A. **Overview of major accomplishments.**

The full Commission is divided into three working groups. Below is a summary of each group’s activities and accomplishments for the year.

1. Communications workgroup. The primary focus of the Communications workgroup this year was to assess the prevalence and climate for employees with disabilities at UNH. The information gathered will help shape the Commission’s policy and programming initiatives in the coming years. UNH has information about students who have registered with the Office of Disability Services for Students but we had only anecdotal information about employees. In the late spring and summer of 2011 a small subgroup including Dani Adler, Carol Swiech, Jennifer Vanderminden, Bruce Mallory, Wendy Beckwith and Janice Pierson adapted (with permission) a survey done by the
Chancellor’s Committee for Persons with Disabilities at Missouri University. Jenn, Carol, and Bruce then applied for and received IRB approval. Jenn was the principal investigator. Carol and Jenn worked with the UNH Survey Center to mount the survey during the fall semester. The winter and spring were devoted to analyzing the data, making recommendations and writing the report. At the April meeting of the Commission the four primary recommendations were discussed and then referred to the most appropriate workgroup for implementation.

We will make one change to the Commission structure as a result of the survey. Beginning next year the physical access work group will become the accessibility workgroup to better reflect other issues of access such as sound and technology.

In a meeting with the President, he endorsed the report and encouraged us to work with Justin Harmon on its public release. Jenn and Carol presented the findings at a campus diversity luncheon and Jenn was invited to present it at the Statewide Summit on Diversity and Inclusive Excellence in April. The full report and executive survey are attached.

A final note about the Communications workgroup – Janice Pierson does a terrific job updating our website. She looks for and posts articles of interest, announcements of events, etc.

2. Physical Access workgroup

The physical access group focused on the next stage of development for the accessibility map: internal academic and student activity spaces. Working closely with the Affirmative Action and Equity Office (AAEO), a survey was created to inventory and check all internal accessibility features. A group of three surveyors were trained including one student and one staff who have physical disabilities and an additional work study student working with AAEO. The Internal survey should be complete by June 30, 2012.

An additional work study student associated with Lonn Sattler’s office identified and reviewed web sites of internal spaces for universities and public venues. Members of the committee reviewed her suggested web sites and selected attributes and formats that will be helpful on the UNH site. This information was shared with Sam Lingeman, a GIS mapper in Doug Benck’s office. A sub-group of the physical access workgroup met with Sam to determine the most cost effective and best practice possible with UNH software. With a plan in place, the goal is to have the map of internal space operational by December of 2012. The GIS mapping department is currently down one staff member so the timeline is dependent on campus wide project volume.

The physical access workgroup committee members distributed our current accessibility
services post card across campus. We expanded distribution to academic advisors in all of the Dean’s Offices at their request.

3. Programming workgroup

The Programming workgroup co-sponsored with David Zamansky of the MUB, a speaker for the Wednesday night series on November 16th. The group, To Write Love On Her Arms, presented an hour long program to present hope for people struggling with addiction, depression, self injury, and thoughts of suicide. It was a very powerful presentation with audience members leaving with much to think about.

We sponsored two events during spring semester. On March 21st, we held a panel discussion with UNH students with hidden and visible disabilities. Faculty, staff and students heard stories from six current students and one alumni on what it is like to live with a range of disabilities: cerebral palsy, deafness, blindness, Aspergers syndrome, ADHD, daily migraines, and being a wheelchair user. The majority of the session allowed participants to ask the panelist questions thereby increasing their awareness, understanding, and comfort levels.

On April 17th, we brought Monica Quimby to campus to speak. While a student at UNH, Monica sustained a spinal cord injury in a skiing accident. She presented to a packed room and told of her rehabilitation process, her return to UNH during fall semesters, and being a national exchange student in Arizona during spring semesters to avoid winters in New England. Monica graduated from UNH in 2009 with a molecular, cellular, and developmental biology degree. She went on for her Masters and is now an Adjunct Faculty member at Southern Maine Community College. In 2011, she became Ms Wheelchair Maine and spreads her message of leadership and advocacy through her presentations.

Both events were attended by close to 100 participants. We encouraged faculty in many of the colleges to make attendance part of their syllabus. A special thanks to Sylvia Foster for her work on publication designs and her ongoing advertising for both events.

