The President’s Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities
Annual Report
Sept 2013 – May 2014

Commission Co-chairs:
Georgia Kerns, Associate Professor, Department of Education
John LaCourse, Professor/Chair, Electrical and Computer Engineering, CEPS

Membership:
Dani Adler, Associate Director, Center for Academic Resources
Mariah Bellington, Human Resources Partner
Doug Bencks, Director of Campus Planning
Chandler Bullard, Program Specialist - Outreach & Program Support, Northeast Passage
Kristin Carpenter, Assistant Director, Residential Life
Cathy Coakley, Educational Program Coordinator for Student Athletes
Kevin Ennis, Undergraduate student
Linda Guttman, Associate Director, Clinical Director, Counseling Center
Elaina Hill, Residence Hall Director, Residential Life
Jeff Parsons, Transportation Operations Manager
Tobey Partch-Davies, Project Director on Poverty and Disability, Institute on Disability
Lonn Sattler, Veterans’ Coordinator, Office of the Registrar
Judy Stevens, Health Education/Community Health Nurse, Health Services
Nate Talbot, Academic Career Counselor, University Advising
Janis Zrebiec, Senior Associate Director, Office of Admissions

Ex-officio Members:
Wendy Beckwith, EEO/ADA Compliance Officer, Office of Affirmative Action
Kathy Berger, Director, Disability Services for Students
Sylvia Foster, Educational Program Coordinator, Office of the President’s Commissions
Janice Pierson, Senior Program Assistant, Office of the President’s Commissions

Commission goals and initiatives for the year

The Commission extended its efforts within the framework of three major working groups.
❖ Programming
❖ Physical Access
❖ Communications and Public Relations

Below is a summary of each group’s activities, accomplishments and goals.

(1) Programming Working Group
This working group co-sponsored two programs with the MUB Lecture Series; (1) Jonathan Mooney, author of The Short Bus, A Journey Beyond Normal, and (2) Michael Hingson who wrote the book Out of the Ashes: Learning to Survive in a Changing world. Working with the MUB Lecture Series has provided a means to build the visibility of the commission across campus. While at the
same time, the speakers provide an avenue for students to gain awareness and education on the issues that people with disabilities face.

A panel discussion in collaboration with Disability Services for Students, was held in February. UNH students with hidden and visible disabilities spoke of their experiences and answered questions posed from staff, students and faculty in attendance.

For International Education week, the commission brought in UNH Alum, Josh Crary, who authors the blog “Boston Blind Runner”.

(2) Physical Access Working Group

A letter from the commission was sent to Campus Planning, the Classroom Maintenance Committee, Business Affairs and the MUB Director, requesting that renovations or new construction of instructional spaces and assembly spaces, include evaluations of, and improvements to acoustical performance. Students and faculty who are hard of hearing are particularly impacted by poor acoustical performance in classrooms, labs and lecture halls.

Work continues with enhancements to the Accessibility Campus Map, and the commission received a demonstration on software being developed by Campus Planning, Global Information System (GIS) to show the interiors of campus buildings. Users will now be able to view the location of elevators, restrooms, wheelchair available seating, ALS equipment and accessible doorways.

Members also received a briefing from the engineering student who is developing the cell phone App that will give people the option of reporting accessibility problems as they are happening.

(3) Communications and Public Relations Working Group

Members are in the initial phase of developing the sidewalk safety video. WildActs is in the process of reviewing and editing the video scripts that will be included in the proposal to Video Services.

A plan for the promotional introduction of the Guide to Bias-Free Language (a 4-commission effort) is in the works.

The commission’s website was updated with resources, special features, photos and the video production presented at the Students with Disabilities Panel Discussion.

Commission Award

The commission presented its first Disability Commission Award to Jon Plodzik and the staff at UNH Dining Services, for their insight and action on increasing opportunity and access for people with disabilities, covered by the Campus Journal.

Respectfully submitted by Georgia Kerns and John LaCourse, Co-chairs