

## Communities of Access: A Program Profile of the University of Central Florida's Faculty Liaison Program in the Department of Writing and Rhetoric



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**Abstract:** This program profile will describe how the University of Central Florida's Student Accessibility Services' (SAS) Faculty Liaison program functions in the Department of Writing and Rhetoric. The Liaison Program served to provide an intermediary between departments and SAS so faculty may brainstorm accommodations with colleagues familiar with their field, department, and courses in ways that do not fundamentally alter their course goals and objectives. Ultimately, what emerged from this program is the idea that access is and must be regarded as a networked practice in order for transformative access work to occur. Access, like writing, needs to be understood as a way to move among different communities of practice.

In a 2017 article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* called "Why We Dread Disability Myths," Tara Wood, Craig A. Meyer, and Dev Bose open with an anecdote that describes a faculty member frustrated with the accommodations he was asked to provide to a student. His concern was that they gave an advantage to this student over her peers, even suggesting that the accommodation for anxiety that the student was requesting could be faked for the sake of missing class. This story reflects the attitude that students with disabilities are a problem to be dealt with, and those of us in the field somehow have the answers to those problems. As faculty in the field of Disability Studies, the authors are correct in acknowledging how we are often faced with scenarios like this, charged with the immediate and complex task of equipping our colleagues with answers about our disabled students and the "problems" they present in the classroom.

In fact, this is a conversation that repeatedly comes up at the Student Accessibility Services (SAS) Faculty Advisory Board meetings at the University of Central Florida. In the three years I've served on the board, every meeting has included a conversation about how best to serve students' access needs while at the same time honoring the course rules, content, and goals of faculty. These conversations led to the idea of a Faculty Liaison Program, hosted by SAS and implemented in selected departments with the assistance of faculty members in those departments. This program profile will describe how the liaison program functions in the Department of Writing and Rhetoric, and how the specific outcomes of this partnership have the potential to engender similar approaches to access and accommodation across the university. The program served to address two of the most common concerns brought to SAS by faculty: 1) issues with student accommodations and instructor expectations weren't dealt with until a conflict arose—likely too far into the semester to mitigate many problems; and 2) the distance between the guidance SAS could offer in the hypothetical and the realities of discipline-based practices and expectations. This profile addresses the Liaison Program's impact on the emergence of access-based pedagogy in the Department of Writing and Rhetoric, discusses my own efforts to offer opportunities to implement Universal Design for Learning strategies in the program, and finally, points to some of the limitations in this endeavor. Ultimately, what emerged from this program is the idea that access is and must be regarded as a networked practice in order for transformative access work to occur.

### Student Accessibility Services at the University of Central Florida

"Why We Dread Disability Myths" is a response Gail A. Hornstein's earlier article that appeared in *The Chronicle*, called "Why I Dread the Accommodations Talk." A central theme throughout the piece is what the authors of

“Disability Myths” call “the able-savior trope,” the notion that the non-disabled idea of accommodation is somehow more accurate than the disabled one. Indeed, the “Disability Myths” example shows that the crux of the faculty members’ concern was that the accommodation letter served as a “diagnosis” of the student that did not line up with his own. Unfortunately, the idea of an accommodation letter as a directive rather than a tool to support instructors and students with disabilities is a prevailing one, often resulting in miscommunications that would leave both faculty and students frustrated with the process. This frustration was one in a line of concerns that SAS director Adam Meyer sought to resolve with his appointment to the position in 2013.

Meyer’s biggest change to the Student Disability Services program was the implementation of a social model of service delivery, which focuses on how the environment impacts access. The environment, in this case, can be the physical, but also policies and infrastructures, or the attitudes of others toward disability and accommodation. Part of the environment that Meyer first addressed was the language around access and accommodation. To that end, he changed the name of Student Disability Services to Student Accessibility Services, and the name of the Accommodation Letters to Course Accessibility Letters. Both changes reflected the social model’s commitment to shift the emphasis of a student’s limitations away from their bodies and onto their learning environments. By making this move, Meyer and the rest of SAS effectively challenged what accommodations meant to students, faculty, and university administration. “Before, we couldn’t talk to students unless they had submitted documentation,” Meyer says. “We would review it and then invite them to come to us.” (Hope n.p.). This shift in policy reflected a shift in attitudes around disability in SAS itself, centralizing the voices of students in assessing their needs as opposed to doctors or administrators. SAS promoted this attitude shift in their Course Accessibility Letters by changing the language found within it. Instead of presenting a directive to the faculty member regarding the needs of the student and the responsibilities of the faculty member, the new Course Accessibility Letter is framed as an invitation to collaborate and have conversations around access in specific courses and situations (See [Appendix 1](#)).

