

# Alliance-NWACC Joint Accessibility Working Group Survey Report

## Introduction

The Orbis Cascade Alliance (Alliance) and Northwest Academic Computing Consortium (NWACC) are working together to further our common goal of ensuring that digital resources and services are accessible to our users. A joint Accessibility Working Group (AWG) was formed to develop collaborative activities related to support for digital accessibility. The overarching goal identified by the AWG is to **foster regional collaboration and information exchange among our member institutions.**

The purpose of the accessibility survey is to gauge priorities for collaborative activities, and gather information about resources and expertise that institutions may be able to share. The survey was distributed to member CIOs and Library Deans/Directors in March 2019. Because responsibility for digital accessibility is highly distributed in our institutions, recipients were encouraged to distribute the survey widely and solicit as many responses as possible.

167 individuals from 35 member institutions responded to the survey, representing a wide variety of institutions and organizational units. Most respondents play multiple roles in supporting accessibility at their institutions, including direct support for people with accessibility needs, creating accessible web resources, working with vendors and contracts to ensure accessibility standards are met, and generally working to ensure regulatory compliance. Accessibility support roles do vary, depending on the organizational division of the respondent, but there is substantial overlap in the top five responses.

Nearly half of the respondents identified understanding accessibility best practices as one of their top three institutional priorities. Other high priorities include raising awareness & educating the community, collaborating across institutional departments, understanding evolving compliance requirements, and helping faculty provide accessible resources. Again the survey reveals some variations in how people perceive institutional priorities, but overall there is substantial commonality across constituencies.

Going forward there is considerable enthusiasm for participating in collaborative activities to help us all better support accessibility in our institutions. Respondents generally favor online activities such as webinars and a shared repository of policies and best practices, though short face to face events would also be appreciated. Furthermore, 36 individuals across a wide variety of institutions and roles volunteered to participate in the Accessibility Working Group and help develop future regional and collaborative activities.

## Accessibility Survey Respondents

167 Individuals from 35 Alliance and NWACC institutions responded to the survey, representing 76% of the total combined membership (46 institutions). Institutions were encouraged to submit multiple responses from different perspectives; the number of responses per institution ranged from one to 18.

70% of respondents are from public institutions, and 30% are from private. The largest number of responses came from master's institutions (32%), followed by Doctoral institutions (26%).

**Table 1. Survey responses by Carnegie Classification**

<b>Carnegie Classification</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Response Percentage</b>
Masters	53	32%
Doctoral	44	26%
Baccalaureate	30	18%
Doctoral/Professional	17	10%
Medical	6	4%
Baccalaureate/Associates	6	4%
Special Focus Four-Year	2	1%

The largest group of responses came from staff in the Library (42%), followed by IT/Academic Technology (19%), Academic Affairs (18%), and Student Services (10%). Note that some staff with dual appointments are counted in both roles.

The "Other" category reflected a wide variety of organizational roles, including Admission, Communications, Diversity & Inclusion, Instructors, Procurement, and Research Services.

**Table 2. Survey responses by organizational division of respondent**

<b>Organizational Division</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Response Percentage</b>
Library	70	42%
IT/Academic Technology	32	19%
Academic Affairs	30	18%
Other	27	16%
Student Services	17	10%

The survey asked each person to identify all the roles they play in supporting accessibility at their institution. Most respondents play a variety of support functions, averaging three different roles per person. Overall, the top three support roles are *Creating public websites that are accessible (39%)*, *Overseeing staff who provide accessible resources and services (37%)*, and *Working directly with students with accessibility needs (35%)*.

**Table 3. Accessibility support roles of respondents (top five responses)**

Accessibility Support Role	Number of Responses	Response Percentage
Create public web sites that are accessible	64	39%
Oversee staff who provide accessible resources and services	60	37%
Work directly with students with accessibility needs	57	35%
Work with vendors and contracts to ensure accessibility standards are met	55	34%
Ensure institutional compliance with accessibility regulations (state and federal)	55	34%

However, when we break out support functions by Organizational Division of the respondent, we find that staff from different departments play somewhat different roles in supporting accessibility.

