ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT OF THE ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS COMMITTEE, January 2013 through December 2013

Removing Barriers, Embracing Universal Design

Diversity Matters
Background

The Architectural Barriers Committee (ABC) was established in 1995 specifically to review proposed building design drawings and to advise DCM (and its predecessors) on accessibility issues related to new and renovated facility improvements.

For several years, the ABC has met on an as-needed basis. During the past two years, several initiatives have been implemented at KU (personnel and organizationally) that have prompted us to consider the membership and function of the ABC. As a result, the ABC needed to refresh its membership, charge and mission.

The former Vice Provost for Diversity and Equity, Fred Rodriguez, provided support to reconstitute the ABC in the fall of 2012. Dr. Rodriguez designated the Director of Accessibility and ADA Education, Jamie Simpson, to chair the reconstituted ABC. Ms. Simpson worked with DCM staff closely to select the members and reenergize the charge of the committee.

The ABC now includes ex officio members, representatives of specified university offices, and faculty, staff, and students. It is expected that a wide range of disabilities will be represented by the faculty, staff, and student members of the committee. Ex officio members serve as long as they remain in their positions. Other representatives serve one-year terms and may be reappointed. All members have voting privileges. The committee meets quarterly. In January 2013 the reconstituted ABC met for the first time since September 14, 2010.

Membership of the Architectural Barriers Committee is as follows:

Director, Accessibility and ADA Education, Office of Institutional Opportunity and Access, chair (ex officio)
Project Manager for ADA Quality Compliance, Design and Construction Management, who serves as assistant to the chair (ex officio)
Director, Parking and Transit (ex officio)
Assistant Vice Provost, Capital Planning and Space Management (ex officio)
Academic Achievement and Access Center representative
KU Fire Marshall (ex officio)
Human Resources representative
Student Housing representative
Unions Representative
Athletics Representatives
At least one member of the faculty with a disability
At least one member of the university staff with a disability
Students with a disability
At least one member of the local community with a disability

The charge to the Architectural Barriers Committee is as follows:

1. To consider accessibility issues that not clearly defined by applicable regulations and provide meaningful recommendations to Design and Construction Management (DCM) for consideration.
2. To collaborate with DCM in the development of an ongoing accessible needs list for ADA improvements. This list shall be reviewed and prioritized by the Committee for implementation recommendations considering funding resources.
3. To develop custom guidelines that go beyond the 2010 ADA Accessibility Standards addressing University needs.
4. To coordinate and communicate with the Executive Accessibility Advisory Council on matters of accessibility and ADA education.
5. To coordinate and communicate with the Director of Accessibility and ADA Education in a systematic and on-going manner.
6. To submit an annual report of activities to the Vice Provost for Diversity and Equity.

Mission Statement:

Over the course of several months, we crafted the following mission statement: To improve campus accessibility through providing input on new construction projects, managing KU’s master transition plan, and incorporating Universal Accessible Design concepts into KU’s Design Standards.
Transition Plan

KU is annually allocated funding by the Kansas Legislature for Repair and Rehabilitation (R&R) improvements. Over the past 15 years, that amount has typically ranged between $2.5 million and $4 million total annually. The R&R funding includes work in categories such as classroom improvements, infrastructure improvements, streets and walks, fire code and ADA. This annual allocation is applied to a deferred maintenance backlog that is currently estimated to total approximately $300 million. Until 2013, DCM committed approximately $50,000 in additional funds per year towards ADA improvements out of each annual R&R funding allocation. The specific ADA improvement projects that are completed using these funds are determined by DCM in consultation with the ABC.

In FY 2013 and FY 2014 there was support to double accessibility-related projects from R&R funding to $100,000. The University also recently dedicated $10,000 for small accessibility issues and streamlined a process for sidewalk repairs affecting accessibility. The intersection of 15th and Naismith is one recent example of how KU increased funding to improve accessibility for crosswalks. The Office of Parking and Transit increased funding for accessible parking issues by $75,000 for FY 2014-2015. There are other categories of R&R work that also contribute a portion of the funding towards ADA improvements including new elevators or upgrades. Another example of how indirect R&R funding improves accessibility is that classroom and laboratory improvements funding also increased from $310,000 (five year average) to $800,000.

