ACCESS Is More Than Accommodations:
The 2018–2019 Deaf College Student National Accessibility Report

More than 200,000 deaf students attend colleges nationwide. For these deaf students to succeed, college experiences must be accessible. Students also need to feel supported by and engaged with the campus community. Giving deaf students interpreters or speech-to-text services in the classroom is not enough! True access involves complex factors like attitudes, campus technology, communication, the environment, student services, and social engagement.

More than 300 deaf students enrolled at colleges across the nation took an accessibility survey about their experiences at college. On average, students rated their colleges’ accessibility at 3.2 out of 5. That’s a D!

Using a systematic approach rooted in research and literature, NDC identified six key components of access. Below are respondents’ average ratings for each category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>3.5 of 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Technology</td>
<td>2.9 of 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>3.3 of 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>3.1 of 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>3.5 of 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Engagement</td>
<td>2.9 of 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“There has been no institutional interest in learning how to become more deaf friendly. The attitude is one of begrudging tolerance at best.”

— Student survey response
What are students’ experience with accommodations?

- Many students used interpreters or speech-to-text services for the first time in college.
- Many students used more than one type of accommodation, and those students had more positive experiences in college.

Are course materials accessible?

- 45% of students do not get image descriptions when they need them.
- 52% of faculty members do not provide notes or slides ahead of time.

Do deaf students feel safe on campus?

- 44% of emergency alerts and announcements are not accessible.

Are videos captioned across campus?

- Most students said that videos shared by other students and those shown on campus were not captioned.

Does the campus seek the input of deaf students?

- 52% of students do not have a way to give formal feedback to their service providers.

Are deaf students part of the campus community?

- 54% of deaf students do not participate in student activities.

Key Findings

- Be proactive in creating an inclusive campus climate. For example, make it standard policy to provide interpreters and captions for all community events.
- Better inform and educate students about accommodation opportunities.
- Consider accessibility as a default or standard practice, especially for videos, emergency alerts, and any other information on campus.

Fewer deaf people complete college than their hearing peers. Let’s change that by making college more accessible!

Key Takeaways

Download this report at nationaldeafcenter.org/project-opening-doors
References


2. NDC uses the term deaf in an all-inclusive manner to include people who identify as deaf, deafblind, deafdisabled, hard of hearing, late-deafened, and hearing impaired.


This resource was developed under a jointly funded grant through the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs and the Rehabilitation Services Administration, #H326D160001. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the federal government.