

We're on a worldwide search to see what inclusive education looks like.

So Blackboard Ally is going on tour for 2019,

visiting campuses around the globe to learn how they're tackling

their toughest accessibility challenges and

improving the learning experience for all their students.

All right, it's great to be back with another installment of the BB Ally podcast series.

During our last episode,

I had the chance to check in with the team at Lesley University in Cambridge

Massachusetts where social justice was the theme of the day.

It's a campus that's been committed to social justice since its founding

and that's a theme that's going to continue in today's episode.

I'm here in the Bay Area California at the birthplace of the Free Speech Movement,

the University of California at Berkeley.

We're both at the campus and in the surrounding cities.

The advocacy for people with disabilities and for

historically marginalized communities is really at the core of the campus,

the core of the community culture.

So I'm very fortunate to have the opportunity first to have

a conversation with accessibility evangelist Lucy Greco a.k.a.

"The Punisher", she earned that nickname both for

her fierce and relentless commitment to

accessibility advocacy as well as for her achievements on the global court.

Lucy represented candidate in the Paralympics,

helped bring home a bronze medal with her rocket arm.

So I'm very fortunate to have a chance to sit down with a true accessibility champion,

somebody who's been bulldozing barriers both in

her personal life as well as for the students she works with here on campus.

Lucy also serves as a special advisor to the Blackboard Ally team.

She's brought her unique knowledge and expertise about accessibility to help inform some of the early designs and features of Blackboard Ally.

So we'll get a chance to hear from her about how Blackboard Ally is impacting accessibility at the campus here at UC Berkeley.

So I'm very excited to have the opportunity to sit down with two inclusive learning champions;

Lucy Greco and Dr. Joseph Feria-Galicia.

I am Lucy Greco,

I am an Assistive Technology Specialist for UC Berkeley.

My title is assistant to access

technology evangelist and I lead the accessibility initiative for UC.

How did you get involved in the accessibility game?

So I have been in the accessibility game for many many years.

I am totally blind and I, of course,

was interested in access technology and assistive technology for myself when I was a student going through school and

I became an expert in the field

by just using and accessing and working with products myself.

What were some of the barriers that you experienced growing up as a student?

So the biggest barrier was access to information,

being able to go to the library like every other student and access articles.

In the days where I was going to school,

we still had periodical reference guides and everything was on paper.

Being able to go through and get that kind of

information without assistance from somebody else,

that was restricted to the 9-5 when the reference librarian was available.

As computers became more used and technology became more digital those barriers slowly dwindled.

Things like STEM were very very difficult to access, there was no digitizing of STEM content early on.

I think today we have a lot better access to those topics and areas.

Tell me a little bit about the history here at

Berkeley around supporting just people with disability.

This is like the home of where some of that stuff started, right?

Yes. So early on in the late 60s,

there was a group of about four or five different students who had various disabilities.

The most famous of which was a gentleman called Ed Roberts

and Ed Roberts was a polio victim who used an iron lung for,

I think, about two thirds to three quarters of

every day and was a young man who came here to Berkeley to go to

school and Berkeley was challenged to work with him and accommodate him and his peers.

I think there was a gentleman who was blind in the group,

a couple of other chair users who weren't,

various levels of disability

and this group of people became known as the rolling disabled.

They came to Berkeley and they challenged our image of people with disability,

they challenged our understanding of the capabilities of

people with disabilities and they won a lot of victories,

they won the right to be able to go to what classes they wanted when they wanted,

they won the right to demand that the classrooms be

made accessible and started the whole disability rights movement.

Berkeley soon became known as kind of a Mecca for people with disabilities,

we actually had a really good program for many many years where students with disabilities would come here specifically because we were more welcoming and more open and had more surfaces for people with disabilities.

