

Pathways to Inclusion

Stories from the Ally Community



First Steps to Creating an Inclusive Culture with Dr. Bryan Berrett and Walt Hebern



University context: “Empowering Student and Faculty Success”

Located in California’s Central Valley, California State University, Fresno provides higher education opportunities to over 22,000 students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. As part of our campus-wide commitment to ensuring equitable and inclusive learning environments for all students, our Center For Faculty Excellence (CFE) supports faculty use of new technologies to improve their teaching and learning. Our work with faculty intentionally creates opportunities to build awareness as well as strategically provides trainings to increase their knowledge and ability to remediate course materials.



Goals for Ally: Designing Change Processes

Becoming a more inclusive campus requires more than just fixing the accessibility issues in course files. It requires a cultural shift, where faculty begin building universal design for learning principles and accessibility best practices into their courses from the start. In working to drive this culture change at Fresno State, we adopted Ally as a tool to help faculty identify and resolve accessibility issues within their courses

as well as to observe firsthand how accessible content allows for high-quality alternative formats that can benefit all students. Crucial to these change processes, the CFE has been building an atmosphere of support and trust with the faculty over the past three years. In organizing our Ally pilot, we wanted



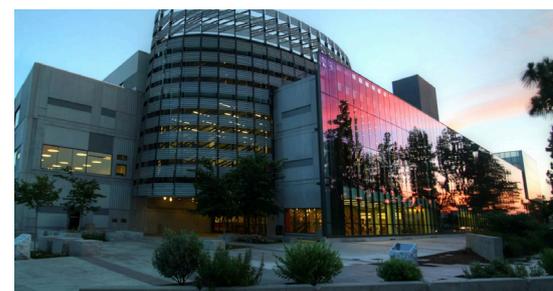
Implementation Strategy: Documenting Progress

43 courses participated in the Spring 2018 pilot, during which, we carefully documented time spent on file remediation, fine-tuned our professional development efforts, and developed collaboration across teams. During

“**Ally provides a platform from which we can launch conversations with faculty about the ease with which they can begin making changes in their course materials and pedagogy that can significantly impact student success.**” Dr. Dennis Nef, Vice Provost

to learn the most effective processes for modifying existing materials and educating faculty on creating accessible files. To support best practices, we have emphasized universal design for learning, self-efficacy, and inclusion in our conversations with faculty. We also wanted to gather feedback from students about their alternative formats usage and their satisfaction with the quality of the formats. Having an executive sponsor in academic affairs has also been an essential component of our communication plan.

workshops, we used the analogy of a lifeguard with binoculars monitoring the safety of the water to explain the purpose of Ally’s colored indicators in monitoring the accessibility of the learning environment. We highlighted



Henry Madden Library at California State, Fresno, home of the Center for Faculty Excellence



“**By supporting instructors to remediate accessibility issues with their course files, we found 50% of the pilot courses were successfully modified in under four hours.**”

the automatic creation of alternative file formats as additional resources all students could use to better access course content- a key principle of UDL.

In preparing for our pilot, we also participated in several Blackboard accessibility service engagements, including a train-the-trainer workshop to help inspire ideas for professional development and a strategy consultation to help develop a communications plan. Gathering feedback about our ideas and processes brought the various elements of our strategy into focus to reveal a comprehensive campus effort, from leadership to student success.



Evaluation and Findings: Change is possible (and complex)

In our survey to students enrolled in the pilot courses, we found that of the students that accessed the alternate file formats, 89% were either extremely satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their alternative format downloads. Although students reported that poor mobile access was one of the most common barriers to content access, there were

students who did not use the formats during the pilot, in part because they were unaware they were available. Students also pointed out pedagogical barriers to content, such as poor course organization. Using the CSV exports of Ally’s institutional reports to establish a course’s accessibility baseline, we tracked improvement to the file issues over time, and observed the average accessibility score increase from 38% to 77% for the 43 courses. For course files, it took between five minutes to over an hour to fix accessibility issues, with scanned PDFs taking the longest. We also identified files that could not be made accessible without compromising their meaning for others, such as infographics, or files that require more complex solutions, such as musical notation.

By incorporating Ally and UDL into our training, we are also observing instructors take a more proactive approach to accessibility. Compared to the 67 summer courses that began with an average accessibility score of 50%, the 58 courses currently being redesigned by our DISCOVERe faculty who received training

are starting with an average accessibility score of 67%. With Ally training in place, 60 new faculty have a total of 171 courses with a starting average accessibility score of 75% for Fall 2018.



Pearls of Wisdom: Make Accessibility an Everyday Practice

Ally and inclusive course design are now built into the onboarding process for our new faculty, which includes six days of training and the option for two additional days of learning. We want accessibility practices to become a natural part of every instructor’s course design workflow, so that when they are adding headings to a document or alt-text to an image, they are thinking about these steps as an essential part of delivering students a high-quality, personalized learning experience. In order to create cultural change, you first need a deep insight into the existing culture, and our efforts at the CFE to recognize faculty needs has helped develop that understanding and trust. Using your Ally pilot to learn about faculty beliefs and skill levels in accessibility as well as to analyze and refine your content remediation processes can help you begin to plant the seeds for such a cultural shift, where instructors no longer see accessibility tasks as chores, but as essential practices for student learning and success.

“**Ally provides Fresno State with an excellent tool that moves us beyond ADA compliance and on a path to universal design. The many alternative formats available through Ally provide students with excellent options to access course materials.**” Dr. Rudy Sanchez, Interim Associate Vice President for Faculty Affairs

Resources and Examples

[Accessibility for All](#)

[Fall 2017 Ally Pilot Report](#)

[Spring 2018 Ally Pilot Report](#)

[Ally Campus Workflow](#)

