[00:00:00] We're on a worldwide search to see what inclusive education looks like.

So, Blackboard Ally [00:00:05] is going on tour for 2019,

visiting campuses around the globe to learn how they're [00:00:10] tackling

their toughest accessibility challenges and

improving the learning experience for all [00:00:15] their students.

Hey, everybody, welcome to the first episode of the [00:00:20] Ally Tour Podcast.

So, for the first stop on the tour,

we're going to be hearing from the team [00:00:25] in Atlantic Cape Community College.

Wow. They have just a really inspiring [00:00:30] story about

how in the face of challenging legal mandates to become more accessible,

[00:00:35] they rally together as a campus to take on

those tough accessibility [00:00:40] challenges and

really become more inclusive for all their students.

So, let's jump [00:00:45] into it and hear from the team.

All right. We'll start with Mike since you just walked [00:00:50] in.

Yeah.

Just a quick introduction, your name,

your role here, [00:00:55] and your relationship to Accessibility.

Okay. My name [00:01:00] is Mike Barnes,

Director of the Center for Accessibility here at Atlantic Cape Community College.

[00:01:05] I've been working closely with

Michelle's Department and [00:01:10] everyone here on making everything as accessible as possible,

[00:01:15] in as many different ways as possible.

My name [00:01:20] is Michelle Perkins,

I'm the Director of Instructional Technology here in Atlantic Cape,

also the Blackboard [00:01:25] administrator.

In my role or through instructional [00:01:30] technology,

we work very closely with

the Center for Accessibility and delivering [00:01:35] training to faculty and

staff throughout the college and we work with faculty in

[00:01:40] trying to help them get their content as successful as possible.

[00:01:45] I'm Josh Carroll, I'm the Technician for the Instructional Technology Department.

I do most of the [00:01:50] back end server work for Blackboard

and other academic related technologies.

[00:01:55] My role with accessibility is basically to test out new solutions, try to break them.

Sometimes [00:02:00] I'm more successful than other times,

but yeah, my point is to test all the stuff out.

I'm [00:02:05] Gerry Fox, I'm a Technologist here at Atlantic Cape.

We [00:02:10] work with Blackboard and with the faculty,

making their content accessible.

[00:02:15] I'm Pat Kubaska, Coordinator in the Instructional [00:02:20] Technology Department.

I work with Gerry and Josh and Michelle,

[00:02:25] working with the faculty, assisting the students.

They call if they have problems with [00:02:30] Blackboard.

Chad Bullock, Senior Manager of the Center for Accessibility.

[00:02:35] We work on all aspects of

accessibility in terms of working with students with disabilities [00:02:40] and

their courses and also training faculty and staff

on different strategies [00:02:45] for accessible content.

All right. [00:02:50] So, let's start maybe in the glory days pre-decree.

What was it like around accessibility? [00:02:55] Who cared about it?

Prior to consent decree,

everything was funneled [00:03:00] through the counseling office.

So, you have a few counselors that handle the students

[00:03:05] that would visit disability services,

is what it was called at the time,

and [00:03:10] they would basically handle anything that had to do with accommodation.

So, accessibility wasn't really in [00:03:15] the conversation,

it was more about accommodation as opposed to

making materials [00:03:20] of course materials accessible.

So, that was probably the way it was set [00:03:25] up in the past.

So, if any request came through,

there's probably [00:03:30] one or maybe two people to handle an accommodation request.

So, now, after [00:03:35] the consent decree,

we're trying to be proactive where what we're

doing is making things accessible from the GetGo,

[00:03:40] so we don't have to have as many accommodations in order for a student to be successful.

[00:03:45] So, that's kind of how the tide is changed a bit.

But in regards to accessible content,

[00:03:50] there really wasn't much of anything.

I mean, we would be [00:03:55] the creators,

non-faculty creators whether for web content,

[00:04:00] we would make sure we had an alt tag.

Other than that, that was the [00:04:05] time of like

flash animations and let's make everything as spinny

and fancy [00:04:10] and eye-catching as we can and there maybe some people who can't look at it,

but [00:04:15] at least those who do,

will really enjoy it.

With [00:04:20] faculty, I really don't

think accessible content was a part of their vocabulary [00:04:25] as a whole.

Content was really designed in those days for users [00:04:30] with perfect vision,

hearing all their senses,

nothing [00:04:35] precluding them, whatsoever.

The rules aren't really much of a thought given to [00:04:40] making content accessible.

Then what happened? So, then you get hit [00:04:45] with this,

it's a consent decree,

that's the official name.

Yeah.

[00:04:50] Yes.

It's [00:04:55] a consent decree that we had agreed to [00:05:00] as an institution,

we had agreed to 100 percent accessibility [00:05:05] across the board.

So, that was something that they had negotiated [00:05:10] prior to my arrival at

the college and prior to Chad's leaving Michelle's department.

[00:05:15] So, then I was hired.

[00:05:20] So, Chad, he kind of manage this consent [00:05:25] decree.

I'll never forget the moment,

I was sitting on the beach and I'm looking at this,

[00:05:30] I got an email from the coach saying, "Here's this document.

You might want to check it out.

It's going to be doing [00:05:35] a lot of work on it."

So, I opened it up and I'm like, "Oh.

Okay. [00:05:40] Here we go."

But we viewed it as a [00:05:45] good thing.

I think like it was very daunting,

but it was something that in looking [00:05:50] at it,

it was like a blueprint into making the college,

like the ideal [00:05:55] to making the college completely accessible.

Realized that 100 percent accessibility is really [00:06:00] difficult and probably not attainable,

but we had a blueprint right in front of us that sort [00:06:05] of

spelled out exactly how we should do it.

So, it enabled us [00:06:10] to reach out to other institutions

that had been there before that done [00:06:15] it really well.

It enable us to reach out to some consultants in industry that

had worked with [00:06:20] other universities on figuring all that stuff out.

So, we just sort of jumped headfirst [00:06:25] into this world and just sort of

started just from [00:06:30] the ground up and just started with the basics of,

"Okay. If [00:06:35] we have a student with a visual impairment,

how do we make sure that they can get into a classroom and take this [00:06:40] class?