This was our disabled students residents program where students who may have had physical disabilities of various degrees who had been taken care of by mom and dad their entire lives or their entire realm of their disability, say they were injured at age 10 something like that, they would come here not only to go to school but they would come here to learn how to become independent disabled adults and learn how to work through the system of disability, learn how to get the appropriate supports, everything from how to hire a personal care attendant to getting a master's of business or a PhD in economics, all the rest of those, all those things were a big package at Berkeley and those students with disabilities were always welcomed and very friendly. So because of that, we had a very rich disabled community.

There's a certain condition of causing disabilities where we actually have the highest percentage of people living with that disability in Berkeley because they all came here to school because we could support them.

How long have you been here at Berkeley?

I've been here for almost 15 years now.

What was it like when you first got here?

How digital were things?

Things were just on the verge of becoming digital.

I was hired to be an access technology consultant for the students,

my role was working with the students specifically and helping evaluate their needs and then helping them match them to assistive technologies.

So a student would come in

who didn't have the use of their hands and I could help them determine,

did we give them on-screen keyboard,

did we give them a use of eye gaze,

did we pair them with speech dictation software,

so it was my role to look at their ability,

pair them with assistive technology to make

their journey through Berkeley go better and go more effectively.

To jump to the next part of that question.

How is it different?

Today I'm actually working at a more systemic level instead of working with students firefighting individual problems and individual cases,

I'm now working to improve the environment overall for these students.

So that when they come here they have

less of a challenge with each and individual program or

every course that the courses are designed

excessively and everything works on an accessible basis.

So then when they know how to use their own technology they don't have

to be challenged by every single phase of process.

What has been one of the most challenging parts of your job as things have gone digital?

Getting the news and getting the information into the hands that need it the most.

Getting people like faculty to know

about the tools that they could use to become more accessible,

getting them to even realize that they were accessible or were not accessible.

That's always been a big barrier.

People in my industry have always worked at a firefighting type of role where we were basically drinking from the fire hose and trying to catch up and we had a student who had this problem and they were on this course and we had to fix that for them.

The biggest problem has always been getting ahead of the problem, getting to faculty and trying to fix the problems before they happen.

Being able to help people realize what accessibility means is actually really the key point.

Having people actually recognize inaccessible and accessible before the problem occurs has been a primary problem.

Maybe just going back broadly,

so are you seeing now accessibility becoming more a part of the conversation with faculty and or with the course experience?

I always of course would like it to be more, but definitely faculty are interested, faculty are engaged.

Faculty aren't aware of where the inaccessible barriers lay at this point and time.

But when they are, they jump on, and they grab it, and they embrace that whole thing.

Faculty really care about accessibility.

Something I've been known to say before is, faculty teach to teach everyone and give everyone the information they can.

When they realize that a person with a disability might not get that information and might not have access to the information, they want to have that be accessible.

They just don't know. They're not aware that what they're doing is blocking somebody from being engaged in their course.

As soon as we introduce something to them, they love it.

They embrace that whole idea of teaching and reaching more at the same time.

What's been the biggest challenge for faculty in making accessible content?

I think the tools that they've been provided are limited and I think as we provide tools and resources for faculty, it will become easier for them.

We had a study here just done just last year on the authoring tools themselves that people are using to create content.

The big problem is authoring tools themselves may have accessibility features built into them to make accessible content but they're not the default setting.

If you go into Microsoft Word to create accessible documents and all the accessibility checks are not on by default.

Actually, labeling the graphics which Microsoft Word does really well now is not on by default.

So the big barrier is knowing where to go to change the problem and faculty didn't even know that there was a problem that they needed to change.

So getting the information to them about where the barriers are and then helping them find the path, the easy path, that's going to be the challenge is the easy path because even though accessibility is a very easy thing, sometimes that pathway can be blocked.

Do you see that a lot with publisher content?

Yes. Some publishers create content that's inaccessible by default, and you have to go through all kinds of hoops and loops to get to that content in an accessible way.

More and more publishers are actually thinking about accessibility and working on their accessibility.

So we are getting improvements.

We're not there yet.

I think the longer we work at this and the longer we talk about the default experience being accessible, we will actually achieve this.

In a few years, I think we're going to have the scales tip in the other direction.

