

THE ALERT

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Letter from the Editor: *Emily (Singer) Lucio*



Where is spring? Does anyone else ever wonder that this time of year? Especially after all of this snow. After working in higher education for so many years one of the things that you realize is that the spring semester seems to fly by and before you know it you are planning for final exams and commencement. We are less than one month into this semester and we have all ready had a few inquiries about accommodations for commencement. In the last issue I had asked everyone to feel free to submit editorials. I would like to remind everyone that this is a great opportunity for people to share your opinion about things that are happening in the field. Do you think DS is heading in the right direction? How do you think the changes in the Federal Regulations have impacted you? What

are some of the good things you see in the field? How has the emphasis on returning Veterans impacted your campus? As our students begin to finish another year and another group of students graduates, I find this is a good time to reflect to see how far we have come and how these students have grown and matured with our support. It is also a good time for us to assess the services that we provide and learn from our students what has worked and what hasn't worked for them. Please feel free to share ideas, reflections or anything else in our next Editorial section in April. I hope that your semester has gotten off to a great start!

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ALERT Editor

In This Issue:

Letter from the Editor.....	Front Page
Message from AHEAD President	2
Federal Update	3 - 4
Professional Development Opportunities	5
Veteran's Issues	6
Initiative's Corner	7 - 9
Resources & Announcements	10 - 12

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Emily Singer, ALERT Editor

Letter from AHEAD President: *Jean Ashmore*

It is my pleasure to announce two exciting forthcoming opportunities for AHEAD members. The first is that in mid-February AHEAD will begin offering a set of online program assessment tools designed to provide offices of disability resource and service 360 degree feedback from the key stakeholder groups on your campus: students with disabilities, faculty, and administrators and staff. AHEAD will host the instruments for your institution on a secure server, provide the data collection, cleaning, and summative reporting. Members taking advantage of this service will be provided with summary reports as well as raw data for further analysis. The data collection of stakeholder groups can be augmented by a comprehensive self-assessment tool that will be provided as well. This service is in its final revision after the third round of beta-testing, and details will be sent out to all AHEAD members very shortly.

The second is related to the Department of Education's Commission on Accessible Instructional Materials in Postsecondary Education. You may recall from my last ALERT letter that AHEAD is represented on this Commission by our executive director, and that the Commission is chaired by AHEAD member Gaeir Dietrich from the High Tech Center Training Unit who is representing postsecondary accessible materials interests from the campus- and system-level perspective. AHEAD, in conjunction with our annual conference July 12 – 16, 2011 in Seattle, will be hosting a two-day meeting of the full Commission along with one of the few public-comment hearings. I am thrilled that AHEAD has been asked to play such crucial roles in the work of the Commission and to host this important meeting and hearing. We'll be certain to pass along details on how you can participate, and be heard, in this work as soon as that information is finalized.

It may seem that July is long off, but for AHEAD it really is not. Despite winter challenges, the AHEAD staff, Program Chair and an army of proposal reviewers have been very focused on our upcoming Seattle conference. Registration materials will be mailed to you before long, and you will no doubt be impressed with the broad array of excellent presentations. I want to call particular attention to the dedication, long hours and professional commitment of Margaret Camp, the 2011 Program Chair, and Richard Allegra, AHEAD's Program Manager for Education without whom this year's excellent program could not have been developed.

AHEAD is expanding. In 2010 the AHEAD Board of Directors voted to establish five Standing Committees to increase the organization's capacity and member engagement. The chairs of these committees, which deal with membership, professional development, diversity, technology and public policy, will be announced soon. The committee chairs will participate in strategic planning with the full board at the spring meeting in April. The Board engages in strategic planning every 4-5 years.

Another thing coming up in the spring is elections. There will be a number of positions on the board up for election this year. Please consider nominating someone, including yourself, for an open position. And then of course, please do vote. With a membership of over 2,500 we should have many, many members who cast votes, but each year I am surprised by how few really do vote. Take time to read the candidate statements, and cast your vote! Sometimes the votes are very, very close which reinforces the adage that every vote matters.

