

PATRICK LOFTUS: Thank you all for joining us today at this webinar entitled "Bridging the Accessibility Gap-- Improving Communication and Collaboration with Faculty." I'm Patrick Loftus from 3Play Media, and I'll be moderating today. Today, I'm excited to be joined by Laura Loree, accessibility services counselor at Utah Valley University. And with that, I'll go ahead and hand it off to Laura, who has a great presentation prepared for you all.

LAURA LOREE: Good morning, everyone. This presentation actually came out of a survey we did trying to find out what our faculty needed from us and how they felt we were doing in terms of serving them and our students. And so the presentation is about the results of that survey and how we're responding to that.

So let's-- so our objectives were to determine how we could alleviate faculty concerns regarding accessible curriculum. How do we tie accessibility to institutional and departmental goals? And we wanted to find out what to say and how to say it to get buy-in from the top down so that we could get that buy-in from those more reluctant instructors as well.

And so we kind of started with the question, how do we get there? And so we started by looking at our institutional goals, and UVU's institutional goals are inclusive, engaged, and serious. And so we took the inclusive piece and said, inclusion includes our students with disabilities, and we have a special assistant to our president, who is in charge of inclusion measures and policies across our campus. And so we were able to connect with him, and we were able to create a vehicle for increasing accessibility in all areas across the campus, including technology and in the classroom.

So we have a campus-wide access committee that we work with. We look for faculty input, and that's where we went to the faculty survey. We sent that out to 500 random faculty members that included our full professors, our non-tenured and our adjunct faculty members. It went out to a random sampling of all of those.

So then we decided, OK, we need to respond to those needs. So we'll talk about some faculty training that we're working on and providing additional support to the faculty so they feel as though their needs are being met. We are working on setting some additional goals that we're still working on. We'll talk about what we've done so far and what we're continuing to do. And we'll continue to reassess and continue that conversation as we move forward.

So from the top down, getting buy-in, we worked with that special assistant to the president. We have established a campus-wide inclusion initiative, and we have included a committee of people across the campus, who are in charge of making sure that we make our campus more accessible, our websites, all of our procurements of technology and curriculum and other media. We have efforts moving towards getting captioning, kind of more of a standard rather than an ad hoc.

We have been written into the inclusion plan, some goals to move us forward. And we have the faculty survey that we did, and I want to talk a little bit about what we found out when we did that survey, so that's where I'm going to move to next. And we'll look at-- so the completed surveys-- as I said, we sent them out to 500 faculty members. That included adjunct, non-tenured, and tenure track, as well as full-time tenured. We received-- of the 500 surveys we sent out, we received roughly 100-- I think it was close to 100, 150 responses.

So we asked these faculty members, we started by asking, have you ever received an accommodation letter from our office? We had two who said they weren't sure, 10 who responded saying, no, they had never received one. 137 of them had received the letters. So then we moved to ask them-- the question was, how confident are you that-- or I am confident I know how to implement an accommodation letter when I receive it.

The responses were pretty good. We had-- no one strongly disagreed that they knew what to do with it. We had nine who disagreed. We had 12 who were neutral. 69 of our faculty members said they felt pretty confident they could, and we had 46 who strongly agreed they knew what to do with the letter when they received it.

So we then asked, do you have a format preference for your letters? And we gave them the option of paper or electronic to receive those letters. We had-- overwhelmingly, 79 of the respondents preferred electronic. 62 preferred paper. And we had eight who were others.

Of those, some of them wanted both, so they liked the electronic because it gave them some confirmation from our office, but they liked the paper because it kind of brought about a conversation between them and the student about what their needs were so that they could implement them as effectively as possible, given their course and their requirements in their classroom environment.

So the next question we asked them was, I know what an accessible document is. And we

asked them on a like or agree-- to strongly disagree to strongly agree. The majority of them knew what it was, as you can see by the numbers there. We had some who weren't sure what we were talking about there, so we've got some education to do there. But for the most part, most of them understood kind of what an accessible document was.

