LearningMate
A STRAIVE COMPANY

Virginia's Community Colleges

Building an Accessible Learning Environment

Inclusive experiences for every student

MEET YOUR GUIDE: TRAINER EXPERTISE

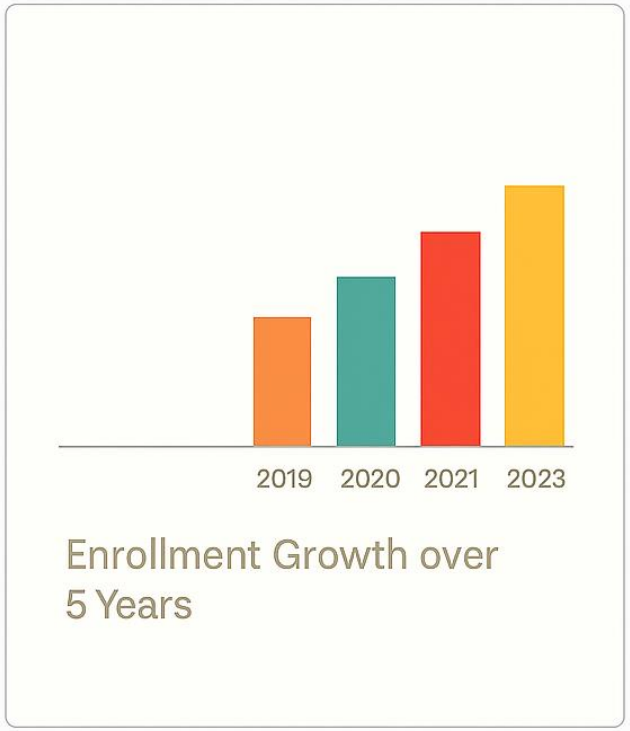
Surbhi Lohia

- 10+ years in digital accessibility & inclusive design (WCAG, ADA, Section 508)
- Led accessibility strategy at Accenture & SAP Labs; built CoEs & mentored teams
- Speaker & advocate at Axe Con 2025, IAAP Webinar; active in global accessibility community
- Expertise: audits, inclusive design, training, organizational change
- Skilled with JAWS, NVDA, VoiceOver, ARIA, Microsoft Suite, Workday
- Early career: Trainer for the Blind, empowering 150+ visually impaired students

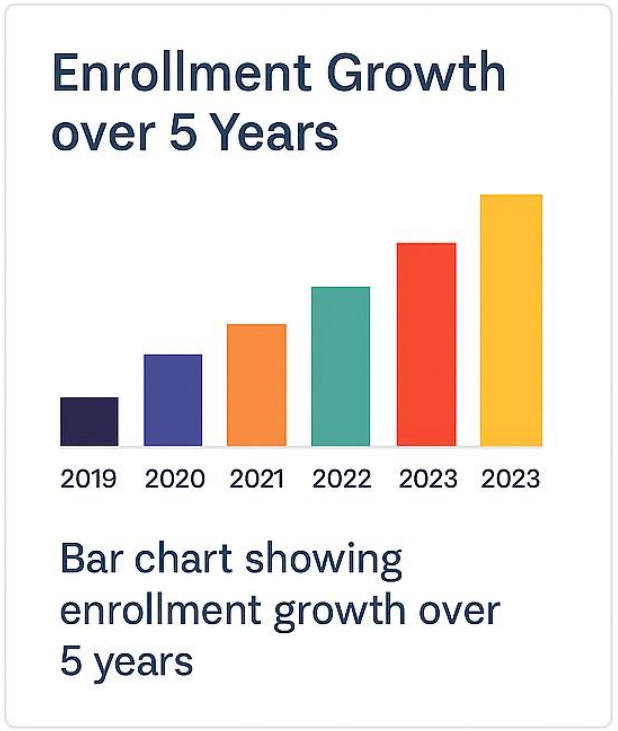
ACCESSIBILITY SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT | CPACC CERTIFIED | 100% VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Can You Spot The Clear Winner?

Can everyone access this?



What's different here?



Small font, low contrast, unclear visuals, unlabeled image

Vs

Clear font, high contrast, labeled chart with description/alt text

Which version works better for your students?

