

Creating an Inclusive Intramural, Recreation, and Club Sports Program on Campus



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National Disability Mentoring Coalition's
**Dinah F.B. Cohen
DREAM Fellowship Program**
Disability Rights, Education, Activism, and Mentoring



This guide is presented by the National Disability Mentoring Coalition, the Dinah F.B. Cohen DREAM Fellowship Program, and the Institute on Disability and Human Development at the University of Illinois Chicago.

Note: This guide contains plain-language. While there is much information on the inclusion of people with disabilities in college life, we focus on providing ways to include college students with disabilities in your college's intramural sports and recreation programs. To ensure that readers understand suggestions given in the guide, we avoid jargon, terms that are specific to academia or sports, and complex words, and instead use terms that most people would understand and recognize.

Please seek resources in the "Resource" section of the guide if you would like to learn more about academic articles, case studies, and more about disability in intramural sports, recreation programs, and club sports in colleges.

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About the Author



Image description: On the lakefront in Chicago stands a large African-American male with locs and a UIC rugby uniform, holding a camera. Picture is in black and white.

Timotheus “T.J.” Gordon Jr. is an African-American male autistic writer and researcher-activist in Chicago, IL. As a researcher at UIC’s Institute on Disability and Human Development, he creates trainings, webinars, guides, and campaigns on inclusion in communities of color, COVID-19 and the intersections of race and disability, autism in communities of color, and inclusion of people with disabilities in the U.S. Census.

Gordon is one of the co-founders of Chicagoland Disabled People of Color Coalition, also known as Chicagoland DPOCC.

Supported by the Institute on Disability and Human Development, Chicagoland DPOCC promotes disability acceptance and self-advocacy in communities of color throughout the Chicagoland area.

As a member of Advance Your Leadership Power (AYLP), a racial/disability justice group within Access Living of Metropolitan Chicago, Gordon supports and helps lead campaigns on combating police violence and mental health within the Chicagoland disability community.

Gordon is the creator of the Black Autist, a blog and social media outlet that promotes autism and disability acceptance in the African Diaspora. He uses writing and social media to discuss topics on disability in the media, disability pride in marginalized communities, and caregiver violence against people with disabilities.

Gordon is a recipient of the Annie B. Hopkins Youth Advocate Award, 2021 Access Living's Williams-Morley Advocate of the Year Award, 2021 NDMC Dinah Cohen DREAM Fellow, and a 2020-21 SARTAC Fellow. He is also a member of Class of 2020 of the Susan Daniels Disability Mentoring Hall of Fame.

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enhance my college life. I enjoyed my college experience, partly because you all have allowed me to be a part of recreational and intramural sports opportunities, regardless of being autistic.

I thank digital storyteller Flemlo Raps for promoting the power of college athletics in culture and personal life to YouTube viewers such as myself; his stories on college and professional athletes, especially those with disabilities (such as Jamaal Charles), reinforce the power that sports and recreation can have on people from different backgrounds and the opportunities and platforms those people can use to do great life works outside the playing field.

Additionally, I would like to thank Special Olympics, TRI Rugby, and Paul Grossman for providing me with pointers on creating inclusive sports and rec programs.

Shout-out to the disabled athletes in all levels of play, and the coaches, peers, and administrators who supported them throughout their years in athletics. You all have made it possible for a new generation of athletes to explore playing in more inclusive and adaptive leagues, including at the collegiate level.

Let's not forget the disabled college students who inspired us, myself included, to not only pursue higher education, but also reap the benefits of living the college life just like their peers. And give thanks to the pieces of legislation that made inclusion in college and collegiate & intramural sports possible, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title IX, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Preface



Image description: Standing in front of a person in red hoodie and black pants is a Black male doing “the Heisman Pose”, holding a football, wearing snow-covered hoodie and pants (Source: Facebook)

Sports have been the love of my life since birth; you can say that preoccupation with sports, the history of sports, and the intersections of sports and culture are some of my many focused interests.

In fact, sports have been the bridge that connected me with people outside the disability community. I befriended many people because I either played a sport with them, engaged in conversation about sports, or played a sports video game with

them. Sports is a powerful tool where people from various backgrounds can come together, build relationships, strengthen communities, and enjoy each other's company.

