

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. We're back with another episode of the BB Ally Tour Podcast series.

After a trek across the country from Berkeley, California
to Charlotte, North Carolina,

I've arrived here at Gaston College

where I'm sitting down with Kim Gelsinger and Karen Duncan
to learn about how they've been using Blackboard Ally over the past year
to make their learning content more accessible.

They've been really keen on leveraging the institutional report
to design their strategy, identify high impact courses,
and put processes in place to make a difference.

So let's hear about what their strategies have been,
how they're taking the next steps to becoming a more inclusive campus.

On the Ally Road Tour,

I have arrived at Gaston College in North Carolina.

I'm sitting down with two members of the team
that's been leading their charge for inclusive learning
and their Ally rollout.

So I'm going to let you two introduce yourselves.

I'm going to start on my left here with Karen.

Karen Duncan, and I am the instructional technology specialist,
and I am also the e-learning accessibility liaison.

I'm Kim Gelsinger.

I'm the director of distance education here at Gaston College,
and I pretty much oversee the day-to-day operations on the learning management system.

I wanted to start with this story.

This is a famous story now.

We have to get it on on camera.

Tell me how you discovered Ally.

John, I love sharing the story about Ally.

A couple of years ago,

a colleague and myself snuck away to Competitors LMS conference.

It was being held in Colorado.

As we were there, we happened to notice one of the exhibitors was Blackboard,
and we tried to be as inconspicuous as possible,

but of course, we had to go by the booth and see what they were promoting,
and Blackboard Ally was a new product that was being promoted.

So we were so excited about Blackboard Ally that we came back to campus,
and immediately got Karen on board with the product,

and I think within an hour of us returning that following Monday,

I had a call from our Blackboard account executive,

wanting to know what I was doing at the Competitors LMS conference the week before.

So I would say be careful where you go

because you never know when somebody is going to see you,

but you also never know what great products you're going to find.

So it's a great story,

and we are so glad that we were able to implement Ally

in a very quick timeframe once we discovered it.

Tell me, just what got you excited when you first saw Ally?

What got you excited about the product?

I think because in North Carolina,
all of the educational institutions were tasked
with defining a five-year accessibility plan,
and we had started that endeavor,
and we came to realize that it was going to take a lot of resources to remediate,
to get us to where we needed to be.

When we saw Ally, it was like the answer to all of our prayers.

We wouldn't have to spend \$30,000 to an outside vendor trying to remediate
documents,
or to find out even where to start.

So I think for the cost, for the implementation,

I just saw it as an answer to our prayers of what we needed to get done.

Then of course, Karen took that ball and ran with it,
and what she's done over the last two years has just been amazing for Gaston College.

Karen, were you involved in that initial-
like, establishing that five-year plan in accessibility?

Yes.

I want to talk just a little bit what was mandated in that plan from the state,
how you-all approached that five-year plan.

Unfortunately, there was no models out there for us
so we all had to develop our plans.

And we did some collaboration with other institutions of what they were doing,
and got an idea that we wanted to introduce universal design in our first year
because we had to let people be aware of why we were doing what we were doing.

Then we broke it down into focusing on documents our second year,
multimedia our third year, with also BPATS,

and then PowerPoints our fourth year,

and then just rolling it all up in that last year.

We have an online quality initiative that we've been doing since 2007,

of some sort on our campus,

and then our QEP in 2012 and 2017,

was focusing on online quality standards,

and accessibility was a part of that.

So we have been doing remediation with documents for a long long time.

We just didn't have a way to find out how good we were doing.

When we turned Blackboard Ally on,

it was just that aha moment and excitement

because we were seeing so much green in our gear shifts.

So it really said, "You're on the right track,"

and now we had a way to track what we were wanting to do.

Initially, we were saying,

"Our first year documents,

we're going to be 50 percent accessible with our documents."

Well, that's very difficult to do when you don't know how many documents you have.

Our statistics are showing us that that number changes daily.

