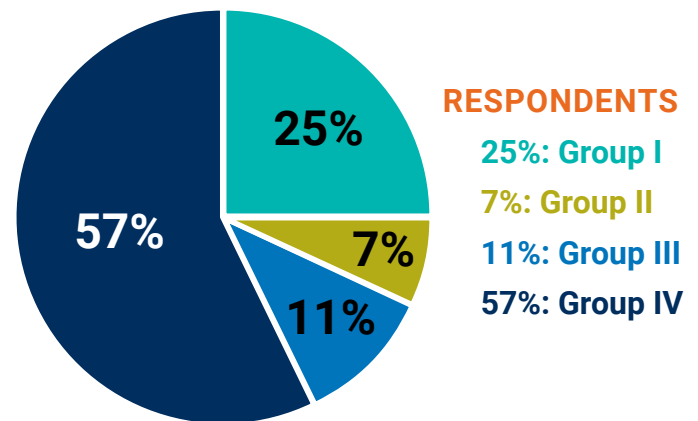


# Faculty and Staff Experiences in LSA with Disabilities & Accommodations

The ADVANCE Program surveyed faculty and staff the College of Literature, Science & the Arts during Fall 2020 to learn how people with and without disabilities<sup>1</sup> would benefit from accommodations at U-M. All participants were asked *Do you have a disability?* and *Would you benefit from accommodations at the university?*

858 survey respondents described their perceptions of disability and accommodations, and were categorized in four groups.



	Accommodations YES	Accommodations NO
Disability YES	Group I	Group II
Disability NO	Group III	Group IV

**Faculty (42%)**      **Staff (58%)**

## Shared Experiences

- The onus is on the person with a disability to learn and navigate the university system to their own accommodation.
- The process to secure accommodations is not understood by faculty and staff. The accuracy of the advice that is provided about accommodations varies.
- The campus community typically assumes that a person does not have a disability (i.e., ableism) unless they see physical evidence of one. This excludes people who have invisible disabilities (e.g., medical condition, mental health challenges).
- Most faculty and staff (65%) in Group I who believe that they would benefit from an accommodation did not ask for one.
- Some faculty and staff voiced their frustration with the process, and others gave up on securing an accommodation.
- There is a culture of disrespect and unacceptance toward faculty and staff who need accommodations.

<sup>1</sup> Do you have a disability? For the purposes of this survey, we understand disability broadly and inclusively, regardless of whether or not you have any official diagnosis or documentation. Examples may include, but are not limited to, physical disabilities, sensory disabilities, chronic illnesses, neurodivergence, mental health conditions, learning disabilities, and more that could at times may make job-relevant tasks difficult.

## Group Differences

- Respondents rated the awareness of disability support significantly less positive for the university than the college. The college ratings were also significantly less positive than departments.
- Faculty rated the university significantly less positively than staff.
- Faculty were less positive than staff when comparing the university to other higher education environments.
- Faculty and staff who do not have a disability (Group III and Group IV) are less critical of the university, the college and their departments than faculty and staff who have a disability (Group I and Group II).
- Group I rated the understanding, acceptance, support and/or awareness of disability significantly less positively than Group IV.

## Ideas for Improvement

- Create a confidential and centralized support for faculty and staff who have a disability.
- Change the campus culture around disability to be more inclusive and to normalize mental health and other invisible challenges.
- Create and execute a plan to support all faculty and staff in a positive work culture, regardless of abilities.
- Increase awareness of campus resources.
- Educate the campus community to recognize more disabilities and prevent ableism.
- This survey provided key information for the creation of the [disability navigator positions in LSA](#).

# Faculty and Staff Experiences in LSA with Disabilities & Accommodations: Common Themes



## Structural Changes

“I think it would be difficult for someone with a physical disability to work in a lot of the offices just due to maintenance types of issues. I’ve seen door openers not work for weeks at a time and things like that. I think they sometimes get pushed down as inconveniences instead of necessities on the facilities docket of repairs.”

“Keep resources committed to FASCCO, maybe include satellite offices on campus so there are no barriers to getting to their offices (i.e., parking, time off work to get there), get rid of the rules around asking employees to document their sick time with drs notes, we are not children, if we have the sick time, allow us to use it without question.”



## Cultural Changes

“People need to believe in and care about each other, learn not to disdain and show “disgust” on their faces for those who seem “weak.” Provide transportation to work when disabled -- do not disdain those who need to phone it in if they cannot walk. Do not penalize salaries.”

“Working for an institution that works at making a more inclusive environment means that there is an alignment between personal values and my place of work. Therefore, increased productivity!”

“Invisible disabilities are real disabilities. Just because you can’t see it doesn’t mean it’s not real.”

“I think that it would be helpful for those of us without disabilities to be more familiar with accommodations, so I would like to see more accommodations present and in use on campus.”



## Centralized Resources & Training

We need “a central place to go. There’s Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD, [ssd.umich.edu](http://ssd.umich.edu)) for students, but no obvious place for staff [and faculty] with disabilities.”

“The biggest obstacle for me is having to arrange accommodations either on my own or via staff/colleagues in my departments. As well, my departments constantly tell me how much my accommodations cost them and that I should feel grateful that I’m not in a [different] department ... Departments should not be the entities paying for accommodations in the first place. This is a major equity issue and recipe for discrimination.”

We need “manager/supervisor specific trainings on how they can help their staff feel more comfortable in their office while supporting all needs including those with disabilities ... [For example, training if] an allergic reaction occurs in their office and how to respond.”



## Disclosing Disabilities

“Allowing for a formal, confidential self-reporting system.”

There is a “fear of disclosing to colleagues or supervisor.”

“Once you disclose to a Chair that you have chronic illness ... they can no longer look you in the eye or are visibly uncomfortable around you, you stop asking for or looking for support.”

“Don’t forget about invisible disabilities. There are many of us that are suffering and forgotten about. We don’t feel supported by the school/college.”