But right now, we're still very balanced with some publishers are making good content, some publishers are making bad content, some publishers are making great choices for accessibility, others are making bad choices.

What about, let's shift gears a little bit more on the theory stuff.

The relationship between accessibility and universal design, universal design for learning.

So universal design for learning is an excellent concept because it talks about the fact that everyone should be able to learn in their own way.

However, people get fixated on it sometimes as a way to get content accessible and I want to remind people that for content to be universally accessible,

it actually has to start with accessible content because you can't talk about ways to teach content and expect that

those ways will be the way you make it content accessible.

If you were presenting a file as a picture

and you're presenting a file as a video



and you're presenting the content in four different ways,  
if every single one of those ways is inaccessible,  
you've got universal design,  
you've got something that works for multiple different people.

You have to start with accessible content and then move to  
the universal design or the universal design for education.

I dread when people start talking about  
UDL because they think that UDL is the answer for accessibility,  
and I think UDL requires accessibility before it can work.

Tell me a little bit about your involvement with Ally?

So I've been involved with allies since very early on.

In that, the founders came to me early on and said,

"We've got this tool and we would like you to help us see how it's working."

They gave me early access to some of  
the content that they were remediating and I looked at it.

They first came to me and I was very skeptical and they said,

"We remediate documents to make them much more accessible."

I'm like, "yes.

Everybody says they do that, nobody does it."

Then I actually looked at the full product and understood how they were working.

First of all, they were doing a very reasonable job of remediating the content.

But the really exciting thing for me was looking at the whole product as a package.

They were doing one thing that nobody had thought about doing before,

which was going in and catching faculty early on in their process.

Maybe not at the beginning,

but early enough that as they were uploading content into their courses,

catching those faculty and saying, "Hey,

let's take a look at this. This is accessible.

This is inaccessible."

So I worked with them very closely from the very beginning to say,

this is the things we need to emphasize,

these are the things we need to look at

and I've always monitored it and respected

the product because it's given me as a professional

in academia a tool I've never had before.

I've never had access to go up to faculty and say,

"Let's look at your content and see if your content is accessible."

First of all, at a university like Berkeley,

the scale is just too large.

Maybe if there was 100 faculty at this university,

I could do that.

I can't do that at Berkeley.

We have a lot more than 100 faculty members,

and most of them aren't willing to talk to a staff member

because they've got busy lives and all the rest of that.

So ally gets the faculty right where they

are and gives them the information in small digestible bites,

which is what's really really important.

Right now, they're getting messaging about big concepts,

the big idea of accessibility.

How do we even begin to talk about that?

Do we talk about learning disability?

Do we talk about physical disability?

Do we talk about access to cognitive barrier?

No. We have to talk about small minuscule little things.

Do your images have labels?

Get them to work on things and give them bite sized digestible information, and that's what Ally I saw as the value right early on at the beginning.

It's like, "Oh my God,

you mean I can actually get

a faculty member to know that a PDF they created is a scanned image?"

forget about remediating that PDF for them,

which ally did do.

But just letting them know that

inherently what you're uploading blocks

a percentage of the population from actually accessing the content.

How have you seen the product evolve over the years?

It has evolved through leaps and bounds.

First of all, the algorithms they're using are getting better and better.

We're looking at different products,

we're looking at different campuses,

different universities around the world now

and seeing similarities in education.

It's giving us great insight into where academia is.

It's telling us what people are doing right and people are doing wrong for accessibility.

The product is evolving by working more with universities and helping us,

first of all see where our problems are,

going through and seeing that campus I work on has X number of files that are PDFs.

So maybe we need to work on PDFs.

It's giving us ways to approach the problem that we've never had access to before.

Tell me a little bit about the data review today and the first three months of roll-out.

It was really exciting to go through our data review and see that faculty were engaging with content and changing content.

That was really quite rewarding for me.

I mean, it was nice to see that we had a lot of content but that the content wasn't also all bad.

There was some content that was in there that actually had some promise, but it also gave us some really good guidance as to where we need to go next.

