

Standing Committee on Disability

Universally Designed

Fall 2009

Quarterly Newsletter for the Standing Committee on Disability

Volume 1, Issue 3

Editors: Melanie Thompson and Matthew Gilsbach

The fall semester is well under way. Hopefully you are flu free and looking forward to a quiet end of the year. To ease you in to Finals and the New Year, we are pleased to provide the third issue in the inaugural year of Universally Designed. Our chair, Katie Stolz, has updates for us all, including the upcoming Annual Convention. In light of the ongoing unification conversation between ACPA and NASPA, guest contributor, Kaela Parks, fills us in on the NASPA Knowledge Community. And, Melanie shares some information about the Department of Education Grant, Project ShIFT, through her editorial in “Advocate, Activist and Ally.”

If you ran out of time to contribute to this edition, you have plenty of time for the winter edition. The next deadline for submission is January 29th. You can email your submissions to Melanie at mvthompson@semo.edu or Matthew at mgilsbach@gmail.com. We encourage you to share the newsletter with others, and encourage your colleagues, co-workers, and peers to contribute as well.

Thank you and enjoy reading,
Melanie and Matthew

In This Issue ...

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From the Chair

Katie Stolz
Standing Committee for Disability: President

Hello SCD!

Exciting plans continue for the 2009 Annual Convention. We hope that you can join us in Boston! Registration opened earlier last month, and the early registration fee will be available till January 28, 2010 (<http://convention.myacpa.org>).

A couple weeks ago, the SCD directorate held their first conference call in several years, in hopes of opening up further channels of communication, in addition to begin making plans for this year's convention. Matthew Gilsbach and Ellyn Couillard are hard at work, creating our marketing plan for this year, and Val Erwin, is working in conjunction with them to coordinate the SCD 10-year celebration at this year's reception. More information on these plans will be shared soon! SCD will again be sponsoring five proposals that address disability in higher education and support the mission of SCD. A big thank you goes out to Andy Beverly, who coordinated that process, and to all those who helped to review submissions.

SCD again hopes to sponsor a Next Gen recipient (<http://convention.myacpa.org/program/next-generation.php>), in addition to recognizing several individuals for their dedication through their scholarship, professional work, and personal interaction with others. These awards will be given at the awards ceremony in Boston, and a call for nominations will be coordinated by Ally Matt, who will be sharing additional info in the next several weeks. Please begin thinking now of those around you who are going over and beyond, and who you believe should be acknowledged for their contribution in the field! Leilani Kupo is the SCD representative on the Voice of Inclusion Medallion selection committee, and will be our voice in this selection process.

As mentioned above, we have a number of individuals from SCD who have stepped up and are working hard to make the convention a memorable experience for all. If you would like to be more involved in SCD, be sure to plan to stop by our 10-year celebration reception and our open business meeting at the convention, which is tentatively planned for Tuesday afternoon. If this is going to be your first ACPA, don't forget to check out Convention Colleagues (<http://www.myacpa.org/sc/scgsnp/conventioncolleagues.cfm>), which will take place on Sunday, the day of the opening speaker and provides an introduction to not just the standing committees, but convention overall.

Another great way to contribute to SCD that is not a major time commitment is to submit a piece for this quarterly newsletter. Thank you, Matthew Gilsbach and Melanie Thompson, for your continued effort in making this publication happen!

Sincerely,
Katie Stolz

NASPA

Disability Knowledge Community

Kaela Parks **NASPA Disability Knowledge Community Chair**

In light of ongoing dialogue to connect ACPA and NASPA, the following is being provided by the Chair of the NASPA Disability Knowledge Community.

I've been working as the director of Disability Support Services at the University of Alaska Anchorage since 2003. I enjoy it very much. In addition to the work I do coordinating academic adjustments for students with documented disabilities, I also teach courses, and have been a lead trainer in recent grant funded initiatives. I teach a graduate level course in assistive technology and universal design through our college of education, and also teach an undergraduate course called "reel eyes," which examines the sociopolitical versus medical models of disability, and encourages students to analyze representations of disability and film and other media. The grant funded initiative that I have been involved in recently is one of the demonstration projects through the office of postsecondary education. The focus of that effort has been on increasing knowledge and implementation of universal design on the smaller rural campuses within the University of Alaska system while simultaneously increasing understanding of how the accommodation process works.

