May 9, 2016

To: Andrew Hippisley, Chair
        Senate Council
        University of Kentucky

From: Senate's Advisory Committee on Disability Accommodation and Compliance
       (SACDAC)

Re   SACDAC Statement of Endorsement on Universal Design and Captioning

The Senate's Advisory Committee on Disability Accommodation and Compliance (SACDAC) acknowledges and fully supports initiatives to expand universal design and captioning to enhance access to learning, living, and working at the University of Kentucky. Pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Civil Rights Act of 1978, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA), a post-secondary institution that receives federal funds is required to provide necessary auxiliary aids and services for persons with disabilities. Twenty-six years after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which mandates access and accommodation for persons with disabilities to be able to participate fully in services and programs, it is increasingly necessary to meet the intent of the ADA to promote a better quality of life for persons with disabilities. The efforts of the University to be an inclusive community through participation in campus educational and social activities and employment requires an investment that will allow equal access to all members of the University community and the Commonwealth.

Of particular interest toward inclusiveness at the University are universal design and captioning. Universal design offers benefit not only to persons with disabilities, but also accommodates a diverse student population and workforce that encompass various ages, mobility, and ergonomic abilities. The importance of captioning, which permits Deaf persons and those with hearing impairments to interact in educational offerings, is recognized through legislative mandate and as part of the Higher Education Opportunity Act. As distance learning/online learning manifest itself as a major part of the landscape of higher education and the University works to continue to meet its outreach efforts to the citizens of the Commonwealth, the University will need to respond affirmatively and timely in making sure that captioning for online courses, professional development, and website access is appropriate and responsive.

SACDAC endorses the concept and practicality of the inclusion of all persons, not just persons with disabilities through universal design and accessibility practices, such as captioning.

Universal Design for Learning

What is Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
UDL is a strategy for designing, developing, and implementing instruction in face-to-face, hybrid, and online environments that incorporates the needs of the diverse student body, including students with disabilities. Through the creation of a more flexible curriculum, UDL enhances the success of all students.

Why is UDL Important
Institutions of higher education are more diverse than ever and are striving to continue that diversity through inclusionary practices, as noted in the vision, mission, and strategic direction of the University. Implementation of UDL principles and strategies also includes accessibility practices, which are a legal obligation of the University – to provide equal and equitable instruction in an equivalent time frame to both students with and students without disabilities. Individuals and organizations are proactive in filing claims against institutions of higher education for not providing such access to educational products and services.

The numbers of students across all ages and levels of enrollment with disabilities on college campuses continues to rise, although this is not readily observable because of invisible disabilities. For example, on average approximately 11% of undergraduate students register with the disability services office. It also is believed that more than half of the students that received accommodations in high school choose not to disclose their needs in higher education.

UDL practices also address the needs of students for whom English is a second language, first generation students, honors students, student athletes, veterans, older students, transfer students, as well as students with differing life experiences, academic preparation, ethnicity, learning styles, and abilities. UDL can help the University to reach the envisioned retention rates of 90 percent, graduation rates of 70 percent, and reduce the gap in retention and graduation rates that exist for underrepresented student populations.

How Can UDL be Implemented
A flexible curriculum can be created by following the principles of UDL, which consist of providing learners with:
- Multiple means of engagement;
- Multiple means of presenting course materials; and
- Multiple means of assessment.

This is done by providing options for students to think about and manage their own learning through multiple methods and resources to enhance learning and experiential outcomes.