So we then took that one step further, and we asked-- the statement was, I know how to create an accessible document. Things changed a little bit there. The majority kind of disagreed. So we know we've got to do some training with our faculty members in terms of how to create some of their own accessible documents, and we'll talk about what we've done so far towards that and what we're continuing to work on to improve that training across our campus so that our faculty members can have some of those basic skills that they need to be able to create a more accessible classroom.

We then asked them-- the statement was, I would like training on accessible documents. And we got a pretty-- we were kind of surprised by the response. We expected a little more reluctance on that, and we got a majority that agreed that they wanted to know more about that. We had probably not a majority, but we had quite a few, and then we had some who weren't quite so sure about that, as you can see by the numbers there.

We took that to the next question on this survey, which said, Accessibility Services is there to support me. And that's where we were happy to see, for the most part, they agree that we're there to support them.

We had some that were neutral, and we had some that disagreed. And so we've talked about in some meetings since the survey a follow-up survey to delve deeper into some of those areas to find out-- to make sure they know how to contact us, and they know how to get the support that they need from us, and to also make sure that there is an additional support that they need that we are not providing so that we can start to move towards meeting their needs as well as our students'. Our approach here is that, if we can meet the faculty's needs and help them to create a more accessible classroom or online learning environment, then we are definitely helping our students as well.

So we then asked them if they were finding any accommodations difficult. And we did get a response. Majority said no. There were some that said yes. There were some that they felt difficult. So our next survey question asked them, which accommodations were difficult or frustrating to implement in the classroom? And here it was an open-ended question, and so

we gave them the opportunity to tell us which accommodations they were struggling with.

And so we had some that were struggling with extra time for exams in Canvas. We have and have had for some time a tutorial video on our faculty web page that tells them how to do that. And so what that told us was that we needed to do a better job of getting that information out there and letting them know where to find that video. And we have worked on that quite a bit here over the last several months since the survey was done.

They had concerns with delivering and picking up exams from our PEC, so we're working with - PEC is our Proctored Exam Center. So we're working with our Proctored Exam Center to get the word out a little bit more. They do use a program called [? Tie ?] Tester. They don't really have to go to the testing center. They can submit their tests online for our students to go take them, and so we're working with them to get that information out there and make sure that it's where the instructors can find it and utilize that as well.

I think probably everyone has this problem. When you're trying to find pure in-class notetakers, that can sometimes be a challenge in certain classrooms. We have put some things in place in our office since this survey. We have some staff in our office who will make phone calls after the first two weeks of the start of a semester to contact students and see if there are any challenges finding notetakers.

have worked with our instructional designers and the people in charge of our LMS so that we can have access. And if they can't get a notetaker with the first announcement or two, we actually send out emails to the entire class and try to identify a notetaker for the student in the classroom. And we are working on some other implementations. We do have smartpens as well. They don't work as well for some students as they do for others.

You can kind of see some of the bullets here. Those were kind of the top three that they're struggling with. We did have one that I thought was interesting. We got a response from an instructor who said that they were a new adjunct, and they were kind of brought on late right at the start of a semester to take a class, and so they were still trying to develop their lesson plans. And they were getting requests for alt text and alt format materials.

And so that kind of let us know that, again, we need to work on that faculty training as we onboard those faculty, and we also need to-- that's an interesting piece of support of working with our departments to make sure that they're providing some additional support to those brand-new faculty that are still developing that may have students who have those kinds of

needs.

I'm not going to go through every bullet on the slide. So we talked about a number of things that had to be addressed here.

We asked them, what does Accessibility Services do well? And we heard that they were providing services for students well and that we're communicating and helping faculty meet accommodations. They feel like we're doing a good job of taking care of students' needs.

A lot of stuff about working with students. So we kind of felt like we do need to do a little more outreach to our faculty and make sure they know we're there to support them as well and how to get that support when they need it. They were concerned about alt format conversions, so we need to make sure we get the word out a little bit better. So for more complicated ones, we do have an Assistive Technology Center with an alt text production lab that can do those things for them. And we worked with that.

We got some information on-- they're pretty happy with our transcribers for our deaf/hard of hearing students. So one of my favorite quotes on there-- and I just have to share it, because it was just so cute-- was, "Accessibility Services makes services accessible." So I just thought that was one of my fun and favorite quotes on that.

