

President's Advisory Committee on Disability Issues

Fall Meeting Minutes

10/19/2023

9:00am – NOON

Via ZOOM

Attendees

- Ann Murphy, Elizabeth Watson, Eric Roester, Hunter Kuester, Jenn Streator, John Achter, Kristen Jaspersen, Paige Smith, Renee Pfeifer-Luckett, Ruben Mota, Shannon Aylesworth, Teresa Davis, Top Tantivivat

Welcome and Introductions

- Introduction of Ruben Mota as co-chair
- Introduction of Teresa Davis, new student member
- Introduction of Paige Smith, Office of Compliance & Risk Management

Membership Review

- Members with terms ending in June 2024 are encouraged to email Elizabeth, John, and [Ruben](#) if interested in continuing for another 2 year term.
- The committee will review again in April and determine recruitment needs.
 - Consider replacing digital accessibility expertise lost with recent departures
 - Consider adding expertise with employee accommodations

Updates

- Services for Students with Disability annual report [Executive Summary Excerpt]
 - **Total Students with Disabilities:** A total of 14,031 students with disabilities were affiliated with disability services offices across UW universities in 2022-23, representing 8.7% of total UW university enrollment. This number has grown by 45% over the past five years despite declining enrollment systemwide.
 - **Disability Categories:** Qualifying disabilities totaled 25,151, indicating that many students present with more than one disability for which they are eligible for accommodations. Psychological disabilities remained the most common disability category, representing 40% of total disabilities reported. The other most common and growing disability categories continue to be attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD – 21% of total) and health conditions (16% of total). Among less common disability categories, autism (3.2% of total) has shown the most growth, with 13% more autistic students affiliating with disability services offices in 2022-23 compared to last year and 40% more compared to five years ago.

- **Accommodations:** Disability services staff approve hundreds of distinct types of accommodations annually based on specific barriers to access unique to each student. The five most common accommodation categories are: 1) testing, 2) notetaking assistance, 3) flexible attendance and due dates, 4) alternative communication formats, and 5) housing accommodations. Housing accommodations accounted for the largest percentage increase of student requests compared to recent years. The report discusses some of the complexities of reviewing and implementing accommodations, including the growing expectations and involvement of parents.
 - **Belonging:** Students' sense of belonging is a core element of college success, and a vital area in which disability and accessibility services offices serve students beyond the accommodation process. This year's report highlights several programs and services that contribute to disabled students' sense of belonging, and how these programs and services complement accommodation services to promote student success.
 - **Personnel/Staffing:** Overall staffing levels (in terms of FTE) remained stable during 2022-23; however, with more students once again seeking accommodations, both the total student/staff ratio and the average access coordinator caseload rose for the third year in a row. These averages have also been on the rise nationally and, combined with a documented increase in the complexity of accommodation requests, make it more challenging to meet students' needs. In addition, centers reported more attrition and longer position vacancies, putting strain on remaining staff. Compounding the issue is that below market salaries and the wide range of specialized skills necessary to provide appropriate levels of service create challenges in recruiting qualified staff.
- Update on the Governor's Council state meeting. All seven governor councils for individuals with disabilities met the first week of October and the overarching council came together for three days. The theme is focused on advocacy and leadership.
 - **Broadband in rural and dense urban areas.** Broadband is not distributed equitably, or cost is inequitable. An award was provided to the legislature and governor to expand broadband, but the committee is advocating for priority to areas that are medical, service and transportation deserts (within urban area of Milwaukee). Resource deserts being access to food or healthcare. Broadband is essential because those are the tools to which those resources are delivered.
 - **Fully accessible electronic voting ballot.** Limited access to transportation due to disability – significant constituent feedback to the committee that individuals felt their right to vote was impeded through lack of access to a digital access voting ballot that was fully accessible. That could also be done in the “equivalent of a mail in” meaning I can do it with an iPad or have

someone who reads it for me. Four other states are doing it, and the ballots are much more secure. MA, CA. Digital Access Ballot – could be helpful for students at college because there are several steps to go through to be eligible to vote at college. Accessible polling but it's minimally accessible polling.

