Hello. I'm Scott Ready,

and thank you for joining us today

for EduALL: Back To School Edition.

This session is Key Learnings from Going Fully Online.

So that you know, we're featuring

Verbit's live integration with Zoom today that

enables you to view

a live transcript throughout the sessions.

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you can click on the arrow next to the CC button,

on the button menu bar,

and then click "View Full Transcript."

With me, I have two leaders in

this space that are here to share with us today.

I'm very excited to introduce you to these two.

Nazely, would you introduce

yourself and then we'll go to Korey?

Hi everyone. My name is

Nazely Kurkjian and I am the Coordinator of Disability,

Diversity, and Nontraditional Student Services

at the State University of New York.

Hi everyone. My name is Korey Singleton.

I manage the Assistive Technology Initiative

at George Mason University.

We're about 30 minutes outside of Fairfax,

Virginia, and I'm very excited to be here. Thank you.

Well, I'm very excited

today that we have the opportunity to hear how

things have been taking place

and what this change has incorporated.

The agenda for this session is first of all,

Going Remote: The SUNY and the George Mason Perspectives,

Common Challenges from Going Online,

Opportunities Presented from Online Environments,

Addressing Engagement of Students Learning Online,

and Specific Technologies that

are Fueling Experiences Effectively.

When we look at online learning, offerings have really

grown as how we are able to deliver education.

This was actually prior to COVID, but since COVID,

we're able to really look

at the opportunities that are being

presented and being able to

capitalize on those opportunities.

Some of the online learning that's not new

is the trends that we're seeing that

is shifted to online learning and

mobile that were prior to the virus.

As you can tell with the gray hair, old enough

to remember when online learning was even

first introduced and how

that shift has taken place over the last several years,

the last 20 years.

As of June, 50 percent of

higher-ed students had taken

an online course in the past year.

More than three-fourths of

the US higher-ed institutions and

students were relying on Blackboard or Canvas,

Moodle or D2L Brightspace platforms.

The increase of retention rates,

which I think is something that really speaks

strongly to all of us in education,

is that eLearning and online learning offerings were

increasing retention rates by 25-60 percent.

So we're looking at trends that really are

providing opportunities for our students to engage.

We like to ask your participation.

We have a poll that we're going to ask you,

and this is a multiple choice,

you can answer more than one.

It's not limited to just one.

But in your opinion,

what is the primary challenge that's facing

higher-ed students learning online currently?

Again, you can choose more than one,

so don't feel like your limited to just one option.

Very good, we're seeing a 32-percent response rate.

Oh, it's going up.

We're up to 44 percent.

Some of you might be having a hard time choosing,

go ahead and select.

Excellent. We're seeing that the results show that

64 percent said that technology issues were

the overwhelming challenge that

is facing higher-ed students.

Right behind that, at 57 percent,

was a tie for Zoom or web conferencing

fatigue and the lack of

in-person dialogue and collaboration.

Very interesting.

Thank you for participating in the poll

and sharing what your experiences are.

Now let's transition and discuss about the key learnings

from needed versus nice-to-have

in the online learning offerings.

This is where I really want to

hear from both of our co-presenters

today as to where is

this experience taking place at your institutions?

Great. Thank you so much, Scott.

To echo what you were saying before,

we have been greatly expanding

our distance education offerings

at SUNY, and Korey shared

with me as well at GMU,

but the pandemic really required all of us to

go online and that

required more flexibility and understanding of our students and colleagues. We anticipated that students who previously did not disclose to our institutions may request accommodation in this new learning environment and we knew that they may not easily be able to retrieve documentation from their secondary schools or medical providers. Many of our faculty never expected to teach online either, and so we all had to quickly familiarize ourselves with online teaching methods, both synchronous and asynchronous, and the accessibility challenges or benefits of one of the other methods. So all departments and all perspectives were constantly adapting. In the context of student disability services, some of our offices were more prepared to operate remotely than others. Some offices had home grown or data management systems that made it seamless to provide their operations at a distance and other offices who had largely paper based operations, struggled a bit more to move everything online and that was new for their students as well.

To add, we had to

re-imagine traditional accommodations such as

note takers that may not be

necessary or looks different in an online environment.

For us, proctoring exams

was the most disruptive change for us.

Typically this service is provided to faculty for

those who teach in person

through the Disability Services office,

and with the transition to remote learning,

that responsibility largely fell in the professors' lap.

So they had to do things like learn how to extend time

on exams and quizzes in the learning management system.

I'll add to what Nazely was saying.

A lot of what we saw from the faculty and

student perspective really fell

into just a discomfort with using technology.

