

# Creating a Welcoming Space in Engineering Student Organizations

Iowa State University strives to prepare students to meet the challenges of responsible citizenship and effective professional roles in a culturally diverse global community. The ISU Strategic Plan Goal 4 is to: *Continue to enhance and cultivate the ISU Experience where faculty, staff, students, and visitors are safe and feel welcomed, supported, included, and valued by the university and each other.* The College of Engineering recognizes that your ability to productively collaborate with people with varying backgrounds, skill sets and abilities that are different than your own, is fundamental to your engineering education. Your leadership of an engineering student organization provides an important and pivotal opportunity for you to develop your diversity, equity, and inclusion skills and help lead ISU to achieve Goal 4 of the Strategic Plan. In line with the [ISU Principles of Community](#), the following strategies were designed to assist Engineering student leaders in creating inclusive and welcoming organizations.



**Check an Interfaith Calendar** – Interfaith calendars contain the dates of important events and holidays of multiple faith communities. Before you finalize the dates for your events, meetings, and activities, consult an interfaith calendar to determine which dates are major holidays in various faith communities. Schedule your activities and events in a manner that allows for individuals of various faith communities to be a part of your organization. (e.g. <https://www.diversityresources.com/interfaith-calendar-2021/>)



**Make Access Easy** – The key to great involvement is making it easy and convenient for more people to participate; thus, location and time of the event/meetings are critical.

- **Location:** Choose event/ meeting locations that are easy for everyone to physically access. Make sure there are ramps and sidewalks (i.e., level surfaces) for accessing the venue. If you are on grass, make sure you are near sidewalks or put down plywood so everyone has easy physical access to the activity.
- **Time of events/meetings** – Check the Cy-Ride schedule and routes so that individuals can travel safely and independently to and from the event/meeting.



**Use Microphones** – Always use microphones when room capacity is greater than 15 and when there are more than 15 people in the room. By using microphones (and not asking if anyone needs the microphone to be used), everyone is included without anyone having to stand out. Keep in mind that the use of microphones does not take away from the experience of those who do not need microphones to be used, AND it significantly adds to the experience for those who would like or need microphones to be used.



**Choose Food** – Food is one commonality we all share; and food helps bring people together. **Always provide gluten-free and vegetarian options on the menu.** This increases the likelihood that everyone can partake in this part of the meeting/event. Also, include the event/meeting menu on flyers or via QR code, so everyone knows what to expect and can plan accordingly.



**Design Slides, Flyers, & Websites with Everyone in Mind** – Use Universal Design principles to present information in a manner that is clear and intelligible for a variety of learning styles and preferences. Universal Design enhances the quality of communication and information delivery by using strategies that meet the needs of a variety of learners.

- <https://www.washington.edu/doit/universal-design-process-principles-and-applications>
- <http://universaldesign.com/what-is-ud/>



**Go Together!** – Go to the event with a friend or classmate. Often the hardest part about getting involved is going alone to an event/meeting when you don't know anyone there. Don't just give them a flyer or invite them to go the event/meeting. Travel to the meeting/event with the person(s) you invite. Create an inclusive organization by going with a first-time attender to the event or meet them outside of the venue so they do not have to go in alone. At the event/meeting, stay with them; invite them to sit with you, introduce them to others, and walk out with them at the end.