The problem, however, is that this shift was not readily apparent to faculty, and without reading the new Course Accessibility Letters, faculty continued to regard any interaction from SAS as a directive and a one-stop-shop solution for any problems they might encounter or confusion they might have around access for students and student needs. Thus many of the SAS Faculty Advisory Board meetings served as brainstorming sessions around how to best express SAS’s mission to faculty and clarify that SAS serves both students *and* faculty to facilitate student success. Any successful accommodation, Meyer would remind the board, can only be achieved through an understanding and partnership between students and faculty. Indeed, much of the exigence for these brainstorming sessions came from recent examples where faculty members felt that the requested accommodation was at odds with their course objectives, leaving both the faculty members and their students unable to make a compromise. Two lessons emerged from these examples: first, while SAS was informed of the situation, it wasn’t brought to their attention until well into the semester, and likely too late to make a compromise. Secondly, even if SAS had been aware of a conflict between the student requests and the faculty’s capability, without insight into field-specific practices and outcomes, compromise would likely have never been reached.

## Faculty Liaison Program

With this in mind, the Faculty Advisory Board came up with the idea of a liaison program, wherein at least one faculty member from each department would serve as an intermediary between their department and SAS. The goal behind this program would be for faculty to brainstorm accommodations with colleagues familiar with their field, department, and courses in ways that do not fundamentally alter their course goals and objectives. Here, SAS positions itself not as an expert of accommodation, but rather a facilitator of it; faculty, then, are the experts of their subject material and can turn to SAS to make their courses accessible as appropriate. Thus this liaison program would ensure that instead of responding to accommodation requests as directives, faculty would see these requests as opportunities for flexibility and growth with regard to their pedagogies. In this way, the program reflected SAS’s shift to a social model that sees the need for environmental barriers to change: as a liaison, we offered the chance for our colleagues to understand the changing nature of the discourse around access and accommodation.

The pilot program began in the Fall of 2016 and only involved departments with the highest average of accommodation requests, or departments interested in volunteering. The Department of Writing and Rhetoric fell into the latter category. Of the 14 departments participating, there was an even split between Science and Arts programs, including Math, Hospitality Management, Political Science, and Communication. Adam Meyer sent email requests to department chairs to ask for potential candidates to be the department liaison, and in instances where Faculty Advisory Board members were in the solicited department, he requested that person in particular. Each liaison was assigned a contact in SAS who would be available for questions or concerns as the semester progressed. There were two informal meetings with SAS and all liaisons to go over basic procedures and goals, and two one-on-one meetings with the assigned contacts throughout the semester.

Thus when I went back to my department, it was up to me to decide what I could provide to my fellow faculty. I began by sending out a mass email to the department inviting them to reach out to me with any problems or questions they might have around accommodations in their classes. I also obtained a list of faculty who were sent Course Accessibility Letters and met with many of them individually to talk about any concerns. For the most part—especially at first - there was a lot of support from my colleagues, but not a lot of concerns brought up. What I heard most was what I had expected: due to the nature of our field and pedagogies—that is, as a department where discussion- and workshop-based courses are found, many of the accommodations did not apply to our courses (extra time for testing, lecture notes, etc.). As a result, many faculty with whom I spoke revealed that oftentimes they skimmed the letters and then waited for students to reach out to them if there were any problems.

