

Faculty Senate Campus Environment Committee
Report on Accessibility
January 26, 2012

The purpose of this report is to summarize the concerns and issues raised in two accessibility forums held on November 10-11, 2011. The forums were attended by students, faculty, staff and administration.

1) Physical Barriers:

- a. Distance is an issue for people with mobility issues.
- b. Braille on vending machines is either missing or inaccurate. No braille on menus in Dalton.
- c. No audible traffic signals.
- d. Removed snow is often placed in handicap spots rendering them useless.
- e. Utility carts are often parked in the middle of sidewalks and block entrances or access to buildings.
- f. Curie Hall is inaccessible and has no signage. Especially difficult is entry from Lot A.
- g. Parking spots behind McConnell Library are sloped and difficult for those in wheelchairs. Could these spots be moved?
- h. McConnell Library elevator is difficult to find. Maps or accessibility signs would be helpful.
- i. Front step into library is dangerous.
- j. Apartments on Fairfax St. are not handicap accessible
- k. Dedmon Center pool area is no longer accessible from the main building. The pool area does not have wheelchair access or handicap parking.
- l. There is only one handicap entrance into Peters Hall and it's not close to the parking lot.
- m. The route from Porterfield to Covington Hall is difficult with no signage for alternative path. Handicap entrance to Porterfield doesn't work.
- n. Covington Hall and Waldron are difficult to access. Waldron ramp is too steep.
- o. Handicap spaces are full of cars without handicap tags. Better enforcement needed. Handicap spaces should be better salted after winter weather.
- p. Recently washed and polished floors are dangerous for those with certain types of handicaps.
- q. When renovations occur, handicap access is often blocked or rendered useless.
- r. Honors classrooms are in the basement of Muse and the stairs are not handicap accessible.
- s. Some classrooms are too light for visually impaired students to see the overhead screen effectively. Shades are missing or broken in many rooms.

2) Policy barriers:

- a. No financial support for departments that want to hire a faculty member that requires assistance (reader, guide, interpreter, etc.). This policy (or lack thereof) creates a disincentive for departments to hire faculty with disabilities.
- b. HR doesn't seem to know what the laws are with respect to accommodations. Faculty report being told that their disability needs are their problem and not HR's. I called HR and was told that Theresa Slaughter and Joey Sword are responsible for fielding accommodation requests.
- c. Temporary disability needs are not being met effectively.

- d. The university doesn't pay for special services needed by faculty such as closed-captioned videos. The burden is thus placed on specific departments and programs (see #2 a).

What is working?

- Dalton staff is assisting students and professors read menus and carry food.
- Graduation facilities are adequate.
- Golf carts are available for conferences and major events that are spread across campus.
- Transition outcome project.
- Signers of the deaf are professional and competent.
- Facilities clean sidewalks effectively after winter weather.

What is being done to address needs?

- According to Roy Saville, a brochure will be produced showing handicap entrances and parking on campus. Handicap parking in front of Russell Hall will be modified to meet code. Missing and broken signs will also be replaced.
- Mark Shanley reports that a Director of Disability Resources will soon be hired.

What needs to be done?

- All campus buildings should have complete and effective internal and external signage for entrances and elevators.
- All departments and programs should be fully accessible
- Apps for instructional needs should be available.
- We need to be veteran friendly and address their unique disability needs including counseling.
- Note takers are difficult to recruit because few want to walk across campus to drop off their notes. We should work toward a digital drop-off option which might involve loaning computers to students to type notes in class. Paying note takers should also be considered.
- Control panels should have buttons. Visually impaired faculty/students cannot use flat screens.
- The university should give greater consideration for disability needs when designing buildings.
- A handicap accessibility committee should be formed to address current needs and future building designs.
- Greater consideration of disability needs when scheduling teaching locations.
- Service cart drivers, skateboarders, and cyclists need to be aware of their impact on students with disabilities.
- We should look at other universities (Syracuse among them) to see how they address disability needs.
- Faculty should be better educated about disability needs.
- DRO needs greater funding.
- Explore logistics of making golf carts more available to those with mobility needs.
- Include audible traffic signals at major crosswalks.