

2025-2026 Report from the Disability Awareness and Literacy Committee

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(Members:

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Kristen Swan (Designee)
Brian Wigman (Student)
Laura White (Student)
Amanda Novak (SON)
Amy Banes-Berceli (Executive Vice President for AA)
Kristina Lindberg (UCM)

Background and Mission: This committee seeks to encourage disability literacy across campus and to promote an understanding of disability as a central component of human diversity.

The committee's aim is to integrate disability visibility into the university curriculum, scholarship, and community as a means of understanding human experience in our contemporary world.

To implement this rationale, the committee's main goal will be to raise the profile of disability as a previously underrecognized way of understanding human diversity, to be included with other urgent areas of inquiry and identity in DEI such as race, class, and gender. Without critical attention to these issues, we further marginalize a part of the population, and thus not serve the whole OU community.

Actions:

Advocating for increased attention to disability throughout the university, including the creation of new means of sharing work-in-progress and promoting collaboration across centers, departments, and units

Collaborating with multiple units to develop a **curriculum** at undergraduate and graduate level

Educating through presentations, workshops and events to the university and the surrounding community on issues of disability literacy

Creating **partnerships** with OU offices and campus resources to support accessibility and other disability visibility issues

Barriers to address:

- Students' lack of access to multi-dimensional support in and out of the classroom.
- The need to fully incorporate disability into DEI measures and discourse throughout the university
- The scarcity of courses at the UG and Graduate level focused on issues around disability.
- The lack of a center for the study of disability on campus that would integrate all units.
- The need for more community engagement and partnerships to connect the university community to the larger community

Accomplishments and Initiatives:

To address these desired actions and barriers, we work in 4 working groups. We present accomplishments per working group:

New Awareness and Initiatives Working Group:

1. Making the campus more accessible
 - a. Amy Banes-Berceli oversaw campus masterplan/ campus building/ renovation initiatives with a focus on accommodations and disability, including incorporating a better emergency plan of evacuating people with disabilities out of a building during an emergency, e.g. including stair

assist for wheelchairs. This feature will be requested for the Dodge Hall renovation and Hanna Hall renovation in the future.

- b. Signage: Increasing improved signage on campus that is no longer white on gray. Signage is changing to black on light grey and gold for improved contrast (e.g. Wilson). Large numbers are being installed over every door to improve communications during an emergency and for wayfinding.
2. Making university events more accessible
 - a. Live Transcription during university events: The university is working on providing live transcription during major events. Commencement was the first event that used this technology. Live interpreters can sometimes not be seen during the event from all areas of the room. Jun Chen started the discussion of looking into technology that could use live transcription on attendees' mobile devices (e.g. a QR code at an event that would lead to a website with live transcription).
3. Campus outreach about accommodations
 - a. UCM assisted with campus communication regarding Title II updates
4. Encouraging faculty with ADA initiative
 - a. UCM assisted with the Digital Accessibility Champion ribbons initiative
5. Collaborations
 - a. Met with Terry Dibble (Senate Mental Health Committee) to improve and streamline work/ coordination that is being done on campus.

Ongoing: Accessibility Statement for virtual and in-person events verbiage to accompany all event info: "If you need reasonable accommodations to attend this event, please contact the university at (248) 370-3266." The group will continue collaborating with other Senate committees in support of disability awareness and literacy.

Policy Analysis Working Group:

The working group continued to review university policies and procedures and identified two main areas that could incorporate accommodations:

1. Accommodations at university events:
 - a. The group met with Request that OU university events - interviews, speakers, addresses - include an RSVP for accommodations similar to the way dietary restrictions are accommodated. This would allow for sign language interpreters, or other accommodations to be present at all events. This would include events that do not have formal invitations but would need to include a QR code or response form for accommodations.
2. Travel Policy Review & Adjustment:

- a. After a review of 10 other university policies, the working group suggested the following be added to the travel policy:

From Purdue University: ADA Accommodations - "Travelers who require ADA accommodations for a disability or other qualifying medical exception must request and receive approval for the accommodation through [Title IX] office"

After a discussion with Steve Mackey, Brian Atkinson, Jillian Gust, Christina and Jo, it was agreed that the statement (or something similar) would be added to the travel policy. In addition, university travelers (faculty and staff) would have the option to note they needed accommodations when they applied for permission to travel on university business.

Ongoing:

1. Improving/ Addressing accessibility of key student resources on campus:
 - a. The working group followed up on ecampus and issues with vouchers and checking out with screen reader. The head of the Oakland Center is looking into what needs to be done.
 - b. Departments and events have access to certified ASL interpreters.
2. Emergency closures and accommodations and DSS policies (Policy under review)

Curricular Initiatives Working Group:

1. New certificate: The disability awareness and literacy certificate for undergraduates, housed in the Department of Communication, Journalism and Public Relations is now open for students to complete.
2. New minor: An interdisciplinary Disability Studies Minor is working its way through governance. The proposed minor is attached below.

Ongoing:

1. Advertise the availability of the certificate for Disability Awareness and Literacy.
2. Continue to work on curriculum development around issues of disability.

Educational Campaigns Working Group:

1. ADA compliance support:
 - a. Drafting and coordinating a communication letter for students that discusses responsibilities and resources related to the upcoming date for ADA compliance. This letter led to an article by a student reporter in the *Oakland Post*.
 - b. Drafting and coordinating a communication letter for the faculty that discusses responsibilities and resources related to the upcoming date for ADA compliance.

These letters were successfully sent out and were well received by the faculty and students

- c. Supported the Champions of Digital Accessibility ribbons project. Staff and faculty who complete Brickfield or Panorama training received a ribbon to hang in their workspace. This is a joint effort with the ADA Digital Accessibility Task Force. As for April 2026, 147 ribbons have been sent to those completing the training.

Ongoing: To obtain testimonials from instructors who have implemented the changes for ADA compliance to convey the ease, maybe a challenge or two, and the positive impact that it has had on their students. This would be a campaign coordinated with UCM and the Digital Accessibility task force.