

Accessible Content Improves Learning For All

Making a case for Blackboard Ally

Accessibility for All

- At the university level, some students do not formally identify as needing accommodations even though they may have had accommodations in the past.
- Some students have never been diagnosed and do not know that they could benefit from accommodations.
- Although not requiring accommodations, many students deal with competing demands on their time; alternative formats can help (e.g., listening to a reading assignment while cooking dinner or driving children to activities.)

Now, Without Blackboard Ally

- In the LMS, number and location of files needing conversion is unknown
- Reporting capability does not exist
- File conversion is a manual process
- No staff officially designated to assist with file conversion
- Although we are working to encourage formation of new habits of mind to guide faculty toward selecting/creating accessible content, some faculty believe that evaluation/conversion is “Not my job.”

Blackboard Ally -- Who? Why?

- Over 300 institutions have adopted Ally -- 13 in NJ, including Atlantic Cape where many of our adjunct instructors also teach
- Ally is fast becoming an expected part of the standard technology toolbox
- Existing content can be converted automatically into accessible alternate formats.
- Institutional reporting is available
- Instructor specific reporting and feedback available.
- Product is regularly [updated](#); updates do not cause any LMS downtime

Blackboard Ally and the LMS

- Ally is integrated with but separate from Blackboard
- Ally is LMS agnostic – If the University decides to adopt any one of the following LMS platforms, Ally is currently available for:
 - Canvas
 - Moodle (self-hosted)
 - Blackboard Open LMS (i.e., the old Moodle Rooms service)
- Ally conversion files stored separately and do not impact the storage levels used by the LMS

Blackboard Ally File Formats

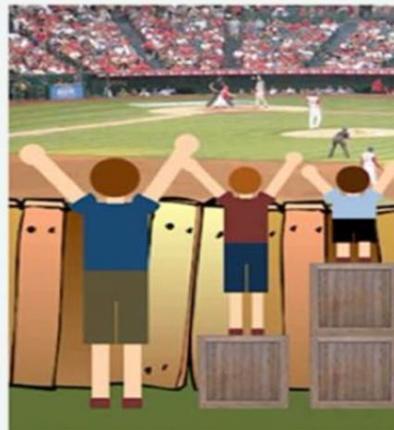
- Word, PowerPoint, OpenOffice, and Uploaded HTML → [Tagged PDF](#), [Semantic HTML](#), [MP3 Audio](#), [ePub](#), [Electronic Braille](#)
- PDF → MP3 Audio, Electronic Braille, ePub
- Items created in Blackboard using the Blackboard editor are also converted.
- Video files (on the LMS, not NJVid) – are checked for captions and audio description.
- Provides feedback for improving files (e.g., reports images without alternate text, problems with color contrast)
- Video demonstration available at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64mmVgZ_7Yk&feature=youtu.be
- Full list of conversions at
https://help.blackboard.com/Ally/Ally_for_LMS/Administrator/Institution_Report/Accessibility_Checklist
- Does not make adjustments to documents available through LTI connections (i.e., publisher content on the publisher web site), but developers are in communication with publishers for future updates.
- Does not currently convert uploaded student assignments, but this is on the product development roadmap for implementation in the very near future.

Access for all Regardless of Need

EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY



In the first image, it is assumed that everyone will benefit from the same supports. They are being treated equally.



In the second image, individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access to the game. They are being treated equitably.



In the third image, all three can see the game without any supports or accommodations because the cause of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed.

Advancing Equity and Inclusion
A Guide for Municipalities
June 2015 © City for All Women Initiative (CAWI), Ottawa

This cartoon illustrates the concept of universal accessibility.
Starting from the left: Equality, Equity, Accessibility