

# VHEAP Bylaws

## **Name of the Organization**

The name of the organization shall be the Virginia Higher Education Accessibility Partners and may be abbreviated as VHEAP.

## **Mission Statement of the Organization**

The Virginia Higher Education Accessibility Partners group (VHEAP) is comprised of professionals within the disability and accessibility fields. Though focused primarily on higher education, the organization invites participation and membership from all areas within the Commonwealth who work to advance accessibility across all levels of education, and from various state agencies whose mission is to advocate for and provide support for individuals with disabilities. The broad mission of VHEAP is to promote, advocate for, and advance greater inclusion and participation of individuals with disabilities in education and employment opportunities throughout the Commonwealth.

## **Goals of the Organization**

The goals of the organization shall include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Approach accessibility from a holistic perspective and address accessibility in the digital, physical, and attitudinal environments.
2. Encourage, promote, and seek opportunities for cooperation, collaboration and communication surrounding accessibility for individuals with disabilities among higher education institutions and other interested parties within the Commonwealth of Virginia.
3. Support projects and solutions which follow universal design theories, principles, and practices, and foster equitable opportunities for learning.
4. Foster education and professional growth of our members.
5. Develop strategies to provide fiscal benefit and broad availability of accessibility resources to educational institutions and other entities across the Commonwealth.

## **Implementation of our Mission and Goals**

The mission and goals of the organization shall be carried out in a multifaceted manner including, but not limited to the following:

1. Sponsor events for potential and existing members from all education organizations, appropriate state agencies, and other interested parties to be held at the discretion of the Organizing Committee. These events will provide opportunities for sharing our common professional interests, experiences, successes, and challenges.
2. Maintain electronic resources for the exchange of information. These resources will utilize the most effective communication technologies as informed by current trends and will be maintained by the Organizing Committee on behalf of the membership.

3. Develop and promote frameworks for accessible course materials, standards compliance (e.g. WCAG), policy development, and guidelines for implementation appropriate to the higher education environment.
4. Encourage and stimulate the development and dissemination of solutions, techniques, applications, software, procedures and documentation.
5. Leverage collective knowledge and experience regarding commonly used resources and tools to inform negotiations with vendors resulting in cooperative purchasing agreements made available across the Commonwealth.
6. Seek opportunities to enhance vendor awareness, understanding, and commitment to proactive accessible design.

## **Membership in the Organization**

- Membership in the organization shall be open to all colleagues from education organizations, state agencies whose focus is disability/accessibility, and other interested parties within the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- Registration at a VHEAP sponsored event shall automatically confer membership in the organization, unless the participant chooses not to engage as a member.
- Each member shall have one vote on any issue brought before the membership-at-large. Voting members are defined as professionals currently employed by the aforementioned entities. Student members are not considered voting members.

## **The Organizing Committee**

The Organizing Committee shall consist of approximately 8-12 members from the membership group at large. Candidates for committee membership shall be approved by the membership. Members shall serve for a three-year term with staggered elections of new members to maintain continuity. No more than three members from the same institution may serve at the same time. Committee members whose role on the leadership team will carry their service beyond the three years, will remain on the Organizing Committee until their leadership duties are completed.

If outgoing committee members wish to volunteer for another term, their request will go to the general membership for approval (same timeline and process as proposed new committee members) with at least 10% of the membership responding to the request. There shall be an effort to replace no more than four retiring committee members in any one year. It is the committee's hope that in filling vacancies, every attempt is made to ensure representation from both public and private institutions, as well as community colleges, small colleges and large universities, state agencies and K-12 school systems.

Service on the Organizing Committee shall be a three-year term and run July 1 – June 30.

Nominations for service on the Organizing Committee shall be accepted from among the general membership throughout the year, with the final ballot being ready by June 1 of each year. Committee members should be exemplars of support for the mission and goals of the organization, integrity, and respect for others. Committee members will be expected to participate in all aspects of activities sponsored by the VHEAP Organizing Committee as they are able.

The Organizing Committee shall make recommendations for the election of a new Organizing Committee to the membership on an annual basis. Voting will take place through an online ballot system in June. New committee members shall be accepted by majority vote of the general membership, with at least 10% of the membership responding.

Specific roles for committee members will be agreed upon using the following guidelines:

- The leadership team of the Organizing Committee will be comprised of Chair, Chair-Elect, and Past-Chair.
- Organizing Committee members, by written or online ballot, shall elect a Chair each year who will become Chair-Elect. Others on the leadership team will fill each role as appropriate, eventually serving the committee in a leadership role for three years. (i.e. The year of election, the role is Chair-Elect. The second year of service as Chair, and the third as Past-Chair.)
- All other roles such as membership coordinator, event logistics coordinator, vendor coordinator, digital media coordinator, event program coordinator, etc., will be filled by volunteers on the Organizing Committee and will be based on an individual's desire to take on the task and expertise to fulfill the requirements of position. In the event that more than one committee member wishes to fill the same role, the role may be shared if agreed upon by the current leadership team.
- Committee members not filling a specific role will assist with tasks as assigned by the leadership team.

If a vacancy occurs on the leadership team during the year, the Organizing Committee shall elect a replacement from among current committee members. A temporary replacement may be sought to fill any other vacancy occurring during the year. The committee will seek a volunteer with a similar school affiliation as the departing committee member. This position will be termed "temporary" until final approval can be granted by vote from the membership through the annual voting process if there is remaining time left of the term of the departing committee member.

All Committee meetings will be conducted in integrity and with respect for others.

### **Revision of these Bylaws**

Upon the recommendation of the Organizing Committee, these bylaws may be revised with approval by a majority vote of the membership who submit their ballot.

These Bylaws as amended were adopted subject to the review of the VHEAP Organizing Committee on this 1st day of July 2021.