TODAY’S OBJECTIVES

- Why Accessibility Matters?
- Understanding User Needs
- Accessibility & Compliance
- Principles of Accessible Design (POUR)
- Common Accessibility Barriers
- Accessibility in Practice
- Accessibility Tools & Resources
- From Awareness to Action: The Road Ahead
- Accessibility Deep Dive: Upcoming Sessions
- Q & A

Why Accessibility Matters?

Challenges & Impact

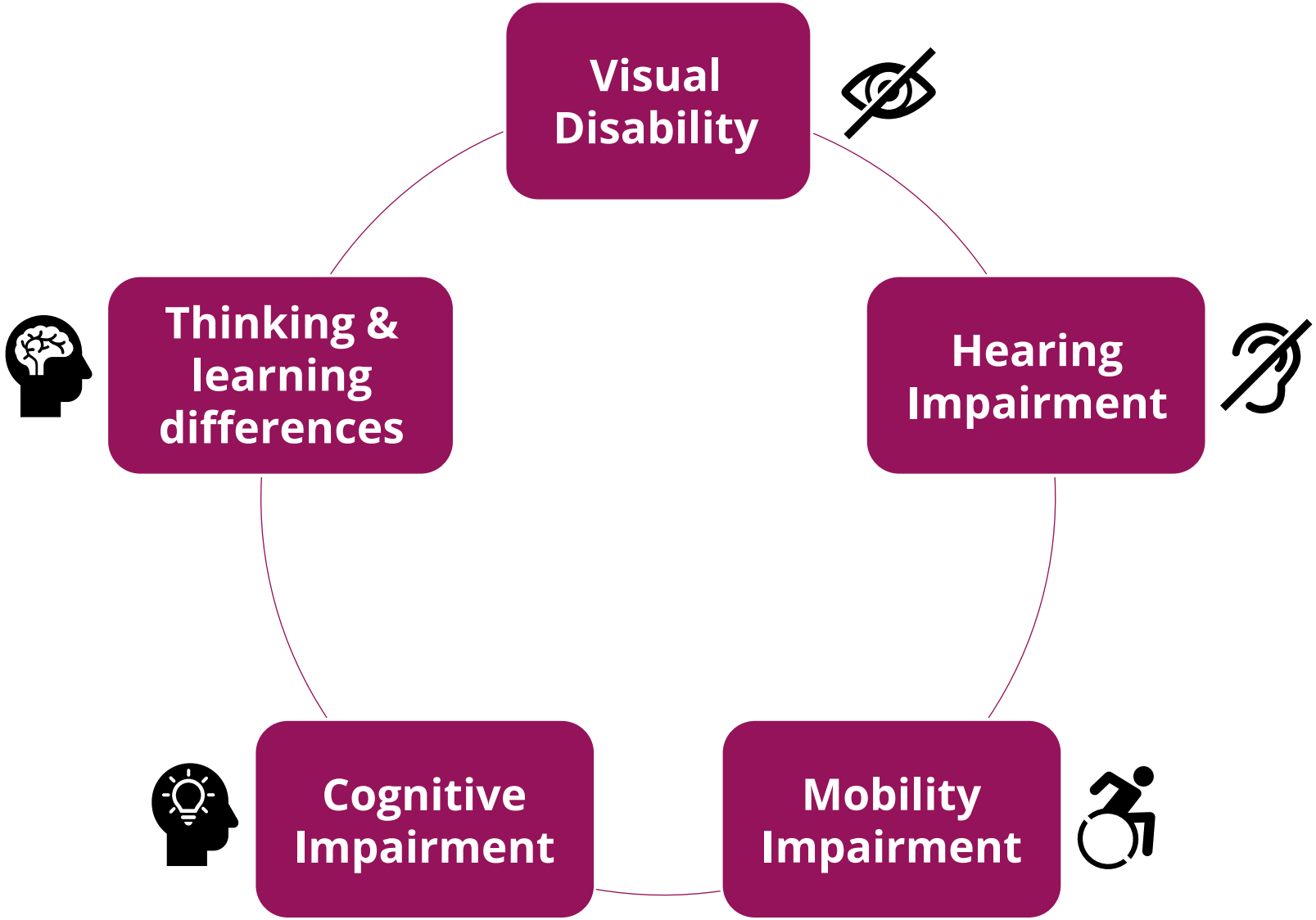
- Nearly **1 in 5 students** has a disability—yet access is rare
- Up to **43% of students** report a disability (many uncounted)
- **49.5%** student with disabilities graduate vs. **68%** peers

