

Resolution Title: A Campus Commitment to Universal Design

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Universal design, a concept that emerged from the architectural field, is now recognized as a viable concept for rethinking and reconstructing many environments—including the environments found in educational settings. Frank Bowe, a pioneer in these efforts, defines universal design as it applies to the educational setting as “the preparation of curriculum, materials and environments so that they may be used appropriately and with ease, by a wide variety of people.” In essence, the application of universal design moves us from the separate but equal approach of accommodating individual differences, to a more inclusive and equitable way of thinking about design of instruction and service environments.

We propose a campus-wide commitment to universal design as a framework within which to deliver instruction, plan our services, and organize academic programs.

WHEREAS, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to providing a quality educational experience to a diverse student body;

WHEREAS, the university also has a history of being in the forefront in terms of the campus community’s response to disability;

WHEREAS, the traditional accommodation approach of responding to disability perpetuates a “separate but equal” model;

WHEREAS, the adoption of universal design as a framework within which we deliver instruction, plan our services, and organize academic programs will place UALR in the forefront of universities that are making the shift from a reactive approach to a proactive one;

WHEREAS, the implementation of universal design will likely result in new and improved design;

WHEREAS, many educators have noted that implementing universal design principles benefits most students—including students with disabilities; students for whom English is a second language; international students; nontraditional students; students with a learning style that differs from that of his or her instructor’s teaching style; and academically at-risk groups (which at UALR includes African American men).

Therefore, be it RESOLVED by the Faculty Senate of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock that, UALR staff, faculty and administrators adopt a formal campus-wide commitment to universal design and publish a summary statement on key web pages and in undergraduate and graduate catalogs;

*(Sample statement: The University of Arkansas at Little Rock is committed to the creation of usable, equitable, inclusive and sustainable learning environments. We promote the principles of universal design for the betterment of all members of our diverse campus community, including people with disabilities and other identity groups.)*

that universal design concepts be infused in faculty and staff training—especially training that relates to course design, Web design, information delivery, and service delivery;

that UALR implement a campus diversity initiative and include Disability as an aspect of the diversity that is an integral part of our campus community;

that the university revisit campus policies and adapt them to reflect this paradigm shift;

that as staff and faculty orientation materials are developed, incorporate messages that promote this philosophy as a part of our campus culture;

that UALR use the principles of universal design to guide construction/development of all aspects of the campus environment: the built environment, classrooms and labs, the IT environment, instruction, programs, and services and engage faculty, staff and administrators in identifying disabling environments and reconstructing them based on these principles;

that UALR hire architects who are trained in universal design principles and involve the Chancellor's Committee on the ADA in the early planning stages for new buildings and remodeling projects;

that we view the need to retrofit a process, product or environment or provide an accommodation as a signpost pointing toward the probable need for redesign;

that we promote inclusive, equitable design with our vendors or potential vendors by communicating the need for products that are usable, to the greatest extent possible, by all of our students, faculty, staff, visitors and alumni and purchasing products that meet our standard; and that we, as a campus, utilize the following as guiding principles as we move forward toward this vision of a more equitable, sustainable and usable campus environment:

- Disability is an aspect of diversity that is an integral part of society.
- Disability is a social construct resulting from the present inability of social institutions and designed environments to accommodate individual differences. (Schriner & Scotch)
- Access is a matter of social justice.
- Good design means, among other things, that a product, process, or environment is, to the greatest extent possible, usable by everyone.
- Creating and advocating for usable, sustainable, and inclusive learning environments is a shared responsibility.