

The President's Commission on People with Disabilities

Minutes

December 15, 2014; 2 pm

Multicultural Center

Hardge Forum Room, 1st Floor

In Attendance and Introductions. Fifteen Members were in attendance: Len Gerber, Anita Jackson, W.M. Sullivan, Paul DePace, Joanne Lynch, Stephen Baker, Joannah Portman-Daley, Nancy Moss, Christine Sullivan, Laura Kenerson, Bob Ferrell, Annette Bourbonniere, Susan Roush, Bridget Ruemmele, Pamela Rohland.

1) The Minutes from September 29, 2014 were approved unanimously with 2 corrections; the first-year Executive Summary was approved unanimously.

2) Old Business

a) Letters of Appointment.

- Co-Chairs are still pending receipt of appointment letters: (Future Co-Chairs were established - see notes below for changes to Co-Chairs status),
- Still requiring letters: Stephen Baker and Lt Mike Donohue from Public Safety,
- The acceptance statement on the last line of the PCPD appointment letters should be manually changed from "Commission on the Status of Women"
- There is a need for a member to represent Alton Jones Campus

b) Safety Evacuation Procedure Recommendations: Stephen Baker noted work on safety areas of refuge for people with disabilities needing such spaces, in particular those with mobility disabilities. This effort is being funded over time by Governor's Commission on Disability and is under design and discussion. Brewster Thornton Architecture Firm has the contract. Davis, Morrill, and Woodward Halls are to be completed first. A concern was expressed that refuge areas not be located over open stairwells. Paul DePace also noted that \$25M has been spend on fire safety, bringing buildings to fire code.

3) New Business

1. Task Force Reports – none available

2. Future Direction - discussions, with recommendations, to Upper Administration Team:

- a. The member list of concerns and proposed actions for discussion included:
 - i. Areas of Refuge and Safety Evacuations
 - ii. Accessible Curriculum (online courses, classrooms, Faculty Development regarding accessibility.)

- iii. Parking and Transportation (consolidate various transportation services under one department; expansion and improvement of RIPTA contract to include the ADA transportation and assessment of scheduling)
 - b. In addition to our meeting with President Dooley and Associate VP Thompson, it was also noted that other relevant departments and administrators were germane to our discussions (i.e. Operations - Christina Valentino, and Academic Affairs, Provost Don DeHayes).
 - c. Paul DePace presented a 5-year Plan of Accessibility Renovation of RI State Buildings, and we specifically discussed the GCOD list of buildings for ADA and refuge areas at URI. For example, Ranger Hall was part of the recommendation for Harrington School but GCOD postponed fewer large projects such as Ranger in exchange for more, smaller projects. Large projects will more easily go for future bond funding. Paul can locate the original recommendations for renovations but the Commission can recommend different areas; i.e. lower campus versus upper campus, or other campuses such as Alton Jones. Individual faculty, staff, or student accessibility issues can be dealt with on a case-by-case basis directly through Paul DePace's office.
 - d. The university must address accessibility in the curriculum particularly in the areas of captioning for online courses (which now frequently include video and audio presentations). This could be facilitated by information awareness and training of mentors for each department. Collaboration among experts on campus to promote faculty development was discussed.
 - e. Steve Baker addressed parking and transportation. Several ideas are being considered: reinstitute the University Manual Parking Committee; conduct an engineering study of parking on campus; review methods of financially supporting a parking plan (to include faculty and staff); reevaluate transportation and the RIPTA contract now supported by student fees; reevaluate control of communication regarding bus route changes; reevaluate accessibility improvements of shuttle service for all URI community members – not just rely on Disability Services for Students RamVan; evaluate whether RamVan should continue to be separate from Parking and Transportation Services; evaluate parking enforcement issues; discuss snow removal issues and snow deposit locations (i.e. curb cuts vs. sidewalks and auto door button clearances; address snow removal policies for campus buildings on upper college road that are not technically “on-campus” but are considered South Kingstown.
3. Discussion about Website development for PCPD –included the following points:
- a. How would the page be found?
 - b. Linked to the presidents page, as for other Commissions;
 - c. Also the page would be tagged in a way that it would show in a search of the word [disability] or [commission], [diversity], etc.

- d. We would need resources for development and several suggestions were made – for example, Lisa Chen would assign server space for site and may have students on loan for the development; Pamela agreed to contact Lisa to begin the process.
 - e. Other departments represented on the Commission may have some support for student developers.
 - f. It was suggested to contact CED Department for resources, and we will work with member departments who are familiar with Wordpress and the URI template.
 - g. Suggested that a student with a disability would develop the website.
4. Election of co-chair and schedule of elections. Faculty Co-Chair: due to lack of availability next semester, Bridget Ruemmele has respectfully resigned her Faculty Co-chair position effective January 20, 2015; Anita Jackson was by quorum election, voted to become the new faculty Co-Chair for a new two-year term effective Spring 2015 semester, January 23, 2015. Annette Bourbonniere was by quorum election re-appointed for one year as the Student Advisor to the Commission. Pamela Rohland, by quorum election was asked to continue for another year to complete a two-year term ending January 2016. In summary, we have reversed the one-year/two-year staggering of the original Faculty Co-chair and Staff Co-Chair terms in order to maintain the concept that Co-chairs are replaced in staggered alternate years. The Committee thanked Dr. Ruemmele for her service during the past year.
5. Discussion Items for the Next Meeting – we will discuss the outline represented in New Business Items 1 and 2, further refining and clarifying how the issues will be addressed to President David Dooley and the URI Upper Administration including Naomi Thompson for Diversity and Equity, Don DeHayes for curriculum accessibility, and Christina Valentino for physical plant accessibility (buildings, refuge, parking and transportation).

[Note: Bridget and Pamela later obtained a meeting with Naomi Thompson for January 7, 2015 at 10 am to discuss her request to President Dooley about meeting with the Commission.]

Next Meeting: January 13, 2015, at 2 pm, MCC Hardge Forum Room.

Adjournment: The Meeting adjourned at 3:20 pm

Minutes respectfully submitted by Bridget Ruemmele and Pamela Rohland, Co-Chairs.