

June 18, 2025

Report from the Disability Awareness and Literacy Committee

Co-Chairs – Christina Papadimitriou (SHS) and Jo Reger (CAS) (they are the returning co-chairs)

Members:

Tracey Taylor (SOM)
Jun Chen (SECS)
Jo Reger (CAS)
Kate Rougeau (SHS)
Cameron Davidson (SOM)
Caitlin Demsky (SBA)
Christina Papadimitriou (SHS)
Mariela Hristova (UL)
Rob Sidelinger (CAS)
Darlene Groomes (SEHS)
Kristen Swan (Designee)
Brian Wigman (Student)
Laura White (Student)
Amanda Novak (Nursing)
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:

Educational Campaigns Working Group:

1. The major initiative of educational campaigns working group was to focus on the upcoming deadline for ADA compliance on all digital communication
 - Communicated with ELis and offered support in communicating the need on campus

- Reached out to faculty who could offer statement of support and narratives on the importance of accessibility
- Researched and gather information on areas of concern to the compliance deadline
- 2. Worked with CETL on a Neurodiversity in the Classroom program.
- Researched websites to aid with this program

Ongoing:

- Will continue to work to support and communicate about the need for accessibility and the upcoming compliance deadline of April 2026.

Policy Analysis Working Group:

1. Similar to last year, we reviewed the policies of OU for issues around ableism. We identified travel and communication as potential topics to explore further.
2. We reviewed the faculty accommodations website, met with Chad Martinez, revised the content of the landing page and forms, added a link to the DSS website that connects to faculty accommodations. Worked with UCM to make these changes.
 - In addition, we proposed changes for pregnancy accommodations on the same page
3. Investigated membership in AHEAD - DSS has Institutional Gold membership for 3 members (renews annually)
4. Investigate the student grievance process for DSS issues
 - Process listed on DSS website www.oakland.edu/dss/policies/
 - Discuss the issue with the Coordinator and then with the director of DSS, if not resolved. The student may at any time file a complaint with the Title IX office.
5. Connected UCM and students over accessibility issues with Chrome and OU Website

Ongoing:

- Contact ecampus about issues with screen reader and checking out
- Continue to ID policies around disability
- Continue review of faculty accommodations process and website
- Continue collecting stories from students and faculty regarding accommodations and disability experience (on shared Google Drive)

New Awareness and Initiatives Working Group:

1. Campus Map: Plan to replace [existing map](#) with new map: Amy reported that the university has met with all vendors about a proposed new map. Tom Yamin from Facilities is planning some site visits to peer institutions who use maps from the vendors who are considered.
2. eLis/CETL: Software accessibility and training:
 - In conjunction with the educational campaigns subcommittee, connected with UTS/eLIS on Nov. 22 regarding software accessibility and to discuss training or needs (online and in-person)
 - Discussion of DOJ ruling that universities have to be accessible starting April 2026, even behind a login (e.g. Moodle)
 - Planned [Neurodiversity in the Classroom](#) course for faculty this semester
3. Monitoring Dodge Hall renovations:
 - The renovation of Dodge Hall is currently in the design phase. They are planning on remodeling the first half of the building and are adding accessible bathrooms/ gender-neutral bathrooms, as well as a ramp on the library side. The plan also includes new ADA-compliant research labs as well as remodeling existing classrooms to be accessible. Further, the redo will include a better wayfinding system for Dodge Hall. The project is estimated to take two years, with board approval scheduled for April of this year, followed by a first state review a month later, and construction beginning in May 2026. Hanna Hall will be next on the list (in about five years).
4. Worked with the UCM account manager for DSS about updating the DSS website for a more user-friendly experience.

Ongoing:

- Testing space for students who need accommodations, such as more time for test taking. These students sometimes have to take tests in faculty offices, which can lead to issues such as faculty needing their office for meetings during that time, or some faculty not having

their own offices. Not having access to a quiet space during tests is challenging for students. Current discussions involve allotting one classroom per building as a testing center, meaning that this classroom would be used for test taking when it is not in use.

Curricular Initiatives Working Group:

1. Initiated new course - Disability and COM in Everyday life with Rebecca Jones
 - Approved and currently offered for the first time winter 2025
 - Under review as a general education course option for the US Diversity Category
2. Designed a disability awareness and literacy certificate for undergraduates
 - To be housed in the Department of Communication, Journalism and Public Relations
 - Currently at the CAS Committee on Instruction
3. Include disability as a category of diversity for the US Diversity area in general education
 - Accomplished fall 2024
 - News story published December 5th on [OU Website](#)

Ongoing:

- The working group will continue to review the status of the Disability and Communication course through the general education committee
- Continue to monitor the progress of the certificate for Disability Awareness and Literacy
- Advertise the availability of the course and certificate.
- Continue to work on curriculum development around issues of disability