What are the barriers?"

We identified the barriers.

We even went as far as, this is actually Chad's [00:06:45] idea,

as we're going through in the very beginning,

we [00:06:50] didn't really know how to really test a lot of this stuff.

So, we hired a blind student [00:06:55] to test everything.

So, we brought in a student,

we paid him as a consultant, [00:07:00] and he came in.

In the very beginning, we ran everything we did

through the [00:07:05] student and he would tell us where he got stuck,

he would tell us what do you know,

he was able to [00:07:10] get here,

maybe this part was a little wonky,

go back and change this,

and that was a game changer [00:07:15] for us,

to be able to really see his perspective on trying to

register for [00:07:20] classes or trying to read

the course catalog or trying to do all these different things.

So, we were able [00:07:25] to create a map to then go back and say, okay,

like what's the main,

so [00:07:30] in order to get over here and take this class we've got to get here first.

We get here, we got to get here so it [00:07:35] was almost like a, "Choose Your Own Adventure" with

this kid trying to figure out exactly how to get where we needed [00:07:40] to go.

Then with all these different things with help of Ally

eventually now we have [00:07:45] a whole system in place that's

really enabling us to ensure that these students have

[00:07:50] access to fully accessible content and that if they don't,

there's a process for making [00:07:55] that accessible,

both on the student side and the faculty side.

So, pre-Ally [00:08:00] had you started to look at the content in the LMS?

How were you trying [00:08:05] to look at the content in the LMS?

I don't think we [00:08:10] started looking at it.

We had started training.

We that was really the first [00:08:15] thing we tried to do is to

educate the faculty and to start [00:08:20] to teach

them how to make their content accessible and [00:08:25] I guess at that point

we were relying 100 percent on the office accessibility [00:08:30] checkers.

But there was really no validation or if they

weren't [00:08:35] using office for some reason when they uploaded their content.

We really didn't have a way to [00:08:40] manage and you know it was,

there was one point at a meeting that [00:08:45] I missed that's the way it always happens,

where it got back to me that Michelle Perkins [00:08:50] will go through

every single course on Blackboard and make sure that the content

is accessible. [00:08:55] I just said-

I know what that means.

[00:09:00] I even don't know what to say because I said even

if I said [00:09:05] it was accessible here

two seconds later they upload something it might not be accessible.

So, we've [00:09:10] really didn't have a solution at that time,

we were just trying to get started because we knew we had to get started [00:09:15] we didn't

insert Ally which made that journey a little [00:09:20] bit easier but-

Once we got familiar using the Microsoft Office [00:09:25] Checkers,

so once we found the Blackboard had a product that was basically going to mimic [00:09:30] in

a way that same result and usage then we jumped on right away with [00:09:35] thought this is great,

let's get it in here even first ones or something to do it,

if we were but we're pretty early [00:09:40] on in

the adoption process just for that reason because we couldn't keep just

using the Microsoft Office [00:09:45] checkers so there wasn't

enough analytics behind that in order to see what was really happening at the school.

[00:09:50] Just to point out that the day

Blackboard Ally introduced [00:09:55] their product was in mid-March of 2017, I believe.

That same [00:10:00] day we were a better toaster for a Blackboard Ally's so we

were in communication with Blackboard [00:10:05] two months before they

rolled out the test products and we were testing it from day one [00:10:10] and we rolled

out for the full semester I

believe was the limited roll out or do [00:10:15] we actually do a whole roll out?

We started with a pilot at fall and [00:10:20] the pilot was so successful.

Our vice president of academic said turn it on [00:10:25] for everyone,

everything we need everybody to have this tool and have access to it. [00:10:30] So-

The pilot like 20 classes, 30 classes or something along those lines?

It was more like 20 faculty [00:10:35] members,

and then of those 20 we turned it on and all their courses.

But then over [00:10:40] thanksgiving break we turned it on system wide and never looked back.

What were some of the [00:10:45] indicators of success of that pilot?

[00:10:50] One big indicator was that when we were invited to go back on different [00:10:55] webinars,

we were already trained on the things that they were discussing in those webinars,

[00:11:00] on how to build accessible content.

We were saying we're already in past,

we already know this stuff [00:11:05] in a way like we were

already educating faculty and staff on these stuff already.

So, we felt like [00:11:10] we were ahead of the game,

so that was a real good indicator.

Especially on a few Blackboard webinars.

As [00:11:15] a matter of fact, I think we are on the Blackboard webinar,

we mentioned that we're from Atlantic Cape and they even mentioned then

[00:11:20] that

we were already been working with you guys on accessibility stuff, you already know this.

Isn't [00:11:25] all that's neat. We're already making

some type of indent or something in the industry.

Right.

[00:11:30] And I think to it speaks to the culture change of the institution.

I think from the very beginning,

[00:11:35] we had stepped in to try and figure out how to not

just require people [00:11:40] and faculty to make accessible content,

but to create culture of accessibility to where we're creating

[00:11:45] accessible content irregardless of

specific disabilities may or may not [00:11:50] be in the classroom.

So, I think that vying and in combined with access to [00:11:55] this Ally product,

you know once it came out and we started noticing that

faculty [00:12:00] members were really concerned about their score,

they were concerned about their content,

[00:12:05] which I think was something that we really didn't see in the past.

I think Ally really allowed,

it was kind of like [00:12:10] the vehicle for

our faculty members to be able to

visualize [00:12:15] progress instead of just us saying, "Yeah, it looks good."

You can really go in and see exactly [00:12:20] where they're at and

also figure out how to make changes if needed.

Another [00:12:25] indicator was a faculty started coming up to

us in conversations [00:12:30] and start talking about accessibility.

While before that, they were saying I don't know what that is.

I don't know what accessibility [00:12:35] is.

I don't know really know what you're talking about,

and they had a lot of stress and trepidation about it,

about [00:12:40] getting into it, and then they will stopping us in a hallway saying,

you know I edit headers on this document and I can't figure out how [00:12:45] to modify the header,

and I'm going this a great conversation because that

means you're implementing [00:12:50] this stuff.

So, that was a game changer.

Yeah I mean the scoring system of Blackboard [00:12:55] Ally

for some they took it like a game, like progress.