The *Creating an Inclusive Intramural, Recreational, and Club Sports Program on Campus* guide is based on my experiences as an undergraduate and graduate student on the autism spectrum. I benefited immensely from an inclusive environment where I felt I was a crucial part of the team and recreational sports program; I was respected for my ability to play and excel in whichever sports program I joined. With this guide, I would like to see more college students with disabilities enjoy similar experiences in intramural, recreational, and club sports.

My hopes for you all reading this guide is that you, as a director of recreation or intramural sports, will have practical tools and resources to create and improve a recreational sports program where more college students with disabilities can create competitive, inclusive, fun, and worthwhile experiences (along with lasting friendships) while attending college. In return, intentionally creating an inclusive environment in your program can add more value and attraction to it.

Introduction: Benefits of Having an Accessible and Inclusive Campus Sports and Recreation Program



Image description: Man with fair complexion, one leg, black hair, and black clothes; climbing on a wall (Source: Pexel)

Sports, recreation, and leisure are some of the most powerful things that can bring people from various backgrounds together. People can relate to sports with one another, no matter where they come from, how much money they have, what gender they are, etc. Sports and recreation are not solely fun activities where people can destress, exercise, explore new things, and compete

with one another (or with themselves). Sports can also facilitate life-long friendships, the practice of living a healthy lifestyle through fitness, sports, and leisure, and the development of skills that can be translated into life outside the playing fields. These skills can be perseverance, teamwork, trusting yourself and your teammates, leadership, and more.

The lessons and benefits of participating in sports and recreation can also be applied to college students, especially college students with disabilities. An accessible and inclusive campus sports and recreation program is not only beneficial to students with disabilities, but also the campus community at-large. Inclusive rec and sports activities can encourage students with and without disabilities to play together and connect with each other, and friendships as a result of those activities can continue to grow after the end of those activities and events within campus rec and intramural sports. Students with disabilities who participate in campus rec and sports programs can learn life skills and lessons, such as teamwork, health and wellness, and other essential skills and traits needed to live an independent/interdependent life on-campus and off-campus.

Inclusive campus sports and recreation programs can be used to recruit more students with disabilities to attend college, whether through traditional means or a [ThinkCollege](#) program. ThinkCollege programs are designed specifically for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities to attend and succeed in college. This is a good chance for colleges to show examples of how they are including people with disabilities into the college

experience, both academically and from a campus involvement point of view.

There are some studies where researchers have examined the relationship between participation in campus rec programs and overall academic performance on campus. For example, those who participate in campus rec and intramural sports, regardless of disability, are more likely to enjoy their college experience more and perform well in their classes. For more studies and research on sports and rec programs and students with disabilities, you may go to the Resource section, under “Suggested Readings”, towards the end of the guide.

Whether your campus rec program is new, or you are looking to make your current campus rec program more inclusive, this guide can help you create a campus rec and intramural sports program where students with disabilities can have a space to be themselves and enjoy the perks of being a college student through inclusive sports and leisure on-campus.

Accessible Recreation and Intramural Sports Programs



*Image Description: Four wheelchair users playing basketball in a gym
(Source: Pexels, Kampus Production)*

Inclusive and Adaptive Recreation and Intramural Sports Programs

Providing necessary accommodations in leagues, events, and programs is one way to attract students with disabilities to use campus rec services and resources. Accommodations will also encourage students to try things such as rock climbing, skiing, hiking, basketball, and other physical activities. For example, your campus rec department can provide adaptive sports demonstrations where students can try out sports and activities such as quad rugby, wheelchair basketball, skiing, canoeing, and more. Students, especially students with disabilities, can interact with each other and bond over shared experiences. They can compete with (or against) each other during those events while

also learning about the adaptive equipment they could use to enjoy certain activities.

In addition, you can also encourage your campus rec staff to provide students with opportunities to create intramural sports leagues or club teams that participate in adaptive sports. Students with disabilities can either play in campus intramural sports leagues or intercollegiate club sports leagues where your campus team can compete against other colleges. Depending on the focus of a league, teams could be made of solely students with certain disabilities, or a mixture of students with and without disabilities.

It is important to learn the rules in any modified sport or rec activity and for your campus rec program to have the tools needed for students to participate.

