Accessibility Best Practices for Classes Using Zoom

The following **BEST PRACTICES increase the accessibility of classes being conducted via Zoom.** Many of these tips are focused on synchronous/"live" classes but some are still relevant to asynchronous classes or recordings that students may view on their own time. While these best practices increase general access for all students, students may still need the individualized accommodations that will be outlined in their Accommodation Letters from Student Accessibility Services (SAS).

GENERAL TIPS

- Don't require students to turn on their cameras during class; this can create a barrier to participation for a number of disability-related reasons (anxiety, verbal or physical tics, etc.).

- If you are using other types of technology during class, ensure it is accessible with audio and visual access available.

- Depending on the length of the class, it may be appropriate to encourage short breaks.

- **Be patient.** It may take some students longer to participate or access features in Zoom (un-muting, participating in polls, etc.). Allow ample time and be respectful of challenges students may experience.

- Think through access needs outside of synchronous lectures and discussions. Group projects, labs, tutoring, office hours, and time to practice presentations require access. Planning for access in advance means students can focus more on course content and less on planning for access for all course activities.

SCREEN SHARING

- Read aloud what is on the screen when going over PowerPoints, media, or using the whiteboard feature.

- Ensure all videos are captioned.

- Post materials before or after class for students to review.

RECORDINGS

- To limit distractions during class and/or recordings, use the Spotlight Speaker setting. You can set up to two additional speakers.

- Provide information on where recordings are located and how long they will be available.

- Students may not be comfortable being recorded; suggest the option of using the Show/Hide Non-video Participants which can hide participants' name or profile picture on the Zoom Room's display if their video is turned off.

INTERPRETING AND LIVE CAPTIONING

- **Sign Language Interpreters** will need to join Zoom like any other participant. Pinning the interpreter will allow the interpreter to be visible in your recordings.

- The Zoom host will need to Enable Captioning. If recordings will be shared, hosts should review captions before distribution to ensure accuracy.

- Do not force mute participant audio. This feature blocks the Deaf and Hard of Hearing students from being able to pin the interpreters.

- If you choose to mute participants' videos, interpreters will need to be designated co-host status so they can remain on screen.

- Muting video and allowing audio alone will not allow Deaf and Hard of Hearing students to actively participate.

CHAT

- Read chat comments aloud so all participants, including those calling in, can be included in the chat.

- Make chat content accessible through additional methods, such as saving and sharing for later use.

- Assistive technology will allow participation in chats, however, some links may not be accessible.

- Send links from the chat by email to all students before or after the meeting.

- Zoom has the option to save the chat after the meeting; share how and when this content will be available.

BREAKOUT ROOMS

- Be mindful of accommodations. Students with live captioning and sign language interpreters will need to be assigned the same rooms. For more information see Zoom's Breakout Room Guidance.

POLLING

- Be aware of limitations when using the Polling feature since students who are calling in *will not* be able to use the feature. Students who use assistive technology *can participate* in polling.

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Accessibility Best Practices for Classes Using Zoom *(cont'd)*

POLLING (CONT'D)

- Notify students verbally before starting a poll. This is helpful for students who use assistive technology.

- **Allow enough time.** It may take additional time to access the poll for some students.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more resources and best practices for teaching online visit the Center for Online Learning and Teaching Technology (COLTT) website: https://www.utrgv.edu/online/

For more resources and best practices for accessibility and providing accommodations: https://www.utrgv.edu/accessibility/accommodations/index.htm

SAS staff are available to consult with instructors regarding questions or concerns for accommodating students in their classes.

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