Barriers & Readiness

- **96%** of U.S. higher-ed websites are non-compliant with ADA
- **1/3** faculty unaware of WCAG; **45%** unclear on details
- Only **10%** of faculty feel they have adequate accessibility tools

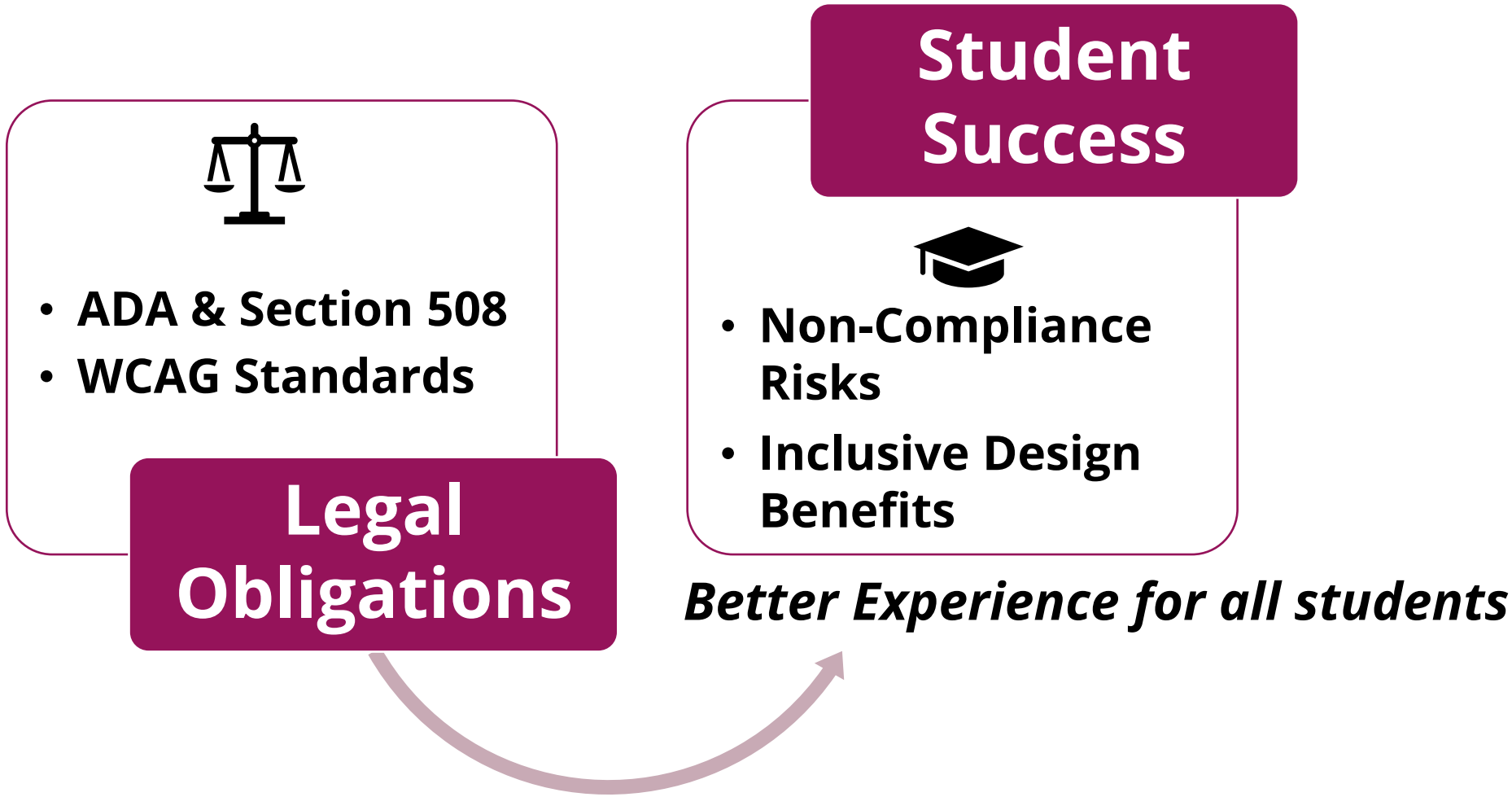
Click here to check the Source of these data

