

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

Office for Equal Opportunity

**Access and Barriers for
Persons with Disabilities
Survey Results
Spring 2009**

NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

Access and Barriers for Persons with Disabilities Survey Results Spring 2009

**North Carolina State University
Office for Equal Opportunity**

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Executive Summary

The Office for Equal Opportunity (OEO) at NC State University conducted the Access and Barriers for Persons with Disabilities Survey (ABPDS) to ascertain the extent to which the University is fulfilling its commitment to persons with disabilities under the pertinent provisions of Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as amended. The respondents to this survey included ninety-eight (98) University executive officers, deans, academic department heads and vice provosts.

While most accessibility surveys conducted on college campuses are for the purpose of identifying existing physical barriers and creating a list of possible solutions to remove them, this survey was deployed for the purpose of looking at the policies, services, procedures/practices, and programs within each college/department/unit that may pose barriers for persons with disabilities. OEO also sought to document the policies, services, procedures/practices, and programs that exist which provide or improve access for persons with disabilities within each respective college/department/unit.

Detailed information came from nine (9) questions classified into five (5) domains. Key findings of the survey, based on a 52% response rate, included the following:

- Efforts that provided or improved access within the college/department/unit were related to: (a) general attitude or philosophy (b) specific responses to issues of inaccessibility (c) deliberate actions to be more inclusive.
- Efforts that were actual or potential barriers within the college/department/unit were related to: (a) limited or no consideration of persons' functional limitations (b) limited or no consideration in the designing and /or purchasing processes.
- College/department/unit marketing materials: (a) displayed the universal symbol of accessibility 25.5% of the time (b) included a statement regarding accommodations for persons with disabilities 45.1% of the time (c) included pictures of persons with disabilities 23.5% of the time
- College/department/unit mission statements contained specific words or phrases that indicated a willingness to include persons with disabilities 19.6% of the time.
- Resources identified by the college/department/unit to help prioritize and specify barriers were related to: (a) assistance with identifying potential barriers (b) technical assistance (c) financial assistance.

These findings suggest that, at NC State University, the "accommodation model" has been the primary mode of viewing and relating to persons with disabilities. In this view, the disability is a "problem" that exists within the person and the goal is to "fix" the person. This approach is often referred to as the medical model of disability. In

recent years, however, a newer paradigm has emerged, referred to as the socio-political model of disability. In this paradigm, disability is viewed as "the systemic mismatch between physical and mental attributes of individuals and the present (but not the potential) ability of social institutions to accommodate these attributes" (Schriner & Scotch, 2001).

As the largest institution of higher education in the State of North Carolina, the University must take the lead in promoting the shift from the older paradigm to the new. The institution must immediately undertake changes in policies and practices which will reflect this new perspective. When we as an institution shift our perspective toward the socio-political model of disability, our vision for the campus also shifts. This shift is beginning to take place as OEO representatives are invited to the table during the initial planning stages of various campus projects, programs and services. However, it is now time for the University to articulate a formal position on this issue, therein creating the momentum necessary to effect a shift in the paradigm through which we view and relate to persons with disabilities.

Background

In 1973, Congress passed the Rehabilitation Act which prohibits discrimination on the basis of physical or mental disability (29 U.S.C. Section 794). Section 504 of the Act states that:

No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance

As a recipient of federal funding from a number of Federal agencies, e.g., U.S. Departments of Education, Energy, Agriculture, the University is subject to the regulations implementing Section 504 of the Act with respect to the conduct of its programs, activities, and services.

Similarly, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits state and local governments from discriminating on the basis of disability. As an entity of the State of North Carolina, the University is subject to the nondiscrimination provisions of Title II of the ADA. The requirements of the ADA for state and local governments are based on, and are essentially the same as, the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Regulatory requirements common to both Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA include reasonable accommodation for students and employees with disabilities; program accessibility; effective communication with people who have hearing or visual impairment; and accessible new construction and alterations.

Shortly after the enactment of the Rehabilitation Act, all recipients of federal financial assistance were required to conduct a "self-evaluation" for the purposes of assessing their compliance with section 504 of the statute and ensuring full participation of persons with disabilities in programs and activities.

After passage of the ADA in 1990, state and local governments and their various entities were similarly required to conduct a "self-evaluation."

It has been more than a decade since the university last completed a self-evaluation of its programs, services and activities, as outlined under the provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA. While technological advances in electronics have vastly improved and increased the opportunities for people with disabilities to fully participate in postsecondary educational activities, the University, as a recipient of federal funding, is nonetheless, obligated to periodically evaluate its policies and practices with regard to programmatic accessibility under the statutory provisions of both laws.

