

## Disability Services Newsletter



### DS INFO SESSIONS

#### SUPPORTING THE RACC COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT OUR STUDENTS

On March 23, 2020, Kym, Terry and Maggie hosted two information sessions via Zoom. Open to all faculty and staff, these info sessions are meant to bridge the knowledge gap and invite other members of our RACC community into the world of Disability Services.

This session, titled "Disability Services: Back to Basics" was meant to be a refresher (or gentle introduction!) with the spotlight on three main topics: who are our students, how and why do we serve them, and what is their experience as they move through our accommodations process?

Attendees were invited to participate through trivia and through a question and answer period held at the end of each session. Our post-PowerPoint discussions at both sessions were rich and interesting, and we came away feeling as though the presentations had been a success.

Top of mind for this and our other presentations is the importance of a mutual understanding that students with disabilities are not *just* Disability Services students, but are all of our students. They can be found working on campus, studying every discipline, and learning in every classroom. The more we all understand about the needs of our students, the better able we are to serve every student equitably. With this in mind, we want to ask you to **please reach out to us with your questions and ideas regarding future information sessions**. We want these sessions to be relevant and fulfill your needs, so the more input you provide us the better able we are to do that!

Anyone interested in viewing our "Disability Services: Back to Basics" PowerPoint can find it at: <https://www.racc.edu/sites/default/files/StudentServices/Disability-Services/Back%20to%20Basics-03-25-2021.pdf>

### DS STAFF DEVELOPMENT

#### WE ARE LIFELONG LEARNERS!

As individuals who have chosen careers in higher education, we are all deeply committed to the idea of lifelong learning. We are also acutely aware that best practices in our field are constantly changing as new information is learned and new technologies are developed. Typically, conferences fulfill our need to stay current and invested in new developments, but with COVID-19 preventing in-person conferences, we worried that professional development opportunities would be hard to come by. We needn't have worried. With the dedication and innovation that is a hallmark of Disability Services, a number of conferences and symposiums were reimagined and presented in a variety of virtual formats.

One of these was the Annual Disability Symposium at the University of Pennsylvania. Offered over five weeks in hour-long lunchtime installments, sessions included a diverse range of topics, from developments in accessible technology to an analysis of the needs of students with autism in their own words. The symposium culminated in a lively discussion between two highly respected practitioners with opposing viewpoints on most topics. This accessible, inventive approach to a conference was a welcome way for us to get excited about what's going on in disability services, to see what people are thinking and talking about, and to reassure us that we are on the right track in our own practice.

In June, Kym and Maggie will be attending the two day Post-Secondary Training Institute's Virtual Conference 2021: "Disability Services in the Age of COVID-19." More on that in our next newsletter!

### DS STAFF MEMBERS

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**“I want to enjoy  
each day as it  
comes!”**



## **TERRY’S RETIRING!**

Terry Rowles has been a fixture here at RACC since 2003. She began her RACC career as a full-time student and work study in Admissions, returning to school after Ames Departments Stores closed. After graduating with an associate’s degree in 2005, Terry continued her work study position in RACC Admissions but transferred to Alvernia, where she graduated with a bachelor’s degree in social work in 2007. Terry worked briefly for Service Access & Management (SAM), but returned to RACC in 2009 as an Academic Intervention Specialist with Disability Services. Shortly afterward, she moved back to Admissions as an Enrollment Coordinator, going to area high schools and technical schools to talk about RACC and encourage students to come join our community. However, Terry’s real love was Disability Services, and in 2011 she returned to her Academic Intervention Specialist role, where she has

remained ever since. Terry’s no-nonsense attitude, her deep commitment to her students and colleagues, and her generous heart have made her a respected and beloved member of the DS team.

After retirement, Terry is going to make the most of her new freedom. She plans to spend time with her husband and family and to travel (when it’s safe!). But most importantly, she plans to lean into being a Nonna, helping to care for her youngest granddaughter and enjoy watching her children and grandchildren grow and learn.

While we are sad to see her go, we are profoundly grateful for her years of service and so very happy for her to have this opportunity. Thank you, Terry! You will be missed!

Please reach out Terry to say goodbye and wish her well!

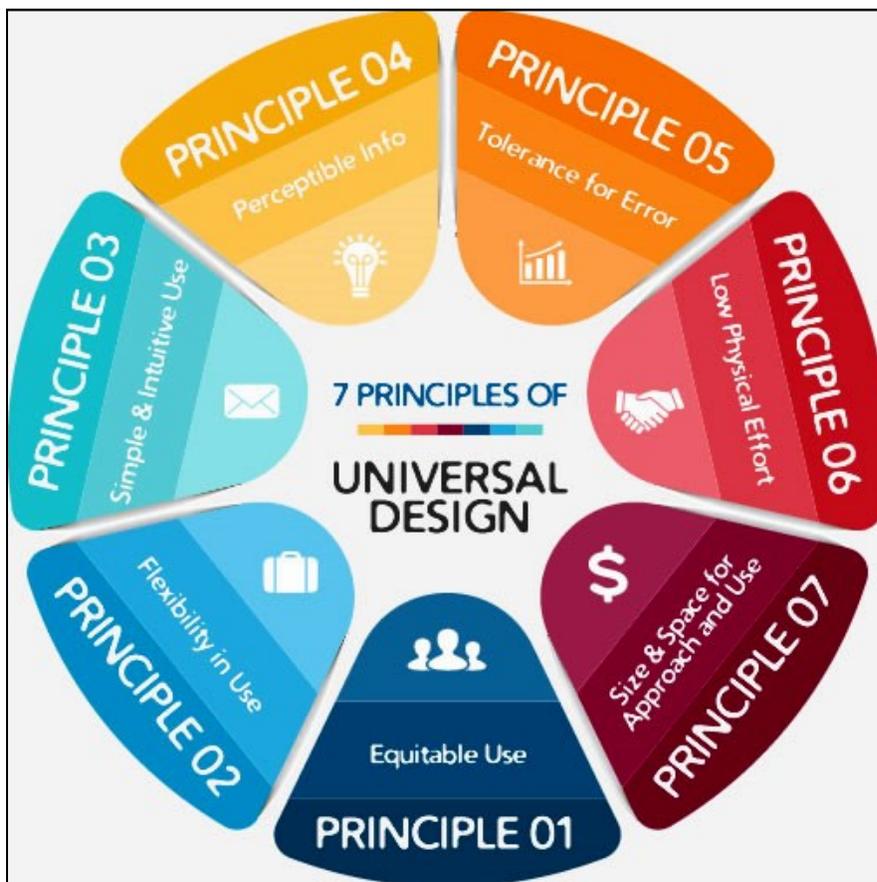
***“How lucky am I to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.”  
—A. A. Milne***