The AHEAD to You! audio series is going strong this year. You can easily sign up for one or all of these excellent professional development offerings. Sessions available in the next few months are:

- February 17th – Institutions of Higher Education Play a Key Role in Helping Students with Disabilities
- March 17th – Mining Learning Disability Documentation for Clues in Determining Eligibility for Specific Accommodations
- April 14th – eTextbooks and eReaders in Higher Education – Solutions, Challenges and Questions

As I've said before, please contact me should you have questions about our association, what it is doing and ways in which to be involved. You can reach me at jean@ahead.org.

Jean Ashmore, President

Federal Update

Ahead of the ADA Access Curve Part 5

The Ides of March are upon us: Are you complying with the DOJ's new regulations about service animals?

This is the fifth in a series of articles, "AHEAD of the ADA Access Curve," to assist disability service providers, ADA Coordinators, and others in promoting compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, section 504, and the Fair Housing Act. This series approaches physical access and other issues as key to the civil rights of individuals with disabilities. It is intended to provide some helpful tools in a time of shifting requirements and shrinking resources.

So what specifically should your college or university do by **March 15**? While this article won't cover all the policy-related changes in the regulations (see a summary in the Alert article from October 2010), it will focus on one area that may cause some confusion: service animals.

The only service animals that you must admit under the ADA are dogs.

While DOJ asked in the proposed rules whether it should include other animals as service animals, in the end it kept this limitation. Of course, you *can* allow other types, and in fact you may be required to do so in residence halls under the Fair Housing Act Amendments or section 504.

Guide any policy revisions by these other principles in the new rules:

1. Service dogs aren't just guide dogs that assist individuals who are blind. A service animal is any guide dog, signal dog, or other dog individually *trained to do work or perform tasks* for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including people with sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disabilities.
2. Among the types of work they can do, service animals can pull a wheelchair, provide physical stability or balance for people with mobility disabilities, alert individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to another person's

presence or sounds, provide non-violent protection or rescue work, retrieve items such as medicine or telephones, alert people with epilepsy and other disorders to an oncoming seizure, alert individuals to the presence of allergens, and help persons with psychiatric or neurological disabilities by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors.

3. If the only purpose of an animal's assistance is emotional support, comfort, or companionship, it is not a "service animal" for purposes of the ADA. (You may need to allow the animal as a reasonable modification in a residence hall or other housing. See the discussion later in this article.) However, you are free to allow support animals, and there may be state or local laws that allow a wider variety of animals to accompany individuals with disabilities, with fewer restrictions on the types of animals and the purposes they serve.
4. Be careful about "documentation." You may ask only two questions about an animal that someone wants to bring into a building other than a residence hall or housing: (1) Is the animal required because of a disability? and (2) What work or tasks is the animal trained to perform?

You cannot ask questions about the person's disability. For

example, if a person says that a service dog alerts the individual to a seizure and makes sure the person gets to a safe place, you cannot ask, "Do you have epilepsy?" or "What causes your seizures?" If the responses reveal that an animal has been trained to provide assistance to a person with a disability, that person should be able to access all services and facilities while accompanied by the service animal. You should not ask the two permitted questions if the answers are readily apparent.

What DOJ *doesn't* say is what you should or can do if the answers *don't* reveal the connection between the disability and the task, and this may bring the toughest challenges. The best recommendation is to use good judgment and to have a "go-to" person who makes decisions if a front-line staff person has a question about whether to admit an animal. That go-to person should be informed about the regulations and your policies and be the one who makes a final decision.

5. The owner/handler of the animal is responsible for controlling and caring for the animal. A service animal should have a harness, leash, or other tether, unless the handler's disability or the nature of the task performed would prevent using one, in which case the animal

must be under the handler's control through voice control or other means. You may ask an individual to remove a service animal from your building if the handler is not controlling the animal, it is not housebroken, its presence fundamentally alters the nature of your service, or it poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others that cannot be eliminated by reasonable modifications.

