ADA31 Task Force

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 31st Anniversary Task Force

2022 Report and Recommendations

Oregon State University

ADA31 Task Force Intro

Members

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Background, charge and scope

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. July 26, 2021 marked the 31st anniversary of this important law. An Oregon State University ADA31 task force was charged on October 26, 2021 by Provost Ed Feser to survey the policies, programs and systems that Oregon State University (OSU) has in place to support a culture of inclusion and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); and make recommendations for ongoing effectiveness and continuous improvement. In developing recommendations, the task force was asked to prioritize coordination amongst areas, capitalize on existing resources and best practices, and encourage scalable models to support compliance university-wide.

The scope of the task force included:
1) **Facilities and wayfinding accessibility**, which includes physical access to and within buildings. This can include ramps, automatic doors, signage, bathrooms, locker rooms, amenities, etc.
2) **Information Technology (IT) accessibility,** which includes web access to websites, as well as learning management systems and platforms used for registration, health portals, financial aid services, and other applications.

3) **Accommodations**, which are individual aids, adjustments or modifications for people with disabilities, based on their specific needs.

Guiding principles

In its first meetings, the task force developed principles to guide its process and approach:

- Strive to create a culture of inclusion for people with disabilities that is supported through broad community involvement, not just designated offices or assigned people.

- Acknowledge that disabilities can be apparent and nonapparent, visible or invisible. People may identify as having a disability whether their disability has been officially diagnosed or not.

- Be guided by the university's mission, core values and code of ethics.

- Be knowledgeable about and value compliance with federal, state and local laws and regulations.

Language

Language is important and ever-evolving. When referring to disability, some people prefer to use first person language ("person with a disability"), and some use identity first ("disabled person"). Both may be used throughout this report.

Report contents

This report is organized as follows:

Current state: OSU offices and resources

Multiple offices, groups, and organizations across the university are responsible for the daily work of managing and supporting facilities and wayfinding accessibility, information technology accessibility, and accommodations. Most of those offices are listed here.

Offices

Disability Access Services (DAS)

Disability Access Services (DAS) provides accommodations, education, consultation, advocacy, resources and coaching to enhance the success of students with disabilities at Oregon State University. DAS works with campus partners to create an inclusive living and learning environment for qualified students with disabilities at OSU, OSU-Cascades, across Oregon, and around the world through the OSU Ecampus. DAS also provides a variety of services such as note taking, captioning, and other assistive technology needs. DAS is the designated compliance office to provide federally mandated services and accommodations for students with disabilities at OSU. In academic year 2021-22, DAS served over 1,550 students.

Office of Equal Opportunity and Access (EOA)

The Office of Equal Opportunity and Access (EOA) is responsible for overseeing compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA); responding to complaints of discrimination; working with academic and administrative units in responding to requests for accommodation from faculty, staff and other employees with disabilities; developing and implementing effective affirmative action plans for women, minorities, veterans and people with a disability; and ensuring equal opportunity and access in all selection and placement processes.

Office of Institutional Diversity (OID)

The Office of Institutional Diversity (OID) plans, leads and implements, in collaboration with university partners, institutional change actions and initiatives to advance diversity, equity and inclusion throughout all facets of Oregon State University. Among its responsibilities is coordination of the university's Bias Response Team which applies established protocols to respond to reported incidents of bias.

University Facilities, Infrastructure & Operations (UFIO)

University Facilities, Infrastructure and Operations (UFIO) is responsible for overseeing the design and development, land use planning, real estate and space management needs for Oregon State University's built environments. This includes designing, constructing, maintaining and supporting safe, comfortable, sustainable, and efficient facilities; and providing safe, sustainable transportation programs and services.

University Information & Technology (UIT)

University Information & Technology (UIT) is the central information technology (IT) organization for OSU. It works to further the mission of the university and serve students, employees, researchers and partner by providing and maintaining anytime, anywhere, innovative spaces and effective and insightful tools. In close collaboration with IT partners and community members across the university, UIT is committed to driving shared vision for an innovative and modern approach to IT at Oregon State University.

University Relations and Marketing

University Relations and Marketing promotes the Oregon State University brand through strategic marketing communications and creative services. It also manages university-level web content and social media networks.

Student organizations

Associated Students of Oregon State University (ASOSU)

Associated Students of Oregon State University (ASOSU) exists to promote academic excellence; encourage the intellectual, social, cultural, and physical development of the student body; and enable the student body to assert its varied interests as citizens and members of the academic community through democratic representation.