## **Accessibility in the Department of Writing and Rhetoric**

While part of this attitude about accommodation letters tends to be expected given the engrained notions of accommodation I talked about above, another part reflects the degree to which ideas around access compliment our approaches toward teaching writing in our department in the first place. Elizabeth Wardle, our former department chair, shaped our composition program through a Writing-About-Writing approach, which calls for composition instructors to “embrace and enact” research and theory about writing (96). Furthermore, this approach also situates the composition program as an “entry point into writing in the university, which other writing courses across the university could build on” (96). I would argue that the strength of our department is this very notion that our writing courses are entry points, but also because our faculty interests are so varied, every course offered to a student serves as an entry point into another path of writing in the university and beyond. Access emerges here in the form of multiple opportunities, guided by the notion that when students are coming in with multiple perspectives, abilities, and experiences, instructors are responsible for taking up the challenge to ensure our curriculum responds to these varying needs in order to ensure equitable opportunities for writing instruction.

This variation across the department requires familiarity across faculty interests and approaches in order to maintain continuity in the service of the department’s commitment to enact theory in the classroom. Just as Writing-About-Writing curriculum requires that we embrace and enact research around theory about writing, a department founded on those ideals requires that we also embrace and enact research around one another’s theories about writing and rhetoric. This does not mean that we must be experts in all theories and pedagogies; what it means is that we must be aware of how we contribute to the constitution of the department, and how our ways of moving through our work shapes how our students understand their own ways of moving through the world. This requires an engagement with one another that moves beyond cursory conversations about what we are doing in our classes and instead moves towards more intentional collaboration and interdependent relationship building. Perhaps the most visible form this kind of engagement took was through the creation of faculty resources, including an undergraduate curriculum working group, teaching cohorts, and a curriculum resource site where faculty of all ranks shared their materials for some of our more popular courses. This in turn creates a culture of collaboration and support, and motivates one another to continue building the kind of program we want, and what our students need. When we understand access as something that is and needs to be networked, the interdependent relationships that motivate the success of the students who move through our program become visible. In this way, access and interdependency are recognized as vital parts of the program. Valuing interdependent relationships between and among faculty and students generates new ideas, offering more perspectives and thus more opportunities and potential to create access points tailored to a variety of needs.

Furthermore, transparency around these interdependent relationships in the department helps maintain a consistent and streamlined message about what access means across different pedagogical and learning approaches. Wardle argues that our department demonstrated how “deep cultural shifts and changed material conditions can be effected through a combination of kairos, piloting and assessment, advocacy, and lying bare our practices so that they are visible to stakeholders” (97). It was this very practice of making things visible in the name of access for our students that characterized my experience as an SAS liaison. The general feeling among my colleagues in the Department of Writing and Rhetoric regarding Course Accommodations was a willingness to comply with what was requested of them, but a belief that the accommodations or access requests did not concern their courses. And while the functioning of the course may not have been impacted—such as accommodations for testing in a class that does not give tests—my goal as a liaison was to follow Brueggemann, et. al’s call to make disability visible in my department. In fact, just by making myself visible as a liaison, several of my colleagues who didn’t feel they needed any assistance at the beginning of the semester were regularly meeting with me as the semester progressed. Many came with specific questions about accommodations (like how to get a video captioned), and others came to me with specific students and scenarios they were facing. More often than not the students that my colleagues had questions about had accommodation letters and thus helped shape our conversations about confronting the problems. But for