**Table 4. Top three accessibility support roles by organizational division of respondent**

Accessibility Support Role	Academic Affairs	IT/Academic Technology	Library	Student Services
Work directly with students with accessibility needs	3 <sup>rd</sup> (30%)	--	2 <sup>nd</sup> (37%)	1 <sup>st</sup> (65%)
Oversee staff who provide accessible resources	1 <sup>st</sup> (47%)	2 <sup>nd</sup> (50%)	--	2 <sup>nd</sup> (53%)
Work with vendors to ensure accessibility standards are met	--	1 <sup>st</sup> (53%)	3 <sup>rd</sup> (36%)	--
Create public web sites that are accessible	--	3 <sup>rd</sup> (41%)	1 <sup>st</sup> (50%)	--
Ensure institutional compliance with accessibility regulations	2 <sup>nd</sup> (40%)	3 <sup>rd</sup> (41%)	--	3 <sup>rd</sup> (47%)

As shown in Table 4, respondents who work in Student Services are most likely to work directly with students with accessibility needs (65%), while people who work in Academic Affairs are

most likely to oversee staff who provide accessible resources (47%). IT and Academic Technologists are most likely to work with vendors and contracts to ensure that accessibility standards are met (53%) while respondents from Libraries are most likely to create public web sites that are accessible (50%). Despite these differences, there is substantial overlap across constituencies in the roles they play to support accessibility.

## Institutional Priorities

The survey asked people to identify the top three institutional priorities for supporting accessibility of digital content, systems, and services. The table below shows the five priorities that received the most top three votes. Overall, *understanding accessibility best practices in higher education* (49%) received the most top three votes, as well as the most number-one votes.

**Table 5. Top three institutional priorities for supporting accessibility at your institution (top five responses)**

Institutional Priorities for Supporting accessibility	Number of Responses	Response Percentage
Understanding accessibility best practices in higher education	82	49%
Raising awareness & educating the community about accessibility needs	65	39%
Collaborating across institutional departments to support accessibility	63	38%
Understanding evolving compliance requirements (institutional, state, federal)	62	37%
Helping faculty provide accessible course resources	54	32%

When analyzed by Organizational Division, there are some variations in perceived priorities:

- Individuals from IT/Academic Technology prioritized *Raising awareness & educating the community about accessibility needs* (56%), followed by *Collaborating across institutional departments to support accessibility* (50%)
- Respondents who work in Student Services placed the greatest emphasis on *Helping faculty provide accessible course resources* (65%).
- Library staff are the only ones who ranked *Working with vendors to ensure accessibility standards are met* (47%) in their top 3 institutional priorities, even though IT/Academic Technology staff are more likely to be involved in working with vendors and contracts.

**Table 6. Top three institutional priorities by organizational division of respondent**

<b>Institutional Priorities for Supporting Accessibility</b>	<b>Academic Affairs</b>	<b>IT/Academic Technology</b>	<b>Library</b>	<b>Student Services</b>
Understanding evolving compliance requirements	--	3 <sup>rd</sup> (41%)	3 <sup>rd</sup> (44%)	2 <sup>nd</sup> (41%)
Understanding accessibility best practices in higher education	1 <sup>st</sup> (63%)	--	1 <sup>st</sup> (49%)	3 <sup>rd</sup> (37%)
Raising awareness & educating the community about accessibility needs	3 <sup>rd</sup> (43%)	1 <sup>st</sup> (56%)	--	--
Collaborating across institutional departments to support accessibility	--	2 <sup>nd</sup> (50%)	--	--
Helping faculty provide accessible course resources	2 <sup>nd</sup> (53%)	--	--	1 <sup>st</sup> (65%)
Working with vendors to ensure accessibility standards are met	--	--	2 <sup>nd</sup> (47%)	--

## Potential Collaborative Activities

The survey asked what types of collaborative activities would help them improve digital accessibility at their institution. Overall, respondents favor online resources such as virtual meetings and webinars (72%) and an online knowledge base or repository of policies and best practices (67%). Face to face workshop and meeting are favored if they are short - one day long or less (63%).

**Table 7. Types of collaborative activities and resources that would help you improve accessibility at your institution (top five responses)**

<b>Collaborative Activities and Resources</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Response Percentage</b>
Virtual meetings or webinars on specific accessibility topics	118	72%
Online knowledge base or repository of institutional policies and best practices	109	67%
Short face to face workshops (1-day long or less)	102	63%
Institutional self-assessment tools/maturity index	86	53%
Online community of accessibility support professionals (e.g. listserv chat space blogs)	81	50%

Preferences for collaborative activities are remarkably consistent across constituencies, with the exception that IT/Academic Technologists placed a higher value on institutional self-assessment tools than all the other constituencies.