Disabled Students Union (DSU)

The Disabled Students Union (DSU) provides a safe space and sense of community for disabled students and their allies, as well as advocates for the accessibility needs of all students on campus.

Groups and committees

OSU Disability Network

 The OSU Disability Network is a place for all OSU community members to gather and discuss topics related to Disability Studies and diversity, equity, and inclusion, and to learn about the current disability-related research faculty are conducting.

AUAC and COSID

In the past, OSU had a physical access committee called the Accessible University Advisory Committee (AUAC), and a general disability inclusion committee called the Commission on the Status of Individuals with Disabilities (COSID). Neither of those committees is currently active.

Training

All OSU employees are required to take five modules of Critical Trainings, one of which contains a submodule on Inclusion and Access. The module is designed to introduce employees to critically important information, understand their role and responsibilities, and affirm OSU's values and commitment to creating a working and learning environment free of all violence, harassment and discrimination.

OSU Extension employees must take additional Civil Rights training when first hired and then every three years.

Accessible web design classes are held on a regular basis and widely advertised through OSU Today.

Disability Access Services Faculty Training provides faculty and staff with information to understand classroom accommodations. The online training connects the campus community to extensive resources to improve communication throughout the accommodations process. This is an online, on-demand, optional training.

Continuous improvement

Equal Opportunity and Access (EOA)

The Office of Equal Opportunity and Access (EOA) requests feedback from members of the university community immediately after accessing EOA services, in an effort to continually improve outreach, services and support to academic, administrative units, and the broader university community. In summer 2020, a broad survey was conducted to request feedback from members of OSU's campus community who had engaged in any EOA services (consultations, complaints and/or accommodation requests) between July 1, 2017, and June 30, 2020.

Disability Access Services

Disability Access Services (DAS) conducts a rotational survey of students, faculty and service providers – one group each year, on a three-year cycle. Survey results help DAS to continually assess and improve its services, communication, outreach, and training to support students with disabilities and faculty regarding accommodations and access. DAS has been conducting these surveys since 2011.

Building Access Complaint Form

Concerns about building or wayfinding access can be made to Facilities via a building access complaint form.

Building access complaint form.

Applicable laws, policies and guidelines

Federal laws

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
The ADA is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities. The law guarantees that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else in public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications. A person with a disability is someone who: has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a history or record of such an impairment, or is perceived by others as having such an impairment.

Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
Section 503 is a federal law that prohibits federal contractors and subcontractors from discriminating in employment against individuals with disabilities and requires employers take affirmative action to recruit, hire, promote, and retain these individuals.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
Section 504 is a federal law that protects the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education (ED). Section 504 provides: "No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
Section 508 is a federal law that requires federal agencies' electronic and information technology to be accessible to people with disabilities, including employees and members of the public. States that receive funds through the Assistive Technology Act are required to comply with Section 508.

University policies, guidelines and best practices

Built Environment Accessibility Best Practices
OSU's best practices for the design and construction of its facilities are incorporated into the Capital Planning and Development Construction Standards that every project is required to follow. Some accessibility standards are found throughout the standards document, but more specifically in two sections: 1) Section 01 10 02: Accessibility Best Practices for OSU, and 2) Section 12 56 33: Accessible Classroom Furniture. The accessibility best practices follow the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design. A comprehensive plan for the built environment was developed in 2013.
Best Practices: Built Environment Accessibility Best Practices | Accessibility | Oregon State University
Construction Standards: | Finance and Administration | Oregon State University
Comprehensive Accessibility Plan for the Built Environment (2013)

OSU Policy on Information Technology Accessibility
Oregon State University is committed to providing equality of opportunity to persons with disabilities, including equal access to university programs, services and activities provided through information

technology. The policy sets standards and expectations in achieving university-wide adherence to practices that ensure access for persons with disabilities.
Policy on Information Technology Accessibility

OSU Service and Assistance Animal Policy
In compliance with applicable law, OSU generally allows service animals in its buildings, classrooms, residence halls, meetings, dining areas, recreational facilities, activities and events when the animal is accompanied by an individual with a disability who indicates the service animal is trained to provide, and does provide, a specific service to them that is directly related to their disability.
Service and Assistance Animal Policy

OSU Policy of Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability
Oregon State University is committed to creating and maintaining an equitable and inclusive working and learning environment free of discrimination and discriminatory harassment. All individuals who are participating in university programs and activities, and all those who apply to participate in university programs and activities, have the right to do so fully, free from prohibited discrimination and discriminatory harassment.
Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability Policy

