Taft College

# Newsletter

Spring 2025 | March | Distance Education

“Empowerment begins with education, and as educators, our mission is not just to teach, but to ignite the flame of curiosity, provide the tools for success, and guide our students towards the realization of their fullest potential in their college journey”

Distance Education Team

## Canvas Updates

### Grade Book

You can use a Notes column in the Grade Book to keep track of extra information in your course, such as extra student information or general notes. The Notes column is not visible to students.

[Canvas Guides Resources](https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Instructor-Guide/How-do-I-use-the-Notes-column-in-the-Gradebook/ta-p/940): https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Instructor-Guide/How-do-I-use-the-Notes-column-in-the-Gradebook/ta-p/940

### Course Calendar

A Canvas event is a non-graded [Canvas activity](https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Instructor-Guide/What-is-the-difference-between-a-Canvas-Assignment-and-a-Canvas/ta-p/890) (https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Instructor-Guide/What-is-the-difference-between-a-Canvas-Assignment-and-a-Canvas/ta-p/890). Events you create on the Calendar will not appear in the Assignments page or the Grade Book. But they will show up on the Syllabus page and student calendars. You can create events with due date times as well as all-day events.

[Canvas Guides Resources](https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Instructor-Guide/How-do-I-add-an-event-to-a-course-calendar/ta-p/948): <https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Instructor-Guide/What-is-the-difference-between-a-Canvas-Assignment-and-a-Canvas/ta-p/890>

## Faculty Corner

### Clear Communication and Expectations

Faculty are encouraged to establish clear communication channels and set transparent expectations with students. This includes providing detailed course outlines, assignment instructions, and grading criteria. Clarity fosters a conducive learning environment, enabling students to understand what is required of them and how they can succeed in the course. Additionally, maintaining open lines of communication through office hours, email correspondence, and online platforms ensures that students feel supported and can seek help when needed.

### Flexible Learning Opportunities

Faculty can offer a variety of instructional formats, such as lectures, discussions, group activities, and multimedia resources, to cater to different preferences and abilities. Similarly, providing alternative assessment options, such as projects, presentations, exams, or portfolios, allows students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in ways that align with their strengths. Flexibility fosters engagement, motivation, and a sense of inclusivity among students, empowering them to take ownership of their learning journey.

### Proactive Support and Resources

Faculty are encouraged to support students by providing resources, guidance, and opportunities for academic assistance. This may include recommending supplemental readings, offering study guides, organizing review sessions, or connecting students with tutoring services and academic support centers. Additionally, promoting a culture of peer collaboration and mentorship can facilitate knowledge sharing and peer-to-peer support networks. By anticipating potential challenges and providing proactive support mechanisms, faculty can help students navigate academic obstacles more effectively and enhance their overall learning experience.

## Student Tips for Success

Stay actively engaged!

* Participate actively in online discussions, forums, and group activities to enhance understanding of course concepts and foster collaboration with peers.
* Seek out additional resources such as textbooks, academic journals, or online tutorials to deepen comprehension and extend learning beyond the required course materials.
* Attend open office hours. Attending open office hours with your instructor allows you to seek personalized guidance, clarify course material, receive feedback on assignments, and foster a supportive academic relationship, ultimately enhancing your understanding and performance in the course.

## Accessibility Tips and Tricks

### A Broader Perspective

Please take a few moments to broaden your perspective and understand [The Internet’s Accessibility Problem](https://youtu.be/QWPWgaDqbZI?si=ZfLgzYBzMe0iGg3h): https://youtu.be/QWPWgaDqbZI?si=ZfLgzYBzMe0iGg3h

### The Digital Age of Accessibility

In our digital age, many accessibility barriers remain unseen to the naked eye, yet they can profoundly impact the lives of individuals with disabilities. Whether it's navigating a website, accessing online content, or using technology in everyday life, these challenges persist. To ensure inclusivity and avoid overlooking such crucial issues, it's imperative to adopt proactive measures. Start by conducting comprehensive accessibility assessments, including thorough evaluations of digital platforms, software, and content. Engage diverse user groups, including individuals with disabilities, to gain valuable insights into their experiences and needs. Implement accessible design principles and adhere to recognized standards such as [WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/#:~:text=Web%20Content%20Accessibility%20Guidelines%20(WCAG)%202.1%20defines%20how%20to%20make,%2C%20learning%2C%20and%20neurological%20disabilities.) (https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21) to create user-friendly experiences for all. By prioritizing accessibility in every aspect of design and development, we can pave the way for a more inclusive digital landscape where everyone can participate equitably and thrive.