We then asked them, what services or support would you like to receive from Accessibility Services and left that, again, an open-ended, where they could type in what they thought they needed that they weren't getting from us. So we got bullet point suggestions for faculty to utilize in working with students with disabilities.

And so our staff has been working on creating some meaningful kind of bullet point suggestions, trying to keep in mind that instructors don't always know the disability unless the student has self-disclosed, and so how to kind of address that in a way that they maybe can look at kind of what the limitations they're seeing are and how to deal with specific limitations, rather than a specific diagnosis.

And so we have kind of-- I think we're down to our finals, and at the last meeting on that, we were actually talking about getting those published and getting them off to printing and getting them out to our faculty and our departments so that they have those available to them. They wanted better integration and support and assistance with Canvas, so we're working with the people in charge of our learning management system, our online ed, our instructional

designers to make sure that they have the support they need to make things accessible in there when they're working with that.

Encouraging students to work more closely with instructors regarding accommodations, so some of what we got was how to make the more stubborn student reach out for help. I'm not sure I have any magical answers for that. If any of you out there do, I'd be thrilled to hear them. Sometimes, as we explain to faculty, sometimes it's just a matter of letting them kind of learn on their own, where they need help, and where they can do it on their own. And they'll let us know when they're ready. And we can just keep encouraging them in the meantime.

So the one thing I thought was interesting is they did say they wanted an ongoing dialogue on current assistive technology and tools. So they know-- we have a number of our faculty out there that know about these-- they know they're out there, but they want to learn more about them.

And I thought that was really interesting, because I really had anticipated a little more reluctance from faculty to learn about those things. It seems that they want to, and so we need to find a way to get that information out to them in a way that they can access it, and they can access it in a way that they can still meet all their other duties as an instructor.

So from that, they talked about some specific trainings that they'd like to see. Some of the ones that we saw over and over again were how to make their class more accessible, how to adapt their materials, how to implement accommodations effectively. We have an Office of Teaching and Learning certification program that is available to faculty members, and there are certain things that they, in completing certain certificate programs through there, that they can-- it moves them forward on their tenure track.

And so we're now working with the Office of Teaching and Learning to create a certificate-based program, several of them, actually-- some for our faculty, some for our staff-- that will allow them to learn how to create accessible documents, how to make sure that the things that they're loading to their web pages are accessible, and tying that to tenure track. And that is moving smoothly as the-- we have two co-chairs of the access committee that I talked about earlier.

One is the associate VP of student life, and one is the RVP of academic affairs. And so she is very on board with the accessibility and very on board with creating a certificate program that makes accessibility part of the tenure track as well.

They want to know more about essential elements and the accommodative process. They know that there's essential elements and that we're not supposed to alter those, but they're not quite sure what the essential elements are. That was kind of the gist we picked up from the more detailed pieces of information around that. So we're definitely working on getting that information out to them.

So responding to the faculty needs and concerns, we have been working on that for several months now, so we've got some things that we've already done and have in place. And I've kind of revised this presentation to reflect what we've done, and since I did it in November back at Accessing Higher Ground. And we'll talk a little bit about what we've gotten done so far and what we've found we still need to do.

We do have some faculty training in place. We've done online faculty workshops through a-- our university human resources department has an online learning program that they utilize for faculty and employees, and we've been able to get some stuff on there on how to create accessible Word documents and accessible PowerPoint presentations.

We are collaborating with Web Development Services. We have collaborated with them on a couple of things. We've gotten some updates made to the web pages, and we've stepped up the accessibility requirements for the annual web audit this year to move us at the end of this audit, which I believe ends next week. All pages are required to be compliant under WCAG 2.0 AA.

So that has been a huge effort on the part of our web development staff to move that forward and get us there, and they've done a really good job of it. We're working with academic affairs and the departments, reaching out to them, making sure that they know that we are there to support them, making sure they know how to get hold of us and who to contact about certain types of things.

We have people in our office who are better trained with the transcription piece, how to transcribe and caption videos. I'm the person who works a lot with the AT staff, and so making sure they know who to contact, given their specific needs so they can get right to the right person right away and expedite that information to them.

