

UUP Disability Rights and Concerns Committee

Meeting on Chapter Disability Committees

September 22, 2005

What can a chapter disability committee do?

Be a channel of communication

Disability - the relationship between a person and an environment

Often, improvements are made only if requested, but often, individual voices are not heard. UUP chapters are the collective voices of members and have a vital role in calling attention to problems in our working conditions. The committee can be a conduit for members to bring issues of needed services, like snow removal, safety issues or needed building modifications to the attention of the UUP chapter leadership, who can bring to Labor-Management meetings if appropriate.

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 that UUP is an inclusive union

A disability committee presents the chapter in a positive light for its interest in supporting all people who are represented by UUP to be fully productive professionally and to participate in and contribute to all aspects of campus life.

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

Get people with disabilities involved in UUP

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. Disability committee members can write these notes.

Improve campus access

SUNY has greatly improved campus accessibility but people still report places that are inaccessible. 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." 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.

Who should be on the Disability Committee?

UUP members, regardless of whether they have a disability, who are interested in making campus facilities and services user-friendly to *everyone*, should be on the committee.

Suggestions for action by disability committees

1. 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? In print? Do members know about them?
2. 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.
3. Consider making a campus guide to accessible routes and facilities for people with disabilities.
4. Represent UUP disability concerns on planning boards for new or renovated buildings.
5. Reach out to those on campus whose disability- related needs are unmet, especially newly disabled UUPers who need accommodations, and may be unaware of accessible facilities and services.
6. 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 Disability Committee Report)? Have other surveys or reports been done? 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?
7. If none, working with other campus groups, try to get professional evaluation or consider doing an informal survey to determine important needs. See Checklist UUP Disability Committee website and click on ***SUNY Campus Accessibility CHECKLIST for people with disabilities*** http://www.uuphost.org/committees/disability/uup_ada.html or see *Americans with Disabilities Act, Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG)*. <http://www.access-board.gov/adaag/html/adaag.htm>
8. Consider whether chapter newsletter is available online in a format that can be read by alternate browsers used by people with visual impairments. Alternatives?
9. Are campus 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.
10. 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.)
11. Disability committee representation on the Chapter Executive Board provides two-way communication. The Executive Board has oversight of Committee activities and Board learns about ADA and about disability -related issues on campus.
12. Work with other disability-related offices and organizations on campus who have an interest in improving access and work with them to make campus more accessible.

*We can change
disabling environments
to enabling ones.*