

PLANNING UNIVERSALLY DESIGNED CAMPUS EVENTS

Blackdisabledandproud.org

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Inclusion or Universal Design?

It is impossible to make all events completely inclusive for every person. In fact, even the term “inclusive” implies that there is some kind of normal population and all the “others” or “diverse” groups should be included in that norm. Instead, consider ways to universally design your event for a diverse universe of users.

What is Universal Design?

Universal design asks people to think about the “universe” of users, and to design something that will be as welcoming and engaging as possible beginning at the early planning stages (just like planning to have an elevator right away instead of trying to add one to a building later). Here are some questions to ask:

- **Who is going to participate in this? Does our planning committee resemble the group of participants we want?**
- **Who is likely to feel unwelcome and not want to be there? Who is likely to feel welcome and enjoy it?**
- **From the start, what can we do to make things more accessible, inclusive and welcoming?**
- **What are some choices we can offer to support individual needs at this event?**

“One of the marvelous things about community is that it enables us to help and welcome people in a way we couldn’t as individuals.”

- Jean Vanier
Community and Growth



Diversity Includes:

- Race and ethnicity
- Language
- Age
- Disability
- Sexuality
- Gender
- Interest in being social
- Religion
- Values, politics, and beliefs
- Educational background
- Having multiple identities



Disability Access

If you can't provide access, then don't hold your event. If cost is an issue, ask for co-sponsorships or fight campus policies that require groups to pay extra for access when it's a college's responsibility. Access should always include:

- Accessible e-mails and printed materials
- Sign language interpreters
- CART (real-time captions)
- Captioned videos or films
- A location that's accessible to participants and speakers who may use a wheelchair (including bathrooms)
- Vegetarian, gluten-free, and low-sugar options for food
- A contact person for access questions, identified on fliers

A Checklist for Event Planning

- Decide who will be a contact person for accessibility and diversity questions.
- Consider offering a sliding fee, scholarships, or free options for housing.
- Do outreach and collaborate with other groups to reach different kinds of people.
- Consider how past events on campus may excluded others or hurt them, and learn from their mistakes. Apologize and quickly address any mistakes you make.
- Plan events around religious holidays.
- Does the venue or marketing have any implicit messages that may exclude or offend, like an event at a church, or ads that only have pictures of males?
- Do the presenters represent diversity of the participants you hope to have? Is the venue accessible to presenters, or only participants?
- Will food and drink options work for everyone? Consider those who don't drink alcohol, Halal and Kosher options, vegans, and people with food allergies.
- Some events are designed for a single population. Respect those within that population who have multiple identities.
- Allow people to be quiet, reserved, reflective, or not social at events. Consider having green, yellow, and red badges to indicate whether others should approach and be social, approach quietly, or not approach and socialize at all.



Resources

- **Syracuse University's Disability Cultural Center's guide for inclusive activities** (<http://sudcc.syr.edu>)
- **The Interfaith Youth Core guide for interfaith friendly events** (<http://ifyc.org/>)
- **Advice for librarians welcoming non-native English speakers** (<https://youthserviceslibrarianship.wikispaces.com/Non-native+Speakers+of+English>)
- **Universal Design for access, architecture, and learning** (http://www.ncsu.edu/project/design-projects/sites/cud/content/UD_intro.html and (<http://www.cast.org/ud/>)