There are a lot of faculty members

who have never really taught online,

as Nazely mentioned, were

never expecting to teach online.

So for them to have to

quickly switch from a course that was designed

totally to be face to face in a brick and mortar sense to

an online environment in

a synchronous manner, was really difficult.

They found that difficult in the sense

that I think there was this community move to say,

''Let's just get through the spring semester.''

So everything that was pushed at that point in time was

focused on synchronous instruction,

trying to keep it as seamless as possible,

and then we'll deal with asynchronous once we

get to the summer months and heading into the fall,

and that's where we are now.

So we see the challenges.

You're on mute there.

I'm so sorry. Dog was barking.

Work from home issues.

We saw quite a bit of challenges going online,

and I think, to

come off of what Korey was saying, the scaling,

and we all just needed to move

everything very quickly and get

it to a place where

everyone in all these different parts of New York state,

with all of these different kinds of devices

and things, were quite challenging.

Disability services, or our information technology units,

perhaps, didn't offer the same assistive technologies

remotely to students or the computers that we sent to

our student maybe didn't have

those assistive technologies on those devices,

and so access to technology in general,

and especially remote access to

assistive technology were challenging for us,

and then the barriers

with the scaling of some of the platforms we were using

in the literal accessibility of some of

those telecommunication technologies and

other kinds of platforms that we needed to use

to switch out what we would do in person,

like workshops and webinars, or yeah, workshops

and trainings for webinars and virtual engagement.

What I'll add to that is that we

noticed while there was

this huge shift online at George Mason,

George Mason had been doing a lot in terms of

online instruction

for probably about eight or nine years now,

there had been a lot of heavy investment in that area.

There was already infrastructure in place to

support captioning and transcription.

Designing of asynchronous courses.

It just wasn't scaled up to 5,000 courses, for example.

You may have had 1,000 courses that were online,

but now you do try and figure out how to

support up to 5,000 different courses moving online.

The number of resources that you need to have,

the number of staff members, instructional designers,

and other types of support staff in place to support

this quick move was just daunting for everybody.

But interestingly, from an assistive technology,

and ICT or Information and Communications Technology

accessibility perspective,

around like captioning and transcription.

New third-party software solutions.

Document accessibility, in essence,

making Word, PowerPoint, and PDF documents accessible.

We didn't see huge numbers in the spring,

and that was because as

our Center for Teaching and Faculty Excellence and

our Office of Digital Learning folks

put in place these course development primers,

which were these, essentially,

these primers to help faculty members

with learning how to transition their

face to face courses to an online environment.

A lot of those didn't start happening until May.

There was a lot of discussion and

preparation in March and April,

but they didn't really happen until May.

But we've seen huge jumps in

the summer in the amount of money that we

spend on captioning and transcription,

the amount of time and effort we

put into remediating Word,

PowerPoint, and PDF documents.

Those shifts didn't show up in our spring numbers,

but in our summer, and fall numbers,

they've been through the roof.

Yeah, I would agree, and that definitely presents

an opportunity for accessibility in our profession.

Obviously, being online inherently

provides the ability to reach more people.

Because space is not so much an issue on some

of these teleconferencing platforms.

We can have 100 people,

500 people or more,

and so SUNY was also very innovative and offered

extensive faculty and

professional development workshop for

improving the accessibility of documents and videos,

and delivery methods, and

reviewing the accessibility of third party products.

It really brought us closer together and empowered us to

brainstorm solutions that will definitely improve

the experiences for our students

and colleagues this fall.

I'll also add that

beyond disability services and faculty,

this has really reached student affairs,

admissions, and other campus offices

has increased their accessibility awareness,

and so they've started reaching out to us

asking what statements they can offer,

what accessibility services exist,

contracts or agreements that we have to ensure

that there's equal participation

in their offerings as well.

I'll just add one more thing

on because we had to move online,

our disability services offices and

other departments who also heavily rely on paper,

have certainly improved the technology and

digital offerings to enable

students and professionals to do

their jobs more effectively at home.

I'll agree. There was so much forgiveness

happening in those March and April Months.

There was just a whole lot of community building happened,

a lot of rallying happened to make sure

that people were able to get through the semester,

not only in the faculty and staff side,

but just definitely on the student side, obviously.

That flexibility was a huge part

of what made getting

through the end of the semester a success.

It's certainly been the case now as we have moved through

the summer months and start to transition into the fall,

just understanding where people are.

A lot of our students who are not in

situations where they can just turn on the camera

and sit at some room

alone and just start engaging in the course.

