

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 and directed by an elected Board of Directors. 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 and provide support for individuals with disabilities. The broad mission of VHEAP is to provide guidance and serve an advocacy role to 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 Board of Directors (BOD) 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 Board of Directors

The Board of Directors (BOD) shall consist of approximately 8-12 members from the membership group at large. Candidates for a position on the BOD shall be nominated and approved by the VHEAP membership. BOD members shall serve for a three-year term (July 1-June 30 is an annual 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. BOD members whose role on the leadership team will carry their service beyond the three years, will remain on the BOD until their leadership duties are completed.

The BOD shall seek nominations from the general VHEAP membership for election to the BOD on an annual basis. Nomination submissions and voting will take place through an online ballot system in the May/June timeframe. New committee members shall be accepted by majority vote of the general membership, providing at least a 10% membership response. Should that response threshold not be met, the nomination/voting process will repeat until the threshold has been reached.

BOD members should be exemplars of support for the mission and goals of the organization, integrity, and respect for others. BOD members will be expected to participate in all aspects of activities sponsored by the VHEAP BOD as they are able.

If outgoing members wish to volunteer for another term, they will follow the standard nomination process. 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, community colleges, small colleges and large universities, state agencies and K-12 school systems.

Up to two Ex-Officio members may be appointed at the discretion of the BOD with a term defined by the BOD at the time of appointment. Being appointed positions, the Ex-Officio members are non-voting when addressing BOD matters and serve in an advisory capacity.

Nominations for service on the BOD shall be accepted from among the general membership throughout the year, with the final ballot being ready near June 1 of each year.

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

- The leadership team of the BOD will be comprised of Chair, Chair-Elect, and Past-Chair.
- BOD 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 BOD and will be based on an individual's desire to take on the task and expertise to fulfill the requirements of position
- 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 BOD shall elect a replacement from among current BOD members. A temporary replacement may be sought to fill any other vacancy occurring during the year. The BOD 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 VHEAP Board of Directors, these bylaws may be revised with approval by a majority vote of the membership who submit their ballot.

These Bylaws, as amended, were adopted by general membership vote, subject to review of the VHEAP Board of Directors, on this 1st day of July 2022.