

Multicultural Universal Design Checklist for the Physical Environment

"Universal design is an approach to the design of products and environments to be as usable as possible by as many people as possible regardless of age, ability or situation. Previous approaches have been labeled "barrier-free" or "handicapped accessible." These terms connoted an unattractive, accessibility challenge. Universal design is a graceful, broad-spectrum solution that helps everyone, not just the disabled." (from wiki-web)

Multicultural is an inclusive definition of diversity. This label identifies groups of individuals who have historically been underserved or underrepresented in higher education (e.g., people of color; students with disabilities; nontraditional students; female students; religious minorities; international students; first-generation college students; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students) Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller: *Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs*.

The Outreach Committee of Academic Support Programs created the multicultural universal design checklist below. We created this checklist to focus on the physical environment, targeting ways for the physical environment to help individuals from underrepresented groups feel welcomed and accepted. Subsequent checklists will explore programmatic/policy, information, and attitudinal environments.

Please evaluate the items below to help determine how well your unit is designed to meet the needs of diverse groups.

Physical Environment

- 1. Are locations and facilities accessible? (gender-neutral restrooms, wheelchair accessible elevators and restrooms, wide hallways, lowered fountains and phones, ramps, automatic door opener)
- 2. Are equipment and materials used by students and tutors accessible?
- 3. Is nearby disability parking provided? (Wheelchair van parking available? Or just standard HC parking?)
- 4. Will a person feel safe in this environment?
- 5. Are high visibility office name plates, directional signs, and addresses present?
- 6. Are aisles kept wide and clear for wheelchair users, and are protruding objects removed or minimized for the safety of users who are visually impaired?
- 7. Is there a statement regarding availability of accommodations? Regarding availability of materials in alternative formats or in alternative media (Braille, large print, audiotape) upon request?
- 8. Are adaptive technologies available? (trackball mice, enlarged keyboards, adaptive software)
- 9. When you walk into the space will people from underrepresented groups feel comfortable? (artwork, pictures, articles circulated?)
- 10. Do materials include pictures of people from underrepresented groups portrayed in a positive manner?
- 11. Do you have any other suggestions on how to make this space more accessible and welcoming?