So you can't catch that 100 percent ever, but you can say,

well, we're going to do 25 percent better than what we did,

or 50 percent better.

So now we have a realistic goal in sight,

and instead of trying to break it down just by documents,

and images, and powerpoints,

we're doing it all together now

because we have the ability to do that with Ally,

with additional software, with staff helping us remediate this.

So the fact that we don't have to do that all by ourselves as well.

How has Ally fit into the broader distance education piece?

I think it's just one more piece of the all-inclusive access

that is needed in our learning management system.

Every one of our courses every semester has a Blackboard presence.

Whether it's a completely online class

or whether it's a traditional class that meets in the classroom,

but every single course has a Blackboard presence.

So we're not only impacting those students that we typically defined as online

but we're also being able to reach those students in the classroom

that may have some of those accessibility issues with the content.

Just the alternative formats in itself,

I think lends so much to all users in the LMS that it was so seamless.

Now, it's just like it's supposed to be there.

It's not supposed to be a separate entity.

So it's really melded with other things that we do within the LMS.

You rolled out Ally pretty quickly to the whole campus.

Did you start with a pilot? Or what was the process?

When we started the process of presenting

to our campus and our executive council to purchase this,

that we moved through this in a month time frame.

We pushed this through.

So we went from October to November a year-and-a-half ago

to purchase Ally and include it.

In the spring, we did initial training with Randy Johnson,

and then we also ran a small pilot with about 20 faculty members,

where they came into some of the training that was conducted by Blackboard, and in their courses, and they started working on it.

Then we had it on selected courses in the fall,

that we were working on some things,

and then this past fall,

attending the access and higher ground conference,

it all came together of how we need to turn this on and implement it,

and start a plan for remediation of content.

So January, we turned it on campus-wide,

but we also cleaned up old courses and old course files,

and got rid of a lot of duplicates,

and then conducted training with 50 faculty members,

and chose 68 courses that we want to focus on.

So we're kind of doing a pilot this spring

and we we'll continue this probably through the summer,

and work on these specific courses,

letting them have a master course that they're going to copy from in the future,

and that way we know that the content is correct in it,

And then in the fall,

we'll probably bring the training more campus-wide.

Campus is aware of it. Some of them are using it.

We're not focusing so much campus-wide right now.

We're focusing on that pilot.

So we've done like two initial pilots since we've turned this on,

but the pilot that's currently going, I'm tracking data.

I know what their score was,

I gathered baseline data to see what their score was before we ever did anything,

and gave them that number.

Then conducted initial training with them,

so that they could start remediating,

then they saw that number increase.

Now, we're completing that remediation in those courses

and then reviewing that with the faculty members.

Some of the data that you're tracking there,

and you just showed me some crazy spreadsheets

that you're doing all of this data collection and tracking,

what other data points are you tracking to help you

understand the time that it takes to go through these courses and all of that?

So on the spreadsheets that we have,

the students actually start out with a day and a time,

and then they also tell me on the document what they did to remediate.

We're tracking what type of document.

Was it a word document? A PowerPoint? A PDF?

Sometimes they may do images,

but we are asking our faculty members to remediate images

because they know what that up tech should be.

When you say students,

this is your student remediation team?

Exactly. I call them students,

they're actually part time employees of the college,

but they were all students at one time,

and some of them were students

that I had in courses that I teach as an adjunct,

and they were good students and so I hand-picked them,

and that's how they came to me.

Then Angus, who is blind, came as a work study

because he was enrolled

and the instructor requested some assistance

to make sure that his content was accessible to Angus.

And so we stumbled on Angus and grabbed him,

and he's now part time.

So I call them my students because they were students

here at some point,

but they've all, other than Angus, have graduated,

and they continue to work with me,

and then also a work study student that does transcripts for us,

she will remediate that.

But even with her doing transcripts,

everything is date and time stamped,

and then also a little description of what they do in there.

