Accessible Technology Policy
Vision, Mission, Policy Statement & Recommendations for Adoption

Accessible Technology Task Force, May 2014

## Overview

This policy is established to support the community and technical colleges in Washington State (CTC) in their obligation to provide equal, effective, and meaningful access to the benefits of technology for individuals with disabilities. All CTCs are mandated to comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Core Services legislation, RCW 28B.10.912 and the Washington State Law Against Discrimination, RCW 49.60 and any future legal mandates related to providing equal access to individuals with disabilities. Beyond these legal obligations, however, the SBCTC and its member colleges seek to create environments that allow for the full participation of their diverse communities.

In addition, it is recognized that accessibility is a system-wide responsibility and everyone within the system is responsible for ensuring access. Accessibility is to be addressed at the statewide system level, in institutions, and by individuals.

The CTC community’s commitment to ensure access to electronic and information technology (EIT) will be met through the application of accessibility standards, guidelines, training, and a common understanding of these concepts as specified in the Department of Education’s June 29, 2010 [Dear Colleague letter](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-20100629.html) (http://tinyurl.com/2wyq5es) on Electronic Book Readers.

This document applies to all current and emerging technologies throughout the Washington Community and Technical College system.

## Definition

The use of the term “accessibility” in this policy refers to the objective that everyone within the Washington State Community & Technical College system will have equally effective and equally integrated access to the benefits of technologies. “Effective” and “integrated” refer to our commitment to meet or exceed our legal obligations to provide an equivalent user experience in any and all cases where that is possible and reasonable.

## Vision

Washington’s community and technical colleges are leaders in supporting and addressing accessibility and ensuring that everyone within the SBCTC community has equally effective and integrated access to all the benefits of the college system. This includes the ability for students and members of the college community to access and use current, emerging, and future technologies.

## Mission

The SBCTC is dedicated to supporting faculty, staff and administrators charged with all aspects of EIT access. This includes the procurement, adoption and implementation of new and emerging educational technologies. We support our entire community as they adjust and adapt to changes in technologies to support our students’ learning experiences and the educational community as a whole.

## Guidelines & Principles

* Our outcome is based on input from all relevant stakeholders, including but not limited to disability services coordinators and students.
* All outcomes promote accessible design solutions as preferable to accommodations.
* Compliance is a by-product of accessibility policy, not a primary goal.
* We stress Universal Design for Learners in settings where it is most appropriate.
* Access is a discovery process on a case by case basis -- not an ad hoc, reactive process.
* Accessibility is a responsive policy environment driven by changes in demographics, technologies, and legal requirements.
* Policy, funding and practice must assist and support everyone involved in the acquisition, development and use of learning technologies.
* Evolving practices and conversations about accessibility should be central to instruction and student service process and delivery.
* Accessibility is an evolving discipline of practice that requires working together to create a culture, philosophy, and community of accessibility.

## Policy Statement

Washington State Community & Technical colleges shall provide appropriate, effective, and integrated access to technology for students, employees and external community members.

This policy applies to the procurement, development and implementation of instructional, administrative, or communications technologies and content. Further, the policy applies to both current and emerging technologies, including both hardware and software, in use in or being evaluated for purchase or adoption throughout the Community and Technical college system. The policy encompasses but is not limited to college websites, learning management tools, student information systems, training materials, instructional materials and assessment tools.

## Recommendations

1. SBCTC supports the new policy on accessible technology;
2. SBCTC & WACTC review and update existing policies on accessibility;
3. Given that legal analyses have identified that individuals, colleges, and the system can be held liable for failures to provide access, we recommend that the SBCTC ratifies this document and ensures that enforcement implementation occurs and guidelines are developed through a statewide implementation work group with representatives from BAC, eLearning, DSSC, WSSSC, IC, PIC, IT etc.
4. eLearning Council and individual colleges will provide professional development to staff/faculty so that appropriate access is provided to all users of technology.
5. Quarterly updates from a designated state group advise all SBCTC councils and commissions on matters of accessibility and technology. This group will support the creation of annual work plans and monitor progress on their achievement. The same group will be responsible for making recommendations, establishing guidelines, and disseminating best practices for technology accessibility.
6. SBCTC will establish a cross-council online presence to capture recommendations, resources and educational materials.