6. Service animals do not need certification, identification cards or licenses, special equipment such as vests, or professional training.

In residence halls or other housing, you may need to allow other types of animals, and may ask more intrusive questions.

The Fair Housing Act (FHA) and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which will generally apply to residence halls and other housing such as faculty or graduate apartments, protect the right of people with disabilities to keep emotional support animals in those settings, as a reasonable accommodation. The tenant can be required to have a letter or prescription from an appropriate professional, such as a therapist or physician, establishing that the support animal is necessary for the tenant to use and enjoy the residence. The individual must demonstrate a relationship between his or her ability to function and the companionship or support of the animal.

And what about miniature horses?

It's not likely to happen -- because there are relatively few miniature horses in the country that assist people with disabilities -- but it is possible that someone will come into one of your buildings with a miniature horse, and you should know what to

do. Miniature horses have longer life spans than dogs and can be viable alternatives to dogs for people with allergies or whose religious beliefs preclude the use of dogs. The new regulations don't consider a miniature horse to be a service animal but say that a miniature horse must sometimes be admitted -- when it has been individually trained to perform tasks for an individual with a disability and its admission is otherwise reasonable under the circumstances. Factors to be considered when deciding whether admitting a miniature horse is reasonable include the horse's type, size, and weight; the handler's control of it; whether it is housebroken; and whether it compromises safety.

Some of the questions about animals may be complex and require assistance from legal counsel. There is more explanation of the service animal provisions of the title III regulations (found in section 36.302(c)) in the DOJ analysis of the 2010 revisions, at <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/2010-21824.htm> and <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/pdf/2010-21824.pdf>. For more about section 504, see "Section 504: Frequently Asked Questions," (www.hud.gov/offices/ftheo/disabilities/sect504faq.cfm#anchor272118). The most comprehensive guidance about section 504 and the FHA is found in the Joint Statement of HUD and DOJ: Reasonable Accommodations under the Fair Housing Act at http://www.justice.gov/crt/housing/jointstatement_ra.php.

In the next article, we'll turn to some of the other policy-related requirements of the new regulations, including those about Segways and other mobility devices, Video Remote Interpreting, and telephone communication.

This series of articles is provided as a member service by Irene Bowen, J.D., with ADA One, LLC. Until August 2008, Irene was Deputy Chief of DOJ's Disability Rights Section. She is also former Deputy General Counsel of the Access Board. ADA One provides consulting, training, and alternative dispute resolution services related to the Americans with Disabilities Act and similar laws. You can contact Irene at IreneBowen@ADA-One.com or by phone at 301 879 4542. Her web site is <http://ADA-One.com>.

The content in this article is for informational purposes only. It is not and shall not be deemed to be legal advice or a legal opinion. You cannot rely on the content as applicable to a particular circumstance or fact pattern. If you need legal advice about a particular issue and particular facts, you should seek professional legal advice.

Professional Development Opportunities

Take advantage of these upcoming events, conferences, and other opportunities to increase and share your knowledge.

UNDERREPRESENTED RACIAL, ETHNIC, AND ABILITY GROUPS (UREAG) 55TH ANNUAL MEETING

The Underrepresented Racial, Ethnic, and Ability Groups (UREAG) committee of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) would like to invite you to join us in Montreal for our 55th annual meeting! The CIES conference annually hosts panel presentations on issues in education from senior scholars, graduate scholars, and representatives from nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations who examine these issues on an international scale or within a comparative context. The conference theme for 2011 is "Education is that which liberates," from the Sanskrit, "Sa' vidya' ya' vimuktaye."

UREAG's mission is to increase participation at CIES by underrepresented groups, as well as to remove barriers to participation and to sponsor panels on topics relevant to underrepresented groups. In order to fulfill our mission, UREAG offers travel funding every year to scholars presenting at or attending the CIES conference. Applications for funding should be no more than three double-spaced pages and include 1) the presentation title, 2) a brief author biography, 3) a description of the accepted paper and its contributions to underrepresented groups, 4) a description of how the UREAG travel grant will enhance your scholarly commitment to international and comparative education, and 5) any additional funding sources.

