

DISABILITIES ISSUES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING

October 23, 2013

[In these minutes: UMD DS report; Website Accessibility Discussion; New Business.]

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Patrick McNamara (chair), Katie Benson, Penny Cragun, Betsy Kerr, Virgil Mathiowetz, Brian McAdams, Benjamin Minnis, Heather Peters, Susan Rose,

GUESTS: Philip Kragnes, Tonu Mikk, David Rosen

OTHERS: Luka Krmpotich

REGRETS: Michael O'Day, Maki Isaka, Donna Johnson, Kristine Talley, Dillon White

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTONS

Professor McNamara called the meeting to order and introduced the speakers.

UMD DS REPORT

Ms. Cragun, director, Office of Disability Resources, UMD, distributed a handout titled "UMD Disability Resources" and explained the following points:

- Data on accommodations provided each year including testing accommodations, note-takers, e-text book requests and the number of instructors worked with each semester.
- The number of students served is growing each year including those with mental health issues.
- Autism spectrum disorder students seeking services remains small.
- They serve only students and UMTC/UMD UReturn specialists serve faculty and staff.
- Partnerships are being made with units such as Housing, Student Life, and HR.
- A comprehensive program evaluation was conducted last year. As a result, they will strive to work closely with faculty and discern the best ways to maintain communication with this group.
- Interpreting hours vary each year and often hours are fulfilled by outside agency staff.

- Their staff has not grown in response to the growth of number of students served.
- “Access for All” is a student group within the multicultural center. They receive student service fees and are in the process of planning events under their new leadership.

Professor McNamara asked how the committee could contribute to UMD DR and Ms. Cragun responded:

- UMNTC DS has greatly assisted in their success.
- Facilitate discussion and understanding of what the Louisiana Tech University Settlement Agreement will mean for all campus DS departments.
- Mr. Kragnes added that making adaptive technology more available to students would help all campuses. Students are limited to going to OIT computing facilities to use certain software, which limits accessibility. System-wide licensing would make this technology available to students and not limited to certain locations. A central server could increase access and create a cost savings.

WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY DISCUSSION

Philip Kragness and Tonu Mikk are part of the Computer Accommodations Program Team (CAP) and David Rosen, Usability Services, attended the meeting to discuss the accessibility of websites. Mr. Kragness began the discussion with the topic of Drupal implementation:

- Drupal is a free, open-source web development platform for online content and user communities.
- Mr. Kragness and Mr. Mikk were part of the RFP Process of searching for a company to implement Drupal. The RFP included definitive language in terms of what was expected for accessibility.
- Accessibility is a requirement for the Drupal templates that are being designed.
- OIT is creating a pool of companies that can transfer websites from the current management system to Drupal and meet accessibility and usability requirements.
- OIT is now co-owner of the Accessibility of Information Technology Policy.
- All department and unit websites system-wide will be switched to Drupal in the near future.
- Corrections and requests will be sent to the implementation company and in Mr. Kragness’s opinion, they will be addressed more quickly as a result.

Mr. Mikk discussed the overall effort that has been made to improve website accessibility:

- Disability Services purchased a one-year HiSoftware Compliance Sheriff application site license for use by the University of Minnesota Web community. The software aids in identifying accessibility issues, provides

information on the importance of accessibility features, provides resources for understanding and resolving accessibility issues, and highlights accessibility issues in both the rendered view and the source code. (cap.umn.edu)

- The intention was that webmasters would sign-up for an account, scan their website, and resolve issues identified by the software. At the end of the first year, a survey of 300 people within the IT community yielded:
 - 12 respondents.
 - Two of the 12 people used the software and changes were made as a result.
- The decision to renew the license was based on a new approach to its use:
 - Twenty University websites were identified, scanned, and three issues per site were reported to the webmasters. The websites were scanned in May and again in August to determine if the identified issues were resolved.
 - Of the sixty issues reported to webmasters, two were resolved, improvements were made to three of them, 49 were completely unresolved, and six are not taken into account because sites were redesigned and will require another initial scan.
- Ten college websites and ten system-wide websites were selected.
 - All of the websites had issues, in some cases more than three.
 - 80% of the websites had incorrect or missing heading structures. Headings must be included in coding for those using a screen reader to navigate the webpage. Mr. Rosen explained that making text appear larger or bold does not denote that something is a heading in the code that is read by screen readers.
 - 75% had low contrast between text and the background of text.
 - 50% had image issues related to alternative text.
 - 40% had form field issues.
 - 20% had keyboard navigation issues.
- Mr. Mikk emphasized that the change made should not be the only indicator of success. This process has increased discussion and the dialogue of accessibility has increased. He stated that their influence is more in the spirit of “good will” and does not have means of enforcement.
 - Mr. Rosen added that units designing their content in a meaningful way, using basic coding benchmarks from the beginning would create a more seamless transition to Drupal. He commented that he would encourage the use of this software now that he is aware of its availability.
- Mr. Kragnes noted that website accessibility issues can be grounds for litigation. Not only will extensive resources be needed in case of litigation, considerable damage would be done to the University’s reputation. This issue involves image, reputation, and prevention of litigation.
- Mr. Kragnes stated that training a group of students to evaluate files and documents used by faculty members for accessibility could be an option to

solve some issues. A pool of students is currently being trained to assist faculty in creating Moodle websites and they will be trained to evaluate the accessibility of the sites and materials.

Professor McNamara asked the presenters if the committee can assist their effort in some way and they responded:

- Mr. Rosen stated that the Drupal implementation is a unique opportunity for all of the websites to be evaluated with accessibility in mind. He warned that this large of a website overhaul may not happen again for a very long time.
- Mr. Kragnes stated that accessibility being championed from the faculty and administration would make an impact.
- Help desk consultants should have some accessibility software training to help students with disabilities outside of the operating hours of CAP and DS.
- Mr. Rosen explained that the development of a training document or learning map has been discussed that will list a step-by-step process for departments implementing Drupal.
- Professor Rose noted that federal grants require websites and materials to be accessible.

Professor McNamara noted that consideration of branding should include accessibility and stated that he will meet with appropriate contacts regarding this issue and report back to the committee.

Hearing no further business, Professor McNamara adjourned the meeting.

Jeannine Rich
University Senate Office