

Starkloff Disability Institute
Universal Design Summit 8 Program Schedule
Saint Louis University, Busch Student Center

DAY 1: WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18

9:15 AM – 10:30 AM

Keynote Speaker

Presenter: Michael Allen Nesmith

Bio: Michael spent 10 years at Amazon, leading creative across Amazon's ecosystem. He authored the Fire TV Global Brand Book, the visual and motion system governing hundreds of millions of devices worldwide. He directed 28+ global product launches. He founded Amazon's first in-house ASL interpreting agency from scratch. Recently Michael founded Non-Breaking Space, a disability-led creative studio where he makes accessibility part of the culture, not a checklist.

Format: In-Person and Online

10:45 AM – 12:00 PM

Plenary Session

Presenter: Starkloff Disability Institute & CannonDesign

Title: "A New Benchmark for Universal Designed Workplace"

Summary: This presentation will pull back the curtain on SDI's new headquarters project that is currently in early stages of design. With a panel made up of project team members from SDI, the design team, and their committees, you will hear about the motivations for the project and how we are structuring the process to achieve our goals of creating the new benchmark for Universal Design.

Format: In-Person and Online

1:00 PM – 1:30 PM

Plenary Session

Presenters: Linda Nilsson & Kara Kopplin

Title: "Merging Workplace Accessibility with Modern Swedish Design"

Summary: This presentation explores how Permobil created a more inclusive environment through thoughtful design features, including weather-protected accessible parking, braille signage on stairway handrails, and low-stimulation areas for respite.

Format: In-Person and Online

1:45 PM - 2:45 PM

Breakout Session

Day 1

Block 1

Presenter: Nakia Avery

Title: “Compliance to Inclusion: Using Universal Design to Build Schools That Actually Work for Everyone”

Summary: This interactive presentation explores how Universal Design principles can help schools and organizations move beyond basic compliance toward truly inclusive and accessible environments. Participants will examine common barriers that impact students, families, educators, and community members and explore practical strategies for designing systems that support diverse needs from the beginning.

Format: In-Person and Online

Presenter: Steve Wright

Title: “From DEI to ROI: Rebranding the Endless Benefits of Universal Design in an Era of Political Pushback”

Summary: How should organizations and people market and promote DEI in 2026? The answer is rebranding. Sell Universal Design as the best Return on Investment (ROI) in the built environment universe. Sidewalks, crosswalks and transit stops that are free of barriers and 100 percent inclusive of all people of all abilities are the best investment a city can make. Inclusion boosts access to jobs, housing, healthcare, education, recreation and daily needs.

Format: In-Person Only

Presenters: Michaela Moore & Megan Heck

Title: “Beyond the Pool Lift: Universal Design in Aquatic Spaces”

Summary: This presentation explores how universal design can be applied to swimming pool environments, moving beyond legal compliance and entry-focused accessibility, toward full participation in the aquatic

experience. Drawing from an occupational therapy lens paired with extensive experience in the swimming pool industry, the proposed presentation examines how design impacts usability, safety, and inclusion across diverse aquatic settings and populations.

Format: In-Person Only

3:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Breakout Session

Day 1

Block 2

Presenter: Manaswini Kaligotla

Title: “From Access to Belonging: A Universal Design Framework for Reducing Hidden User Burden”

Summary: This session introduces the idea of the “Adjustment Tax”: the hidden labor people experience when systems are not designed around their real bodies, abilities, contexts, cultures, or constraints. Through examples across AI, banking, healthcare, retail, and digital services, this presentation will show how universal design can move beyond compliance and usability toward dignity, trust, and belonging.

Format: In-Person and Online

Presenters: Abigail Sarver-Verhey & Allison Hamburg

Title: “Please Touch: Accessible Design in History Museum Exhibitions”

Summary: This presentation will explore key features that have set new standards of accessibility in MHS’s work. Presenters will share case studies from their experience leading design on several MHS exhibitions, including Mill Creek: Black Metropolis, Made in St. Louis, and Gateway to Pride, highlighting challenges faced and solutions developed in wayfinding, multi-sensory interpretation, inclusive storytelling, and beyond.

Format: In-Person Only

Presenters: James Butler, Jane Winburn, Stephen Kesel, & Amela Paric

Title: “Designing a Place to Belong: Trauma-Informed and Universal Design for Healthier Missourians”

Summary: This presentation explores the design journey of the newly constructed Roy Blunt Center for Healthcare Innovation & Integration in Jefferson City, MO. Carefully situated within the surrounding limestone bluff Ozark landscape, this forward-thinking facility serves as a premier case study for the

seamless integration of Trauma-Informed Design and Universal Design Best Practices within architectural, interior, lighting, and exhibit design.