### Manual Testing

Is your content accessible? To simulate whether your content is accessible, try it for yourself!

* Zoom to 400% on a 1280px wide screen. Is there any loss of content?
* Turn your screen off while using [NVDA](https://www.nvaccess.org/download/) (https://www.nvaccess.org/download/). Please review [NVDA controls](https://dequeuniversity.com/screenreaders/nvda-keyboard-shortcuts) (https://dequeuniversity.com/screenreaders/nvda-keyboard-shortcuts). Can you imagine the page content structure and navigate easily?
* Unplug your mouse from your desktop or laptop and try only using your keyboard! Is there any loss of content? Is there any content that you are not able to use your tab key to access?
* Greyscale your screen. Does your content still make sense without the use of color?

## Upcoming Events

### March 15th Skill-Up

Come be a part of, the, "**Website Design for Accessibility**!," You guessed it, it’s one of those exciting types of workshops focused on empowering both the faculty and staff in the whole process of creation of inclusive digital experiences. Learning it, the practical strategies, and perhaps, the best practices for making sure that your websites can be accessible to all users, yes this includes those individuals with disabilities. From, learning about the WCAG guidelines, to the use of accessible design principles. This workshop arms you; with the necessary knowledge and skills needed to build a website that puts a higher priority on inclusiveness.

### April 12th Skill-Up

Discover the power of **Sensus Access**with Taft College's latest workshop! Designed to empower students and faculty alike, Sensus Access is a cutting-edge tool revolutionizing accessibility in education. Join us to explore how this innovative platform seamlessly transforms documents, images, and files into accessible formats, catering to diverse learning needs. Learn how to leverage Sensus Access to enhance accessibility and inclusivity across your academic materials.

### Faculty Training Resources for Website

Below are free accessibility training options available. They necessitate a committed allocation of time to fulfill all requirements.

* [Free Digital Accessibility Online Course By W3C](https://www.w3.org/WAI/courses/foundations-course/): https://www.w3.org/WAI/courses/foundations-course/
* [Free Web Accessibility Online Course by Google](https://www.udacity.com/course/web-accessibility--ud891?irclickid=weGzmHVWVxyPR%3A8VVSRyIVZIUkH14mwqSXt7S80&irgwc=1&utm_source=affiliate&utm_medium=&aff=259799&utm_term=&utm_campaign=_gtc_www_classcentral_com_&utm_content=&adid=788805): https://www.udacity.com/course/web-accessibility--ud891?irclickid=weGzmHVWVxyPR%3A8VVSRyIVZIUkH14mwqSXt7S80&irgwc=1&utm\_source=affiliate&utm\_medium=&aff=259799&utm\_term=&utm\_campaign=\_gtc\_www\_classcentral\_com\_&utm\_content=&adid=788805
* [Free ICT Accessibility Online Course by Georgia Tech](https://www.edx.org/learn/information-technology/the-georgia-institute-of-technology-information-and-communication-technology-ict-accessibility?irclickid=zZcx21TlqxyPU8AznWVfk24-UkH14jzCSXt7S80&utm_source=affiliate&utm_medium=Class%20Central&utm_campaign=Harvard%27s%20Computer%20Science%20for%20Python%20Programming_&utm_content=TEXT_LINK&irgwc=1): https://www.edx.org/learn/information-technology/the-georgia-institute-of-technology-information-and-communication-technology-ict-accessibility?irclickid=zZcx21TlqxyPU8AznWVfk24-UkH14jzCSXt7S80&utm\_source=affiliate&utm\_medium=Class%20Central&utm\_campaign=Harvard%27s%20Computer%20Science%20for%20Python%20Programming\_&utm\_content=TEXT\_LINK&irgwc=1
* [Free Accessible Website Online Course by Wix](https://www.classcentral.com/classroom/youtube-accessibility-101-build-your-accessible-website-full-course-wix-learn-119976): https://www.classcentral.com/classroom/youtube-accessibility-101-build-your-accessible-website-full-course-wix-learn-119976
* [Free Learn Accessibility Online Course by Web.Dev](https://web.dev/learn/accessibility/): https://web.dev/learn/accessibility/

## Feedback and Suggestions

If you have any feedback or suggestions for our department's monthly newsletter, please email or call our director Jon Farmer ([jfarmer@taftcollege.edu](mailto:jfarmer@taftcollege.edu)) directly.