

Individuals with Disabilities

Defined:

The Americans with Disability Act (ADA) defines a person with a disability as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (i.e., caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, breathing, learning and working). This includes people who have a record of such an impairment, even if they do not currently have a disability. It also includes individuals who do not have a disability but are regarded as having a disability. The ADA also makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person based on that person's association with a person with a disability.

This category is for all disabilities and is not limited to only those students with accommodations on file.

Top Five Disabilities: Learning Disabilities, ADHD, Psychiatric Disabilities, Health/Chronic, and Mobility
*2023 Data

Program Examples:

- Texas A&M Achieve: Aggie ACHIEVE provides an inclusive and immersive college education and equips students for employment in the community. Aggie ACHIEVE aligns coursework, internship opportunities, and extracurricular activities with each student's academic interests and employment goals.

Access and Equity Considerations:

- Identify and remedy any transition disconnects, barriers, and hindrances that possibly leave the individual lost, confused, and frustrated with your higher education institution and/or processes.
- Create an Individual Education Plan (IEP) instead of generic accommodations requirements.
- Evaluate the individual student to ensure they are placed in a program aligned with their abilities.
- Offer personalized career coaching with someone who knows how to navigate the hiring process with an understanding of any barriers related to their disabilities.
- Require completion of disability and accessibility checklists before producing online content.
- Provide work-study opportunities for students with disabilities with necessary accommodations.
- Educate faculty who view accommodations as inconvenient to look at it from the student perspective.



Resources and Considerations for Individuals with Disabilities

Population-Specific Considerations:

*The National Center for College Students with Disabilities, students with disabilities identified the following barriers to access and participation on campus. *2023 Data*

- Being unaware of their campus disability resource office and its services, challenges navigating campus procedures, and inadequate accommodations.
- Classroom and instructional environment barriers, including faculty unaware of disability accommodations, faculty who push back against accommodations, and instructors who do not respond to requests for accommodations.
- Campus access and support issues including uneven, poorly marked walkways, buildings with external stairs but no ramp, and gaps in programs and services.
- Negative interactions with fellow students, the stigma of disability, and the added work of seeking support and accommodations for their disability.
- Students with disabilities were less likely to feel welcome on campus or supported by their institution than students without disabilities.
- Applying for accommodations for learning disabilities can be a cumbersome process, and students who don't receive support early face an increased risk of not finishing.
- Students with disabilities were more likely to experience financial hardships and food and housing insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic than students without disabilities.
- 70% of students with mental health disabilities were not registered to receive accommodations and one-third of students with mental health disabilities stated they were not aware they were eligible for accommodations.

Additional Information

Organizations

- American Association of People with Disabilities
- Association on Higher Education and Disability
- Campus Disability Resource Database
- Explore Access: Tools for Promoting Disability Access and Inclusion
- National Disability Rights Network
- National Center for College Students with Disabilities

Initiatives

- University of Texas at Austin (TX) Disability Advocacy Student Coalition
- Texas Neurodiversity

Services

- Active Minds (mental health)
- Autistic Self-Advocacy Network
- Bring Change to Mind (mental health)
- Delta Alpha Pi International Honor Society
- Disability Rights Texas – College Rights
- Disability Rights, Education, Activism, and Mentoring (DREAM)
- National Wheelchair Basketball Association (NWBA) Intercollegiate Leagues
- Project Heal (for eating disorders)
- Project LETS (Let's Erase the Stigma)
- Proud2BeMe on Campus (for positive body image and eating disorder issues)
- Student Veterans of America (not specifically focused on disability, but has many disability initiatives for Wounded Warriors)
- Texas Workforce Commission
- The Diabetes Link: All Things College



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Current Research and Literature

- Educational Equity for Students With Disabilities: The fight for fairness and equity for all students facing learning challenges. By Steven Mintz. September 28, 2021
- Equity Gaps for Students with Disabilities. By Katie Pak and Arianna Parsons. Unk date.
- Equity Matters: Digital and Online Learning for Students with Disabilities. By James Basham, William Stahl, Kelsey Ortiz, Mary Frances Rice, & Sean Smith. 2015
- Disabled Students Need Equity, Not Just Access. By Amanda Kraus. Summer 2021.

- Higher Education's Challenge: Disability Inclusion on Campus. By Dahlia Shaewitz and Jennifer R. Crandall. October 2020.
- Learners With Disabilities: An Important Component of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Medical Education. By Robert Golden and Elizabeth Petty. 2015
- More than Words: Inclusion and Equity for Students with Disabilities. By Caroline J. Ketcham. June 2021.
- The Postsecondary National Policy Institute Factsheet: Students with Disabilities in Higher Education. September 2022.



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