Examples of popular adaptive, inclusive, or [Special Olympics Unified Sports®](#) that students with disabilities can participate in campus rec programs are:

- Basketball (including wheelchair basketball)
- Bowling
- Flag Football
- Rugby (including quad rugby)
- Softball
- Electronic Sports (Esports)
- Table Tennis
- Soccer
- Hockey (floor or ice)

- Broomball
- Tennis
- Volleyball
- Tabletop gaming
- Card games (such as spades, poker, or Uno)
- Kickball
- Bocce or boccia
- Goalball
- Cornhole

Unified Rugby

If any student is looking for contact sports on campus, and want to feel included, then unified rugby is a perfect game that students with disabilities, community members with disabilities, and students without disabilities play together. Participants can have the option to play 15-person rugby or 7-person rugby; students can also create a touch rugby team if they prefer a non-contact alternative.

Though unified rugby is more prevalent in the United Kingdom, it's becoming more popular in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. It is even introduced in the United States as a part of USA Rugby's initiative on diversity, equity and inclusion.

For more information on unified rugby and its growing popularity in the United States, visit the following online resources:

- Trust Rugby International - <https://www.tri.group>

- Article on Unified Rugby in the United States - <https://www.usa.rugby/2021/03/washington-wolfpack-unified-rugby-continues-through-covid-19>
- Washington Wolfpack Rugby Football Club - <https://www.facebook.com/dewolfpackrugby>

Special Olympics Unified Sports®

Another opportunity that college students with disabilities can take advantage of is Special Olympics Unified Sports. In Unified Sports, people with intellectual disabilities and partners without intellectual disabilities play on the same team; this is a rare opportunity for people with various talents and needs to work together, connect with each other, and compete with each other.

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools® supports college and university campuses throughout the United States that host Unified Sports. Flag football, basketball, and soccer are some of the popular sports that students could participate in unified teams. However, students can form unified teams in any sport that the intramural and campus rec department at your school offers.

Another cool thing about Special Olympics college programming is that students can use the opportunity to promote inclusion of people with disabilities on campus through leadership training sessions and campaigns that promote inclusion on campuses.

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools has a partnership with [NIRSA: Leaders in Campus Recreation](#). In addition to supporting Unified Intramural Sports on campuses, NIRSA

committed to hosting Unified Sports divisions at both its regional and national championship tournaments. These tournaments include basketball, flag football, soccer, and electronic sports.

If you would like to learn more about Special Olympics college programming, or if you would like to sign up to have a team on your campus, visit <https://tinyurl.com/SO-College-Guides>. In that link, you can check out Unified Sports rules, how to sign your college up for Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools, leadership opportunities, and more.

Paralympics and Virtus (Athletes Without Limits)

Other options for adaptive and inclusive sports programs within campus recreation are Paralympics or Virtus sports. Both leagues provide several team and individual sporting opportunities to people with disabilities, and they can compete locally, nationally, or even with athletes around the world. They could have the chance to qualify for national and global games in their prospective sports. Your campus rec program can provide a space where Paralympics and Virtus athletes can train and play their respective sports under those leagues, and they can also compete against other colleges and agencies within those two entities.

Examples of sports that students can participate in within Paralympics or Virtus are:

- Basketball
- Sailing

- Martial arts (such as taekwondo and judo)
- Wheelchair rugby
- Track and field
- Rowing
- Swimming
- Hockey
- Soccer (football/futsal/indoor soccer)

Keep in mind that Virtus/Athletes Without Limits provide more opportunities for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities than Paralympics, while Paralympics are more tailored to people with physical disabilities.

Electronic sports (Esports)

Electronic sports, or sports where people can compete against each other in video games, are becoming popular on campuses. In fact, some colleges have competitive teams where they can compete against other college teams. Some rec sports departments have an intramural electronic sports league where students compete against each other in games such as Street Fighter, Madden NFL series, NBA 2K series, FIFA series, Mario Kart, Rocket League, and more.

The powerful thing about electronic sports is that anyone, regardless of skill level or disability, can participate. Your campus rec can provide the game consoles, games, and controllers for electronic sports events; you can also provide accessible controllers as well for those who may need a controller that suits their accommodations and needs.

Outside of tournaments, your program can also host demonstrations through gaming organizations where students can learn about the accessibility options available when playing video games. They can test various accessible controllers and accessories, try video games with disability community representation, and learn about accessibility options in gaming consoles.