So we track the document type,

how many pages the document was,

I'm taking averages of pages,

I'm taking averages of time spent,

and able to follow all of that.

I never know when I'm going to meet that,

and people don't realize how long it takes to remediate a document.

A PowerPoint can take five hours to remediate

depending on the length of it in the issues that they're finding.

So we want to know exactly that our time is valuable,

and that it's worth what we're doing here,

to also support, continuing to keep them employed here.

So the process then.

So you've picked 68 courses you said?

Yes.

Sixty eight courses.

So just beginning to end,

what's that process look like?

You pick up a course,

you start off by looking at the file content?

Or were just walk through the process and the key word that's involved,

and also the roles that the students play in that process?

Okay.

So our deans chose high enrollment courses.

So I met with each of the divisional deans,

and our Arts and Sciences have a little more robust,

they've chose 25 courses that we're looking at,

and then our Business division has 13,

our Health has 10 or 13.

We have an EMS fire area,

that's through our workforce development,

they've chosen maybe six or seven,

and then our engineering programs.

They don't have as many online classes,

but we're even looking at seated classes

because they put a lot of content in Blackboard

for those seated in web-assisted classes.

So the initial process is we focus on some high enrollment courses.

Then in December, I pulled all of the statistics for those courses,
what they're Blackboard Ally score was,
and then pulled the sheet of what was the images,
was it missing headings,
the report that you pulled,
the institution report that you can see that and printed that out.

Then in January of this past year, scheduled 30 trainings,
15 on image remediation online,
and then 15 on course file management.

How to make folders in their course files,
how to organize that chunk their stuff together
because if they wanted to download all the PowerPoints,
they could download it in a zip file if it was in a folder,
removing duplicate files,
showing them how to replace a file on a course
instead of removing it from an attached item and then reattaching it,
and now it has a number in the course files.

So explaining that and given the management on that.

So that was the initial training that was conducted in January with 50 faculty members.

We did them in small groups that was the maximum that they could come in training.

So we had more hands on.

They were doing the image remediation in the courses
that we showed them how to do it with the Blackboard image which is very easy,
click on the red gear shift, add all text, click Add
and they would see the gear shift change and they were all excited.

Showed them how to download a word document or PowerPoint
and run it through accessibility and

just fix the issues with images and not to make it overwhelming to them,

I don't know how do the heading,

and my student workers can take care of that type of remediation.

So that was our first step.

We spent January doing training.

Then we've also purchased a software called Common Book.

That helps us with our remediation as well as using Adobe Professional.

Then we started breaking up the courses,

adding my student workers as course builders.

So they had access to the course files and we're now able to see great courses.

So they didn't have to worry about the integrity of the student grades being compromised.

So then we created a Spreadsheet,

and this took a couple tries to figure out the best way to do all of this.

We used Dropbox, shared folders,

so I create an initial Spreadsheet with all the information form,

I enrolled them in as a course builder in the course,

we numbered the folders in their Dropbox,

so they know how they're supposed to work through them,

and then they go into the course files and they'll download the course file,

and then they'll remediate it and put it in their Dropbox folder.

Once they complete the initial remediation,

Sarah and Shauna are the two that go through that.

Then it gets ready for Screen Reader testing,

which is our quality control.

So they take that folder and they move it over to Angus so that he

now can take those same files and go ahead and listen to those,

run them through the Screen Reader,

and then he keeps a Spreadsheet of all the data that he's going through,
and any comments if there's things to get done.

As Shauna and Sarah are remediating documents,
they're replacing the files in the course files.

So they're using the gear shift and then they will go upload
that file so that the current in the correct file is in there.

If Angus has any issues with it,

then I pull the file from where they left it with him

and then I will continue with any additional remediation,
some things that they may not have the skills to remediate.

Then if Angus needs to listen to it again,

we'll send it back to him or I will upload and replace the file in there,

and we're keeping up with time of everybody that spends in the remediation.

So initial remediation, Screen Reader remediation,
and then my final remediation of the document.

