Kent State
of Accessibility

Kent State University Accessibility Committee
Year-End Report, 2017-2018

Michael Kavulic and Amanda Weyant, Co-Chairs

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2017-18 Committee Membership

In keeping with past practice, new committee members were added and/or replaced over the year. Changes to membership came both in response to regular turn-over and in response to efforts to represent a broad cross-section of the university. The current committee membership is listed below.

Gina Campana; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Kelly Cichy; Associate Professor, EHHS
Nichole DeCaprio; General Counsel
Julie Di Biasio; Student Accessibility Services
Nasim Eshghi; Graduate Student Senate
Pamela Fitzgerald; Compliance, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action
Joseph (Jay) Graham; University Architect
Jade Green-Gamble; Information Services
Dennis Gregory; Residence Services
Ben Hollis; Kent State Online
Mary Hricko; Library Director, Geauga
Michael Kavulic; Office of the President
Don King; University Facilities Management
Tricia Knoles; Public Safety
Tim Konczal; Procurement
Mandy Munro-Stasiuk; Associate Provost
Timothy Pagliari; System Integration
Jason Piatt; EIT Manager
Sara Smith; University Communications and Media
Phyllis Vair; Center for Teaching and Learning
Laurie Wagner; Assistant Professor, EHHS
Michael Weatherford; Graduate Student
Amanda Weyant; Student Accessibility Services
Framework for Committee Operations and Structure

In 2014, the Accessibility Committee drafted a proposed charter that would document the operations and structure of the committee in addition to acting as formal recognition and documentation of the committee.

At the time, the charter was not adopted by university leadership but continued to serve as a reference point for the committee. Over the past academic year, the committee has had several discussions about the need for documentation around the structure and operations of the committee and returned, once again, to the draft charter.

In revisiting the draft document, the committee has chosen to move away from the concept of a charter and instead is in the process of editing what is being referred to as a framework document. This document would allow the committee to detail committee structures (i.e. the new working groups and positions), operations (i.e. meeting frequency and term limits), and committee membership (i.e. representation from strategically selected university areas). This document will serve as a living record of the committee that will be updated as needed and will assist in succession planning and new member orientation.

This document will also be posted on web pages associated with the committee to communicate the goals and structure of the committee to both internal and external constituents.

(ULI 5.3 Establish a culture of sustainability and continuous improvement)

Mission Statement

As one of Kent State University’s proactive voices on issues of accessibility and inclusion, the Accessibility Committee values the empowerment of all individuals with disabilities and advocates for inclusive practices and policies in all facets of University life.
Committee Restructuring

After consultation with sub-committee chairs and the general members of the committee, the structure of the committee shifted from three standing subcommittees each focused on the different overarching components of accessibility (Structural/Physical, Curricular/Instructional, and Attitudinal/Cultural) to task-based work groups focused on pressing issues and projects.

Through this change, the committee continues to approach its work with overarching concepts related to accessibility and inclusion in mind.

These concepts consist of physical space, cultural attitudes, and learning environments, while adding a focus on digital accessibility. Details pertaining to proposed projects to be spearheaded under the new work group structure will be included in the AY18-19 proposed goals section of this report. Work groups, once initially formed, will determine the appropriate scope of the project including timeline, resources, membership, and reporting and communication needs.

The leaders of these work groups will come from the Accessibility Committee membership, while membership of the work groups will likely reach beyond that of the committee.

(ULI 5.3 Establish a culture of sustainability and continuous improvement)

Accessibility Website and Form
Create one landing page for contacting offices responsible for providing accessibility at Kent State. Develop and implement a plan for communicating about the website to front-line staff and administrators.

Emergency Evacuation
Examine best practices for creating accessible emergency evacuation procedures and develop a plan for Kent State students in emergencies.

Physical Audit Proposal
Continue work on the proposed physical audit project. If the audit is approved, this group will help to prioritize the results.

Kent State of Accessibility
Plan, promote, and execute the second Kent State of Accessibility in October as part of disAbility Awareness Month. The 2018 event will focus on invisible disabilities.

Accessible Universal Restrooms
Further the work of the administrative policy regarding universal restrooms to promote the inclusion of fully-accessible universal restrooms in every building.
Event: Kent State of Accessibility

On October 6, 2017, the Kent State Accessibility Committee, in partnership with the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Division of Research & Sponsored Programs, hosted the first Kent State of Accessibility event.

This half-day event featured a lunch panel presentation and Q&A session with Kent State University faculty researching areas related to disability, along with two break-out sessions: one focused on hearing the experiences of faculty, staff, and students with disabilities, and the other describing resources that exist at Kent State University.

The break-out sessions will each run twice so participants could attend both sessions if their schedule allowed. Close to 90 individuals attended the event and results from a post-event survey indicate that attendees generally enjoyed the event and that it was effective in its aim to educate and raise awareness on issues related to accessibility.

(ULI 1.4 Strengthen diversity and the cultural competence of students, faculty and staff systemwide; ULI 2.1 Build a culture of research and innovation; ULI 5.1 Create a healthy campus initiative that prioritizes the health and wellness of students, faculty and staff)
Partnership with Great Place Initiative

In February 2018, the Accessibility Committee received a presentation from Great Place Initiative (GPI) co-chair Dr. Mandy Munro-Stasiuk outlining the results of the University climate study, with a particular focus on the response from faculty, staff, and students with disabilities.

