Lessons Learned to be Inclusive of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities are a diverse group with respect to gender, race, and ethnicity, but also with regard to disability type. You may have students in your department with attention deficits, autism, chronic health issues, learning disabilities, mental health conditions, or disabilities related to vision, hearing, mobility, or speech.

19.4% of college students have disabilities (NCES, 2018). Among departments that reported disability data to the Taulbee survey, 4.1% of undergraduates received disability accommodations (Zweben & Bizot, 2023). Record numbers of college students have mental health conditions (Alonso, 2023).

Computing departments should take into account the following.
- **Data.** Collect data related to disability in departmental evaluations and climate surveys. (Blaser & Ladner 2020).
- **BPC Activities.** Include disability and accessibility as part of departmental DEI efforts and within your departmental Broadening Participation plan. (Blaser & Ladner, 2023).
- **Curriculum.** Include information about accessibility in your departmental curriculum. Teaching about accessibility prepares future technologists to design accessible products and many students are interested in this information. (Ladner, Ludi, & Domansky, 2023, Shinohara, Kawas, et al, 2018).
- **Universal Design of Learning.** Encourage faculty to embrace universal design of learning (UDL), which aims to maximize the learning of all students and minimize the need for accommodations. (CAST, Equal Access: Universal Design of Instruction).
- **Department staff, facilities, and technology.**
  - Ensure faculty and staff are knowledgeable about the accommodation process.
  - Consider accessibility in buildings and facilities, including accessible pathways, ample signage, sufficient lighting, or quiet spaces.
  - Ensure departmental websites are accessible, including captioning on videos. (30 Web Accessibility Tips).
  - Procure accessible technology (Accessibility in Third-Party Products and Services).
  - Find more at: Equal Access: Universal Design of Computing Departments.

Beyond the resources linked above, there are other existing resources:
- AccessComputing serves as a national resource. We maintain a community of practice related to accessibility in CS education and can consult with educators and organizations about accessibility. Students can join the AccessComputing Team.
- SIGACCESS Resources include writing and presentation guides as well as guides related to conference accessibility.
- Students with disabilities can connect with the disability community at the Tapia Celebration of Diversity in Computing or participate in research through DREU.