Planning Inclusive and Accessible Events

Scheduling

❑ Avoid scheduling events during major religious or cultural holidays, and be mindful of the diversity of Sacramento State and our surrounding community.

❑ Consider connecting with other organizations and integrating into existing events and programs to maximize attendance.

❑ Add your event to the Sacramento State Calendar.

Venue

❑ Do a walk-through of the potential venues to assess accessibility issues (e.g., wheelchair accessibility, availability of assistive technology, etc.) and to identify and address any barriers.

Promotional/Registration Materials

❑ Events should be publicized at least three (3) weeks in advance for the purpose of ensuring good attendance and to allow adequate time for individuals interested in attending to request accommodation.

❑ Include language about how and by when to request accommodations, materials, interpretation in a language other than English, or dietary modifications, and include (1) a contact person with phone number and/or email address, and (2) clear deadline by which to make requests known.

Sample Language:

The Division of Inclusive Excellence seeks to ensure that our events are inclusive and that all attendees are able to fully participate. The event will have wheelchair accessible seating and vegetarian and gluten-free food options will be provided. Please request an ASL interpreter or a live captioning as soon as possible, but no later than five (5) business days before the event, by sending an email to asl@csus.edu with your request and providing the name, date, time, and location of this event. For all other requests, please email **[INSERT EMAIL ADDRESS]** no later than five (5) business days prior to the event.

❑ The deadline by which requests for accommodation should be made should be no longer than five (5) business days prior to the event, unless there are special circumstances.

❑ Include language about any planned accommodations (e.g., vegetarian and gluten free food options, wheelchair accessible seating, use of amplified sound, etc.)

❑ Common dietary restrictions and allergies should be considered when serving food at an event, including ensuring vegetarian and vegan options.

Consider including universal access symbols on promotional and registration materials: https://www.artsaccess.com.au/universal-access-symbols

❑ Flyers, if distributed electronically, should be screen-reader compatible, with an accompanying text-only version (that includes the same text as that which appear on the flyer) in the body of any email sent out. There is no need to provide a separate, text-only file, if the text is "in the body" of the email.

❑ If you invite community members or the public to the event, make sure to have information regarding parking options on your advertising materials.

Staff/Volunteer

❑ Appoint a point person for accessibility issues and list as contact on all materials.

❑ Conduct a walk-through of the venue a few days before and the day of the meeting/event.

❑ Test all technical equipment when it arrives and the day of the meeting/event.

Virtual Events

During the COVID-19 Stay at Home order, and even when campus is re-populated, virtual meetings and events are a helpful method for connecting with guests. It is just as important to consider accessibility with virtual events and meetings as it is when planning face-to-face events. In general,

❑ Where possible, please provide both internet and dial-in options for participation in virtual events or meetings as not everyone has reliable access to internet service.

❑ In advance, provide tip sheet for attendees related to software used for the event that addresses how including (1) how to log in and whether an account is needed to do so, (2) the availability and how to use an accessibility features, and (3) where to direct any questions should attendees experience difficulties.

❑ Provide presenters information on best practices on working within the software and/or with any accessibility features or services, including ASL Interpretation during a virtual presentation (see a few resources below)

❑ Test the technology and all anticipated functionalities both several days in advance and immediately before the event.

❑ Designate one or more individuals to troubleshoot problems during the event or respond to attendees experiencing technical difficulties.

❑ If taking and receiving questions during the event, determine the process for doing so, advise participants of the process being used, and designate one or more individuals who will assist the presenter(s) with both receiving and responding to questions.

❑ Consider having an opening slide or slides that communicates important information to attendees as the program begins, such as accessibility features, how to submit questions, etc.

❑ Best Practices: below are several helpful resources to assist in planning and executing accessible virtual events:

- Accessibility Features (Zoom),
- Getting Started with Closed Captioning (Zoom)
- Accessibility Tips for a Better Zoom/Virtual Meeting Experience (*Deaf/Hard of Hearing Technology Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center*)
- "What It Takes to Run a Great Virtual Meeting" (*Harvard Business Review*)
- "How to Make Your Virtual Meetings and Events Accessible to the Disability Community" (*Rooted in Rights*)

Presentations

Seating

❑ Reserve seats in front of presenter for persons with visual, hearing, and cognitive limitations or impairments.

❑ Ensure that all accessible seating is integrated within the room so as to avoid sitting all persons with disabilities together.

❑ Identify any barrier that cannot be eliminated and be sure to communicate those to attendees.

Screen

❑ Provide screens that are viewable from all areas of the room.

❑ Make text and visuals large enough to be read from back of the room.

❑ Presentations that include videos or films should have closed captioning enabled on any media used.

Microphones

❑ Provide presenters with a lapel and/or a handheld microphone. (Please note that it is advisable to check with the presenter when possible to learn their preference).

❑ Any program that includes a question and answer session requires multiple microphones for individuals or audience members to ask questions.

Materials

❑ Ensure that visual aids are printed in large font and make print copies available.

Presenters

❑ At the start of the meeting, introduce the interpreter(s) and other service providers by name.

❑ At the start of the meeting, orally describe the room layout and location of emergency exits, food/beverages, and restrooms, including gender-neutral or all gender restrooms.

❑ Inform attendees in the presentation description and at the start of any writing or reading activities during the meeting so people with visual, cognitive, or motor impairments can fully and equally participate.

❑ Use a microphone at all times. (Please note that simply asking the audience, "Can you hear me?" does not guarantee that everyone can hear. People who cannot hear, or that are uncomfortable speaking up, likely will not respond. Therefore, it is best to always use a microphone.)

❑ Provide a written description of all images.

❑ Use multiple communication methods for different learning styles (verbal, pictures and diagrams, text, auditory).

❑ Describe images, photographs, and other visual moments out loud, in a paced way, using accessible language.

❑ Question and Answer period. Repeat all questions and comments from the audience in the microphone.

Working with Interpreters or Live Captioners

❑ In advance, provide information to presenters regarding working with ASL interpretation during a presentation. *See* How to Use a Sign Language Interpreter, How to Rock Your ASA Presentation and Make it Inclusive, and Sign Language Interpreters in the Classroom.

❑ If possible, give interpreters copies of presentation material to review before the presentation.

❑ If members of the audience are using interpreters or personal assistants, address all comments directly to the person and not their interpreter or assistant.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This resource was developed based on prior materials developed by Sacramento State employees and groups from the Commencement Office and the University Library. The information graciously shared by those offices were used as a starting point with additional information and resources from Syracuse University's A Guide to Planning Inclusive Events, Seminars, and Activities (2018), the University of Arizona Disability Resource Center's Planning Accessible and Inclusive Events, and the American Bar Association's Planning Accessible Meetings and Events: A Toolkit.

Inclusive Excellence believes that there is always room for continuous improvement. If you have suggestions for how to improve this resource, please email your comments and feedback to diversity@csus.edu.

Note: Please be advised that the information and guidance herein is not intended to replace or supplant any rights or obligations under the American with Disabilities Act or other related law. Therefore, students seeking accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD) by emailing sswd@csu.edu or calling (916) 278-6955. Employees seeking reasonable accommodations should contact the Benefits Office, by emailing benefits@csus.edu or calling (916) 278-6213.