



October 24, 2022

Campus Safety and Equity Advisory Council October Meeting Report: Resources and Initiatives for Students with Disabilities

On October 22nd, members of the USHE Campus Safety and Equity Advisory Council (CSEAC) met on Zoom to discuss resources and equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts pertaining to students with disabilities. Discussion prompts included questions such as:

- What is the current climate like for students with disabilities on your campus?
- Are individuals with disabilities equitably represented on campus among groups, clubs, elected positions, faculty, staff, etc.?
- Are there strategies you think could help your institution make improvements in serving students with disabilities?

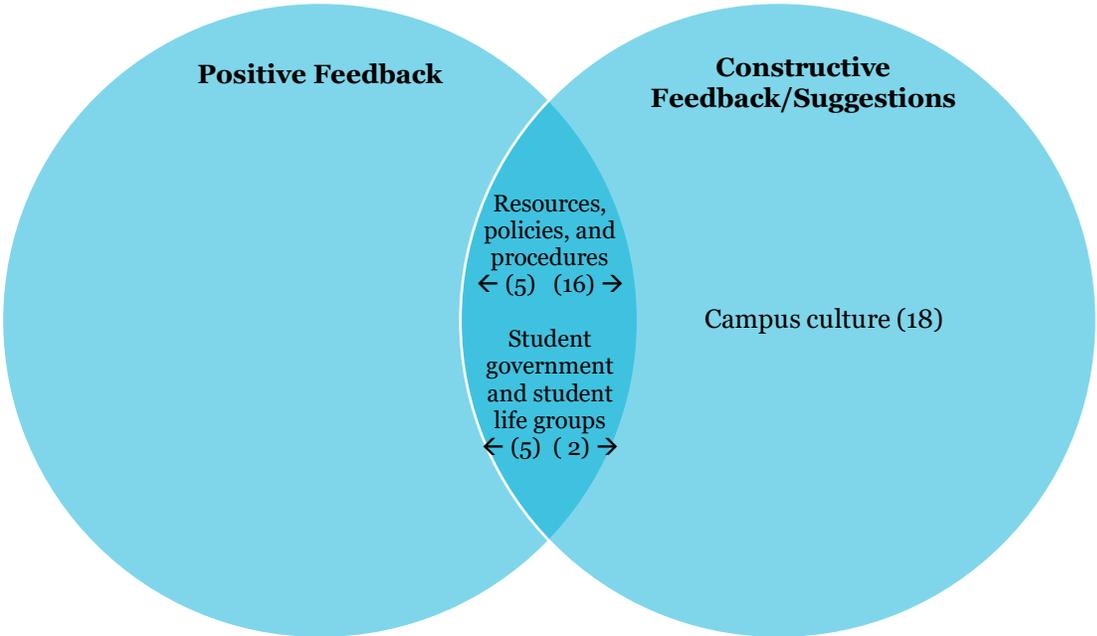
CSEAC member Reed Hammond, a student at Southern Utah University, volunteered to lead the discussion, which yielded the following key takeaways:

Positive feedback (10)	
Category	Examples
Resources, policies, and procedures (5)	<i>Staff at Disability Resource Centers are passionate and helpful (2)</i>
	<i>The tutoring center at the Disability Resource Center does a good job of accommodating individual needs (1)</i>
	<i>The Disability Resource Center at my institution can accommodate students facing mental health challenges (1)</i>
	<i>The testing center at the Disability Resource Center is adaptive and helpful (1)</i>
Student government and student life groups (5)	<i>Having designated representation in student government for special constituency groups (including students with disabilities) is valuable at my institution and should be replicated across the system (4)</i>
	<i>Programs like Aggies Elevated are helpful and should be replicated across the system (1)</i>

