STRATEGIC PLAN FOR ACCESSIBILITY: AY24-AY26

Enhancing and Sustaining Access to Programs and Services at Mason

(Updated 10/15/2025)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act require that higher education institutions receiving federal financial assistance ensure equitable access to all programs and services for individuals with disabilities. This includes, but is not limited to, addressing issues related to discrimination against people with disabilities, modifying existing policies and procedures to provide reasonable accommodations, removing architectural barriers, and ensuring that information and communications technology (ICT) developed, procured, maintained, or used by the institution be accessible to all employees, students, and members of the public (as specified in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act). Since 2009, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR), and national advocacy organizations like the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) and the National Association for the Deaf (NAD) have challenged how universities and colleges ensure equitable access to ICT resources.

The Office of Access, Compliance, and Community's (OACC) ADA Team is committed to ensuring George Mason complies with the standards and guidelines outlined in these laws. Furthermore, OACC is committed to its mission of fostering a diverse and inclusive university community.

To that end, OACC is tasked with developing and guiding the University's *Strategic Plan for Accessibility*. This plan outlines OACC's 3-year strategy for addressing issues that impact equitable access for individuals with disabilities in the George Mason community. Through the end of the 2025-2026 academic year, OACC will focus on the following areas: (1) Assessing the institution's existing accessibility services, policies, and practices; (2) Adopting an ADA Transition Plan; (3) Improving OACC's existing accessibility-related marketing and communications strategy; (4) Restructuring, cross-training, and strengthening our team of accessibility specialists; and (5), Developing and Implementing a plan to help the institution comply with the updated ADA Title II guidelines impacting the accessibility of websites and mobile apps.

We strongly believe that the objectives outlined in this plan will streamline and improve George Mason's existing efforts to ensure equitable access to the institution's resources for employees, students, applicants, and visitors with disabilities. Additionally, these efforts will afford all individuals the opportunity for an accessible and transformational learning and working experience.

STRATEGIC PLANNING REPORT

WHAT WE DO

The ADA Team is responsible for ensuring that George Mason complies with relevant laws (e.g., ADA, Section 504) and university policies (i.e., UP 1201, UP 1203, UP 1308) that impact access for individuals with disabilities within the university community. Among other things, this includes addressing issues related to discrimination against individuals with disabilities, providing reasonable accommodations in the workplace, providing aids and supports for effective communication (i.e., alternative formats for instructional resources, captions for videos, ensuring front-facing web resources are accessible, etc.), ensuring accessible paths of travel, and evaluating the use of service animals on campus grounds.

We work collaboratively with strategic partners across the institution (e.g., Disability Services [DS], Information Technology Services [ITS], Human Resources [HR], Facilities, Parking Services, Strategic Communications, the Stearns Center, academic and administrative departments/units, instructional faculty, as well as library personnel) to develop, coordinate, and implement a university-wide accessibility plan. We also offer ongoing training and outreach to campus partners, aiming to raise awareness about the need for accessible resources and provide guidance on how to make instructional content and front-facing web resources more accessible and inclusive for all members of the university community.

AY20 – AY22 RECAP OF *A11Y* UNIT'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Between AY20-AY22, a few of the ADA Team's more impactful accomplishments are as follows:

- **Accommodations**
  - *GOAL: Improve the ADA accommodations process and provide more targeted outreach to the campus community.*
    - Implemented a new and more efficient *Interactive Accommodations Process* that both ensures equity among requests and aids in documentation of accommodations.
    - Provided training on ADA, Accommodations, and Disability Etiquette to help create an equitable culture for campus community members with disabilities.
- **Communications and Marketing**
  - *GOAL: Improve campus-wide marketing and communications.*
    - Updated http://accessibility.gmu.edu to more closely align with the resources identified in University Policy 1308.
    - Updated Assistive Technology (AT) & Accessibility Resources on http://ati.gmu.edu.