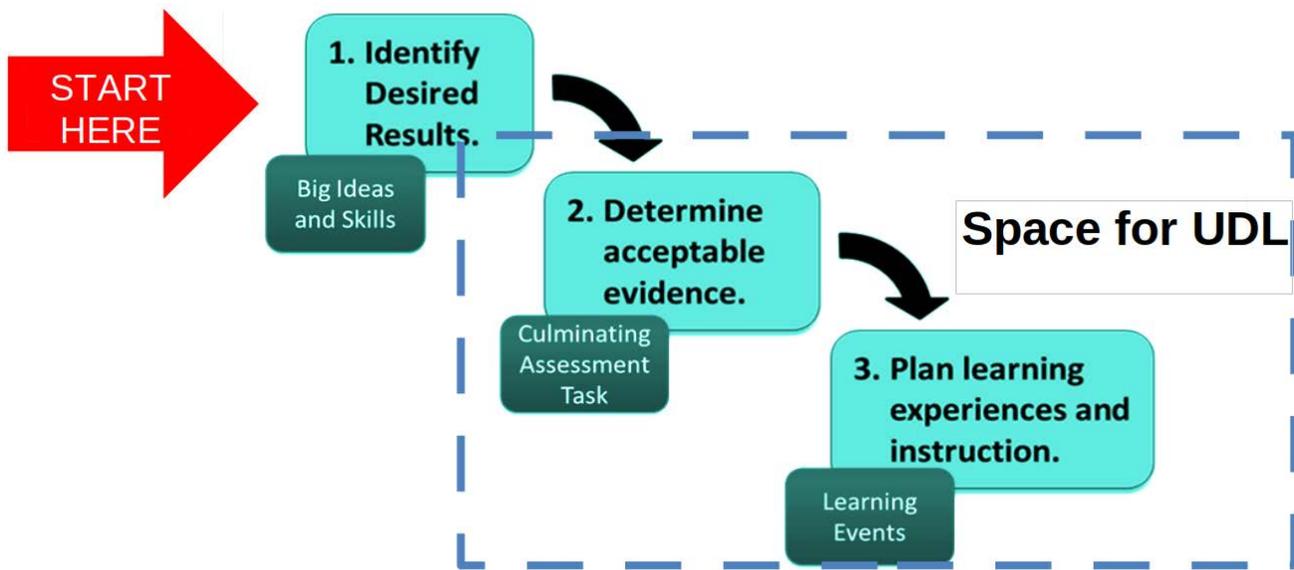
those students who did not have accommodation letters, it served to demonstrate how these letters are not the quintessential means to making things accessible to students.

## “Deep Cultural Shifts”: The Liaison Program in Action

What emerged from these encounters was a need to provide information for my colleagues around the implications of accommodation letters, access, and even Universal Design for Learning. Even without an accommodation letter, access is still a necessity. To that end, I opened up the following semester with a workshop that introduced those in attendance to some of the most common access needs and what they might look like in a writing class. In this workshop, I clarified the role of SAS, students, and faculty in the accommodation process, explained what we mean by “accommodations,” and then went through the most common accommodation requests and unpacked some of the implications of those requests in the writing classroom. Faculty self-assessment became the unofficial theme in this workshop and in later conversations with faculty about access, namely what they could do to open up access opportunities, but also what they could do to create an environment where students would feel comfortable co-creating these opportunities. This prompted me to hold a second workshop about halfway through the semester that focused on self-assessment around our accommodation practices and strategies for specific experiences that faculty were facing in the classroom. This workshop was much less formal than the first, as we used the time to brainstorm strategies, share tips, and offer assistance to one another in the collective effort to make our classes more accessible. As writing teachers, we came to see the degree to which access, like writing, is neither an individual or social activity, but rather a system of interconnected practices, discourses, and infrastructures (Reiff et. al 3) that must always be driven by students’ own voices regarding their needs and experiences. Thus situating access as “bound up in, influenced by, and relational to spaces, places, locations, environments” in these workshops helped participants see the degree to which writing itself is a form of access, or an entry point into different ways of moving, transforming, and creating (Reiff et. al 4).

My intention with the program was to provide an opportunity for my colleagues to rethink the ways that we teach writing by recognizing student barriers to learning are not problems to be solved. Many colleagues expected checklists for good Universal Design For Learning practices, and while there is much use in seeing those strategies laid out, the key to successful writing pedagogy is its ability to adapt to the changing needs of students. Thus there is no quintessential checklist to make our writing classes accessible for everyone; approaching writing classes holistically, however, provides opportunities for students and faculty alike to engage in productive and innovative teaching strategies. More importantly, relying less on the checklist and more on the context in which access happens—that is, allowing students to take a larger role in stating what opportunities they might need—generated these innovative teaching moments that might have otherwise never occurred. Browning insists that we must “think critically about every aspect of [our] classrooms: the physical space, the pedagogical techniques in use, the projects and assignments students are asked to complete, the technology students are required to use, and the subject matter instructors suggest that students discuss” (97). In order to perform this kind of critical thinking, we must, as Simi Linton says, “claim disability” and disrupt traditional pedagogical practices in the name of inclusivity. For my role as a faculty liaison, this meant having hard conversations with my colleagues about the implications of insisting on common assumptions about learning and expressions of students’ critical thinking skills, and inviting students to be regarded as co-creators of learning spaces, a skill they would carry through to their post-college careers.

