

**The President's Commission on People with Disabilities**  
**Accessibility Concerns, Priorities, and Recommendations: Working Document**  
**Designed and prepared by consensus and broad input from PCPD Members**  
**January-February, 2015**  
**Presented to URI President David Dooley, March 2, 2015**

The University of Rhode Island community, also a public entity, is more than the students faculty and staff who come here; we are also the alumni, supporters, and visitors who we invite to campus for open campus programs and use of facilities (such as the Library). A welcoming climate for all of us is important. Members of the President's Commission on People with Disabilities have discussed three concerns as priorities to consider for the URI Community. We are looking to discuss these topics with the President and relevant members of the University's administration:

- Transportation and Parking, presenters: Laura Kenerson and Steve Baker
- Safety and Evacuation: presenters Mary Jane Klinkhammer and Paul DePace
- Curriculum\_Online Accessibility: presenters Nancy Doyle-Moss and Meada Daly-Cano

The URI President's Commission on People with Disabilities recognizes that we are a state university with competing interests for limited resources. Therefore within the goals, priorities, and recommendations that we bring forward, we understand that some concerns can be addressed inexpensively or case-by-case, while other concerns will require consideration and planning over time. We bring these concerns forward in the spirit of communication, advisory and awareness for the University of Rhode Island with the note that some items are being addressed by URI's dedicated faculty and staff; other items may be added for future consideration.

Co-Chairs: Anita Jackson and Pamela Rohland

A. Transportation and Parking

- a. Definition: Physical accessibility of the campus is a concern of the ADAAA (Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act), which, with state statutes, provides guidelines about the distribution and locations of accessible parking spaces, accessible pathways, and building access. Campus transportation is one of the resources that accommodate students, faculty, and staff, including those with disabilities in moving around our hillside campus, accessing academic buildings, and administrative buildings.
- b. Nature of concerns or problem:
  - i. There may be inadequate availability of close parking for some buildings; the current transportation system may not compensate for close parking for certain individuals.
  - ii. There may be an inadequate number of disability-marked spaces in areas where they are most needed, (e.g. some disability parking spots may not be near the accessible entrance to a building).
  - iii. Accessibility maps (printed and online) are out of date.

- iv. The current transportation system does not address the needs (timing and distance of transportation) of many people with a variety of disabilities even though buses are technically wheelchair accessible.
- c. Recommendations for solution(s):
  - i. Conduct a study of inner-campus disability parking, the appropriate number of spaces per building, and proximity to accessible entrances (e.g. 1-5 per building; whether accessible entrance is locked during business hours, etc. (e.g. library entrance is locked during evening hours).
    - 1. Evaluate funding sources for parking and transportation; collaborate with current staff and/or consultant (to be determined) for evaluation of campus needs (currently in progress via Public Safety discussions).
    - 2. Identify disability parking that is needed in strategic locations (e.g. Woodward Hall, Ranger Hall, etc.)
    - 3. Include accessibility information on interactive Google Maps being developed (in process).
    - 4. Collaborate with Facilities, Capital Projects and Campus Planning and Public Safety to ensure accessibility of campus buildings, pathways, parking, and transportation (this is an ongoing process).
      - a. Example: keep disability parking spots and building ramps clear of snow. (on-going collaboration with Fac. Svcs).
    - 5. Re-establish the URI Parking Committee (University Manual) as advisory for Public Safety Administrators; possibly as a sub-committee of the Master Plan Review Committee.
    - 6. Address parking and transportation needs on a case-by-case basis where possible via established disability accommodation request procedures through Human Resources and Disability Services for Students.
  - ii. Evaluate the current RIPTA Services for ease of use and accessibility.
  - iii. Consider the feasibility of incorporating Para-transit Van Services into future transportation contracts for faculty, staff, and students with qualifying disabilities. (to enhance point-to-point transportation between classrooms for faculty and students with disabilities).
- d. Priority or timelines to be addressed:
  - i. Spring 2016 or by end of current RIPTA contract: consider adding ADA-RIDE Para-transit Vans to supplement current available transportation.
  - ii. End of Spring 2015: Conduct an audit of available disability spaces.
  - iii. Spring 2015: Reestablish Parking Committee.
  - iv. Fall 2015 through Fall 2016: Hire proposed parking/transportation consultant, complete campus evaluation. RFP in process through Parking Services.
  - v. Spring 2016 or as determined by URI Parking Committee: Implement parking and transportation solutions.
  - vi. As changes are implemented: notify URI community.
- e. Recommendation for who might be involved:
  - i. Parking and Transportation Services