Accessible Event Planning Guidelines
Oregon State University is required to provide access to its programs and services for all qualified participants regardless of disability. Considering accessibility when planning events can benefit the experience of all participants by creating a more inclusive event.
Event Guidelines

Bias Incident Response
The Office of Institutional Diversity coordinates the university's Bias Response Team which applies established protocols to respond to reported incidents of bias. A bias incident is an act directed toward an individual or group based upon actual or perceived background or identity, and which can create an unsafe or hostile environment or have a negative psychological, emotional, or physical effect on an individual, group, or community.
Bias Incident Response

Accessibility Website
The accessibility website serves a hub for information about accessibility and accommodations policies and guidelines.
Accessibility website

Listening sessions, survey and meetings

The recommendations in this report respond directly to the feedback and suggestions received from the OSU community via listening sessions and surveys, as well as from campus partners and stakeholders who do accessibility and accommodations work. Every effort was made to reach out broadly to students and employees, especially those who identify as having a disability.

Listening sessions

In January and February 2022, the task force held 12 listening sessions to gather feedback from students and employees. A variety of listening session modalities were made available: online, in person, on the phone – and in groups, one-on-one drop-in sessions, and scheduled individual or group meetings.

Campus partner meetings

Subject matter experts in facilities and wayfinding, information technology, and accommodations shared their ideas and feedback about creating and maintaining an inclusive university.

Online survey

An online survey was available throughout January and February 2022. A total of 180 responses were received. Questions included: What does OSU do well – and what could OSU do better – related to:
- facilities and wayfinding access for disabled individuals?
- IT accessibility for disabled individuals?
- Accommodations for disabled individuals?

Feedback received

Positive and negative feedback were equally distributed across all questions. Examples of feedback about what OSU does well include:
- "The app with accessible/inclusive restrooms and accessibility data is a great idea"
- "Ensuring new construction and remodeled facilities have the resources needed"
- "Lot of automated doors and ramps into buildings"
- "There is a lot of readily available and easily accessible ADA and accommodation information available to students"
- "Lots of good signage in place, and a willingness to receive feedback when the signage is inadequate"
- "IT services are relatively available and helpful when needed. Multiple formats and options tend to be readily available."
- "I think it is great that the DAS is very good at communicating and listening to student needs."
- "As an employee, seeking accommodations from EOA was very easy. I just sent an email, an appointment was made, and it happened."

Examples of feedback on what OSU could do better include:

- "More power assist doors. More support for non-visible disabilities. Signage so visitors know what website to consult for nongender bathrooms, etc."

- "The app with accessible/ inclusive restrooms and accessibility data is often not accurate- this is particularly frustrating."

- "Better visibility for signage. Often signs are placed but to see them well from a distance can be difficult for sight-impaired or placement is too high on a wall."

- "More training for employees and more drive to determine what accommodations are most frequently requested so we might make those standard rather than requiring that folks ask for accommodations?"

- "I have ADHD and my friend has dyslexia, and both of us have a really difficult time navigating the websites, handbooks, emails, etc. maybe send shorter emails, or have in bold a short list of the important points. make the handbook easier to navigate for specifics."

- "The process of having to provide documentation from a medical provider is often left up to the student and there is no support to address systemic inequities in the medical field that result in lack of documentation for certain types of disabilities (usually invisible) or for marginalized communities."

- "Just because there are resources for disabled communities on campus in regards to IT doesn't mean that disabled folks know/are proficient in using them. OSU could improve at having convenient and accessible education regarding accessibility for IT services and making sure that it does integrate into people's lives in a way that is meaningful. Plus, it is really critical that disabled people are centered in decision making and given the opportunity to provide honest feedback about how various systems actually work for them."

Specific facilities and wayfinding needs that were shared – for example, about a specific ramp that needed maintenance or door that was inoperable – were communicated to the Facilities office, who was in the process of addressing them at the time this report was completed. Attendees of listening sessions were informed about the building access complaint form so that they could report any future needs.

Areas for improvement

Clear themes emerged from the feedback received and were grouped together by the task force into five major areas:

1. Recognize disability as diversity.

2. Increase awareness and understanding of non-apparent and invisible disabilities, including those related to mental health.

3. Strive for consistency of experience across a decentralized university.

4. Provide resources and clear, accurate information for people with disabilities to navigate their university experience.

5. Proactively enable and maintain accessible features, spaces and experiences.

Recommendations

The recommendations are organized by the five major areas for improvement identified through the listening sessions, online survey and campus partners meetings. Successful implementation of the recommendations will in most cases rely on collaboration among multiple offices. A lead office is identified for each recommendation.