Fantasy Sports League

With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and increased awareness of students with “invisible disabilities” (e.g., chronic pain/illness, autoimmune disorders, and mental and behavioral health conditions that affect social skills), some students may not feel comfortable participating in campus, sports, and leisure activities in-person.

Thanks to the rise of online opportunities, such as electronic sports and virtual recreation and leisure activities (such as online tabletop gaming, virtual reality gaming, and virtual fitness classes), campus rec/intramural sports programs can provide opportunities for students with disabilities off-campus and those who prefer less in-person interaction to connect with each other and join in remote, fun activities.

One example of an interactive and competitive activity that your campus rec program can provide to all is fantasy sports. In fantasy sports, students can create a customized team of real-life players and compete in leagues against teams led by people on-

campus. Scoring is based on stats that a player produces in games on a given week. Students also have opportunities to be commissioners of fantasy sports leagues, where they can oversee trades, free agency acquisitions, and competition among teams within a league.

Students can also create their own pick 'em leagues in addition to traditional fantasy sports leagues. In pick 'em, the objective is to get the most correct predictions of which teams would win in a given week; a player can choose which teams they want to win. They can set up the league where players can choose teams they want to win for that week, or they can have the option to also predict the scores of each game during the week.

Fantasy sports leagues are inclusive options for students; those leagues can bring together sports fans with and without disabilities, and it's also an avenue for sports enthusiasts to test their team management skills in a simulated environment. Participants can play in a league as long as they have access to a computer or mobile device with Internet access; they can play within the comfort of their homes or with groups at small gatherings. Participants with disabilities can use adaptive equipment to play in a league, and some features may be already available in the device (e.g., large print, voice-to-text, etc.).

Examples of fantasy sports leagues that your program can offer are:

- American football
- Soccer/football
- Baseball

- Hockey
- Racing sports (like NASCAR)
- Cricket
- Golf
- Professional Wrestling
- Fantasy Congress (scoring based on the legislative activity of your favorite U.S. Senators or Representatives)

Adding the Adaptive Leisure and Fitness Element to Your Campus Rec Program



Image description: Woman with fair complexion, red boxing gloves, green shirt, and black pants standing in a boxing ring (Source: Pexels)

In addition to inclusive and accessible intramural sports options and events, students with disabilities may also be interested in exploring leisure activities, fitness classes, and learning leisure skills that they can develop and use in the world outside of campus. A primary objective of a campus rec/intramural program is to provide students opportunities to find activities they can do

and enjoy away from the classroom and learn leisure skills that could help them interact with peers on campus and beyond.

Adaptive/Unified Fitness

Adaptive fitness is one way to add a life skill component to an inclusive campus rec and intramural sports program; accessible fitness can serve many purposes to students with disabilities who are utilizing services and tools from the program.

Students with disabilities can use adaptive fitness as a way to develop leisure skills, connect with people with similar fitness interests, and follow through with health and/or fitness goals. Students can also utilize adaptive fitness resources to train in their respective intramural or adaptive sports. Your campus rec program can provide resources where students with disabilities can access adaptive fitness. You can add more adaptive equipment to the fitness center. You and your staff can create programs and events where students with disabilities can get personalized training from a workout partner without a disability or a certified trainer that specializes in adaptive fitness; events your program could also include a series of events where trainers with disabilities can come and teach students with disabilities how to modify fitness routines such as cycling, yoga, martial arts, weightlifting, and more. Or, you can also create virtual workouts where students can check out videos and visuals of adaptive workouts and sign up for virtual classes. The cool feature of virtual fitness classes is that trainers and instructors could provide students examples of tools they can use from home to do the workout.

In one example of adaptive fitness, Special Olympics offers Unified Fitness classes in which athletes can learn how to do exercises virtually or do virtual sessions of strength training, stretching, and conditioning. This can be a good option for campus rec programs to have if a student with a disability would like to compete in Special Olympics events and find modified workouts that can help them train for those events. Unified Fitness can also enable students with disabilities to explore leisure activities that they like and find exercise models that can help them get fit.

For more about Unified Fitness and other Special Olympics fitness models, visit: <https://www.specialolympics.org/our-work/inclusive-health/fitness>.

