

# Institutional Disability Access Management Strategic Plan for Cornell University

## July 1, 2013–June 30, 2014

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### **Executive Summary**

Since 2004, Cornell University has holistically addressed the needs and interests of its students, faculty, and administration/staff with disabilities in three ways, by: 1) incorporating disability matters into the university's institutional diversity planning; 2) implementing a long-term disability access management strategic plan to increase accessibility of the university's Ithaca campus and programs; and 3) including the needs of individuals with disabilities in the university's overall work/life strategy.

The university designated an ADA Coordinator Team (see appendix A) that is responsible for identifying challenges to the university's compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), overseeing the implementation of the institutional disability strategic planning process, and providing leadership in incorporating disability into the diversity initiatives.

The university established an Executive Disability Access Steering Committee (see appendix B) with responsibility for overseeing that the university complies with disability laws and regulations and carries out its commitment to addressing the needs of students, faculty, staff, and visitors with disabilities.

The university also created a six member team to implement the six core priorities of the Ithaca campus's disability strategic plan: the director of Workforce Policy and Labor Relations (employment); the director of Student Disability Services (educational programs), the Facilities ADA Coordinator (campus physical access), the manager of Emergency Services (emergency planning and

preparedness), acting director of academic technologies (technology ) , and the projects director for University Communications ( communications).

In March 2012, the university implemented its Toward New Destinations diversity initiative—a college/administrative unit-based system for addressing diversity and inclusion throughout the Ithaca and Weill campuses. Through this program, colleges and administrative units are encouraged to address disability access through their annual diversity initiatives.

Cornell University’s disability compliance efforts and commitment to addressing disability as an aspect of diversity are carried out through four offices and departments at Cornell University: the Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity (addressing disability as an aspect of diversity), and the Office of Medical Leaves Administration and the Office of Workforce Policy and Labor Relations (providing and enforcing rights to disability accommodations for faculty and staff), each housed in the Division of Human Resources and Safety Services; along with the Office of Student Disability Services in the Division of Student and Academic Services (providing disability accommodations for students); and the Department of Maintenance Management in the Division of Facilities Services (addressing physical access issues).

The disability access management strategic plan is the university’s roadmap for disability access that will enhance the university’s compliance with disability laws and regulations, and support the university’s efforts toward creating a climate that embraces individuals with disabilities. The plan is designed to:

- Encourage colleges and administrative units to include disability access initiatives as a component of their diversity plan under Toward New Destinations.
- Educate the university community about the responsibility of affording services and benefits for individuals with disabilities.
- Provide educational opportunities to improve the university community’s understanding of disabilities and their impact on members of our community.

- Expand the university's commitment to community relations with organizations that advocate for individuals with disabilities.

The plan focuses on six priority areas: physical accessibility of the Ithaca campus, educational programs and services for students and employees, technology, communication, employment, and emergency preparedness/ evacuation.

The disability access management strategic plan is not intended to encompass all of the efforts related to disability access that occur on campus. For example, not all of the elements designed to remove physical barriers are highlighted in this plan, but the end results of the removal of these barriers are reported in our accomplishments. The same is true for our employee and student accommodations and services. To the greatest extent possible, the implementation of the 2013–2014 disability access management strategic plan will take place within existing university administrative departments as part of their ongoing work. Disability accommodations will continue to be carried out through the colleges and administrative units as part of their general operations.

The university is fully committed to meeting the intent of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), Section 504, and NYS regulatory compliance obligations. In accordance with our ADA obligations, all new construction and renovations will be fully accessible to individuals with disabilities. At the same time, we agree to remove existing accessibility barriers to current programs, services, and activities, as required by the ADA, to allow equal opportunity in the most integrated setting.

