Resolution 39: Zoom Live Transcript
Implementation Request

Abstract: This resolution calls for the use of automatic live transcription (closed captioning) feature on all applicable academic zoom meetings to better accommodate students through the current and possible future online/remote learning period.

Sponsored by: Duncan Cady ‘23, Kate Santacruz ‘23
Reviewed by: 2/3 majority of Student Assembly voting members
Type of Action: Legislation
Originally Presented: 01/27/2022
Current Status: New Business

Whereas, Cornell University is currently holding all academic courses remotely, using the video conference software zoom, and the first two weeks of Spring 2022 instruction will take place in a virtual environment;

Whereas, Cornell prides itself in their mantra of “any person and any study” and must make sure that goes to ensure an inclusive educational environment for all students;

Whereas, automatic subtitles are often imprecise and may not necessarily correctly convey the material spoken, especially with complex academic topics;

Whereas, The most recent free and paid versions of zoom offers, including all versions of zoom being used at Cornell University, an automatic live transcription (closed captioning) feature that can be easily turned on in any zoom meeting in under two clicks and does not negatively affect any aspects of the meeting;

Whereas, Zoom describes this service as the following in a statement from October 2021: “auto-generated captions (also known as live transcription) are now available on all free Zoom Meetings accounts. This feature, which provides automatic captioning during a Zoom video call, is also available for paid Zoom Meetings and Zoom Video Webinars accounts. It’s important to us that everyone can successfully connect, communicate, and participate using Zoom. Without the proper accessibility tools, people with disabilities face tremendous barriers when using video communication solutions. That’s why we [Zoom] are focused on building out a platform that is accessible to everyone, and features such as auto-generated captions are an important part of that mission.”;
Whereas, Unlike other accessibility features Zoom offers including “Features like keyboard accessibility, pinning or spotlighting interpreter video, screen reader support, and voicemail transcription”, this accessibility feature must be turned on by the meeting host and can only be requested by meeting participants;

Whereas, Cornell University can further accommodate all kinds of students, learners, and participants in university-related zoom meetings by simply turning on this new feature that can be simply and in intrusively incorporated into any learning environment when beginning a zoom new meeting;

Whereas, this feature must be turned on individually before or at the beginning of an individual zoom meeting by the meeting host or co-host thus cannot automatically be implemented without teaching assistants, professors, faculty, and academic department heads being aware of this feature;

Whereas, This Zoom feature was introduced in late 2021, thus many members of the Cornell community, inducing many who may seek to benefit from this as an accommodation to students, including by not limited to, students with disabilities, students with inconsistent auto output set up in meetings, students without stable internet, etc. do not know about this feature;

Whereas, Similarly, many teaching assistants, professors, faculty, academic department heads, and college Deans likely do not know about this feature nor its potential benefits despite their best intentions;

Whereas, Cornell University’s Student Disability Services recognizes the importance of this accessibility feature as an accommodation not only specific to students with disabilities and see this feature as possibly beneficial in academic learning environments, advising students to request it should they be able to;

Whereas, The Student Assembly holds a unique relationship with the administration including faculty to requestion accommodations and increased accessibility in leaning environments for all students;

Be it therefore resolved, That President Pollack respectfully requests to teaching assistants, professors, faculty, and academic department heads that, when possible and not intrusive to the class material or learning environment, all in-class zoom meetings turn on automatic live transcription (closed captioning/meeting subtitles) and are recorded to be available for students and the appropriate parties after viewing;

Be it further resolved, That the Deans of the all-academic schools and colleges, including but not limited to Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS), Arts and Sciences (A&S), Dyson, Engineering, Art, Architecture, and Planning, Hotel Administration, Human Ecology, and Industrial and Labor Relations requests to their respective teaching assistants, professors, faculty, and academic department heads that, when possible and not intrusive to the class material or
learning environment, all in-class zoom meetings turn on automatic live transcription (closed captioning/meeting subtitles) and are recorded to be available for students and the appropriate parties after viewing;

**Be it further resolved,** that college or school-specific Student Assembly representatives formerly and respectfully request to the Deans of their respective schools that, when possible and not intrusive to the class material or learning environment, all in-class zoom meetings turn on automatic live transcription (closed captioning/meeting subtitles) and are recorded to be available for students and the appropriate parties after viewing;

**Be it finally resolved,** these requests sent out to turn on the automatic live transcription (closed captioning/meeting subtitles) feature be made at the earliest convenience and are sent out before the beginning of the second (2) week of instruction starting Monday, January thirty first (01/31/2022) to give all relevant parties time to implement this new feature in their meetings.

Respectfully Submitted,

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*Dyson Representative, Student Assembly*