Format: In-Person Only

Universal Design Summit 8 Program Schedule

DAY 2: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19

9:15 AM – 10:15 AM

Keynote Speaker

Presenter: Dona Edwards

Bio: Dona started her career as a Mechanical Engineer working on space shuttle and satellite technology before switching directions and working in the legal field for more than 20 years. As an Intellectual Property Attorney, she learned new technologies every day. Engineering and practicing law is now in the background, and Dona has re-invented herself again with a focus on fashion for all. Join Dona as she shares her career journey and discusses adaptive and universally designed fashion.

Format: In-Person and Online

10:45 AM - 11:45 AM

Breakout Session

Day 2

Block 1

Presenters: Katie Fields & Daynique Smith Mwakatobe

Title: “From Partnership to Product Innovation: What Nestle Purina and SDI Are Learning Together.”

Summary: This session is designed to share a real-world example of how Purina recognized a gap in its understanding of disability, engaged a trusted partner, and incorporated community voices throughout a product innovation process. The story is not about having all the answers. It is about beginning a journey, acknowledging what was unknown, learning directly from people with lived experience, and creating a roadmap for future action.

Format: In-Person and Online

Presenters: Heath Mizer & John Morris

Title: “Designing the Public Realm for All”

Summary: Universal Design is widely under-represented in the public realm. This presentation will share Heath's experience designing award-winning destination parks and plazas that bring inclusive accessibility at the forefront of the design process rather than an afterthought. A case study of Finlay Park Renovation in Columbia, SC will be featured among other projects.

Format: In-Person Only

Presenters: Daniel Rosenthal, Lisa Clancy, Melissa Wilson, & Pete Uetrecht

Title: “Creating a Universal Design Ordinance for Single-Family Homes in St. Louis County”

Summary: St. Louis County would benefit from more single-family housing that integrates Universal Design Strategies. An ordinance that requires informing new home buyers of a select list of UD tactics could educate the public on their benefits and result in more housing options for those who need better accommodation. This panel of public officials, an architect and a builder, will discuss the benefits and pitfalls of gaining legislative support for such a measure.

Format: In-Person Only

1:00 PM – 1:30 PM

Plenary Session

Presenters: Lindenwood University Fashion Business & Design Program

Title: “Inclusive Fashion Show”

Summary: Join Lindenwood University students as they demonstrate inclusive design in action and show off a variety of fashion looks utilizing universal design and adaptive fashion.

Format: In-Person and Online

1:45 PM - 2:45 PM

Breakout Session

Day 2

Block 2

Presenters: Kyle Guenther & Tasha Singh

Title: “Mapping by Touch”

Summary: This session explores the evolution of indoor navigation through the design and implementation of tactile maps for complex-built environments and events such as the Universal Design Summit. Participants will examine the integration of emerging tactile technologies and fabrication methods that enhance spatial orientation for individuals with varying ranges of visual disability. By analyzing recent and international case studies, this exploration highlights critical lessons learned regarding material durability, intuitive symbology, and placement strategies.

Format: In-Person and Online

Presenters: Eddy Lio & Renee Burns

Title: “Beyond Compliance: Co-Creating Inclusive Furniture Through Research, Iteration, and Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration”

Summary: This breakout session explores the evolving relationship between Universal Design, furniture design, and cross-disciplinary collaboration. Presented through the lens of Teknion’s early Universal Design exploration efforts, the session examines how vertically integrated manufacturing, custom prototyping, and collaborative research can help bridge the gap between accessibility compliance and truly inclusive environments.

Format: In-Person Only

Presenter: Amanda Truemper

Title: “Keeping Design in Mind: Creating Spaces for Neurodivergent Experience”

Summary: This session will explore how the built environment can better support a wide spectrum of cognitive and sensory needs. This presentation highlights practical design strategies that prioritize comfort, clarity, and choice—addressing elements such as lighting, acoustics, spatial organization, and sensory regulation. Attendees will gain insight into how neurodivergent individuals experience space differently and how thoughtful design can reduce barriers while enhancing wellbeing and productivity.

Format: In-Person Only

3:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Breakout Session

Day 2

Block 3

Presenter: Aja Black

Title: “Designing for Focus: How Cognitive Ergonomics Can Mitigate Sensory Overload”

Summary: This session explores the critical intersection of cognitive ergonomics and neurodiversity to create workplaces that support focus and mental well-being. Participants will examine how environmental stressors, such as poorly designed digital interfaces and high-sensory physical layouts, contribute to cognitive overload and executive dysfunction. By applying human factors engineering principles, we will identify evidence-based strategies to mitigate these barriers for neurodivergent individuals while improving productivity for all employees.