Understanding User Needs

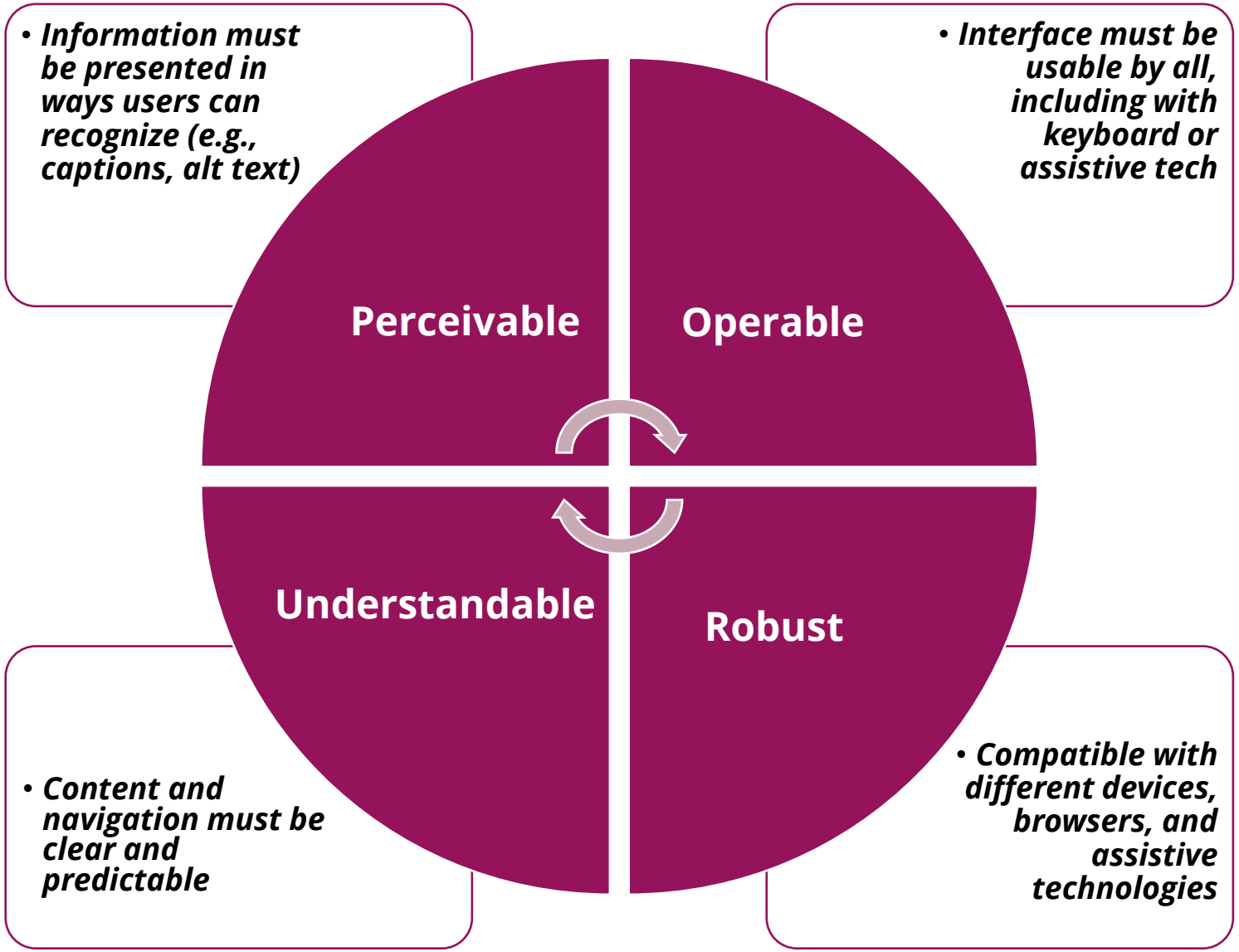


- Disabilities are diverse: visual, hearing, mobility, cognitive, neurodivergence
- Needs vary across physical & digital environments
- One size does not fit all — accessibility ≠ just compliance
- Universal Design: benefits everyone, not only those with disabilities
- Co-design with students: “Nothing about us without us”

Accessibility & Compliance



Principles of Accessible Design (POUR)



Common Accessibility Barriers

Low color contrast

Missing alt text for images

Poor font choice / small text size

Lack of captions

Inaccessible audio/video content

Interfaces requiring fine mouse control

No keyboard navigation support

Complex navigation or cluttered layouts

Jargon-heavy or unclear content

Time-limited tasks without flexibility

Websites/apps incompatible with assistive tech (e.g., screen readers)

Mobile-unfriendly design

Accessibility in Practice: Effective Alternative Text

❌ Poor Examples

No Alt Text:
Screen reader says "Image."

