

To: The University Senate
From: University Resources Policy Committee and Purdue Student Government
Subject: Disabled Community Ad Hoc Action Plan
Reference: PSG Resolution 22-69
Disposition: University Senate for Discussion and Adoption

Rationale: Implicit discrimination due to ableism and access issues is prevalent within college communities, including Purdue University. There are many disabled students, including 1035 students registered with the Disability Resource Center in 2021, who are affected by lack of equal access at Purdue University.

The PSG Disabled Community Ad-Hoc Committee was created with the purpose of addressing accessibility issues on campus and advocating for the disabled student community. Purdue University Senate has a responsibility to advocate for the student body in order to create an inclusive and accessible environment for students.

The purpose of this document is to outline the goals necessary to accomplish further student accessibility and inclusion, which include:

1. Awareness

Increasing awareness of issues impacting Purdue's Disabled Student Population, and education on all forms of disabilities

2. Resources

Creating resources to educate faculty on all forms of disabilities and accommodations, and educating the disabled student community on resources available to them

3. Inclusion

Advocating for equal opportunities for disabled students across campus, including athletic, academic, and residential opportunities.

4. Accessibility

Promoting equal access to all campus resources including physical and virtual environments; Addressing current accessibility limitations on campus.

5. Community

Providing more opportunities for the disabled community to come together at Purdue.

Supporting this document is imperative to demonstrate to the disabled student body that Purdue takes the issues surrounding accessibility seriously and cares for their wellbeing as a whole. The strategies in this document work to address current accessibility issues by better informing students of resources, supporting, advocating for equal opportunities for the disabled community, and educating the student body and faculty at large.

Proposal: Purdue's administration should adopt the Disabled Community Action Plan 2022-2023.

Committee Votes: URPC

For:

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Purdue Accessibility Action Plan
Disabled Community Ad-Hoc Committee
2022-2023

Table of Contents

Introduction/Mission Statement

Goal 1: Awareness - 3

Strategy 1A: Hosting Events/Awareness Campaigns - 3

Strategy 1B: Commitment to Providing Information - 3/4

Goal 2: Resources - 5

Strategy 2A: Distribution of “Accessibility Guide” - 5

Strategy 2B: Working with the DRC & DSU to Collect Resources - 5/6

Strategy 2C: Work with DRC on Process of Reporting Violations - 6

Goal 3: Inclusion - 7

Strategy 3A: RecWell Commitment to Greater Inclusion - 7

Strategy 3B: Greek Life - 7/8

Strategy 3C: Dining & Culinary - 8

Strategy 3D: Housing - 8/9

Goal 4: Accessibility - 10

Strategy 4A: Accessible Bathrooms and Building Facilities - 10

Strategy 4B: Accessibility of Learning Environments - 10/11

Strategy 4C: Purdue Website Accessibility - 11

Goal 5: Community - 12

Strategy 5A: Student Support Groups - 12

Strategy 5B: Promote the DSU and Disability Related Clubs - 12

A

Mission Statement:

The Disabled Community ad-hoc committee was founded in 2022 in order to address issues faced by the disabled population on campus, including, but not limited to, problems with accessibility, stigma, and lack of inclusive opportunities. While Purdue has implemented accessibility measures in accordance with ADA requirements, talking with students has illuminated a significant need for broad-scale efforts to create a more welcoming and accessible campus for the disabled community.

The action plan is divided into five main goals:

1: Awareness

Increasing awareness of issues impacting Purdue's Disabled Student Population and educating on all forms of disabilities. *2: Resources*

Creating resources to educate faculty on all forms of disabilities and accommodations and informing the disabled student community about available resources.

3: Inclusion

Advocating for equitable opportunities for disabled students across campus, including in athletics, academics, and residential life. *4: Accessibility*

Promoting equitable access to all campus resources including but not limited to physical and virtual learning environments, career and internship planning services, study abroads, and online material, as well as addressing current accessibility limitations within campus buildings. *5: Community*
Increase opportunities for fostering relationships between individuals within Purdue's disabled community.

These goals aim to cultivate a welcoming environment on campus that actively seeks to meet the needs of the disabled student community at Purdue and address accessibility issues in order to ensure equal opportunities, both physically and virtually, for disabled students.

Goal 1: Awareness

Increasing awareness of issues impacting Purdue's disabled student population, and education on all disabilities.

Issue Addressed: Educating others and raising awareness creates a safe space for people with disabilities and would cultivate a more inclusive environment at Purdue. This includes awareness of the prevalence of disability at Purdue and awareness of the challenges that the disabled community face on campus.

