

## Standing Committee Annual Report

**Name of Committee or Council:**

**Chair**

**Meeting Dates in Current Year:**

### Major Actions or Accomplishments:

The Committee communicated on a number of issues via E-mail over the 2011-2012 academic year. We received some information about progress on new signage from Tom Hutchins and Judy Blain. At the April 26 meeting, the Committee unanimously passed 5 motions:

1) Move to approve the entire PDS America list of outside improvements from the document provided to the Committee by Tom Hutchins so that action can be taken on creating the improvements by the Physical Plant beginning in the summer of 2012.

2) Move to create a new Committee Mission/Responsibility statement. A draft statement is included below. Committee members have until Wednesday, May 2, 2012, to offer suggestions to modify or improve the draft statement.

"The Committee for Persons with Disabilities is dedicated to protecting, advancing and advocating for the needs and rights of persons with disabilities. The committee has oversight (by recommendation to the President) of all expenditures of funds in service of ADA compliance. The committee has oversight (by recommendation to the President) of all university policies that are developed from Disability Services (students and classroom accommodations) and Student Affairs, Human Resources (faculty and staff), and Physical Plant which impact persons with disabilities. In addition, the committee monitors questions relative to procedures and access and communicates with other university divisions regarding those matters."

3) Move to request the PDS America list of recommended interior ADA improvement projects with priorities and cost estimates be provided to the Committee members by Tom Hutchins by May 10, 2012.

4) Move to recommend APSU ADA funds be expended immediately to add or modify to an ADA accessible interior door or other interior entry accommodation the current hall door to Disability Services.

5) Move to request a permanent physical repository for all records, minutes, etc., of the Committee for Persons with Disabilities. [The committee members note that such a permanent physical repository would be of benefit to most, if not all, university

standing committees.]

Tom Hutchins has already responded with appreciation for Motion 1 and informs me that he will comply with Motion 3, though travel for personal reasons prevented him from meeting our requested date of May 10.

From: Hutchins, Tom  
Sent: Wednesday, May 02, 2012 8:08 PM  
To: Thompson, James  
Subject: ADA Projects

Thank you for your assistance with the exterior ADA project approvals. I will keep a running list on the website as we get the improvements completed.

I'll work on a similar list for the interior improvement recommendations. I am currently in Charlotte, NC for a family medical issue, but should be back Monday.

Thanks, Tom Hutchins, PE

With regard to Motion 2, feedback from Committee Members after the April 26 meeting indicates that we are satisfied with the wording of the proposed new Committee Mission/Responsibility statement. It is unclear to us how to have this new Mission/Responsibility statement approved, just as it was unclear to us where the prior statement originated. Please give us guidance on that issue.

With regard to Motions 3 and 4, I have just sent an E-mail to Tom Hutchins, with a copy to you, requesting follow up on those matters.

With regard to Motion 5, I can tell you that our committee and other university committees, including also many campus honor societies and other on-going university organizations, have no permanent home for their records and documents. Cardboard boxes are shuffled from one (often faculty) office to another as chairs and officers change over time. I would urge you to consider addressing this problem on the widest scale, but if that is impossible, then I would at least urge you to consider the problem for the Committee for Persons with Disabilities, as our records could be of great value in demonstrating good faith efforts at compliance with ADA guidelines, if a law suit were ever to develop over ADA matters.

Finally, I must return to an ongoing problem for the Committee. I brought this problem to your attention in last year's report:

"I remain concerned that there is a lack of openness and cooperation with the Committee by the Physical Plant over the years, and this year, I would add to that, cooperation from the administration,

specifically the failure of Mr. Westerman to get back to the committee promptly with answers to questions or requests for information, and the failure of Mr. Jackson to provide information he promised at the Fall meeting is frustrating. Those of us, faculty, staff, and students, take our responsibility seriously. To do our work, even though it is just advisory work, we need information, and we need it in a timely fashion. When *ex officio* members of the committee fail to respond or act to cooperate with the committee, it is very frustrating.

I expressed my concerns about this issue to you when you first asked me to assume the chair of the committee. You passed those concerns on to Mitch Robinson. If you and Mitch Robison are not going to use your authority to see that the committee receives the information it requests and in a timely manner, then the committee cannot properly do its job. I do not think it is the responsibility, and it is certainly not within the authority, of the chair to direct these *ex officio* members of the committee to follow through. Please advise me on how to resolve these issues?"

You removed Al Westerman from the Committee. Richard Jackson has retired. The new university attorney has not participated with the committee in any meaningful way. In response to last year's report, you advised me to involve you when I had additional concerns about the committee receiving the information it needs to do its business. You also passed my concerns to Mitch Robinson at that time.

I want to speak bluntly this year, speaking for myself as Chair, not for the Committee as a whole, though I suspect I would get considerable support from them on this matter of inadequate information provision to the Committee. My hypothesis, based on a variety of personal experiences with Mitch and on experiences told to me by colleagues, is that Mitch is the source of this ongoing communication problem, and not just for the Committee for Persons with Disabilities, but for some other committees and organizations on the campus. I will limit myself, however, to the committee I chair.

I further hypothesize that Mitch communicates to subordinates, Al and Tom in particular, that information should not be shared with the Committee, or as little as possible shared with the Committee. I hypothesize that Mitch has little respect for the concept of faculty/staff shared governance and is dismissive of any positive contributions our Committee might make in exercising oversight over the expenditure of ADA funds or other matters we perceive as within our mission and responsibility.

I further hypothesize that Tom would not have any difficulty cooperating with our Committee were it not from pressure to do otherwise coming from someone in his chain of command, whom I hypothesize is Mitch. Tom expressed to me in my first face-to-face conversation with him in April, while I was trying to obtain cost estimates for the outside projects the Committee ultimately approved unanimously, that he felt "caught in the middle." I hypothesize that Tom is, indeed, caught in the middle. His background is not in academics and he was not aware of the concept of shared governance. I have, as you know, sent him information on the topic, but do not know if he followed up on those web links.

I regret having to put this problem on your desk, but I do not see any alternative. If our committee is to do its work as we see our mission and responsibility, we need timely and complete information. As so often happens in university administration, individuals find themselves with considerable responsibility but little or no authority. That is the position of our Committee and its chair. I think you need to exercise some of your authority so that individuals within Finance and Administration and the Physical Plant cooperate in a timely fashion with the business of the Committee. I respectfully request that you take action on this problem. Thank you very much.