We would like to invite you to:

- Apply for a travel grant from UREAG to attend the conference
- Join the UREAG listserv and participate in our dialogue

Please save the following dates in your calendar:

- March 6, 2011: Early registration deadline for CIES 2011
- April 17, 2011: Regular registration deadline for CIES 2011
- May 1-5, 2011: CIES 2011 conference dates

Visit the conference website at <http://cies2011.mcgill.ca/> for the official call for papers and to submit your abstract. Applications for the UREAG travel grant should be e-mailed to ureagtravelgrant@gmail.com. You may also contact the UREAG committee at ureag@cies.us to join our listserv and receive more information.

We look forward to having you share in our work!

Veteran's Issues

A Veteran Friendly Campus, A 3-Part Series (Part 2 of 3)

Veteran Success Jam Attracts Thousands

Elizabeth O'Herrin

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In May 2010, the American Council on Education (ACE), in partnership with NASPA and with the generous support of The Kresge Foundation, hosted an unprecedented online dialogue, the Veteran Success Jam. This three-day national conversation brought together thousands of veterans and their families, service members, campus leaders, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing veterans in higher education. For 72 hours, participants discussed issues faced by returning veterans and generated ideas in the following areas:

- Promising practices on college campuses
- Education benefits and financing an education
- Navigating a path to college
- College credits for military service
- Supporting the families of veterans
- Transitioning to employment and training
- Removing the myths and misconceptions of physical and psychological health challenges.

A forum on each topic was hosted by a recognized leader in the field aided by facilitators with in-depth subject matter experience. Together, participants shared valuable resources, identified recurring barriers, and brainstormed about campus enhancements to support students. Repeatedly, participants exchanged contact information and planned further discussions outside of the Jam.

More than 3,000 registrants made more than 2,800 posts, representing individuals from all 50 states plus the District of Columbia and more than 30 countries and territories logged on to participate. Nearly 60 percent of the participants were college and university faculty and staff, reinforcing the belief that institutional representatives want to hear directly from veterans and are committed to serving them. The Jam drew more than 600 posts specifically from veterans, signifying that veterans want to contribute to these conversations and have vital insights to share. Participants spent an average of two and a half hours in the Jam and shared more than 175 unique web-based resources.

During the course of the Jam, more than 650 participants attended a series of free webinars. The webinars, led by prominent subject matter experts, provided participants with vital and timely information on military transcripts, post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, and the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Several recurring topics surfaced in the Jam:

- The importance of a campus task force with high-level institutional representatives as well as current student veterans
- The barriers posed by military and civilian terminology when veterans pursue an education and a career
- Specific or additional services for women veterans
- The gaps and difficulties with the Post-9/11 GI Bill

- The ever-increasing use of the term "veteran friendly" by marketers and others that is diminishing the real meaning of the phrase
- The need to create greater awareness of current programs and of the difficulties in determining effective resources from a large, and often overwhelming, pool.

ACE has released a summary report of the Jam, "Ensuring Success for Returning Veterans," which is available for download as a PDF at www.acenet.edu/STWS. The report provides overviews of each of the forum discussions, participation metrics, key insights, and a list of the web resources posted by participants. ACE will continue to analyze this information and collaborate with others in honing its agenda for the second year of Post-9/11 GI Bill implementation.

Elizabeth O'Herrin is the former associate director of military programs at the American Council on Education.

Initiative's Corner

J.U.S.T. CHANGE INITIATIVE (JCI) JUST Change Initiative Brings JUST Design

Christopher S. Lanterman,
Northern Arizona University

Elizabeth G. Harrison,
University of Dayton

Last fall the Institute for Human Centered Design (IHCD) issued an RFP for a grant titled "Design for Social Justice: Partnerships in Diversity Access to Design Professions." The grant competition called for projects that seek to expand the recruitment and/or support of students with disabilities into post-secondary design education. This request for proposals was met with enthusiasm by participants in AHEAD's JUST Change Initiative (JCI), as it fits neatly with our focus on Just, Usable, Sustainable, Transformational (JUST) change. We realized that this grant offered an interesting opportunity for AHEAD to collaborate with IHCD in opening discussion around the importance of design in our ongoing considerations of disability in higher education.