And we're reaching out and trying to get into the department meetings at each of the colleges to talk to faculty, let them know what we do, how we can help, find out from them what they still

need that we're not doing. And those meetings have been going very well.

It's tricky to get into them. They typically only have them once a month, and so trying to catch-- we're a large school with 35,000 students, lots of different programs ranging from technical certifications all the way to graduate degrees, so it can get pretty tricky trying to get into all those departments. But we are definitely making some inroads there, and that does seem to be helping.

So what are we working on now? We met, again, as a department about a month ago and looked at the survey data in depth some more. We're developing an improvement plan. We're looking at it as an ongoing thing. We want to continue to improve our services to faculty. Parallel to this, we've got the same thing going on. We've got other people who are conducting a survey to the students, and we're doing kind of the same process with our students as well to make sure we're continuing to keep that improving.

We're reviewing our accommodations. Some of the things we've heard from instructors is that the way our accommodation letters are worded, it's not always clear exactly what they need to do or how to implement accommodations, so we've been working on rewording those, making those easier for them to understand.

We have pulled together a committee, where we do have some faculty members on that committee as well to make sure that we're not too caught up in the industry terminology that we know well and they might not be as familiar with, making sure that we're wording it in a way that they're understanding what we're saying as well.

We're reviewing all of our policies and procedures for any needed updates, changes to make sure that those stay current and make sense for our current environment. We are developing the trainings that are tailored to the faculty needs and requests and that will meet accessibility standards.

I am currently on a committee with our web development director and the director of our instructional design department, our distance ed department, and a couple other people. And we are working on those training programs for our Office of Teaching and Learning and kind of figuring out how to break those down and make them manageable for faculty.

The one we're struggling the most with is accessible PDF-- how do we tell faculty and staff how to create a PDF that we know will be accessible if they're going to have it loaded to their

website and not overwhelm them with the really long online videos? We're trying to figure out, how do we break that into meaningful chunks, where they can take it a piece at a time and start to learn to do that in a way that won't-- we don't want to scare them away.

We're trying to find new and better ways to get the word out about our services, our support for faculty by improving our website, improving the number of publications and handouts. We're working on trying to put together some digital signage across campus that lets everybody know who we are, where we're at a little bit more frequently and a little more creatively to make sure we're reaching everyone who needs to know about us.

So when I designed this presentation for Accessing Higher Ground, my hope was to get questions from my participants and have some discussion going. Are there questions for me at this point in time?

PATRICK LOFTUS: Let me go ahead and take over, Laura, and we will feed those questions to you. All right. So some questions that we have coming in right now-- someone's asking, can you speak more about strategy for obtaining buy-in from leadership?

LAURA LOREE: More about the strategy. So as I said, we have a-- I'd love to say that there was this really well-planned-out strategic way that we got to him, but actually, he had done a workshop on inclusion during a week in the summer. We do what we call a summer university, where the faculty and the staff can go. And we have a day of personal development workshops and a day of professional development workshops.

And he did one on the inclusion plan, and I had attended it, and I was asking him some questions about what the inclusion plan had to say about students with disabilities. And that kind of piggy-backed into him catching me after the workshop and asking me some questions about how well we were doing in terms of including our students with disabilities. And that kind of piggy-backed into him giving me a 20-minute shot to plead my case.

And so I went in with just a bullet point talking list sheet that he had a copy of, and I talked about including students with disabilities and inclusion and how creating accessible websites and captioning videos and all the different things that we advocate for for our students with disabilities, how they helped other student populations as well, that it wasn't just about disability, to make sure that-- plead that case.

The typical response when you ask for services for students with a disability is, they're worried

about the cost versus the percentage of the student population they're serving. And so I wanted to make sure they understood that you're not just serving students with disabilities when you do these things. You're serving all students, lots of different populations across our campus.

That piggy-backed into a meeting between the inclusion specialist, our associate vice president of student life, my director, and myself in which we decided to establish our campus-wide access committee. And we have made sure that all key players in accessibility across campus are involved.

We have tried to make sure, in as many cases as possible, that we're dealing with directors and VPs and people who really have the authority to move forward the things we're talking about in that committee, and that they're not just going to stop at the door when people go back to their departments and colleges.