Some of them may not have a camera at home,

some of them may not have working technology at home,

and in many cases, or they may not have

access to WiFi as easily as some others.

We have a number of non-traditional students.

Of course with kids being home,

they're also trying to take classes while you have,

in my case, a five and

a seven year old running around being loud,

but we're all in that same boat.

I think that there's a lot

of sense of community that's come in with that.

But some of the things we did here on our campus was

there are a lot of students who did not feel

as engaged at the end of the spring semester,

they didn't feel as a part of

the course once everything transitioned online.

Some of the strategies that we

talked to faculty members about engaging

students is not only in how they develop and

transition a face to face course

to an online environment,

and how you build that to be

an engaging asynchronous course

with discussions and all kinds of other things,

but also just simple things like checking in students,

sending an email, reaching out to

individuals directly or even

having small group meetings and

sessions so that students feel like they

have an opportunity to talk to

the faculty member in not just

engage through email or

engage through some large discussion group.

Those are some of the things and then

also just best practices.

Naza and I had talked about this a lot early on.

Some of the things we've focused on,

when we talked about accessible course design

were not necessarily around assistive technology,

or how that engaged with a website, or anything like that,

but just providing descriptions for images.

Very basic things about who benefits from captions.

Not just those who may be deaf or hard of hearing.

But we have a huge number of students,

international students,

who also take advantage of the captionings.

We have a huge number of

faculty members who speak English as a second language,

who like to have

captions for those students who may not always

understand what they're saying

at different points in the course.

Certainly when you get into

a very difficult subject matter and things like that.

Those are a lot of the key points we pulled out.

I know Nazely has some thoughts as well.

Yeah, Korey. I think you hit on all of them.

I think that our students were definitely overwhelmed,

perhaps distracted in their environment.

There's a lot going on in the world at this time,

and so that, the inflexibility and

compassion is what we've been

emphasizing to our faculty and professionals.

Working with students individually

now more than ever to ensure

that they can meet the learning objectives in

this course with what they have at home.

I think this is a great opportunity for us also

to have deeper conversations with faculty about

what's required in the courses.

Things like attendance and what

formats things are submitted in.

Really re-imagine how to best

meet the needs of

different learners with different styles

and how they manage their time.

I think that that was really

great for us to be able to engage

our faculty about how

to design different test assessments,

authentic assessments,

and so that was something that we did as well.

In terms of specific technologies

feeling effective online instruction.

In addition to the existing

academic technologies that we used,

such as early alert tools,

campuses added trainings to promote the use of,

we have Ally on many of

our campuses through the learning management system,

which helps faculty identify

the accessibility conformance of

some of their electronic materials,

and also utilization of

built-in accessibility features and

other kinds of services,

such as with our captioning providers

and document remediation services

within campus supported platforms.

We were in a similar boat.

We just implemented Ally, so

we've been piloting it

since the beginning of the spring session,

and we're planning a for a full roll out in the fall,

but one of the things we've tried to do,

we handled document remediation in-house.

So for example, with Ally,

while it may point to a number of different things,

with so many different things

going on for our faculty members right now,

as far as learning how

to move a face-to-face course to an online course,

and just engaging in an online platform in general.

We've tried to minimize

the number of things that they have to think about.

So for example, with Ally,

some of the easiest things to do are to go ahead and

add alternative text descriptions to the images.

So start there and then the next thing we can

do is help you with adding

alternative text descriptions for example,

to documents that you may have in your course.

So trying to help them

navigate some of those simple things,

so that accessibility doesn't feel like

this whole other thing that

they have to tackle as they move into

the fall have been some of the things we needed to do.

We've also taken a look

at a lot of third party applications,

because the number of faculty members

are wanting to provide

more engaging types of tools in the classroom.

So we've looked at things like GoReact,

looked that some of the other publishing platforms,

and tested those for accessibility to

identify where there are

particular challenges around a lot of these things.

So there's been a huge move towards interactive tools.

Another example would be like H5P,

which has a lot of interactive question types,

that you can embed directly

within a learning management system.

So we have a number of faculty members using those,

and it's trying to guide

them towards those that are accessible,

and those that we know will be

a particular challenge for students.

So we've tried to provide

a more targeted route for faculty members to move in.

We do not really have the power to say

no when it comes to accessible course design,

nor do I think we really want that power

for all of the heat that is going to

come back whenever you say no,

but we do want to make sure that we provide

guidance on where potential pitfalls and

accessibility challenges may come into play,

when you talk about working with individuals who may

have any type of learning challenge, for example.