To make a long story short, Chris Lanterman and Beth Harrison, the authors of this article and part of the JUST Change Initiative, will be guest editors of a proposed special issue of the JPED to be titled "JUST (Just, Usable, Sustainable, Transformational) Design," with a target publication date in 2012. We recently released a Call for Papers and to date have received twelve article, practice brief, and review proposals for the special issue with several more promised. We see this as a clear indication that many people are pursuing change projects in their work and that the concept of "JUST design" may serve as a useful way to help people see their individual work as part of a dynamic movement to bring change in our higher education institutions.

The concept of design is very elastic. There are, of course, traditional academic and work-related fields that we all recognize as homes for "designers": visual/graphic and now web design, architecture and landscape design, industrial design, fashion design, interior design, set and costume design in the theatre. Many other fields center on design without actually carrying that name--most areas of engineering, some in computer science, for example.

What we don't often think about is that we all design things all the time. As DS providers we design documents and interactions, processes and procedures. Classroom instructors design every aspect of their course and their interactions with students. As individuals we design our day (with To Do Lists and schedules), our image (through clothing and makeup and hair style, for example), our meals (through meal planning and the choices we make from the table or the menu), our interactions, our vacations.

Why this is important? Because thinking about what we do everyday as "design" can help us remember to make more conscious and considered choices. Accepting that through our everyday choices we create the environments in which we live and in which we ask others to function gives us the opportunity to look more closely at the environments we are creating. Herein lies the impact for disability, for making conscious and considered choices means taking accessibility and usability into account in every choice we make and in everything we design.

The catch lies not only in doing this in our own lives and work, but also

in finding ways to help others do the same. For that reason our goals for this special issue of JPED center on providing JPED readers with ideas and examples from people who are consciously trying to bring inclusive and universal design into the postsecondary environment. We hope to (1) showcase effective and validated approaches to inclusive design in physical, learning, and information environments that create equitable opportunities for disabled students and faculty; (2) identify key relationships between disability service professionals and partners across campus that can promote access to and participation in many different fields, including traditional design fields, for disabled students; (3) suggest effective practices for transitioning disabled students from secondary education into design fields through these partnerships; and (4) illustrate the efficiencies and equities that may be enhanced through reframing disability and access through a lens of effective and inclusive design.

We think that design matters, and this project will highlight the importance that design plays in the accessibility and usability of all aspects of our Disability Services work and our institutions, and ultimately in our pursuit of social justice overall.

Initiative's Corner

Reframing Disability: Putting disability on the diversity agenda

Donna Johnson, Director, Disability Services, University of Minnesota

Since the 1960's, Congress has passed a number of civil rights laws intended to protect the rights of Americans who may face discrimination in publicly financed education because of their race, gender, or disability. Individual states and municipalities have enacted similar legislation and some have expanded this protection to ensure freedom from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender expression and gender identity. These laws reflect the core value – that each individual should have the opportunity to develop his or her talents to the fullest (U.S. Department of Education, 1999 as cited in Bremer, Timmons, & Johnson, 2007). While most colleges and universities have services designed to meet the needs of racial/ethnic minorities, women, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and disabled students, it is uncommon for these offices to be housed in one collaborative unit.

In 1996, the University of Minnesota started bringing together various units under the umbrella of what is now known as the Office of the Vice President and Vice Provost for Equity and Diversity (OED). In 2011, the following units are part of the Office for Equity and Diversity: Disability Services; the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action; the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Ally Programs Office; the Institute for Diversity, Equity and Advocacy; the Multicultural Center for Academic Excellence; the Office for Diversity in Graduate Education; and the Women's Center.