Other Topics under discussion in 2011-2012

- The availability and use of assistive listening devices
- The formation of the University Council
- The new assistive technology lab in the Office of Disability Services for Students
- Updates from the ADA Compliance Office including
  - The Web Accessibility Compliance Project, a project intended to assure that UNH is providing all web based services, programs and activities in an accessible format.
  - Accessibility features of new construction and renovation projects
- Updates from the Office of Disability Services for Students including
  - Current trends
Training programs offered by DSS
- Veterans with Disabilities
- How best to include student voices in the work of the Commission

B. Evaluation of the Commission (strengths, weaknesses and areas of opportunity)
The membership composition is a strength, a weakness, and an area of opportunity. By design, the membership is drawn from various units on campus whose activities directly impact the access to University programs and services for people with disabilities. This composition is a strength because these units are becoming more aware of the impact their activities have on people with disabilities and ways to improve their current operations. It is a weakness because many Commission members have limited experience working with people with disabilities and limited knowledge of ADA requirements. Education has been an important part of our commission meetings. A good example is a recent discussion about the use of assistive listening devices, particularly in large lecture halls. Many members had never heard of assistive listening devices, did not know how they worked or why they are important.

The Commission structure has always been a challenge for staff members. Operating staff have difficulty getting release time and PAT staff balance the demands of their jobs with reduced resources – money and staff- with the work it is to serve on a commission. Commission service is rewarding and provides significant professional development opportunities for members and especially for the chairs but it adds a significant workload to staff who have already been stretched thin in recent years. We have been lucky that the majority of our commission members have served since the inception of the commission three years ago. However, we have not been able to field new chairs from the current membership. Carol and Dani have served for three years and can no longer afford to do so. Our staffs have been very supportive but we do not want to continue to burden them and to compromise our positions. In October we met with Donna Marie Sorrentino to begin the process of identifying new leadership. Our hope is to get broader representation of individuals with disabilities. We will continue this work over the summer with VP Wanda Mitchell and Donna Marie.

C. Description of initiatives that promoted “inclusive excellence” and collaboration
We feel strongly that everything this Commission does promotes the inclusion of people with disabilities in the life of the University. The Commission attempts to go beyond simply meeting legal mandates. The spirit of the law drives our work. Our fundamental objective goal is to make UNH as accessible and welcoming to people with disabilities as possible. Major examples described elsewhere in this report include:
- Development of the accessibility map. The map currently shows accessible parking, routes, and entrances. It will continue to be refined to include access into and throughout buildings and sensory access.
- Campus-wide survey of the climate for and prevalence of faculty and staff with disabilities. This survey was the first of its kind at UNH and will inform future programming and policy initiatives.
• Public presentations to raise awareness and to better educate our community on the impact a disability has on a person.

D. Goals for 2012-13

Based on the findings from the survey conducted by the Communication workgroup, the Accessibility work group will seek to develop a group of staff and students with disabilities on campus to assist with the identification of physical and sensory barriers and when possible review new construction and renovation plans to provide feedback.

The group will continue to refine the access map. Sensory components will follow internal spaces. The group will also look into applications for handheld devices that can help with orientation and campus navigation.

The Communications group will focus on education and training around keeping accessible routes accessible. The survey highlighted problems with vehicles, bikes, and skateboards blocking and creating obstacles for people with (and without) disabilities.

The programming workgroup is already at work for next year. We are sponsoring with the MUB a presentation by Temple Grandin, a renowned animal scientist born with autism. Additionally we are talking with the Education Department on how to celebrate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3, 2012. In the spring, 2013 we hope to continue our yearly tradition of sponsoring a Panel of Students talking about their experiences at UNH as students with disabilities. Finally we will work on the training initiatives discussed in the summary of the faculty and staff survey results.

E. Commission representatives to serve on the University Council for Inclusive Excellence and Equity.

Dani and Carol are stepping down as co-chairs and will be working with Wanda Mitchell and Donna Marie Sorrentino to suggest new leadership for the commission. Our hope is to have more individuals with disabilities serving. We believe the representatives to the University Council should be the decision of the new leadership.

Respectfully submitted by Carol Swiech and Dani Adler, co-chairs