Providing Inclusive Leisure Activities and Leisure Skills Education

Some students with disabilities may not be interested in traditional intramural sports and rec opportunities, and that is okay. Other ways that students with disabilities can participate in campus rec are through checking out non-traditional sports/leisure activities and learning leisure skills that can be transferred to daily activities outside of the playing field. Students may opt to do fun activities where they can just enjoy the experience, try something new, and do thrilling activities with peers that don't have to be a sport. Some of these activities can also be ones you can learn and apply to independent living.

Examples of non-traditional sports and leisure activities that can be adaptive for students with disabilities are:

- Laser tag
- Archery
- Fishing
- Pool
- Arcade Gaming
- Zipline
- Sailing
- Kayaking
- Nerf gun wars
- Hiking
- Camping
- Curling
- Skateboarding
- Surfing
- Dodgeball
- Cooking
- Arts and Crafts
- Paintball
- Sewing
- Gardening

Your campus rec program can also offer opportunities where students with disabilities can learn and promote life skills that are tied to sports, leisure, and independent living. Some could be interested in learning how to be a team player, leadership skills, finding interests and hobbies, and more. Some could also look into learning ways to promote inclusion of people with disabilities on campus, including supporting campaigns to spread awareness about slurs used to describe the disability community (such as

“the R word”) and respecting people with disabilities in inclusive settings.

One example of a program where students with and without disabilities can learn leadership and advocacy skills through sports, recreation, and leisure is the Special Olympics’ college leadership program. Students with and without disabilities on campus can participate in campaigns and learning opportunities that encourage inclusion of people with disabilities in colleges. Those programs are shaped by Special Olympics College’s three approaches: youth leadership and advocacy, inclusive sports, and whole school engagement. To learn more about leadership programs through Generation Unified and Special Olympics College, visit the following websites:

- Unified Classroom (Generation Unified):
<https://www.generationunified.org/unified-classroom>
- SO College: Continuing Youth Leadership through Higher Education:
http://media.specialolympics.org/soi/files/resources/Project_Unify/SOCollegeContinuingYouthLeadership.pdf
- Additional Youth Leadership/SO College resources:
http://generationunified-6471772.hs-sites.com/distance-learning-resources?utm_medium=email&hsmi=2&hsenc=p2ANqtz-GAaGR6baRLLKxeST7eG04hfQ84CiMFDUGC93pZZpOH-hbJ3OCD2og5sulY07UJFy1AJ0gw55dYzqYvguxU-g5VvL2GCS_bi5FuvwdiJi44-IEuo0&utm_content=2&utm_source=hs_email

Making Your Campus Rec/Intramural Sports Program More Accessible and Inclusive



Image Description: Man with fair complexion, prosthetic leg, red t-shirt, red shoe, and black shorts; pulling a gray resistance band (Source: Pexel)

Evaluating the Tools That You Already Have

At first glance, you may find it difficult to have an inclusive program for students with disabilities perhaps because your department does not have the equipment or money to support that initiative.

But what if we told you that you don't need to start all over in

creating an inclusive and accessible campus rec and intramural sports program? Your department may already have the tools to start off with.

For instance, the campus rec facilities may already have accessible locker rooms and include components of universal design, in which access to the facilities are created to accommodate ANYONE who wants to use the facilities. Or, your department has accessible equipment that students with disabilities can use for fitness, swimming, and other sports so that they can enjoy what the campus rec program has to offer. Another example of an inclusive part of the program that you could already have is unified teams where students without disabilities and students with disabilities can compete with and against each other, or leagues (such as Paralympics or wheelchair basketball) where the rules are adapted specifically for students with disabilities.

One way to check for accessibility and inclusion of your campus rec program is to survey all areas and equipment in your fitness centers, gyms, swimming pools, and other areas within your campus rec and sports facilities. You may also check for accessible and adaptive features of your facilities in all parts of the campus if your university or college has more than one part of the campus.

There are two examples of evaluation tools that you may use to check which accessible and inclusive features your program already has while prioritizing features that could be added or improved. You can use evaluation tools and guides such as:

- Accessibility Instruments Measuring Fitness and Recreation Environments (AIMFREE)
 - Link to guide example:
<https://publichealth.buffalo.edu/content/dam/sphhp/cat/kt4tt/pdf/ckp-aimfree/kt-intervention-study-tools-broker-version-series-b1.pdf>
 - Link to research article on AIMFREE:
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09638280410001711432>
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) - <https://www.adainfo.org/content/ada-accessibility-guidelines>

If a student with a disability would like to exercise at the rec center or train for an intramural or club sport at that facility, you can recommend to your staff to create a variety of universally-designed fitness programs where students with disabilities can try out exercises and drills that could be customized to their accommodations, needs, and training goals, regardless of disability type.