The Office for Equal Opportunity (OEO) at NC State is responsible for monitoring the University's compliance with Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, applicable state laws, UNC system policies, and NC State University policies with regard to accommodating an otherwise qualified individual with a disability by making reasonable modifications in its services, programs, and activities. To determine the extent to which the University is fulfilling its commitment to persons with disabilities, OEO requested campus administrators to complete an electronic survey designed to identify portals of access and potential barriers for persons with disabilities.

(NOTE: While physical and architectural barriers and access are important to review; they were not the focus of this survey.)

Survey Methodology and Response Rates

OEO staff developed and administered the Access and Barriers for Persons with Disabilities Survey (ABPDS) during spring 2009. An e-mail from the Office of the Provost on March 12, 2009 provided the executive officers, deans, academic department heads, and vice provosts with an URL to a web page containing the online survey. Respondents were instructed to complete the survey by April 10, 2009. The Office of the Provost also sent a follow-up reminder via e-mail regarding the completion/submission of the survey on April 8, 2009. Of the ninety-eight administrators receiving the e-mail regarding the ABPDS, fifty-one (51) participated for a 52% response rate.

The survey consisted of nine (9) questions with 1 – 4 asking respondents to list any policies, services, procedures/practices, and programs within their college/department/unit that they thought might:

- (a) provide or improve access, and
- (b) be potential or actual barriers for persons with disabilities.

Questions 5 – 7 asked respondents to select the appropriate answers to questions concerning college/department/unit marketing materials regarding:

- (a) displaying the universal symbol of accessibility
- (b) including a statement regarding accommodations for persons with disabilities
- (c) including pictures of persons with disabilities

by choosing:

- Yes, all do
- Yes, some do
- No, none do
- Not applicable (no marketing materials)

Question 8 asked respondents to indicate “yes” or “no” to answer whether or not there were specific words or phrases in their college/department/unit mission statement that would indicate their willingness to include persons with disabilities.

The final question, number 9, asked respondents to list what resources would be most helpful to them in prioritizing and specifying barriers that should be removed or otherwise modified.

The following definitions were provided to help clarify and assist respondents in answering the questions:

- *Disability*: a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.
- *Policy*: any standard that influences and determines decisions, actions, and other matters.
- *Service*: an act of assistance or benefit for others.
- *Procedure/Practice*: an established course of action to be followed in solving a problem or accomplishing a task.

Survey Results

This section notes some of the executive officers', deans', academic department heads', and vice provosts' responses to each of the survey questions:

The policies, services, procedures/practices, programs that might provide or improve access seem to fall within these three (3) categories:

(1) General attitude/philosophy

Examples:

- We include in our student, faculty, and staff surveys, questions about the campus climate for people with disabilities
- Acknowledging in our literature that our building is accessible
- We require our webmaster certificate participants to take a class on the ADA

(2) Responses to specific issues of inaccessibility

Examples:

- The Assistive Technology Center provides technologies to facilitate library research and alternate format access to library materials.
- Patrons can request assistance in retrieving materials from the book stacks.
- Patrons can submit requests to have materials copied by staff at self-service rates

(3) Deliberate actions to be more inclusive

Examples:

- We have information up about how to get around our buildings
- We allow personal care attendants and/or interpreters to attend classes free of charge (Encore Center)
- Revised our foreign language requirement to include sign language

The policies, services, procedures/practices, programs that may be potential or actual barriers seem to fall within these two (2) categories:

(1) Limited/No consideration of persons' functional limitations in creating the process

Examples:

- We require students to speak/communicate for themselves in all conduct procedures as opposed through a representative
- I would think some of our undergraduate programs might present barriers for students who cannot see or have very limited vision since most people would use vision to process this type of information
- Interviews are videotaped and reviewed as part of our practice courses – barrier for students with visual impairments

(2) Limited/No consideration in designing/purchasing

Examples:

- We don't have a commercial software program that will display models of structures
- We need an increase in alternative models for lab experiences

- With some of the Study Abroad Programs, some of the overseas partners don't have accessible facilities

Marketing materials

Do the marketing materials for your college/department/unit:

- display the universal symbol of accessibility?



Yes, all do	0%
Yes, some do	25.5%
No, none do	41.2%
No marketing materials	23.5%
No response	9.8%

- include a statement regarding accommodations for persons with disabilities?

Yes, all do	13.7%
Yes, some do	31.4%
No, none do	21.6%
No marketing materials	23.5%
No response	9.8%

- include pictures of persons with disabilities?