**Welcome  
To  
The  
Team!**



## **DISABILITY SERVICES HAS A NEW EMPLOYEE: MAGGIE CAWLEY**

Maggie joined the DS team in the role of Assistive Technology/Educational Support Specialist in February, but she is not new to RACC. You may have seen her in any number of places, including B209 where she started as a Reading and Writing Tutor in 2011, the Multilingual Learning Lab in Y119, the Foundational Studies Lab in B601, in a classroom teaching EAP reading or Foundational Writing courses, or back in B209 working as a part-time advisor. Maggie holds a bachelor’s degree in English from Kutztown University and graduated in May 2020 with a master’s degree in Higher Education Policy and Student Affairs from West Chester University. She left RACC briefly from July 2020 to February 2021 to work as an Academic Program Coordinator at Harrisburg University of Science and Technology, but missed the student-facing roles that she’d had in the past. When the opportunity arose to return to RACC, she jumped at the chance. She is thrilled to be back and looking forward to a busy summer and fall semester working with students. Stop by and say hello to her in B207.



**UD SPOTLIGHT:  
CLOSED CAPTIONING**

As artificial intelligence (AI) gets better and is integrated with more programs, accessibility features in computer programs are seeing a surge in both availability and quality. Right now, this is especially apparent in field of automatic closed captioning, which is newly available from programs like Canvas, Zoom, Google Slides, Google Chrome, and Storyline. This kind of closed captioning is autogenerated by AI and therefore does not have the 99% accuracy rate required for accessibility in terms of official accommodations; however, it is still quite good and can make your class accessible to people in many different circumstances, including those who are hard of hearing, those who are viewing your classes in a noisy location, those who can't have sound on, and those who are not native English speakers.

Check it out today!

## BENEFITS OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN

**“Universal Design assumes that the range of human ability is normal, not special.”  
—Elaine Ostroff, 2001**

### What is Universal Design (UD)?

UD is “the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people, regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability” (NDA, 2020). In other words, it is design that considers and ensures the dignity of *all* users and takes a proactive approach to ensuring equity of access, rather than reacting after the design has already been put into practice. It is applicable to all services, environments, and products, from transportation and architecture to lesson plans, assessments, and classroom materials.

As the image above illustrates, UD relies on seven principles which will be named and described in the next seven paragraphs. When taken together, these principles help individuals to consider and address barriers that may be caused by environments or services that are designed with only certain bodies or abilities in mind.

**Principle 1-Equitable Use:** This principle asks users to ensure that all features of design are accessible to all users. Note that it uses the word “equitable” and not “equal”—this means that design should be identical when possible, and equivalent when identical is not possible.

**Principle 2-Flexibility in Use:** As with most things, flexibility is essential to UD. Whether for reasons of preference or ability, users should have choice in their method of use, and when possible services, environments and products should be adaptable.

**Principle 3-Simple & Intuitive Use:** In design, emphasis should be put on simplicity, consistency, logical organization, and effective feedback. It is vitally important to consider users of all skill levels,

levels of experience, and language abilities are able to understand how to access what they are using.

**Principle 4-Perceptible Information:** Information should be provided with effective communication in mind, including use of multi-modal redundancy (written, verbal, visual, etc.), consideration of color contrast and legibility, easily explainable differentiation between elements, and compatibility for those using assistive technologies.

**Principle 5-Tolerance for Error:** Design should minimize hazards and adverse consequences, specifically for accidental and unintended actions.

**Principle 6-Low Physical Effort:** Design should allow for neutral body positions, limited physical repetition, and minimal physical effort.

**Principle 7-Size & Space for Approach & Use:** Design should consider the size and space needed for approach, reach, manipulation, and use, and should accommodate a use of any body size, posture, or mobility.

Use of UD ensure that all of our students feel welcome and valued. Consider incorporating these principles into your classroom organization, lesson plans, and Canvas classroom!

*Adapted from <http://universaldesign.ie/>*

## **KEEP IN TOUCH!**

If you are a faculty or staff member with questions, concerns, or an interest in learning more about Disability Services, we want to hear from you! Our role here at the college is not just to support students, but also to support faculty and staff as you work with students with all kinds of abilities. Feel free to reach out to us individually, or for general questions/comments/concerns, send us an email at [disabilityservices@racc.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@racc.edu).

We look forward to hearing from you!

For more information, visit the Faculty bullet on our web page!:

<https://www.racc.edu/services/facultystaff-information>



**Have a great summer!**