I want to get to this [00:13:00] new level for content I'm giving to my students.

So, I don't know if the game of fire [00:13:05] is the right word for that

but that's kind of what the scoring system did in the beginning.

[00:13:10] So, did you first kind of turn on

the institutional report and look at that before you opened [00:13:15] it up to faculty?

What was that process?

I think we [00:13:20] did turn on the institutional report.

We were looking before we [00:13:25] turned it on.

Yes. So, we were looking just kind of out of curiosity.

There was at that time [00:13:30] I mean we were still training faculty,

it wasn't like anything was being held against faculty.

We were kind of [00:13:35] morbidly curious to see where we were in those very first steps.

[00:13:40] In those days, we would go through page after page [00:13:45] after page

of zero percent, five percent.

We were excited that, "Hey, we had 10 courses that [00:13:50] are 100 percent

accessible now."

Remember, we were looking at that stuff.

Absolutely.

And then that number grew more

[00:13:55] and more and it was exciting watching the change. It was really exciting.

Yeah I mean [00:14:00] it was a good indicator of what

content faculty were putting on Blackboard [00:14:05] at the time and I think in the beginning,

there were like 80 courses at zero percent [00:14:10] because they were all scanned PDFs.

There was just not a trace of [00:14:15] anything

accessible beyond a person who could visually see the scan document.

[00:14:20] And as a team looking at a course like that,

what was your strategy?

Did you [00:14:25] pull them into your room and sit them down

like we had to do something like now about it?

[00:14:30] What was the process there?

There was a lot of education.

I mean [00:14:35] we had this series of accessibility courses that Chad created.

We had two [00:14:40] faculty development days that were dedicated towards,

[00:14:45] let's get down and get dirty and show you how to do this.

We had messages [00:14:50] from upper management.

I was going to say, we tried to take the nice guy approach at first,

and [00:14:55] of course, that worked for

some and [00:15:00] then there were others that we needed administration.

We needed administrations backing.

I mean, [00:15:05] it wasn't going because it does require work and it's not hard work,

but it's different and change [00:15:10] is different,

and until administration said,

you have to do this.

[00:15:15] There were some people who just weren't going to do it,

and those people then would end [00:15:20] up in our offices and say, I'm so overwhelmed.

I've no idea how to start with this and [00:15:25] we're going to start one document at a time.

You have to look at it one PowerPoint at a time,

one [00:15:30] video at a time because when you're trying to look at,

well I have five different courses I teach [00:15:35] and I have like 60 different thought.

It's very overwhelming to start one at a time and when you do that [00:15:40] one,

then you can do the next one,

and then the next one and you're going to find that it gets a little bit

easier and [00:15:45] we found that in the beginning,

we had faculty who just weren't willing to do anything,

[00:15:50] and it really just please try and you know what I can do this stuff,

and like they were excited [00:15:55] about it and then they're like you know what,

I have other students who are actually using this too and they [00:16:00] said it's better,

and that was all very exciting feedback for us.

[00:16:05] I think to like one of the things that we struggled a lot with.

I was sort [00:16:10] of on the peripheral of a lot of this stuff that rise.

What I saw was a lot of the faculty members who've [00:16:15] been here for 40,

45 years, 50 years [00:16:20] and that's a lot of data.

That's a lot of course material, that's a lot of stuff,

and what we wanted to [00:16:25] make sure that we did from the beginning is to not devalue all of

that work and devalue [00:16:30] all of that content because it is still great content.

It's still [00:16:35] very great for lack of a better word,

but [00:16:40] in doing this it was saying like okay that's still good stuff.

We had to figure out a way to bring [00:16:45] that to now.

So, it's to make that content accessible [00:16:50] for kids now because right now it's not.

So, what do we have to do to work together to make sure that that

still [00:16:55] holds value and I think once we

broke down that barrier of being like that I think there's

[00:17:00] a lot of faculty who were just like look don't touch my stuff,

it is my stuff, I'm not [00:17:05] playing this game.

Once really explain that it's not [00:17:10] your stuff,

your stuff still great.

It's just how it's presented and things like that.

So, [00:17:15] I think once that barrier was broken down, I think we saw a lot.

[00:17:20] That's what I think we really started to see the culture change and

that shift at the college to [00:17:25] more accessible content.

I was part of it too.

There was [00:17:30] some defensive faculty early on that said,

you know why are you targeting me?

[00:17:35] I've always taught it this way.

I don't understand why anything has to changed.

So, part of the message was [00:17:40] saying it's not your fault,

we're not blaming you and pointing the finger directly to you,

it said [00:17:45] this is really how the process should be all along.

Let's put you in the direction of

improving everything [00:17:50] you create from this point forward,

whereas punishing you for what came before.

[00:17:55] We had to kind of get around,

the explanation, and get to the learning part of [00:18:00] it, I guess.

I think using examples too of students,

for [00:18:05] instance, we had a student with a visual impairment,

who had no cognitive issues whatsoever [00:18:10] and this student can't access her material, right?

The student is no different from any [00:18:15] other student

other than the issues the student has a vision,

and we're saying that this student effectively [00:18:20] that okay even though you've got nothing

else besides your [00:18:25] visual impairment,

you can't take this class because it is in a language [00:18:30] that you can understand, right?

So, I think by really having that student right

there in front [00:18:35] of somebody saying like okay well you can't be here,

that I think was a little bit of a change [00:18:40] too because it brought the idea of

accessibility home to where like now we have a kid who's [00:18:45] in our a fully capable student,

who is at our institution that cannot access [00:18:50] anything unless we make changes.

I was going [00:18:55] to ask me about that course with

all scans because like that's a heavy lift right.

Doing heading on [00:19:00] a word document,

not too terrible but in cases like that,

what was some [00:19:05] of the process?

Because that's something that we hear a lot from institutions which

we keep carve off all text [00:19:10] or whatever,

but how did you pick up some of these big challenges?

Well, any other training that [00:19:15] we did,

we kind of reiterated a lot of the same thing

and a lot of different training that we did,

[00:19:20] and one of them were we're not the only school on the planet that are trying to make

this particular [00:19:25] document or infographics in an alternative version.

