



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**TENNESSEE**  
KNOXVILLE

Commission for Disability  
*Meeting Minutes*  
October 27, 2020 – 12:30 PM

Attendees: Dr. Janelle Coleman, Addie Welch, Dr. Adam Cureton, Dr. Jason Scott, Austin Boyd, David Ndiaye, Dr. Elizabeth MacTavish, Dr. Emma Burgin, Dr. Eric Moore, Dr. Heather Hartman, Jill Malolepszy, Karmen Jones, Kinley Koontz, Karmen Jones, Riley Toll, Dr. Robert L. Spirko, Dr. Talisha Adams, Tarah Keeler

Agenda Items Discussed

**1. Introduction**

- a. Dr. Janelle Coleman and Addie Welch shared the agenda items for the meeting and briefly discussed the pending approval of the September meeting minutes which Addie will make readily available to all Commission members. Dr. Coleman introduced Dr. Jason Scott, an Assistant Professor in the Kinesiology, Recreation and Sport Studies department.

**2. Co-Chair Announcement**

- a. Dr. Coleman thanked all nominees and voters for participating in the election. Addie announced that the new Co-Chairs for the Commission for Disability would be Jill Malolepszy and Dr. Rob Spirko. Both Jill and Dr. Spirko expressed their gratitude and excitement. Congratulations!

**3. Discuss proposal to be sent to Chancellor Plowman**

- a. Dr. Coleman asked Dr. Heather Hartman to recap what the proposal to the Chancellor is. Dr. Hartman explained that in 2015, Chancellor Cheek appointed a group to address accessibility that stemmed from system-level inquiry on accessibility. That group worked for two years on the UT System Policy on Accessibility and a program accompanying that policy that outlined accessibility strategies for UTK and Knoxville. Frequent changes in leadership over the past several years has caused that program to not be approved or implemented yet. The Commission will need to see what of that program is still viable and usable and how this Commission can help implement those strategies.
- b. Dr. Coleman started a discussion on identifying the areas that this proposal covers and started a brainstorming process on how different subcommittees of the Commission could address various parts of this proposal. Dr. Hartman went into more detail about the components of the proposal.
  - i. Training and Resources: Video training modules were created by OIT about accessibility. Originally, it was intended to require that training and to get it endorsed and pushed out to all faculty. David Ndiaye requested that the training be made available to Commission members and brought up the specificity of the training materials. Dr. Eric Moore brought up the heavily-requested closed

captioning requests that have been made to OIT. Dr. Hartman to send a proposal draft to the GRA.

- ii. According to Dr. Hartman, the accessibility website has continued to be maintained but not frequently updated.
- iii. Dr. Hartman explained that one initiative that was not able to be implemented due to lack of resources was Chancellors' Champions. This program was designed to give faculty members more in-depth training on a certain area of accessibility and then re-convene and teach other faculty members on their training areas.
- iv. Dr. Hartman suggested that a subcommittee be formed to work on writing this proposal.

#### **4. Identification of subcommittees**

- a. Dr. Coleman suggested that forming a Communications subcommittee would be worthwhile as that group can oversee website updates and communicate to campus at large about the Commission's needs and also as it pertains to this proposal.
- b. The group also discussed how the subcommittees might vary year to year as the needs and size of the Commission changes and grows. The Commission for Disability will use other Commissions such as the Commission for LGBT People and Commission for Women as a blueprint for deciding general subcommittee types while recognizing some Commission-specific subcommittees might be needed.

#### **5. Main Areas of Focus for Commission for Disability**

- a. The Commission moved to discussion about the major areas of focus for the Commission. Kinley Koontz brought up important areas such as student feedback, technology and program development, faculty training, and the importance of employing data from surveys and other means of feedback to inform decisions.
- b. Dr. Hartman shared the Accessibility Awareness Canvas Training with the group: <https://utk.instructure.com/courses/51474>
- c. Dr. Emma Burgin shared her desire to see the Commission to focus on reality-driven issues and parse out accessibility vs. compliance in the initiatives that the Commission undertakes.
- d. Dr. Coleman introduced a [document](#) that was made to help organize the Commission's visions, future actions, and potential subcommittees. Document can be found here.
- e. The group discussed and outlined the following visions for the group
  - i. Normalize accessibility and UDL practices
  - ii. Increase representation in committee across campus that impact campus culture
  - iii. Developed feedback loops to enhance climate
  - iv. Partnership with key departments and community partners to support them in meeting needs
  - v. Inclusion of disability in campus communications regarding diversity
  - vi. Increased sense of community for disability community on campus
  - vii. Celebration and recognition of the contributions of people with disabilities
  - viii. Increased awareness and education around disability
  - ix. Movement beyond a focus on compliance - "Accessibility as an act of love."

- f. Dr. Coleman added a column to the planning document to list out existing campus resources. During discussion, it was noted by members that communicating existing resources to the campus community will be crucial.
  - g. Co-Chair Jill Malolepszy discussed the importance of the Commissions' visions and aspirations to move beyond a compliance-driven model and that "accessibility is an act of love." She also brought up the idea of conducting a campuswide accessibility audit for physical access.
  - h. Co-Chair Dr. Rob Spirko discussed the importance of learning about accessibility policy and asked Dr. Hartman to go into more detail about accessibility complaints that were recently made against the University. Dr. Hartman reported that both major complaints had to do with website accessibility.
  - i. David Ndiaye reinforced the idea that accessibility is at the heart of all of the work and initiatives that this Commission will do and that partnering with Knoxville is crucial because Knoxville is not a fully accessible city.
  - j. Dr. Eric Moore talked about the idea of combating defeatism and the deficit mindset towards those with disabilities and that it will be important to utilize a shared language that empowers those with disabilities.
6. Dr. Coleman mentioned that creating a mission statement for the Commission and continuing these conversations will be the focus of the next meeting.
7. Information about Student Disability Services and FUTURE's virtual event on November 9th was shared- Why Representation Matters: Disability in the News and Media Entertainment
  - a. November, 9th- 5:30- 7 p.m.
  - b. <https://tennessee.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJErc-CupzIsHtbQk04FzFAH-7ihkgE4DR-e>
8. Dr. Coleman concluded the meeting and asked the newly elected Co-Chairs and Karmen Jones to stay on for a short meeting.