These offices were created to ensure that those who are, and have been, underrepresented, underserved, and

marginalized are able to access all that the university has to offer. Over time, the charge of these offices has grown to include focusing on the institution's understanding of how the creation of, support for, and success of a diverse University community is critical to achieving its mission and strategic goals. The overarching theme among all units represented in OED is social justice – the concept that those who have traditionally been devalued by society have the right to fully participate in and thrive in society. Similar to the Civil Rights movement, the Women's Rights movement, and the Gay and Lesbian Rights movement, the Disability Rights movement has worked to combat oppression by the non-disabled people over people with disabilities (Johnson, 2006) and to create environments in which all can participate to the fullest extent possible (Longmore, 2003).

The Disability Rights movement aligns with the social justice model of disability in which disability is viewed as a difference, not a deficit (Gill, 1994). The social justice model of disability is an integral part of service delivery at the University of Minnesota. Disability Services not only determines and implements reasonable accommodations for students and employees with documented disabilities, but actively works to change the environment in which students and employees learn and work. For example, Disability Services' staff chair the Provost's Committee on Mental Health, a campus-wide committee charged by the provost to raise awareness about issues related to student mental health, to affect policy change, to improve conditions on the University of Minnesota campus for students with mental health

conditions and serve as a model for campus collaboration.

Although the social justice model of disability is not a new concept, it has not made its way among mainstream society, let alone among many people with disabilities. Block, Loewen, and Kroeger (2006) suggest that disability services providers need to educate not only their own staffs, but the entire campus community on disability as a part of diversity, the social justice model of disability and universal design.

Recently the University of Minnesota's Disability Services sponsored a variety of activities to educate both DS staff and the campus community. One example of activities to educate staff on the social justice model of disability is the First Monday Book Club in which staff discuss book chapters and articles on power, privilege, oppression, and disability. Another example is all staff meetings focused on Reframing Disability and Practical Applications of Disability Studies. Disability Services has also purchased artwork by artists of color with disabilities hung in the office to celebrate disability community, culture, and pride which sets the tone of diversity when entering the Disability Services.

In order to put disability on the diversity agenda, Disability Services launched an identity campaign in which students, staff, faculty, and guests with a variety of disabilities who are also diverse in race, gender, and background share their stories on how they access and contribute to the campus community. Disability Services also launched Advancing Access for Everyone... A Reception to Honor the Outstanding Contributions of People

with Disabilities and Their Allies in October. Also in October, Disability Services co-sponsored at diversity education event featuring Matthew Sanford, a yoga teacher and professional speaker with a disability. Disability Services has also co-sponsored social justice film festivals, a symposium on artists with disabilities, a social justice leadership retreat focusing on mental health, and events that showcase musicians with disabilities for the campus community.

While these activities are useful in broadening the work of Disability Services at the University of Minnesota, they do not replace the importance of the presence of Disability Studies on its campuses. The Institute on Diversity, Equity, and Advocacy (IDEA) is exploring the development of Disability Studies graduate minor at the University of Minnesota. A committee has been formed and The Minnesota Symposium on Disability Studies was held in 2010 with participants from Canada, Europe, and United States. A Disability Studies minor would solidify the importance of disability as a part of diversity in the academic environment as it would attract scholars interested in looking at disability as an area of study. It would also elevate disability to a position meriting a social group worthy of academic study.

In conclusion, by reframing disability as an aspect of diversity, Disability Services at the University of Minnesota has been able to draw on the richness that human differences bring to campus and as well as collaborate with colleagues who share the values of access and inclusion, community, education and learning, sustainable transformation and accountability.