I brought in Wiggins and McTighe’s concept of understanding by design ([Figure 1](#)), an educational approach that focuses on the desired outcomes or learning goals of a course or module as a way to design curriculum, assessments, and strategies. What made this model useful in the context of UDL is its placement of the role of UDL: UDL strategies do not modify learning objectives, they interact with the evaluation and teaching of content. Putting this model alongside some of the more common course accommodation requests, then, gave faculty the space to brainstorm what might happen in the space for UDL without compromising their course goals and objectives. But for most writing faculty, the course accommodations they were given did not, in their view, truly impact the role that accommodation and UDL might play in the desired outcome of their courses.



Wiggins, G. P., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design*. Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.

**Figure 1.** Where UDL can Happen in the Assignment Design Process

In one of the most overlooked accommodation requests in our department, the request for alternative testing (including a distraction-reduced environment, or double time for tests and quizzes) was used as an example of how UDL and accommodations function in the design of course curriculum. ENC 1101 is UCF's first year composition course. In it, students develop ideas about what writing is and its role by examining writing as an object of study. In doing so, students locate their writing and writing practices within a variety of contexts, including professional, civic, and personal. One of the four writing tasks students are assigned is a discourse community ethnography, whereby the objective is for the student to understand the ways that discourse communities impact or interest students. Based on the sample writing assignment located on the department website, students are required to collect data, analyze it in the context of course readings, and present their findings in an essay. This essay must demonstrate what they have learned, review relevant literature, describe their methodology and findings, and then present an answer to their own research question. Appendices with all of their data must be included. Using an understanding by design approach with a student whose accommodation is related to test-taking, we would begin by thinking about the students' own input related to their accommodation. While it is inappropriate to ask students about their disabilities, it is important to understand what they need from you in order to be successful in class. It is up to the student to decide what—if anything—they want to disclose to you, and it is entirely inappropriate to try and diagnose disabilities or associate a students' barrier to learning with their disability. As an instructor, it is your job to help students negotiate barriers if you are unable to remove them.

That said, SAS has identified some common reasons why a student might require a testing accommodation. It is possible that he or she may

- be easily distracted
- have difficulty organizing and generalizing information
- have difficulty with the speed of processing
- have anxiety

With this in mind, a teacher of this assignment might begin by asking the following questions: What is the objective of the assignment? Is it to write a research essay, do research, or analyze a discourse community? Referring back to figure 1, locating UDL opportunities within Wiggins and McTighe's understanding by design may generate the following questions and observations:

- If it is to write a research essay, students with a testing accommodation might
  - Require an early notice of the assignment expectations in order to account for possible distractions, time management, etc.
  - Require examples of the formatting and structure of the research paper's argument

- If the goal is to analyze a discourse community, students might
  - Be distracted by organizing the information
  - Feel pressured by time constraints, if the assignment information is not available early enough
  - Feel uncomfortable gathering interviews, etc.
- If the goal is to practice research methods, students might
  - Do their research with the use of assistive technology, like an audio recorder;
    - Should the student transcribe the data to be appropriate for the writing task?
  - Need assistance in taking field notes
    - Is this appropriate?
  - If the student needs testing accommodations because they are hard of hearing, can research methodologies be accommodated?

While I am not suggesting that instructors map out these possibilities without the input and consent from a student, I am suggesting that even accommodations that might seem unnecessary for a writing classroom have implications in a student's development and success. One solution, in this scenario, would be to emphasize the outcome of the assignment: if it is a practice in research methods, for example, do the findings need to be presented in a traditional research paper? If it is a practice of analyzing data, might a student provide another way of synthesizing data that is not bound to a rhetorical analysis? The point of this example is not to overwhelm and/or efface the very real complications that such a mapping might invoke, but rather respond to Margaret Price's call to question "the common assumption that students' critical thinking can be adequately represented through written artifacts" (57). What possibilities does this assignment hold for a student who does not have the confidence or tools necessary to produce a written artifact? What would happen if that student could revise their project *into* a written artifact? Ultimately, this example serves to remind us to be flexible and encourage students to understand how they learn and express themselves best; doing so will give them the tools necessary to develop confidence, flexibility, and advocacy skills they will hone through their college careers.

