

Western Illinois University  
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**Abstract**

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Live Scholarly Presentation

Major: English

Faculty Mentor: Magdelyn Helwig

**Improving Handicap Accessibility at Western Illinois University Macomb Campus**

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The purpose of this presentation is to increase awareness of handicap accessibility issues faced by Western Illinois University's Macomb campus and propose solutions to better the quality of life for students with physical disabilities. Research includes a variety of secondary sources involving the Americans with Disabilities Act, journalist descriptions of struggles faced by college students with disabilities, and information about how handicap accessibility influences the recruitment and retention of college students with disabilities. Primary research includes an interview with the WIU Disability Resource Center and evaluations of handicap accessibility in each residence hall on WIU's Macomb campus in addition to various academic buildings. The major findings of this research demonstrate that achieving the minimum legal ADA requirements for handicap accessibility is not enough to create an inclusive environment for students with disabilities, and there are a multitude of improvements that can be made to better accommodate these students. Proposed solutions include improved labeling of handicap accessible entrances, elevators, and ramps on campus, the formation of a volunteer program allowing students to support students with temporary or permanent disabilities, improved accessibility for admissions events such as campus tours and Discover Western, the addition of academic opportunities for students to learn more about physical disabilities, and greater transparency of the services provided to students with physical disabilities. There are also physical accessibility improvements that can be made within each residence hall and several academic buildings on campus, which would be a worthwhile investment for Western Illinois University to improve the institution's inclusivity.