

# Neuro-Inclusive Campus Events (NICE)



**West Chester University of PA**

End-of-Year Report for \*Neuro-Inclusive Campus Events (NICE) at WCU  
Innovation in Diversity & Inclusion Grants Program 2023-2024  
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<https://library.wcupa.edu/NICE/>

### **Summary of the Program**

Neuro-Inclusive Campus Events (NICE), initiated in 2022, aim to increase accessibility at WCU events including but not limited to concerts, student activities, and cultural offerings. Supported by the Innovation in Diversity & Inclusion Grant, the NICE framework was utilized to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for the Concert on the Quad on April 25, 2024. Through working with stakeholders including Dub-C Autism Program (D-CAP) students and faculty, supports were added to the Concert on the Quad to create an accessible environment for all attendees. Supports included an ASL interpreter, paper and digital copies of the program (accessible via screen readers), therapy dogs, stress “squishies” and bubbles, trained volunteers, a break area, the availability of the Self-Care space at the FHG library, adaptations to sound and lights, and a website with information and videos which could be viewed ahead of the concert. The NICE concert was a performance that aimed to be more accessible for the audience while not sacrificing content.

### **Program Highlights**

The NICE concert fulfilled the aim of increasing access for the WCU and broader community, while also expanding the concept to other events on campus. In addition to the Concert on the Quad, other events included drum circles on the lawn of the Swope Music Building (and inside on cold days) open to students and community members hosted by the music library and the music therapy program. It is the intention that the NICE concept will expand further across the WCU campus in the 2024-2025 school year as we collaborate with other groups and departments across campus and seek funding from various sources.

Concert attendees and NICE participants reported that the added supports enhanced the experience for everyone, not just neuro-diverse individuals. Volunteers and student leaders commented that they gained knowledge about creating an inclusive environment and that it is more than just being friendly and welcoming. They also consistently commented that talking with stakeholders, people with disabilities, and neuro-diverse individuals during the planning phase is integral and helps to inform and enhance support provided and maintains the integrity of the event and the NICE concept.

### **Impact to WCU Campus and Broader Community**

The NICE concert and the drum circles were open to all, and were attended by individuals with and without disabilities. For some, it was their first concert attendance or their first opportunity to participate in a drum circle without a perceived fear of judgment. Through collaborating with staff from the FHG Library and Presser Music Library, a public facing website was developed and included helpful resources and videos of routes from the parking lot to the concert space, the restrooms, and other important locations. Student leaders assisted in creating a D2L site which included content for volunteers and served as a training site. A brief quiz, with unlimited attempts to pass, was required of all volunteers. Collaborations across campus are increasing as this NICE concept is gaining recognition.

### **Challenges of the Program**

On the day of the NICE concert on the quad, the weather was cold so part of the event was moved indoors to the Emilie K. Asplundh Concert Hall. We learned from last year's event so this year the Steel Drum Band and Latin jazz performed outdoors and the orchestra performed indoors. The exterior doors and the doors to the lobby remained open for those who were more comfortable engaging with the concert outside or in the lobby. The student leaders, volunteers, faculty, staff, and students were flexible.

### **Narrative Description of Budget Spending**

The program adhered to the total \$5,000 grant award, which was used to pay for the ASL interpreter, lawn signs, tablecloths, star "squishies", bubbles, volunteer T-shirts (including a T-shirt for Rammy), canvas bags, and stipends for two student leaders. The t-shirts, canvas bags, and squishy stars were purchased from Spectrum Designs, a company whose mission is "to create meaningful and inclusive employment opportunities for people on the Autism Spectrum." Their employees earn at least a minimum wage and individuals on the spectrum screen printed the canvas bags and t-shirts. A pizza dinner for the volunteers was provided and served as an opportunity to discuss the NICE concert, reflect on the experience, and plan for future events. The therapy dogs and a visit from Rammy were donated services.



NICE concert signs and volunteer bags.



“Squishy” stars and Instrument Petting Zoo with signs: “OK to touch”, “Please ask before touching”, and “Please do not touch”.



Rammy at the Instrument Petting Zoo Concert signs and noise reducing earplugs.



Concert auditorium and stage  
(house lights remained on.)  
Rammy and therapy dogs