TU Faculty and Lecturers,

Are you using Blackboard to share documents with your students or to facilitate an online course this semester? Do you strive to make your learning resources accessible to all of your students?

If “yes,” the Office of Technology Services is looking for faculty and lecturers to partner with us as we continue to pilot the Blackboard Accessibility Tool to help make our campus even more inclusive. The Tool was piloted in fall 2018 by a small group of faculty, and we are expanding the pilot for the spring. Ultimately, the Tool will be part of a larger accessibility toolkit, and faculty input is critical to OTS as we research additional tools and support strategies.

What is the Blackboard Accessibility Tool?
The Blackboard Accessibility Tool is a product integrated into Blackboard that helps make course content more accessible. Focused on inclusivity, sustainability, and automation, the Blackboard Accessibility Tool helps you understand and tackle accessibility to the benefit of all students.

What does the Blackboard Accessibility Tool do?
The Tool features many capabilities:

- Automatically generates alternate forms of documents (HTML, plain text, audio, etc.)
- Checks course content against industry-standard accessibility guidelines
- Delivers in-context feedback and guidance to help increase your skills to create accessible content
- Provides comprehensive reporting to help you track your progress from term-to-term

....and so much more!

What skills do I need to be part of the pilot group?
The Blackboard Accessibility Tool is designed for use by anyone that uses Blackboard as an instructor, regardless of level of one’s technical skillset. Pilot members ranging from someone who is just hearing about digital accessibility for the first time to faculty that teach courses on the subject are welcome to participate.

I’m interested. What sort of commitment would this entail?
You will need to attend a one hour training session with OTS, and we will have several time slots to choose from. As part of this training session, you will identify one or more courses for this semester where you would like to turn the Tool on. After the training session, our only expectation would be to review the Tool’s findings and features throughout the semester. At the end of the semester, OTS will reach out to you to collect some feedback via a survey on the Tool, as well as what other accessibility toolkit needs your department may have, and possibly a short follow-up conversation.

I want to sign up, have questions, or have someone to recommend participate.
Thank you for your interest! We are accepting new pilot members until February 20, 2019. Email otsaccessibility@towson.edu or call Brent Davis, OTS’ Digital Accessibility Analyst at 704-6456 to join our pilot group or ask any questions.