who don't know what they don't know about the ADA and accessibility—and that's every faculty member presently teaching at any college or university."

K. Virginia Hemby, Ph.D, Professor, Middle Tennessee State University



"You don't want to wait until an accommodation request has been made for your courses; you need to ensure your courses are always accessible to every student."

Accessibility Series Provides Opportunities for ALL using Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

How did you hear about the OLC Topic in Focus - Accessibility series? Cindy Adams, Manager, Distance Education Faculty Services at Middle Tennessee State University, sent an email to all faculty inviting them to review the workshops and to let her know of our interest in participating—with the added bonus of having those workshops paid for by MTSU.

Why the need/interest in the OLC Topic in Focus - Accessibility series? I always find myself with a student or two in my courses that submit the required accommodation request. In most cases, I merely extend the time allotted for tests and quizzes. However, I just didn't feel that my courses were doing enough for all students, not just the students who submitted an accommodation request. I wanted to learn how to make sure my courses were accessible to everyone.

How did the series help you in your position/career? I am hopeful that what I learned from these three workshops will allow me to become a better teacher—a better facilitator of learning for my online courses. I want students to talk about my courses in a positive way: that they learned how to do things or learned about things because they wanted to, they were encouraged to—they were allowed to complete assignments in a way that helped them see the benefits of learning—rather than simply saying they took my class because it is a requirement or because they needed an elective. I do not receive any promotion or additional income based on completion of these 3 workshops. I did so for my own personal edification. I am a true adult learner because when I need or want to know something, I find a way to learn about it.

To whom and why you would recommend the series? I would recommend these workshops to every faculty member teaching in higher education. We need to help faculty move away from the "accommodation" perspective to the "accessible" perspective and help them see that every course should be accessible to every student—not just when an accommodation request is presented. I don't think that faculty understand the difference between these two terms—accessible versus accommodation. I believe they use them interchangeably. I am sharing my experience with my departmental colleagues and encouraging them to consider UDL for their courses as well.

TOP 5 BENEFITS OF THIS SERIES:

1. Resources for creating and revising courses to ensure that they are accessible to all students
2. Opportunity to explore different methods and technologies for creating assignments
3. Advice from other participants on ways to modify courses
4. Opportunity to learn what other colleges and universities are doing regarding faculty professional development for online courses (instructional design area)
5. UDL ideas that I immediately put to work in a revised assignment



About Virginia

Dr. Hemby is a Professor of Business Communication and courses in the Meeting, Event, Exhibition, and Convention (MEEC) Management areas. She has been developing and teaching online courses since 2002.

She was struck by a pick-up truck in 1999 when crossing the street and suffered traumatic brain injury (subdural and epidural hematomas) and was not given much hope for survival or recovery. "I fooled the doctors—I'm still here! I went back to teaching and live with the after-effects of TBI and PTSD. I became extremely interested in ADA and its regulations after my accident but more so after my first grandson was diagnosed with autism in 2012."

Because of her TBI, she has short-term memory and executive function issues—coupled with PTSD, her challenges are to keep her anxiety in check, not to panic, to control her anger and outbursts. Her teaching challenges, however, are to find ways to make her courses inclusive—to accommodate all students regardless of disability.

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