ALLY
Inclusive Learning Series
Research Insights from the Ally Community

Fix Your Content Day: An Impact on Inclusion for GAAD 2020

May 21st, 2020 marked the 9th annual **Global Accessibility Awareness Day** (GAAD) and the first ever Blackboard Ally **Fix Your Content Day** challenge. Colleges and universities enrolled in the challenge to see which institution could improve the accessibility of the most course files using Blackboard Ally. In the lead up to the challenge, institutions planned their strategy and prepared for the day.

When the clock struck May 21st in the first timezone on Earth (Kiribati), the global Leaderboard launched and the competition began. Leveraging usage data from Ally, the Leaderboard ranked each participating institution by their total number of files improved out of their total number of students. The Leaderboard also tallied the total number of files improved across all Ally users. The challenge lasted until May 21st ended in the last timezone on Earth, at which point, the winning institutions were announced.

Fix Your Content Day Numbers

425+ Institutions registered at least one file improved globally

4,882 Courses with at least one file improved

59 Institutions represented on the Leaderboard

5 Continents, 6 Countries, and 18 U.S States participated

57,252 Total files improved (82.5% of fixes by Leaderboard participants)

2,603 Avg. files improved for Top-15 Leaderboard finishers

.76 Avg. files improved per student for Top-15 Leaderboard finishers

4,205 Files improved in one peak hour and **over 1.5** per second

45,329 Images improved

5,259 PDFs improved

4,729 Word Docs improved

1,935 Presentations improved

Fix Your Content Days Champion Clubs

Diamond Club
(>1.4 fixes per student or >4,000 fixes)
- Coastal Pines Technical College (Georgia, USA)
- Oconee Fall line Technical College (Georgia, USA)
- York St. John University (United Kingdom)
- California State University, Chico (CA, USA)

Gold Club
(>1 fixes per student or >2,000 fixes)
- Medical University of South Carolina (S.C., USA)
- Lanier Technical College (Georgia, USA)
- California State University San Marcos (CA, USA)
- Utah State University (Utah, USA)
- Southern Crescent Technical College (Georgia, USA)

Silver Club
(>.5 fixes per student or >1,000 fixes)
- Charles Darwin University (Australia)
- Concordia University Texas (Texas, USA)
- Northwest Florida State College (Florida, USA)
- Augusta Technical College (Georgia, USA)
- Southern Regional Technical College (Georgia, USA)
- Texas A&M International University (Texas, USA)
- British University in Dubai (United Arab Emirates)
- Coastal Carolina University (S.C., USA)

Bronze Club
(>.1 fixes per student or >500 fixes)
- McDowell Technical Community College (N.C., USA)
- University of North Dakota (N.D., USA)
- College of DuPage (Illinois, USA)
- University of Houston (Texas, USA)
- Riverside Community College District (CA, USA)
- Wiregrass Georgia Technical College (Georgia, USA)

Fix Your Content Day Grand Champions

Most fixes per student

1	Coastal Pines Technical College (3rd in total fixes)	1.98
2	Oconee Fall Line Technical College	1.41
3	Lanier Technical College	1.40

Most total fixes

1	California State University, Chico	6,023
2	York St. John University	4,549
3	Medical University of South Carolina (4th in total fixes)	3,549

Regional Champions

North America
Coastal Pines Technical College

Middle East
British University in Dubai

Latin America
Universidad Carlos Albizu

Australia
Charles Darwin University

Europe
York St. John University

State System Champion
Technical College System of Georgia

FIX YOUR CONTENT DAY

Exploring the Effects of a Global Leaderboard on Ally Usage

Gamifying Accessibility

Motivating desired behaviors through gamification elements such as achievement badges and competitive leaderboards has become a common engagement strategy in digital applications. In an effort to further motivate users to address accessibility issues with course content, the **Fix Your Content Day** challenge implemented a global Leaderboard that visualized data events from Blackboard Ally to spark a competition among participating institutions to "fix the most files through Ally." Each time a user successfully improved the accessibility of a course file during the 48 hours of GAAD (counting all time zones), their institution received one point on the Leaderboard. To account for institution size, each institution was ranked by their total number of files improved out of their total number of students. This paper analyzes how the presence of the Leaderboard influenced engagement with Ally's Instructor Feedback tools by comparing data events during the Fix your Content Day challenge with the same data events over the prior year.