Format: In-Person and Online

Presenters: LaDonna Eriksen, Doug Lugar, & Maria Stapperfenne

Title: “Inclusive Spaces: Crafting Safe and Functional Homes for Every Generation”

Summary: Discover innovative design strategies to transform homes into safe, accessible space for all. With over 20% of our population aged 65+ by 2030, and over 70 million who are disabled in the United States our living environments must evolve. The program will teach you practical tips for eliminating hazards and creating functional, inclusive spaces that promote independence and well-being at every stage of life. Embrace the chance to shape a future where everyone can thrive.

Format: In-Person Only

Presenters: Traci Rose Ryder & Victoria Lanteigne

Title: “Revitalize, Reimagine, Rebuild: Relaunching the Center for Universal Design”

Summary: For decades, the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University has served as the global home of Universal Design. Today, a collaboration of industry partners, expert advisors, and researchers, is working to revitalize and reimagine the Center as the Alliance for Inclusive Design Practice and Research (the Alliance). In this session, the Alliance’s co-founders will share the strategic direction for the organization and discuss emerging research initiatives aimed at advancing accessible, inclusive, and equitable environments.

Format: In-Person Only

Universal Design Summit 8 Program Schedule

DAY 3: Friday, NOVEMBER 20

9:30 AM - 10:30 AM

Breakout Session**Day 3****Block 1**

Presenter: Laura Miller

Title: “Ethical Design - The Intersection of Universal Design, DEI, and AI”

Summary: This session focuses on the intersection of Universal Design, diversity, equity, and inclusion and artificial intelligence. As AI continues to develop, more questions arise about its impact on DEI and inclusive design. Join this dynamic session to learn more about the potential impacts and how to stay informed of changes and challenges moving forward.

Format: In-Person and Online

Presenters: Kevin Symons, Anthony Maginity, & Alexa Vaughn

Title: “Lived Experience + Sensory Lens: Elevating Everyday Design”

Summary: This multi-speaker session brings together a Deaf architect, a Deaf civil engineer, and a Deaf landscape designer to explore how their work on sensory-focused, accessibility-driven projects shapes and improves their everyday design practice. Grounded in lived experience, each presenter will share case-study-informed examples of how designing for Deaf and sensory-focused users—emphasizing visual, tactile, and spatial cues in place of auditory information—leads to clearer wayfinding, more intuitive circulation, and more legible environments for a broader range of users.

Format: In-Person Only

Presenter: Amy Wilson

Title: “Safety Starts Here with Universal Design for Safety”

Summary: This session introduces the Universal Design for Safety Method, a practical approach to making personal safety education more accessible, inclusive, and empowering for all people. Participants will explore how traditional safety conversations often overlook the lived experiences of disabled individuals and how universal design principles can help remove those barriers. Through storytelling, real-world examples, and actionable strategies, attendees will learn how to create safety practices rooted in choice, communication, accessibility, and human connection.

Format: In-Person Only

10:45 AM – 12:00 PM

Keynote Speaker

Presenter: Jordana Maisel

Bio: Jordana Maisel, PhD, works at the intersection of research, teaching, and practice as assistant professor in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning and as Director for the Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access (IDEA Center) within the School of Architecture and Planning. She brings experience designing and conducting experimental studies in the laboratory and field; analyzing data; and, capturing and interpreting stakeholder perspectives with surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Maisel has led research in the areas of public transportation, street infrastructure, post occupancy evaluations, and accessible housing policy.

Format: In-Person and Online

2:00 PM – 4:15 PM

Universal Design Tours

Location: Soldiers Memorial Military Museum

About: The Soldiers Memorial Military Museum in downtown St. Louis, Missouri is a memorial and military museum, at 1315 Chestnut Street, owned by the City of St. Louis and operated by the Missouri Historical Society that has undergone a Universal Design redesign. Join this tour to learn more about the upgrades they have undergone and how that creates a more inclusive museum experience.

Format: In-Person Only

Location: Missouri Botanical Gardens

About: The Missouri Botanical Garden is a botanical garden located at 4344 Shaw Boulevard in St. Louis, Missouri. It is also known informally as Shaw's Garden for founder and philanthropist Henry Shaw. Missouri Botanical Gardens has continued to strive to create a more inclusive experience. Attend this tour to hear more about their efforts towards inclusion and inclusive practices.

Format: In-Person Only

Location: Museum at the Gateway Arch

About: The Museum at the Gateway Arch is located underground beneath the iconic monument in downtown St. Louis, Missouri. The facility features six interactive, themed historical galleries spanning over 200 years of

American history from 1764 to 1965. After a re-design, Universal Design was incorporated. Come learn about the changes that have taken place.

Format: In-Person Only