

ACCESSIBILITY for VENTURA COLLEGE DISTANCE EDUCATION STUDENTS

In planning or revising a distance education course, it is important to be aware of possible accessibility concerns that may arise for students with disabilities and to be aware that planning at the front end can result in a course that reflects the principles of Universal Design. This means that the course is designed to be usable and accessible to all students.

Ensuring accessibility expands the market for distance education courses and supports the open enrollment policies of the California Community College system. In addition, there are policy and legal mandates regarding access. The following are relevant legal requirements:

Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504	Prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in educational settings which receive federal dollars.
Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 508 (revised)	Requires equal access to telecommunications, which is defined to include services and programs delivered via the Internet. The State Attorney General for the CCC has ruled that Section 508 applies to distance education offered by the CCC system schools. Instructors bear the responsibility of making their classes accessible to <u>all</u> students prior to the start of the class. Students with disabilities should not have to request special accommodations because the course is not accessible, nor are they required to reveal their disability.
Federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	Requires programs and services, including educational programs to be accessible to qualified persons with disabilities. Requires also that all telecommunication must be equal and equally effective.
California Title 5	Prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability.

CCC Chancellor's Guidelines:

The Office the Chancellor for the California Community College System has issued a document entitled, Distance Education: Access Guidelines for Students with Disabilities. The document is available at:

www.htctu.net/dlguidelines/2011%20Distance%20Education%20Accessibility%20Guidelines%20FINAL.pdf

This guide was updated in January 2011. The guidelines are comprehensive and include strategies for addressing access concerns with all distance education formats, including