? *How did the Fix your Content Day challenge and Leaderboard influence engagement with Ally's Instructor Feedback tools?*

? *How did the Fix your Content Day challenge impact accessibility at the participating institutions?*

Assessing the Scale of Impact

The line graph represents the overall hour by hour files improved during the challenge, with a peak of **4,205 files improved** on May 21st at 2PM PDT (one hour). By comparison, the average number of files improved per day (24 hours) during 2020 was **3,331**. The prior record for most fixes in a span of 48 hours was **11,083 files improved** set in April 2020, compared to the **57,252 files improved during the challenge.** Institutions that finished in the top-15 of the Leaderboard rankings had an average total of **810 files improved** between January 1st and May 5th, 2020. During the challenge, those same 15 institutions had an average of **2,603 files improved**.

Given that 81% of the participating institutions were in U.S. time zones, the rise and peaks over the 50 hours mostly align with standard business hours, except for the sudden surge in activity at 7PM on the 21st. Whereas hourly engagement with the Instructor Feedback on a typical day tends to steadily decline after 12PM, the burst in activity after standard business hours is evidence that the desire to achieve a high ranking on the Leaderboard motivated engagement beyond the typical work day. This "after hours" commitment is especially evident in the first place finisher, with peak activity after 10PM (their local time) and final burst of activity at 6AM (their local time) to ensure the victory. Remarkably, the fourth place finisher had 16 straight hours with at least five files improved, **averaging 220 files fixed per hour** during their steady climb into the top-5.
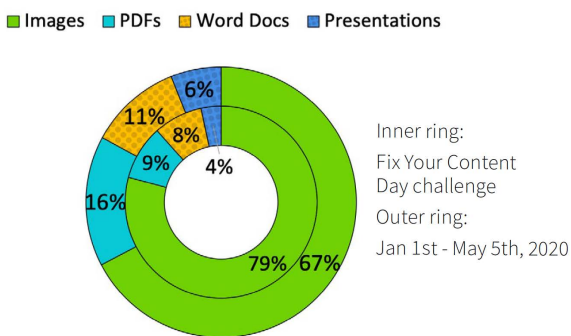
Hourly Rate of Files Improved during the Challenge: Total Fixes

*All times reported in U.S. Pacific Time

Cumulative Files Improved per Student each Hour of the Challenge: Top-6 Finishers
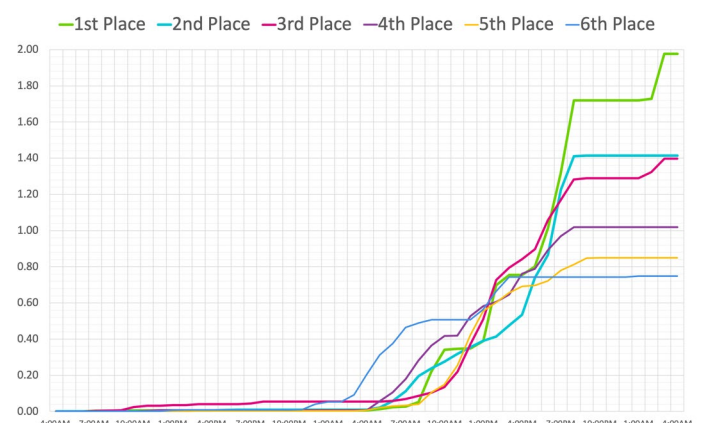
Effect on File Remediation Practices

The number of fixes and hours spent fixing compared to previous time periods both suggest that the challenge had a significant impact on engagement. Given gamification elements tend to reward quantitative achievement without qualitative oversight, it is important to consider how the challenge and Leaderboard may have shifted existing file remediation practices. The donut charts below illustrate the percent breakdown of the types of files improved during the challenge compared to the previous four months.

