An Interview with Scott Kupferman, College of Education

As part of ACCESS @ UCCS series

Interview Questions

1. **Why is ensuring access and inclusion for students with disabilities in the classroom important to you?**

In 2010, I was honored to join President Barack Obama at the White House for a celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA, along with other pieces of legislation like Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, prohibits discrimination and has led many more students with disabilities to pursue higher education. Despite progress being made, students with disabilities continue to experience lower retention and graduation rates compared to their peers without disabilities. In response, President Obama made an important point: We must not only meet but also exceed the law to make true change. Thus, as a member of our UCCS community, I have tried (and will continue to try) to create accessible and inclusive learning spaces, innovate and challenge our processes, and understand that disability is diversity rather than a problem to be solved.

2. **What steps have you taken in the classroom to improve accessibility in your courses?**

In an effort to improve student access, I have intentionally designed my courses to align with a universal design framework. A commonly used example of universal design is the sidewalk curb cut, whereby people pushing strollers, riding bikes, and others all benefit from the hard-won accessibility feature advocated for and by people with disabilities. Within an instructional context, universal design is represented in the captioning I embed within all videos. Though developed as an accommodation for people who are deaf, video captions also benefit students who are learning English as an additional language, students who want to stream videos without disturbing a roommate, or students who are experiencing audio/technical issues on their device. Another universal design example includes my use of text descriptions of images, such as charts and graphs. This effort is not just an accommodation for students who are blind. Rather, when I explain the key elements of a graph or a chart, the entire class better understands the image and why it is used...access, that is, is often directly connected to teaching and learning. If you are interested in learning more about universal design, I would encourage you to join the Faculty Resource Center's "Universal Design for Inclusive Teaching" course/badge: https://frc.uccs.edu/programs/instructional-development

3. **What is one piece of advice that you'd give to faculty to incorporate accessibility into their teaching practices?**

Incorporating accessibility into your teaching practices can appear cumbersome and time-consuming. Thus, I recommend that you start by making just one change. An example might be to ensure that you have enough color contrast in your PowerPoint slides by using a color contrast checker. If you would like to give it a try, please visit: https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/ …and enter the commonly used UCCS gold (Color Code: #cfb87c) as the foreground color and white (Color Code: #FFFFFF) as the background color. You will notice that this color combination fails to meet all accessibility requirements. The UCCS Faculty Resource Center has an in-depth resource page with additional accessibility-related strategies: https://frc.uccs.edu/teaching_resources/accessibility