There's resources out there already.

So, [00:19:30] whenever you get stressed out like as

faculty member I mean about making something accessible,

we have [00:19:35] support circles to help you with that,

and if we have a solution today,

we're to find it because we know the channels where to [00:19:40] reach out and where to look for.

So, we'll find a solution,

but now fix the things that you're comfortable with fixing,

[00:19:45] record the things that you're having trouble with,

and eventually your course will [00:19:50] be fully accessible.

So, just keep chipping away at the course semester after semester.

[00:19:55] They would email you directly [00:20:00] when they had an issue of what was that system they use?

The words accessibility and Chad just weren't together [00:20:05] at all aspects even like staff,

they were going to buy a [00:20:10] piece of software Chad has to test it.

I'm like wait, hold on what!

and I have [00:20:15] a lot of email.

So, originally that's what happened and then we looked at the process [00:20:20] though,

and we looked at where we needed to implement different stages of the process.

[00:20:25] So, what they brought on a part time employee just for the academic side

of things.

[00:20:30] So, just for faculty support that helped me out a lot,

as opposed to [00:20:35] just coming directly to one person.

Now, we have a few people that

instructional technology [00:20:40] was helping out a lot with giving direction.

We made a web page strictly for

resources [00:20:45] where faculty can read up on things on their own,

so they didn't have to keep reaching out to us especially [00:20:50] for things that we

felt were a little more simpler concepts to really understand and get.

[00:20:55] So, that helped out so all these different channels

and buckets we really started to fill.

Now, once [00:21:00] those buckets got filled a little more,

it was easier to get things done especially [00:21:05] the time of [inaudible 00:21:05] anyway .

That's what we were saying for the academic side for [inaudible 00:21:09] [00:21:10] ,

the part time support on the academic side,

and then we just [00:21:15] kept educating ourselves.

So, we went through professional development for ourselves.

We have two people on staff [00:21:20] now that are certified, right? For accessibility.

So, we took courses in professional development.

[00:21:25] We spoke to vendors, we brought vendors in.

We went to conferences all these different [00:21:30] things.

Anything that we could do to gain more experience as quickly as [00:21:35] we could with experience,

and then once we gain that,

we bring it back and disseminate that information [00:21:40] as much as possible,

and that was really the plan.

We just keep going [00:21:45] with that.

Great.

The process doesn't end.

No. It never had and [00:21:50] never will,

and that's a message we said it backwards to about their courses.

It's never going to end. You're not just going to be fully [00:21:55] accessible one day.

Because anytime you bring in a new piece of equipment,

you want to have accessibility in mind [00:22:00] whatever that concept might be so.

Yes. It's constantly evolving but it's [00:22:05] good.

So, some of the training that you all set up,

I mean you are showing [00:22:10] me some of the things that you have built out,

and so you provided basically asynchronous [00:22:15] secret.

However, you can reach them you did it.

Yeah, and bombarded [00:22:20] too.

We offered more training than we had ever had in the past.

We [00:22:25] basically made it like Fridays where training.

Without a doubt, we always had something on Fridays [00:22:30] and then we would

always do a Tuesday or Wednesday as well on top of that.

We brought out new workshops stuff [00:22:35] that was

never been offered before to keep it a bit fresh.

I mean obviously there were no accessibility workshops.

[00:22:40] We know that, but then we also parlay that into universal design.

We talked about video captioning [00:22:45] which is certainly accessibility,

what is just the bucket of it.

We never had workshops [00:22:50] dedicated to those topics before.

So, now we have more education than we ever had before.

[00:22:55] So, it's easier especially for a new faculty member,

a new adjunct that comes [00:23:00] in.

They can jump right into all these resources and get educated very quickly on this topic,

[00:23:05] and that's probably one of the biggest things.

Right, and one of the other things [00:23:10] that academics is doing now is,

they started putting together

[00:23:15] some standard courses that had accessible content [00:23:20] already filled out in it.

So, that when a new adjunct was hired instead of saying, hi [00:23:25] you're hired.

Here's the syllabus on a text.

Good luck. Here you go.

Here's [00:23:30] a course we already have fully accessible PowerPoint.

We already have a fully accessible syllabus.

We already have all these [00:23:35] things that are already done and give them a head start.

What I mean when they started.

So, [00:23:40] we're still working on that.

But we definitely have made a lot of progress.

[00:23:45] So, those templates were something pretty new that you introduced after.

Oh, yeah. They're very [00:23:50] new.

They just started last summer.

I think they just started [00:23:55] developing them for last fall.

How is faculty response [00:24:00] to templates?

Are they like, don't tell me how to organize my course or my syllabus.

[00:24:05] There's some of that. There's others

who have embraced that a little [00:24:10] bit more because it doesn't.

They're not restricted from changing it.

Once they get it, it's just given [00:24:15] them a foundation to get started.

Once they have it, they can then use it,

not [00:24:20] use it, add their own content.

Some of our [00:24:25] academic departments have really,

again you spoke with some of our science folks earlier.

[00:24:30] They've done amazing things with developing that type of

content both for [00:24:35] lecture and lab blackboard core shells.

[00:24:40] So, that way when an adjunct comes in.

Just think of it, you're a brand new adjunct they're hiring maybe in the 11th [00:24:45] hour.

How am I going to make this happen?

Just like that and they not only have the tools they need [00:24:50] to be successful,

but it's already accessible and it all is

just going to help make the students [00:24:55] more successful.

In the process of training up faculty,

[00:25:00] getting them on board,

did certain faculty champions emerge that you [00:25:05] propped up on the campus to say,

hey this is your model look at this faculty member?

[00:25:10] Absolutely. We're definitely did because we had

some remember [00:25:15] where you can see right away.

Like that bell click or something clicks [00:25:20] all of a sudden where they get it.

So, this isn't as stressful as I thought it would be

or as [00:25:25] daunting as a test because I thought it would be.

But then we started getting feedback going.

[00:25:30] I've cleaned up a lot of stuff in my course.

I didn't realize how much stuff I have had my course.

I don't even use anymore that's really [00:25:35] old or something like that,

and I brought in new content new fresh stuff as well.

