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Bowling Green State University

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The ADA is leveling the playing field for all students

All over campus, work is going on continually to bring the University into compliance with the requirements of the Americans With Disabilities Act, which went into effect last July.

According to Rob Cunningham, associate director of affirmative action/disability resources, 10 percent of incoming freshmen will have some type of disability, either physical, mental or learning. The task of opening access to everyone is a large one, he said.

"We're making very good progress. I'm pleased with the cooperation of the University community in taking an active interest in making programs and services accessible," said Cunningham.

He said the purpose of the act is to "level the playing field and allow the same level of participation for individuals with disabilities as for those without.

We need to minimize as much as possible the impact of the disability on a person's experience.

To this end, he has been working since long before the ADA took effect with other University staff to find out where problems lie and how to solve them.

Since 1990 the office has been conducting surveys and last year, Jim McArthur, assistant University architect, and a group of students, both disabled and not, traveled around campus in wheelchairs to see what obstacles exist. "Just to get a grasp of the difficulties, a little crack or depression can make a big difference to a person in a wheelchair," said McArthur. "We had been hearing about a crack that was causing a problem and when I tried to get across it, it almost threw me right out of the chair."

McArthur's office has been very active in the past few years insuring that all new construction on campus is accessible and that renovations continue in existing buildings to improve access. O'Scannell Hall, scheduled to open this fall, will have state-of-the-art physical access features such as automatic door-opening devices, lowered phones and drinking fountains.

According to a report prepared by the disability resources office, Founders Hall is completely accessible and offers in-room visual alerting systems upon request. Many other residence halls are being or have recently been upgraded for ease of access.

But ADA covers much more than physical barriers. Access to programs must also be maintained for all individuals, which means allowing everyone to participate "in as independent a way as possible," Cunningham said.

For the hearing impaired, his office offers assisted listening devices which operate on an FM wavelength and cut down on extraneous noise. These devices are also available in some movie theaters, he added.

The University continues to purchase computer hardware and software to help with "a range of disabling conditions," said Cunningham. For those with visual or fine-motor problems, there are devices that enlarge the screen or contain a speech synthesizer or steady a hand, for instance. "These are not prescription devices," stressed Cunningham, "but generic items that permit general access to the computers."

The ADA does not say the University is required to supply these computer devices in every computer lab, but simply to make sure they are available and accessible to those who need them.

The crux of the ADA, he said, is to provide "reasonable accommodation" for those who request it. This means that if a visually impaired person calls the registrar, for example, and informs the office that he or she will be on campus in a couple of days to go over course descriptions, an effort must be made to accommodate that person. This may be done in various ways, either by supplying large-print catalogs, making an audiotape, or if these are not available, having someone there to verbally give the needed information.

In the area of programmatic access, there are few specific requirements. The mandate is to make a good-faith effort to assist as much as possible. However, in the physical access side of ADA, there is a great deal spelled out about the removal of architectural barriers. There are specifications for everything from height and type of door handles to how many handicapped-designated parking spaces must be provided, to how many fully accessible hotel rooms there are.

Orphan chemical program noted for its innovation

The University's orphan chemical recycling program is garnering some national attention. It recently received the National Safety Council's Award of Distinction in the Council's Unique and Innovative Program Competition. The University's entry was displayed at the International Conference on Campus Safety held at West Virginia University June 19-24.

Dave Heinlen, environmental health and safety, said the program is gaining recognition among other institutions and has the potential to be implemented across the country.

An orphan chemical is any chemical substance that has been used in experiments or research. It is no longer needed by that researcher but is still in good, usable condition. Most often these chemicals are disposed of because people don't know what to do with them.

Heinlen said he originally devised the University's orphan chemical recycling program in 1991 as an in-house method of reusing chemicals. He developed an inventory of used chemicals from areas such as the biology and chemistry labs and let other offices know what materials were available.

In the first year, approximately 700 pounds of solids and 50 gallons of liquid chemicals were transferred for use in other departments.

"After seeing how well that worked, we thought we could do even better," Heinlen said.

The program was expanded to outside the University to include science departments in junior high schools, high schools and area colleges. The schools are invited to compile lists of the chemicals they have and to send them to Heinlen. He then puts together a complete list of available chemicals and where they are located.

Continued on back

Lois Howe (left) and Cathy Kutz, both of the physical plant, box some of the food items collected at their building for the Administrative Staff Council and Classified Staff Council second annual summer food pantry drive. Employees across campus were asked to bring a nonperishable food item to work on July 27. More than 1,000 cans, jars and packets of food went to the Bowling Green Food Pantry located on Pike St. Becky Cheney, a volunteer at the pantry, said the collection was greatly appreciated as their stock has been particularly low this summer.
Sociologist receives grant to study mentally ill offenders after prison

Dr. Joseph E. Jacoby, sociology, has received a $49,124 grant from the Ohio Department of Mental Health to conduct research on how mentally ill offenders make the transition from prison to community life. The pilot study, thought to be the first of its kind, is expected to take about two years to complete.

Current estimates are that between 10 and 15 percent of the nation’s prison population suffers from serious chronic mental illness. "Prison life is very stressful," Jacoby noted. "The transfer from prison to the community is a major trauma."

"We know that the offenders are troubled and a drain on resources," Jacoby said. The sociologist plans to document the experiences of 80 mentally ill offenders to determine what kinds of assistance make a difference in their lives after their release from a prison system, whether or not they will be helped from family members, friends or government agencies.

The subjects, who will be asked to take part in the project shortly before their release, will be interviewed weekly during their first two months outside prison, then monthly thereafter for a year. Those hired to conduct the interviews will have had prior experience with the mental health system as clients.

"We think the interviewers will have gained some insights as a result of their experiences and will also serve as research consultants," Jacoby explained, noting that the research methodology being used is itself being developed on a trial basis.

The information gained through the study could help to identify ways to stop the cycle of imprisonment, release, relapse and rehospitalization or reimprisonment. The findings also potentially could help policy makers develop programs to assist the mentally ill more effectively and economically.

While acknowledging that the scope of the pilot project may limit its potential contribution to public policy, Jacoby said he hopes the study will provide a model for research on a much larger scale.

A member of Bowling Green’s faculty since 1987, Jacoby frequently writes on topics related to criminal justice and the mentally ill. Among his previous research projects was a national survey of public opinion on punishment for criminal offenses funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

FACULTY/STAFF POSITIONS

The following position is available:

Manager: Accounting/Financial Services

DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING

Responsibilities include accounting, employee benefits, payroll, insurance, and other administrative duties. This position requires strong organizational skills and the ability to work independently. A bachelor’s degree in accounting or a related field is required. Experience in a similar role is preferred. This position is full-time.

Contact: Human Resources

To apply, submit a cover letter, resume, and three references to Human Resources. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

Classified Employment Opportunities

New vacancies

Posting expiration date for employees to apply: Noon, Friday, Aug. 12.

8-5-12 Account Clerk 3
Pay Grade 7
Diane Miller

8-5-12 Typist 2
Pay Grade 4
Mass Communication
Twelve-month, part-time