The liaison program brought much of what the department valued and worked towards to the fore in transformative ways. It revealed exactly what Wardle said the department was already capable of doing: making deep cultural shifts in our ideas about accessibility and accommodation and changing material conditions in the name of access through piloting, assessment, advocacy, and making our practices visible to everyone affected by them, both students and faculty. In sum, the liaison program's greatest accomplishment was an opportunity for the writing program to recognize the symbiotic relationship between our goals, the goals of SAS, and more importantly, the goals of our students.

Indeed, having these conversations about access within a writing program prompted an engagement with writing studies and access in a productive way, necessitating an understanding of access as something that is networked, and relies on interdependent and symbiotic relationships in the department and beyond. The liaison program showed how access is an activity that must be engaged with the socially constituted systems in which it exists (Cooper 367). Instructors and students must work within and against the attitudinal barriers that construct access and success as an individual issue that determines the capabilities of the learner and the teacher, void of any socially constructed system within which both work. Thus there is no fixed endpoint in the production of access: it is a practice of constant adaptation (Reiff, et. al 7); as rhetorical contexts shift, so too do access needs. Access therefore must be built into the curriculum and culture of a program. This can be accomplished through professional development, student learning goals, and consistent self-assessment practices (Inoue 253).

Furthermore, when access is understood as something culturally situated, it provides opportunities to learn rhetorical awareness through a diverse range of practices and approaches (Fishman and Reiff 68). Visibility and transparency give rise to self-advocacy skills for students, wherein their needs as learners are recognized and valued as they negotiate the practices and expectations that are expected of them in our classrooms. When students can understand the systems within which we work, they are more capable (and likely) to intervene. Therefore access must be regarded as a network that is sustained by interconnected relationships and self-reflection, where fluidity, adaptation, and evolution are the norm (Reiff, et. al 3). Fluidity, adaptation, and evolution can only happen, however,

when relationships and practices are made visible and transparent; doing so creates a culture where collaboration and partnership-building is encouraged and nurtured, and varying perspectives, abilities, and roles are valued equitably among these relationships.

Ultimately, the relationship between SAS and DWR has pulled into focus what access can teach us about our own writing pedagogies and programs. Giving agency to students in a learning environment allows them the freedom to draw on their knowledge and experiences in order to transform and grow their ideas. Offering a wide range of opportunities to facilitate the development of rhetorical skills and opportunities of access takes some of the burden off of SAS, faculty, and even the student. Most importantly (for a writing program), self-awareness of ability and access needs shapes how students view issues of writing, difference, and rhetorical listening.

## Limitations

While my experience with interested faculty was rewarding and productive, there were a number of limitations I experienced that prevented the liaison program from having the impact I hoped it would have had. I would characterize these limitations as related to time, circulation of information, and discomfort with accommodations.

The idea for the liaison program began in the Spring semester of 2016, and it was implemented at the start of Fall of 2016. Our first meeting was in the third week of the semester—long after faculty had designed their courses and received Course Accommodation Letters - and in my case, I didn't meet one-on-one with a SAS staff member until October. Much of that first meeting was focused on getting a sense of how faculty felt about the Course Accommodation Letters, SAS, and the process in general. As our conversation went on, I asked for a copy of everyone in my department who had received a letter, and went on my own to meet with those listed. We had one more meeting that semester with all liaisons and SAS, which served as feedback sessions for how the program worked. Thus while I appreciated the support SAS gave me when I asked, as well as the control over how my department would participate in the program, the lack of formal structure made it difficult to stay attentive to potential issues as the semester wore on. That said, I was able to implement my ideas the following semester, Spring 2017, with workshops and scheduled one-on-one conversations. Having a structure and a schedule—even if it is just my own, not my department's or SAS'—dramatically shifted the level of engagement and interest in what I was doing. Part of this is due to the consistent visibility I attempted to bring to the issue, but I would argue that the mid- to late-semester conversations emerged as access needs transformed as the semester progressed.

