

# Institutional Disability Access Management Strategic Plan for Cornell University

## July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015

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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 A) 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), 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 2014–2015 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.

### **2013-2014 Accomplishments**

In its fifth 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**

- With the cooperation of the Office of the Dean of Students, facilitate a more rigorous oversight of ADA accessibility of events that are approved through the use of the University Property (UUP) process.
  - In collaboration with the Office of the Dean of Students, changes to the Event Registration Form (ERF--formerly referred to as the UUP), were made and staffing allocation plans have been initiated to start this process formally for the Fall Semester. Every applicable event will be reviewed to assure that accessibility for the event is part of the plan. Student Assembly and Student Disability Services are partnering with Facilities Services to allow for staffing assistance for review of the ERF parameters to assure that accessibility for all people who would like to participate in any public program is being considered.
- Collaborate with Cornell Association of Professors Emeriti on a comprehensive plan to improve assistive listening systems in significant lecture spaces on campus.
  - A number of efforts related to Assistive Listening Systems (ALS) have been accomplished this year. A very important training program was developed and delivered for IT and Facilities Personnel within colleges and units on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Over 80 people participated in the training program that was a joint venture with Facilities Services, CIT and Student Disabilities Services that highlighted the utility and significance of ALS and the importance of testing and having the units in working order and available at all times. Judith Reppy from

Cornell Association of Professors Emeriti (CAPE) participated in an opening video that personalized the importance of ALS.

- Signage was installed for every ALS available in meeting rooms and lecture spaces on campus. Prior to this project, there were few signs that announced the availability of the systems. Over 120 signs were installed notifying people of the existence of the ALS across campus.
- A mini-grant program was initiated for Colleges and Units to apply for funds to cover ALS as part of their AV systems across campus. To date, over 50 units are being installed as part of this program in small and large lecture spaces on campus, including the installation of a FM loop system in the School of Hotel Administration.
- Monthly testing procedures to assure that ALS are always available and in working order have been developed and are being implemented with colleges and units across campus.
- Additional Physical Accessibility Highlights for 2013-2014 are:
  - Creation of an accessible route from the rear parking lot into Willard Straight Hall and improvement of ramp into the building from Ho Plaza.
  - Development of an exterior accessible route for the Mann Library Plaza, reducing numerous barriers to accessibility for three connecting buildings.
  - Exterior path of travel improvements from B Lot into the College of Veterinary Medicine, loading zones at Bartels Hall, Rhodes Hall and sections of Tower Road.
  - Complete “Accessibility Blitz” a new approach to barrier removal that improves accessibility from parking and entrances through the building including restroom access. This was accomplished at Bartels Hall that included automatic operators at two main entrances and toilet room modifications.
  - Feasibility studies/Design Documents to improve access are currently underway at Sage Chapel, Teagle Hall, Plant Sciences, and Uris Library.

## 2. Educational Programs and Services

- Support efforts of newly-formed Neuro-diversity working group to develop a plan for providing greater support for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.
  - Dr. Marisela Huerta, a faculty member of the Weill Cornell Center for Autism and the Developing Brain visited campus on October 23, 2013. She did a presentation for the Gannett Health Center Staff titled, “***The Diagnosis and Care of Young Adults with ASD.***” At noon Dr. Huerta did a workshop for Faculty which was co-sponsored by the Center for Teaching Excellence titled, “Amazing Things are Happening Here, Academic Support for Students with ASD.” At 2:00pm., Dr.

Huerta did a presentation for student service professionals titled, Advising Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