I also look at the HTML report that comes through Blackboard Ally,

and then I'll go in and remediate anything that we can do there.

So when I'm done,

the lowest score I've had so far is a 97 percent with Blackboard Ally,
and a number of 100 percent.

So it's very exciting.

Are those lingering percentages usually some issues that are difficult to fix?

Is it some kind of quirky file or something like that?

Pardon.

The class that I teach as an adjunct.

Because of the content I teach in Advanced Word processing course.

So a lot of the files that I upload as content are files that the student has to use to do an exercise.

It might be applying heading styles.

So we know that that document will not ever be 100 percent because it's not going to have headings styles on it, that's part of the student's work.

So depending on the content, subject matter, there may be classes that will never reach 100 percent.

But as long as the instructor understands that, then that's okay, because I know it's the best that they can be.

Yeah.

Then some of those are the OCR, which you showed me the trick today.

So I might be coming back and fixing those and bring in those 97s to 100, if I can't get a little closer.

Some of the HTML I've tried to look at I can't figure out why it's not given me that reading and it's few and far between there's a few in there.

Some of the things that we're also finding is the faculty are putting the Publisher PowerPoints.

So what we're also finding is that they're asking students to pay to access the Publisher's site and the Publisher's PowerPoint is already there.

So why do we want to put that file in our course?

Why don't we link to the Publisher's content?

And then it's not we're helping increase their scores as well.

So we're trying to work smarter as well.

They have to pay this course card, they're going to access, this is where their videos are,

this is where their PowerPoints are.

Well, let's link to them and tell them that's where they're going to get that, and then we don't have to worry about remediating that document.

Publisher PowerPoints change every two years.

We don't want to spend a bunch of time remediating a document that's not going to be good next time they use the course.

Then also Cengage, I'll give kudos to them.

Their new content that they are creating, their PowerPoints are awesome and so many of them are accessible with amazing all text that they're putting in there for their crafts, for their images.

So definitely, kudos to them and I have reached out to tell them that.

So they're doing their job.

So it sounds that one of the, maybe unanticipated benefits with demo file management, cleaning up courses has also been on the elements directly maybe.

Absolutely. Just getting rid of cleaning up those course files has made a real big impact on the amount of storage space that we may be utilizing in Blackboard.

It's amazing how many multiple copies of the same document was being uploaded to one specific course, but it was all because the instructors did not have the training, the knowledge to be able to know how to do that efficiently.

So just getting rid of all of those duplicate documents or getting rid of possible documents that haven't been attached, they were unattached but never removed from the course.

So it has had an impact even on them.

Sometimes when they're copying the course from the semester, the old syllabus is still lingering in the course files and they don't realize, oh, I need to remove this.

So we're trying to teach them how to work smarter and utilize that, and teach them that course files is their course flash drive.

Make folders, organize, delete, replace that way.

If you can give them that concept they'll understand that a little bit better.

Karen had mentioned linking out to the Publisher's content.

That in itself if everybody would link out to where that content is,

that would free up so much more of our storage capacity

within the elements and we wouldn't be paying

an additional fee for that additional storage that we need.

What's been maybe the biggest challenge in remediating these courses?

Are there any particular file types or you mentioned that the scans...

The scans for sure.

We need a little more knowledge with remediating if it's the PDF,

because those are so difficult if we don't have that source document.

A lot of faculty are also trying to link them to where those PDFs are located,

instead of downloading the PDF on a website,

make a web link to the URL,

and then hopefully the Publisher updates or whoever on their website,

then that document would be updated there as well with it.

But if I don't have that original document,

that I'm trying to convert it or I'm trying to remediate it

in the text structure and I know enough to be dangerous sometimes.

We need more training and more knowledge on actually

remediating that PDF and those who bears with it.

