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Customer Spotlight

Hinds Community College

In a Nutshell

To change perceptions and get buy-in about the need to deliver accessibility to students, Hinds Community College is hosting courses for their faculty to educate them on inclusion. AST, a Verbit Company, and its specialized team and solutions for education are at the root of how accessible experiences are being offered at the college.

Here are some tales and success stories from **Tershuna Bass, Instructional Design Coordinator at Hinds Community College**, that run the gamut of how student inclusion is being both disregarded and approached currently, and how AST can help make a difference.

Q1: Why does access need to be considered highly?

A: “Accessibility is so important to any student. But having content that’s engaging is at the forefront of any college. People go to school to get an education. They need to be engaged in their instruction. They are our future leaders, so I want them engaged in the content, and I want it accessible for all.”

Q2: How did this course come about?

A: “It was a need. Teachers were creating content. Yes, it was good, but it was not accessible for all. I’m telling them the importance of accessibility, telling them about how we can potentially get sued and **students are now suing the teachers**. I made this course after there was a viral video of a teacher at another institution who was yelling at a student who was deaf in their Zoom class. I showed it to my DSS partner here. We were livid, and I knew something had to be done. In the Accessibility 101 training course, I talk about why it’s important what happens if you don’t comply.”



With over 20 different academic areas of study and 70 career and technical programs, there is something for everyone at Hinds Community College. Making these programs accessible is a high priority. Hinds Community College is a public community college with its main campus in Raymond, Mississippi and additional campuses in Jackson, Rankin, Utica and Vicksburg.

"We have a very diverse student body here. I know we have a lot of students with visible disabilities that I see around campus, but we also have a lot of students with invisible disabilities. I have a student who is half deaf and is blind. When they told me that they couldn't access information from a flyer, it was unacceptable. Then I started partnering with the DSS office here. We have meetings whenever they encounter students' frustrations, and I try to train my teachers so that they are addressing those issues before they even become a concern."

Q3: What are the legal implications to be aware of?

A: "We are in a consortium here in Mississippi with other community colleges. I had a phone call from another institution. A teacher was calling because their videos weren't captioned and they would be teaching a Hinds student. The Hinds student has a disability and they needed their videos captioned. They even went on to ask, whose responsibility is it? They said Hinds needed to caption their videos.

Anything you put online must be compliant, and it is the instructor's responsibility to ensure compliance. But since it was a Hinds student, and the class started in a week and they had over 33 videos, my institution, with Verbit, had their videos captioned because we didn't want it to affect our student. They really didn't think it was their responsibility for it to be compliant. I really wanted to explain their responsibility in compliance and make them understand not only the risk they are taking with their career, but also the negative impact it has on students with disabilities.

In my training course, I have a page called Accessibility Laws and Policies where I discuss Section 504 & 508 of the federal disability civil rights laws. I have a second page called Disability Laws in Higher Education where I show how Netflix got sued when they weren't captioning. I show all the legal cases."

Q4: What are some creative ways you're working to get instructor buy-in?

A: "We host events here, and we try to put the teacher in that student's predicament. We blindfold participants and have them listen to the screenreader so they can hear alternative text on or hear long web addresses read aloud. **Putting them in the shoes of a student with a visual impairment brings to light the need for ensuring accessibility in course content.** When they experience the inconvenience their students do, they are humbled. They begin to recognize the rationale behind adherence to ADA requirements."

Q5: What are some new ways that you're using AST, a Verbit Company?

A: Another reason why we love Verbit is recently we've been doing virtual convocation. Convocation is something that we have every semester where the president gives us the update on the college and important things we should know. They've been doing it virtually lately. We've had quick deadlines to turn the videos into interactive video quizzes.

Being able to get that 24-hour accurate turnaround from Verbit to get it closed captioned and not having to worry about that aspect of the process helps tremendously. It takes a lot of stress off of us. Not having to worry about the closed captioning piece is awesome, and that way, we don't have to irritate our Video Coordinator because they have to cut and edit the video.. We are comfortable saying, 'Take your time because when you get it, we only need 24 hours after that because Verbit will caption it for us.' I'm telling you guys we love you all. You all are lifesavers.

Q6: What effects are you seeing from accessibility and captioning efforts?

A: Personally I've seen retention instances have been better. When we close caption and make sure things are accessible across the board, we're appealing to all those learners, so you don't have the thought of a lawsuit coming any day now. But also, we retain those students because they're learning, and reading, not just listening.

"Students learn differently. Some people can listen. We have our auditory learners, but some people need to read for it to stick. Everything is a learning opportunity whether it's a student event, or a teacher-student classroom, any events. **We want the students to grasp the information; grasp it correctly, so that's why we always use Verbit because you guys are very accurate.**"

"Love, love Verbit! Love that they are accurate because in instruction, you are teaching future professionals, so what you say and what they read has to be accurate because that's how they will grasp it. Trust me, we tested it. I tried saying long uncommon words with my Southern accent, and it was so accurate. Getting that message across in the correct way is big."

Tershuna Bass,
Instructional Design Coordinator, Hinds Community College



Q7: How are you seeing accessibility technologies affect student learning outcomes overall?

A: "I'm big on accessibility such as captioning and everything because personally at home I don't have a disability when it comes to hearing, but I have captions on my Netflix all the time simply because people may have different dialects. It just helps me to understand or grasp what they say because they may have said it really fast.

Closed captions are so good not only for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, but they are also good because they benefit students who are **non-native English speakers, students with visual learning preferences, and they help with cognitive disabilities.** I'm so big on closed captioning for this reason as well."

Q8: What are your thoughts on transcripts and offering interactive transcription like AST's?

A: I love transcripts personally. I hyperlink the transcript to the words Alternative Text underneath each video or PowerPoint that I may have simply because, personally, I print out and refer to transcripts often. If I wonder where did someone talk about this topic instead of going through the video and having to fast forward to try and figure out where they talked about the topic, I can just refer to the transcript, find a keyword, and quickly identify the information I needed. I love transcripts.