And that has been very enlightening. About the time that we actually started meeting as a committee, the University of Miami letters came out, which definitely got the attention of the VPs co-chairing the committee. And we've actually kind of used that as a talking point and an educational point so that all the key players across campus start to understand exactly what's going to be expected of us as we move forward on the accessibility piece.

PATRICK Great.

LOFTUS:

LAURA LOREE: Does that answer your question?

PATRICK I think that was a very succinct overview of that or a clear overview. So I hope that person's

LOFTUS: question was answered. Another question coming in here is, does your campus use an accessibility management software, such as Accessible Information Management or Clockwork, and if so, how has the faculty responded?

LAURA LOREE: So we don't have an accessibility management platform. We are actually looking at a couple of them. We looked at Clockwork, and we have looked at Accommodate. I know that decisions have been made, and things are moving forward to acquire that and to make sure that we're-- to get ready for the procurement and the launch of that. I believe we're about a year out.

And I have been out of the loop for the last little bit, and I don't know-- I think in the end, we may have decided on-- I believe that our office decided on Accommodate, and so we're in the

process of trying to make that happen.

I'm not exactly sure where we're at on that piece. I'm trying to get through the bureaucratic tape to get the procurement process taken care of.

PATRICK LOFTUS: Great. Thanks, Laura. Next question here is, can you share any information regarding support for online courses versus on-the-ground courses?

LAURA LOREE: So I'm not sure exactly what you're asking for on that. I mean, there's definitely a different world of accommodations there. We're not trying to make a classroom accessible, so we're looking more at making sure that the website itself is accessible, that the documents posted on the learning management system or the platform are accessible.

So the support there is, with regard to faculty, that's why we're working on kind of this training. That's why we've gotten the instructional designers and our distance ed department involved as well so that the key players in those departments are getting this information on how to do this. And we're having discussions on how we make that happen, given our platform. We do use Canvas, so fortunately. I mean Canvas is pretty accessible as LMSs go.

So we've been working on, how do we best make that work, given our campus culture, our university's goals? And so we're moving forward on all of that. Our biggest concern-- right now, we're really focused on making sure that what those instructors and what those designers load is accessible and that we're not loading uncaptioned videos, that we're not loading locked or image PDFs. And so we're kind of in baby steps at this point in time to move some of that forward.

And so we're working on the training. We're looking to make sure that people have some basic understanding of how to write an effective alt tag for an image or a chart. We want to make sure that they understand color contrast. We want to make sure that they understand what makes those documents that they load accessible or accessible and how to get around things that maybe aren't as accessible as we'd like them to be. How do we create an equal alternative?

PATRICK LOFTUS: Great. Thanks, Laura. Another question-- someone is asking, do you create your own how-to videos for your staff to view, or do you point them to other resources?

LAURA LOREE: So I'm not sure. The Canvas tutorial on how to extend test times was done, actually, before I

arrived at the university, so it's been around for a while. I'm not sure who created that. I personally develop some short tutorials that are on that bridge learning application through our HR department on the Microsoft Word and the PowerPoint. Moving forward, as we're working on the Office of Teaching and Learning certifications that I talked about, I am working with our web development office, Web Development Services, our instructional designers.

And so this will kind of be a group effort to move those forward and create those. So I'm hoping those are going to be a little higher quality than I was able to produce on our budget, because we'll be able to involve all of those other departments and bring in digital media and those people to really make a quality program for our faculty and staff.

PATRICK Thanks. Next question, someone's asking, what are some examples of the industry
LOFTUS: terminology you mentioned that goes over an instructor's head?

LAURA LOREE: So we find sometimes that, as we talk about accommodations, we sometimes will slip in terms like "essential alteration" or "functional limitation." And while many of them understand what that means, many of them don't. So trying to word those in ways that they understand what they are. We also try to keep them-- each individual student, we're addressing accommodations individually, and we're looking at them.

We also try to, when we put them into our database, we try to word them in a way that they're specific enough to address the student need, but at the same time, that they may be general enough that we don't have to enter a whole new set of them every time we have a student who has a similar accommodation.