The first Transition Plan listing the physical barriers in the University’s facilities and plans to remove those barriers was completed in December 1977. In June 1992 the University finished a transition plan to update the 1977 plan.

The reconstituted ABC created a new transition plan in 2013. Some items are placed onto the transition plan when a person with a disability alerts the ADA Coordinator that there are areas on campus that could be improved for accessibility. Other items are added to the transition plan when new built environments are added to the KU campus. The University of Kansas developed its transition plan with the assistance of the ABC. The ABC votes to prioritize items on the transition plan.
By October 28, 2013, the ABC members prioritized six areas on the transition plan in the following order:

1. Ramp outside of Malott
2. Wayfaring accessible signage
3. Smith elevator
4. Additional door opener to Wescoe
5. Analysis of Lot 16
6. Additional door opener to Twente

The ABC members met October 28, 2013 and were presented with a unique opportunity to re-prioritize the list by adding an accessible front entrance to Strong Hall to the transition plan.

Strong Hall is home to numerous offices and student resources, including the Offices of the Chancellor, the Provost, and the disability resource office, called Academic Achievement and Access Center. Currently, someone who uses a wheelchair or has other significant physical disabilities must enter and exit Strong Hall at the back of the building. The current accessible entrance in the back of Strong Hall does not create any legal obligations to remedy the path of travel for people with disabilities.

Even though creating an additional accessible entrance to Strong Hall has been discussed for several years, members from the 2012-2013 Student Senate and members of AbleHawks & Allies built interest and momentum to explore what it would take for an accessible front entrance to Strong Hall. The 2012-2013 Student Senate requested that DCM study an additional accessible entrance to Strong Hall.

University Architect and KU Fire Marshal conceptualized a new approach to creating an accessible front entrance to Strong Hall. Their vision for the front entrance was studied by an external architecture firm. One draft drawing for the accessible front entrance to Strong Hall is Appendix A.

In early October of 2013, members from the AbleHawks and Allies worked closely with members of the 2013-2014 Student Senate to write a resolution imploring KU administrators to make an
accessible entrance to Strong Hall a University priority. Eighty-two senators sponsored the resolution and the resolution passed unanimously. From there, an outpouring of support came from other University offices, KU faculty and staff.

KU decided to fund the accessible front entrance to Strong Hall. Our goal is to install the accessible entrance the summer of 2014 so the work can be coordinated with the reconstruction of Jayhawk Blvd from Poplar to Sunflower Road.

The effort to create an accessible entrance to Strong Hall reflects KU’s mission dedicated to serving all citizens. Furthermore, when we create a more inclusive climate for people with disabilities on campus, we support *Bold Aspirations* - Strategic Initiative Theme 3- Building Communities.

This Strong Hall accessible front entrance endeavor has reflected the best of community; students, faculty, staff, and administrators converged to assess the value of the project, the means by which to accomplish it, and dedication to its accomplishment.

The most current transition plan is **Appendix B**.

**Accessible Elements in KU’s Design Standards**

The University currently strives to operate each service or activity so that, when viewed in its entirety, it is accessible to and usable by people with disabilities. However, KU aspires to do more than comply with the letter of accessibility laws. Our goal is to endorse a campus climate that will sustain attention to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in the spirit in which it was designed and provide the KU campus community a climate of inclusiveness.

DCM is responsible for creating and maintaining design standards for the University of Kansas. DCM Project Manager for ADA Quality Compliance and the Assistant Director of Consultant Services, Steve Scannell, are in the process of creating KU ADA design standards. Based on recommendations and feedback from the ABC and support unit staff, design standards that address the real-world needs of those with disabilities are currently in progress. To see the KU Design Standards that the ABC approved, see **Appendix C**.