- **Dan Johnson Advocacy Award:** Four people received the award. Three of the four were alumni from Whitewater that Elizabeth knew during their academic career. Council membership is around 80% of individuals who graduated from UW System schools or Wisconsin technical colleges.

Update on open comments – ADA II

- Received fifty-five comments from UW university stakeholders.
- Noah Brisbin (office of general counsel) consolidated the feedback and drafted a unified response, signed by President Rothman.
- President Rothman letter was submitted through regulation.gov. A copy of the letter is available to PACDI members in the TEAM site.
- Discussion
 - DOJ proposed higher education institutions would be permitted to not make accessible any items that were intended to be archived documents. For example, an older or archived report would not need to be made accessible.
 - Password protected content. DOJ proposed higher education (and K-12) would be permitted to not make accessible any software that was behind a password. Anything we use our net ID for (Canvas, My UW and documents within) would not need to be made accessible.
 - Essentially eliminate Title II of ADA.
 - Universities would be shielded from developing accessible and inclusive documents by putting them behind a password.
 - If approved, we will maintain the status quo with inaccessible procurement and then it is up to the DRC to make it accessible.
 - A lot of support in the public comments that this is not the direction DOJ should be taking.
- If new rules are passed, universities would have 2-3 years to ensure compliance.

Digital Maturity Self-Assessment (DMSA)

- Summary of topic areas reviewed and preliminary findings
 - **Vision and Leadership Commitment.** Only 3 or 4 campuses have an established digital accessibility policy. One campus has a policy about web accessibility, but it is out of date (WCAG 1.0 and we are at WCAG 2.1).
 - **Planning and Implementation.** Where policy exists, some lack specific plans for reviewing and maintaining accessibility and monitoring compliance.

One or two campuses address this in a minor way but do not have a robust way for ongoing implementation and review. We know accessibility is happening in pockets and that many are making things accessible, but there is a need for teams to coordinate that include accessibility experts who can help to implement and monitor plans.

- **Resources and Training.** This is also variable across campuses. Some are more resourced and have more training than others. One of the recommendations we are considering is would there be something that UW administration could do to help provide more broad resources instead of each campus having to create and obtain their own resources.
- **Assessment.** Every campus acknowledged that they needed to conduct assessment but few had plans to do so. Individuals experiencing barriers often do not discuss those concerns with the people who manage technology or websites, and universities don't proactively seek this information. Most campuses do not regularly check their major websites for accessibility. Most campuses were not sure how to assess what product they could use that would provide valid information about the accessibility of their web content. Two campuses developed policies and plans but could not get to the assessment because they did not know the feedback loops.
- The plan is to create individual summary reports for each university—outlining strengths, opportunities, and recommendations—and one summative report for President Rothman, Chancellors, and other university leadership identifying themes across the universities and outlining system-level recommendations.
- Workgroup target completion date is late November or early December.
- Resources that will likely be included in the reports:
 - [Dear Colleague Letter](#)
 - Barrier Reporting Toolkit (in process)
 - [Fact Sheet: Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Accessibility of Web Information and Services of State and Local Government Entities](#)
- It was noted that several campuses have already started to develop action plans, based simply on what they learned in the process of completing the self-assessment.

Potential future projects

- The committee discussed picking projects to focus on each year based on one of three broad categories of barriers:
 - Physical
 - Digital
 - Attitudinal
- Digital accessibility was the focus for 2022/2023.

- Focus areas discussed in the April 2023 meeting (from March BoR discussion)
 - Universal design statement: Ann, Elizabeth, and Justin offered to work on draft statement. Status is pending.
 - ADA self-assessment template: There were three campuses last year asking for guidance to conduct a physical accessibility audit. One campus explored the use of an architectural firm but could not find one that offered an accessibility audit. Status is pending.
 - Faculty/staff training: The committee decided this would be our “attitudinal” focus for 2023-2024. Training should include faculty and student aspects. Other recommendations included:
 - Creating an inventory of current training opportunities. TEAM’s site can be used to collect what’s available
 - Developing short training modules in a video format
 - Campus accessibility issues post-COVID.
- Other
 - Recommendation to create a PACDI annual report to summarize committee activity for the President

Next Meeting

- Thursday, April 18, 2024, in-person at Stevens Point