    - ATI staff started distributing digital newsletters to highlight digital accessibility resources on Mason campuses. Newsletters are set at the beginning and end of the fall and spring semesters. Currently, the newsletter reaches over 1,000 members (faculty, staff, and students) of the George Mason community.
    - ITS implemented the DubBOT web governance solution. Among other things, DubBOT helps web developers and web content authors make their websites more accessible. DubBOT has been a valuable way for the ATI to build a community of web developers and web content authors dedicated to the goal of accessible and inclusive websites.
- **Web Accessibility**
    - *GOAL: Integrate feedback from AT users into the web and applications testing process.*
        - Acquired space for the development of a web accessibility and AT testing lab.
        - Hired a student worker who is an active AT user to provide feedback on the usability and accessibility of Mason's instructional resources.
- **Document Accessibility**
    - *GOAL: Improve scalability of document remediation service.*
        - Blackboard Ally was released to the full university community in Fall 2019. In partnership with ITS, the ATI developed a process for faculty members to submit document remediation requests through both Ally's Instructor Feedback window and the ATI website.
- **Alternate Formats**
    - *GOAL: Procure technology that would aid in the creation of 3D-printed tactile graphics.*
        - ATI staff acquired a 3D printer to assist with the creation of tactile graphics.
- **Purchasing and Procurement**
    - *GOAL: Develop a public database/resource for tracking web and application testing results.*
        - The Architecture Standards Review Board (ASRB) is currently developing a database of ICT resources that have been vetted for accessibility, among other things. This information is now being made widely available to the university community through the ITS website. Additional ways of sharing this information are still being explored.
- **Library Accessibility**
    - *GOAL: Work with library staff to develop clear guidelines for access to library programs and services.*
        - ATI & Library staff have collaborated to update the existing AT lab in Fenwick Library. This includes updating the operating systems, installing

an additional adjustable height workstation (electronically controlled), additional widescreen computer monitors, alternative mice/keyboards, and cable management solutions.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, & THREATS

During AY23, the A11y staff conducted a SWOT analysis to identify areas of strength and weakness in ensuring equitable access for individuals with disabilities within the George Mason community. A summary of findings is listed below:

STRENGTHS

- Direct ICT accessibility-related supports and services (document remediation, AT, captioning & transcription, accessible text, web accessibility).
- Key partnerships with DS, Stearns Center, ITS, Strategic Communications, and academic units.
- Strategic support within OACC.
- Cloud-based availability of AT.

WEAKNESSES

- Lack an updated ADA Transition Plan.
- Instability and inconsistency in the role of ADA Coordinator.
- Lack of a comprehensive strategy/resources for identification of accessible options in event and classroom spaces.
- Changes in library infrastructure have led to a lack of clear accessibility-related policies and procedures for library locations.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Bring stability to the ADA Coordinator role.
- Conduct comprehensive self-evaluation as precursor to an updated ADA Transition Plan.
- Explore avenues to grow direct accessibility-related services (i.e., partnerships with academic units);
- Explore ways for students, faculty, and staff to provide direct feedback on ATI services, needs/issues with respect to campus services, accessibility testing, etc.
- Expand digital accessibility-related training efforts (e.g., Zoom, Teams, Microsoft 365, etc.).
- Streamline collection of ATI service delivery data.

- Tighter integration/participation in OACC's Initiatives.

THREATS

- ADA Transition Plan is required by law.
- Remaining comfortable given the landscape of changing student needs, staffing, and shifts in the university's IT infrastructure.
- Lack of a comprehensive strategy for addressing access to library resources.
- Campus accessibility (i.e., classrooms, event spaces, libraries, etc.)