- Mr. Ari Ne’eman, the president of the Autistic Self-Advocacy Network visited campus on February 11, 2014. He presented a workshop for the professional staff of Residential Programs on creating an inclusive environment for students with ASD in residential living. He gave a public lecture in G10 BioTech at 12:15 titled *The Politics of Neurodiversity* which will be available on Cornell Cast. In the evening did a workshop for CUnique, a group of student leaders participating in a series of 4 workshops weekly on neurodiversity topics. Mr. Ne’eman’s campus visit received funding support from CALS, OADI, Residential Programs and Student Disability Services.
- SDS co-sponsored a series of weekly workshops for student leaders called CUnique from February 4 to March 4, 2014 on neurodiversity topics. The workshops have been planned to promote improve understanding among student leaders about neurodiversity issues among students.
- Counseling and Psychological Services has conducted a weekly support group for students with social communication issues. This group has been designed to give peer support to students with social anxiety and help them with strategies for dealing with social anxiety. Two CAPS counselors conduct the group which was formed as part of Gannett’s on-going commitment to provide greater support for students with ASD.
- 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.
  - The spring semester Bulletin on Student Disability Issues for Cornell Students can be accessed at this link on the SDS website at, [http://sds.cornell.edu/Faculty/FACULTY\\_BULLETIN\\_JAN2014.pdf](http://sds.cornell.edu/Faculty/FACULTY_BULLETIN_JAN2014.pdf). Past issues are also available. Dean of Faculty Joe Burns sent a link to the Bulletin on the Faculty listserve.
- Several workshops on Planning Accessible Events and Meetings were held on campus.

### **3. Employment**

In addition to responding to 30 requests (July 1, 2013-May 8, 2014) for disability accommodations from staff and faculty, the university engaged in the following to create a more accessible workplace:

- Just-In-Time Toolkit (JIT) - Using Respect@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. This training is designed to broaden awareness about the important role that supervisors play in the ADA and Accommodation Process.

- Created “Leading in a Disability Inclusive Workforce” program featuring a [30-minute video](#) with Professor Thomas Golden, ILR, providing the research and background for the toolkit, as well as 30-60 minute facilitated follow-up session.
- Created Website at <https://www.hr.cornell.edu/managers/disability.html>
- Training program adopted as goal under Toward New Destinations by division of Human Resources and Safety Services, JGSM and Vice-Provost Research.
- Presentation to Disability Colleague Network October 31, 2013.
- Incorporated in Supervisory Development Training.
- “Synching” disability websites with link to JIT. Annual Disability Service Providers Event - Increased the 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.
  - A training was conducted on April 10, 2014 in the ILR Conference Center with sixteen Disability Service Providers and 21 Cornell hiring managers attending, an increase of 60% and 162%, respectively, over the previous year.
  - In addition, the Ticket to Work program was promoted at the event by the testimonial of an individual who used the program in the process of obtaining a position at Cornell.
- University representatives discussed current career development practices with staff from Career Services and Student Disability Services.
  - Collaboration between the Employment Team and Career Services staff resulted in the addition of symbols marking disability –friendly employers to the Career Fair Guide to Employers distributed in fall 2013 to Cornell University students. The symbols promoted employers (including Cornell) who make an intentional effort to hire individuals with disabilities and who design their work environment to be inclusive of people with disabilities.
  - A Lunch and Learn was held for Career Services staff with Erin Sember-Chase in January 2014 titled: How Career Services can Best Serve Students with Disabilities. The purpose of this session was to provide training to Career Services staff about the legal and practical considerations that students with disabilities encounter in their career exploration. This training will help CS staff as they advise students about their job search, application, and pre-employment processes. This session also included information about the resources and information that exists to help enhance knowledge in this area, so they can best serve this diverse population of students.

- The university continued to support the newly established Disability Colleague Network Group 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

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.

- Published Cornell Chronicle [article](#) on a Cornell Library initiative that provides individuals with disabilities access to thousands of digitized books. (October 31, 2013).
- Published Cornell Chronicle [article](#) featuring Wendy Strobel Gower on how voters with disabilities face barrier at polling places due to inaccessible voting machines. (November 5, 2013).
- Published Cornell Chronicle [article](#) on a Cornell Union for Disabilities Awareness program that exposed university administrators, employees, and alumni to the experience of navigating campus using crutches, wheelchairs, and motorized scooters. (December 3, 2013).
- Published Cornell Chronicle [article](#) on a disability awareness program developed by communications senior lecturer Kathy Berggren. (December 4, 2013).
- Published Cornell Chronicle [article](#) on the classroom accessibility program organized by Education and Technology Team Leads. (February 11, 2014).
- Continue to pursue the creation of a multi-source budget line to support closed captioning for live web streams and CornellCast productions.
  - This is a work in progress.
- Provide general support to the Physical Access, Employment, Education, Technology, and Emergency/Safety teams through University Communications' various platforms.
  - As needed.