Recognize disability as diversity.

Recommendation 1

Incorporate disability more formally and expressly into institutional diversity equity and inclusion goals, strategic plans, institutional frameworks and communications. Incorporate intersectional experiences of disability when deliberating equity initiatives. Develop a clear institutional understanding of and framework for the range of what disability is (including, for example, physical, cognitive, and non-apparent) and how we understand the confrontation of ableism as attached to our institutional mission. As part of this, comprehensive curriculum regarding disability justice will be developed and begin in Fall 2022.

Lead: Office of Institutional Diversity

Increase awareness and understanding of non-apparent and invisible disabilities, including those related to mental health.

Recommendation 2

Convene cross-cutting university service and support offices to develop a coordinated approach to increasing awareness of and providing support for non-apparent and invisible disabilities, including those related to mental health. Include offices that provide mental

health, disability, diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility support and services, including but not limited to: Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Student Care, Student Health Services (SHS), OSU Assist, Human Services Resources Center, University Housing, Disability Access Services (DAS), Equal Opportunity and Access (EOA), Athletics, Department of Public Safety, Diversity and Cultural Engagement, and Office of Institutional Diversity, among others.

Lead: Division of Student Affairs

Recommendation 3

Provide role-based accessibility training and resources for employees. As part of the Enterprise System Management (ESM) and Learning Management System (LMS) projects, update existing trainings into centrally available, self-paced trainings and webinars. Identify roles or functions, based on job descriptions and duties, for which trainings are required or recommended. Provide content and level of information that is appropriate to roles, for example: building managers conducting routine physical accessibility checks; academic faculty, graduate teaching assistants and instructors developing inclusive classroom materials and accommodations; and webpage managers taking *Accessibility Basics for the Web* training before given access to Drupal.

Leads: Human Resources and University Information Technology, via the ESM and LMS teams

Strive for consistency of experience across a decentralized university.

Recommendation 4

Update Policy on Information Technology (IT) Accessibility. Review, update and approve the policy regarding information technology that is acquired, developed, distributed, used, purchased or implemented by or for any Oregon State University unit; and used to provide university programs, services, events or activities through websites, web-based applications, or in person. Scope should include, among other issues: purchasing and using technology that is, or can easily be made to be, accessible for use by people with disabilities; expectations that settings

for accessibility be active as a default; and clarifying that expectations and requirements apply to all IT, whether managed or not by central University Information Technology (UIT).

Lead: University Information Technology (UIT) via the IT Governance Group

| Recommendation 5 | **Provide resources and support to enable units to meet information technology (IT) accessibility requirements**. Update existing, or create new, checklists, training and other resources that align with and support the operationalization of the *Policy on IT Accessibility*, for example: developing accessible websites, enabling closed captioning for videos, accessibility requirements for procurement of software or other IT products, accessible set up and use of technology at events, identifying and correcting inaccessible features on websites, assessing and updating internal processes, and supporting faculty in developing accessible materials. Numerous best practices already exist across campus that could be shared more widely in a centrally accessible location.

Lead: University Information Technology (UIT) via the Operational IT Governance team, and in close collaboration with University Relations and Marketing |
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| Recommendation 6 | **Utilize accessible best practices in large and small OSU construction and remodeling projects.** Review, update and maintain the *Accessibility Best Practices in OSU Construction Standards*. Update existing, or create new, checklists, training and/or other resources that align with and support operationalization of the construction standards, regardless of whether the projects are managed within or outside of OSU.

Lead: University Facilities, Infrastructure & Operations (UFIO) |
| Recommendation 7 | **Centralize employee accommodations budget.** In alignment with best practices[1], centralize the university's employee accommodations budget to avoid the unintentional disincentive for a unit to employ someone |

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[1] EARN: Increasing Disability Inclusion: Centralized Accommodation Programs as a Best Practice and JAN: Best Practices in Establishing a Centralized Accommodation Fund

with a disability, and to help streamline and expedite the accommodations process. Very few units are able to fund the full cost to accommodate an employee; currently, most units are asked to match a portion of the cost. EOA currently receives an annual budget of $75,000/year for accommodations, bringing the total university commitment to approximately $150,000/year.

Lead: Equal Opportunity and Access (EOA)

Provide resources and clear, accurate information for people with disabilities to navigate their university experience.

Recommendation 8

Refresh accessibility website. Refresh the university's central hub website for accessibility to create a robust landing page and useful information for everything related to accessibility and accommodations at OSU. Provide links to relevant university offices and resources, as well as construction alerts or changes to Beaver Bus routes or availability.

