Delivering Accessible Presentations

Delivering a presentation so that it is accessible to all students regardless of physical, mental, or cognitive abilities helps to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to be engaged with the content of the presentation. Planning for accessibility can benefit all students, including those without disabilities.

Three Ways to Get Started

1. As you present, ensure that students can see your face and hear your voice.

Look for physical barriers that may make it difficult for students to see and hear your presentation. Make sure you are in good light so the audience can see your face. As much as possible, face the audience while speaking; doing so helps all audience members follow and understand what you're saying, but it also aids students who lip-read. Speak clearly, at an appropriate volume and at a moderate pace. Repeat questions from the audience so that everyone hears them.

2. Make presentation materials available in advance.

Make digital copies of presentation materials available in advance so that participants with different needs may review them and can access them on any electronic device they may use. Provide written materials in formats requested by participants. Format all materials so that they are accessible.

3. As you present, describe images, tables, or charts on the slides.

When presenting, describe such visual elements as images, tables, and charts. If you display video, turn on closed captioning. Describe all of the information on each slide.

Accessible Presenting in Action

Brian's instructor often uses her tablet PC to draw equations on a digital whiteboard. By mirroring the tablet's display to a presentation screen at the front of the room, she can maintain eye contact while drawing an equation.

Esperanza is taking a class in a large lecture hall and has difficulty seeing the screen at the front of the room. Her instructor presents using an app that mirrors to Esperanza's tablet whatever he displays on the screen.

Jacob's ADHD makes it difficult for him to stay focused during presentations. To remedy this situation, Jacob pulls out his laptop and refers to the presentation materials that the instructor has shared with students before class, which helps him to stay focused and not fall behind.

Because Megan is dyslexic, she sometimes finds it challenging to keep up with the pace of a presentation and still understand its content. She finds it helpful when instructors describe the charts, graphs, and tables on their presentation slides.

Note that all students, regardless of disability, can benefit from these instructional practices.

Resources

For more information on making your course materials, activities, and assessments accessible to all students, visit "Accessibility and Universal Design for Learning at Boise State." (https://accessibility.boisestate.edu/)

Many organizers of academic conferences provide presenters with tips and strategies for creating accessible presentations and for delivering presentations in an accessible manner. Here is one example, from the web site of the 2016 Conference of the American Society for Theatre Research. (http://bit.ly/2xWurPY)

The Web Accessibility Initiative provides advice on planning, designing, and delivering accessible presentations in "How to Make Presentations Accessible to All." (http://bit.ly/1pHJ3LI)