

October 29, 2021

Dear R&DE -

In celebration of **National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)**, I want highlight the achievements of employees with disabilities and/or those requiring accommodations as well as bring awareness to accessibility and inclusion in the workplace. This is one of many opportunities for us to value and embrace diversity as part of my DEI educational plan.

Since 1990, the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** - modeled on the Civil Rights Act of 1964 - has provided protections for disabled Americans and shielded workers from disability-related discrimination known as *ableism*. Our Core Values of **“Be Respectful”**, **“Value Teamwork”**, **“Value & Embrace Diversity, Equity & Inclusion”** and **“Value Safety in the Workplace”** continue to uphold the provisions set forth by the ADA and provide guiding tenants on how we can protect all members of the Stanford community regardless of ability status. As I have mentioned before, I have a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination of any kind in R&DE; it is our responsibility to safeguard everyone’s physical and psychological well-being.

This year’s theme for NDEAM is, **“America’s Recovery: Powered by Inclusion.”** It is now more important than ever to expand our outreach efforts and increase the bandwidth of our talent pipelines. As President Biden so aptly stated during his address to the country this month, “Our Nation will never fully recover and rebuild unless every single community – including disabled Americans – is fully included.” To this end, R&DE Human Resources has partnered with **AbilityPath, Kainos** and the **Stanford Neurodiversity Project** to ensure the maintenance of equitable hiring practices in the workplace and prioritize inclusion as an integral component of our recruitment efforts.

Inclusion and accessibility are persistent themes throughout R&DE operations and reach every corner of the 5 million square feet of our capital plant. In Student Housing Operations (SHO) and Maintenance & Capital Projects (MCP), we support those with disabilities through active collaboration with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE) to modify existing residences and/or provide accommodations as necessary. SHO partners with OAE to provide compliance for **Service Animals** and accommodations for **Emotional Support Animals (ESA)** for residents. Emotional Support Animals come in all forms – such as, dogs, cats, birds, fish, hamsters, reptiles and even a chinchilla – and perform a wide variety of services. Most of the animals kept by students in residence are ESA and R&DE has provided them with the same level of service excellence for which we are known. Furthermore, new building construction and renovation projects are engineered with accessibility at the forefront of all design and planning. This includes support for the general population to include wheelchair-accessible ramps, wheelchair lifts, door-open assists, handrails, roll-in showers, braille signage and other ADA-compliant installations. MCP further supports individual accommodations through enhancements to our facilities based upon unique needs and special circumstances such as the installation of bed shakers, bedroom door openers, flashing doorbells, horn/strobe devices, overhead rail devices and more to ensure building safety, security and emergency preparedness are equal for all.

In our dining halls, Stanford Dining has created an inclusive dining experience through the creation of the **Food Allergies @Stanford program** which takes into consideration those with food allergies and specialized dietary requirements. This program features a dedicated Food Allergy & Inclusive Nutrition Programs Specialist who supports hundreds of Stanford students, staff and guests with special dietary needs. Furthermore, R&DE Stanford Dining has proudly partnered with **Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE)** to help improve the college experience for students with food allergies through enhanced awareness, accommodations and training. The R&DE Stanford Dining nutrition team reviews all ingredients, recipes and menus for allergens, trains R&DE staff on food allergy accommodations and provides nutrition counseling and education for students to help with managing their dietary needs on campus. We also now offer the **Mindful Meal** program which ensures that every dining hall offers delicious, carefully prepared meals that are free from the top nine allergens (milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soy and sesame). Stanford is also home to the first nut-sensitive dining program in the nation at Ricker Dining, and we have added a second nut-sensitive location this year at Stern Dining. We also work with a number of students who require non-dietary related accommodations or support such as assisting those with physical or visual disabilities to navigate the dining halls and select food. Additionally, we support individuals who are experiencing temporary disability due to injury or illness through meal delivery coordination.

Accessibility in technology is also of paramount importance and central to all R&DE IT (Information Technology) operations which strictly adhere to the **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG)** developed by the **World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)**. This internationally shared set of guidelines and protocols ensures that websites, devices and content are accessible to users with disabilities. Some of the accessibility features R&DE IT has provided include screen readers, color filters, keyboard shortcuts, eye-tracking support as well as bespoke support for those with hearing and visual impairments. Furthermore, hearing aid, audiogram and background sound support can be provided which minimize distracting, discomforting or overwhelming noises to support the neurodiversity present in our community.

R&DE strives to ensure that we are best supporting all individuals in an equitable manner and will continue to reduce barriers to education and employment for those with disabilities. So, I ask all of you to join me in celebrating NDEAM in a manner consistent with our Core Values and my vision for excellence in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Thank you for your continued efforts to ensure all individuals at Stanford are welcomed, respected and included across R&DE and wherever we might reach across campus.

Warm regards,



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