**Campus Accessibility Focus Group**

July 11, 2022

Zoom

4 Participants

1. **What challenges have you experienced at UND that may be preventing it from being a more welcoming and accessible campus for all?**

* Parking. Twice I had to miss class because I could not make it in time, since I had to park so far away from where my classroom is.
* I second the parking, from a student perspective. Winter can be a big challenge when it comes to parking and getting to classes. It is also an issue for staff with ADA parking pass. Being ‘in compliance’ is just meeting a minimum, it’s not a standard we should aspire to.
* For a campus of this size, it is a deterrent when we tell people they can park on one side of campus but then to shuttle to their building. They cannot easily leave for lunch or go to other buildings on campus without easier/closer access to their vehicles.
* For guests with accessibility issues, parking the ramp is not close to where they need to be. This does not signal that ‘all are welcome here.’
* One thing that that University of Arizona does well in terms of handicapped parking is to separate handicapped parking into student and public spaces. It prevents students and guests that both need the handicapped stall to compete for these spots and provides options for community members and students to have equal access.
* In Hislop both handicapped spots may be taken by people coming for physical therapy, but if I am coming for class what happens when I don’t have a parking space?
* Having more ADA spots and for students and community members. We have staff that utilize ADA parking in the winter. But you can request a special temporary spot, so we should promote this, so we are not competing for the same spots.
* I didn’t go to UND for my General Education classes because of the parking. These classes are spread out in many buildings which makes it difficult to get around, especially in the winter when my muscles get tighter.
* Accessibility as we enter buildings is a big issue. The older style with steps to get into building is problematic. ADA compliance says we need to have one accessible door, but it is not always the door that is convenient for where students are coming from, and the signage is nonexistent, so people have to wonder outside of the building to find a way in at times.
* Campus is starting to become more accessible, but if we can think about these things on the front end, it would be incredibly helpful to our students. If a student can get through 4 years without having to see Disability Services because they have an issue that would be ideal because that means that their needs are being met and they don’t need extra help.
* Tables that change heights. Not having desks that can accommodate a student does not make it a welcoming environment
* Work with a lot of students with PTSD that need multiple exits. They cannot have back to the door. Are spaces designed with multiple exits?
* Some students need chairs without arms, or chairs that have options to have wheels or not. If we do these things on the front end, it is more accessible and welcoming to everyone.
* The sound loop in new buildings so people with hearing impairments do not have to struggle. As we think about construction and remodeling, we need to have somebody at the table that is helping us think of these things as buildings are being built or redesigned.
* Same with office spaces. Is there enough room in offices for a wheelchair to navigate? We need to do the same for students, faculty, and staff.
* Facilities and UND Master Plan: do we have Disability Services at the table/a part of the conversation when a remodel or rebuild is done? No, not right now.
* Merrifield was terrible. The elevator with the three steps and the lecture bowl- I only had one option of where I could sit and that was in the front row, and nobody wants to sit there. Just getting into the room was traumatizing. The metal elevators with three steps down and 200 kids rushing by you. The elevator location is terrible. Merrifield was just a mess.
* Making elevators safer and more convenient (location wise) and easier to know where they are located (signage).
* The double door entrance is a challenge at times- having to go through both doors is difficult without the automatic opening.
* It is a problem for those of us that come as guests to campus, especially people that are handicapped. When we had the Writers Conference one of the sights designated to park was still a very long way to walk for those with limited mobility. Not enough handicapped spaces. If you have an ADA tag can we just make it so you can park in any spot?
* You should have it so people can go online and enter license plate of cars with handicapped tags. The technology exists so we need to utilize these types of things better at UND.
* These big box stores have pick up spots figured out. We have the technology to say “I am parking in X spot and I will be here until X pm.’ You can use this in a college campus and make it much more accessible for people.
* I understand that we have old buildings, but it is frustrating when you must search for accessible doors. Don’t make us search for accessible doors. Also, where is the elevator? We need better signage. We need to know where to go. Help me know where to go so I do not have to search for this.
* Anytime we have a map of a space it should clearly mark where accessible doors are, where bathrooms are, where elevators are.
* We need ADA voice on these committees that are redesigning buildings and campus spaces.
* Bathrooms are a big deal. It can be uncomfortable to be in a bathroom that is not accessible. When you don’t have a stall that is big enough you do not have privacy.
* Bathrooms are critical because it is a privacy thing. Doors to a bathroom need to be 36 inches for ADA. Every bathroom needs to have an accessible stall. 5-foot diameter- a longer stall does not make it accessible. This needs to be changed immediately.
* Also, the gender-neutral private bathrooms are also important. Most gender-neutral bathrooms are ADA. If a building has an ADA stall it is usually just one. It does not mean the sink is accessible or the hand soap or the towels.
* A student should not have to come in and request this. We need to do this check prior to students using these spaces.
* I always want to know where the bathrooms are, since I need to use one frequently. We need good signage, so we know where the bathrooms are.
* One of the most common requests we get are accessible textbooks. If professors are using books published before a certain date, we cannot always find an electronic copy in a timely fashion. If faulty can choose books that are in print and accessible that would go a long way. The text to speech option for textbooks is critical.
* ProctorU is not accessible for students with anxiety disorders.
* High need for students that are deaf or hard or hearing is captioning. The university does not currently automatically caption large events. This is how you create a welcoming environment. We need to do this for any video we send out. We need use captions for videos in classrooms. These are things that we should be doing. Students don’t always know they need to request this. Our guests on campus do not always know they need to request this. This needs to be part of how we plan an event or teach a course.
* Sometimes staff or faculty make it more difficult than it needs to be. I feel like it should be a required session where they go over the basics to be aware of what the students are going though. When we all communicate and work tougher it will be better.
* Improve parking signage for the handicapped spots- nobody knows that you need a UND parking pass when you park in these spots.

1. **Regarding the Master Plan: looking forward what are your recommendations of things to be focused on that would make this a more welcoming environment?**

* From a physical space it is elevators and restrooms. If we are going to keep classes in Merrifield Hall we need that elevator to function. Updating our infrastructure is accessible for all students- this needs to be first on the list.
* As we continue to make campus more walkable, I want to make sure we are keeping accessibility in mind. For example, the brick selection we are putting those across campus can get slippery, so we need think about materials that make sense
* We need to have an ADA person at the table when these decisions are made. An architect that does not have the experience with accessibility issues will not always think of these things. We need to have this voice on all building projects. This is a perfect example of one of the most important things going forward. Having a voice in these decisions
* Lab settings: There are great minds that don’t have great bodies. Going forward for our STEM spaces we need to have lab access for people with accessibility issues. Do we have areas where they are 34-inch counters? Are they rollable under? Things like this allow all types of bodies to be involved in these spaces and type of work.
* As we are looking at physical spaces, we have amazing technology that needs to be accessible as well. If we put this investment in on the front end it makes it much easier then scrambling in the back end.
* Allowing for independence is the best way I can put it. Allowing us to have that independence is the most important. Try to look at things from other people’s perspective and make things as easy for each other as possible.
* Training and education are important. Students with verification letters and well-meaning faculty that don’t want to say something offensive to a student, so they call our office versus having a conversation with the student about their needs. Empowering faculty and students to have that conversation about their needs is important. More education and training are important for everybody.