Sometimes with the PowerPoints,
just we're having some contrast issues but
we're not focusing on fixing those so much right now.
PowerPoints have missing titles and people just they don't use
the built in layouts when they're creating PowerPoint,
and they don't understand that because they were never taught.
They weren't taught how to add structure to Word documents.
We're trying to make that common now here at the college
with our syllabus template that we've created,
and train all of the full-time faculty on how to use that.
So it's just that that's not their area of expertise,
and so that's the struggle that they don't understand and
realize how to do it and why they have to do it.
But earlier you were talking about HTML content,
and so you're talking about looking at the institutional report and
checking what each HTML pages that they've created in the course.
Correct, correct.
We have one that I created, it's our technical information
and it lists where our labs are located on our class.
Because it was copied and pasted, sometimes it's got a malformed list,
and it looks right.
It's got indented bullets,
it's got bullets but when I clear and strip the formatting in it,
it loses the bullets.
So now I realize that's the malformed list,
so I fixed it in our course template.
So whenever Kim and Beverly create courses,

now it's created, copied correctly.

But we've got so many old courses that are using that,

now I'm trying to go back in and fix it when I'm doing some of these things.

So those are things that the faculty don't have access to.

Sometimes are easy fix or sometimes it tells me we've used the Blackboard styles,

so we're trying to apply the heading one in the subheadings,

but then it may be missing a heading.

So I have to go into the HTML and search for the heading code,

and then delete if there's a blank heading.

Because sometimes, blank headings show up

and so those are things as well that we spend time remediating.

Ally soon will provide feedback at the instructor level on that HTML content.

So hopefully that will help that course.

Did you notice how much more HTML content you have now

compared to two years ago in your institutional report?

It's quite a bit more.

It's my fault. The way we were designing and building things,

we started using the styles.

So instead of them adding a document that was one paragraph or

their outcomes and the student had to open up

a Word document to say what the student outcomes were,

it was a list of three things.

So we started making that an item,

and so that's one of the reasons there as well.

So that why would we want to force them to open up

a Word document that they may not have especially mobile.

They may not have Word on their phone to be able to open that document.

So it was like, let's reduce our documents in our courses.

For the short little things,

let's put it on the screen so that they can

read it especially if they're doing a mobile view.

So that's one of the reasons why that number has increased.

I think it's really good. I mean,

it certainly contributes I think to the improvement in your score too overall,

because that content is generally much more accessible than the Word document or the PDF.

So I think it's a great move seeing that HTML increase

because we know that it's going to be more accessible.

How did you get involved in accessibility, Karen?

This was not your original calling.

No, it was not. It fell in my lap,

and it's something that I enjoyed the challenge and the change of it.

So I started searching out ways to do it more with accessibility.

It was part of our online process when we started

our pilot project from 2007 to 2010 with online standards,

and there was a small piece built in there with accessibility.

Then with our QDP in 2010,

my position changed over to instructional technology,

and our QDP began in 2012 and we did online quality standards,

and one of our sections was accessibility.

So because I was over that portion of the QDP,

accessibility fell into my lap.

So when we were doing course reviews,

we were checking for that basic 508 stuff that they were talking about.

Now that you have lists,
that you had descriptive hyperlinks,
that you had all text,
that you had captions and transcripts.

So that little short punch list,
we were looking at that.

Then in 2014,
North Carolina Community College system told us
that we had a five year accessibility plan,
and I was asked to oversee the e-learning content of it,
because I was already working with this in our standards.

So we helped develop the plan.

So once again, I just felt I needed to know more and
searched out my certificate program through
the University of Illinois that help with accessibility.

A lot of it is learning on your own,
attending conferences where you can find accessibility and
watching people present and seeing how they're remediating documents,
and okay, that's good. Let's go try that.

Then come back and drag Kim in and show her what I learned.

So sometimes we know enough to be dangerous,
but we try and figure out it's a puzzle.

My motto is I always win.

In one way or another,
I'm going to make it work.

So I enjoy getting in there and trying to figure it out.

I think Karen is a natural born project manager.

Over the years, I've seen Karen lead multiple initiatives on campus,
and this was just a natural transition from the quality initiative into accessibility.

