DRC Student Rep Statement 06/04 Weekly Briefing Campus Re-entry

Short intro:
I wanted to give a shoutout to the rally yesterday that was organized and led by Black students and youth in Tucson. I urge that we continue to center and listen to these students moving forward with any demands or guidance they may put forward. The DRC will continue to provide services and offer flexible options for meeting with students. The Disability Cultural Center is not currently planning to be open as an in-person space, all events and discussion groups will be online. I myself, as a chronically ill and disabled student and university employee, will continue working and studying from home despite any calls for re-entry onto campus. I am fortunate to have this flexibility and support built into my job, although this is not the case for everyone. The DCC staff have several disability specific concerns from the perspective of disabled students on campus.

1. Course concerns:
We would like clarity on what offering “flexible options” means to students who cannot return to campus or need to be remote. Will those students be required to provide any documentation of diagnoses or be registered with the DRC for accommodations? Additionally, what does this mean for faculty & graduate assistants, how can we ensure their safety and support in potentially needing to offer in-person and online options for their courses, as well as ensuring their safety by allowing them to teach remotely? Overall, how can we ensure there is no retaliation for those who choose to continue work/classes from home?

We advocate for the following:

- To implement asynchronous online courses where possible to best support the needs of students now living in different time zones, or living at home and sharing space and electronics with their family.
- For instructors to offer flexibility in what is considered for “participation” and “attendance” for courses, such as removing requirements for students to have their cameras on during Zoom lectures
- For the University to work to ensure the safety of all students, graduate assistants and faculty on online platforms such as Zoom.
- And for the University to create opportunities for disabled, immunocompromised, chronically ill students & faculty, including those impacted by COVID-19, to express specific concerns and needs.

2. Accommodation concerns:
Is there a plan in place to provide the necessary resources and trainings for faculty & grad students on how to make online learning accessible for all students? How can we make sure this is being implemented?
We urge the university & faculty to implement universal design by making their courses accessible whether or not they have a student who is registered with the DRC, especially considering those recently impacted by COVID-19.

3. COVID-19 Testing Concerns
We are glad to see testing rolled out on campus, but have questions about the location of testing sites. If the testing site is located at campus health with the disability resource center just across the courtyard in highland commons, how can we ensure the safety of DRC staff and those on campus utilizing disability services, but also for disabled, immunocompromised, and
chronically ill individuals who have appointments or are picking up medication at campus health?

4. **Budget Concerns**
   We strongly urge that the University has a plan in place so that any future budget cuts that may occur don’t take away the necessary funding for any of the cultural and resource centers on campus, or any programs intended for people of color, first generation students, low income students, LGBTQIA+ students, and/or disabled students.

5. **Safety concerns**
   When reconfiguring classrooms to allow for social distancing measures, we want to ensure that accessibility to all students, staff and faculty is considered. We also urge the university to provide masks for all students, staff and faculty at no or low cost. Additionally, to ensure that all signage being put up around campus for safety precautions regarding COVID-19 is accessible to all individuals e.g. at an accessible eye-level as well as providing the information in braille.

Lastly, we want to emphatically remind everyone that it is not just elderly individuals that are at risk of contracting COVID-19. We also need to center the safety concerns of Native & Black individuals/communities who have been disproportionately impacted by this pandemic, as well as immunocompromised, disabled, and chronically ill students, staff, and faculty regardless of age. A reminder that addressing student, staff, and faculty’s health and safety also means divesting from local and campus police, and investing in local and on-campus communities, particularly in Indigenous & Black communities. To invest in graduate students & junior faculty, to invest in housing, food support, direct financial support, & mental health services. Thank you.