We still have a lot of images being uploaded, not as many as we would have thought.

So that was actually interesting to see that faculty are moving away from uploading images.

But we still have people putting in scanned PDFs and getting those fixed it's going to be critical and key.

I mean it was great though because we now have a snapshot of where we are, what we're doing and what kind of content we're creating.

We know that PDFs are the number one thing that we're doing on our campus, so we have to find a better way of creating those PDFs.

What do you see as maybe the next steps in the process?

So the next steps in the process is of course to continue using Ally.

That's going to be really important to keep engaging and to start communicating ways and means for people to do the things they're doing more effectively.

So, we need to start providing our faculty with the tools and easy access

to the tools and provide them with easy to understand guidance on how to use the tools.

So we need to encourage people.

"Hey, use Microsoft Word and maybe upgrade your copy of

Microsoft Word so that you're using the most advanced version of it".

These are the quick steps on how to check your product.

Literally, get the messaging through to them and I think starting to provide places and ways for them to understand how to do what they're doing better.

That it focus specifically on what the reports are telling us.

So, the number one problem is scanned PDFs.

So what kind of things can we do to stop those scanned PDFs.

Do we have to go around and find out where those photocopiers are that are only scanning images and providing images and maybe install OCR functions on them.

That's maybe one solution but there's got to be others as well.

We've got to start coming up with fast easy fixes.

What's most exciting do you see in the horizon for accessibility technologies?

The fact that STEM is becoming more accessible is really important to me.

The fact that we can now do math,

or chemistry, or biology

or physics online and that it's actually becoming more accessible,

I think it's going to make it not only accessible to people with

disabilities but it's going to make it accessible to third world countries.

People can learn more,

people can engage with content and understand it.

Education can benefit from technology if it's done right.

One thing we didn't talk about yet is like the alternative formats.

So just from a person with a visual impairment,

what's the value of being able to get an alternative format?

I'm going to throw that back at you and say that the value for

everyone is that you get to learn in the way you want to learn.

Maybe you're a commuter and you want to listen to an MP3 file

because you're driving and you can't take your eyes off the road to read the book.

Maybe you're a person who is a tactile learner and you want to be able to engage with an HTML file and move your way through

that HTML file and see the links and connections within it.

Maybe you are a person who needs to see and hear to understand.

So you're going to listen to it then you're going to read it.

If you're a blind and visually impaired person and

somebody does give you that scanned image,

being able to download it as an HTML file or a PDF,

gives you the benefit that you currently have to wait

up to seven weeks to get that converted by your disabled students program.

You can download that alternative format and have a file within instances,

seconds that you didn't have access to before.

You had to go to somebody else and say,

"Can you remediate this".

Now you have access to it yourself.

Because people can engage with those formats and pick whichever format they want,

that means that they can absorb it whatever way they want,

when they want, how they want, where they want.

How has it been for

the disability services office in terms of providing equitable access at scale?

How challenging is that?

It's incredibly challenging.

We have well over,

I think it's close to 2,000 students right now with disabilities,

many of which require alternative formats and we have to hire a lot of staff to do that.

I think there is currently 68 staff right now,

doing alternative media conversion.

That's a lot of people.

That's huge and we're just serving,

I think the number I heard was 125 students specifically with that.

It's taking up to seven weeks to get them their content.

Some students are getting material on what we call it just in time basis,

so you're covering topic X next week in the course,

you're getting the material this week.

You're not getting it before the semester.

A lot of students like to go through their textbook ahead of

time and get the ideas and concepts.

Students will sometimes read the book before the semester even starts.

Yes, very few of them but there are students who will do that.

If you're disabled students and you're in

a very complex area like chemistry or science of some sort,

we may not be able to get that material to you in an accessible format ahead of time.

Any closing thoughts?

I think.

There are schools out there just getting started with Ally.

The closing thought is this,

to see where you're at.

Thinking about the Ally tool,

use this tool as a way to engage and gather information about where you need to train,

where you need to reach out to people,

and figure out what the support mechanisms you can afford to give people are.