#### 5. Emergency Preparedness and Evacuation

- Promote the use of the web page and self-reporting at <http://www.cornell.edu/disability/evacuation-planning.cfm>
  - Promotions being done from different angles including adding the link <http://www.cornell.edu/disability/evacuation-planning.cfm> To our page <https://emergency.cornell.edu/building-evacuation/> in the area of "if you are unable to leave the building due to a physical disability"
  - It will also be added under the preparedness section as well.

- Partner with the Onboarding Center to promote the use of the evacuation planning procedure.
  - Collaborations with EH&S staff and HR staff have resulted in a change in the onboarding process for new hires to the University to be aware of the web site to notify EH&S that they may need assistance in the event of an emergency.
- Partner with the HRSS/Office of Medical Leaves to share information with employees with disabilities about the ability to develop an evacuation planning procedure.
  - EH&S staff are working directly with HRSS/Office of Medical Leaves so that when people return to work, this link <http://www.cornell.edu/disability/evacuation-planning.cfm> is given if they think they have a restriction that would meet the criteria. The form is voluntary.

## 6. Technology

- Provide the campus with guidelines, similar to those for web design, and resources about Mobile Development and how to incorporate accessibility standards.
  - Information has been made available on IT@Cornell in the web accessibility primer.
- 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.
  - A new Learning Technology Types document has been revised and promoted.
- Enact the web accessibility policy approved by the Executive Policy Review Group.
  - In progress.

### Joint 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 Preparedness and Evacuation and Physical Access:**

- Incorporated concerns for individuals with accessibility needs within all emergency management drills/tabletops and exercises, including creating and practicing scenarios for each exercise component, and using the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HAEEP) database.
  - Worked with building coordinators to facilitate discussions prior to the drills. The drill schedule has been established for September 2014-August 2015.



**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.
  - Representatives of the Employment Team worked with representatives of the Physical Access team to explore a project to improve transportation options for staff and faculty by exploring five peer institutions with similar programs, and examining the existing services provided by Cornell University. The workgroup concluded that much of the infrastructure, institutional knowledge and experience already exist at Cornell in the form of CULift, and proposed a pilot project for the 2014-2015 year that would refine and expand the service effectively for faculty and staff.

**Physical Access and Communications:**

- Improve accessible features on the university events calendar, including information on building access and access maps.
  - Added functionality to the Events Calendar web site allowing event planners to designate a contact person for individuals needing information on access for people with disabilities at their event venues.
  - Additional information is being developed for use on the university events calendar.

**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.
  - Continued coordination about assistive listening systems and room accessibility is occurring with campus partners. Increased visibility of accessibility deficiencies in classrooms has resulted in additional conversations for leveraging funding.

**Education and Technology:**

- Develop and implement a video captioning pilot, and share outcomes and approaches with campus.
  - Summer 2013 pilot was completed. Revised web pages to share captioning information 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.)

- Conducted workshop on May 9, 2014 titled Video Captioning: How and Why. This workshop provided training on creating and using captioned video.
- 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).
  - A panel presentation of persons with disabilities was held on January 31, 2014 at 10:00 in G10 Biotech to provide information to CIT and web developers regarding barriers encountered when using technology at Cornell.
- Develop and provide information to faculty who are developing online courses on the responsibility to design accessible courses and best practices for doing so.
  - This is still in progress
- 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.
  - This is still in progress

## **2014–2015 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**

- Continue collaboration with Dean of Students Office and reviewing relevant Event Registration Forms to assure that disability accessibility is considered with programs on campus.
- Use this year as a pilot project to review collaborations with Accessibility and Cornell's Sustainability efforts. This is to include at a minimum accessibility of recycling efforts and other similar programs but also making connections with disability inclusion and sustainability.
- 2007 survey data of all 62 miles of sidewalks and paths will be updated including updating 2005 data of more than 3000 building entrances. This data will be used for maintaining the walks and indicating accessible paths of travel on our maps.