Strategy 1A: Hosting events and awareness campaigns with the purpose of educating students and staff about disabilities.

Informing the Purdue community about students with disabilities would help dispel misconceptions that exist and lead to more understanding and awareness. This would help increase representation of disabled voices on campus, which will benefit both non-disabled and disabled students.

1A.i. Collaborating with the Disabled Student Union at Purdue to create awareness campaigns. This could include hosting disabled speakers in order to educate others using their personal experiences and having events for the disabled community.

1A.ii. Creating a platform on social media about the resources available to students and answering questions that others might have. Having an internet presence can reach a bigger audience and

facilitate interaction among students. It creates a safe online space that would have the purpose of promoting resources on campus, accessibility tips, and educating students. This would make it easier for students to connect with others and create a supportive group.

Strategy 1B: Commitment to providing information to all students about the disabled community.

Incorporating the disabled community and accessibility issues into Purdue training and programs will help in reducing accessibility barriers on campus that stem from a lack of awareness of said issues.

1B.i. Giving a preliminary training for incoming students to become aware of the resources offered and the importance of the disabled community at Purdue. This could be an additional section to completing the V-Star or an independent training for students who are new at Purdue. This would educate incoming students and ensure that they have been given information at the beginning of their careers at Purdue.

1B.ii. Commitment to educate students and faculty on accessibility issues the disabled community faces. Examples include; mass emails about accessibility issues such as leaving scooters on sidewalks, distributing information about how to host accessible club events, etc.

Goal 2: Resources

Creating resources to educate faculty on all forms of disabilities and accommodations, and educating the disabled student community on resources available to them.

Issue Addressed: The availability and distribution of resources such as; accessibility maps, disabled student rights, offices and individuals who are trained to advocate for disabled students, and student organizations that focus on disability inclusion and discussion.

Strategy - 2A: Purdue University shall distribute a copy of the “Accessibility Guide”, authored by this committee, to all faculty.

The Disabled Community ad-hoc Committee’s Accessibility Guide provides information about common accommodations many students with disabilities need to be successful in the classroom. By providing information and tips to make classrooms more accessible for all students in general, the Accessibility Guide will be a resource to Purdue professors to ensure that they both understand the needs of disabled students, as well as enacting classroom policies that are accommodating to all students.

2A.i, Purdue University shall distribute the Accessibility Guide* to all teaching faculty to demonstrate their commitment to creating accessible classroom environments.

**The Accessibility Guide shall be completed Fall 2023 and will be distributed after completion.*

Strategy- 2B: This committee will work with the Disability Resource Center and Disabled Student Union to gather important resources and make them readily available to the disabled student body.

The Disabled Community ad-hoc Committee shall commit to working with both the Disability Resource Center and the Disabled Student Union to create and provide important resources for the student body. These resources can range from accessibility maps, accommodations for student living, etc.

2B.i. Working with the Disability Resource Center to create/update accessibility maps with information such as; accessible bathrooms, building entrances, and parking. Other resources that inform disabled students about their rights shall also be both collected and widely distributed in an accessible and easily understandable format by the DRC to students.

2B.ii. Working with the Disabled Student Union to gain feedback from the disabled community about what resources and information they would like to see provided from the university. Collaborating on projects such as accessibility maps and meetings with the Disability Resource Center about creating and providing more resources for the disabled community.

Strategy - 2C: This committee shall work with the Disability Resource Center to educate disabled students on the processes for reporting violations of university/federal accessibility policy.

Many disabled students have expressed concern that the current process for reporting violations of accommodations or accessibility issues on campus is extremely confusing and hard to locate. It is imperative to modify this process so that students can receive the attention and aid they need to fix accessibility issues on campus.

2C.i. Working with the Disability Resource Center to ensure that disabled students are aware of their rights to both federal and university accommodations. The DRC and our committee shall commit to educating students about the university processes for reporting violations of accommodations and university accessibility policy via electronic or physical communication.

2C.ii. The process for reporting violations shall be clearly defined and easy to understand. Furthermore, university forms, and other methods of reporting such violations should be easily accessible on university websites to ensure disabled students are able to locate the necessary resources. Other university/federally mandated accessibility regulations and resources should also be posted in a similar format.

Goal 3: Inclusion

Advocating for equal opportunities for disabled students across campus, including athletic, academic, and residential opportunities.

Issue Addressed: The issue of inclusion is central to a student's successful experience at Purdue University, no matter their identity. Current measures fall short of providing an environment in which disabled students have access to the same opportunities that non-disabled individuals have on campus. The Purdue Student Government urges the following steps be taken to ensure that disabled students have equal opportunity to all elements of campus life.