Yes, all do	0%
Yes, some do	23.5%
No, none do	37.3%
No marketing materials	25.5%
No response	13.7%

Mission Statement

Are there specific words or phrases in your college/department/unit mission statement that indicate your willingness to include persons with disabilities?

YES	19.6%
NO	64.7%
No response	15.7%

If you answered, "yes," what are those specific words or phrases?

Eleven (11) respondents provided information, but only one (1) contained language specific to disability.

Needed Resources

When asked what resources would colleges/departments/units find most helpful in prioritizing and specifying barriers that should be removed or otherwise modified, the replies seemed to follow three (3) themes:

(1) Assistance with identifying potential barriers

Examples:

- A self-assessment guide that covers the basic elements of both physical as well as service issues/barriers to be reviewed
- Possibly showing us where we have barriers and how we can remedy
- Consultation and guidance from OEO on how we can be more intentional in our efforts to be inclusive

(2) Technical assistance

Examples:

- Resources to help the faculty and college maintain accessible materials, such as web pages, closed captioning
- Additional help with web site
- Training and independent assessment of our spaces

(3) Financial assistance

Examples:

- Setting up a pool of funds (ETF?) that would support upgrades to dept. websites and Assistive Technology in meeting rooms
- Money
- Sufficient funding for renovations

Conclusions and Recommendations for the University's Administration

As noted elsewhere in this report, the ABPDS was deployed to selected university administrators and while over half of them responded, many of the respondents left several questions unanswered or simply stated, "we are in compliance with all laws" or "not applicable."

Although information was included with the survey that indicated that physical and architectural barriers and access were not the focus of the survey, many of the responses related to such. This phenomenon suggests that the University community may benefit from information explaining the distinctions between physical, programmatic, informational, and attitudinal access and barriers.

The survey responses, when examined in their entirety, can be viewed as a reflection of the University's philosophy toward persons with disabilities. Historically, many universities, including NC State, have provided people with disabilities reasonable accommodations; only providing the minimal equal access required by law on a case-by-case basis. While the University does provide high quality accommodations, faculty and supervisors frequently inquire about what they "have" to do and what they are "legally responsible to provide" to students and employees with disabilities, rather than, "how can I make our programs and services accessible and usable to everyone?"

Most campus service providers have historically built their service and philosophical constructs on the tenets of the medical or rehabilitation model. Although this has been effective in most cases in providing programmatic access and accommodations for individuals or one person at a time, it seemingly reinforces a "separate but equal" system rather than full inclusion within a community of peers. It does not provide an avenue for the development of self-determination or disability pride for the person receiving services. This model does not take into account that the physical, programmatic, informational, and attitudinal designs often limit the full participation of individuals with disabilities. Through this medical model approach, people with disabilities eventually obtain equal access to University programs and services; however, obtaining the accommodation may take a great deal of time, patience, and is in many cases, not inclusive.

Utilizing the medical model approach inherently creates several disadvantages for people with disabilities:

1. It requires a special accommodation.
2. The accommodation is typically a segregated service.
3. Individual accommodation can be costly and is typically not sustainable.
4. Many times an accommodation is impractical or fails to work
5. People have to self-identify to obtain the accommodation. People hesitate to identify themselves as having a disability, which puts them at risk to fail.
6. It limits the person to work/learn/participate in the University community independently.
7. It requires the person with a disability to go to a special office, allow time for the accommodation process and obtain documentation supporting the disability and need for accommodation. This is a process that other members of the university community do not have to undertake.

It is the responsibility of every member of the campus community to expect that there will be persons with disabilities among us. It is also the responsibility of everyone to support and retain our faculty, staff, and students with disabilities. It should not just be the responsibility of the Office for Equal Opportunity.

In contrast to the medical model, the socio-political model of disability promotes universal design, disability pride, self-determination, and independence of the

individual. With this model, the limitation is not found within the person who has the disability, but in the design of our architecture, curriculum, policies, procedures, programs, and services.

Universal design is not new to NC State. The principles were first developed by Ron Mace of the School of Architecture in the College of Design here on campus. Mace described universal design as the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

When we acknowledge that persons with disabilities do, and will, work and learn on our campus, then we will all need to participate in creating a welcoming campus environment. The act of designing physical, programmatic, informational, and attitudinal environments should center on making intentional and reflective choices about what it is we want faculty, staff, and students to experience and gain during their tenure on our campuses. Designing with intent should then result in naturally inclusive and barrier free learning, working, and social environments thus requiring fewer adaptations and accommodations.

