

**“We Are All in This Together”:  
A Conversation with University Faculty Senate (UFS) Leadership on Digital Accessibility**

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Under ADA Title II requirements, all digital content must be accessible to everyone by April 24, 2026. To learn more about SUNY’s accessibility initiatives and resources available to help faculty, staff, and students meet the compliance deadline, Jie Zhang and Alithia Alleyne, members of the UFS Communications Committee, interviewed Kim Scalzo, Senior Associate Provost for Digital Innovation and Academic Services (DIAS) at SUNY System Administration; Bruce Simon, UFS President; and Logan Rath, Chair of the UFS Operations Committee and President of the SUNY Brockport Senate in Fall 2025. As UFS President Simon reminds us: “Accessibility is more than compliance. It is a commitment to equity and academic excellence. Universal design benefits all learners and strengthens the integrity of SUNY’s educational mission.”

**Swift Action and Strategic Support**

In October 2025, the UFS Operations Committee responded quickly after the fall planning meeting, proposing [\*Resolution 201-03-1, Increased Support for Title II Preparations\*](#), which was passed at the plenary meeting, calling for additional resources and support from SUNY system to prepare for digital accessibility compliance.

*“While SUNY has done a lot of great work to prepare us, there are still campuses concerned about being fully compliant by April 24, 2026,”* said Rath, *“I am personally thankful for the Title II grants from DIAS [Digital Innovation and Academic Services] that were quickly made available after this resolution passed UFS. With system-level support like this it will ease some of the pressure on meeting this deadline.”*

Simon emphasized: *“We’re committed to doing more. UFS is committed to championing accessibility and equity in higher education, and actively exploring additional ways to assist campuses as they navigate these changes.”*

**From Accommodation to Universal Design**

A major focus is shifting from a reactive, accommodation-based approach to Universal Design for Learning (UDL), creating inclusive learning environments where all students have equal opportunities to succeed. This transition *“is about challenging ableist assumptions and*

*reinforcing the value of accessibility,” Simon explained. “Accessibility is not about lowering standards. It’s about equity.”*

### **System-Wide Coordination, Support, and Resources**

To guide campuses in navigating this transition, SUNY System Administration has implemented comprehensive support structures. Senior Associate Provost Scalzo focuses on academic technology and Electronic and Information Technology (EIT) accessibility coordination across SUNY’s 64 campuses.

DIAS aims to support campuses in ensuring compliance with ADA Title II by guiding implementation of accessibility standards and providing resources for faculty, staff, and students. A guidance memo was issued to campus presidents in August 2025, followed by two system-wide webinars in September attended by over 500 participants. Additional support includes:

- SUNY EIT Accessibility Policy and Guidelines to establish clear standards
- Free access to Deque University for in-depth accessibility training and resources
- Professional development programs offered by the Center for Professional Development (CPD)
- Webinars and recorded sessions on best practices
- Grant funding opportunity up to \$10,000 per campus (the application deadline was December 15, 2025)
- Campus-level incentives, such as SUNY Brockport’s *Strive for 85 Campaign*, for course Ally accessibility scores of 85% or higher in Brightspace
- Faculty Accessibility Fellowship Program (11 current fellows and a second cohort launching in January 2026)

At a symposium in Fall 2025, Fellows shared campus updates, underscoring the importance of leadership, both administrative and governance, in reinforcing accessibility as a core value.

### **Challenges in Implementing Digital Accessibility**

- Scale and complexity of SUNY’s 64 campuses
- Need for behavior change among faculty and staff to design for accessibility from the start
- Time constraints and additional workload for faculty and staff to retrofit existing content
- Many campuses lacked designated EIT Accessibility Officers until recently

Despite these obstacles, SUNY is developing progress reports starting in Spring 2026 to help campuses track their compliance efforts.

### **Practical Steps for Faculty and Staff**

Faculty and staff members can take actionable steps to improve digital accessibility:

- Inventory course content and identify accessibility gaps
- Use tools like Ally in the Learning Management System (LMS) to check accessibility scores
- Participate in webinars and CPD programs
- Seek help from campus EIT officers and accessibility fellows
- Start small with manageable changes, such as making PDFs readable or adding alt text
- Start now and track incremental progress: gradual updates can lead to substantial progress without feeling overwhelmed.

### **The Role of Campus Governance Leaders (CGLs)**

CGLs play a vital role in identifying discipline-specific challenges and sharing solutions. Simon encouraged CGLs to use collaborative platforms like the CGL Google group and Microsoft Teams channel to exchange insights and best practices.

### **Looking to the Future**

Scalzo envisions digital accessibility becoming integral to course design and student services across SUNY: *“It will enhance equity, engagement, and innovation across SUNY campuses, making learning environments more flexible and universally designed. It will ensure inclusivity from the start rather than relying on accommodations.”*

Plans are also underway for student training through partnerships with the UFS Student Life Committee and SUNY Student Assembly, ensuring that the entire campus community is engaged in this important work.

### **Call to Action**

Faculty and governance leaders are encouraged to engage in ongoing conversations, share resources, and champion universal design principles on their campuses. Together, SUNY can ensure it remains a leader in inclusive education.

*“Title II compliance is not just a legal requirement. It leads to a paradigm shift from providing accommodation after the fact to designing for inclusivity from the start.”* Scalzo concluded.

### **UFS Survey on Digital Accessibility**

**Survey link:** [Click here to access the Brockport Survey](#)

**Survey QR Code:**



**Survey Questions:**

- Does your campus have a designated structure for Title II compliance preparation?  
Yes/No/Unsure  
If yes, please briefly describe:
- What actions has your campus taken so far to prepare for ADA Title II digital accessibility compliance?
- What strategies have been effective in promoting awareness and participation in digital accessibility efforts on your campus?

- What resources have been provided to faculty, staff, and students to support digital accessibility?
- What are the biggest challenges your campus faces in implementing digital accessibility?
- What additional resources or support does your campus need to meet the April 24, 2026 compliance deadline?

## **References**

[ADA.gov Fact Sheet: New Rule on the Accessibility of Web Content and Mobile Apps Provided by State and Local Governments](#)

[ADA.gov Guidance for State and Local Governments: First Steps Toward Complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act Title II Web and Mobile Application Accessibility Rule](#)

[ADA.gov Webinar: Americans with Disabilities Act Title II Web & Mobile Application Accessibility Rule](#)

[Health and Human Services Web Accessibility Requirements](#)

[New York Executive Law Section 170-f](#)

[SUNY Accessibility Advocates & Allies Faculty Fellowship Program](#)

[SUNY Digital Accessibility Challenge](#)

[SUNY EIT Accessibility Resources Webpage](#)

[SUNY Electronic and Information Technology \(EIT\) Accessibility Policy](#)

[Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act Web Accessibility Regulations](#)

[Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.2](#)

## **Contacts**

[2025 SUNY Accessibility Advocates & Allies Faculty Fellows](#)

Accessibility Fellows:

- Glenn Dausch - Stony Brook University
- Mary Henesey - University of Buffalo
- Kate Bohan - SUNY New Paltz
- Allison Moreland - SUNY Empire

[Dan Laird, SUNY Oswego, on accessible presentations](#)

EIT Accessibility Officers on Each SUNY Campus