Changing a department's culture also takes time. For the liaison program to work as is fully intended, all faculty would be engaged and motivated to talk about access with students and colleagues, and in a perfect world, we would find no discrepancies between what the student needs and what faculty can provide. Ultimately, the liaison program seeks to do just this, which means that seeing outcomes of these conversations and practices will not happen immediately, despite the fact that many faculty are on board with the conversations I am initiating. Furthermore, circulating the information in workshops is a difficult task when the program is not adequately advertised—a lesson I take with me into this new semester—meaning that a lot of the work I attempted to do fell between the cracks. Yet there has to be a realistic balance between this work and the mid-semester workloads of our instructors.

Furthermore, while I did have support from my colleagues in the department, there still exists a culture of resistance to shifting pedagogies. While nobody would argue with the fact that classes need to be accessible and Course Accommodation Letters need to be followed, how that happens is up for debate. There were two major concerns coming out of the workshops and conversations I had: possible sharing of information/plagiarizing among students, and the time it takes to implement accessible content. For example, in talking about the use of audio recorders for lectures, many faculty expressed discomfort with the possibility that students would disseminate the lectures, and along with uploading notes and course content into our course page, would not feel compelled to come to class. Others felt resistance to the idea of allowing students to record discussions, since many of our courses have little to no lectures. Faculty also frequently expressed concerns about the workload that goes into creating accessible content. And while these concerns are valid and limiting, I do not see them as issues that would fundamentally change how I continue the program.

## Reimagining the Liaison Program

The biggest limitation, however, was the workload that I had to take on in order for the program to become visible enough to make any kind of change. Indeed, part of the reason that the liaison program will not continue in an official capacity is the workload that the liaison takes on in order to reach the desired outcomes. To accomplish the work that the liaison program provides and has the potential to offer, the work cannot fall on one person alone. The work I

describe in my own experience was, and continues to be, only possible because of certain privileges I was afforded: my research interests lined up with this service opportunity; the culture in my department is very supportive of me and this work; the infrastructure for a lot of the outreach I wanted to perform was already in place; and most importantly, I had the physical, mental, and emotional capability to perform this work. I was lucky enough to be able to do work that was not only required of me with regard to service and research, and I was even luckier in that this work invigorated me—a privilege that, unfortunately, tends to be misunderstood as indicative of the kind of “work ethic” that is valued in academia, and one that becomes more prevalent as my workload increases and energy decreases. My teaching load was relatively manageable, and I had a strong support system of friends and colleagues that encouraged me along the way. Without all of these elements in place, the liaison program in my department would not have played out the way that it did.

That said, understanding my privileges in this space allows me to draw out the essential elements that must be in place for a liaison program to occur and be successful. For this kind of program to be put into place and succeed across departments, programs, or organizations, a community of support must exist in some form or another. Relationships are the foundation to any kind of liaison program, and as I have shown, key to fostering purposeful attention to access and emergent relationships that can build on that access. The liaison program’s goal was to facilitate access and opportunities for access, which meant the following need to occur:

- *Visible and collaborative teaching practices.* Create a community of learners and teachers, wherein instructors and students share teaching philosophies, effective activities, and syllabi are shared across departments, programs, and disciplines. Make this a foundational part of departmental citizenship: encourage instructors and students to be open to transparency in their teaching and learning styles through workshops, instructor or student spotlights, and encourage students to share their favorite activities, assignments, and general approaches instructors have made to making material more accessible.
- *Disciplinary support and exchange.* Build relationships with student support services across campuses. Keeping those lines of communication open is a form of resource-building, putting programs in a position to reach a greater number of students and faculty in less time and effort than without.
- *Design thinking for students.* Make student input and voices an integral part of curriculum and course design. Privileging student experiences in our courses, services, or programs takes much of the guesswork out of determining and delivering access needs and opportunities for students.
- *Approach to access as a networked practice.* Remember that everyone is accommodated in some form: when access is understood as a networked practice, accommodation and access becomes a collaborative effort. Teaching and learning become based on information exchanges, as opposed to hierarchal models typically found in instructor-student, structural, or organizational relationships.