Karen becomes very passionate about the project that she's working on.

In fact, before the state of North Carolina

told all of their education institutions that we needed a five-year accessibility plan,

Karen was already passionate about accessibility from the enhancement plan.

QDP.

QDP. So Karen and I went out to Utah to Web Aim workshop,

and we were one of the two colleges from North Carolina present.

So I feel like we were almost pioneers

in moving accessibility and education forward in North Carolina.

But a lot of that was due to Karen's natural ability to

be a great project manager and to be

passionate about whatever it is that she's working on.

So Gaston College is where it is because of Karen's passion,

and she always wins,

just like she said, and we all know that.

So we've been very successful at Gaston as well.

When accessibility wins, everybody wins.

Absolutely.

So that's a good thing.

Our college has been so supportive of this.

If we say we need it, they make it happen,

and when we decided we wanted Blackboard Ally,

it was like two or three weeks,

it was decided that yes,

we're going to do this and we were able to say why we needed it.

We were able to show them why we needed it.

We were able to show them how great it was going to be, and so we had those facts and figures and they're like yes, and if we say we need this yes.

Fortunately we've been able to use Perkins funding, and I have two workers that are here 28 hours a week, and able to assist with this.

They've allowed me a temporary part time position with Sarah, and I've had her for three years.

I'm allowed to have work study students that can help with transcripts, so they have been very supportive.

We asked for it, they pretty much will see that we get it.

What was part of making that business case for Ally?

Did you talk about of what you were currently doing in accessibility?

Yeah, because we really didn't have a way to track the numbers.

We didn't know how many documents we had in Blackboard.

We knew the courses.

We knew how many courses we had in there

but we couldn't drill down to that content,

and as soon as we saw that Ally we can say,

this course has 73 documents,

and these were the issues with it and the remediation features of it

meant to say something earlier with it when you did that instructor preview of,

now their Word document and it's going to show us that where

the contrast colors are messed up in the document or where the heading structure is.

That was the greatest thing and when I saw you guys in

November with accessing higher ground did a little conversation,
and I would say, the preview was coming
and I got to see that in your bayden and I was like,
oh my God, when I got back, I was like,
you cannot believe what's going to happen and then you turned it on in January.
I was like, yes.

So that's great because now they can say,
"Oh that's what's wrong with it," or where they're looking for it and
it just makes that so much easier to remediate those documents.

When you rolled out to the entire campus that was in January.

January, yes.

Any push back from faculty? Did you get questions?

What are these gauges doing?

Why is my course all red?

Did any questions come to the office at all?

I don't really think it did because I think we had done a really good job back in
the fall of doing some initial training.

We took the opportunity at convocation.

At convocation in January.

In January. So we let them know what the gauges meant.

I even had some little marketing cards

if you will set up advertised some 30 minute workshops.

Karen had mentioned some training that we had done.

Our faculty could come to a 30 minute lunch workshop and learn
about the gauges so that they didn't panic when they saw the gauge.

We did a lot of that last summer.

Started in the summer.

In the spring we did on the tips tricks and triage.

So we called it T-three,

and we did it twice a week a little 30 minute sessions.

In May we focused on Ally a little bit introduced what it was and some remediation.

Kim did some in the training in the summer and in the fall,

so they had that training, convocation we presented,

and then created two soft talk tutorials just invented your videos, the student view,

the faculty view and e-mailed the links so that they could

see that posted it on the Blackboard log in page actually,

so that they could say, this is Blackboard Ally,

this is what it means and you can just go look at the video real quick.

So we tried to really promote it and send it off

the campus and send that out as an e-mail as well,

so they see it and then once they see gear shift change they got really, really excited.

I was getting, "Whats my score now."

So in our initial training they had a printout

of the little circles with their percentages,

and then the list of the number of items that were wrong for

this little baseline thing but immediately it was like, "What's my score?"

So now don't you provide them a certificate?

