

# Partners

## Advancing Access to Postsecondary Education for People with Disabilities

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UNIVERSITY OF  
ARKANSAS

College of Education  
& Health Professions

# About U of A Partners

- Provide technical assistance and training on topics related to disability and accessibility.



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# Handouts



[exploreaccess.org/handouts](https://exploreaccess.org/handouts)

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# Today is Global Accessibility Awareness Day!



The purpose of GAAD is to get everyone talking, thinking and learning about digital access and inclusion, and the more than One Billion people with disabilities.

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# Forward Momentum and Cultural Shifts that Advance Access

...and the resistance that slows them down

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# Shifts to a Social Justice Perspective

- Disability as diversity
- Proactive removal of barriers
- Universal design in instruction
- Moving from compliance to inclusion
- Reduced burden on students



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“Through a social justice lens, disability is shaped by dynamics of privilege, power, and oppression and can be compared to the experiences of other subordinated social groups. Disability is no longer considered to be a personal problem, but something that is influenced greatly by the interaction of that individual with society.”

Amanda Kraus  
Vice President for Student Affairs  
University of Arizona

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# Resistance to Social Justice Perspective

- Seeing disability through a medical model lens
- Focusing solely on compliance
- Misunderstanding and misapplication of social justice framework
- Assumptions that this approach creates unfair advantages



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# Emerging Technologies

- AI-powered accessibility tools
- Integration of assistive technology into mainstream technology
- Video conferencing tools



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# Resistance to Emerging Technology

- Concerns about academic dishonesty
- Restrictive anti-AI policies
- Classroom bans on certain technologies



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**“Design has the power to make us feel competent or incompetent; it has the power to include us or exclude us.”**

Elaine Ostroff  
Founding Director of the Institute for Human  
Centered Design

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# New Title II Rule on the Accessibility of Web Content and Mobile Apps

- Department of Justice's (DOJ) final rule published on April 24, 2024
- Establishes specific requirements for ensuring that web content and mobile apps are accessible to people with disabilities.



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# Resistance to Digital Access

- Compliance date delayed from April 26, 2026 to April 26, 2027
- Lack of training and knowledge
- Beliefs that:
  - “Some content should not have to be accessible”
  - “Accessibility is solely the responsibility of the disability resource office”



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**“A law cannot guarantee  
what a culture will not give.”**

Mary Johnson, disability activist



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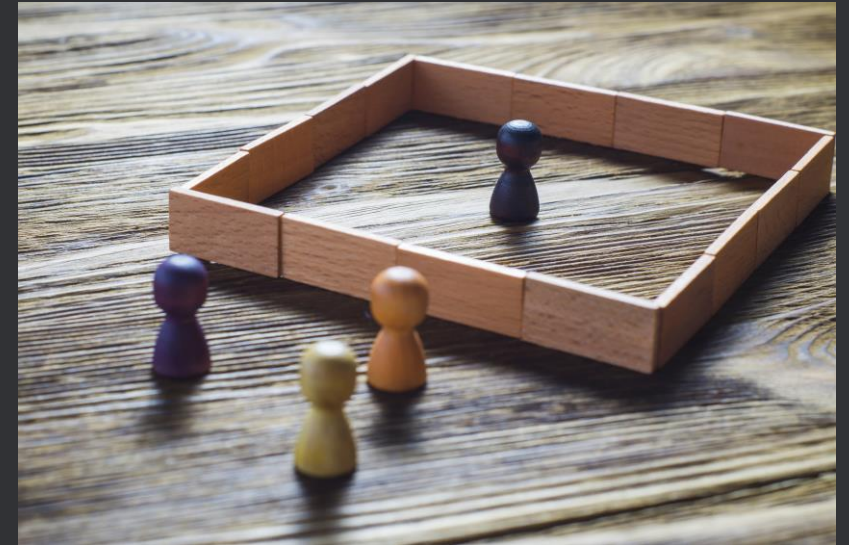
# More Focus on Student Mental Health

- Studies indicate that 60–75% of college students report anxiety or depression.
  - Increased prevalence has normalized conversations about mental health on campus.
  - Students more likely speak up and get help.
- 
- More creative responses
    - Digital and mobile services
    - Peer support and training
    - Faculty and staff development
    - Mental health integration into curriculum
    - Holistic wellness programs

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# Resistance to Focus on Mental Health