And that's where sometimes things get confusing. They're saying, we think we need more specific information, and so we're working on how do we do that in a way that we don't completely overwhelm our database with thousands and thousands of accommodation definitions, but that we are meeting each student's individual needs and that we're wording it in a way that's specific enough for the instructors to understand what that student needs. So that's kind of the problems we're running into those.

PATRICK Great. Thank you. Another question here-- what's your policy on third-party video content that
LOFTUS: a professor might show in class like a YouTube video that might not be compliant or uncaptioned?

LAURA LOREE: So our policies on captioning are in transition. I'm going to address-- so our web people have

managed to-- and I have no idea where or how-- but they have managed to acquire some budget funds. And they are now saying anything that goes onto our public-facing web page or anything that's currently on there by the end of this web audit will have to be captioned. And they are doing that through Captura. And I'm drawing a blank-- the name of the-- I think it's Rev that's doing the captioning for them. And so they're covering that.

My understanding right now is they are-- we're still doing a lot of ad hoc captioning in the classroom for those third party. We are working on training. We have some people who are captioning the ad hoc, and there are certain times of the year for some of those people that are slower than others. And so when they have slow time, we have all of our videos that are currently being used in classrooms. We kind of have a catalog of those.

That said, you all know that there's probably been a number or more that have started to be used that we weren't notified about, but we're working on educating on that. We have those catalogued, and they are going through when they have downtime and captioning those as we can, trying to get them moving forward. They're kind of prioritized. I'm not sure what system they use.

This was done by instructional design, but they kind of catalogued them and kind of listed them in a priority order of the ones that are being used the most out there so that those are getting captioned first. And we are trying to find some funding. I know that they have a funding request out there to get some more funding to pay for that.

We all know it can get a little expensive, and so they're trying to find the funding to make sure that we can start to contract some of that out as well. But we do have some people on our campus who are working towards getting those done in the meantime as well.

PATRICK LOFTUS: Great. Thanks, Laura. Someone else is asking what other groups you collaborate with besides faculty, such as the library, and how you communicate with them over accessibility.

LAURA LOREE: So we have a wonderful library staff who are very interested in accessibility at this point in time. Luckily, I don't personally collaborate a great deal with our library, mainly because what they're looking at is they're looking at accessible documents and accessible library media and technology and those kinds of things.

And coincidentally, our Assistive Technology Center and our alt text production lab are housed on the bottom floor of our library. So they collaborate a lot with our ATC coordinator and

manager. And they work with them on those issues a great deal.

PATRICK LOFTUS: Thanks. Someone else is asking sort of outside the institution, how are you collaborating and communicating with book publishers that might or might not be making their textbook materials and platforms accessible?

LAURA LOREE: So we do work with publishers. I'm not sure where they're currently at with that. We just went through a changeover in our management over there, and we did-- about two years ago, we had hired a manager who was running that with a little more of an accessibility background and not so much of-- they had the technical skills, but they also had kind of that accessibility background, knowledge of the ADA and 504 and 508 and all those things.

And they did leave us to go to another university. We just hired a new person, so I've kind of been out of the loop of exactly what's going on with working with the publishers for a couple years. I know that they do contact them directly. They are working with some. I've heard that they've had some improvement in what we're getting. We try to use Bookshare, Learning Ally, those when we can as well.

And so the publishers are a challenge. We all know that the publishers are a challenge and that right now, there's really-- it's hard. We're still struggling with it. If anyone else has suggestions on how to improve that, I'd love to hear them.

PATRICK LOFTUS: I'll relay some of those if any come in. Next question here is, how do you engage with the non-responders to a survey?

LAURA LOREE: So with the non-responders, like I said, we're trying to increase our communication by getting into faculty meetings and getting opinions there as well. We are trying to create the trainings to get that information going. With the access committee, our co-chair, the VP of academic affairs, is trying to get some outreach to her faculty and her department chairs to find out-- we did this survey.

Are there others who have input? What are you thinking? Is there something that's unique to your department? So we're trying to get that feedback, and we're in the process of gathering some more of that. But so far, the response is good. I think when we get out there and we say, we're here to hear what you need, and then just listening to what they need, we're getting some pretty good positive feedback. And I think we're moving towards helping them kind of get their needs met as well.