Yes. I've also made a little certificate,

so they have a Blackboard Ally certificate with their percentage on it.

When I get done,

I send them an e-mail of all the numbers of how many documents,

what their score was before,

how much time we spent remediating the courses,

and then I also sent that to their Dean as well so that,

and in a copy of the certificate.

Also lists what's now there,

we call that, new master course.

So the next time they teach the course they know

which course to copy from when they put in their request.

So they also get a little certificate,

that we just created,

to give them a kudos.

Everybody likes a certificate.

Your never too old for a certificate.

I guess so.

You are also part of your early process was doing in your syllabus template as well,

so your entire campus now uses the template.

Yes.

What was that process because that's definitely something that we

talk a lot as a starting point for institutions,

you say they work on an accessible syllabus

if it's a template or if it's working with what they had.

First, was there push back in trying to get them to use a template?

Well, I think we did it covertly without them really realizing what was happening.

Seems the beginning of last summer, the summer before.

It's been two years ago.

Okay, two years ago.

It's been a while now.

Beginning of a summer,

Karen and I had a conversation,

and I had been very passionate about at least getting

a common look to all of our syllabi because we had some syllabi that was created in 1960,

and it was PICA font.

It was from a typewriter.

It was from a manual typewriter all the way to your latest Word document.

Three fourths of our syllabus or of our syllabi are all the same, and has the same information.

There's only certain things that need to change.

So Karen and I started talking and felt like if we needed to start with one thing that we could make accessible that would impact the most people, and it would also get us decent syllabi across campus that would be it, and so we covertly,

I think encourage all of the other deans to get on board.

We ended up getting copies from all the divisions and then found the common elements,

and then we decided to make sections.

Because I think we even first started by just we wanted to go in and make the syllabus accessible, and then we realized all my word they're all different.

It's going to take an enormous number of hours to do this.

What we need to do is start out with one type of document, and make it accessible, that was a big project.

We took our policies and procedures manuals.

There's a list of things that need to be included that were required to be in there, and we made that one section.

So there's nothing that the faculty has to change in that, we made a part one that includes the course description, their outcomes, their textbook,

it's usually about two pages long and that's where they can change their textbook information, and some of that basic, the course requirements, section two is where the big changes were, that this is where their grading policy is located.

This is what their grading scale is, this is their late work, their tardy policy, but we also included the college policy in the sections that they can change but then we structured it with styles, and navigation before somebody might bump it up to 16 point bold all caps and thinking that's a heading.

So we made that structure then we created what we thought was going to be a good template,

and then we met with all the deans and brought them in, and let them vet it,

and they said, "We want this here, we think this is here, we think this is good," and got their input and they're buying in on it,

and so we established our template,

and then we started training,

and so we required all of the full time faculty to come to training,

some adjunct faculty came to training, we walk them through,

have them used the template,

there's an instruction sheet on

the very first page telling them that what's in the screen font,

you can change, that's all you need change.

Then we have that consistent look,

and we put it on our shared network,

and it's broken up by divisions in our shared drive,

and then all the faculty have access to that.

The department chairs are able to edit in there,

so if they need to make a change about a textbook on the master template,

then they're able to do that.

So our faculty can access that main template.

The summer, each summer if there's changes,

if the colleges made a change to the withdrawal process,

that needs to be changed to campus wide.

Well, Arts and Sciences.

The Dean there handles their syllabi, they have like, 113,

I think we have 672 syllabi on our campus,

and I manage the other less 113.

So, my student workers will spend a month going in their master syllabi,

and making those changes,

so that we know that they're consistent and then

we're getting them in the habit of it now because this will be our third Fall,

that we're having an effective date.

So, the Deans will say,

"Make sure you pull it off the shared drive." You got to update it.

So, we let the department shares update the textbook or the faculty can change it,

the main stuff that we're not require them to update,

because when we used to say, "Hey,

change your syllabus," and the statement to,

there's no telling where it would have gone.

