Minutes of the Spring Semester Committee on Access for Persons with Disabilities, March 19, 2013


K. Myers chaired the meeting. Minutes of the Fall Semester meeting were approved. Myers offered an update from the Office of the Registrar regarding the process of submitting a retroactive course cancellation request and in some cases a full or partial tuition refund request. It is imperative that timelines for submission and guidelines for documentation of the request be followed closely. Two to four such requests are typically received each month for consideration. Myers also reviewed the updated cancellation form required to fully withdraw from campus.

G. Willhite reported that Heritage Hall which opened Spring 2013 houses 100 students. In Heritage Hall, the manager’s apartment, two of four CA suites and 4 of 45 student rooms meet accessibility codes. Evergreen and Centennial also have accessible rooms, and during Summer 2013 some single rooms in McCall and Skyberg will be renovated for improved access. Discussion ensued about a timeline for applying for an accessible room. For the 13-14 academic year, it was recommended to note May 1, as a priority date by which to request a room if a student has specific disability access needs. The time from April 1-May 1 is identified for priority requests for returning students as well. Res Life makes every effort to accommodate access requests, has many more options than in the past, but also tries to minimize disruption in assignments for all students.

Rand Rasmussen reported that an $89,000 Grant RFP to the Great Lakes Higher Ed. Foundation was submitted last week to fund a one-year Student Success Adviser to focus on improving retention for students who are first generation, low income, or students of color. The award will be announced in August. This adviser would function in addition to the academic adviser to assist those students who voluntarily agreed to additional ‘intrusive’ advising support.

Rich Connell of Facilities reported that the Dowell Hall bathrooms on first and third floors are targeted for major renovation summer 2013. HEAPR funds are allocated for this project. These bathrooms are 45 years old. Dowell is the main classroom building for the campus, and there are no accessible restrooms between Kiehle and Sargeant Student Center. All this serves to prioritize this site for upgrade. Facilities will work with a TC design team and external contractors for this project. Future HEAPR allocations will be dependent upon legislative allocations and UMC’s percentage allotment from those funds. Anticipated upgrades to Knutson/Lysaker will have some HEAPR accessibility funding, and will meet established building code for any renovations that are undertaken. Facilities maintains a record of access upgrades from the 2012 Physical Access Survey conducted by Roberta Juarez, TC Access Specialist, and plans to maintain contact with Roberta who effectively advocates for needed funding for our campus projects.

Linnea Barton, Writing Center Coordinator and OSD Specialist, reported on the on-line course in which she is presently enrolled entitled Accessible Media and Universal Design. The course is taught by Howard Kramer of Accessing Higher Ground (adaptive technology and universal
design project leader). This course would be one resource available to train campus personnel assigned to improve online accessibility. Linnea reported on some emerging system-wide support to UMC for captioning and alternative format text production from the TC campus which has the required technology and expertise. VC Phaiah indicated that we have some opportunity for identifying needed services as a part of the Enterprise System cost share.

Re: ongoing discussions on the topic of improving accessibility in online learning environments, Wilson shared some historical information related to these efforts including copies of the 1992 Regents’ Policy on Disability Services, the 2011 Re-allocation Funding Request which noted the expectations on emerging technologies identified by the Office for Civil Rights, and the recent request submitted for consideration in the 2013-2014 Compact Request.

- Phaiah reported that Debra Race will be assigned duties and given support to fulfill the position identified in 2011 for the multi-departmental technology specialist. Linnea hopes to assist in this process and offered support.
- Wilson recommends that UMC investigate the model adopted by many other educational institutions that host online courses. This model involves centralized course development whereby faculty continue to have primary content development responsibility and receive some basic level of accessible course development training for electronic learning environments, but are assisted by specialists who work to make content meet current accessibility standards. Wilson also reported on advances in technology that allow for mathematical content to be accessed by persons who are low vision/blind users.
- Faculty in math are currently investigating this resource and the process for implementation to determine what will be required to adapt math content across subject areas. Funding for release time, special projects, professional development needs and technology acquisition are all being considered as aspects of the potential scope of this project.
- Profs. Karen Miller and Venu Mukku expressed both interest and urgency in the need for accessibility training as courses undergo both review processes and development.

Meeting was adjourned.