AY24-AY26 STRATEGIC FOCUS

The *ADA Team's Strategic Focus* highlights some of the major issues, opportunities, and threats identified through the SWOT analysis. Between AY24-AY26, we will focus on the following areas:

- Adopt an ADA Transition Plan
  - Update/Create ADA Transition Plan
- Improve Campus Access
  - Library Access
    - Work with library staff to modernize delivery of AT resources.
  - Event Access
    - Work with Classroom & Lab Technologies, Student Centers, and University Branding to identify digital resources available for equitable access in event spaces.
    - Integrate accessibility information into websites promoting event spaces.
  - Classroom Access (Physical)
    - Work with Classroom & Lab Technologies, Student Centers, and University Branding to identify digital resources available for equitable access in classroom/instructional spaces.
    - Integrate accessibility information into websites promoting classroom/instructional spaces.
- Expand Communications and Marketing Efforts
  - Establish ADA Advisory Committee
  - Develop "*communities of practice*" for targeted training initiatives.
  - Continue to offer TTW and DAF courses.
  - Continue offering biannual DAIC meetings/workshops.
  - Update ATI's web-based resources (i.e., accessibility.gmu.edu, ati.gmu.edu) as needed.
  - Develop mechanisms for user feedback.

- Strengthen A11y Infrastructure
    - Redistribute responsibilities of the ADA Coordinator role.
    - Increase cross-training opportunities within the ADA Team.
    - Implement a system for tracking/reporting accessibility-related service data.
- Develop a plan to move the institution toward compliance with the updated ADA Title II guidance regarding websites and mobile apps
    - Establish a central website for communications.
    - Educate the campus community about the updated guidelines.
    - Work with strategic partners to develop/implement enterprise-wide tools and resources (i.e., DubBOT, Bb Ally/Panorama, Bb/Canvas, Microsoft 365, etc.) to support creation of accessible digital content (i.e., websites, documents, videos, etc.).
    - Provide targeted training to help faculty and staff learn how to remediate and create accessible digital content.

ADOPT AN ADA TRANSITION PLAN

By law, Mason is required to have an ADA transition plan. To date, no plan has been located, and it is likely out of date given the significant number of construction projects over the last decade. The ADA Team will address this issue in the following way(s):

- **Update/Create ADA Transition Plan**

  Transition plans are required by the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. A transition plan would lay the foundation for a strategic plan regarding ADA-related matters, prioritizing the removal of access barriers identified through internal self-evaluations. It would establish an inventory of potential access barriers, a budget for removing these barriers, a point of contact responsible for remedying each issue, and outline a schedule for improvements. Over the next few years, OACC will enlist the assistance of a third-party provider to conduct an ADA audit and create an ADA transition plan.

IMPROVE CAMPUS ACCESS

To ensure members of the Mason community are afforded equitable access to campus resources, most notable being existing library resources, campus event spaces, and physical classroom spaces, the ADA Team will address the following areas:

- **Modernize delivery of AT resources in library locations.**

Prior to and during the COVID-related shutdown, both the library and ITS experienced a fair amount of turnover in critical library (i.e., Media Services, Digital Technologies and Services, etc.) and ITS (i.e., Advanced Desktop Support) positions. The most notable impact has been the ATI's ability to properly maintain and update existing AT workstations. ITS typically oversees the workstation image updates, but turnaround times to create the new images have affected the ATI Office's ability to quickly remedy access issues. Additionally, as students have opted to take more remote classes, there has been a decrease in demand for access to a physical AT workspace.

To address these issues, the ATI will partner with library staff to provide an AT "kit" at branches that no longer have AT workstations. These "kits" would likely include laptops with AT applications pre-installed, as well as adapted keyboards, mice, and headsets, among other accessories. The "kits" would be owned and maintained by the ATI Office, but the process for loaning them out to library patrons by request would be overseen by library staff.

- **Partner with strategic partners to identify accessibility supports available in existing event and classroom spaces.**

  During the COVID-related shutdown, the technology in Merten Hall and Horizon Hall was upgraded to modernize and improve communications. The Merten Hall rooms (i.e., 1201-1204) have been outfitted with amplification systems, ceiling microphones, as well as new podium and handheld microphones. Similar upgrades were provided in the Horizon Hall classroom spaces. In addition to updating the instructor stations, portable assistive listening systems (10 units) were made available for placement in up to 10 rooms at any given time. The issue, however, is this information is not publicly available and leads to confusion in terms of who is the best point of contact if an accommodation request is made for any of these resources.