Now they're all in the same place, and then,

we showed them the benefit of using the styles that they have to put a withdrawal date in every syllabi, and their certain dates throughout the semester, depending on when the course starts, and the link.

So, we showed up, "Hey, you turn this on, you click withdrawal process now you don't have to scroll to page six."

You can go in there and get to it quickly.

So we showed them the benefit of using the styles,

for themselves, and then also, as a side note,

we showed them the benefit of using styles on how to conduct, create table of contents,

because a lot of these people have

advanced degrees and they had to do with this rotation,

and they're like, "Oh, this is great, I wish I had known this before."

So we've shown them the benefits of not just for accessibility,

but just for them to be able to scroll, and quickly get

to items in their syllabus that need to be updated and changed.

Absolutely. All right.

I think we're almost ready to break for lunch.

Sounds good.

Last question is here.

So moving forward, is the plan to continue to support the instructors,

centrally, by going course to course as well as the hope

that they're also going to start to initiate more of this on their own.

A lot of them when we started the training, they're like,

"Oh, how do I finish this remediation other than just the document?"

So some of them want to know more with it and some of them will not, with it.

So it's going to depend we're want to encourage faculty to start learning how to do that.

Hopefully, we're getting them in the habit,
and training them how to do that.

So, some are more are excited with it.

So, that's the goal with it,

but also we want to continue to support this way,

that if they're not going to do that,

and it's a high on that course that we're building it that way,

and just working in collaboration with them, and that also,

if we have an accommodation from

our special needs counselor about a student in the course,

then that course we would definitely,

make sure that we get into that course,

and check that course for accessibility,

depending on what the need is, in that course.

So, with the hearing impaired student,

then we would make sure that anything that they have is captioned,

and they'll work with a faculty member making sure

that they're putting accessible content in there.

If there is a specific video that we need to provide a transcript for,

then we will work with that.

If it's a visually impaired student,

then we would want to make sure that the documents and the content in there,

has the proper heading instructions in instance and a tag document as well.

So, that would be a priority.

We would definitely jump into those courses first.

Has that been kind of the collaboration with, Disability Resource Office, is going to working with commendation letters, and going into those courses?

Yes. So, we have a very good relationship with that Coordinator, or the previous ones we're in the process of rehiring that position because they've been promoted to another position on campus, but we work very closely with that office, in trying to make sure that we are able to meet those needs.

Kim, last question for you.

You've seen a lot of technologies come around for the Learning Management System.

What gets you so excited about Ally in particular?

I think, the ease of use.

It was so easy to learn.

What it was telling me it was,

the graphics are awesome,

they're simple to understand,

but I think most importantly is the benefit that it gives to the users,

and we're not just talking about those users that have identified accessibility issues,

but we're talking about everybody,

because all of us especially,

as we age, need some assistive technology.

So, I see Ally benefiting every student, every employee,

anybody that comes into contact,

with our Learning Management System,

and hopefully in the near future,

even with our website.

Great to hear from Kim and Karen about their journey to more inclusive education.

Hearing about their process.

A lot of institutions,

they always think well,

where should we start?

How do we make a dent into this giant accessibility challenge?

Here we see, working with Deans,

identifying those high impact courses,

bringing in a student like Angus, building that team,

making sure that the content is accessible to people who use screen readers,

that they can navigate successfully through that environment,

really cool to see.

Thanks so much, for the team from Gaston,

getting the chance to talk with them,

and next time we'll be reporting from the,

Medical University of South Carolina,

hearing about how they're using Blackboard Ally,

at a Medical University,

to make for a more accessible community,

not just at the University itself,

but also the surrounding hospitals.

Until then, see you on the road to IncluCity.

Join the tour, along with the rest of the Ally Community, @tour.ally.ac.

You can catch the latest updates,

on Instagram and Twitter, @allytour2019,

and listen to stories of inclusion from

our community champions Ally Tour 2019 podcast series.

Available on Sound-Cloud or in your favorite podcast app.

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