Vague Alt Text:
"People."

Over-Described Alt Text:

"A young man with glasses wearing a blue checkered shirt is typing on a silver laptop covered in stickers while two women ... [etc.]."

✓ Good Examples

Useful Alt Text:

"Three colleagues collaborating around a laptop during a meeting."

Context-Specific Alt Text:

"Colleagues working together on a laptop, representing teamwork."

Accessibility in practice: Sufficient Color Contrast

This is sample text in low contrast

This is sample text in low contrast

This is sample text in low contrast

Bad Contrast Examples

This is sample text with proper contrast

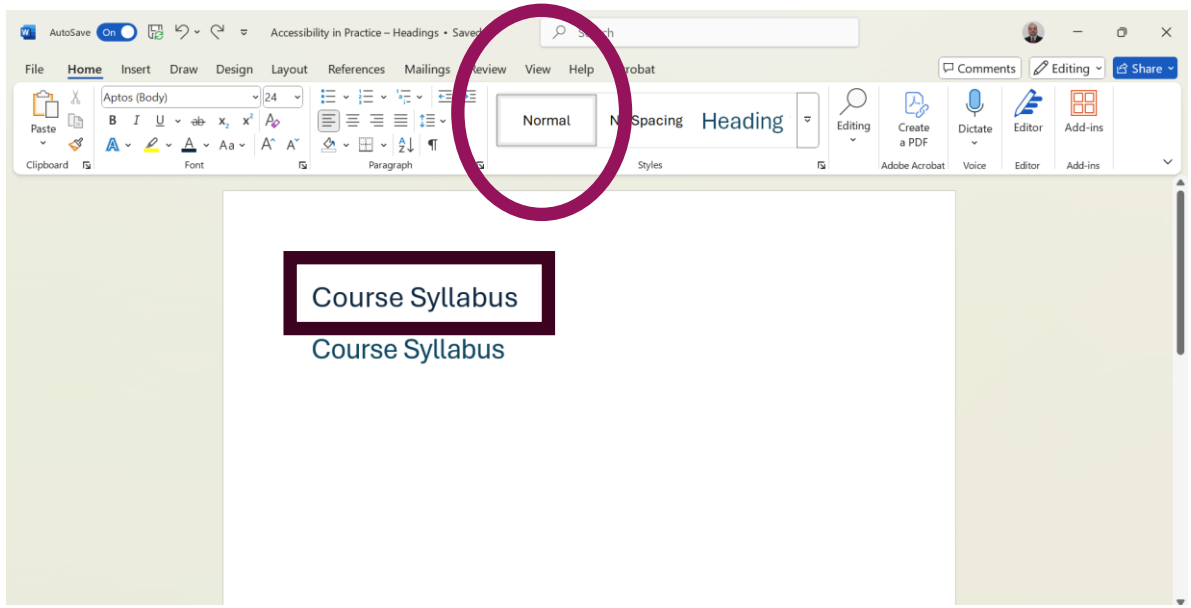
This is sample text with proper contrast