  To address these issues, the ADA Team will partner with Disability Services, ITS (Classroom and Lab Technologies), Event Services, and University Branding to gather information related to the physical accessibility (e.g., amplification systems, wheelchair accessible pathways, podiums, instructor stations, etc.) of these events and classroom spaces. The ADA Team will advocate for this information to be made available on the existing Event Services (e.g., Student Centers), University Branding (i.e., 25 Live), and Stearns Center (i.e., Classroom Guides) websites. Furthermore, the ADA Team will collaborate with Disability Services to ensure that the information is available on both the Disability Services and GMU Accessibility websites.

EXPAND COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING EFFORTS

In the previous cycle, the ADA Team improved marking and communications by transitioning ATI websites to new CMS templates, streamlining content, establishing the

Digital Accessibility and Inclusion Community (DAIC) Group, and delivering a bi-annual newsletter on digital accessibility-related supports, services, and resources to the Mason community.

Going forward, we will expand upon these efforts in the following areas:

- **Establish ADA Advisory Committee**

  A critical aspect of the ADA Coordinator role is establishing strategic partnerships across the institution. It is not necessary for the ADA Coordinator to be the expert in all areas, but rather to coordinate with partners and units across the campus to remove access barriers. To that end, we will establish an ADA Advisory Committee to assist with identifying and remediating critical accessibility-related issues (i.e., policies, practices, training/outreach, self-evaluations, etc.).

- **For digital accessibility-related matters, the ATI will focus on building "*communities of practice*" for more targeted outreach.**

  While existing ATI *e*-newsletters reach over 1,000 members (i.e., students, staff, and faculty) of the George Mason community, the level of engagement (i.e., opening a link) typically falls within the 2%-5% range. We cannot effectively educate the community on digital accessibility and the resources available to support individuals with disabilities without reimagining how we structure our outreach efforts.

  During this cycle, each ATI staff member will focus on individually developing "*communities of practice*" to ensure our message is reaching not only strategic partners, but those individuals who have at one time or another used ATI services (i.e., captioning, document remediation, AT, web accessibility). This includes, but is not limited to, continuing to offer bi-annual DAIC meetings for our strategic partners. These meetings have provided opportunities for IT, learning, and accessibility professionals to come together to address issues affecting digital and/or physical access on Mason campuses.

- **For digital accessibility-related matters, the ATI will expand training initiatives focused on building the capacity of strategic partners to independently address digital accessibility-related concerns.**

  During the summer 2022 session, the ATI piloted two training programs designed to help our strategic partners better understand the impact of inaccessible digital content on access for members of the Mason community with disabilities. The *Trusted Tester for Web Fundamentals (TTW)* course provides web developers and web content authors with a foundational understanding of the legal standards outlined in Section 508 of the Rehab Act of 1973 and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.x Level A and AA, as well as the basic elements of accessible web design. The *Document Accessibility Fundamentals (DAF)* Course consists of a series of self-guided, self-paced modules that provide content authors with a foundational understanding of how to create accessible Word, PowerPoint, and PDF documents.

Individuals completing these courses earn Micro-Credentials, which demonstrate their knowledge and practical mastery of the subject. They are also provided with monetary compensation for completion of the training. The ATI will continue to offer these training cohorts on an annual basis to further build the capacity of strategic partners to confidently and independently address digital accessibility-related concerns.

- **The ADA Team will implement mechanisms to solicit user feedback.**

  As in the previous cycle, it is imperative that we develop additional ways to understand the experience of individuals with disabilities at Mason. The ADA Team will implement surveys at the conclusion of each service and create focus groups to assess performance, identify gaps in existing services, and more.