Strategy 3A: Purdue RecWell and Club Sports commit to greater inclusion of disabled individuals, especially those with mobility aids.

Disabled Students, especially wheelchair users deserve equal access and opportunities to university activities such as club sports that are hosted and supported by the university.

3A.i. Purdue University shall commit to providing one wheelchair accessible club sport to ensure that students in wheelchairs are able to access the same experiences as their able-bodied peers. This sport can be determined by the university but shall have similar organization to other club sports in terms of teams and promotion.

3A.ii. Purdue University RecWell should purchase at least two sports wheelchairs for use in the CoRec and wheelchair related club sports/activities. These wheelchairs shall be considered university property and be stored in the CoRec where disabled students may check them out with proper Purdue ID.

Strategy 3-B Purdue's Greek Life chapters and cooperative living houses adopt policies to ensure disabled members an equitable opportunity to participate.

Greek Life encompasses nearly twenty percent of the Purdue undergraduate student population, it is highly likely that many of these students have disabilities that challenge their participation in Greek Life. Furthermore, many students are dissuaded from the Greek Life and cooperative houses as their disability may not be accommodated.

3Bi. The Rush process to join Greek Life is difficult for many disabled students, especially those with physical disabilities. Both Panhellenic and the Interfraternity Council should establish plans to accommodate individuals with disabilities that are interested in rushing. These plans can include virtual options/rounds for rushing and accommodations for attire to make the process more accessible to the disabled community.

3B.ii Housing is a major challenge and obstacle for disabled students when joining and participating in FSCL life at Purdue. Greek chapters and cooperative houses should seek to make changes, whenever possible and budget permitting, that allow for disabled students to "live in" if possible. Furthermore, greek chapters and cooperative houses should be willing to waive "live in" requirements for students with disabilities, and should make the process to waive these

requirements as accessible and simple as possible. Chapter and house events that are hosted in houses that are not fully accessible for students should also have a virtual option or temporary solutions to enable participation for the entire student community.

3B.iii Diversity and Inclusion oversight to include disability education and awareness should be encouraged in all Greek chapters and cooperative houses. Education about disability and the promotion of discussion is key to ensuring that the FSCL community is welcoming and accepting to the disabled community.

Strategy 3-C: Purdue Dining should be accessible for all students and should seek to adopt and change practices that will improve accessibility for the disabled community.

The Purdue Dining experience is a key aspect for all Purdue students, especially freshmen as they are required to have a meal plan. Thus, the dining experience should be accessible for disabled students who should not have to worry about accessing food on campus.

3A.i. Students in wheelchairs and with mobility aids have difficulty serving and carrying food in the dining halls and often are forced to rely on others or dining staff to assist. Purdue Dining and Culinary should adopt practices that allow for wheelchair users to more easily serve food or plan for additional support for disabled individuals that need assistance.

3A.ii. Many disabled individuals have diet restrictions that can be dangerous, even lethal, should an incident occur. Many students in the Disabled Student Union as well as in a survey from our committee expressed concern over lack of dining policy for cross contamination of food allergens on utensils and serving ware. Furthermore, Purdue Dining should ensure workers are educated on the importance of practicing food safety and commit to providing basic allergen free meals.

Strategy 3D: Purdue Housing should ensure facilities and procedures are accessible to disabled students that live with University Residences.

University Residences provide housing to 41% of the Purdue student community, including many disabled individuals who often face accessibility issues that need to be addressed to ensure that all students have equal access and opportunities in University Housing.

3D.i. University Residences should ensure that student residence halls are fully accessible to disabled students, especially those with service animals or mobility aids. Many residence halls have features that render necessary services such as front desk assistance inaccessible to students. Examples include; lifts that are not functional, doors that do not meet ADA* requirements (too heavy, wheelchair buttons not working), that result in students being unable to access common rooms, the front desk, or mail areas.

**ADA door regulations*

<https://www.ada-compliance.com/ada-compliance/ada-doors.html>

3D.ii. University Residences should ensure that all Resident Assistants are trained to understand and accommodate their disabled residents to ensure the safety and inclusion of disabled students in residence halls. Furthermore, Purdue University should seek to hire disabled students that are able to perform all university requirements as Resident Assistants to provide representation of the disabled community.

Goal 4: Accessibility

Promoting equal access to all campus resources including physical and virtual environments and addressing current accessibility limitations on campus.