Educational institutions are desperately in need of funding to do things.

Using something like Ally to target what's most important in your institution,

maybe you don't have as many PDF as we do.

Maybe you have images, that's your a problem.

Come up with really effective ways of communicating about how to make those things more accessible to your campus by using the Ally tool.

Make sure that your faculty find the tool as a help

not as a threat or a hindrance to their getting you from point A to point B,

point out that this tool is there to make them better people.

That's the number one thing to focus on.

If you say to them,

"You may actually face penalties if you're not actually correcting your files nobody's going to want to use the tool."

But hey, "We're providing you this

so you can reach out to more students and be more effective,

engage with it, let us know where it's failing you,

let us know where it's assisting you."

You will form a partnership between your faculty and your audience and be

able to engage more effectively and be able

to get to a point where accessibility is part of the culture.

Which is where you want to be,

you don't want accessibility to be a mandate,

you don't want accessibility to be something that's tacked on at the end,

you want people to think about accessibility as

a cultural important thing in

the organization and have everyone be a part of that community.

Really inspiring to hear from Lucy.

I think the thing that stands out to me is just how

important it is to reach faculty in their workflow.



For so many years Lucy's been trying to connect with faculty about the importance of accessibility and how to author accessible content and now with a tool like Blackboard Ally, she's able to spark that conversation inside the LMS, that point of contact still important for moving the conversation forward and giving the faculty the tools and skills they need to create more equitable learning experiences.

Now we'll have the chance to hear from the accessibility team lead,

Dr. Joseph Feria-Galicia, who has been

leading the Blackboard Ally roll out at UC Berkeley.

Joseph has a background in instructional design and was working with

faculty in designing accessible online courses,

working with Lucy Greco to build in those accessibility best practices.

Now as the Ally team lead,

he's actually working with the existing courses,

helping put in the strategies and the communications and the trainings in place to help

those faculty take their existing content and

start to make it accessible using Blackboard Ally.

I'm Joseph Feria-Galicia, I'm the accessibility team lead with

UC Berkeley and I'm also the LA service lead on campus.

Just tell me a little bit about your background

in working with accessibility issues with disability?

Sure, I've been here on campus for five years

and started off with the Berkeley resource center for online education,

became an accessibility team lead right after and making sure that

our online content is accessible both the course content and the download files,

providing a number of workshops to

instructional designers and helping with policy as well.

Your background is in instructional design?

My background is educational policies studies and educational technology.

But yes, I was an instructional designer for a number of years as well.

The instructional design work was one of the reasons why I was hired originally.

The team was amazing and I learned a great deal,

they were doing a lot of work in terms of providing content in smaller modules,

making sure there's alternative forms of assessment

and making sure the online courses are navigable.

So they had a lot of good universal design concepts

implemented but in terms of the course content like using headings,

things like that, in the download files I was able to help

out with that back in 2012 I believe.

Nice. So you kind of got involved in with Ally,

becoming the service lead with Ally.

So maybe just kind of thinking back before Ally for

supporting students with diverse needs and not just those disclose,

what kind of practices and strategies have been put in place to support those students?

Yes, so in terms of online content,

UC Berkeley has been slow to adopt online courses but

the UC Extension was the model on campus and again,

like I mentioned earlier the course content that the Berkeley resource center

for online education was creating involved breaking the content down into smaller chunks,

using the modules, using good navigation,

a consistent navigation, consistent layout.

For the most part color contrast was really good, yes.

Just trying to reach diverse learners that way but the content itself in terms of

headings and the download files weren't necessarily looked upon originally back in 2012.

But, you know, as soon as we brought it up it was embraced and then we created a number of course templates, Word templates, PowerPoint templates and just really embraced the training model right away within the Berkeley resource center for online education. That was recently broken up so that we could bring the expertise on campus and the new organization that is leading the push is Digital Learning Services or DLS. They also implement a digital learning initiative campus-wide and we're accepting grant opportunities for faculty to learn how to create their course content using inclusive design. That's happening this spring and into the summer and next fall.