We encourage you to build your inclusive campus rec or intramural sports program around the accessible and inclusive services, features, equipment, and sports and leisure activities that your program already has.

Invest

While it is good to have accessibility and inclusion already established with existing facilities and tools, you can also invest money, resources, and support in maintaining an inclusive

environment within your campus rec/intramural sports programs. You can start investing in your inclusive program by accessing the tools and resources that you would need to have an inclusive and accessible program on campus, whether it is getting accessible equipment for the college's fitness center, hiring a staff of people who specialize in diversity, inclusion, and equity on campus to ensure inclusion in the campus rec and/or intramural sports program, or creating sports clubs that include students with disabilities and providing those clubs with uniforms, essential equipment, and more.

One way to invest in your program is to search for grant and fundraising opportunities where you can put more money and resources into your program. You can apply for grants through local and federal organizations that focus on leisure and disability. In addition to grants, you can also encourage your staff and students to create fundraising opportunities that could benefit inclusion and accessibility in your campus rec program.

Community members, alumni, and others can help your program generate funds through annual donations (e.g., Giving Friday initiative or donations through a college department that houses campus rec and sports), selling merchandise, galas, car washes, and other creative fundraising activities.

Another way you can gather resources for your program is to partner with organizations who have similar objectives as your program or serve similar communities (in this instance, students with disabilities on campus and in the community). By partnering with organizations, such as community special recreation associations or special recreation departments at your local park

district, they may donate equipment, resources, or money into your program in exchange for participating in their events or using their name and images in promotional materials and uniforms (e.g., campus recreation can partner with the state or local Special Olympics Program for resources to support on campus Unified Sports).

Drafting an Inclusion Statement

To attract more students with disabilities to utilize services and equipment in your intramural sports program, you may create an inclusion statement and include it on the program's website, social media, and other forms of promotional material.

An inclusion statement has a positive tone that is welcoming to those who read it. It is a statement where you can talk about the program's intent to include people from various backgrounds, including people with disabilities, and create a welcoming environment. Think of it as a values statement, where you can express the purpose and values of the intramural sports program and its commitment to include students with disabilities.

It is not enough to say "we don't discriminate based on race, gender, etc". While it is the standard script to use to promote diversity and inclusion in campus organizations, it doesn't illustrate how they would like to, and plan to, include students with disabilities.

An inclusion statement shows a program's commitment to ensure that the facilities, culture, and activities in campus rec are

inclusive to all students, including those with disabilities. A strong inclusion statement displays examples of how they include students of all backgrounds and programs for people with disabilities that they could participate in.

Below is an example of an inclusion statement; this is from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign student affairs website:

University of Illinois Campus Recreation, as part of Illinois Student Affairs, celebrates diversity.

As such, we are dedicated to providing an inclusive environment with safe services, programs, and facilities that are welcoming to all individuals regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, spirituality, gender, gender identity/expression, age, sexual orientation, ability, socioeconomic status, or national origin. In an effort to accommodate all of our members, we provide multiple workout areas and programs to address various skill, ability, and individual comfort levels.

Campus Recreation makes every effort to be accessible to all abilities. If you need special accommodations for facilities, activities, and/or programs, please contact us at campusrec@illinois.edu or provide your [Accessibility Feedback online](#). Additional resources, including a list of accessible equipment, can be found on the [Campus Recreation website](#).

University of Illinois Student Affairs

When a student with a disability reads this statement, they may feel motivated to go to the gym or join a club with the campus recreation department because the department states their commitment to accommodate students with disabilities using their services. Or perhaps that student could be drawn to the programs.

Here is another example of a powerful inclusion statement; this one is from Portland State's Inclusive Rec:

Campus Rec celebrates diversity, inclusiveness, and authenticity in all of our programs. Our Inclusive Rec offerings demonstrate our commitment to creating holistic wellbeing and a welcoming community for all. Enjoy accessible spaces, programs, and equipment, including outdoor trips, adaptive climbing and swimming, wheelchair sports, goalball, open inclusive rec time, and youth events for the entire PSU community.

