The University of Maryland, College Park (UMD) hosted the Third Disability Summit on Friday, April 5th at the Marriott Hotel and Conference Center. Approximately 250 individuals attended presentations, a morning and afternoon keynote, a poster session, and an afternoon workshop.

The full program and schedule for the 2019 UMD Disability Summit can be found at: https://www.lib.umd.edu/disability-summit

As attendees were leaving the Summit, they were invited to complete a brief online survey about the conference. The information below includes information from registration, an informal assessment by the Summit coordinating committee, and responses from the 31 participants who completed the survey.

Who attended?

- About 250 people attended the Summit throughout the day.
- 31 individuals filled out the survey.
- Fifteen respondents (31%) identified as having a disability.
- Ten respondents (20%) said they had a family member with a disability.
- Sixteen respondents stated they were a researcher or other professional in the field (33%).
- 22 participants (68.75%) identified as white.
- Twenty respondents answered that they identified as female (64.52%) and 7 male (22.58%), with other responding they identified as nonbinary, with some preferring not to say, and three respondents identifying as trans. We also asked for preferred pronouns during registration and if provided, included on the nametags.
Takeaways and Positive Experiences

Diversity/Variety of presentations
Many attendees were excited to see a wide variety of presentations, which gave both new and old participants within the field of disability studies and advocacy opportunities to learn:

- “Best part was seeing and meeting so many people in the field since I am new to the area.”
- “The presentations were really great. I loved how varied and interesting they all were, and I learned quite a lot.”

Networking
Attendees were enthusiastic about sharing ideas with each other, learning what other organizations and groups are working on, and making useful contacts.

- “My disabled son was able to see people with disabilities at work, pursuing their dreams.”

Advocacy and Allies
Another common takeaway was learning more about disability advocacy at all levels (interpersonal, institutional, individual). Additionally, many attendees without disabilities came away from the Summit with a better understanding of how to be an effective ally. In relation to the theme of the ADA’s upcoming anniversary, participants reflected on the past and present impacts of advocacy:

- “Hearing directly from advocates with disabilities, especially older people.”
- “Presenters showed new perspectives. John and Marian gave a great history of ADA and inspired me to keep it strong.”

Concerns
While most attendees were pleased with the content and networking opportunities at the Summit, attendees raised concerns about logistics and supports. Several attendees commented that information about sessions should have been more readily available before the event and in both print and digital versions at the event. Some commented that the structure of the sessions - several concurrent two-hour blocks on particular themes - made it difficult to choose to move between sessions and hear other speakers. A few participants commented that the registration process was difficult to navigate. The original conference website did not contain up-to-date information about the location of the Summit until a week or so before the event.
What people liked best

Two words stood out when people told us what they liked best about the Disability Summit — networking and variety. People were enthusiastic about the chance to interact with speakers and other attendees, networking, sharing ideas, and having discussions in an event with a sense of community and inclusion. They also enjoyed having a wide variety of topics covered, from academic to government to personal. The afternoon workshop “Radical Access, Awkward Ableism and Disability Justice” received the most specific praise. This was the first time a workshop was offered at the Summit, and clearly this is something that should become a feature moving forward.
What Makes Our Summit Different?

The UMD Disability Summit prioritizes accessibility, and therefore we have maintained a free and open space for scholars, researchers, activists and allies. Founded by Dr. Paul Jaeger and Dr. Stephanie Cork in 2016, leadership has always been shared by disabled and nondisabled community advocates. In creating a free cross-disability, cross-disciplinary space the UMD Disability Summit is unique and would not be possible without your wonderful sponsorship.

Your donations support accommodations for attendees and presenters including ASL interpretation, CART, and a wide array of dietary options. The generosity of sponsorship this year was essential in moving to the Marriott Hotel and Conference Center for this year’s event. The Marriott has supportive staff who helped make access for all a priority. In moving to this space, we were able to offer a more spacious and accessible venue, free parking, and “Quiet Rooms” available to conference goers throughout the day. The feedback we received from participants at this year’s event will help us improve access, registration, and organization of the next Summit in 2021,

We believe the UMD Disability Summit is unique. Access means much more than ramps. We will strive to ensure that the Summit continues to provide a forum for engaging conversations and networking across and within the disability community in the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia and beyond.

With your support, we were able to accomplish all of this and more and are looking forward to 2021.
Thank you to all our sponsors:

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