Constructive feedback (36)	
Category	Examples
Campus culture (18)	<i>In EDI discussions and efforts, disability is too often forgotten or is given much less attention than other aspects of identity and lived experience, such as race and gender (7)</i>
	<i>Institutional actions toward inclusion for members of the campus community with disabilities sometimes feel like a performative effort to meet minimum legal compliance requirements instead of feeling like a genuine effort of inclusion (5)</i>
	<i>More outreach and enhanced access are needed to ensure students with non-visible disabilities understand campus resources that can help them (3)</i>
	<i>Institutional conversations about disability and institutional conversations about mental health should be more integrated where appropriate (2)</i>
	<i>Individuals with disabilities should be involved in more processes so they can lend their lived experience in the decision-making process – e.g., provide input when new buildings are being designed (1)</i>
Resources, policies, and procedures (16)	<i>The need for an official diagnosis for accommodation can be a barrier for students who do not have the means to be diagnosed, but whose lived experience means they would benefit from accommodation (3)</i>
	<i>Students need to be made more aware of on-campus disability resources and options for accommodation (3)</i>
	<i>Students need to be made more aware of processes for reporting failings of the systems meant to serve students with disabilities (i.e., if a piece of physical ADA infrastructure is broken or if a professor is not honoring accommodations) (3)</i>
	<i>Disability Resource Centers are understaffed (2)</i>
	<i>Institutions should offer more pass/fail course options for students to create more access for students with disabilities (2)</i>
	<i>When students are struggling to obtain accommodations, institutions should offer students the option to take a temporary “incomplete” until they are able to secure the accommodations they need (1)</i>

	<p><i>Institutions can do more to make campus accessible to folks with short-term physical accommodation needs – e.g., designated parking spots for pregnant students (1)</i></p> <p><i>Application processes (admission, student groups, etc.) should be more accessible for students with disabilities (1)</i></p>
Student government and student life groups (2)	<p><i>Application processes for student life groups designed for students with disabilities are too onerous and can create barriers to access (2)</i></p>

Discussion Summary: Resources and EDI Initiatives for Students with Disabilities



Notable quotes

- On ensuring disability is represented in more EDI conversations:*
 “Diversity, equity, and inclusion often seems to be in our mind as gender, sexuality, and race, but if 10% of our students at our institutions have disabilities...making sure that’s included when we think about these things...that intersectionality is a big deal. I know plenty of students of various races and genders and sexual orientations at our Disability Resource Center, and just kind of trying to understand the way those things build on top of each other is very important.”
- On ensuring representation of students with disabilities in student government:*
 “In our student government, there is a position for a representative from the International Student Association, then there’s also a position for the representative for students with disabilities...it’s really exciting when we do have those big conversations about what positive changes we can make here at the university...It is a diverse and broad perspective that it is so easily overlooked because, as we mentioned, it’s not visible a lot of the time. People can see a

wheelchair and people can see a white cane when a blind student is going across campus or something, but other than that, you don't often notice. And things like anxiety as well that are not even necessarily physical but more internal and psychological, we notice those even less. And so, how do we ourselves speak up for others but also create a culture on campus where we're speaking up for students with disabilities that might not necessarily be represented in a room?"

- *On facing barriers when seeking accommodation:*
“[For students facing mental health challenges that disrupt their learning], providing evidence of diagnosis by a mental health provider to access a Disability Resource Center can be a barrier. [My institution's] counseling services have a long wait list.”

“[Accessing a diagnosis to get an accommodation] can also be challenging if you don't have insurance or if you're an international student or you're coming from another country and you have a disability, that 'proving' part of it can be a little difficult.”
- *On understaffing of Disability Resource Centers:*
“[At my institution] I think their goal is to have maybe 200 or 300 students per staff member who works with them and right now I think we're 500 to 600 per staff member. They're hopelessly outnumbered, but they're doing their best.”
- *On the importance of having a process for reporting issues with accessibility infrastructure:*
“I have a friend on campus who is in a wheelchair and a couple of weeks ago, his class was on the fourth floor and the elevator wasn't working. He actually climbed up the stairs because he's very committed to school and just a rockstar, but that was something that was super alarming to me.”
- *On the importance of offering temporary accommodations*
“We can always continue to grow toward equity....something that I've been working with a student on is that they're currently 36 weeks pregnant and have to park up the hill on these icy sidewalks, so we've been trying to see if we can work with the Senate to get expecting mothers' parking.”
- *On the importance of facilitating continuous dialogue about accessibility and inclusion:*
“Higher education as a space itself is already incredibly ableist because it is filled with having to do large workloads of assignments, and you're supposed to be consistently attending your lectures, and you're supposed to be consistently doing research, so it's a huge time commitment that not all people are able to commit to or they don't have the full capacity to do so. So higher education in and of itself is already a space that is super ableist, and I know there's no institutional policy to rewire how we do higher education, but perhaps having conversations is probably going to be even more important today...Having conversations in multiple spaces can bolster that critical awareness and you're able to look out for your other fellow students and colleagues.”

Commissioner's Recommendation

This is an information item only; no action is required