As the chair of the NASPA Disability Knowledge Community, my work has focused on collaboration. Over the summer we issued a special edition newsletter for AHEAD conference attendees. We distributed the newsletter on a CD that also included the electronic version of the disability history exhibit which you may have seen during the "Road to Freedom tour."

In general, the NASPA Disability Knowledge Community is focused on creating and disseminating knowledge. We try to bring disability related information to the larger population of student affairs professionals. We solicit and sponsor sessions at our national and regional conferences that are relevant to the senior student affairs officer who may be supervising a DSS office, but also try to offer sessions that are relevant to the new professional just starting out. In addition to conference sessions, the knowledge community also contributes by submitting articles in NASPA publications.

Given that the ACPA standing committee on disability generates a newsletter, and our knowledge community has just started to generate a newsletter, it could be nice cross pollination for us to share these documents. Additionally, I will share information when the Knowledge Community/NASPA has free webinars or other resources that may be of value to the ACPA Standing Committee on Disability.

Thank you,
Kaela

Activist, Advocate, Ally

Melanie Thompson, Ed.S., LPC, LMHC, NCC
Director - Learning Assistance Programs & Disability Support Services
Southeast Missouri State University

In August of this year I had the opportunity to spend a week in Denver with 24 other Disability Services professionals to begin work on a Department of Education funded grant, “Project ShIFT” or Shaping Inclusion through Foundational Transformation. The intent of this grant is to build upon groundwork laid by previously funded grants, to demonstrate a model that offers sustainability in institutional change by addressing underlying systems and campus-wide conceptualizations of disability. An initial emphasis through Project ShIFT is on creating progressive philosophical constructs of disability within DS offices, which will lead to uncovering and correcting negative messages that are transferred to faculty and staff, with an end goal of incorporating concepts of universal design (UD) within classrooms and across participating campuses. So, what does this have to do with being an “Activist, Advocate and Ally”?

The week in Denver challenged some of my values and beliefs, and provoked me to evaluate where I stand in the area of disabilities as an activist, advocate and ally. Particularly, in regards to shifting my perspective of disabilities from a medical model to a socio-political model. As a licensed counselor I am familiar and comfortable with looking at “symptoms,” giving my diagnostic impression, and then creating a treatment plan. That’s the medical model at work. The socio-political model looks at disability as being neutral, and often, as residing in the environment instead of the individual. Disability Studies activists are attempting to shift allies to this model, as a sustainable way to reduce barriers and increase access to resources for people with disabilities.

Taking this shift back to my office and institution has been eye-opening. The medical model is something that is entrenched in so many different ways; it is in terminology, in actions, in policies and procedures. When I was a new Director, I sometimes used the approach of telling people what the legal obligation was. This approach worked, though often, it got people’s attention begrudgingly, and led to getting the bare minimum done. As I have moved toward the socio-political model, I have found that sometimes people are more receptive to considering changes, accommodations or adjustments, when it is presented as something that is good (beneficial) for many. That’s the way I have attempted to infuse the concept of Universal Design into conversations about shifting away from the medical model and toward the socio-political model.

As a member of the SCD, I hope it is safe to assume that you are an activist, advocate or ally for people with disabilities. One thing that I would encourage you to do, in light of your interest, is to learn more about the socio-political perspective and identify ways that you may be able to shift your perspectives of disabilities as well. I’ll share that it was a charged change for me, and one that I continue to work on daily as I infuse different terminology into my personal life and my professional role.

If any of you are making this shift as well, perhaps you’ll share for the next newsletter?
Melanie

In the next issue...

For the newsletter in February, we like to including one or more of the following. If you are able to contribute in any way, please contact Melanie or Matthew:

- SCD sponsored sessions for the Annual Convention
- Disability related sessions provided by SCD members or other disability advocates
- Articles on “Lessons Learned” or “Diversity and Disability
- Articles on your role in the field of disability: research, studies, work...
- Updates from other disability related organizations that you participate with

Additionally, we will be working on a new format for the newsletter. If you have any feedback on the current format, please let us know. In particular, if you or others have had any accessibility issues, we would like to know.

More to come early next year. Questions or comments, contact:

Melanie: mvthompson@semo.edu

Matthew: mgiltsbach@gmail.com