

11/04/09

Minutes from the Committee on Access for Persons with Disabilities
October 28, 2009

Committee Members Present: K. Myers, M. Vivion, T. Norton, S. Grunewald, O. Williams, L. Johnson, and L. Wilson, Guests: S. Hannah, M. Belanger, S. Chao, and J. Sandman
Committee members unable to attend: M. Tollefson, D. DeMuth, G. Willhite, and R. Rasmussen, student members: E. Gustafson, Y. Valgren

Williams chaired the meeting.

Updates

OSD: Wilson indicated that of the 37 new student reports of disability related issues this fall, 25 or 68% reported histories of anxiety and depression as primary concerns. This is consistent with the reported growth nation-wide in students with mental health related concerns on college campuses. As of 10/28/09, 57 students are actively working with OSD, and that number grows weekly. OSD has also served several students with temporary disability issues this fall. Additionally, more students have self-identified as being in chemical dependency recovery than in any previous fall. Numerous prospective students with disability issues have also visited the campus to date this fall, and we have provided service to two students enrolled exclusively through on-line programs.

Student Health: Grunewald reported on increased demand for services related to Pandemic issues and escalated #'s of students who are ill and increased #'s of parents making contact with the office regarding their students. Grunewald is working with the Pandemic Flu Center at Riverview to assist students as well as with Polk County Public Health to offer seasonal flu clinics on campus. HINI vaccine is available to children and pregnant women at this point at PCPH.

On-line tutoring: Mark Belanger and Dr. Chao reported on the progress of tutoring support for on-line courses. Mark indicated that at the present time, the process which primarily involves on-line chat has been accessible to those students with disabilities who have requested assistance. Mark indicated that the greatest barrier inherent with the present system would likely be inaccessibility with screen reading programs used by students with visual disabilities. He is reviewing the possible use of a program called JAWS Tandem as a way of serving students in this category. One of the limits of the present system is that qualified staff are not available 24/7 for tutoring and appointments must be made. The process is staff time intensive.

Mark also reported on his attendance at the *Accessing Higher Ground Conference* which dealt primarily with design accessibility for web pages and course content. There is an emphasis on Universal Design across all academic environments including electronic ones. (*Universal Design is the design of products and environments to be useable by all people without the need for adaptation or special design. AHEAD*) Mark, a recent UMC IT graduate reported that there had been little to no instruction related to electronic disability access or Universal Design in any of the courses in his program of study.

Center for Teaching and Learning:

Steve Hannah provided information regarding the ongoing work of the CTLT to improve electronic disability access for on-line learners. For the past several years, MOODLE which is recognized as highly accessible by W3C (World Wide Web Consortium guidelines) has been the content management platform of choice at UMC. Additionally instructors receive a five page checklist of suggestions for

course development, of which several elements would enhance accessibility but are not yet mandated policy. On-line courses are also subject to QM course review protocols, which include accessibility measures. Problems arise in content development and use of certain instructional content such as embedded videos that are not captioned and cannot be captioned because of copyright issues. Wilson noted that Steve Hannah's assistance to students encountering inaccessibility of content has been very helpful. Another common barrier is often inflexibility of time for on-line exams.

Human Resources:

Les Johnson reported on a recent TC meeting he had attended where the topic of electronic access was discussed. He noted that a TC committee member indicated that to this point there has not been the same level of commitment and attentiveness related to 'how-to' insure accessibility of course content with on-line courses as traditionally delivered courses. UMC's status as the U of M Digital Campus Centralized Call Center as well as the campus's history with technology positions UMC to provide leadership with this effort. It was noted that federal accessibility mandates apply to electronic learning environments as well as traditional environments. Two actions were taken following this discussion:

1. The motion was made by Ken Myers to amend the membership of the Committee on Access for Persons with Disabilities to include the position of Director of CTLT. Ken Myers and Laurie Wilson will work on the exact wording and submit the updated membership recommendations to the Constitution and Bylaws committee for action. Motion was seconded by Les Johnson. Motion passed.
2. It was recommended by Les Johnson that Steve Hannah and Ken Myers initiate a contact with Billie Wahlstrom of the U of M Digital Campus to communicate an interest in developing a 'Demonstration Project' or a work group at UMC to specifically address disability access needs of online learners, investigate methodologies for curriculum design, create on-line demos for faculty developing coursework, and identify training needs, resources, etc. Wilson will follow-up on this as well.

Training opportunities already scheduled include a series of eight audio conferences for '09-'10 offered by AHEAD, with the next one scheduled for November 12th from 2:00-3:30 in SSC 244 called **"Keeping it Legal: Learning from Others' Mistakes, Avoiding Complaints and Litigation"**. December 4, from 9-12:30 in Centennial Conference Room, **Lessons from the Field on Race, Culture and Children's Mental Health**.

Recent access improvements noted: two AAC/SSS/OSD computers in Owen 270 replaced, improved access to Prairie Lounge, improved signage in Owen, experiments with Smart Pen for note-taking

Meeting adjourned. L. Wilson, recorder