

WebAIM Documents Course Available to 52,000+ CSU Employees

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George Joeckel records a module for WebAIM's online training program.

An often-neglected aspect of content on the web are the documents we email, post and share. Filling out a Word or PDF document is often a frustrating experience for those who rely on assistive technology to read text, or for those can't use a mouse. To address this issue, the WebAIM team at the Institute for Disability, Research, Policy & Practice developed a [video-based online training course](#) that launched in 2018.

In the fall of 2020, [The California State University](#) system and WebAIM collaborated to create a program to train 500 employees, with an initial focus on staff located at the Office of the Chancellor. Early successes led the CSU team to open the program to staff and faculty at other units, and over the first year of the program, more than 1,000 employees were trained.

“We launched the [ATI \(Accessibility Technology Initiative\)](#) in 2006 to make information technology resources and services accessible to our students, and to all of our stakeholders,” said Leslie Kennedy, CSU’s assistant vice chancellor for academic technology services. “The document accessibility training is helping us to reach a new level. If you look at Rogers' innovation adoption curve, we're now crossing over the chasm to reach the mainstream.”

A common way for people with disabilities to read digital content is by using technology called a screen reader, which presents information out loud. This and other

assistive technologies can only function correctly when electronic documents are structured properly. WebAIM's document training teaches CSU's content creators how to add this structure in Word and PowerPoint, as well as how to optimize PDFs exported from these applications.

At the start of the second year, this training program has expanded to a system-wide focus. The online course is now available to more than 52,000 employees at the 23 campuses in the CSU system. In addition, [virtual training](#) is also being conducted over Zoom to support the independent-study course.

“There's a lot of gratefulness for the CSU to make the most of WebAIM's high quality accessibility training for our staff and faculty,” Kennedy said. “This partnership is meeting a long-term goal for supporting all users as equitably as possible.”