### **2012–2013 Accomplishments**

In its fourth year of the strategic planning process, Cornell University continued to focus on meeting the compliance requirements of various disability laws and regulations while addressing disability access from an inclusiveness perspective in light of the focus on diversity in the university's Toward New Destinations plan. Despite continued budget constraints, the university worked to provide greater disability accessibility by incorporating these efforts into its diversity and inclusion initiatives; establishing greater shared accountability for disability access;

increasing awareness of disability issues and challenges on the campus; working with community groups committed to addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities; and making incremental, but significant, progress in addressing disability access in the six priority areas identified in the Executive Summary.

What follows are highlights of the year's accomplishments.

## **1. Physical Accessibility**

The university is working toward making the campus fully accessible by using a multifaceted approach including an ongoing self-evaluation of the university's physical space. The accomplishments related to this area were:

- The Arts Quad Accessible Path of Travel Study was completed, which allowed solutions to be explored to improve physical accessibility for the outdoor space and also consider program accessibility for events that are held on this space.
- A university-wide project manager was identified to assess the functionality of assistive listening systems on campus.
- The online accessibility map was updated, using the Arts Quad Accessible Path of Travel Study data.
- A review of elevator ADA deficiencies was completed as part of the planned elevator upgrades scheduled for the Ithaca campus
- Construction began on Willard Straight Hall to improve ADA accessibility, including an ADA compliant front entry ramp from Ho Plaza, an automatic door operator at the main entry of the building, and creation of an accessible path of travel from the rear parking area.
- Accessible, gender neutral restrooms were created at Barton Hall on the main floor and ground floor. The accessible women's room was made compliant with current accessibility standards. Improving access in this significant building was vital, given the use of this building for major events such as commencement, reunion, concerts and other major events.
- Restrooms were constructed in Morrill Hall with fully compliant accessible stalls in both the men's and women's rooms.

- The Uris Library Path of Travel Feasibility Study was completed which provides a number of solutions to improve ADA accessibility to the facility.

## **2. Educational Programs and Services**

The university is committed to providing educational programs and services that are accessible to students, faculty/staff, and visitors to the campus. In addition to responding to requests for accommodations from 1,024 students, the following were accomplished related to this commitment.

- The university offered three campus-wide and five departmental training sessions for event planners on planning accessible events.
- Educational materials and training opportunities were provided for faculty on disability compliance and best practices for teaching students with disabilities.
- A group of faculty, staff, students and community educators formed the Neurodiversity working group to educate the campus about Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) with the end goal of enhancing support for and understanding of individuals with ASD. A campus-wide presentation on ASD by Dr. Lauren Kenworthy, the Director of the Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders at National Children's Medical Center kicked off the event. In February, the Council on Mental Health and Welfare held panel discussion with faculty, staff and a student about ASD.

## **3. Employment**

In addition to responding to 29 requests for disability accommodations from staff and faculty, the university engaged in the following to create a more accessible workplace:

- A third annual disability service providers event was held June 18, 2013, and featured LaWanda Cook from the Cornell Industry and Labor Relations (ILR) Employment and Disability Institute, presenting on "Tapping Into Talent with Disabilities."

- University representatives discussed current career development practices with staff from Career Services and Student Disability Services. A collaboration with the employment team was offered to enhance the resources within Career Services to address career development issues of students with disabilities
- On May 8, 2013, the Onboarding and Administrative Human Resources staff was trained on the topic of disability as an aspect of inclusion in recruitment and retention at Cornell, including information on Cornell policies and resources, the “Just in Time” Toolkit (JIT), and a discussion of case scenarios.
- On September 10 and 17, JIT was shared with Continuing Education and Summer Sessions Managers and Directors, and Facilities Leadership Council, respectively.
- The Just In Time Toolkit, <https://www.hr.cornell.edu/managers/> , was shared with the Discrimination and Harassment Advisors (DHA) during the update meeting held on October 17, 2012 and was reinforced at the DHA meeting of October 9, 2013.
- “Core” JIT team members were trained in May and October 2012 and JIT has been incorporated into New Supervisor Training.
- The university continued to support the newly established Colleague Networking Group on Disability, the Employment and Disability Institute, the CNYUSBLN, and other groups on campus with a focus on disability as a part of the broader initiatives around diversity and inclusion.