Recommendations

To achieve naturally inclusive and barrier free learning, working, and social environments, it is recommended that members of the campus undertake the following initiatives:

1. Charge the Disability Compliance Advisory Team (DCAT) with developing an implementation plan protocol for operationalizing the recommendations contained within this report. The DCAT should complete its work by January 2010.
2. Formally adopt the guiding principles of universal design as a part of the overall campus strategic planning processes (including compact planning) and promote this new conceptualization of disability on key web pages and in undergraduate and graduate catalogs, and other university marketing and informational materials.
3. Provide resources and training—especially training that relates to course design, Web design, information delivery, and service delivery—intended to reframe the construct of disability and disability compliance so as to not find the limitation within the person who has the disability, but in the design of our architecture, curriculum, policies, procedures, programs, and services.
4. Develop policies, services, practices, and procedures that reflect this paradigm shift, i.e., products and services should be usable by as many people as possible,

regardless of disability, language barriers, or other obstacles to use, therein minimizing the need for adaptation or specialized design.

5. Develop staff and faculty orientation materials which incorporate messages that promote universal design as a part of our campus culture and identify readily achievable strategies, i.e., "best practices" which promote access to the curriculum for diverse populations.
6. Seek input and feedback from interested parties, i.e., persons with disabilities, and organizations representing them in the continuing effort to examine and evaluate the programmatic accessibility of the university programs, activities and services.

Adopting universal design as a framework within which to deliver instruction, plan our services, and organize academic programs will result in new and improved techniques for the instruction and inclusion of all students.

If the mission of NC State University is to "use knowledge, collaboration and creativity to impact the economic, human, environmental, and social concerns of all of society," we must begin to look at the policies, services, procedures/practices, and programs within each college/department/unit for possible barriers that may prevent a person with a disability from fully participating in the institution's mission and vision. More importantly, the University must document and replicate the policies, services, procedures/practices, and programs within each college/department/unit that provide or improve access for persons with disabilities, thus guaranteeing the active participation of people with disabilities in the future of the institution, the state, the nation and the world.



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North Carolina State University Access and Barriers for Persons with Disabilities Survey

TO: NC State Deans, Directors, and Department Heads

**FROM: Larry A. Nielsen, Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor, and
Joanne G. Woodard, Vice Provost for Equal Opportunity and Equity**

The Office for Equal Opportunity (OEO) at NC State monitors the University's compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, applicable state laws, UNC system policies, and NC State University policies in regard to accommodating an otherwise qualified individual with a disability by making a reasonable modification in its services, programs, or activities. To determine the extent to which the University is fulfilling its commitment to persons with disabilities, we are asking you to assist us in reviewing access and barriers by completing this survey on or before **Friday, April 10, 2009**.

(NOTE: While physical and architectural barriers and access are important to review; they are not the focus of this survey.)

As you know, as one of the leading land-grant institutions in the nation, "NC State is committed to playing an active and vital role in improving the quality of life for the citizens of North Carolina, the nation and the world." As a unit within the Office of the Provost at NC State, OEO/DSO is fully committed to playing an active and vital role in improving the quality of life for persons with disabilities, who learn, work, and visit here.

If our University's future is to "use knowledge, collaboration and creativity to impact the economic, human, environmental, and social concerns of all of society," we must begin to look at the policies, services, procedures/practices, and programs within each college/department/unit for possible barriers that may prevent a person with a disability from fully participating in our future. We must also document the policies, services, procedures/practices, and programs within each college/department/unit that provide or improve access for persons with disabilities, thus guaranteeing their participation in our future.

By responding to these survey questions, you are contributing to the planning process towards a university that is fully accessible. THANK YOU! If you have any questions about the content of this survey, please [e-mail Cheryl Branker](#) or phone 919-513-3768.

Continue to Survey



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North Carolina State University Access and Barriers for Persons with Disabilities Survey

How To Take This Survey

- Enter your email address and select **Start or Resume Survey** below. If you are resuming a previous survey, the survey fields will be filled with any responses that you have previously saved.
- To leave the survey and return later, select **Save and Exit**. Your responses will be saved. You can return to the survey and make further changes even after you have completed it, as long as the submission deadline has not yet passed.
- Please answer all questions. When you have completed your survey, select **Submit Survey**.
- If you have a technical question regarding this survey, please [e-mail Elizabeth Snively](#).

After Submitting the Survey

The Office for Equal Opportunity & Equity may follow up with you to:

- clarify information submitted;
- seek information omitted;
- substantiate information provided.

