



# COOL A TOOLS

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## Going Accessible

One of the biggest focus areas in Higher Education today is something known as accessibility. While many definitions of accessibility exist, and are debated, for our purposes I will define it as how we design our courses for people with learning disabilities so that they can take full advantage of the course with or without assistive technologies (such as a computer screen reader). It is important to know that this is not just an “online class thing,” and accessibility is not a trend in Higher Education. It is real, and it is here to stay.

Accessibility is not just for students who require accommodations. Research has shown that people with learning disabilities benefit from accessibility, especially things like captions for video, and documents in multiple formats. Researchers have proven repeatedly that “able bodied” people find value in accessibility, so it is worth your time to investigate how you can apply accessibility to your classes.

One of the big concepts in accessibility is Universal Design, which means that you have already designed your class so that it incorporates accessibility principles before you are required to make accommodations. I believe it is easier to build a class that already is accessible so it will be less work when that happens. If you follow this advice, you will also get the added benefit of knowing that you have already helped the students who have learning disabilities but have not identified themselves and submitted paperwork to the college.

While there is not enough room in this edition of *Cool Tools* to get into the process for making your class accessible, I do have room to tell you that you can find a wealth of information on the internet, especially how accessibility applies to different formats of course delivery. If you have any questions on this, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Tom McKinney at extension 4522.