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Accessibility at Simmons

April 13th, 2020

According to [universitybusiness.com](#), “the ADA requires U.S. colleges that receive federal funds to provide the accommodations students need to live and learn on campus.” Not adhering to these policies can be met with fines or other legal action. While Simmons has a legal obligation to be accessible, it’s the **moral imperative** that encourages us to make this a top institutional priority. Becoming the most inclusive campus in New England isn’t just a slogan.

“If we are not accessible to all types of individuals and abilities then we are not genuine in our pursuit of excellence.

Equity=Accessibility=Excellence,” says Debra Perez, Senior Vice President of Organization Culture Inclusion & Equity.

Simmons is working every day to make it happen

Offices and departments such as Accessibility Services, Organization Culture Inclusion & Equity, Title IX, Residential Life, University

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Communications and so many others have initiatives, programs and processes to help build a more equitable and inclusive institution.

Some offices have a direct responsibility to provide accessibility support. For example, the Office of Accessibility Services works with students and faculty to secure classroom and academic accommodations for students and consults with other departments on events such as commencement to make sure they're accessible. While other departments and positions don't facilitate hands-on support for accessibility, they still have the capacity to create change.

Here are some ways that you can help:

Even if your job doesn't directly involve accessibility it is still everyone's responsibility to create a culture of accessibility at Simmons. There are many ways that faculty and staff can aid in this effort. "There's a way that every office can contribute to making things as barrier-free as possible while providing access," says Lisa Bauer, Director of Accessibility Services.

- **Consider whether your office space is accommodating:** Simple things like considering whether furniture placement is creating barriers to people with physical disabilities is a simple way to create change.
- **Make sure that your syllabi include a wide range of assignments:** By having a variety of assignments you can more easily accommodate different learning styles and abilities, this can make a big difference in the effort of inclusion.
- **Creating accessible digital content for your students and colleagues:** Sending emails and creating documents in a way that accommodates faculty, staff, and students using assistive technologies fosters accessible communications. The office of University Communication has a document to aid faculty and staff in [creating accessible digital content](#).
- **Plan events with accessibility in mind:** Event planning is a good time to think about accessibility. Is the physical event space accessible? Does the audio/visual components accommodate someone who has an impairment? Does your flyer state who they can contact if they need an accommodation to attend your event? These are just some of the ways we can guide Simmons into becoming a more equitable institution.

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- **Reach out for help:** If you're wondering what you can do to make your classroom, office, event or program more accessible, there are plenty of resources. The Office of Accessibility Services is available for a one-on-one consultation with members of the Simmons community on an as-needed basis.

According to Disability Studies Quarterly, approximately 9% of university students have some form of disability. Simply opening up the conversation around accessibility in your office will get us moving in the right direction, push us to innovative solutions for our students and employees, and truly make us the most inclusive campus in New England.

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