So, [00:25:40] we're getting good feedback from that.

With something that we really didn't think about.

We were just trying to make it accessible. But [00:25:45] here we are.

They're designing their courses all over again and updating their materials [00:25:50] and they

felt like that cleaning out my closet type of feeling, more organized and I'm [00:25:55] ready to go.

So, that was a nice response.

Well it sounds like there's been [00:26:00] some cost savings,

there too as far as storage.

Oh, yeah. Right. Because [00:26:05] we were always up

against the limits because of storage [00:26:10] with Blackboard.

Because we are a managed hosting and we pay for [00:26:15] our storage and faculty,

they'd upload a file and it would never be [00:26:20] deleted from their course and we could

go through their files and they'd have a syllabus in there from 2004.

[00:26:25] That's just been copied over and over and over and over again, and we had,

[00:26:30] well over half of our faculty that just

said, "Give me a brand new course [00:26:35] I'm starting over," and that is really.

Cleaned [00:26:40] it up a lot.

Yes it did.

Comes down to customer service [00:26:45] emails and all that.

[00:26:50] So, now I mean you're pretty far along in this journey.

You got some [00:26:55] success in there.

As you were starting to see these courses turn green.

[00:27:00] Did that inspire the campus?

Did it start to move away from just a stick being [00:27:05] beating over to them to a sense of pride?

How has, when you talking about a culture shift,

how does that now [00:27:10] feel on a campus that has become more inclusive?

Well, accessibility [00:27:15] is obviously a big word.

Everybody I think on campus knows about it and knows exactly what it means,

[00:27:20] exactly how to implement it.

Which is three years ago there wasn't something that was happening [00:27:25] here at all.

Right. That's just not a word that people knew and now they know

a lot of it probably more than they want [00:27:30] to know about it.

Well, I think they're proud to know I mean we were talking [00:27:35] a

little bit earlier and some of us in the room teaching.

[00:27:40] I'm proud that my course is accessible.

I wanted it to be accessible as accessible as it can to everybody and [00:27:45] I think that

there are a lot of faculty on campus that are proud that they can say that now,

and many [00:27:50] of them did the work themselves and they are like I did that,

and [00:27:55] I think there are a lot of people who are proud of themselves.

I think when the teachers hear [00:28:00] any feedback from a student though.

Right.

That's where it really makes

an impact because that's [00:28:05] what they're here for at the end of the today.

So, we always [00:28:10] pitched the idea of saying,

would you like less emails from your students about they can't get access to this [00:28:15] thing.

Where they can't find this document, those types of things.

Now, that the courses [00:28:20] are more organized and accessible,

they're not getting those emails or just getting emails

about content [00:28:25] which is where they want to be.

They don't want to have emails about software where things are.

So, [00:28:30] you know when they get that feedback from the students I think that

really makes them feel so good about it that they

have a good product that they're putting out there.

[00:28:35] I think also how much it's support students without disabilities.

I think that's a point [00:28:40] that does get lost a little bit.

Accessibility is a whole doesn't [00:28:45] just serve students with disabilities,

it helps students without disabilities incredibly well [00:28:50] as well.

So, I think by seeing sort of the student [00:28:55] investiture

in their Blackboard courses

I think they're starting to [00:29:00] see an uptick of students using them.

Students be able to access them and also

[00:29:05] by taking out a lot of that stuff that has been there forever,

[00:29:10] it's very much easier to navigate.

So, I think students are using the Blackboard

[00:29:15] courses a little bit more now because they're a little bit cleaner.

So, I think that's [00:29:20] been a pretty positive thing as well for staff and faculty.

[00:29:25] So, and faculty get the service, right?

I mean they get feedback on their courses.

[00:29:30] So, they can literally read all this feedback and get feedback directly from the students.

So, that's a big one [00:29:35] too.

Are you getting a sense that it has improved in some of those areas [00:29:40] that

students are reporting a better experience in the course?

Yeah. [00:29:45] Well, and part of that was

as a part of this process in the very [00:29:50] beginning of the process probably one of

the first things we did is we

instituted [00:29:55] a standard course menu in all of our Blackboard course shells.

So, we [00:30:00] could make navigation a little more consistent.

That probably hit more resistance than [00:30:05] you could probably imagine from faculty.

Because we were telling them,

you can only have [00:30:10] these eight things on your course menu now instead of

the 30 things [00:30:15] that you had before and they didn't

want to be told that and they sure didn't want somebody telling [00:30:20] them what to name them.

But we did survey students after we did that and [00:30:25] there was so much positive feedback.

The students were like it was nice that no matter what [00:30:30] course I was going in,

I knew where to find my syllabus,

I knew where to find this,

I knew where to find that,

and [00:30:35] that definitely was validation that we were moving in the right direction there.

[00:30:40] Has it changed the way your office is doing things?

What's been the impact on your office?

[00:30:45] It's been a great impact as we're able to now

ensure accessibility for students [00:30:50] and we can now say,

so if a student comes in and we know what they need to take,

[00:30:55] like for instance got one of our student visual impairment.

We know he has to [00:31:00] take a biology class at some point in the next few semesters.

So, now we're able to go [00:31:05] in and try do

a deep dive now into that course to make sure that it's perfect.

[00:31:10] So, I think we're seeing that.

Being able to look into the future and sort [00:31:15] of

scaffolding the students experience as they move through.

But also being able to [00:31:20] point our students towards [00:31:25] classes that are more accessible.

To say, so we know we have a student who requires [00:31:30] a high level of accessibility.

We're able to now go in and [00:31:35] we

know that the faculty members that are really doing it well.

So, this [00:31:40] enabled us to go in and see who are those professors that are just killing [00:31:45] it.

So, that we can now take our students and put

them in that direction [00:31:50] instead of what we're doing before.

Just like this is open go here,

just because it's open and we [00:31:55] don't know what experience that students is going to get.

Being a community college we're full of adjuncts.

Most [00:32:00] of them are wonderful.

But sometimes you have some that are a little bit funny.

Now, we can go in [00:32:05] and really see what the course looks like and make sure that

students experience [00:32:10] is almost 100 percent going to be a good one.