- ii. Department of Campus Planning and Design
- iii. Representation from Commission on People with Disabilities and/or Disability Services for Students
- iv. Human Resources
- v. Parking and Transportation Committee (to be reestablished).
- vi. Department of Public Safety, including Parking & Transportation Services

## B. Safety and Evacuation

- a. Definition: URI has, in response to threats of violence nationwide, begun a planning process to keep URI community members safe in the face of gun violence, fire, bomb threats, etc. URI has begun a planning process to keep all URI community members safe in response to threats of violence nationwide, which includes the professionally made film, “Run, Hide, Fight” which provides instructions to URI community members for safety and evacuation in the face of gun violence, fire, bomb threats etc.
- b. Nature of concerns or problem: URI’s well-made “Run, Hide, Fight” video left some people from the President’s Commission on People with Disabilities wondering how they would evacuate if they are unable to run, hide or fight. The strategies encouraged by the video may in some cases not address the particular needs of certain persons with disability (i.e. those who use wheelchairs, those who are blind, etc). Examples of situations that may need to be anticipated (the following bullets are an excerpt from the 7/22/14 letter to President Dooley from MJ Klinkhammer):
  - i. A student who uses a wheelchair is on the Quad when her cell phone alerts her that a person on campus is threatening others with a knife. Where should she go? Who will help her get there?
  - ii. A visually impaired staff member is in his office when a fire alarm sounds. Can he exit the building by himself? Who will help him if he can’t?
  - iii. A faculty member who uses a wheelchair is teaching a class when shots are heard from outside the building. What should she and others do?
  - iv. A combat veteran hears shots fired and begins to experience flashbacks. What can be done to help him/her and others nearby?
  - v. A student using a wheelchair is in the library looking for a book when a fire alarm sounds. Who will know that the person is there if she/he needs to be rescued?
  - vi. A student whose family was killed in a house fire sees fire coming from one of the residence halls and becomes traumatized. What resources will there be to help him, and when?
  - vii. A staff member who uses an automated wheelchair is in her office when a fire alarm sounds. Official policy currently is for the person to wait in a stairwell until fire personnel arrive. Who will know that the person is there? What if the fire starts coming down the hallway and the person is alone, terrified and unable to escape?
- c. Recommendations for solution(s):

- i. Establish a long-term plan to prioritize installation of emergency phone stations in each building near areas of refuge (or escape).
  - ii. Establish a long-term plan to develop areas of refuge in every building (This process has begun through the Office of Capital Projects).
  - iii. Establish a “buddy system” for people with disabilities in each building.
  - iv. Ensure that buildings with areas of refuge have adequate signage to indicate their locations.
  - v. Establish a long-term plan for effective communication and training with first responders regarding people with disabilities.
  - vi. Establish training procedures and practice drills, specific to each building, for appropriate evacuation of the building; practice drills could include evacuation of people with disabilities.
  - vii. Continue the already established procedure to allow lockdown of classrooms from the inside; which is planned for completion by September 2015.
  - viii. Consider disability evacuation during regular building inspections by Public Safety and State Fire Marshal’s Office.
  - ix. Expand the system whereby people with disabilities can identify their needs during an emergency situation.
- d. Priority or timelines to be addressed:
  - i. Ongoing: Regular annual training regarding personal protective action per building.
  - ii. Fall 2015: Establish evacuation drills per building.
  - iii. Ongoing: act on the established building priority for designing areas of refuge. First are Davis Hall, Morrill Hall and Woodward Hall – per Capital Projects plan.
  - iv. Ongoing: Establish annual safety inspections per building
- e. Recommendation for who might be involved:
  - i. Department of Public Safety, Divisions of Emergency Management and Fire/Life Safety
  - ii. Capital Projects

