



New Coalition Launches to Improve Higher Education Accessibility for Learners with Disabilities

Representatives from across sectors come together to drive higher education policy changes at the state and federal levels and improve institutional accessibility practices.

Today, in honor of Disability Pride Month, the [Center for Higher Education Policy and Practice](#) (CHEPP) at Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) and the [National Center for Learning Disabilities](#) (NCLD) announced the newly created Coalition on Accessibility in Higher Education. This coalition brings together organizations across K12, higher education, workforce, technology, and disability rights organizations to advocate for change in higher education institutional and practitioner policies and develop and support strong state and federal public policies.

Building on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act that give disabled students the right to access educational opportunities alongside their peers, this coalition will connect research, policy, and practice to transform institutions of higher education and expand accessible learning opportunities for all students to truly enable each learner to achieve economic security, economic mobility, and success in life.

“Our team at the National Center for Learning Disabilities is eager to launch this coalition focused on tackling issues of inaccessibility in higher education,” said Dr. Jacqueline Rodriguez, CEO of NCLD. “For too long, students with learning disabilities and other neurodivergent students have faced systemic barriers. We are excited to develop solutions across policy, research, and practice by working with familiar and new partners.”

"While one in four people in the U.S. have a disability, learners with disabilities are too often underserved by institutions of higher education," said Jamie Fasteau, Executive Director of the CHEPP at SNHU. "This coalition brings together experts, advocates, and policy leaders from across sectors to inform needed changes to improve college access and success for disabled students and all learners."

“Creating an inclusive and accessible higher education experience begins in K-12 and does not end until learners have graduated into their careers,” said Kimberly Knackstedt, Ph.D., Principal Consultant of Unlock Access and Advisor to the Coalition. “For too long, our systems have been disconnected. The Coalition on Accessibility in Higher Education is leading the way with cross-sector collaboration to transform the higher education experience, working to ensure every disabled student can succeed alongside their peers.”

Members of The Coalition on Accessibility in Higher Education include:

[Association on Higher Education And Disability](#) (AHEAD)

[Association of University Centers on Disabilities](#) (AUCD)

[Center for American Progress](#)

[EdTrust](#)

[Institute for Higher Education Policy](#) (IHEP)

[National Association for College Admission Counseling](#) (NACAC)

[National College Attainment Network](#) (NCAN)

[National Down Syndrome Congress](#) (NDSC)

[National Skills Coalition](#)

[Nelnet Diversified Services](#)

And other organizations

NCLD's [State of Learners with Disabilities Young Adult Survey](#) and CHEPP's paper, [Online by Design: How Accessibility is Fundamental to Learner-Centered Design](#) informed the importance of launching this coalition.

To learn more about the coalition visit <https://www.linkedin.com/company/higher-ed-access> or please reach out to the coalition's advisor, Kimberly Knackstedt at Knackstedt@unlockaccess.org. For media inquiries please reach out to Cierra Mangal at cmangal@nclld.org.