- Portland State University's Inclusive Rec

In Portland State's inclusive statement, they included activities that people with disabilities can participate in, in addition to accessibility features of the facilities. By listing adaptive and inclusive programs and events, your campus rec or intramural sports department can draw more students with disabilities to come to your facilities and sign up for programs. You can also use the statement as a springboard to encourage staff to implement events and activities where people with disabilities and non-disabled people can enjoy rec and sports activities together, or create activities leagues for students with disabilities where it can be adaptive and competitive.

Here are some helpful tips you could use when drafting the inclusion statement for your program:

- In the inclusion statement, list examples of inclusive recreation center features and sports programs that can attract students with or without disabilities. Examples of such features are:
 - Access to accessible, gender-neutral bathrooms and locker rooms

- Opportunities to participate in Special Olympics or competitive adaptive sports teams, either within campus or in a region consisting of many colleges
- Adaptive equipment for swimming and exercise
- Events where students can attend demonstrations of adaptive activities
- Describe the inclusive environment that will attract more students to try activities or attend leisure and recreational events. You can describe what students, faculty, and staff think of the inclusive programs, sports, and features in your program. You can also mention your staff's vision of what an inclusive campus recreation program would look like at your college.
- Do not focus on disability and inclusion alone. Use the statement as an opportunity to illustrate your program's approach to incorporating intersectionality and diversity into various parts of the program. For instance, you can add things to the statement that could show your program's commitment to respecting student's religious practices, or you can address in the statement events where it's not only accessible to people with disabilities, but also allows for exchange and dialogue between various ethnic cultures and races.
 - Note: Diversity means ensuring that each identity is represented and heard. For the purpose of this guide, intersectionality means considering the various ways that barriers, discrimination, and multiple identities can affect the daily life of a students. Identities include race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, income level, weight, health/disability status, religion, and educational

background.

Promoting Your Inclusive Campus Rec Program

According to an article on promoting adaptive sports and rec on campuses, about 59% of the campus rec programs that were reviewed in the study did not have pictures of students with disabilities using their facilities or examples of adaptive equipment in their facilities, while only 25% of those programs have an inclusion statement on their websites (Bruning, Cardinal, and Kennedy, 2020). Inclusive promotion of your campus rec program is as effective as what is advertised to the masses. Students with disabilities may not want to check out events or services offered by the campus rec program if there is no mention of adaptive equipment, inclusion statement, or representation of students with disabilities participating in events or activities within the program. This could be seen as not wanting students with disabilities to feel included in the campus rec program.

I encourage you to showcase the adaptive and accessible features of your campus rec program on social media and websites! Talk about weights, swimming pools, and basketball courts that are universally accessible. Promote listings of unified sports and inclusive campus rec activities on campus rec websites and apps. Show footage of students enjoying all the universally-designed features that the campus rec program has to offer. Any of those things can help attract more students with disabilities to try programs and events within the campus rec program.

In the program's website or social media accounts, you could also mention examples of adaptive and inclusive rec and sports programs that students could check out outside of campus. Some places may have family-friendly tournaments, such as poker, trading card games, electronic sports, and more where people can join in. Some places and organizations may also offer demonstrations of adaptive sports. At any rate, check to make sure that each event or program off-campus that you list on the website, or social media accounts, are inclusive and accessible. To find examples of what an inclusive and accessible event looks like you could look into the following resources below, or look into additional resources in the Resources section:

- Access Suggestions for a Public Event, by Sins Invalid: <https://www.sinsinvalid.org/blog/access-suggestions-for-a-public-event>
- Accessible Sporting Facilities, by United States Access Board: <https://www.access-board.gov/files/ada/guides/sports.pdf>
- A Planning Guide for Making Temporary Events Accessible to People with Disabilities, by ADA National Network: <https://adata.org/guide/planning-guide-making-temporary-events-accessible-people-disabilities>
- Holding Inclusive Events: A Guide to Accessible Event Planning, by Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN): <https://autisticadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Accessible-Event-Planning.pdf>
- How to Make Sporting Events Accessible, by Larry Anderson: <https://www.connectmeetings.com/sports/how-to/how-to-making-sporting-events-accessible>

If you don't have it already, it helps to have a strong social media presence where current students, prospective students, and alumni can have the opportunity to learn and see examples of the programs, equipment, and services that your inclusive campus rec program provides. Examples of social media tools you can use are:

- YouTube
- Facebook
- Instagram
- TikTok
- Twitter

Visual Blueprint for Creating an Accessible, Inclusive Campus Rec Program

While there are ways that you can build your accessible, inclusive campus rec program, it can also be helpful to refer to a guide or visual that can help guide you to ensure that your program has the important tools and resources.