Several respondents offered additional suggestions for collaborative activities, such as:

- Guidance on which accessibility issues to prioritize based on impact
- Publisher self-assessments of their tools and textbook accessibility
- Model contract language
- Online, self-paced trainings for various technologies employed by the university
- Evaluation (like a consumer report) of accessibility of large information providers (e.g., textbook publishers)

## Contributing to Collaborative Activities

The survey asked what types of resources and expertise people might be able to contribute to a regional and collaborative accessibility initiative, with options reflecting a range of investment and time commitment. Overall, 110 individuals (66%) expressed an interest in participating in future activities to support digital accessibility.

**Table 8. Types of accessibility expertise and resources could contribute (top five responses)**

Types of expertise and resources	Number of Responses	Response Percentage
Participate in a face to face workshop or conference	71	65%
Provide institutional policies for a knowledge base	52	47%
Participate in planning and program development for collaborative accessibility projects	42	38%
Present at a face to face workshop or conference	29	26%
Provide an online session on an accessibility topic	28	25%

Additionally, 36 individuals across a wide variety of organizational units provided contact information and volunteered to participate in the Accessibility Working Group.

Report Prepared for the Joint Accessibility Working Group, July 2019

- Marianne Colgrove, Reed College - NWACC (co-coordinator)
- Gloria Doherty, George Fox University - Alliance
- Ann Harris, University of Portland - NWACC
- Kun Lin, Whitman College - Alliance (co-coordinator)
- Sasi Pillay, Washington State University – NWACC

# Appendix I. Survey Text and Response Choices

## **Title: Collaborating to improve accessibility of digital resources on campus**

**Introduction:** Accessibility of digital resources, services, systems, learning technologies, and curricular and scholarly resources is an important concern higher education. The Orbis Cascade Alliance (Alliance) and the Northwest Academic Computing Consortium (NWACC) are working together to identify ways we can collaborate to ensure that digital resources and services are accessible to our users.

The joint Alliance & NWACC Accessibility Working Group (AWG) needs your input to gauge needs and priorities for collaborative accessibility activities, and to gather information about resources and expertise that institutions may be able to share.

This survey is being distributed to Alliance Deans & Directors and NWACC CIOs. Please distribute it to all individuals who play a role in providing accessibility support at your institution - multiple responses are encouraged!

Institutional responses will be shared with the appropriate Alliance and NWACC representatives. Aggregate response data will be used by the AWG to develop recommendations for programs and projects.

Please submit the survey by April 15, 2019.

Thank you!  
Alliance-NWACC Accessibility Working Group

### **Questions:**

- Institution Name (menu)
- Your Title (text)
- Your Department (text)
- Organizationally, where does your department reside? (menu)
  - Academic Affairs
  - Admission/Enrollment Management
  - Advancement
  - Communications
  - Diversity & Inclusion
  - Finance & Administration
  - Information Technology
  - Library
  - President's Office
  - Research Services
  - Student Services

- Other
- What is your role in supporting accessibility of digital content, systems, and services at your institution? (check all that apply)
  - Work directly with students with accessibility needs
  - Work directly with employees with accessibility needs
  - Review requests for accessibility services and identify accommodations
  - Support others who provide accessible resources and services (e.g, help create accessible resources, provide guidance on accessibility best practices)
  - Oversee staff who provide accessible resources and services
  - Work with vendors and contracts to ensure accessibility standards are met
  - Create public web sites that are accessible
  - Create accessible resources for courses (e.g., resources in learning management system, syllabus, course content)
  - Create accessible resources for "ad hoc" student resource requests (e.g., journal articles, texts, media)
  - Ensure institutional compliance with accessibility regulations (state and federal)
  - Other
- What do you think are the top three institutional priorities in supporting accessibility of digital content, systems, and services? (Pick 3) (grid)
  - Understanding evolving compliance requirements (institutional, state, federal)
  - Understanding accessibility best practices in higher education
  - Raising awareness & educating the community about accessibility needs
  - Collaborating across institutional departments to support accessibility
  - Helping faculty provide accessible course resources
  - Working with vendors to ensure systems and resources are accessible
  - Meeting accessibility requirements for "ad hoc" resource requests (e.g., journal articles, texts, media)
  - Ensuring website accessibility
  - Ensuring accessibility of online forms and/or interactive systems
  - Funding for accessibility support services and resources
  - Other
- What types of collaborative activities and resources would help you improve accessibility at your institution? (check all that apply)
  - Virtual meetings or webinars on specific accessibility topics
  - Short face to face workshops (1-day long or less)
  - Longer face to face conferences (multiple days)
  - Accessibility sessions in the context of other Alliance or NWACC events (e.g., Academic Technology Round Table, Special Topics)
  - Online knowledge base or repository of institutional policies and best practices
  - Institutional self-assessment tools/maturity index