STRENGTHEN A11Y INFRASTRUCTURE

Over the past few years, staff departures (i.e., ADA Coordinator, Accessible Text Coordinator, and Student wage employees) resulting from COVID shutdowns have led to significant instability within the ADA Team. This led to a vacuum in the continuity of core services, gaps in the accurate tracking of employee accommodations, and gaps in the general oversight of access barriers on Mason campuses. We will address instability concerns in the following ways:

- **Redistribute the responsibilities of the ADA Coordinator position**

  To date, the responsibilities of the ADA Coordinator role have been handled by a single employee, partnering with strategic campus units (e.g., HR, DS) as needed. The challenge with this approach is that when the position is vacated, there is no backup in place to ensure continuity of services. To address this issue going forward, the ATI Manager position will be converted into an additional Deputy ADA Coordinator position (i.e., Deputy ADA Coordinator for Accessibility. This position will oversee the ATI Office and assume responsibilities related to removing architectural barriers on Mason campuses. The existing Deputy ADA Coordinator position will maintain oversight of employee accommodations and also partner on the removal of architectural barriers (i.e., Deputy ADA Coordinator for Accommodations). The Associate Vice President for OACC will serve as the ADA Coordinator, overseeing the coordination and development of the institution's ongoing efforts to maintain ADA compliance. This includes, but is not limited to, consultative services to the administration, reviewing/updating policies related to discrimination and reasonable accommodations, and addressing complaints alleging noncompliance or any allegations of discrimination.

- **Increase cross-training opportunities amongst members of the ADA Team.**

  The ATI has typically employed student workers to support the institution’s accessible media, document remediation, and web-accessibility-related services.

Over time, however, this practice has impacted the continuity of core services, as student workers often have inconsistent work schedules (e.g., summer break, internships) and tend to leave positions after a year or so. Going forward, the AT Specialist will take a more active role in supporting these areas. Given the AT Specialist's front-facing role supporting students, this individual is best positioned to both understand what AT tools students are utilizing and how those tools will interact with the instructional resources developed by faculty members.

- **Implement a system for tracking/reporting accessibility-related service data.**

  The Guardian database was purchased during the 2021-2022 academic year to facilitate the collation and streamlining of the OACC reporting process. It was refined and implemented over the course of the 2022-2023 academic year, with trial runs initiated in the early weeks of the Spring 2023 semester. It has been used since late spring 2023 to track ADA-related accommodations requests. The ATI unit will start tracking digital accessibility-related service and support requests during the Fall 2023 semester.

DEVELOP A PLAN TO ACHIEVE COMPLIANCE WITH UPDATED ADA TITLE II GUIDANCE (WEBSITES AND MOBILE APPLICATIONS)

In alignment with the recently developed Digital Content Accessibility and Adoption Plan (DCAAP) and forthcoming updates to the ADA Title II regulations, the ADA Team will lead institutional efforts to ensure that all websites, web applications, and digital media comply with WCAG 2.1 AA standards by April 24, 2026.

To achieve this objective, the following initiatives will be undertaken during FY24–26:

- Develop a comprehensive plan to move the institution toward compliance with the updated ADA Title II guidance regarding websites and mobile applications.

- Establish a central website for communication and coordination of Mason's digital accessibility efforts, ensuring consistent messaging and resource access for the university community.

- Educate the campus community about the updated ADA Title II guidelines, highlighting institutional responsibilities and compliance timelines.

- Collaborate with strategic partners (e.g., ITS, Stearns Center, Strategic Communications, University Libraries, HR, and Disability Services) to develop and implement enterprise-wide tools and resources, including DubBOT, Blackboard Ally/Panorama, Canvas, and Microsoft 365 accessibility checkers, to support the creation of accessible digital content such as websites, documents, and videos.

- Provide targeted education and training to help faculty, staff, and content creators understand how to create, test, and maintain accessible digital content.



