Checklist for Making Computer Labs Accessible to Students with Disabilities

DO-IT

An activity that can lead to greater awareness and more inclusive computer labs

Name and location of computer lab reviewed: _____

Reviewer name(s): _____

Contact name, phone, email: _____

Students with disabilities face access challenges to typical computer labs in precollege and postsecondary settings. Access barriers may prevent a student from

- gaining knowledge
- demonstrating knowledge
- fully participating in lab activities

Accommodations and Universal Design

There are two approaches for making academic activities accessible to students with disabilities—accommodations and universal design. An accommodation makes adjustments for a specific student with a disability, such as assistive technology and creating documents in alternate formats. The goal of universal design is products and environments that are usable by everyone (including people with disabilities), to the greatest extent possible, minimizing the need for accommodations for individuals in the future. For example, if a computer lab contains an adjustable-height workstation, an accommodation will not be needed for a student who uses a wheelchair that is too high for standard-height workstations. This workstation may also be comfortable for a student who needs to remain seated because of a health impairment or someone who is very tall or short in stature. Making accommodations is reactive, whereas universal design is proactive.

Universal Design of Computer Labs

It is likely that some universal design strategies are already in place in your computer lab and others could be implemented soon. The following checklist will help you identify both. For each of the strategies listed, indicate the following in the Status section of the checklist.

- **N/A**—if the suggestion is not applicable to the science lab being reviewed
- **Done**—if the strategy is already in place
- **[date]** —for items that will be implemented by a specific target date/month/year
- **TBC**—for strategies to be considered for future implementation
- **Other**—with an explanation

Status	Strategy, Planning, Policies, and Evaluation	Comments
	Are people with disabilities included in planning and evaluating lab products and services?	
	Do you require that accessibility be considered in the procurement process for computer hardware and software?	
	Do you have a procedure to ensure a timely response to requests for disability-related accommodations?	
	Are disability-related access issues addressed in your evaluation methods?	
	Physical Environments	
	Are parking areas, pathways, and entrances to the building wheelchair-accessible and clearly marked?	
	Are all levels of the facility connected via an accessible route of travel?	
	Are there high-contrast, large-print signs to and throughout the lab?	
	Is at least part of a service counter or desk at a height accessible from a seated position?	
	Are aisles wide and clear of obstructions for wheelchair users as well as people with mobility or visual impairments?	
	Are there quiet work or meeting areas where noise and other distractions are minimized?	

Status	Strategy, Planning, Policies, and Evaluation	Comments
	Lab Staff	
	Are staff members familiar with the availability and use of assistive technology and alternate document formats?	
	Do staff members know how to respond to requests for disability-related accommodations such as sign language interpreters?	
	Information Resources	
	Do pictures in your publications and website include people with disabilities?	
	In key publications, do you include a statement about procedures for requesting disability-related accommodations?	
	Are all printed publications available (immediately or in a timely manner) in alternate formats such as Braille, large print, and electronic text?	
	Can lab publications be reached from a seated position?	
	Do electronic resources, including web pages, adhere to accessibility guidelines or standards?	
	Hardware	
	Is an adjustable-height table available for each type of workstation in the lab? Can the height be adjusted from a seated position?	

Status	Strategy, Planning, Policies, and Evaluation	Comments
	Is at least one large monitor available so that a larger amount of screen can be viewed while magnified?	
	Is equipment marked with large-print and/or Braille labels?	
	Can controls on computers, printers, scanners, and other information technology be reached from a seated position?	
	Are adequate work areas available for both right- and left-handed users?	
	Do you provide alternate hardware to replace the standard mouse and/or keyboard (e.g., a trackball, mini-keyboard, one-handed keyboard)?	
	Do you provide special software that is beneficial to students with disabilities (e.g., screen reading, idea organizers)	
	Is it easy for lab visitors with disabilities to know what assistive hardware and software is available in the lab?	

Overall, how accessible do you think this facility is for people with the disabilities listed below? Explain your responses. In the second column summarize the most important recommendations for making the facility/program more welcoming and accessible to people with these types of disabilities.

Disability Type and Access Issues	**Accessibility Recommendations**
Blind with low vision	
Deaf or hard of hearing	
Mobility impairment	
Learning or other invisible disability	
Other disability	

Other comments about this checklist, this facility/program, and/or your overall experience:

Adapted from the publication *Equal Acces: Universal Design of Computer Labs* at *www.uw.edu/doit/Brochures/Technology/comp.access.html*

About DO-IT

DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology) serves to increase the successful participation of individuals with disabilities in challenging academic programs such as those in science, engineering, mathematics, and technology. Primary funding for DO-IT is provided by the National Science Foundation, the State of Washington, and the U.S. Department of Education.

For further information, to be placed on the DO-IT mailing list, request materials in an alternate format, or to make comments or suggestions about DO-IT publications or web pages, contact:

DO-IT
Box 354842
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98195-4842
doit@uw.edu
www.uw.edu/doit/
206-685-DOIT (3648) (voice/TTY)
888-972-DOIT (3648) (toll free voice/TTY)
509-328-9331 (voice/TTY) Spokane
206-221-4171 (fax)
Founder and Director: Sheryl Burgstahler, Ph.D.

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