For example, the National Center on Health, Physical Activity, and Disability (NCHPAD) created a guide and series of videos where staff on-campus can get ideas on how to build and create inclusive, accessible recreation programs. Their visuals are based on eight basic steps:

- Addressing the need for an inclusive, accessible campus rec program, and getting people to buy in

- Accessible equipment needs and funding for the program
- Partnering with other organizations
- Accessibility of events, sporting and rec programs, equipment, and facilities
- Who will participate in maintaining the program
- Sustainability of the program
- Facilitating the events and activities within the program
- Continuing the commitment to inclusion and accessibility of your program

You may access the visual blueprint and videos on building accessible and inclusive programs at:

<https://www.nchpad.org/1834/7019/Creating~an~Inclusive~College~Recreation~Program>.

Pairing Inclusive Campus Rec, Intramural Sports, and Club Sports Departments with ThinkCollege Programs



Image description: Logo for ThinkCollege, Institute for Community Inclusion, UMass Boston (Source: ThinkCollege.net)

One way to attract students to your campus rec departments is connect with a ThinkCollege program on campus. ThinkCollege is is “a national initiative dedicated to developing, expanding, and improving research and practice in inclusive higher education for students with intellectual disability” (ThinkCollege); it is an initiative that pushes inclusion of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including autism, in college campuses. Some colleges within ThinkCollege have programs where people with intellectual and developmental disabilities can take college courses part-time, learn independent living skills, and secure internships that could lead to future employment. Those programs are called transition and postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disabilities, or TPSIDs.

TPSIDs provide opportunities for students to not only take college courses, but also enjoy the benefits of being a college student on-campus. It is recommended that a student in a TPSID program be offered the same access to fitness and campus rec facilities, student organizations, campus events, and more! Your campus rec program can connect with a TPSID on campus and recruit students to take part in inclusive events and opportunities in your

program. They can take part in unified teams, sports clubs, tournaments, rec and sports demonstrations, and more. The connection between the two programs can help encourage students with intellectual and developmental disabilities to stay in college longer and experience college life through exploring inclusive opportunities in your campus rec program.

If you don't have a TPSID or ThinkCollege program at your university, reach out to one in your local area or state for some guidance on including students with disabilities (including students with intellectual and developmental disabilities) in campus rec and intramural sports activities. Those programs may give you information and guidance on putting together events and activities that are inclusive, accessible, and fun for students with disabilities on campus.

To search for ThinkCollege programs near you, visit:

<https://thinkcollege.net/college-search>.

Resources

Below is a list of articles, websites, videos, blogs, and books related to the intersections of disability, inclusion in colleges, campus recreation, campus life, and intramural & club sports. You may use any of those resources to help build a disability-friendly, inclusive, and accessible campus recreation and intramural & club sports program. Those resources are divided into two categories:

- *Practical resources, which are blogs, articles, videos, guides, and examples of inclusive campus recreation programs, and*
- *Suggested readings, in which you can access academic articles on, or related to, disability and campus recreation*

Note: Some resources may not be in plain-language. If it's not in plain-language, and you need help going through the links, ask someone to help guide you through any article, website, or video that you may not understand.

Practical Resources

In the Practical Resources section, you will find articles, blogs, videos, and guides related to inclusive and adaptive campus recreational/sporting activities. You can find information on grants for inclusive campus rec programs, adaptive sporting equipment, examples of inclusive rec programs in the United States, drafting inclusion statements, how to build an inclusive campus rec/sports program, how to create accessible and inclusive sporting and rec events on campus, and more.

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Suggested Readings

Below is a list of books, theses, dissertations, and academic articles that covers direct and related research on inclusive and adaptive campus recreation & sports.

Note: These readings may not be in plain language; they are written in a way that people in the legislative and academic field

can understand. Please seek someone who can help you if you need help reading through those materials. You may also search for summaries and reviews of the readings; some may be written in plain-language.

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