#### **4. Communications**

A number of accomplishments were made in the university’s efforts to increase the accessibility of its communication materials. Cornell also increased its communication to the community about how the university is addressing disability access.

- The university continued efforts to develop a communication strategy to inform the Cornell community of our commitment to disability access.

- The Cornell Chronicle and Pawprint continued to provide coverage of news about disability access and the efforts of the Disability Access Committee.
- Pawprint invited disability access spokespersons to contribute semi-annual columns updating the campus on disability access efforts.
- University Communications continued to feature staff from Cornell's disability services offices in the Staff Notes series on CornellCast.
- University Communications' Web Technologies group completed the project to allow event planners to add disability access information to the Events Calendar.
- University Communications continued to pursue the creation of a multi-source budget line to support closed captioning for live web streams and CornellCast productions.
- Strategies were developed to inform the campus community, particularly academic department chairs and administrative managers, of the university's disability compliance obligations.

## **5. Emergency Preparedness and Evacuation**

Two projects were completed to address emergency preparedness and evacuation efforts for individuals with disabilities:

- Emergency planning efforts were reviewed and revised to incorporate needs of individuals with disabilities.
- Fire safety plans were reviewed to ensure that they were in languages that reflected those of the Cornell community.

## **6. Technology**

Although in the past, there was not significant progress in addressing accessible technology, this year, eight initiatives were completed.

- The university educated Qualtrics web survey creators about how to check surveys for accessibility.
- Guidelines and resources were provided to faculty about video captions for teaching and learning and how to incorporate these into service pages.

- Provided guidelines to faculty about adding captions to course video as part of the updated documentation for new instructional video services.
- Provided guidelines to faculty about how to use Blackboard and its accessibility options.
- Updated the web accessibility primer page to reflect updated software.
- Included accessibility as a product review criteria in the Academic Technologies 2012-13 pilots.
- As part of the overall service review and recommendations report to the Learning Technologies governance committee, information about accessibility and video captions were included in the Lecture Capture report.
- The university collaborated with campus partners to identify campus captioning needs, developed a centralized captioning solution and considered writing an RFP to find a contract supplier to be used for all campus captioning services.

In addition to these specific accomplishments, Cornell University made progress in addressing challenges to creating a fully inclusive community for individuals with disabilities.

For the 14th year, Cornell University chaired the Central/Western New York Industry Liaison Group, an organization that focuses on affirmative action compliance, including compliance with disability affirmative action laws. One of the quarterly meetings featured a presentation on disability access.

For the sixth year, Cornell University chaired the Central/Western New York Business Leadership Network (CWNYBLN), an organization of employers committed to hiring individuals with disabilities. The CWNYBLN, with approximately 45 members, hosted a disability webinar series that featured a DiversityInc presentation on lessons learned from their top employers for individuals with disabilities; global disability issues, and issues facing minority employees with disabilities.

## **2013–2014 Goals and Objectives**

For this plan year, goals have been established for all of the six priority areas. In some cases, the goals will be accomplished from a collaborative perspective.

### **1. Physical Accessibility**

- Facilitate, with the cooperation of the Office of the Dean of Students, a more rigorous oversight of ADA accessibility of events that are approved through the use of the University Property (UUP) process.
- Collaborate with Cornell Association of Professors Emeriti on a comprehensive plan to improve assistive listening systems in significant lecture spaces on campus.

### **2. Educational Programs and Services**

- Support efforts of the newly formed Neuro-diversity working group to develop a plan for providing greater support for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.
- Provide information to faculty via the Bulletin for Cornell Faculty on Disability Issues on compliance responsibilities and best practices in working with students with disabilities.

### **3. Employment**

- Using Respect at Cornell as a model, and incorporating the Just-in-Time Toolkit for Managers, develop a training program for those in supervisory roles to raise awareness of obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

- Increase participation of hiring managers in the 2014 Partnering with Workforce NY program that brings disability service providers and Cornell University hiring managers together to create connections with the goal of increasing the success of hiring individuals with disabilities into the Cornell workforce.

