

Disability Rights and Concerns Committee
Meeting Notes
Oct 2, 2004

Attending: Steve Abraham; Dave Dubois; Ken Kallio; Sally Knapp; Diane McFarland; Rod Patterson; Pamela Wolfskill; Thomas Judd.

- I. Introductions, EOL leave form.
- II. Notes from April 30, 2004 meeting read and approved.
- III. Report of the Co-Chairs. Knapp reported that she had met with the Executive Board in May and that they had accepted the report, but revised the recommendations. Sally and Dave discussed their presentation to the Chapter President's Meeting, August 20 in Syracuse. The recommendations emphasized getting chapters to form disability rights and concerns committees. Bill Scheuerman said that he would work with the SUNY Senate to push for professional evaluation of campuses and implementation of ensuing recommendations. Handout from that meeting attached below. Dave encouraged Chapter presidents to urge members to help disabled students to vote.
- IV. Old Business
 1. Revised recommendations from report were distributed (See PDF version of the report at <http://www.uupinfo.org/disability.pdf>)
 2. Dubois suggested a press release in October since that is Disability Employment Awareness Month. [UUP released the report and put it and a press release up on the web October 29. See <http://www.uupinfo.org/> scroll down to "Press Release: UUP Report Raises Disability Concerns at SUNY Campuses." The press release is also available through Empire Information Services <http://www.eisinc.com/release/storiesh/UNTNY5.599.html> but I have not seen it in any of the newspapers I searched]
 3. Knapp to ask Tom Kriger if paper copies could also be available. [Yes they are available from him].
 4. Kallio suggested Knapp again contact Scheuerman about having a program and article in a new journal in higher ed *American Academic* published by AFT.

Abraham reminded us that primary task should be to improve things on SUNY campuses. Knapp said we could offer copies of checklists used by volunteers for the current survey to other chapter committees to identify problems on their own campuses.

Dubois said that the Board of Regents is asking campuses to make an effort to

accommodate people with disabilities. SUNY will take campus plans and make a master plan to present to the Regents. He also said that Scheuerman will bring up the issues with the SUNY central administration. Dubois will ask Scheuerman to send a copy of our report to the Chancellor.

5. Committee charge and the role of the statewide committee.. The charge given to the Committee for 2004-2005 is:

“To monitor campus implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act and to make recommendations regarding disability rights.”

Further, the report recommendations which the Executive Board approved urges “ the Disability Rights and Concerns Committee to use its resources and those of UUP and its affiliates to educate the membership in disability rights and concerns.”

McFarland suggested sponsoring a training session for representatives from each campus and committee agreed.

Judd suggested State Committee serve as a clearinghouse of ideas from chapter committees.

Judd suggested that campus committees link up with Veterans Committees and Abraham suggested that the committees connect with student disability committees.

Wolfskill described parking problems and measures taken at Stonybrook to correct them.

6. Chapter committees. Knapp will write to those chapter presidents whose members had already surveyed their campuses to remind them we'd like to know what they have done or are doing.

Kallio said that chapter committees could apply to the SUNY/UUP Joint Labor Management Committees for funding for disability-related projects. Depending on the project, some might be eligible through the committees for Affirmative Action/Diversity, Employment, Safety and Health, Professional Development.

Abraham asked whether Scheuerman could simply direct chapter presidents to survey members. Kallio said chapter presidents have considerable autonomy and could be asked but not required to do things such as this.

7. Staff workload issues with respect to students and staff with disabilities. Topic for an academic forum. Perhaps later.

8. Committee website ? Knapp asked for volunteers to work on this and Wolfskill

volunteered to do it. Knapp will send her info for it.

II. New Business

1. Knapp reported that the Affirmative Action Committee will be holding some diversity meetings/workshops or publications in response to problems raised by a recent cover of The Voice and asked whether the committee would like her to write to the Chair of that Committee to request that Disability be included. McFarland proposed that Knapp be directed to do this and it was unanimously agreed.

