To: CUNY IT Accessibility Task Force
    CUNY IT Steering Committee

Re: Strategic Technology Accessibility Initiative (STI) Funding Proposal

CUNY Online Faculty Accessibility Training: A Self-Paced Online Workshop on
Accessibility in Digital Teaching and Learning for CUNY Faculty

Summary
The CUNY School of Professional Studies (CUNY SPS) requests $9,000 from the Strategic
Technology Accessibility Initiative to support the development of an online, self-paced
workshop site for faculty that addresses accessibility in online education. This workshop
site is part of a larger plan to implement training on accessibility issues in online education
for faculty and staff across CUNY. The creation and implementation of this Blackboard
course, which will be made available to all CUNY campuses, will have an indirect but
significant benefit to students across the entire University.

Description
As CUNY expands its offerings in the realm of online education with an increasing number
of fully online, hybrid, and web-enhanced courses, the need for a University-wide approach
to making these courses accessible to all students—including students with disabilities—
has become apparent. Although students may still be supported by campus staff and
university resources, in the online learning environment, the individual instructor
ultimately mediates the accessibility of the course's design and materials. It is therefore
essential that CUNY faculty, as well as staff members who work with faculty or students,
receive sufficient training in the design of accessible course sites and the creation of
accessible course content. This will ensure equal access for all students to the full range of
instructional resources, without resorting to individual adjustments and accommodations
only after a student encounters a barrier to access.

Over the course of the last few months, the CUNY Accessibility Working Group has begun
assembling materials for a self-paced faculty workshop on accessibility in a Blackboard
organization site entitled CUNY Online Accessibility (organization ID:
QCC01_CUNY_Accessibility_Projects). This small, ad hoc committee is composed of
Blackboard administrators and assistive technology/disability services specialists from
several CUNY campuses, including CUNY SPS, Queensborough Community College, Bronx
Community College, New York City Tech, Baruch College, and Central Office (CIS).
Unfortunately, work on the site has been slow and intermittent due to time constraints of
the group members.
An organization site containing folders that outline the curriculum for the workshop has already been set up in Blackboard:

1. Introduction to Accessibility and Universal Design in Online Education
2. Blackboard Accessibility
3. Accessible Video Content in Online Courses
4. Accessible Word Documents
5. Accessible PDFs
6. Accessible Powerpoint Files
7. Accessible Excel Files

The self-paced workshop will also include an additional module for non-teaching staff members, including personnel working in student disability services, assistive technology, instructional technology, and information systems. This more technical section of the workshop will be designed to train staff members who support faculty in the use of specialized software and applications, as well as optimal utilization of the Blackboard learning management system.

Creation of the workshop content and implementation of faculty/staff training will happen in three successive phases:

Phase I Setup of workshop Blackboard site; creation of content in consultation with CUNY Accessibility Group; beta testing with selected groups of CUNY SPS faculty and assessment thereof;

Phase II Copying of workshop site for each CUNY Campus; train the trainers sessions on each CUNY campus;

Phase III Ongoing maintenance of and updates to the course site; ongoing distribution of updated versions to each campus.

For Phase I of this project, CUNY SPS would like to employ a non-teaching adjunct (NTA) and a college assistant (CA) to aid in the design and construction of this much-needed professional development tool. The NTA, an instructional designer, would work for 150 hours to design and build the workshop course site and the CA, an expert in assistive technology, would be employed for 75 hours to assist with research and test the site to ensure that all training materials are fully accessible.

Both NTA and CA will be jointly supervised by Christopher Leydon (coordinator of student disability services at CUNY SPS) and Antonia Levy (instructional technologist and faculty developer at CUNY SPS). If this position is approved for summer or fall 2015, CUNY SPS can provide cubicles, computers, and software required for both positions. The CUNY Accessibility Working Group will continue to develop the curriculum for the workshop and remain in an advisory role for all content and format.
Once the workshop has been created (ending Phase I of the Project), an appropriate entity (such as CATS, CIS, or the CUNY Accessibility Working Group) will be designated to make it available to all CUNY campuses, and provide ongoing train the trainers support for each campus (Phase II), and assume responsibility for maintaining and updating the workshop site (Phase III), along with securing funds to support these latter phases of the project.

**Budget**

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