That's cool. What does that consist of?

Like the grant, what kind of strategies are they incorporating using inclusive design?

Yes. Well, just the use of an accessible canvas template is really key.

We've tested the template itself using Lucy Greco's web access team and so we created proper navigation with the skip tools for a screen reader users, again breaking things down into smaller modules, chunking the videos into smaller eight-minute videos instead of 13 or 20-minute videos, making sure everything's captioned, also just trying to focus on accessible content, the download files as well.

So we do a lot of workshops as well around Microsoft Word, PowerPoint and Adobe Acrobat to get folks up to speed.

Nice. Have you started those yet?

They're starting this spring.

This spring they are starting those?

Yes.

Faculty board have already been selected for that?

Yes, there's been a few that have been offered and yes, they're getting started.

The other initiative is helped by

the Digital Learning Service team is Adobe Fellows Program and

that is a program that takes advantage of the UC Berkeley's license for Adobe products.

So we have well faculty from American cultures that are embracing

students using things like Adobe Spark or

Premier or Rush or Photoshop into their curriculum.

So instead of traditional multiple-choice tests or essays,

they are able to produce podcasts or videos

or infographics to share their learning within the classroom.

For those we're encouraging students to produce content

that has the proper use of captioning,

described the video, color contrast,

things of that sort so that they're producing accessible content as well.

That's happening right now.

Yes, so you guys are doing audio description on the videos?

We're encouraging to describe it before the need for AV at

the end so that they're describing it as the recording is taking place.

Got you. So then you are not use any special software to do that?

We have tested out 3Play audio description and it's actually really good.

Yes.

When you pause that's extended audio description so

then instead of a five-minute video that's originally short

you could turn it into a seven or eight-minute video because of

the added description but their service is really good.

How did you learn all this accessibility stuff signed in your background?

Yes, when my brother went blind back in 96 at the age of 39 and I helped install JAWS on

his computer and just saw how his access

to the online community gave him hope for life in a lot of ways,

it lifted his morale.

I've been involved in different social justice endeavors and didn't make

the connection until much later that

this type of access to historically marginalized communities,

it embraces people with disabilities as well.

So my brother's experience is one and

then I was at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and they were

using a native American mascot

that was impacting a student retention for native people, people of color.

Someone at the University let us know that the website that we

were using and our PDF files weren't accessible.

Again, making that connection to social justice

and I just quickly learned how to code websites with

CSS and headings and then slowly producing PDFs in an accessible way. Yes.

Was it easier to learn the websites and PDFs?

Well, at the time it was just more pertinent for the website but yes,

PDFs are a big quagmire and nobody likes doing them.

I wish there was a different way, hopefully,

things like EPUB will help replace those or just straight HTML.

But yes, PDFs are everyone's burden.

Let's switch a little bit to Ally first.

When did you first get introduced Ally?

So while we were at the Berkeley Resource Center for Online Education, Nicholas actually, he came to a workshop that we had on tables, accessible tables and that's when we first met him and then he needed pilot participants back.

This was probably one of the first ones I piloted at the UC Extension.

I didn't really pay attention to it much

because all of our indicators were green at the time

because we were pretty remediating all our content.

It wasn't until some of the instructional designers might

add a PDF file or a Word file that wasn't remediated,

and then we would see the indicators.

It was just a really good way of triangulating our work.

I think we actually presented with Nicholas at

season on Ally and shared with

the community our best practices and producing online content.

So that was our initial endeavor with Ally

and then now that we're on campus,

it's a different model.

We don't have a lot of instructional designers,

creating content for the rest of the campus,

so we're able to see the beauty of Ally in terms of

informing the community of the course content in the download files.

So tell me a little bit about the process just now

in preparing to roll out Ally to the campus.

Sure.

Last semester, thing about last semester,

what the process was.

Yes. So we reached out to our Center for Teaching and Learning to recruit 15, actually it was 11 faculty that had 15 courses.