#### **4. Communications**

Inform the Cornell community of progress in improving disability access across campus:

- The Cornell Chronicle and Pawprint will provide coverage of news about disability access and the efforts of the Disability Access Committee as appropriate. Pawprint will continue to be the main vehicle for reporting to campus.
- Pawprint will publish a story on the Disability Access Committee and its history, accomplishments, and goals for 2013 - 2014 during the summer of 2013. Follow up may include inviting disability access spokespersons to contribute to a regular Pawprint column that would update the campus on the team's disability access efforts during the course of the year.
- Feature at least one staff member from Cornell's disability services offices in a video to be posted on CornellCast or another venue. (Note: a new series, Office Hours, will be launched sometime in late 2012 - 2013 or early 2013 - 2014. Although it initially will focus on faculty, an expansion of content to include staff is planned)
- Continue to pursue the creation of a multi-source budget line to support closed captioning for live web streams and CornellCast productions.
- Provide general support to the Physical Access, Employment, Education, Technology, and Emergency/Safety teams through University Communications' various platforms.

## 5. Emergency Preparedness and Evacuation

- Promote the use of the web page and self-reporting at <http://www.cornell.edu/disability/evacuation-planning.cfm>
- Partner with the Onboarding Center to promote the use of the evacuation planning procedure.
- Partner with the HRSS/Office of Medical Leaves to share information with employees with disabilities about the ability to develop an evacuation planning procedure.

## 6. Technology

- Provide the campus with guidelines, similar to those for web design, and resources about Mobile Development and how to incorporate accessibility standards.
- Develop technology benchmarks and best practices for accessible learning spaces (separate from existing building and ADA requirements) and incorporate them into the learning spaces “Classroom Types” document and into service pages.
- Enact the web accessibility policy approved by the Executive Policy Review Group.

### **Collaborative Initiatives**

In addition to initiatives that will be implemented in each of the six priority areas, a number of collaborative initiatives have been developed.

**Emergency/ Safety and Physical Access:** Incorporate concerns for individuals with accessibility needs within all emergency management drills/tabletops and exercises, including creating and practicing using different scenarios for each

exercise component, and using the HSEEP-program base.  
(inclusion/administrative structures)

**Employment and Physical Access:** Explore a project to improve transportation options for staff and faculty, which may include development of a business plan and exploration of peer institution best practices. (engagement/administrative mechanisms)

**Physical Access and Communications:** Improve accessible features on the university events calendar, including information on building access and access maps. (inclusion/communication)

**Physical Access and Technology:** Continue to coordinate with CIT and Space Planning on accessibility for lecture spaces on campus, especially in the accessible features of: assistive listening systems, wheelchair accessible seating and wheelchair access to the front of the lecture space. (engagement/administrative mechanisms)

- Education and Technology: Develop and implement a video captioning pilot, and share outcomes and approaches with campus.
- Provide resources about captioning best practices and techniques with campus by building on the resources created in last year's goals. (Provide guidelines to faculty about adding captions to course video.)
- Offer opportunity to instructors of fall semester courses with pre-enrolled Deaf/Hard of Hearing students to have video course content captioned.
- Assess the usability of captioning tools with instructors on measuring the instructional value of captions for all students. (inclusion/communication)

Develop an implementation roadmap for the staff development goals in the new IT Strategic Plan. (e.g. Cornell IT services are implemented according to nationally recognized standards and approaches, such as those for accessibility, quality and usability)

- Provide training opportunities and workshops for developers in accessibility and UI design

- Convene a panel of faculty, staff and students with disabilities who can provide information to CIT and web developers regarding barriers encountered when using technology at Cornell
- Collaborate on training opportunities to educate campus community about accessible design. (inclusion/multicultural competency)