Start or Resume Your Survey

Your Email Address:

[Start or Resume Survey](#)



North Carolina State University Access and Barriers for Persons with Disabilities Survey

Please provide the following identifying information:

Email Address:

Last Name:

First Name:

Phone:

Title:

College/Department/Unit:

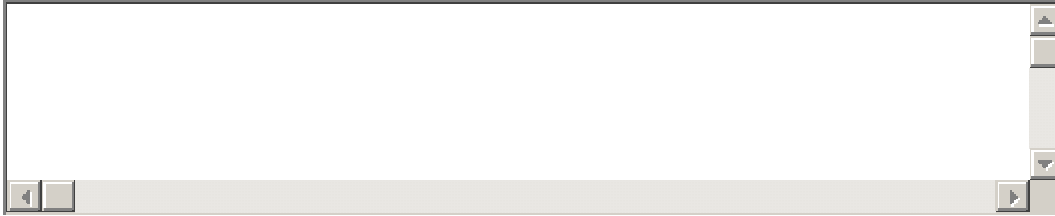
Definitions

In this survey, you will first be asked about policies in your college/department/unit impacting access for persons with disabilities, followed by services, then procedures/practices, and lastly programs. Please use the following definitions to help clarify and assist you in answering the questions about each type of effort:

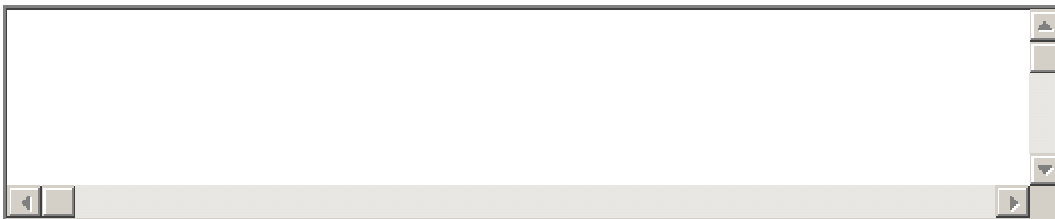
- *Disability*: a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.
- *Policy*: any standard that influences and determines decisions, actions, and other matters.
- *Service*: an act of assistance or benefit for others.
- *Procedure/Practice*: an established course of action to be followed in solving a problem or accomplishing a task.
- *Program*: a plan or schedule of activities.

Please answer the following questions:

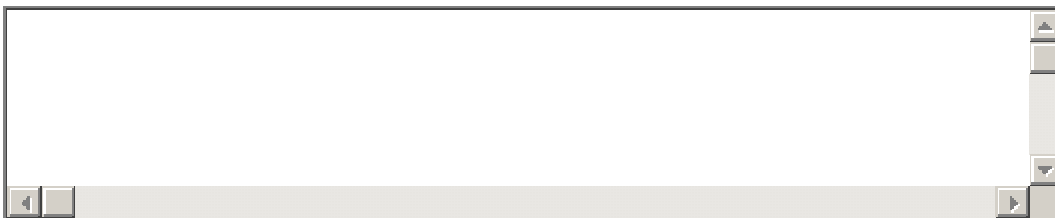
1a. List any policies within your college/department/unit you think might provide or improve access for persons with disabilities.

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1b. List any policies within your college/department/unit you think might be potential or actual barriers for persons with disabilities.

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2a. List any services within your college/department/unit you think might provide or improve access for persons with disabilities.

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2b. List any services not available within your college/department/unit you think might be potential or actual barriers for persons with disabilities.

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3a. List any procedures/practices within your college/department/unit you think might provide or improve access for persons with disabilities.

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3b. List any procedures/practices within your college/department/unit you think might be potential or actual barriers for persons with disabilities.

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4a. List any programs within your college/department/unit you think might provide or improve access for persons with disabilities.

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4b. List any programs within your college/department/unit you think might be potential or actual barriers for persons with disabilities.

5. Do the marketing materials for your college/department/unit display the following universal symbol of accessibility?



- Yes, all do.
- Yes, some do.
- No, none do.
- Not applicable (no marketing materials).

6. Do the marketing materials for your college/department/unit include a statement regarding accommodations for persons with disabilities?

- Yes, all do.
- Yes, some do.
- No, none do.
- Not applicable (no marketing materials).

7. Do the marketing materials for your college/department/unit include pictures of persons with disabilities?

- Yes, all do.

- Yes, some do.
- No, none do.
- Not applicable (no marketing materials).

8. Are there specific words or phrases in your college/department/unit mission statement that indicate your willingness to include persons with disabilities?

- Yes.
- No.

If you answered "Yes," what are those specific words or phrases?

9. What resources would be most helpful to your college/department/unit in prioritizing and specifying barriers that should be removed or otherwise modified in the coming year within the limits of the financial and human resources available?

This completes the survey. Thank you!