


**MEMORANDUM**

Monday, June 9, 2014

TO: Mr. Scott Honea  
Interim Associate Vice President and Chief Information Officer

FROM: Mr. David Sweeney   
Chair, GoogleApps Accessibility Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: GoogleApps Accessibility Recommendations

With the recent decision to move students to Google Applications for Education (GoogleApps), care must be taken when using these tools to fulfill the mission of the institution. While GoogleApps demonstrate high utility, care must be taken to avoid using them in such a manner that would disenfranchise members of the university community, especially individuals with disabilities.

While Google has demonstrated improvements in accessibility, much work remains to make the experience acceptable and equitable for individuals who have disabilities. Google email and calendar are accessible with standard assistive technologies. Google Docs and Drive, Chat, Sites, and other collaborative technologies in the Google suite do not work well with standard assistive technologies.

Consequently, these tools should not be **required** to fulfill instructional or work-related tasks. They may be used, but only in concert with a plan to allow the activity to be completed with an alternative accessible technology, in the event an accommodations request is made. Considering an alternative after an accommodations request is made is not an acceptable strategy.

The following priority recommendations are offered:

- Disseminate a memo to faculty and staff advising them on the appropriate use of GoogleApps. In particular, students should not be required to use GoogleApps outside of email and calendar for their coursework
- Disseminate a memo to students and employees that emphasizes the University's commitment to equal opportunity and equal access; provide a point of contact to receive help configuring client systems (e.g., Outlook and Mac Mail) for email and calendar access, as well as information on requesting accommodations, if appropriate
- Create a workflow for HDC and ITS to handle GoogleApps issues of accessibility
- Create a mechanism for the university community to provide feedback on GoogleApps issues. A central repository for this information would be helpful
- Create internal processes for IT support staff (e.g., Help Desk Central, College IT Help Desks, etc.) to help assistive technology users configure Google Mail and Calendar with desktop clients

Some non-priority recommendations are also offered:

- Include accessibility considerations in any online help documentation for GoogleApps at TAMU (e.g., <http://google.ncsu.edu/>)
- Incorporate accessibility considerations into any future GoogleApps training offered to faculty by Instructional Technology Services (ITS)
- Communicate accessibility requirements to GoogleApps support team (ongoing)
- Create a resource that is routinely updated (perhaps wiki) that catalogs accessibility issues of the GoogleApps suite. Ideally, this would be hosted by Google and could be accessed by any institution.
- Create a resource that lists alternative products to use when GoogleApps utilities can't be used.