This is sample text with proper contrast

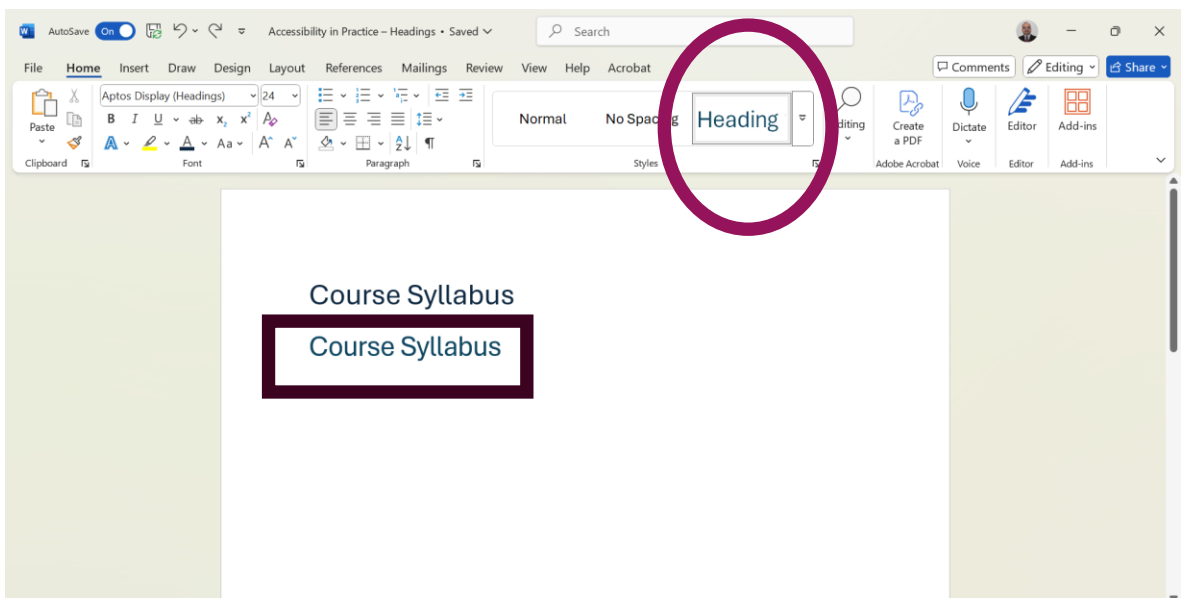
Good Contrast Examples

Accessibility in practice: Headings For Structure

✗ Poor Example



✓ Good Example



Accessibility in practice: Descriptive Links

❌ **Poor Example**

Click here

✔ **Good Example**

Click here to go to Accessibility Tools & Resources slide

Accessibility in practice: Clear Language

Poor Example

Students must demonstrate interdisciplinary metacognition aligned to institutional paradigms

Students are required to furnish comprehensive expository documentation delineating their epistemological framework and methodological justifications within a fortnight of project initiation

