

## A Checklist for Universal Design in Student Programming

The [principles of Universal Design](#)—creating programs and services that are usable by the greatest number of people—are intended to increase access and inclusion. Universal Design and [Universal Design for Learning](#) has made headways in supporting the success of students with disabilities, but also benefit all of your students, including those who are: first-generation, underrepresented, users of English as a second language, and students with diverse learning styles. The suggestions and questions below will provide a framework to assess for accessibility so as to benefit all students.

### Office Environment and Culture

#### **Diversity awareness, inclusion, and etiquette**

- Is your office staff trained in basic diversity awareness?
- Are you familiar with etiquette for interacting with students with disabilities? (For example, do you know the “dos and don’ts” of conversing with a deaf student using an interpreter?)
- Assume disabled people are in the room, even if they aren’t evident, and that they are stakeholders in your event
- Be mindful of your language:
  - ✓ Avoid words that use disability as an insult, like "crazy" or "hysterical"
  - ✓ Avoid phrases such as "wheelchair-bound" or "suffers from"
- Do you involve a wide range of students in planning and evaluation of activities?
- Are there programs designed to develop diversity awareness within the student community?
  - ✓ Disability simulations (e.g., having someone who does not normally use a wheelchair ride in one and try to navigate around a space, or having a sighted person wear a blindfold in order to experience being blind) are not appropriate. The [University of Arkansas Disability Resource Center describes](#) how simulations often have the effect of making disability into something solely negative.

#### **Physical office space is welcoming and accessible**

- Can a wheelchair get through your office door easily? Are aisles clear?
- Is there clutter that would pose mobility problems or cause distraction?
- How is the lighting? Too dark? Too much glare? Do you have strong florescent lights only?
- Does your office maintain an environment free from strong chemical scents?
- Is there nearby accessible parking? Are pathways to your building accessible?
- Is there clear signage providing direction to your office?
- How accessible are nearby bathrooms?
- Does staff know how to answer a relay call from a deaf person?

#### **Privacy for disability related and other confidential conversations**

- Do you have an office or other space with a door to provide privacy as needed if students need to disclose something of a sensitive or private nature?
- Are your confidential forms and student files kept secure?
- Has your office discussed confidentiality protocol?

## Digital Accessibility

### Publicity, Social Media, and Information provided in a variety of formats

- What formats does your office use to disseminate important information to students? Do you use a variety of means such as audio, printed text, electronic, and/or video?
- Are your videos closed or opened captioned?
- Do your flyers include a statement such as: "*If you need a disability-related accommodation or wheelchair access information, please contact \_\_\_\_\_, at \_\_\_\_\_ or email; \_\_\_\_\_. Requests should be made \_\_\_\_\_ (at least one week in advance of the event). To increase access for everyone, please refrain from wearing heavy scents, such as perfume. For more information about [scent free inclusion check here.](#)*"
- Social networking sites, like Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>), provide a powerful means for reaching out to students, other individuals, and organizations about your event. When posting an image to Facebook (which does not allow the use of alt-text), it is important to make sure that you provide a brief description of the image (if necessary for conveying the meaning of the content of the image), and any text shown in the image.
- While including images (JPGs, etc.) inline in emails can make them look nice, images are not accessible to screen-reading software. If you include a JPG or similar image in your email, make sure to include all of the text from the image in the body of the email. This also applies if you send an email that has, for instance, a PDF flyer as an attachment (even if the flyer itself is screen-reader accessible).

### Accessible and easy to navigate website

- Is the website accessible to those with disabilities, including blind students who use adaptive software (i.e. screen readers) to read your site?
  - ✓ Find more information about [screen reader accessibility here](#).
  - ✓ Use descriptive link text ("find pictures of cute animals here" rather than "here"), as screenreader users may jump through links and need to know where they lead.
  - ✓ Include a website accessibility statement, like this one from Rooted in Rights'
- Is it easy to find important information and forms on your website?
  - ✓ Are the forms accessible? i.e. pdf's and word documents that can be accessed with assistive technology. Scanned pdf's are merely images and are unreadable.
- Is the website clear and concise or is it too "busy"?
  - ✓ Be mindful of colors and contrast, use high contrast and consider using a tool to allow users to switch from dark-on-light.
  - ✓ Do not use flashing animations as they can be dangerous for individuals with neurological sensitives.
- Do you have [alt text](#) for all images? Additionally, make sure images are not used to present text information.
- Do all of your videos or audio content have captions or transcriptions available?

Need more information? Try exploring [WebAim](#) and [Section 508](#).

## Event Planning

### **Inclusive and varied programming options/formats:**

- Select an accessible location and vet your facilities
  - ✓ In buildings, look for: Ramps; accessible all gender restrooms; doorways of sufficient width for wheelchairs to enter; ample seating; reconfigurable spaces; bright, even light.
  - ✓ Ensure accessible transportation and routes to and from all events.
- Be clear about the physical accessibility of the event location, and consider related issues of inclusion by making the location of accessible entrances, bathrooms, etc. clear on the signage at your event, and in any materials you provide to attendees during the event or in advance of it.
- Designate seating for disabled people in the front of the room or crowd and near the exits, marking space off so nondisabled attendees understand they should not sit there.
- Develop varied programming: Shorter activities, longer events; Smaller vs. larger programs; One time vs. ongoing.
  - ✓ Consider independent activities or distance participation within events (e.g. for those with social anxiety) and create opportunities for varied audio, visual, kinetic, etc. experiences to play to individual preferences.
- Acquire accessible products for events and programs (i.e. captioned movies, ADA compatible software)
- Ensure that anyone who is speaking, including audience members, use microphones.
  - ✓ Consider audio assistance, like hearing loops, for people who have hearing loss and rely on assistive technologies such as hearing aids
- Include a disability orientation for all volunteers and staff
- Develop a scent policy — going scent-free will enhance accessibility.
- Make sure that all events have an evacuation plan for persons with disabilities; are exits clearly identified? Do fire and emergency alarms have both audible and visual signals?
- Are you prepared to handle any new disability accommodation requests? What are your offices' procedures when a student requests an accommodation? (Note: at UCSC all units and departments are responsible for making themselves accessible. The DRC is funded only for academic accommodations. However, we can be a resource to help your unit be accessible).
  - ✓ Make sure your department has funds allocated in the budget to cover the cost of accommodations.

*Need help? This ADA checklist can be a great resource, as can this [guide on designing ADA compliant events](#); the Autistic Self Advocacy Network is a [good place to start with more inclusive access policies](#).*