

Disability & Diversity in Policy

Diversity

Association for Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD)

Encompassing the variety of qualities, traits, and characteristics that are inherent to humans, with a focus on the world views, communication styles, and unique ways of 'thinking, being and doing' of individuals within our institutions and the communities we serve

California State University Websites

- Disability constituted as an innate, individual deficit
- Rights-based and medical model of disability dominate
- No visual images of disability
- "Diversity" as associated with disability found only once

Gabel, S. L., Reid, D., Pearson, H., Ruiz, L., & Hume-Dawson, R. (2016). Disability and diversity on CSU websites: A critical discourse study. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 9(1), 64.

Canadian Universities

- How is **Disability** conceptualized in Canadian university policies?
- In what ways is **Disability** included as an aspect of **diversity** in university policies?
- Five top-ranked research-intensive universities
 - Disability rights, access, and accommodation policies
 - Discrimination and harassment policies
 - Employment equity policies
 - Religious holidays policies
 - Sexual violence policies

Disability policy not enacting intersectionality

- Burdensome accommodations processes
 - Often costly documentation,
 - Obtained from medical professionals,
 - Requiring the ability, and
 - Time to navigate the healthcare system.

What do you think of these policy statements?

- "Applicants with disabilities conform to the same academic conditions of acceptance as other applicants."
- "Offices that are designated to assist [the University] in integrating Students with Disabilities into all aspects of University life"
- "Accommodation neither requires nor implies that the University lowers its academic or professional standards"

Disability as Deficit: Ableism in policies

Disabled students contextualized as a *separate* or fundamentally different from all other students

Disability defined as *impairment* causing functional limitations

Reiterations and reassurances that the university will expect Disabled students to conform to academic standards

Religious Holidays

Reasonable accommodation provided for religious holidays

In what ways is the accommodation framed differently?

What kinds of documentation are required?

Is it a 'deficit' to be a member of a religious group?

Anti-discrimination policies

Ableism never mentioned specifically

Creating a discrimination free environment is framed as a shared responsibility.

Are any other groups expected to do extensive extra work to gain access to an environment free of discrimination?

Sexual Violence

•“Sexual Violence and its consequences may disproportionately affect members of social groups who experience intersecting forms of systemic discrimination or barriers (on grounds, for example, of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, race, religion, Indigenous identity, ethnicity, disability or class)”

•No evidence regarding how this fact is impacting the university’s policies or practices

Ideas across policies

Disability isolated from other forms of diversity

- Individualizing disability
- Responding with accommodations

Community responsibility to co-create culture of welcoming diversity is obfuscated