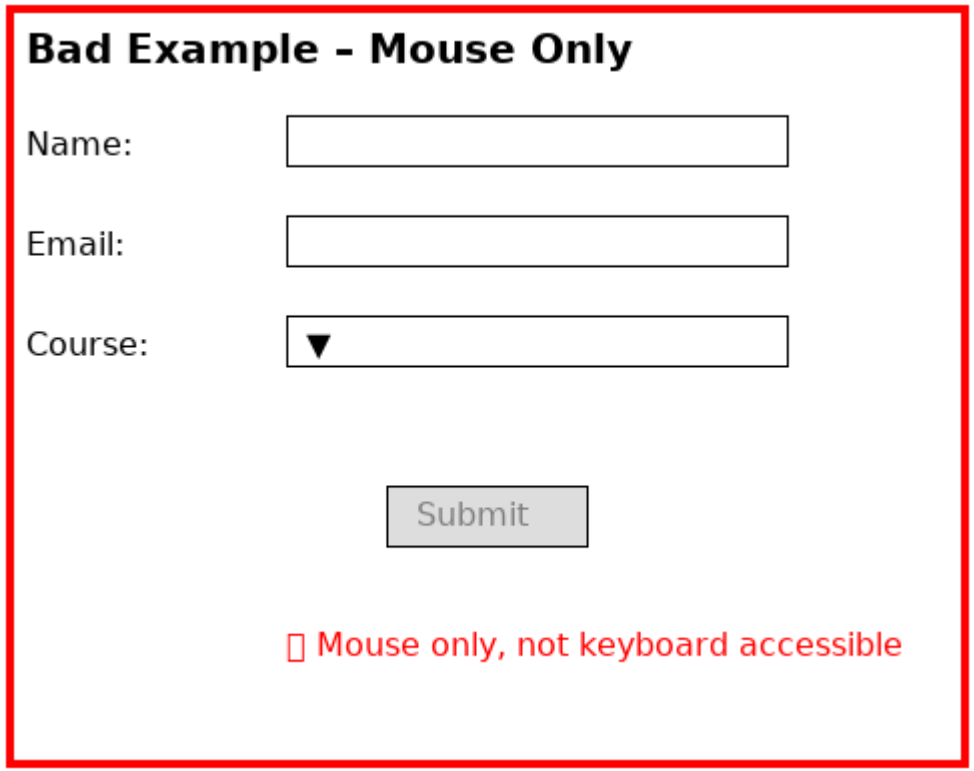
Good Example

Students should explain how their learning connects across subjects

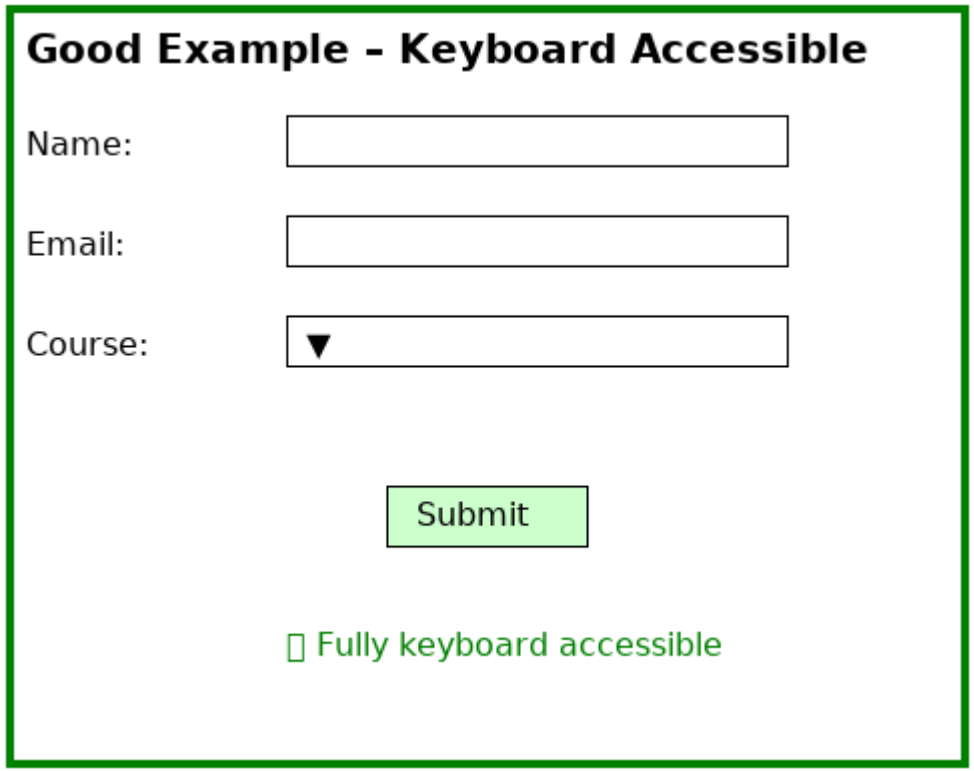
Students must submit a 2-page paper explaining their research approach and methods within two weeks of starting the project