Comparing Percentage of Files Improved: Fix Your Content Day and Previous Four Months

Images **PDFs** **Word Docs** **Presentations**

6%
11%
8%
9%
4%
16%
79% 67%

Inner ring:
Fix Your Content Day challenge
Outer ring:
Jan 1st - May 5th, 2020

Images are typically regarded as the "easiest" and fastest file to improve because image descriptions can be added directly through the Instructor Feedback. For most institutions, missing image descriptions is also their most prevalent accessibility issue. Both of these factors help explain why adding image descriptions increased as a percentage of the file fixing activities during the challenge. The percentage of fixed images marked as "decorative" actually decreased by two percentage points during the challenge. Since marking images as decorative would be faster than typing a text description, this slight decrease provides some evidence that the gamification did not alter typical practices for fixing accessibility issues with images.

On the other hand, PDFs tend to have the most complex accessibility issues to fix, and so predictably had the largest percent decrease during the challenge. As with marking an image as decorative, one fast way to circumvent fully remediating a PDF that could have been exploited during the challenge is adding a "Library Reference." However, as a percentage of total PDFs fixed during the challenge compared to the previous four months, the number of Library References added also remained consistent.
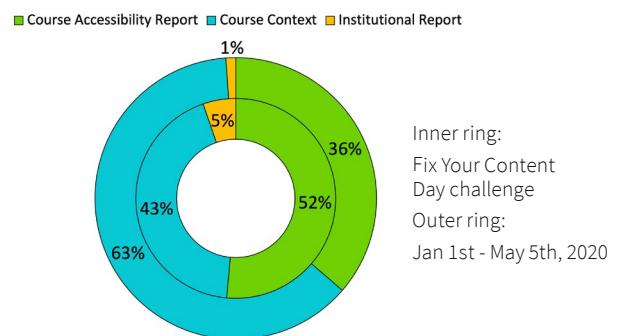
Barbara Taylor
@bltmacomb

California State University, San Marcos

We are thrilled at how many files we could remediate today and celebrate the success of everyone participating. All our students benefit from the hard work we all put in to move the needle. #udl matters. Let's strive to #FixYourContent daily.

Comparing Tools Used for Fixing Files: Fix Your Content Day and Previous Four Months

Course Accessibility Report **Course Context** **Institutional Report**

1%
5%
36%
43%
52%
63%

Inner ring:
Fix Your Content Day challenge
Outer ring:
Jan 1st - May 5th, 2020

The donut charts above compare the tools used to fix files during the challenge with the four months prior. More files were fixed during the challenge through the **Course Accessibility Report** (CAR) than through the course context, consistent with previous findings in the research series that the CAR plays a more central role in courses with the most fixed files. The increased percentage of fixes made directly through the **Institutional Report** may reflect a more prominent role played by administrative teams fixing files for their respective institutions to help improve their ranking on the Leaderboard.

Making an Impact on Inclusive Education One File at a Time

During Fix Your Content Day, participants appear to have been motivated to improve the accessibility of their course materials, contribute to the spirit of Global Accessibility Awareness Day, and achieve eternal Ally Community glory on the Leaderboard, striking a careful balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. While there is general consensus that equity and access are important educational values, content accessibility can be easily forgotten among many other competing priorities. Mobilizing a campus initiative such as this to bring awareness and excitement to digital accessibility seems to have catalyzed (at least for the duration of the challenge) a greater commitment to accessibility. Institutions may employ such a gamification model to develop their own internal Fix your Content challenges, such as between departments or colleges.