I will just add, because

one of the questions that I saw in the Q&A,

that we also had to explore

the challenges of exam security software

as we scaled our online teaching.

That proctoring service, as I mentioned before,

that used to happen in person was no longer available,

and so we saw a lot of

faculty departments adopting exam security software,

whether they were lock down browsers, or monitors,

or live proctoring services and so there

were some challenges with that,

that we had to work on a case by case with

students to provide alternative accommodations.

Like Korey said, we can't really control,

at least at our institutions, what the faculty use

and how they design their courses,

but we can encourage them to

use exam practices that minimize instances of cheating.

Should they still feel the need to

use things like exam security software,

they may do that and work here to tell them

what the possible barriers to act may be,

and try to solve

any unique issues that may come

up with certain assistive technologies.

So at our institutions,

sometimes that means someone live

proctoring via Zoom or something like that.

That's how we've handled some of those situations.

Or purchase an entirely

different assistive technology that

does work with this kind of software.

Ditto.

Excellent. I so love the opportunity

to hear from other institutions

as to what's taking place,

and it really helps

everyone to feel that we're not in this alone,

we're not recreating, reinventing the wheel

that we are able to really glean from each other.

Participants, this is your opportunity.

This is your opportunity to ask two of

the experts in the field questions

and to pose situations that you're experiencing.

So please, in the Q&A

feature within Zoom, please post questions.

We have a few minutes left of this session,

where we'll be able to actually ask those questions.

Let me ask Danielle.

Do you have questions that have been posted yet?

If not, I have one.

Scott, I think let's start with your question just

because living and breathing the space.

Okay. How, at both SUNY and George Mason,

are you also addressing

the student engagement in non-academic events?

So the classroom is one aspect and

being able to ensure that students are able to

engage in their academic experience,

but there's still much more to that student life cycle,

then only the academics.

How are your institutions addressing this?

I'll go ahead and go first, if you want,

unless you want to take it.

Go ahead, Korey.

So one of the things, we've

gotten a lot of requests for how do we

handle live captioning for

any types of nonacademic events.

Obviously, there's a huge amount of cost that goes

into providing live

captioners, if you were

going to do something like that.

So an example would be we had a

career services fair back in May.

A huge, there were a bunch,

it was basically handled on some virtual platform.

I can't remember the name of it to save my life,

but there were a number of

different rooms, and every vendor had their own room,

every potential employer had their own room,

and basically, this platform did not

have support live captioning.

So one of the things we had to do

was be very aggressive about reaching out,

specifically to those individuals who we knew

might need live captions,

and saying please let us know beforehand so that

we can ensure you'd have access to which you need,

because it was such a fluid event,

and you can move from one room to the next fairly easily,

and it wasn't integrated in a platform.

We basically were able to set up a couple of students

with live transcribers that

pretty much followed them from room to room.

We had a blind and low vision student who participated as

well and the platform wasn't supported.

It did not support screen reader access,

but they did have call in numbers

for every particular vendor,

so that we can ensure the student had

as smooth an experience as possible.

But one thing they agreed to do was not

to ever use this platform again, going forward,

because of all the issues that we ran into,

and then had to try and find workarounds

for within a very short time frame.

So I think for any of those live events,

one of the things we've tried to do is

encourage there is a way for them to request,

for example, live captioning and

transcription for an individuals that need

an accommodation through our disability services office.

But for those who may be hosting events,

don't necessarily have a request

and want to be more inclusive,

we try to point them towards

some freely available automatic

transcription services out there,

like Web Captioner,

like what's built into Microsoft PowerPoint,

like what's built into Google Slides.

Things that you can do that

don't cost a whole lot of money,

and it shows that you're trying to be more inclusive,

and we call that live

captioning without a budget, essentially.

So obviously if someone's making a request,

you go and use a live transcriber and a paid service,

but if there is no request and you

want to be as inclusive as possible,

you can trust services like that.

Nazely, do you have anything that you'd like to add

in the last 30 seconds?

No. We pretty much do the same thing at SUNY,

we're encouraging folks to use

free or low cost built-in accessibility features,

such as the automated captioning and obviously to

provide CART or virtual

remote, video remote interpreting upon request.

Excellent. Nazely, Korey,

Thank you so much for your wisdom and sharing

what's taking place within

your organizations with all of us,

and we are going to wrap up this session

so that everybody can make

the transition into our next one,

which is Web Conferencing and

Online Learning: Tools and Security.

We have two excellent presenters in that session,

so let me encourage you to join us in

the next one by clicking on

the link that's in your agenda.

Thank you very much.