Develop and provide information to faculty who are developing online courses on the responsibility to design accessible courses and best practices for doing so. (inclusion/multicultural competency)

Select and introduce to the campus new technologies that meet accessibility standards. Explore the development and implementation of a Voluntary Product Accessibility Tool as a standard procedure in the procurement process of IT, including exploring the need to identify trainers from peer institutions on the implementation of a procurement policy regarding accessibility. (inclusion/administrative structures)

**Technology and Communications:** Provide the campus community with information on methods to integrate captioning in video production and provide other technological solutions to communication challenges. (inclusion/communication)

## **CONCLUSION**

Cornell University has been recognized on a number of fronts in its efforts to be a “best” employer and educational institution” As with other aspects of diversity, the university will strive to achieve this same status for its efforts with disability access. The university’s fourth year of creating the disability strategic plan will result in continued work to accomplish the goals outlined above, and will present a way to communicate its progress.

## **APPENDIX A**

### Proposed Disability Initiatives for Toward New Destinations Institutional Planning

In 2012, Cornell University implemented Toward New Destinations, an institutional diversity planning initiative. Toward New Destinations calls for each college and administrative unit to identify five annual initiatives in the areas of composition, engagement, inclusion, and/or achievement for any of seven constituent groups: undergraduate students, graduate and professional students, postdocs and academic professionals, staff, faculty, community partners, or the extended Cornell community (parents of our students, alumni, donors and friends.)

The following are sample initiative plans to address disability diversity and inclusion.

#### **Composition**

- Develop recruitment pipelines for students, staff and faculty with disabilities, with the goal of increasing the representation of these populations in our student body and workforce.

#### **Engagement**

- Include disability as an identifier in surveys that are conducted by the college or administrative unit in order to measure the experience of persons with disabilities to that of non-disabled peers.
- To support the engagement of individuals with disabilities, provide opportunities for those who self-identify to participate in career development opportunities and in community activities that benefit individuals with disabilities

#### **Inclusion**

- Establish and publicize procedures, throughout the college or administrative unit, for providing disability accommodations to students, faculty, staff and visitors. The procedure should include an accommodation

contact statement for all programs to be used by participants with disabilities to request disability accommodations.

- To increase multicultural competency, provide training to college or unit members on planning accessible events, disability rights and awareness, disability resources available on campus, and employee accommodations.
- To increase the effectiveness of communication around diversity, include language and images of persons with disabilities in college and unit publications.
- Review the college or administrative unit website and IT use for accessibility and remediate activities of inaccessibility.
- Commit to having all new web content and emerging learning technologies compliant with W3C standards.
- Provide training to staff in administrative units or faculty and staff in colleges on accessible web design and IT.
- Publicize the college's or unit's procedure for emergency evacuation for persons with disabilities.

### **Achievement**

- Encourage faculty members to mentor students with disabilities and include disability as an aspect of the college student mentoring initiatives.

For 2013 2014 year, five colleges and administrative units have selected disability access as one of their five Toward New Destinations diversity initiatives: Human Ecology Research, Library, Facilities Services, Human Resources and Safety Services and University Counsel.

## **APPENDIX B**

### ADA Coordination Team: (also part of the Steering Committee):

Alan Mittman – Director of Workforce Policy and Labor Relations

Kappy Fahey — Director of the Office of Student Disability Services

Andrea Haenlin-Mott — ADA Coordinator for Facilities Services

### Executive Disability Access Steering Committee:

Susan Murphy — Vice President Student and Academic Services

Elmira Mangum — Vice President Budget and Planning

Kyu Whang — Vice President Facilities Services

Mary Opperman — Vice President Human Resources and Safety Services

Laura Brown — Senior Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education

Tommy Bruce — Vice President University Communications

Ted Dodds — CIO and Vice President for Information Technologies

Janet Corson-Rikert -- Executive Director of Gannett Health Services/Associate Vice President for Campus Health

Lynette Chappell-Williams — Associate Vice President Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity