



Steering Committee Executive Summary 2026

Introduction:

The University of Denver's Accessibility Council Steering Committee is providing an executive summary to share the deliverables for academic year 2025-2026 as part of our annual review. We also frame how these initiatives align with University Academic and Operational Transformation efforts.

Academic Excellence, Student Experience, and Transformation

As higher education becomes increasingly competitive, accessibility presents an opportunity for the DU to further differentiate itself through a demonstrated commitment to the 4D experience. Promoting accessibility through inclusive, innovative, and student success initiatives contributes both deepening intellect and developing well-being.

DU's long-standing approach to accessibility has become a defining institutional strength, attracting students who actively seek a supportive and inclusive learning environment. By building on this strength and continuing to lead in student success, faculty development, belonging, and educational excellence, the University of Denver creates a more welcoming and effective experience for all. The University exceeds the *national average of students who are eligible for and seek support through Student Disability Services.

National—US Data	DU—Current SDS Enrollment
21% of undergraduate 1% graduate report having a disability	30% undergraduate 22% total (grad and undergrad combined)

*National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

Key 2026 Accomplishments:

- **Developed the Student Disability Services (SDS) faculty and staff canvas course.**
This course is populated automatically for faculty and added at the request of staff to support an understanding of ADA, accommodations, equitable access, and how to best support students with disabilities. Ideally, this would be a mandatory training course.
- **Launched the Faculty Accessibility Ambassador Program** with 13 faculty representatives from 8 colleges and schools, across undergraduate and graduate programs, creating a cross-campus network to share resources, identify accessibility barriers and connect faculty with appropriate support.
- **Expanded the annual Neurodiversity Institute (NDI)** through a combined experience for faculty and staff to support partnership and continuity of support for students.

- **Engaged Student Voices, through the Global Accessibility Awareness (GAAD) Day and the Neurodiversity Institute (NDI).** The GAAD Student Panel on May 21, 2026 included two graduate students, one law school student, and three undergraduate students. The NDI Student Panel on August 18, 2026 included one graduate student and one undergraduate student. Their feedback highlighted the following strengths and areas for improvement. (Please find highlights of that feedback in the addendum).

Operational Transformation:

While the University's efforts at Operational Transformation is just starting, the Accessibility Steering Committee see key areas of alignment in our work across policies and procedures, data infrastructure, space use, and technology. As examples, we offer these accomplishments from the last year as a way to build collaboration across faculty, staff, and students.

Key 2026 Accomplishments:

- **Established the Digital Accessibility Policy** to support inclusive engagement with the digital environment at DU.
- Created a centralized website for resources **Accessibility at DU**
- **Accessibility Council Meetings:** We hosted accessibility council meetings in fall, winter and spring. We greatly appreciated Provost Lobo's participation in the spring meeting. We are grateful to both Provost Lobo and Vice Chancellor Halsall for your continued support of this work.

Moving forward, the goal of the steering committee is to partner with Institutional Research to develop a data informed dashboard to support continued education, awareness, and progress to build the most inclusive and accessible DU experience for our students, faculty, and staff.

Over the course of the next year, the steering committee will identify essential data points to inform a dashboard that is supportive of student, faculty, and staff experiences as well as the essential need to continue training on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to create the most inclusive learning environment.

Conclusion and "Ask"

The Accessibility Council Steering Committee will continue to refine areas of focus that further advance efforts of retention, enhancing student, faculty, and staff experiences, and opportunities to partner with AI resources that further accessibility in cost efficient ways.

We welcome the opportunity to collaborate on how academic and operational transformations can preserve our strengths in accessibility, as well as promote ongoing improvements to accessibility at the University. We invite you to join us at our Accessibility Council meetings to learn together and to collaborate on transformational efforts. The AY 27 meeting schedule is:

- Wednesday, October 7th 3-4:30 (AAC 290)
- Tuesday, February 23rd 3-4:30 (virtual)
- Wednesday, April 28th 3-4: 30 (AAC 290)

Addendum-Student Experience

Strengths with their experience:

- Supportive faculty and staff in particular staff in Student Disability Services and the Learning Effectiveness Program
- Faculty who have learning environments grounded in Universally Designed Learning environments to support accessibility for all of their students. One of our Faculty Accessibility Ambassadors, Calley Marotta was named during the panel as a faculty member who integrates UDL and accessibility in her courses.
- Faculty using captioning
- Assistive Technology such as [Jamworks](#) and teaching in different modalities
- Professors who held accessible office hours and were willing to do scenario-based planning (e.g. if Plan A fails, here is plan B and C).
- The general culture of DU staff being approachable and willing to help-"drop in support" and an open-door culture).
- Pre-class emails with optional pre-readings to support context were helpful as a neurodivergent student to mentally prepare.

Faculty Perspective

- The accessibility ambassador program helps faculty feel supported in their efforts toward more accessible classrooms.
- The program provides a space for faculty to share their successes and challenges, exchange ideas, and learn from one another.

Moving Forward, Opportunities for Improvement:

- More education with faculty to understand accommodations because they each shared similar experiences with having to justify their accommodations because they are viewed as a privilege rather than a necessity for equitable access to their learning. One of the panelists shared a specific comment made to her by a faculty member: "I am only giving you this accommodation because I am legally obligated to do so but I do not think this is fair to other students"
- Students shared that it would be helpful to have access to their course materials sooner to support their accommodations if the materials are not accessible. This is especially a need between winter and spring terms.
- More consistent canvas layouts for faculty. Currently, it varies across courses and are a consistent pain point for neurodivergent students who rely on predictability and clear structure.
- Reducing the constant referencing of different systems with the course syllabi. If syllabus information was duplicated in canvas this would reduce the multiple cross-referencing of materials.
- Provide breaks with long course sessions to allow students to reset and return more focused.
- Offering content in multiple formats (video, hands-on, written, audio) addresses a wider range of learning styles without focusing on any individual student.