Leads: University Relations and Marketing, and University Information Technology, in close collaboration with content owners such as Equal Opportunity and Access and Disability Access Services

Recommendation 9

Implement wayfinding and campus map. Finalize and implement the wayfinding and campus map, which has been under development. Determine most useful and important information to include, and test the map with anticipated users, especially disabled people.

Lead: University Facilities, Infrastructure & Operations (UFIO), in collaboration with University Marketing and Relations and University Information Technology (UIT)

Recommendation 10

Assess accommodations offices. Assess the functionality, services, processes and staffing levels needed to allow DAS and EOA to most effectively support students and employees, including: providing

needed services and support for people with non-apparent disabilities, including mental illness; responding to increased needs related to COVID and long-COVID; and providing accommodations for non-students and non-employees, including participants in youth programs and Extension/4H across the state.

Leads: Division of Student Affairs and Equal Opportunity and Access (EOA)

Proactively enable and maintain accessible features, spaces and experiences.

Recommendation 11	**Regularly review physical building accessibility features are functional.** Review, update and maintain the *Building Access Complaint Form,* which allows anyone to report a concern or request a repair related to disability access. Develop additional processes for proactive monitoring of building accessibility features, for example by encouraging supervisors and building inhabitants to be aware of, remedy or report barriers. Consider developing and implementing a new process and checklist for building managers to proactively assess functionality and emerging needs on a regular schedule. Lead: University Facilities, Infrastructure & Operations (UFIO)
Recommendation 12	**Review the 2013 Comprehensive Accessibility Plan for the Built Environment.** Conduct a 10-year review of completed items and successes, as well as items that remain to be completed and why, as well as if there is a new plan to complete them or if they are no longer relevant. Lead: University Facilities, Infrastructure & Operations (UFIO)
Recommendation 13	**Regularly review online accessibility features are functional.** Assess websites for accessibility, including the use of automated systems and

tools that review sites and materials. Provide reports, information, guidance and tools to allow units to review and correct inaccessible features on their websites and in their materials, if they are not centrally managed. (See also Recommendations 4 & 5.)

Lead: University Information Technology (UIT)

Recommendation 14	**Encourage and support inclusive classroom and learning materials.** Academic faculty are encouraged to proactively develop inclusive classroom materials and planning with student disability in mind from the design stage, rather than relying solely on providing accommodations. Department administrators and academic faculty are encouraged to work proactively with students to identify needs, and to request and provide accommodations in advance, in coordination with accommodations offices.

Lead: Office of Academic Affairs

Other important items

In the course of discussions and meetings, various efforts, requests and needs were identified that fell outside of the charge or purview of the task force. These warrant consideration by the appropriate groups and are noted here.

1. **Disability Cultural Center.** Associated Students of Oregon State University (ASOSU) is currently working on establishing a [pilot program for a Disability Cultural Center](#), a welcoming space for all students with disabilities and their allies to connect with each other and build stronger communities.

2. **Clear and up-to-date OSU web pages.** Navigating daily experiences via access to information is important for all students and employees. University wide, there is an opportunity to: remove non-relevant or outdated webpages, content and information; provide up-to-date, clear and helpful information that has been tested with the intended audience; and follow design and accessibility guidelines.

3. **Language access.** The university is committed to providing meaningful access to university programs, activities, and services for multilingual communities and people with Limited English Proficiency. There is an opportunity to share best practices and coordinate these efforts university-wide, including via a Language Access Task Force that Office of Institutional Diversity will be launching.

4. **Curriculum**. Consider opportunities to incorporate disability studies in the curriculum.

5. **Alumni.** Consider incorporating a focus on alumni engagement, including reconnecting with Beavs with disabilities.

6. **Fundraising.** Consider engaging in raising funds to support disability work at OSU.

Implementation and next steps

Workplans and timelines

Workplans and timelines to meet recommendations will be developed by the lead office listed for each recommendation. Updates will be compiled centrally on a quarterly basis and provided to the provost and executive vice president via the Compliance Executive Committee. A rollout and communication plan will be developed to inform the university community about the content of this report and keep it apprised of the implementation of the fourteen recommendations.

6- and 12-month reviews

The task force will reconvene six and twelve months after implementation planning begins, to review the status of implementation of recommendations, as well as consider any needed changes or revisions to recommendations. When the task force meets at the twelve-month mark, it will consider the need for and benefits of creating an ongoing university committee to address disability inclusion.