Resources

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Resources & Announcements

MUST—NASA Educational Project Administered by the Hispanic College Fund (HCF)

Despite the fact that she “always loved and succeeded in science,” Alysha Jeans once admitted to having doubts about her future as a scientist. “Science was simply too technical a field for a blind person to enter,” Alysha remembered feeling before she became a physics major at Rice University.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Motivating Undergraduates in Science and Technology (MUST) project helps students like Alysha realize their potential in science, technology, engineering and math fields. MUST participants receive a one year scholarship of up to half of tuition and fees, not to exceed \$10,000; a paid 10-week summer internship at one of ten NASA field centers; and the MUST Professional and Academic Support System (PASS), which includes funding for tutoring, mentoring, and diverse professional development activities. After being accepted into MUST and successfully completing her internship at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Alysha could no longer doubt that she had everything it took to thrive as a scientist at one of the most prestigious space agencies in the world.

MUST is a NASA educational project administered by the Hispanic College Fund (HCF). HCF is a nonprofit that organizes its work into pre-college, college, and career initiatives. Career initiatives include the MUST project and the NASA One Stop Shopping Initiative in which HCF serves as NASA’s preeminent recruiter of students of all backgrounds and abilities who attend Hispanic Serving Institutions. While these HCF programs are a gateway to NASA opportunities at the undergraduate level, a variety of other HCF programs link underserved communities to different resources and public and private agencies. For more information, please explore the following websites. HCF: www.hispanicfund.org, OSSI: <http://intern.nasa.gov>, MUST: www.nasa.gov/education/must

Article: The French Chef Still Waits for The Annoying Orange: Making Online Programming Accessible to People with Disabilities

Suzanne Robitaille and Michael Janger Aledbody

Synopsis

The new Twenty-first Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act will make it easier for people with disabilities to access TV programs over the Internet. While the law is a tremendous step in the right direction, a surge in new types of online programming, such as Webisodes and streaming movies, are still not captioned for the deaf and hard of hearing. This issue has drawn the attention of federal law enforcers, including the Department of Justice, which is considering the possibility of revising the Americans with Disabilities Act to address accessible web information and services, movie captioning and video descriptions.

This white paper lays out the current online programming landscape and attempts to analyze:

- What the law covers, and what content is not covered
- Why all emerging programming delivered online should be accessible
- The business case for making online programming more accessible
- What we can expect from the industry going forward

This paper is designed as an up-to-date resource for law enforcers and policymakers; companies and organizations that create multimedia content; web producers and developers; and people with disabilities and others dealing with physical or mental conditions.

<http://abledbody.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/abled-body-online-video-captions.pdf>

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Resources & Announcements

American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) sponsoring the Disability Vote Project (DVP)

The DVP works in a non-partisan manner to eliminate the barriers to voting and, in close collaboration with coalition partners in states around the country, to increase political participation for individuals with disabilities. DVP aims to get people with disabilities registered to vote; strives to educate them on how to get to their polling places and what their rights are at the polling places; and works to make polling places accessible to voters with all disabilities. Learn more at: http://www.aapd.com/site/c.pv11kNWJqE/b.5606967/k.63BD/Disability_Vote_Project.htm.

Secretary of Education Duncan announced \$10.9 million in awards under new programs that help students with intellectual disabilities transition to postsecondary education.

The bulk of the funding is being awarded to 27 two- and four-year institutions of higher education or consortia of institutions under the model comprehensive Transition Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID). The TPSID grantees, located in 23 states, will create or expand programs that focus on academics and instruction, social activities, employment experiences through work-based learning and internships, and independent living. Grantees will provide individualized supports for students and opportunities to be involved in college experiences with their peers without disabilities. For more information, see: <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-secretary-education-duncan-announces-109-million-awards-under-new-programs-he>.

The Education Department (ED) has awarded two consortia of states millions of dollars in grant money to develop the next generation of alternate assessments for students with severe cognitive disabilities - the “1 percent” group of students.