Issue Addressed: Existing and developing opportunities for students on campus are rendered obsolete for certain populations of students if proper accessibility measures are not taken. According to the Campus accessibility guide*, there remain at least 10 fully inaccessible buildings on Purdue's campus (meaning "a building without a grade-level or ramped entrance"), in addition to at least 11 partially inaccessible buildings (meaning "a building with one or more accessible entrances but with limited use, no elevator or elevators requiring keys."). At present, Purdue University is known among the disabled community to be inaccessible. Thus, current lack of accessibility on campus not only negatively impacts current students ability to fully take advantage of the educational opportunities offered on Purdue's campus, but it discourages prospective students from attending.

**Purdue Campus Accessibility Guide (2015)*
https://www.purdue.edu/accessibilityresources/Accessibility_Guide.pdf

Strategy 4A: Purdue Facilities and Maintenance will promote the accessibility of general campus spaces including bathrooms and other facilities.

It is essential that all Purdue buildings have accessible bathrooms and other necessary facilities including ramps and entrances so that disabled students are able to have equal access and experiences as their non disabled peers.

4Ai. Purdue F&M will add full-length mirrors to bathrooms labeled as handicap accessible in main academic buildings as well as in the Wilmeth Active Learning Center, the Stewart Center, and the Purdue Memorial Union.

4Aii. Purdue will relabel bathrooms to accurately reflect whether they are wheelchair accessible.

4Aiii. Paper towels will be provided directly next to the handicap accessible sink in handicap accessible bathrooms (to allow wheelchair users to dry their hands prior to touching their push rims).

Strategy 4B: Purdue will increase the accessibility of learning environments by ensuring classrooms allow disabled individuals the opportunity to fully participate.

The classroom experience is one of the most crucial aspects of student life and, as such, disabled students deserve equal access and accessibility in the classroom. Many classrooms and buildings are inaccessible for disabled students, especially those in wheelchairs, which hinders the ability of disabled students to have equal opportunities to learn.

4Bi. Classrooms, especially large lecture halls for core classes, should have wheelchair seating that is not at the back of the classroom and is clearly labeled and accessible for disabled students.

4Bii. Laboratories should be accessible for all students and have equipment and tables that meet proper height requirements for students in wheelchairs.

4Biii. Elevators in buildings should be accessible, operative, and operate at a reasonable speed so that disabled students are able to reach their classes on time.

4B.iii Purdue will provide professors resources for creating accessible learning environments, both virtual and in person in order to promote accessible learning environments and classrooms.

Strategy 4C: Purdue will modify its website design to ensure accessibility.

Many Purdue official websites are not accessible* and are difficult to view for some members of the disabled community. As these websites often have important information, it is crucial they are accessible for all students.

4C.i. Purdue will work with the Diversity Resource Center to ensure all university websites are accessible. This includes using fonts, colors, and subtext for images to ensure equal access.

**UC Berkeley's tips for creating accessible websites:*

<https://webaccess.berkeley.edu/resources/tips/web-accessibility>

Goal 5: Community

Promoting a greater sense of community for disabled individuals within the Purdue community and supporting organizations that focus on the disabled community.

Issue Addressed: The issue of community is a critical component of the Purdue experience for all students, regardless of disability status. However, disabled students face a significant deficit in social opportunities and events hosted by Purdue due to lack of accessible spaces, event activities, and inclusive organizations. The Disabled Community ad-hoc Committee urges the university and Purdue Student Government to promote the following initiatives.

Strategy 5A: Implement and promote student support groups for disabled students. Disabled Students have a much higher prevalence of mental health issues*, including depression and anxiety, and thus, deserve a space to connect with other members of the disabled community and to have access to mental health resources that focus on the disabled community.

Disabled students have a 67% likelihood of having mental health issues compared to 45% of able bodied peers
*<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1325421.pdf>

5A.i. Purdue CAPS should create and offer a support group for disabled students.

Strategy 5B: Purdue Student Government and Purdue University shall work with and promote the Disabled Student Union and other clubs focusing on the disabled community.

It can be easy for disabled students to feel isolated from their peers and struggle to find friends in the disabled community. While many clubs for majors and sports are heavily advertised and promoted, it is important that organizations such as the Disabled Student Union and other clubs focusing on the disabled community are also featured.

5B.i. Purdue Student Government, specifically the Disability ad-hoc Committee, should work with, and encourage collaboration on issues with the Disabled Student Union to ensure representation of disabled voices on campus.

5B.ii. The Disability Ad-Hoc Committee should actively work to promote clubs and groups for disabled students on campus via social media, campus outreach events, and other mass communications.