

Advocating for Student Access on West Virginia University (WVU) Campus

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Background

- Lack of accessibility features at campuses
 - Difficulty navigating the campus
 - Overcoming geographic issues of West Virginia
 - Lack of accessible doors and parking on campus
- Certain disability laws may not represent the reality
- Student-based approach to minimize these challenges is necessary
- Only 16.4% of people with disabilities completed cross all colleges by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2014¹

Objectives

The purpose of this initiative is to make WVU campus more accessibility friendly by:

- Making doors accessible
- Providing adequate parking spaces
- Using language access plans to integrate and help students with disabilities access services
- Encouraging open-mindedness about disability rights
- Empowering students with disabilities to initiate the necessary changes to fit their needs by facilitating programs that support students with disabilities on campus



Description

- Evaluated accessibility policies
- Contacted the accessibility office at WVU
- Asked my department to advocate for installing accessibility doors
- Advocated to bypass the law that generalized all disabilities in one category by using personal experience
- Asked the maintenance department to evaluate new accessibility doors and requested a need for an accessibility button
- Used my unique position as WVU Diversity Ambassador to create connections and integrate different disciplines to accomplish this goal



Results

- Disability regulations are not always applicable to all disabilities
- Disabilities vary depending on the situation
- Effective language access plan is crucial for helping diverse students with disabilities
- Initiated the WVU Recovery Ambassador Program to spread awareness of addiction and mental health issues in order to connect students with resources on campus

Accessibility efforts

- Language access plan
- WVU Diversity Ambassador
 - Reached out to diverse communities and connected them to resources

Conclusions

- Disability regulations do not capture the full needs of people with disabilities
- Disability centers should encourage students with disabilities to provide feedback to improve access
- Universities need to assess student needs, rather than enforcing laws that do not support all students with disabilities
- Universities should create positions that allow students with disabilities to advocate for their own needs
- Universities need to bring more awareness of programs that improve access for resources
- Disability programs at colleges and universities could implement the Reach, Efficacy, Adoption, Implementation, Maintenance (RE-AIM) model to access and gain better access²

Reference

1. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *The Economics Daily*, People with a disability less likely to have completed a bachelor's degree on the Internet at <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2015/people-with-a-disability-less-likely-to-have-completed-a-bachelors-degree.htm>(visited September 21, 2019).
2. Harden SM, Smith ML, Ory MG, Smith-Ray RL, Estabrooks PA and Glasgow RE (2018) RE-AIM in Clinical, Community, and Corporate Settings: Perspectives, Strategies, and Recommendations to Enhance Public Health Impact. *Front. Public Health* 6:71.