[00:32:15] Is it over now? Is the-

In consent decree? No.

No, it is [00:32:20] not.

No. We still have, what do we got left?

We got some time left on it.

[00:32:25] I think it's just the progress,

this is going to continue.

That's the [00:32:30] way too much new technologies are way

too much variation in dissemination of information,

[00:32:35] where accessibility is always going to have to be

thought of when you're creating [00:32:40] content and when you're bringing content in.

It's never going to go away.

So, we have to stay up [00:32:45] to date now for all the new stuff that's coming in.

So, there's a lot of work to be done.

[00:32:50] But as far as the legal hammer,

that's still over your head [00:32:55] in a way?

Yes, like the deadline that loomed for so

long [00:33:00] of all content has to be 100 percent accessible by a certain date,

that passed last summer.

[00:33:05] So, we are past that now but we still

have facets of it that [00:33:10] is still ongoing for a little easier.

Because you are right. I mean it's always [00:33:15] going to be there, right?

It's always a journey, right?

That inclusive learning [00:33:20] they say it's not a destination, it is a journey,

and it's something you'll always work [00:33:25] on.

Well, I think the most important part over the consent decree, right?

When everybody thinks about consent [00:33:30] decree they think about lawsuit,

they think about things that have to get done right away.

But what the consent [00:33:35] decree really did was it highlighted

ways that we can support our students that we were [00:33:40] not doing prior.

We were offering a lot of services.

That's not why [00:33:45] the consent decree came about,

it was because there were certain little areas that we weren't [00:33:50] offering support in.

So, we were able to really analyze

those areas and [00:33:55] strengthen them, and that's what we've done.

So, we're taking proactive approaches because of that and we'll [00:34:00] continue to do that.

I think, and I'm not sure if this was mentioned,

but I think one of the great [00:34:05] things about the consent decree is

it's allocation of resources, right?

So, you have [00:34:10] something like this that we're now legally bound to do, which I stand by.

I think the consent [00:34:15] decree is a great thing.

I think it's enabled us do a lot of really good work,

but with that comes [00:34:20] an allocation of resources,

with that comes the ability to go to conferences,

[00:34:25] to be able to write grants, to do these things,

to be able to bolster the program and get the technology we need.

[00:34:30] Not just with Blackboard Ally but being able to get the right magnifiers,

being able to get the right [00:34:35] equipment,

the right everything and be able to have an ability to [00:34:40] pay for it,

which I think that's been huge for us.

It's being able to [00:34:45] use that added resources and really figure out a way out.

[00:34:50] It's very rare that you get the ability to build a program from scratch and say [00:34:55] like,

"Here's this document, build a program around this document."

So, [00:35:00] it's a unique position to be in and we really took

full advantage of it across [00:35:05] the board.

The other two amazing resources we did get out of the consent decree is Mike

[00:35:10] and Chad.

Whereas Mike actually was in

Atlantic Cape before and Chad was part [00:35:15] of instructional technology,

but the roles they have here now have [00:35:20] changed the Atlantic Cape

forever in a positive way and have [00:35:25] just really opened up everybody's eyes.

They have been [00:35:30] the vehicles by which

they had directed the change of the culture here at Atlanta [00:35:35] Cape.

I think by breaking down the silos that had existed [00:35:40] across campus for so

long and really being able to work so closely with them, instructional [00:35:45] technology,

that's just been a perfect partnership in that [00:35:50] we're able to work seamlessly

together on projects where it's not just [00:35:55] we're off

doing our thing and then we're on Step 10 and we go,

"Hey, [00:36:00] what do you think about this?"

And like, "I've been doing this too.

Why don't we." So, our [00:36:05] efforts have been combined from the jump.

Then not only just with [00:36:10] instructional technology but

working with the academic side of the college, with purchasing,

with [00:36:15] every area and every facet

of the college being able to make sure [00:36:20] that it's accessible.

So, for instance the college isn't

purchasing any [00:36:25] kind of electronic technology without our approval,

without it being completely vetted through [00:36:30] the center for accessibility.

So, we're not even buying anything that we know is inaccessible now,

[00:36:35] whereas before we just like, "Go ahead and buy it."

Now we're able to go in and look at it and feel like if this is

an accessible [00:36:40] product we're not buying it, right?

We have the ability to [00:36:45] approve or deny all those things which I think is huge.

We've been able to [00:36:50] include a lot in policy changes.

We've changed a lot of different policies now to

include [00:36:55] accessibility within those policies now.

So,-

Absolutely.

[00:37:00] When I see that we've rebuilt the whole thing and we got rid of

every policy and [00:37:05] procedure and we rewrote everything.

We just went and we found different institutions that were doing [00:37:10] it

right and we just adopted things that other people had [00:37:15] done that worked.

We took things that we were doing that worked and we built this

around best [00:37:20] practices from all over the place,

and then realized that we could create our own philosophy, [00:37:25] right?

We looked at our population of students.

It's a unique community college.

[00:37:30] We service students [00:37:35] in the community and a lot of our students are on the fringe,

even if you take the disability [00:37:40] completely out of it.

Even to walk in the front door is a huge success.

So, what [00:37:45] could we do from an accessibility standpoint to be able to

scaffold these students and [00:37:50] to be able to make them feel like they can be successful?

[00:37:55] We've built a program around that.

Also, [00:38:00] we want to get what we do without the team that's here,

without the culture of the institution stepping [00:38:05] in and allowing us to build this thing.

I think [00:38:10] by large it's been pretty successful thus far.

You were talking about student success and the benefits [00:38:15] for all students and

I shared with you all your alternative format downloads recently.

[00:38:20] It sounds like people are pretty excited to hear that number.

They're very excited because you know what?

That's [00:38:25] a part of Ally that our faculty don't really think about a whole lot.

[00:38:30] Because they think about the indicators and do I have green or red whatever,

but they don't really [00:38:35] think about the fact that now

their content isn't just like that one accessible file [00:38:40] they put up there,

but now there's several other ways that students can

also get this content [00:38:45] in a way that they never could before.

That just makes their life,

their [00:38:50] learning experience a better one.

