

Week 7 in class activity- Website Accessibility Critique

Room2

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Selected Accessibility User Type: Users with Visual Impairments

Definition and Needs of Visually Impaired Users

Users with visual impairments include individuals who are:

- **Blind** and rely on screen readers such as JAWS, NVDA, or VoiceOver.
- **Low vision** and may use screen magnification, high-contrast settings, or large text.
- **Color-blind** and require sufficient contrast between text and background elements.

Key Accessibility Requirements

- **Screen Reader Compatibility** – The website should provide appropriate ARIA labels and semantic HTML to ensure full compatibility with screen readers.
- **Keyboard Navigation** – Users should be able to navigate the website using only a keyboard.
- **High Contrast and Readability** – Text and background colors should meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) contrast ratios.
- **Alternative Text for Images** – All images should have descriptive alternative text for screen readers.
- **Clear Focus Indicators** – Visual indicators should be provided to help keyboard users track their navigation.
- **Easy-to-use Motor Control** – Avoidance of elements that require fine motor control

Accessibility Issues Identified

Issue 1: Lack of Proper Screen Reader Support

- Several interactive elements, such as buttons and links, do not have ARIA labels, making them inaccessible to screen readers.
- Certain form fields are missing associated labels, preventing screen readers from providing meaningful descriptions.

Issue 2: Poor Keyboard Navigation

- Some dropdown menus and navigation elements are not accessible via keyboard controls.
- The tab order is not logically structured, leading to confusion when navigating without a mouse.

Issue 3: Low Contrast Between Text and Background

- Certain sections of the website feature low contrast between text and background colors, making content difficult to read for users with low vision.
- Links and buttons are not sufficiently distinguishable from surrounding text.

Issue 4: Missing Alternative Text for Images

- Many images, including banners and icons, lack appropriate alternative text, rendering them inaccessible to users relying on screen readers.

Recommendations

To improve the accessibility of the UNC Charlotte Admissions & Financial Aid website for users with visual impairments, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Screen Reader Compatibility

- Add descriptive alt text to all images, including the banner image and icons.
- Provide descriptive labels for buttons and links (e.g., "Apply Now for Undergraduate Admissions" instead of "Apply Now").
- Use meaningful link text that describes the destination (e.g., "Learn More About Financial Aid" instead of "Learn More").

2. Keyboard Navigation

- Ensure all dropdown menus and interactive elements are accessible via the keyboard.
- Add visible focus indicators to buttons, links, and form fields to help keyboard users track their position.

3. Color Contrast

- Increase the contrast ratio for text elements to meet WCAG standards.
- Supplement color-only indicators with text or icons to ensure accessibility for users with color blindness.

4. Heading Structure

- Use proper heading tags (H1, H2, H3) to structure the content logically.
- Ensure the heading hierarchy is consistent and does not skip levels.

5. Forms and Interactive Elements

- Add descriptive labels to all form fields, including the search bar.
- Ensure error messages are communicated clearly to screen reader users, both visually and audibly.

6. Mobile Phone Access

- When I tried to use Voice Assistant on my mobile phone to access the website, it is even harder to use.
- Avoidance of elements that require fine motor control, especially some important buttons, “Go to the financial aid website to get started” and “Start here”.
- Make buttons and icons large enough for visually impaired users to easily click on.