- Online community of accessibility support professionals (e.g., listserv, chat space, blogs)
  - Other
- What types of accessibility expertise and resources would you be able to contribute? (check all that apply)
  - Participate in planning and program development for collaborative accessibility projects
  - Provide an online session on an accessibility topic
  - Present at a face to face workshop or conference
  - Participate in a face to face workshop or conference
  - Provide institutional policies for a knowledge base
  - Provide institutional resources or best practices for a knowledge base
  - Provide ad hoc consultation for other Alliance and NWACC members
  - Participate in site visits to provide accessibility consultation to Alliance and NWACC members
  - Other
- Any other suggestions for collaborative activities that would help you better meet accessibility needs at your institution? (text)
- Would you like to participate in the accessibility working group? If so, please provide your name and contact information. Thanks! (text)

## Appendix II. Accessibility survey email invitation

To: All NWACC and Orbis Cascade Alliance Council Members,  
From: Alliance-NWACC Accessibility Working Group  
Subject: Reminder - Alliance-NWACC Collaboration to Improve Digital Accessibility

Dear Library Deans/Directors and NWACC CIOs,

The Orbis Cascade Alliance and Northwest Academic Computing Consortium are working together to further our common goal of ensuring that digital resources and services are accessible to our users.

The joint Accessibility Working Group (AWG) was formed to develop collaborative activities related to support for accessibility of digital resources. To better inform our work, we need to hear from you! What are your highest priorities in supporting accessibility on your campus, and what collaborative activities would most help you?

The Accessibility Working Group Survey will help the us gauge priorities for collaborative activities, and gather information about resources and expertise that institutions may be able to share.

**Please distribute the survey to all individuals who play a role in providing accessibility support at your institution - multiple responses are encouraged!**

**Accessibility Working Group Survey [link]  
Survey deadline: April 15, 2019**

Institutional responses will be shared with the appropriate Alliance and NWACC representatives for each institution. Aggregate response data will be used by the AWG to develop recommendations for programs and projects.

Thank you for your participation,

Joint Accessibility Working Group

Marianne Colgrove, Reed College - NWACC (co-coordinator)

Gloria Doherty, George Fox University - Alliance

Ann Harris, University of Portland - NWACC

Kun Lin, Whitman College - Alliance (co-coordinator)

Sasi Pillay, Washington State University – NWACC

## Appendix III. Alliance & NWACC Members and Respondents

### Alliance & NWACC Institutional Members and Survey Respondents

Institution	Alliance member	NWACC member	Survey Response
Central Oregon Community College	x		x
Central Washington University	x	x	x
Chemeketa Community College	x		x
Clackamas Community College	x		
Clark College	x	x	x
Concordia University	x		x
Eastern Oregon University	x		
Eastern Washington University	x	x	x
George Fox University	x	x	x
Gonzaga University		x	
Lane Community College	x		
Lewis & Clark College	x	x	x
Linfield College	x	x	x
Montana State University - Bozeman		x	x
Mt. Hood Community College	x		
North Dakota University System		x	
Oregon Health & Science University	x	x	x
Oregon Institute of Technology	x		x
Oregon State University	x	x	x
Pacific Lutheran University		x	x
Pacific University	x	x	x
Portland Community College	x	x	x
Portland State University	x	x	x

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Alliance member</b>	<b>NWACC member</b>	<b>Survey Response</b>
Reed College	x	x	x
Saint Martin's University	x		
Seattle Pacific University	x	x	
Seattle University	x	x	x
Southern Oregon University	x	x	x
The Evergreen State College	x	x	x
University of Alaska System		x	
University of Hawaii		x	x
University of Idaho	x	x	x
University of Montana		x	x
University of Oregon	x	x	x
University of Portland	x	x	x
University of Puget Sound	x	x	x
University of Washington	x	x	x
Walla Walla University	x		x
Warner Pacific University	x		
Washington State University	x	x	x
Western Oregon University	x		x
Western Washington University	x	x	x
Whitman College	x	x	x
Whitworth University	x		x
WICHE		x	
Willamette University	x	x	x