Accessibility in practice: Flexible Interaction

✗ Poor Example

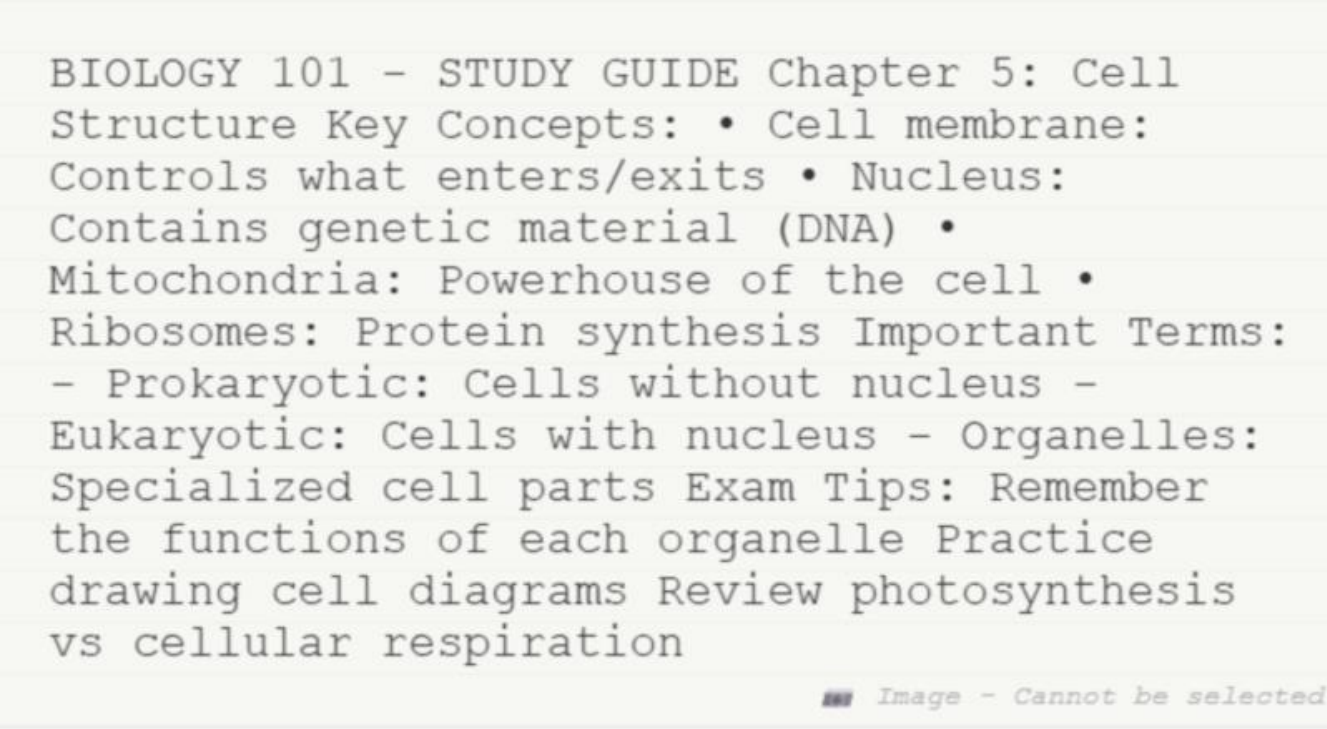


✓ Good Example



Accessibility in practice: Compatible Content

✗ Poor Example



✓ Good Example

BIOLOGY 101 - STUDY GUIDE

Chapter 5: Cell Structure

Key Concepts:

- **Cell membrane:** Controls what enters/exits
- **Nucleus:** Contains genetic material (DNA)
- **Mitochondria:** Powerhouse of the cell
- **Ribosomes:** Protein synthesis

Important Terms:

- **Prokaryotic:** Cells without nucleus
- **Eukaryotic:** Cells with nucleus
- **Organelles:** Specialized cell parts
- **Exam Tips:**

1. Remember the functions of each organelle
2. Practice drawing cell diagrams
3. Review photosynthesis vs cellular respiration

Accessibility Tools & Resources

Built-in tools

- Microsoft Accessibility Checker (Word, PPT, Excel)
- Google Docs Accessibility Features
- Adobe Acrobat Accessibility Checker

Testing Tools

- WAVE (Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool)
- axe DevTools
- Color Contrast Analyzer

Guidelines & References

- WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)
- Section 508 (U.S.)
- ADA Title II & III (higher-ed impact

Helpful Sites

- W3C WAI (Web Accessibility Initiative)
- A11Y Project (checklists, tutorials)

From Awareness to Action: The Road Ahead

Today We Covered	**Accessibility = equity + compliance + better experience for all**
	Small steps (headings, alt text, contrast, captions) → big impact
	Everyone shares responsibility: faculty, staff, students, IT
	Accessibility is not extra work—it's good design

If there's one thing you take away today, it's this:
Accessibility isn't about checklists—it's about people

Accessibility Deep Dive: Upcoming Sessions

Session 2: Image description & alt text

Session 3: Video accessibility

Session 4: On-page content accessibility

Session 5: PDF tagging & accessible documents

Q& A

THANKS

Source

1) 96% of American Colleges Deny Equal Access to Disabled - AAAtraq

2) Study Shows Equity Gap in Classroom Tech for Students With Disabilities - govtech

3) Report: Almost All Disabled Students Lack Access to College Readiness Programs – The 74

4) Faculty Survey Shows Need for Digital Accessibility Support - insidehighered

Click here to go to Why Accessibility Matters slide?