This took place in the fall of 2018 and we had an array of different users.

Some of them were very enthusiastic about Ally,

some of them just were participating as

a favor didn't really pay attention to the indicators

and then others were willing

to select the indicators and try to make some fixes themselves.

But for the most part,

we found it a positive experience

because it worked and there weren't very many service calls,

there weren't any service calls,

so we were able to launch it without much support.

We had support in place

but our fears were that we would be overwhelmed with service calls.

Because it seamlessly integrates with canvas,

I think a lot of people just went along with it,

didn't notice it too much.

I did go to a couple of classes and showed the students

the alternative formats and they were very enthusiastic

and that was another reason why we wanted to launch a little earlier because

of student enthusiasm for the alternative formats.

So part of what we had to build was

our service page with resources, frequently asked questions,

training our helpdesk on how to respond to urgent questions

and our teaching and learning service team had a long history of launching new

services

and so they had templates for launch and that's just really helpful to work with a group of experienced individuals that were very enthusiastic about the hopes of Ally and getting it implemented.

So we launched on January 11th, 2019.

We were a little worried about the amount of service calls that we would get but we've since launch and it's today's the 21st we've only received two service calls and both of them had to do with helping their course materials more accessible.

We've also had some instructors come into office hours, they just want to know how to make their course more accessible because they don't want the read indicators.

So it's been really positive overall,

it's galvanized us to work across other units, other departments.

We're working with Lucy's team,

the web access team,

with disability students program, with the library,

with alternative media and with equity and inclusion

now and it's the first time in my recollection that this has happened.

So the momentum that Ally is providing on campus is I

think leading toward a culture change around accessibility issues,

which is something that's really needed and that's going to help

deepen our understanding of what accessibility is on campus.

Can you elaborate maybe just why you didn't see a faculty reaction,

like there wasn't that many service calls and that

there wasn't the push-back as it's obviously,

it was a fear here,



is if you're in a lot of places that they

turn it on they're going to get a lot of push back.

What in your mind was the reason that they didn't have that?

Well, no matter what,

if faculty gets a letter of accommodation,

then they're going to get support from disability students program and alternative media,

to produce that alternative content more excessively.

There is no mandate for faculty to produce accessible content right now,

they're not reprimanded, they're just provided with the indicators and that's it.

So they could choose to ignore them

and I think that's what a lot of them are doing.

Based on the data yesterday,

there are a number of faculty that are clicking through

the red indicators and making content more accessible.

But again, there's no mandate, there's no penalty,

and then we have

our disability students program to take care of our legal mandates overall.

So it's a safe place right now.

We do have support in terms of the disability students program.

I'm just assuming that's what's happening right now.

yes. Now, it makes them makes a lot of sense.

What about when you presented the alternative formats to students,

how did they respond to it?

They applauded. They were like,

"Wow, this is really helpful."

They were very enthusiastic about the HTML or

the mobile devices and in the audio as well.

I would get ovations when at my workshops were done.

Not because of my content,

but because of the alternative formats.

It's just really needed I think within the student life right now.

Yes. Do you think it's like the nature of

the campus where you've got a lot of students relying on

mobile and English language learners or you just think as

a general need in education to have that kind of access?

Yes. We do have a lot of second language learners on campus,

lot of international students.

They were particular the ones that were asking questions and we're better testing

the translation tool and I think that was another functionality that was well received.

We're not really a commuter school,

but student life is really busy and they're just so used to mobile devices.

I think that anything that they could consume on

their mobile devices is going to be

helpful for them in terms of their academic performance.

Yes. Had you be creating a ton of training resources and things like that?

Yes. So that's another thing.

Just because we're not receiving service requests or service calls,

doesn't mean that the need isn't there.

I do workshops around Adobe Acrobat and Microsoft Word,

so we just created content around that so that it's

more of a self-service model and it's been well received as well.

Again, it's open for everyone.

It's available for anyone outside of our campus as well to use.

Thanks.

Before we get to that what's next,  
what about working with the consulting team,  
Kristi Greer and that team.

