



Office of the President

Nathan O. Hatch
President

June 30, 2016

The Honorable Lamar Alexander, Chairman
US Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John P. Kline, Chairman
US House Committee on Education and the Workforce
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Alexander and Chairman Kline:

I write about a pressing issue that I hope you will join me in working to address. Technology has transformed the way we facilitate the teaching and learning process, and when it comes to students with disabilities, this transformation offers countless possibilities. For example, before modern technology, the only way to make print material accessible to a blind student was by modifying the text into a format like Braille or audio; this equivalent facilitation was sufficient, but it was burdensome. The digital world allows us to bypass these processes and invest in mainstream systems that are accessible to everyone.

Despite the advances modern technology offers in supporting students with disabilities, more progress can be made. To further support students with disabilities and educational institutions in their efforts to provide equal access in today's classrooms, developers must explore accessibility solutions. For this to happen, schools must learn what accessibility looks like and then streamline the demand for it. If more schools are ever going to gain this knowledge and start collaborating, we need direction from national experts. I learned from my students that there are indeed national efforts to develop accessibility guidelines for material used in higher education, and Wake Forest supports this initiative. The educational technology market is a national market, and our obligations to provide equal access come from the federal government. The creation of a purpose based commission comprised of leaders in higher education and developers from the technology sector that can explore the development of national guidelines is a solution that spreads knowledge about accessibility and stimulates the market, ensuring broader commitment to digital equality.

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
The Honorable John P. Kline
June 30, 2016
Page 2

I urge you to consider the establishment of this commission, whose work on development of national guidelines can stimulate systemic change in a way that enforcement actions are unable to. I also ask you to think globally about what will help us in our quest to provide equal access for students with disabilities, and how increased leadership in the area of accessibility can serve higher education's interests.

I also invite other institutions to collaborate with one another in efforts to incorporate an accessibility policy and criteria for procurement that will relieve administrative burdens and reduce accommodations costs. This process includes engaging students with disabilities and national consumer groups in our policy planning conversations. I have learned that the best way to meet the needs of blind and other students with disabilities is by talking to them directly.

I look forward to taking our objectives to the next level. Together, we can change the landscape for students with disabilities. I hope you will support these initiatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nathan O. Hatch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nathan" being the most prominent part.

Nathan O. Hatch
President