

PLANNING TO IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY AT GRINNELL COLLEGE (April 2007)

I. Facilities Accessibility Efforts to Date

In 1992, President Ferguson convened a task force to identify physical and technological barriers at Grinnell College and to work to ameliorate them. A careful review of existing facilities and learning software took place and a number of barriers were addressed as a consequence of the task force's work. Since that time, the College has addressed accessibility issues in developing and implementing the 1998 campus plan, on a case-by-case basis with respect to grandfathered facilities, and most recently in the strategic plan. In addition, since 1998 the College has sought to hire individuals considered disabled as the opportunities arise. The College now implements a number of strategies—including ASL interpreting, real-time captioning, and amplification headsets—to make major events accessible to the hearing impaired, and new technologies such as dictation and screen-reader software to allow students to dictate their writing or 'read' their textbooks on their computer.

II. Grinnell College's Strategic Plan and Accessibility

A new, and more focused, phase of work on accessibility has begun as a result of the College's strategic plan (approved in 2005). The College's goal of improving diversity among its students, staff, and faculty includes the intention to ensure that a range of disabled individuals should find Grinnell College a welcoming place and a good environment to work and study. With additional funding for accessibility projects built into its 5-year budget projections, the College is reviewing and planning future commitments to improving the accessibility of its facilities and learning environments.

This planning has benefited from the work and commitment of an ad hoc Disability Committee, and from the on-going contributions of the staff in Student Affairs, the Health Center, and Facilities Management.

III. Goals Regarding New Buildings and Grandfathered Buildings

To improve accessibility on campus and to comply with the spirit and the letter of the law of the ADA, Grinnell College works to improve the accessibility of its programs, grounds and facilities in accordance with the following guidelines.

1. Grinnell College seeks to ensure that all new buildings are accessible and in compliance with ADA regulations. This includes new classrooms, new residence halls, and other buildings.
2. Buildings and spaces undergoing extensive renovation that are central to the instructional function of the College should also be accessible. These include teaching buildings (or floors of buildings) and major administrative buildings.
3. All offices that are public in nature should, within the period of the strategic plan, be moved from buildings not in category 1 or 2 or at least be the subject of firm planning for renovation or new construction.

4. As we turn to our older buildings, we intend to make these spaces more accessible and to reassign low-use and non-public functions to those spaces that cannot be made accessible in a reasonable fashion.

New buildings and major renovations completed within the past decade include: 1) Athletics and Fitness phase one, 2) Bucksbaum Center for the Arts, 3) Joe Rosenfield '25 Center, 4) Chrystal Center, 5) Cowles dining retrofit, 6) Old Glove Factory, 7) Kershaw, Lazier, Rose, and Rathje Residence Halls, 8) new Facilities Management building, 9) Conard Environmental Research Area, and 10) Noyce Science Center phase two and renovation of portions of the older portions of the science building (new construction to be completed in the spring of 2007 and renovation to be completed the spring of 2008).

VI. Recent Updates

(July 2008)

During the 2007/08 academic year, we have completed the Noyce Science Center Phase II. Other 2007/08 projects improving the accessibility of the College include the renovation and expansion of Macy House (1205 Park St.); improvement of the sidewalks on the 1100 and 1200 blocks of Park St.; addition of mechanized doors to the Burling Library, the Forum and Cowles; and construction of an accessible restroom on the main level of Burling Library.

Accessibility-related projects anticipated for the upcoming (2008/09) year include the renovation of Nollen House, construction of ramps at Younker and the west entrance of Cowles (summer of 2008), addition of mechanized doors to the Bookstore (summer 2008), and the addition of a ramp to and renovation of the first floor of Faculty House.