PATRICK Next question here is, can you discuss the relationship between the online learning teams and
LOFTUS: your office?

LAURA LOREE: So the online learning teams-- that's a piece that we're just kind of really building that collaboration. That's kind of coming through that campus-wide access committee and through the work group that's working on those trainings. We do get calls from-- there is a good deal of collaboration between the gentleman in our office who is in charge of all of our captioning and one of the key players over there in instructional design that are working together on the captioning piece.

And that's now expanding as we look at making sure that whatever documents get loaded are accessible, that we're making sure that the way we design the platforms for online courses, those kinds of things, are done in a way that's accessible, that alt tags are meaningful and useful, that color contrast is accessible as well.

And so that piece is expanding, and we're working together through those two vehicles. And my usual experience with UVU as those connections start to happen, it just kind of expands into, you run into each other in the hall. Hey, I need to talk about this. Do you have time on your calendar? And then it becomes just kind of an ongoing collaboration that kind of expands beyond those committees as well.

PATRICK Thanks, Laura. I think we are going to do a couple more questions. Someone is asking, what
LOFTUS: are some ways that you have tried to make the accommodation of disability-related absence/flexibility regarding attendance more understandable for your instructors, as well as your students?

LAURA LOREE: That is a tough one for all of us. I know we've all been struggling with that. We try to work with students to make sure they understand that there are some limits to attendance when you're dealing with a college course and that there's a point where absences grow to where they're just not going to leave that class with the information they need. So we try to make sure that our students understand that it has limitations.

What those limitations look like, we tend to talk in terms of, it's meant to give you a couple more absences beyond what the normal attendance policy is. If you're having symptoms or an exacerbation that you're going to exceed that, and you know that, we're telling them to notify us so that we can look at different things that we can do. We talk to them about working ahead

when things are good and making sure that they're a good student. They're in class. They're participating when things are good, and letting them know that that will help them get more flexibility from instructors.

With instructors, when we talk about that, we try to explain the student has a functional limitation that creates this circumstance or that circumstance. We try to explain to them why we've approved that accommodation for the student without giving away diagnoses. And then we make sure they understand that we understand too that there's limits, so we need you tell us where your concerns are. And we try to collaborate with them around the specific concerns.

And sometimes what we come down to is the student has to make some tough decisions sometimes, and sometimes we're able to work with an instructor who says, well, if it's this, I can work with that. The really tough ones are our participation-based classes, guest lecture series, physical education classes. We do have an exercise science, and we have dance programs, performing arts programs that are strongly participation-based. And those get really tricky. We just take each individual case, each individual situation, and try to do the best we can to mitigate and to minimize.

PATRICK

LOFTUS:

Great. Thanks, Laura. And just one more question here. Do you have any ideas for how to encourage proud or silent students with disabilities who might not approach your department to speak with your department?

LAURA LOREE:

So I keep saying that, if I find the answer to that one, I'm going to be really, really rich. I try to, when I do come in contact with students who-- the ones that won't even come to our office, I don't even know how we reach those, other than making sure, like I said, working on things like making sure that they can find us on our website, that they can find-- the digital signage is out there.

Our instructors-- we have a lot of instructors who are really good about, if they see a student struggling, they'll make some referrals that will include like our tutoring labs and our learning strategists and Accessibility Services, that kind of thing, and kind of encouraging them to contact-- sometimes students will ask for some extra time for assignments or something like that. And they'll kind of disclose that there's maybe something going on. And they'll send them right down to our office, so we can have a conversation with them.

In terms of the student who maybe has already identified themselves to us and is a little bit proud or a little bit self-conscious about asking for help, I have a couple students like that. I

tend to approach it in terms of, you know what? My job is one where I don't always get immediate gratification.

So if you need something specific, and I can solve that, I get to go home that day knowing that I did my job and feel good about that. So let me feel good about my job. Don't feel bad about asking for help. And that has worked with some of them by spinning it and saying, do me a favor. Let me know what you need.

PATRICK

All right. Well, Laura, thank you so much. It's great to see what changes your department's

LOFTUS:

made after seeing that presentation at AHG.