As part of the No Child Left Behind and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act assessment and accountability requirements, students with the most significant cognitive disabilities must participate in and be tested on a curriculum based on the same academic content standards that their grade-level peers are learning. To meet these requirements, individual states have developed alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards to test the 1 percent group of students, which refers to the number of students who can be considered proficient on the basis of such tests for AYP purposes. The new tests to be developed - slated for use by the 2014-15 school year - will be aligned to the Common Core State Standards and will be designed to assess students' knowledge of math and English/language

arts in grades 3-8 and in high school, according to ED. For more information, see: <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-education-department-awards-grants-improve-assessments-students-disabilities>

Resources & Announcements

WGBH Works with Nuance Communications, Inc. on Effort to Improve the Quality of Live News Captioning

Boston, Mass., – November 9, 2010 – WGBH’s National Center for Accessible Media (NCAM) is collaborating on a U.S. Department of Education-funded Project to develop a prototype system to automatically assess accuracy of real-time captions for live news programming. The system will identify and weigh the impact of different kinds of errors in closed captions.

The variations in quality and accuracy of real-time captioning have long been a concern to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Captioned news in particular can be a lifeline to viewers who cannot hear well enough to follow program audio, a lifeline only as strong as the captioning is accurate. Live, or real-time captions are most often produced by specially trained court reporters, called stenocaptioners, who use a phonetic keyboard attached to a computerized dictionary to translate spoken words into text in a matter of a few seconds. National consumer advocacy organizations have petitioned the FCC to consider adding a standard of caption quality to existing mandates for quantity of captioning on television.

An early activity of NCAM’s “Caption Accuracy Metrics” Project was the design and launch of a web-based national consumer survey of television news caption viewers. Respondents were asked to read sample captions and identify error types that make captions hard to follow. Basic real-time captioning error types are word substitutions, deletions (dropped words or omissions) and insertions (addition of words not spoken).

WGBH is working with Nuance Communications, a leader in speech solutions, to develop customized language processing, data analysis, and benchmarking tools for the Project. Nuance is leveraging its Dragon NaturallySpeaking speech recognition technology to

develop these tools in order to quantify and further analyze the captioning data that is being gathered. Nuance’s work is integral to the Project’s development of a final prototype tool that will enable tracking of audio and captioning, comparing the spoken word with the caption output and rating the accuracy levels based on error type and severity.

In addition to software developed at WGBH, The Project is using Nuance’s Dragon speech recognition as a benchmarking and data analysis tool. The Project is not using speech recognition as a caption-creation source. Test data reports will not associate samples with specific television networks, programs or caption agencies.

Project staff are working with a team of advisors, including the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), the federal technology agency that works with industry to develop and apply technology, measurements, and standards, Gallaudet University and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf.

NCAM staff recently convened a technical review panel of major stakeholders in caption quality at the CBS Broadcast Center in New York. Representatives from broadcast and cable networks, caption agencies, deaf education experts, and the National Court Reporters Association discussed the value of the project’s work to their organizations. In addition, the FCC recently announced that it is refreshing the record of comments on caption quality, solicited in two notices of proposed rulemaking over the past five years, and will determine with consumer and industry feedback if standards of quality should be set and, if so, in what manner.

“The phrase ‘a rising tide lifts all boats’ works well here,” said NCAM project director Marcia Brooks. “Being able to

quantify caption errors has been the missing piece for a range of stakeholders. We expect the Project will help improve captioning quality through better and easier monitoring by caption agencies and networks.”

Funding for NCAM’s Caption Accuracy Metrics project is provided by a grant from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, U.S. Department of Education under grant #H133G080093-10.

About NCAM and WGBH

The Carl and Ruth Shapiro Family National Center for Accessible Media at WGBH is a research, development and advocacy entity that works to make existing and emerging technologies accessible to all audiences. NCAM (ncam.wgbh.org) is part of the Media Access Group at WGBH, which also includes The Caption Center (est. 1972), and Descriptive Video Service® (est. 1990). For more information, visit The Media Access Group at WGBH, access.wgbh.org.

About Nuance Communications, Inc.

Nuance (NASDAQ: NUAN) is a leading provider of speech, imaging and customer interaction solutions for businesses and consumers around the world. Its technologies, applications and services make the user experience more compelling by transforming the way people interact with information and how they create, share and use documents. Every day, millions of users and thousands of businesses experience Nuance’s proven applications and professional services. For more information, please visit: www.nuance.com.

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