OPERATIONS PLANNING

CURRENT STAFFING (AS OF 10/16/25)

- ADA Team
  - *Associate Vice President/Title IX Coordinator/ADA Coordinator,* Thomas Bluestein
  - *Deputy ADA Coordinator for Accommodations*, Rachel Elliott
  - *Deputy ADA Coordinator* for Accessibility and *ATI Manager,* Korey Singleton
  - *Assistive Technology Initiative Team*
    - *Accessible Media*, Robert Starr
    - *AT Program Coordinator*, Jen Little Brown
    - *IT Accessibility*, Kristine Neuber

A11Y PROJECTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Project Title	Description	Project Lead(s)	Projected Timeline
Accessible/alternative texts and instructional materials (Accommodations)	Conversion of instructional materials (i.e., PPTs, PDFs, textbooks, exams, quizzes, etc.) into Braille, readable PDFs, Word, etc.	Jen Little Brown	As needed
ADA Advisory Committee	Collaborate with key stakeholders (e.g., ITS, Legal, DS, Libraries, Facilities, HR, etc.) to develop and maintain accessible facilities, programs, and services throughout the university.	Thomas Bluestein, Naomi Martinez-Jones	As needed
ASRB Committee (Procurement)	Work with ITS to review new software and web application purchases for accessibility and conformance with Section 508 and WCAG.	Kristine Neuber	As needed

Assistive Technology Assessments, Support, and Training (Students)	Provide informal AT assessments, training, and support for students registered with DS and LS	Jen Little Brown	As needed
Assistive Technology Assessments, Support, and Training (Faculty/Staff)	Provide informal AT assessments, training, and support for staff/faculty referred by the Deputy ADA Coordinator for Accommodations.	Jen Little Brown	As needed
ATI Training	Coordinate, conduct, and schedule ongoing ATI training sessions and locations.	ATI Staff	As needed
ATI Websites	Ongoing maintenance of *Accessibility* and *ATI* Websites.	Korey Singleton	As needed
AT Lab Updates (Libraries)	Maintain existing library workstations. Facilitate access to library workstations. Work with ITS to update library AT Lab images (annually).	Korey Singleton	Fall 2025
Campus Mapping Plan	Investigate existing campus mapping solutions and develop a plan for offering a more accessible solution to individuals in the Mason community.	Korey Singleton	Spring 2026
Captioning and Transcription	Coordinate delivery/production of accessible media (i.e., captioning, audio description) to support individuals with disabilities in the George Mason community and ensure compliance with relevant disability laws.	Robert Starr	As needed

Clockworks Client Database	Oversee maintenance of Clockworks client management database.	Robert Starr	As needed
Coordinate conversion of textbooks and instructional resources to braille/tactile graphics	Coordinate quotes, conversion, and delivery/pick-up of braille/tactile graphics resources for blind students in STEM courses.	Jen Little Brown	As needed
Digital Accessibility and Inclusion Community Group (DAIC)	Work with key stakeholders (i.e., ITS, Legal, OACC, DS, Library, etc.) on the university's ICT accessibility plan.	Korey Singleton	As needed
Digital Content Accessibility Action Plan	Develop a comprehensive plan to move the institution toward compliance with the updated ADA Title II guidance regarding websites and mobile applications.	Korey Singleton	Fall 2026
Document Remediation (Compliance)	Develop a strategic plan for ensuring accessibility of instructional resources (i.e., Word, PPT, and PDF) used in Mason.	Robert Starr	As needed
Employee Accommodations	Responsibility for ADA compliance and for engaging in an interactive process to determine whether an employee, applicant, or visitor is a qualified individual with a disability for the purposes of providing a reasonable accommodation.	Rachel Elliott	As needed

Removal of Architectural Barriers (Events, Libraries, Parking, Etc.)	Partner with University Libraries, Events Services, University Branding, Parking Services, Facilities, and ITS to remove architectural barriers.	Rachel Elliott, Korey Singleton	As needed
Stearns Center (Office of Digital Learning)	Coordinate integration of ICT accessibility planning with ODL.	Korey Singleton	As needed
Supplemental Application Reviews	Review and test 3rd-party applications for accessibility and usability (i.e., Mathematica, MyMathLab, etc.).	Kristine Neuber	As needed
Web Accessibility	Develop and maintain university guidelines for conformance of websites and web-based documents with Section 508 and WCAG 2.1.	Kristine Neuber	As needed