You were speaking to that [00:38:55] point earlier Chad,

about broadening the conversation to that UDL,

[00:39:00] thinking about the usability of the course and opening up a lot of those principles.

Do [00:39:05] you want to talk about maybe what you see as you all move further down the road here?

[00:39:10] Well, we're definitely focused more on universal design.

There's a lot of different aspects to universal [00:39:15] design

but just the organization structure to the course.

It's [00:39:20] extremely beneficial for student success,

but I think what we're finding too is how faculty [00:39:25] member can actually have

a dialogue with students about certain things that they never knew before.

So, [00:39:30] we have a student in your class that relies on a screen reader.

We have a faculty member now saying,

"I know what screen [00:39:35] reader is" I'm aware of

that tool and I can build contents so that that will work that way.

[00:39:40] So that's a huge benefit.

That's one of the big changes that we're seeing that

actual conversations [00:39:45] that are happening.

Prior to this, you probably said I don't know what a screen reader is.

So go [00:39:50] see disability support services and

get a combination of something while now it's like, "No, we can work [00:39:55] with that.

As a matter of fact, there's an alternative versions right here in blackboard.

Let me show you. Click this button" type of deal.

[00:40:00] So, faculty are definitely more

open to discussing these type [00:40:05] of things with their students.

There is a lot of dialogue, which is good.

Yeah. I'll just point out prior [00:40:10] to this whole thing,

the word accessibility was not required in syllabus.

[00:40:15] So, it wasn't really a thing that a student

even had the opportunity to bring up with their instructor.

[00:40:20] One of the first policy changes you guys can correct me and all

that is that there had to be [00:40:25] a little blurb in every syllabus thing.

"Hey, we have these resources available,

here's the contact [00:40:30] information to reach out for that."

Part of that is now with the very first class.

You [00:40:35] hand out the syllabus. Hey, it's right there in writing.

If the student was curious about something,

they can bring it up with their [00:40:40] instructor or they can just

go straight to CFA to take care of it.

That's part of the reasons [00:40:45] when we rebuilt the program, we rebranded it.

It was for years,

it was disability [00:40:50] support services.

So, the first thing that we did was we took that out and

threw it away and changed [00:40:55] it to the Center for Accessibility.

That's at the bare bones.

That's what we do, [00:41:00] is we make

things accessible for students not distractions with disabilities.

So statements like [00:41:05] that on the syllabus,

we were able to do that and link that directly back to

an office instead [00:41:10] of just being just random statement.

Any other policy [00:41:15] things that you wanted to mention,

any other things that you instituted you thought were

pretty effective [00:41:20] and in creating that culture shift?

I'm sure a lot of other institutions would love to hear about.

Well, [00:41:25] we did the 90 percent green.

I don't know if you want to mention that, [00:41:30] but yeah.

Yeah, we did have a goal or challenge.

You emphasize 90 [00:41:35] percent and you say that we're had a standard that we were looking for.

Right, that the Office of Academic [00:41:40] Affairs put out,

where they told faculty,

they wanted [00:41:45] everybody to strive towards

a 100 percent accessibility but they really wouldn't accept anything [00:41:50] below 90 percent.

So as a result of that,

[00:41:55] we had Josh here develop a way to extract the data that the Deans [00:42:00] actually

look at the accessibility of all of our active courses on [00:42:05] a weekly basis.

Anybody that dips below that number gets [00:42:10] an email from the Dean,

"Hey, there's something going on in your course.

[00:42:15] Did you upload some new content that you need help with?

We have these resources.

[00:42:20] Do you have it in an alternative format we're not aware of?

If so, let us know [00:42:25] so we're aware."

So, that definitely was huge [00:42:30] in our success.

Again, that's administration support.

You need [00:42:35] the backbone.

You need the muscle from the top and you need the workers

[00:42:40] from the bottom to have that perfect success I think.

Absolutely.

[00:42:45] I mean, not this isn't specific to Ally,

but one of the things that we [00:42:50] implemented that I think we've seen a big success on is,

being a community college we see [00:42:55] a lot of older students.

Like a lot of institutions that [00:43:00] we are one of them in order to receive accommodations,

we have to provide documentation [00:43:05] of your disability.

We were only accepting documentation that was,

[00:43:10] less than five years old.

So, [00:43:15] and making students go if it was older than five years,

they can go out and get re-evaluated,

[00:43:20] at their own cost.

I've seen most institutions are

doing this but when I was [00:43:25] going or going through regarding this,

we realized we don't, we really have to do that.

We don't really have to have [00:43:30] this barrier so,

it's kind of the idea for five of the students has documentation that [00:43:35] they have

autism but the documentation is from 2010.

There's a really [00:43:40] good chance they still have autism,

and what kind of a barrier am I putting in place now for the student [00:43:45] saying, oh great,

I have this IEP from high school,

that says you have autism,

[00:43:50] but it's not, we can't take it anymore.

So, I'm going to need you [00:43:55] to go out and spend

a thousand bucks to get re-evaluated to tell me something that I already know.

We [00:44:00] threw out the window, we got rid of it.

So, as always we get something from a licensed [00:44:05] professional,

we're going to take it and we're going to work with

every student also comes [00:44:10] in and meets with us.

So, we don't really

[00:44:15] go on the days where a student just sends off a piece of documentation,

we give them accommodation.

[00:44:20] They come in and we come up with

an individualized plan and if their plan involves accessibility [00:44:25] and technology,

they're going to go and meet with Chad and develop

an individual technology [00:44:30] plan

to be able to suit them and this is, we're in high schools now.

So we're talking to [00:44:35] kids or juniors in high school now,

that identified Atlantic Cape is the place that they're going to come.

We're working [00:44:40] with them now,

on technology plans, still in high school.

So, trying to get this technology [00:44:45] in their hands now,

so that when they come to Atlantic Cape,

they're proficient [00:44:50] in the use of that technology already.

So, we're really dialing it back.

So, we [00:44:55] know for instance like how many visually impaired students,

how many deaf students [00:45:00] are in our catchment area that may

possibly come to Atlantic Cape at some point over [00:45:05] the next five years.

So we're ready, and they know that we have a resource here.

They also come on [00:45:10] campus.

