

Although Haverford College is a prestigious and rigorous academic institution, the school appears to fall short in regards to being an accessible environment. For my midterm project, I walked around Haverford's campus in search of positive and negative things related to physical access. While there were some positives, there were many negatives, such as many of the buildings not having accessible entrances, such as dorms, academic buildings, and even the health center.

Haverford's website would make someone believe that their campus is very accessible, both in a physical and non-physical sense, but this is not true. Their claims on their website are extremely optimistic, welcoming, and convincing that they will provide disabled students with "an accessible experience at Haverford College". Other claims include saying that they are, "committed to ensuring equal and meaningful access to all campus programs, activities, and services for all students". Among these, there are quite a few other things on their website that would indicate that Haverford's campus is overall accessible.

There are many reasons why having very few accessible spaces on campus is unacceptable, aside from the obvious fact that it is downright ableist. First, the physical campus pushes away prospective students, as it guaranteed that the already existing spaces on campus would not provide them with a completely inclusive college experience. Secondly, the lack of accessible social spaces is harmful to college students' growth by preventing disabled students from having the same social experiences as non-disabled students. Also, what does it say about

Haverford College as an institution when they have the only accessible entrances to certain buildings in the back of the building, like in Founder's Hall. And what does it say about the college when they are not actively prioritizing creating more physical access on campus? They perpetuate the harmful narrative that disabled people are not welcomed in "mainstream" spaces. The beliefs and values of Haverford College would indicate the very opposite- that all people are welcome on campus. While not perfect, Haverford makes clear attempts at prioritizing the inclusion and needs of BIPOC students. However, the same effort is not made regarding disabled students. I feel that people often forget that inclusion is not just about race or gender, it is also about disability.

Not only are there issues at Haverford related to physical access, but there are also many related to non-physical access, as well. For example, the process of students receiving accommodations, physical and non-physical, can be quite challenging. However, since non-physical disabilities are often less visual and therefore harder to "prove" to another person, ADS requires an excessive amount of documentation proving you actually have a disability that requires accommodations. After this heavy process, professors are still able to deny a student their accommodations, which feels incredibly unjust and unethical.

They claim that "Haverford Colleges's academic program is flexible in its form and content so as to meet the needs, interests, and strengths of individual students. The small size of the College also allows faculty and staff to pay attention to each student's unique needs, and work with them on an individual basis. ADS works collaboratively with each student applying for accommodations to determine eligibility, and to identify the accommodations that remove barriers without altering the fundamental nature of the academic program". While the college is able to help a decent amount of students receive accommodations, they do not provide enough

protection to assure that every student who needs accommodations will actually receive them. There are other issues, as well, such as attendance requirements and grade distributions that cause students to receive worse grades due to physical or non-physical disabilities. I heard from many students that the hybrid options of classes that became available during the Covid-19 pandemic were extraordinarily helpful for students with all disabilities. However, with the exception of our class this semester, I do not think these hybrid options are available at Haverford anymore, despite them being extremely helpful for disabled students.

For my final project, I wanted to expand my midterm by getting direct feedback from Haverford students who have faced issues related to access or observed problems that need attending. I reached out to some students from our class that are involved in DASH, asking if I could collaborate with the group to see if people would be interested in sharing any information regarding accessibility, or rather the lack thereof, at Haverford. I created an anonymous google form where anybody could share any type of feedback they desired, either related to their own experiences, experiences of friends, or things they have observed on campus even if they themselves do not have a disability.

I believe in total, I shared this form with nearly 40-50 people. Out of those people, only 2 responded to the form. While surprising, I thought I could take the smaller response total as an opportunity to reflect on why students might not have felt comfortable sharing their experiences or observation. The first few reasons could be due to just not checking online platforms super often, such as group chats or emails. I have definitely been guilty of this myself. Especially since I sent the form out to DASH right before finals week, and sent an email to our class during finals week, I was not surprised at the number of responses because I knew many people would have

been busy. I wish I had thought of this option earlier, and maybe there would have been more responses on the form.

Other reasons students might not have felt compelled to share their experiences could be due to internalized feelings of defeat related to their disabilities, either due to how they have been treated at Haverford or anywhere else in the world. It could be easy for students to feel that their opinions do not have value or will not make a difference, especially considering the many challenges that students with disabilities already face on this campus. I am sure many of the people I reached out to have experienced challenges, at Haverford and beyond, fighting for access to things that should not require fighting for. Understandably, this could cause people to think responding to a student's anonymous form would not make a difference or is not worth their effort.

One student shared many difficulties they had with a professor accepting their accommodations and completely disrespecting the student's needs. They also described how no dorms on campus meet their accommodations and that Residential Life has not been helpful in assisting them in the process. They described Res Life's response to be very belittling and unacceptable. Also, they said their experiences at CAPS were horrible and they have denied this student care over 5 times. Another issue they reported is that facilities park in places on campus that get in the way of people with mobility issues, disrupting the safety and access for disabled people on campus. They also discussed issues in the Kim and Tritton dorms, saying they are completely infested with mold, which is extremely dangerous to not just some disabled people's health, but everybody's health. They also mentioned Haverford's mission statement that I quoted above, about how their academic program is flexible and will meet the needs of students and how it does not accurately reflect how the campus treats them or their peers.

Another student shared concerns about the lack of options for getting around campus when it is difficult for students to walk. On Haverford's website, they claim that though they are not required to assist people with physical access, they will make every effort to assist you. However, this clearly does not seem to be a priority. They also mentioned how buildings need much more than just accessible entrances to the buildings. These buildings require accessible entrances to the rooms in the building, including bathrooms. I appreciated these students' feedback tremendously. If two students have experiences like this, I think it is fair to assume that many other students with similar disabilities have many of the same experiences and observations.

Haverford College needs to start prioritizing making the college as accessible as possible. It is not acceptable for them to wait for students to speak up and demand changes themselves after they have come to the campus and learned about the many difficulties Haverford causes for disabled students. Nearly all spaces need updating, especially dorms and academic buildings. There are major discrepancies between what Haverford includes on their website versus the actual structures, both physical and non-physical, that exist on campus. It is not okay to make multiple claims declaring how well they will treat disabled students when that is simply not always the truth. The lack of access on campus is damaging for multiple reasons. One is that being in an environment where you are often not included is mentally harmful and can damage one's sense of self and growth as a young person. Also, it definitely affects students' physical and mental safety. Haverford College needs to make many changes that will align with their claims on its website, otherwise, they will keep admitting disabled students and providing them with inadequate college experiences. The college experience is mentally challenging enough on its

own. It is not okay that students feel the need to fight and stand up for themselves in order to feel included, welcomed, and safe on this campus. It should already be done for them.