

Memorandum

To: W. Terrell Jones, Vice Provost for Educational Equity

From: Hilary Chubb

Subject: Additional Information for Renaming Office for Disability Services

Date: November 4, 2013

CC: Educational Equity Staff Members

As I have already shared, our current name of the Office for Disability Services at Penn State reflects a medical model at a time where our profession is moving towards using a social model. In changing our name to the Accessibility Resource Center we will not only embrace and reflect a social model but also encourage more eligible students to use our services, enlighten our campus community, and inspire diversity across our institutional population. All of this will occur with relatively little additional cost considering the growth we can expect from demonstrated patterns from previous years and the expanse of available assistive technology.

Network Strategy

With this change, as with all others, support is necessary. Backing for this modification will come from two places; within Penn State, and outside of this institution.

The first partner we need in this process is Educational Equity, as this is the division under which we immediately fall. Additionally, it would be advantageous to gain the support of the Faculty Senate for a few reasons. First, this will not only help develop support from the university faculty, but also will be a step towards publicity of the change with the faculty. This publicity is important because notifying and educating faculty members about this change has been discussed as a necessary item to address during this transition. Gaining the support of the Faculty Senate will also help in the process of this change as the approval moves up through the organizational structure of the university.

We have already taken the first steps in accumulating the necessary support from within Penn State by addressing our colleagues in Educational Equity. From there we will start with a smaller faction of faculty, likely from disability studies, counselor education, and other related fields, as agents to introduce the change to the Faculty Senate. Research institutions tend to be resistant to change and this will likely be one of the most difficult things we will face while making this transition, particularly among faculty. I predict that faculty may not actively oppose the change but likely will not recognize how it relevant to them. By not making that connection they will also be less likely to support the transition. Faculty support is very important so one of our considerations will be towards a strategy to illustrate to faculty members how this change is not only relevant to them but will support them and improve their institution. They will experience more successful students because of the student who will be using the resources available to them. Faculty will also have a more diverse student population

which benefits outcomes of students and also the overall campus environment. Additionally, this change has the potential to create good press for the institution.

Outside of Penn State, one of the most important network partners is AHEAD (the Association on Higher Education And Disability). Due to the fact that one of the catalysts for this change came from the standards set forth by this professional organization, support from them will not be an issue. In fact, our institution could use AHEAD as a medium for publicity by publishing a short article about the process and reason for our transition from Office for Disability Services to Accessibility Resource Center. Once an article such as this has been written by a member of our offices' staff, it will be submitted to AHEAD to be presented at their annual conference.

Media Strategy

The media strategy for this transition from Office for Disability Services to the Accessibility Resource Center is closely tied to our networking strategy. Rather than using media to support this proposal, we predict publicity from the results of this proposal. As mentioned above, a simple product of this transition will be a short article to be published and presented to our professional organization, AHEAD. The media will produce impact not only for our office and our institution, but for disability services, diversity, and the problems in our society around ableism and language.

Our target audience is offices which provide resources to students with disabilities at other institutions. The most likely outlets for our target audience are websites such as The Chronicle of Higher Education, Inside Higher Education, The National Organization on Disability, and AHEAD. Our goals are meant to start small, hence starting with the name of our office. As other institutions of higher education learn about our change as well as the change other institutions have made, they will consider the same. They can then make the change of their name and also the language they use overall. Those institutions will then see the same changes we hope to see through more diversity in our student population, and overall institutional populations who are more educated about disability and what that really means.

In order to achieve these goals we will not only need the support of our institution but also AHEAD. This is because a large part of our outreach goal relies on presenting about our process at their annual conference. In order to do what we, as an office and as an institution, can do to support ourselves in this endeavor we will use available resources. This means collaborating as an office to produce an exemplary article as well as using faculty who have overlapping interests to provide any additional scholarly support.