

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



JEANINE BLOMBERG
Commissioner of Education



Memorandum Number 07-10

June 13, 2007

MEMORANDUM

TO: Community College Presidents
FROM: J. David Armstrong, Jr.
SUBJECT: Accessibility of Electronic and Information Technology

To assist the Florida Department of Education in meeting Strategic Imperative Eight, "Improving Student Opportunities for Access and Advancement," the community colleges must ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to electronic and information technology. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the community colleges with assistance in meeting the guidelines for accessible electronic and information technology.

Summary:

House Bill 1503 was passed during the 2006 legislative session and signed into law as sections 282.601-282.605 of Florida Statutes (F.S.) by then Governor Jeb Bush in order to improve accessibility to public electronic and information technology for individuals with disabilities. This legislation was a result of Governor Bush's task force on Accessible Electronic and Information Technology. Section 282, F. S., requires the state to align its standards of accessibility with those established by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The Task Force convened between August 2005 and January 2006 to develop recommendations for improved accessibility standards. The mandates of the legislation apply to employees, students, and the general public served by community colleges, and the provisions of this bill took effect July 1, 2006.

J. DAVID ARMSTRONG, JR.
Chancellor, Division of Community Colleges

The purpose of this technical assistance paper is to provide more specific information and address concerns identified by community college staff. Please see the attached appendix for full text of associated statutes

Implementation:

This legislation is applicable to community colleges because the colleges are public entities which both employ and serve individuals with disabilities. As a result of this legislation, colleges will be responsible for ensuring:

- All technology purchased after July 1, 2006, involved in communicating, duplicating, creating, or converting information, including but not limited to Portable Document Files (PDFs), documents, Compact Discs (CDs), Digital Video Discs (DVDs), is accessible to persons with disabilities or available in an alternative format;
- Hardware, software, operating systems, web-based intranet and internet information and applications, telephone systems, video and multimedia products, and self-contained products such as fax machines, copiers, hand-held devices, and kiosks are accessible to persons with disabilities;
- The college web site and its individual web pages are accessible to persons with disabilities; and
- All guidelines are followed, as outlined in the standards for Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Exceptions:

- The following exceptions apply:
 - Agencies are not required to purchase or make products owned by the agency available for access and use by persons with disabilities at a location other than where the electronic information technology is provided to the public.
 - Agencies are not required to make changes that would result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of the product or its components.
 - Products located in spaces frequented only by service personnel for maintenance, repair, or occasional monitoring of equipment are not required to comply with the legislation.

Implementing the provisions of Section 508 will likely involve cooperation among college personnel, including information technology specialists, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) coordinators, student disability services staff, and general counsel staff. For further information, please review www.section508.gov. If you have questions about the implementation of this statute, please contact the Americans with Disabilities Act Working Group at the Department of Management Services at (850) 487-3423 or Amy Albee at the Division of Community Colleges at amy.albee@fldoe.org or (850) 245- 9488.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter!

JDA/aac

Attachment

c: Council on Instructional Affairs
Council of Student Affairs
Dr. Judith Bilsky, Executive Vice Chancellor