2. Dubois brought up the "Future of SUNY" and asked about our involvement. Kallio said he is on that committee. There was a unanimous motion that he be directed to represent our perspective on that Committee (?)

Attachment:

UUP Disability Rights and Concerns Committee Chapter Presidents and Vice Presidents Retreat, August 20, 2004

What can a chapter disability committee do?

Improve campus access

SUNY has made progress in making campuses accessible but people with disabilities still report many places that are difficult or impossible to access. The general picture is very uneven. Accessible facilities were found "in most cases" in only 40% of responses to our facilities checklist (seven campuses); while in 60% they were only found "in some cases" or "not at all." Facilities should be accessible even if no one needs them at the moment. The piece-meal approach is inadequate. A disability committee can help the chapter to prioritize campus accessibility needs and work with others for their achievement.

*Disability - the relationship
between a person and an
environment*

Get people with disabilities involved in UUP activities

Members of the disability committee may also become delegates or take on other chapter responsibilities. Occasional notes about issues of interest in the chapter newsletter can reach people with disabilities whose union

involvement may have been very minimal. Committee members can write these notes.

Give disabled UUPers a channel of communication

Often, improvements will be made only if requested, and indeed, one SUNY administrator said exactly that. But often, individual voices often are not heard. UUP chapters are the collective voices of members and have an important role in calling attention to problems in member working conditions. The committee can be a conduit for members to bring issues of needed services, like snow removal, or needed building modifications to the attention of the chapter leadership.

Create a mutually supportive disability community within UUP

When members have disability-related questions, a campus disability committee gives them access to the experience of other disabled people and builds commitment to UUP.

Show chapters and UUP as an inclusive union

A disability committee presents the chapter in a positive light for its interest in helping all who are represented by UUP to be fully productive professionals and contributors to campus life..

We are committed to empower everyone, including those with disabilities, to enjoy a fully productive professional life.

Who should be on the Disability Committee?

UUP members, regardless of whether they have a disability, who are interested in making our campuses accessible to everyone, should be on the committee.

Suggestions for action by disability committees

- 1.. Request surveys of campus ADA compliance. Did the campus respond to the 1992 memo from SUNY Office of University Counsel and Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs Sanford H. Levine directing campus presidents to implement ADA regulations (Appendix A of report)? Have other surveys or reports been done?
- 2.. If none, try to get professional evaluation or consider doing an informal survey to determine at least important needs (See Disability Checklist (State Disability Committee) or Americans with Disabilities Act, Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) Checklist for Buildings and Facilities <http://www.access-board.gov/adaag/checklist/a16.html>)
3. Determine what progress has been made. What needs to be done? Prioritize needs. What is being done by others on campus and how can the committee work with them?
4. Represent UUP disability concerns on planning boards for new or renovated buildings.
- 5.. Find out whether the campus has plans to evacuate people with disabilities from buildings in emergencies. If not, encourage their development and offer to work with those responsible.
6. Assess whether the campus has adequate and well-publicized procedures for requesting reasonable accommodations. Do they include appeal procedures when requests are denied? Are the procedures on the web? Available in print? Do members know about them?

We can help change SUNY's disabling environments to enabling ones.

7. Consider whether chapter newsletter is available online in a format that can be read by alternate browsers used by people with visual impairments. Alternatives?
8. Are chapter meetings held at accessible locations? Accessible to hearing-impaired persons? People with

respiratory allergies? Ask how they could best be accommodated. Are other groups excluded by lack of access? Committee can look for alternatives.

9. Encourage all interested in disability issues to join COALACC, the online discussion group for disability access at SUNY campuses. (Contact Carol Jewell cjewell@uamail.albany.edu.)

10. Reach out to those on campus whose disability- related needs are unmet or who have concerns and interest in improving access and try to work with them to make campus more accessible.

11. Committee chair can represent the committee on the Chapter Executive Board. This provides the Executive Board oversight and information about activities of the Committee and about ADA and other disability-related issues nationally, statewide and on campus. It provides members of the Committee with a voice on the Chapter Executive Board.