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

- Develop "Best Practices for Providing Testing Accommodations" document for faculty.
- Develop a "Best Practices for Using Testing Accommodations" document for students.

- Collaborate with the Center for Teaching Excellence on Universal Design in Instruction programs for the Faculty Diversity Institute.
- Develop a blog on the SDS website that will offer the opportunity to share ideas and tips on useful IT for persons with disabilities. Develop and disseminate a packet of information about teaching and accommodating students with disabilities for new Cornell faculty.

### 3. Employment

- Monitor development and implementation of job group analysis of the workforce by disability status performed by Inclusion and Workforce Diversity.
- Track development strategies for “best practice” in the recruitment and selection of staff and faculty with disabilities performed by the Recruitment and Employment Center/Inclusion and Workforce Diversity.
- Continue the dissemination and use of the Just In Time Toolkit for Managers by asking units to adopt the training as one goal under Toward New Destinations
  - Colleges/units would be encouraged to adopt the JIT as a goal for their managers and supervisors with the goal of at least two organizations adopting the Toolkit as a goal.
  - We would continue to distribute the toolkit through Organizational Effectiveness’ Supervisory Development training classes and create interest in the program.
- Continue the annual successful disability service provider event under Mary DeSouza’s leadership: Partnering with Workforce NY, bring disability service providers and Cornell University hiring managers together to create connections that will increase the success of hiring individuals with disabilities into the Cornell workforce. The goal will be to maintain or surpass this year’s participation rates and to enable us to track the yield of applicants, interviewees and hires originating from this program.

### 4. Communications

- Inform the Cornell community of progress in improving disability access across campus:
- The *Cornell Chronicle* and *Pawprint* will continue to 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 an update on the Disability Access Committee and its goals for 2014 - 2015 during the summer of 2014.
- Feature at least one staff member from Cornell’s disability services offices in a video to be posted on CornellCast or another venue.

- 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**

- Funding has been secured for two permanent evacuation chairs to be placed on campus in strategic locations where they may need to be used frequently because of multiple levels and where people need assistance with evacuation. This is considered a pilot project to determine if additional chairs and locations should be considered for future years.
- In the two buildings where the new evacuation chairs are to be located, three training programs will be held for the building occupants on the safe operation of the chairs and for procedures related to the use of the chairs.

## **6. Technology**

- Incorporate accessible IT information on the Disability Information web site.
- Raise awareness: Continue Outreach & Training on video captioning, instructional content, online courses and accessible web practices.
- Continue & Expand in FY15: Develop and provide information to faculty who are developing online courses on the responsibility to design accessible courses and best practices for doing so.
- 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.

## **Collaborative Initiatives**

### **Employment and Educational Programs**

The Education and Employment teams will review relevant laws regarding the rights of persons training service animals and will recommend appropriate changes to all applicable policies and procedures to conform to our legal responsibility. They will also engage appropriate stakeholders (e.g., Medical Leaves Administration, Counsel's Office, Risk Management) to recommend the administration of any policy changes or additions.

### **Employment and Physical Access**

Continue the exploration of improving transportation options for staff and faculty with disabilities by possibly expanding CU-Lift service to faculty and staff. A pilot project is being considered that will be coordinated with all of the stakeholders who have a role in the CU Lift and transportation systems on campus. A forthcoming “white paper” created by the subgroup of the Employment and Physical Access teams will present the research and analysis of available options.

### **Physical Access and Education Programs**

Conduct an inventory of lecture spaces that have fixed seating to gather information about the availability of accessible seating and wheelchair access to the front of the lecture space.

## **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 ongoing effort of creating a yearly disability strategic plan will assist in accomplishing the goals outlined above, and will present a way to communicate its progress in developing an accessible and welcoming environment for all staff, faculty, students and visitors.

## **APPENDIX A**

### 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

Paul Streeter— 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

Tracy Vosburgh— Assistant 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