

## Abstract/Introduction

This research project was developed to examine disability and higher education – specifically, evaluating architectural/physical barriers that may impede inclusivity at the University of Iowa.

- Students, scholars, staff, faculty, and researchers *with disabilities* in higher education remain under-represented and they are among the most marginalized, vulnerable, and excluded groups on college campuses. Among other barriers, they may struggle with accessibility to learning facilities. Inclusive education is important not only for students, scholars and academics with disabilities but the societies they live in, as it helps to combat discrimination, and to promote diversity and participation.

Our research was designed to capture Master's level student experiences to determine if those students had:

- a) experienced physical or architectural barriers on the University of Iowa campus, and/or
- b) where they have encountered limitations to accessibility.

## Methods/Procedure

- Project was deemed not human subjects research (IRB)
- Setting: University of Iowa campus
- Population: Graduate students enrolled at the University of Iowa in a Master's program.
- Design: survey research measuring quantitative and qualitative data points from a pool of respondents by asking multiple survey questions. This research included the recruitment of individuals, collection, and analysis of data
- Procedure:
  - Recruited participants via departmental Graduate Program Coordinators to distribute survey within UI graduate programs
  - Distributed an anonymous survey with five questions, inviting qualitative responses to be completed virtually via Qualtrics
  - Participants were allotted approximately one month from initial invitation to participate to submit responses
  - Results were analyzed and coded using UI-given acronyms, unifying responses that were given in free-form text

## Results

The survey received 170 responses. Master's students (110), Doctoral students (48), staff (7), undergraduate students (4), and faculty (1). Individuals who began the survey but did not identify as a graduate student were routed to conclude the survey as an excluded participant.

40 named responses were given in response to the question asking: "Which building(s) or their surrounding entrances (including, but not limited to, vehicle parking, sidewalks, signage, doorway limitations, etc.) have you experienced architectural or physical barriers at the University of Iowa?":

The following buildings, spaces, places, or facilities were named: Art Building West(2), Bowen Science Building (4), Chemistry Building (2), College of Public Health (7), Campus Recreation and Wellness Center (2), Eckstein Medical Research Building (2), General Exterior (4), General Interior (3), Halsey Hall (1), Hardin Library for Health Sciences (1), Laboratory Spaces (2), Main Library (1), Medical Education Research Facility (1), North Hall (1), Seamans Center (1), Wendell Johnson Speech and Hearing Center (2), Trowbridge Hall (1), UIHC (1), Visual Arts Building(2), and Westlawn (1).

Samples of open-ended solicitation for areas on campus which respondents felt represented a physical or architectural barrier:

"CPH is not accessible for people who are handicapped and it has no parking. The only way to get to the building is multiple flights of stairs."

"The University of Iowa has many improvements to be made around parking accessibility to their buildings. However, once in the buildings they do a better job at accessibility."

"Outside infrastructure is the most concerning. Every bump or uneven surface, while it may seem obsolete to most people, makes getting around campus very difficult when you are unable to walk from place to place."

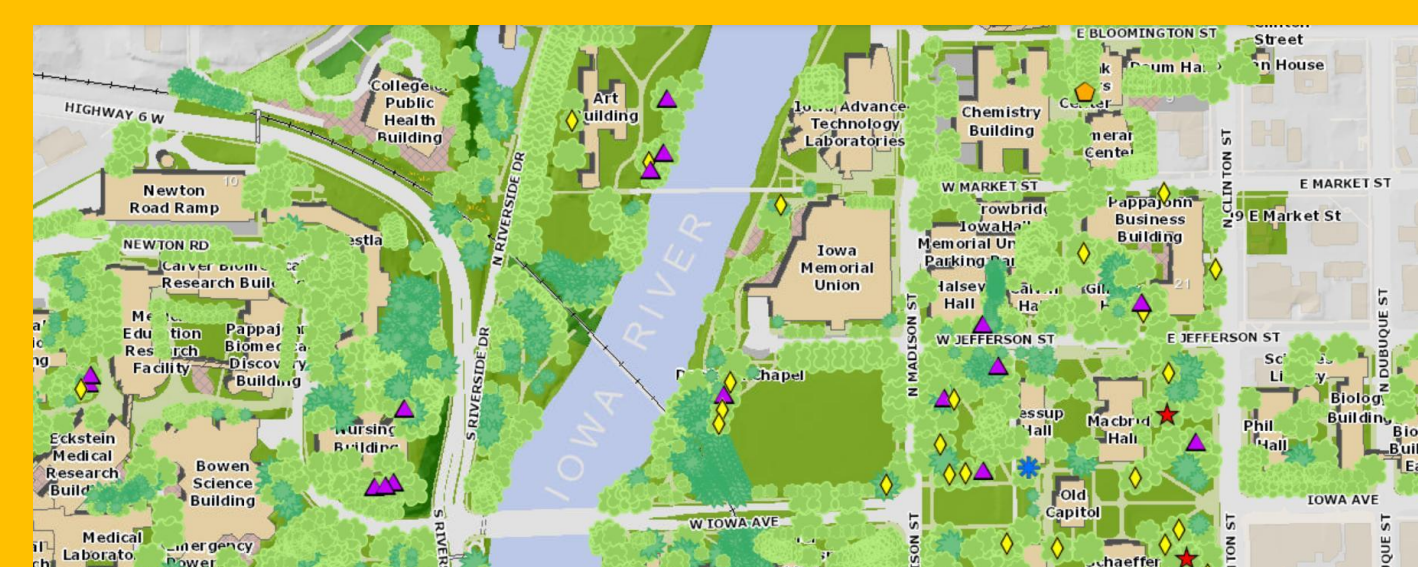
## Discussion

- **Applications and Next Steps:**
  - Provide a campus wide survey reaching audiences beyond graduate students to see if results are similar and architectural improvement is warranted
  - Make focus groups to help direct future campus construction or updating current buildings to be more accessible
- **Highlighted areas from respondents:**
  - Public Health Building
  - Main library - general
  - General exterior – ramps, lighting, parking

## Citations

Arif, S., Massey, M. D. B., Klinard, N., Charbonneau, J., Jabre, L., Martins, A. B., Gaitor, D., Kirton, R., Albury, C., & Nanglu, K. (2021). Ten simple rules for supporting historically underrepresented students in science. *PLoS computational biology*, 17(9), e1009313.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pcbi.1009313>



<https://maps.facilities.uiowa.edu/trees/>