- Continued bias against people with mental illness
- Fear of having conversations about mental health
- Belief that mental health is not a shared responsibility



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# Increased Recognition of Neurodiversity

- Recognition that neurological differences are a natural part of human diversity.
- Supports a social justice perspective
- Improved self-esteem
- Reduced isolation



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# Resistance to Neurodiversity Movement

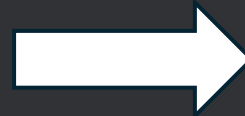
- Continued stigma toward people with autism, ADHD, and learning disabilities
- Concerns about unfair advantage
- Concerns that some people with disabilities will be overlooked



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# Additive Impacts

- Greater acceptance of neurodiversity
- Increased recognition of mental health conditions
- Reduced burden of documentation requirements



Result:

- Increased requests for accommodations

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# Resistance to More Accommodations Being Granted

- Concerns about over-accommodation
- Media narratives such as *Accommodation Nation*
- Selective or misleading use of research



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**“People are always concerned about accommodations giving me an unfair advantage. I never hear them express concern about nondisabled people having an unfair advantage over me.”**

Alberto Guzman  
Disability Activist and Disability Studies Scholar

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# How Do We Support the Trends Toward a More Accessible Future?

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# Rehabilitation professionals can:

1. Help students find colleges and universities that are committed to disability inclusion.
2. Encourage students to “interview” disability resource offices before choosing a college.
3. Encourage students to talk to other students with disabilities about their college experiences.

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# Mental health providers can:

1. Develop and/or promote nonspecialist approaches to mental health support.
2. Use stepped-care approaches to mental health services.
3. Mentor nonspecialists who want to be peer leaders or provide peer training on college campuses.

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# Disability resource professionals in higher education can:

1. Work to improve access proactively.
2. Ensure policies and practices reduce the burden on students to the extent possible.
3. Build skills for responding to faculty and administrators who question accommodations and inclusive practices.

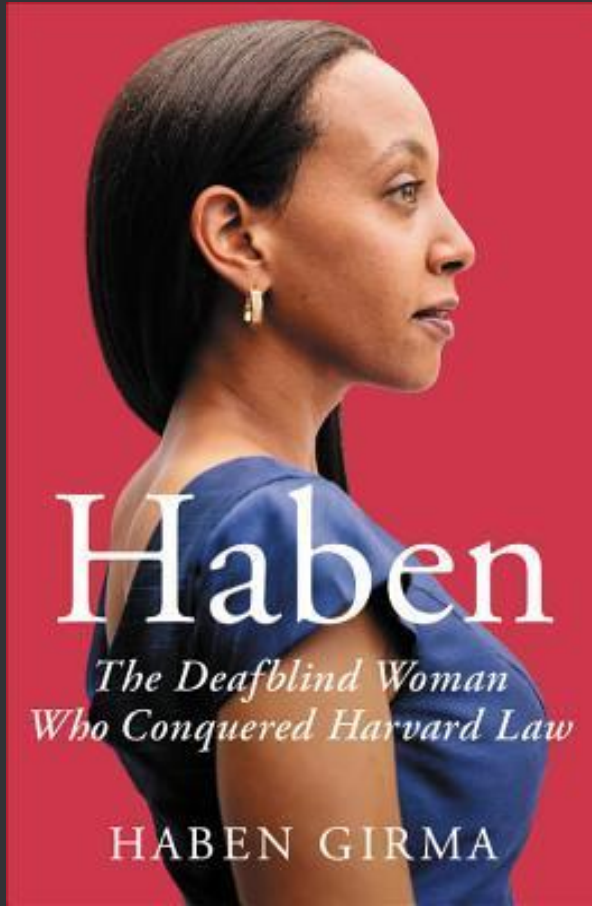
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# We all can:

1. Promote and represent disability as a natural part of human variation.
2. Make sure we model accessible design in all we do.
3. Listen to the experiences and wisdom of Disability activists.



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**“Communities designed with just one kind of person in mind isolate those of us defying our narrow definition of personhood.”**

Haben Girma  
Lawyer, Disability rights activist

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# How Will We Respond?

The future of access depends on all of us.

Will we give in to resistance, or will we continue pushing toward greater access, inclusion, and opportunity?

**THE  
FUTURE  
IS  
ACCESSIBLE.**

ACCESSIBILITY



LOADING...

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# Global Accessibility Awareness Day!



The perfect day to commit to creating a more accessible world...together.

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# Contact Me

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