Was that helpful for you in getting the strategy and communications in place?

Yes. So Kristi Greer is really amazing.

John Scott as well been really helpful.

I mean whenever we have questions we get responses within 24 hours.

The fact that they're able to put us in contact  
with other institutions similar institutions,  
is really helpful as well.

I think one of the most helpful was getting in contact with Chico State,  
Jeremy Elgin who shared his experience of when they turn on the Ally tool.

He went to his office

and just waited for the service calls and nothing really

came and that was really helpful as well,

it helped alleviate some of

our apprehensions about turning on the tool in the first place.

But overall, whenever we would have meetings and in

our meetings with the Blackboard support team it involved our librarian,

our alternative media specialists and our web access representative as well.

So we were communicating across units

and that communication was more rich because of that

and it wouldn't have happened without Kristi's leadership and your leadership as well.

So we've continued on those relationships and strengthen them.

Just not feeling alone and anticipating possible pain points,

and then just a reminders all of that has been really helpful has been invaluable.

Nice. So what's next?

You're rolled out to the whole campus.

What are you thinking about for your next steps?

Yes. So we're going to continue

our workshops and building online content for self-service.

We're reaching out to our graduate student,

instructors as well to see if we get them on

board with some of the content remediation efforts.

We've looked at Penn State and

Washington Universities lays on programs and where they trained.

It's a trained the trainer model for around

accessibility across our different units so that we could spread our expertise

and continue to impact the culture that looks at

accessibility from new ways is involved with pre remediation as much as possible.

Is that the biggest challenge right now as you go into

the data review yesterday if you're going to think about your content challenge?

Yes. So I mean one of the issues is where a research one institution

and it might not be fair to expect instructors to remediate themselves.

So trying to figure out some alternative models that instructors could be supported

and that's can definitely involve a support staff across

campus looking at content creation right from the beginning.

If folks are aware of what is needed in order to produce accessible documents,

then they're more likely to do so

and it's not that difficult it's actually very efficient once you learn how to

use styles in word or learn how to tag PDF files.

It's not that difficult if you're working from the source files.

Nice Jo. I think that's it man.

Anything else you want to touch on?

Oh just your world tour is really

intrigued a lot of us and we're really excited that you've been presenting today.

We have over 33 people that are registered for the event.

It's helped us continue in our accessibility endeavors

and your support has been really helpful for us reach new staff,

new faculty and I really appreciate it.

Has it been fun for you like you did like some presentations and stuff on Ally,

is it fun to represent a product like this given your passions for this subject?

Well, Ally has gotten so much better since we first

previewed it when I was part of the Berkeley Resource Center for Online Education.

So part of that is my belief in the product itself.

It's very strong.

There's a lot of depth to it and the road map just seems really promising.

So yes, I'm really happy to associate myself with

the product itself and the influence that it's having on campus.

But yes it has been fun.

That concludes another episode of the Blackboard Ally Podcast Series.

It's really great to hear from Jo and Lucy about how they've been

implementing Blackboard Ally at the UC Berkeley campus.

I think it's another example where we see that faculty,

they really do want to do the right thing by their students.

They want to provide those equitable learning experiences for all their students

and it's just a matter of working with them to find the time,

find the strategies and the best practices to help

them make accessibility part of their course design experiences.

Be sure to keep an eye out for the next episode of

the Blackboard Ally Podcast Series where we'll be traveling back across the country to Gaston College in North Carolina where we'll be talking with Kim Geller Sengor and Karen Duncan about how they are using data rich insights from Blackboard Ally to systematically improve the accessibility of their courses.

Until next time, see you on the road to IncluCity.

Join the tour along with the rest of the Ally communities at [tour.ally.ac](http://tour.ally.ac).

You can catch the latest updates on Instagram and Twitter at hashtag Ally tour 2019 and listen to stories of inclusion from our community champions on the Ally tour 2019 podcast series available on SoundCloud or in your favorite podcast app.

We'll look forward to seeing you at the next stop on the road to IncluCity.