The role of the liaison is to facilitate the relationships between people, organizations, and even ideas. This is heavy work, especially as programs become more complex and wide-reaching. Having a liaison to facilitate access and accommodation opportunities between programs and campus accessibility offices is useful, but can unfortunately fall apart if the culture of support isn’t there. A sustainable liaison program, then, must attend to the different needs of and between people and organizations, and cannot fall on the shoulders of just one person. Situating all members of a community as liaisons between their own work and the work of the department or program can build a culture of access that depends on the work of its members to grow and thrive. As I said above, changing a culture takes time, which means a lot of conversations, shared resources, and changing pedagogical practices. A liaison’s job is to facilitate and encourage all of these things, offering a reminder that access, like writing, is a way to move among different communities of practice.

## Appendices

1. [Appendix 1: SAS Course Accommodation Letter](#)
2. [Appendix 2: Workshop Accommodation Example](#)

### **Appendix 1: SAS Course Accommodation Letter**

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) is a resource for students with disabilities and university faculty. Through collaboration, we ensure students with disabilities experience access and inclusion in their coursework through accommodations or other modifications.

The accommodations listed below are a starting point in the conversation. Upon student request or (SAS) notification (such as a test request), the following accommodations should be facilitated for the student or discussed with SAS when questions of reasonableness exist (...)

We have a collaborative responsibility to create accessible learning environments and we value your input. Reasonable accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis based upon the design of the course and the student's situation. At the time this letter is sent, SAS likely has no knowledge of your specific course design. As a result, some accommodations listed within this letter may not align with course activities or may be unreasonable because implementation would fundamentally alter the course objectives.

**Reasonable accommodation and modification possibilities can extend beyond what is listed in this letter so long as they do not fundamentally alter the essential course objectives.** If you have other ideas regarding how to create access for your course beyond what is listed, SAS encourages you to speak with the student to explore alternative modifications. You are also welcome to collaborate with an Accessibility Consultant at SAS to discuss course design, learning objectives and reasonable access options.

## ***Appendix 2: Workshop Accommodation Example***

### **Example 1: Audio Recorder**

The use of an audio recorder is considered one in a number of note-taking strategies. For a number of reasons, some students are not able to take adequate notes during class. Audio recorders allow visually impaired students to access class information outside of class, students with upper body impairments may use audio recordings of lectures if they cannot take notes themselves, and students with problems focusing might use audio recordings of class to supplement their notes. Sometimes this accommodation can be replaced with the use of a note taker, but if you or SAS is unable to find one, the use of an audio recorder will take its place.

#### **What does it mean?**

Use of an audio recorder in class is typically subject to the following conditions:

- Recordings are only for the student's personal use;
- Recordings are only to be used in preparation related to the class;
- Students may not share the recording with anyone, including peers in his/her class;
- Recordings are considered source material, and should be cited as such;
- Students are expected to destroy the recordings once they are no longer needed;
- Students agree to record only the voice of the lecturer, not the voices of other students. (Modified from <http://www.cccti.edu/DS/Documents/AudiotapingClassLectures.pdf>)

#### **What should I know?**

- Stand close enough to the microphone to allow for clear recording. You might consider having the recorder next to you, as opposed to on a student's desk.
- Always describe visual aids and explain what you're demonstrating in class, including things you're writing on the board, or pulling up on the computer.
- Wearing a lapel microphone is not the same thing as using an audio recorder: lapel mics for students with hearing impairments are meant to amplify your voice, not record it.

#### **How can I make this accommodation part of my courses in the future?**

Offer all students the opportunity to record your lectures.

- Record your lectures and upload them.

#### What does this have to do with a writing class?

- If you have in-class writing assignments, it may be difficult for a student who needs this accommodation to complete the assignment for a variety of reasons: lack of focus, impacted performance due to chronic illness, slowed cognitive function
- Students with this accommodation might benefit from information given in a format that is not aurally-based: consider providing copies of your lecture notes, integrating visuals, or having students do group work/exercises in class.
- Sometimes audio recorders are approved for students who have difficulty focusing; keep this in mind during class discussions, as participation could be impacted by a number of distractions.
- Repeat important information and provide that information in a variety of formats.

#### Caveats:

- Try to avoid allowing students to record discussions if the discussions could contain sensitive information about other students in class. Instead, mitigate by offering a copy of discussion questions beforehand.

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