### C. Curriculum and Online Accessibility:

- a. Definition: Every student needs access to what is being taught. Students who have disabilities, students with English as a Second Language, student veterans, and non-traditional age students need participation in courses that is equal to their peers. Principles of Inclusive Teaching and principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) are often used to facilitate learning for ALL students and if employed from the beginning of course design will be a time saving benefit for the instructor. The most vulnerable part of any course in terms of accessibility is non-captioned auditory material (e.g. DVDs, short films, lecture capture online, etc.). Faculty are encouraged to design media with captions or at least transcripts in all online and blended courses. By so doing the course is ready with accessible content for all students from the beginning. A university with a curriculum that is universally designed demonstrates student-centeredness and is attractive to a more

diverse student body. (Faculty resources for captioning may include URI Department of Online Education, Department of Instructional Technology & Media Assistance, Disability Services for Students.)

- b. Nature of concerns or problem: The university, as a public institution, may be vulnerable to civil rights litigation when courses, computer labs, public websites and other academic services are not accessible to potential and current students. Some faculty are unaware of UDL principles. Others may be resistant to changing course formats or attending to course accessibility (i.e. video captions or captioned online lectures or accessible classroom environments). Captioning can be time-consuming. There is not yet a protocol or published process to help URI Faculty/Staff provide captioned media in their courses and websites.
- c. Recommendations for solution(s):
  - i. Work collaboratively with Marketing and Communications to develop a pattern and practice to ensure inclusive content for public URI websites and videos (e.g. closed captioning, descriptive language for photos). All public websites would be captioned to demonstrate a welcoming climate. President's blog, Big Thinkers, highlight videos, etc.
  - ii. Apply for grants from the GCD and other organizations to pilot a captioning project.
  - iii. Encourage Inclusive Teaching principles and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles for on-line and traditional courses during the course approval phase.
  - iv. Recommend online UDL training for faculty, which has already been developed and is available through the Office of Online Education and on numerous websites.
  - v. Department Chairs demonstrate the value of inclusive teaching and accessibility by giving preference to instructors who adhere to UDL and Inclusive Teaching principles.
  - vi. Consider policies to encourage only the purchase of accessible captioned films or course modules (which puts pressure on publishers to make accessible products). The College of Nursing already has designated a strict policy within their college. The Purchasing Department can help with such policies.
  - vii. Formulate a committee to prioritize recommendations for the allocation and implementation of resources for captioning and other resource-intensive activities (e.g. how should we prioritize when to and when not to routinely caption online materials?).
  - viii. Seek collaboration across campus among faculty who are Disability Resource Mentors (from the previous Changing the Culture grant), Online Teaching Fellows (Office of Online Education), and from Disability Services for Students to provide UDL mentoring to new and veteran faculty in creating accessible course content and classroom environments.
- d. Priority or timelines to be addressed:
  - i. By Fall 2016 encourage all faculty to participate in the online accessibility training (Office of Online Education)

- ii. Consider that each course might provide at least two weeks of accessible course content if they teach an online or blended course. Should the instructor find that they have a student with a disability that requires captions, the university will provide resources and assistance for the duration of that course under disability accommodation funds.
- e. Recommendation for who might be involved:
  - i. Budget and Planning
  - ii. Academic Diversity Task Force for enforcement and assistance
  - iii. Provost and Vice Provosts
  - iv. Purchasing
  - v. Classroom Media Assistance
  - vi. Faculty Senate
  - vii. Voluntary UDL Faculty Mentors (from groups such as Online Teaching Fellows, Disability Resource Mentors)
  - viii. Office of Online Education
  - ix. Disability Services for Students
  - x. Commission on People with Disabilities