It was noted that this group (faculty, staff, and students with disabilities) responded that they experienced greater amounts of exclusionary behavior and less favorable climate than their peers without disabilities.

As a result, the GPI co-chairs have convened an ad hoc group that will focus on analyzing the climate study data and will recommend ways to address this discrepancy.

This group, which will report directly to the GPI co-chairs, will begin meeting in the summer of 2018 and will be co-chaired by Dr. Kelly Cichy and Amanda Weyant.

The initial charge will be to identify and assess the existing ecosystem around disability and to consider what a university-wide approach to access and inclusion would look like. The ad hoc group will report back to the Accessibility Committee and will call upon members of the committee as participants and to assist in the implementation of recommendations.

(ULI 1.1 Enhance and expand student success programs systemwide to improve retention and graduation rates; ULI 1.4 Strengthen diversity and the cultural competence of students, faculty and staff systemwide; ULI 2.3 Implement a “Great Place Initiative” that prioritizes attention to the diverse human element of the university)

Differences by Disability Status

Multiple Disabilities respondents (60%, n = 111) were significantly less likely to indicate that they were “very comfortable”/“comfortable” with the overall climate at Kent State University - Kent Campus compared to Single Disability respondents (73%, n = 380) and of No Disability respondents (80%, n = 4,869).
Accessibility Website and Form

To foster a more well-informed campus community, in February 2018, the Accessibility Committee began working on an updated web presence and an online form to route concerns and ideas to the appropriate offices.

First, the group identified the offices and individuals on campus who are responsible for accommodations or creating access in various areas on campus, including athletic and university-sponsored events, physical spaces, electronic information, and the website.

Contact information for each of these offices was added to the website.

Then members of the committee from University Communications and Marketing and Student Accessibility Services created a form to gather information about concerns and to direct that information to the appropriate office.

In the upcoming year, the Accessibility Committee will develop a communication plan to publicize the website and form for campus stakeholders who are most likely to encounter questions or concerns from students, faculty, staff, and the general public.

(ULI 1.1 Enhance and expand student success programs systemwide to improve retention and graduation rates; **ULI 5.3 Establish a culture of sustainability and continuous improvement**)

> kent.edu/accessibility
Proposal for Physical Audit and Funding

As there has not been a consistent source of funding to address physical accessibility needs across the Kent State University system independent of larger, more comprehensive renovations, many small but notable improvements have been deferred until a sponsor or a funding source is established.

The Accessibility Committee and University Facilities Planning and Operations collaborated on a proposal intended to identify areas for improvement as well as to formulate a plan to prioritize needed improvements. Specifically, this proposal contained a request to identify funding for a complete physical audit of the Kent campus, highlighting structural enhancements that can be folded into capital improvements as well as the campus master plan.

This proposal also outlined three actions: (1) identifying areas for increased access through an architectural audit; (2) prioritizing the results of the audit; (3) and then identifying university funds and resources to address these needs.

This proposal was submitted to Vice Presidents Brown, Polatajko and Little in the spring of 2018. An initial meeting regarding the proposal occurred in May of 2018. During that meeting, university leadership demonstrated support for the concept and recommendations to consider the ability of internal offices to conduct the initial assessment. The next steps regarding this proposal include continued discussion of feasibility and format of the audit.

(ULI 1.4 Strengthen diversity and the cultural competence of students, faculty and staff systemwide; ULI 2.3 Implement a “Great Place Initiative” that prioritizes attention to the diverse human element of the university; ULI 5.3 Establish a culture of sustainability and continuous improvement)

University Physical Plant Assessment
First, it is necessary to evaluate the current state of accessibility, identifying areas where compliance with the law does not provide for complete access, such as restrooms with curtains rather than doors. An architectural firm specializing in accessibility would assess buildings, grounds, and other structures on campus to create a list of potential improvements and renovations. Estimate: $100,000

Prioritizing Assessment Results
Once these projects have been identified, the list can be prioritized based on building use and relevance to students, faculty, staff, and campus visitors and can be included as part of capital planning, special projects, and long-term master planning.

Identifying University Funds and Resources
The final stage of this proposal requests the identification of dedicated and sustainable resources to address current and ongoing accessibility projects.
Continued Engagement with University Leadership

The committee continues to benefit from a strong relationship with Vice Presidents Brown, Polatajko and Little. The committee is also excited about the recent participation of Vice President Rathje in leadership meetings and we look forward to his continued guidance and leadership.

Proposed Plans for AY 2018-2019

Proposed Projects
Initially proposed projects that the work groups will spearhead include:

1. Accessible universal restrooms
2. Physical audit and funding proposal
3. Accessibility website and form improvements and publicity
4. Emergency evacuation plan for individuals with disabilities
5. Kent State of Accessibility event

Co-Chair
Additionally, Ben Hollis (Director, Instructional Design, Kent State Online) will assume the role of co-chair beginning in July 2018 when Michael Kavulic (Director, Research Strategic Initiatives) steps down as co-chair and transitions to the general membership of the committee.