You don't have to be a student here to come in

and talk with us and learn about the resource,

learn what we can do, how [00:45:15] to support you irregardless of where you go to college.

So, I think it's been a good [00:45:20] success for us, policy wise.

It's our [00:45:25] policy wise but one of the new Blackboard Ally tools that we are

actually or [00:45:30] abilities that we are using is,

we had to develop or Mike [00:45:35] developed a form that students could click on and

fill out if they do happen [00:45:40] to go through

their Blackboard course and find a piece of content that wasn't accessible.

They could [00:45:45] click on that link and it takes them to a form,

then goes to Chad and Mike so they can help [00:45:50] the professor

identify what the content is and make it more accessible.

We were able to use that new [00:45:55] feature,

where you could include

that automatic help feedback to the student to [00:46:00] put in a direct link to that form.

So as the student clicks on the piece of content and [00:46:05] that's not

working for them and they go through

the alternative formats and they're not working for them,

then right [00:46:10] there, they're taken to the form that goes straight to those guys

to help them to get [00:46:15] their content in a format that's actually going to work for them.

Very cool. [00:46:20] Any closing thoughts?

You want me to expand just a minute [00:46:25] longer,

I know because you wanted some stuff on universal design.

Where we're at though in terms [00:46:30] of training,

we did a lot of training for accessibility,

meaning you can use an automated [00:46:35] tool to see if something is accessible,

just like Blackboard Ally.

So, our faculty [00:46:40] really understand

what accessibility is and how to make something compliant.

But now, [00:46:45] we're trying to educate them a little bit more on usability and

why we're doing the things that we're doing [00:46:50] for student success.

The student experience side of it.

So that's what we're catering towards [00:46:55] our workshops now,

in the future, adjusting [00:47:00] to that.

So, in other words you can run a document through an accessibility checker and get

the green light [00:47:05] because

the accessibility checker might say that you have alternative text on an image,

but [00:47:10] is the alternative text good for the context of the lesson?

Is it really [00:47:15] a quality alternative text.

So that's where the conversation is heading now at our [00:47:20] school,

quality in universal front.

Let me as one challenge question,

while I read [00:47:25] this one back in at another part.

But as far as you mentioned some faculty,

[00:47:30] because I've heard this one before,

some faculty saying I'm going to yank

my content out of there so that [00:47:35] it doesn't get checked.

What's been the strategies in trying to address that?

Do you see [00:47:40] that starting to change a little as they see

other faculty get green and feel more comfortable [00:47:45] with it?

No, yeah. Number one,

our message from our departments and we do

workshops is never ever [00:47:50] pull content down like that.

That's not the way this institution operates,

and that's not [00:47:55] the way we're trying to operate.

That's really not an option.

The option is to identify [00:48:00] where the barriers are,

the struggles for accessibility and reach out to

the support circles in order come [00:48:05] up with a resolution.

So, if we keep doing that rhetoric,

then [00:48:10] that's what's going to happen.

If we have a rhetoric of take it down,

it can to make excessive of work.

It's too hard, [00:48:15] don't worry about it,

then that's the result you're going to get.

So, we're not really looking at that result.

We don't [00:48:20] say that rhetoric.

We don't, we try to do,

push them [00:48:25] in the positive direction of trying to,

we absorb the challenges,

we look forward to a [00:48:30] challenge and try to come up with a solution for it, so.

I think a lot of it too is just [00:48:35] having real talk with

faculty members and just when we're noticing that [00:48:40] content's removed,

the content's not reflective [00:48:45] of the course,

having blatant purposeful conversations

with that faculty [00:48:50] member and just trying to figure out why,

figuring out what's the rationale [00:48:55] behind it.

Then, just taking things from there,

just realizing what like Chad [00:49:00] had said it's not the culture of the institution.

We've been collectively working really hard for [00:49:05] a long time

to build this culture and that's counter to what that culture is and

what the [00:49:10] mission of the college and the Center for Accessibility and all of

the other offices [00:49:15] and it's not acceptable and it's kind won't be tolerated.

[00:49:20] We do have the support of,

[00:49:25] all the way up to make sure that this stuff happens.

[00:49:30] But I think communication and real talk and just making sure

that [00:49:35] once people I think realize how non-difficult [00:49:40] it is,

that's when we start to see that shift.

So I think, having those conversations and not [00:49:45] sort

of beating around the bush so to speakers, is really important.

And you said the examples.

[00:49:50] I mean we have examples in classes about how this was made accessible.

Well, I [00:49:55] don't know how to make that. Is it possible to do that?

I say, "No hold on, let me show you."

Exactly.

We have different ways of doing it.

We've done [00:50:00] it over here this way,

maybe you can implement that.

When they see that their peers are [00:50:05] able to do

it and maybe they think outside the box a little bit,

to get it done, [00:50:10] that's the direction that we push people in.

It's a bit of a strange statement because when

[00:50:15] you're saying I'm going to pull my content down,

you're basically saying I don't want to give my students the ability to learn this.

So, it's [00:50:20] an odd starting point for something like that to say that.

I'm going to remove resources from [00:50:25] my students, then okay.

I mean, if that's going [00:50:30] to be your starting point as a teacher,

you probably have other things you got to look at.

Yeah.

[00:50:35] All right. That's a wrap.

Wow. [00:50:40] Hearing from the team in Atlantic Cape,

I mean what an amazing, amazing story.

[00:50:45] They deserve major kudos for leading their campus and really

turning a tough situation [00:50:50] into a triumph for inclusive learning.

So next stop, we'll be [00:50:55] continuing on the northeast leg of the tour

with visits to William Paterson University [00:51:00] from the University of Connecticut.

Until then, good luck on your road to IncluCity.

[00:51:05] Join the tour along with the rest of the Ally [00:51:10] community at tour.ally.ac.

You can catch the latest updates on [00:51:15] Instagram and Twitter at #AllyTour2019 and

listen to stories of inclusion [00:51:20] from our community champions

on the Ally Tour 2019 podcast series,

[00:51:25] available on SoundCloud or in your favorite podcast app.

We'll look forward to seeing [00:51:30] you at the next stop on the road to IncluCity.