FA Disability Committee

Meeting Notes from October 18, 2023, 12:00

Committee Members Present:

Colleen Donnelly (Chair), English

Linda Fried (Vice Chair), Business

Thorsten Spehn (recorder), Political Science

Maureen Melonis, Bioengineering

Kyle Ehrhardt, Business

Pepe Sánchez, SPA

Matthew O’Brien, Business

Mike Greene, Integrative Biology

Amy Ferrell, SEHD

Mary Prestigiacomo, AL

Sophie Cook, CAM

Notes:

The chair started by discussing issues related to the email server, but it seems that, finally, everyone is now receiving emails through the FA DC server.

Committee members introduced themselves. There are four new members. Welcome!

Colleen asked Thorsten to send the Accessibility Operations Taskforce (AOT) final proposal to all members because of it being a good introduction to where we are at the school, where we're going in the future. Especially for those who haven't done disability work.

Brief talk about the new DRS director. It took a long time to find out who she was. Her name is Hannah Lewis. She has been invited to the next meeting. She is a disability advocate. A lot of us are hoping this may be a new day in terms of relationships with DRS.

Colleen briefly talked about the work of the AOT and the amount of 30,000 to be spent on workshops, trainings, incentivizing Ally after it rolls out in January.

She also mentioned the work the committee has done over the years including the disability symposium with over 200 attendees and addressing accessibility issues in North Classroom Building. Future projects include a poster campaign and student-run events.

Colleen then explained what AVC Antonio Farias wanted to know: What is happening in really good schools in the country? What is the upper structure about who's sort of running disability programs.

The issue was to try and find out who was running things at these schools and then the issue was what do they do beyond accommodations and what is required?

The rest of the meeting was spent looking at the information about disability services and institutions on Campuses based on the information compiled by the group. Each committee member reviewed the institutions assigned to them.

It was agreed that the following institutions represented best practices or had aspects of best practices (in no particular order):

* Wright
* Iowa State
* University of Arizona
* University of Washington
* University of Chicago
* California State University, Sacramento
* University of Michigan

Stanford University and Georgetown University are still working on implementing better practices but look promising.

Some of the best practices that stood out included:

* Disability Cultural Centers with active event schedules
* research centers on disability or specific kinds of disabilities,
* outreach centers that connected students with the wider community,
* inclusive centers that connected students, faculty, and staff.
* Existence of social spaces, social clubs and working spaces that connected students with disabilities and those without and that catered to the specific needs of disabled persons (i.e. computer space in Portland State
* DRS centers that worked on a social model of disability and offered a wide range of services
* DRS centers that made accommodations easy
* Bigger teams devoted to the needs of disabled persons on campus with larger FTE
* Peer mentoring programs for students and faculty
* Connections between different university offices across campus such as recreation and fitness, career services, travel abroad at Michigan
* Funding to support student groups
* Considering disability as part of DEI and addressing intersectionality by facilitating connections between marginalized groups

There was some debate about whether the focus should be on best practices or best institutions. Maureen and Thorsten argued for best practices.

Colleen asked everyone to try to find out more about the structure. To see how things are run, how they are being coordinated and to get that information to her by Monday if possible.

Thorsten suggested that one way to analyze and differentiate would be to see whether we are looking at a network of campus institutions with relatively equal co-decision making and deliberation or more of a hierarchical model with strong guidance from the top.

The meeting concluded at 1:12 PM.