Advisory Group for Accessibility, Disability, and Universal Design

Rhodes College
September 2023 Update

In the fall of 2022, Rhodes College established the Advisory Group on Accessibility, Disability, and Universal Design, which reflects The College's commitment to institutional inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility and to fostering a sense of belonging among all members of the college community, including persons with disabilities. The advisory group's role is to ensure broad institutional input on matters relating to persons with disabilities of all characteristics at Rhodes College.

The purpose of the advisory group:
- Promote knowledge and advocacy in the areas of disability, accessibility, and Universal Design.
- Promote disability awareness, access, and inclusion in campus policies, procedures, training, and resources.
- Promote an understanding of the connections to other kinds of diversity we want to encourage on our campus.
- Advocate for campus planning on all levels to consider Universal Design principles and best practices.
- Advise the president and senior leadership regarding access compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and best practices in fostering a truly inclusive, diverse, equitable, and inclusive community.

Membership consists of faculty, staff, and students who were appointed by the President in 2022 and agreed to serve a two-year term. Members for 2023-24 are listed below.

Faculty:
- Kim Brien, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Chemistry
- Eric Gottlieb, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Mathematics & Computer Science
- Eric Henager, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Spanish
- Vanessa Rogers, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Music

Staff:
- Anne Beard, Chief of Staff, Co-Chair
- Darlene Brooks, Director, Barret Library
- Melissa Butler, Director of Student Accessibility Services, Co-Chair
- Brian Foshee, Director of Physical Plant
- Martha McGeachy, Benefits Manager, Human Resources
- Alexa O'Hara, Student Outreach & Support

- Sherry Turner, Ph.D., Vice President of Strategic Initiatives

Students:
- Sophie Garau 2025
- Elise Keller 2024
- Maggie Lindsay 2024
- Carolina Smith Cavalcante 2024

Melissa Butler and Sherry Turner co-chaired the advisory group from spring 2022 through spring 2023. The advisory group met twice during spring 2022, identified five subcommittees, and focused on the first three during summer 2022 through spring 2023.

1. **Digital Environment Subcommittee**
   - Focus: Address digital environment access issues related to online learning platforms, materials posted to those platforms, college websites, digital communication platforms, and social media. Address accessibility issues, such as creating accessible materials, captioning, and identifying protocols to ensure accessible course design, online platforms, and technologies. Identify necessary training and resources.
   - Completed to date: Compiled a comprehensive list of all digital platforms currently used at Rhodes College. Researched best practices for digital access and explored ways to ensure that accessibility is considered when the college purchases new software.
   - Members: Kim Brien, Melissa Butler, Jana Files (Communications), Maggie Lindsay '24, Greg Paraham (Library), Sherry Turner.

2. **Physical Environment Subcommittee**
   - Focus: Address existing and potential barriers in the campus physical environment. Examples include, but are not limited to, accessible paths around campus, building and classroom accessibility, processes for reporting physical access issues, and new construction accessibility. Prepare an annual plan that prioritizes access solutions and guides spending for campus access improvements.
   - Completed to date: Revised Report an Access Barrier Form. Compiled list of physical access barriers with solution updates.
   - Members: Darlene Brooks, Melissa Butler, Brian Foshee, Martha McGeachy, Carolina Smith-Cavalcante '24, Sherry Turner.

3. **Learning Environment Subcommittee**
   - Focus: Advocate for Universal Design for Learning, proactive and accessible course design, and early selection of materials. Provide feedback to Student Accessibility Services on accommodation protocols and identify training and resource needs.
   - Completed to date: Gathered and reviewed Universal Design for Learning materials. Discussed ideas for promotion of best practices for accessible course materials, program materials, and event planning. SAS enhanced website and added Faculty Resources page.

- Members: Melissa Butler, Sophie Garau '25, Eric Gottlieb, Eric Henager, Vanessa Rogers, Sherry Turner.

4. **Policies/Procedures Subcommittee**
   - Focus: Advise on revisions to existing access-related policies and new college policies to eliminate/prevent barriers for individuals with disabilities. Identify disability-related training needs for college employees and develop a centralized resource repository.

5. **Campus Culture Subcommittee**
   - Focus: Examine campus attitudes and perceptions of disability and accessibility in our community. Identify necessary awareness training and resources to promote increased access, inclusion, and sense of belonging for students and employees with disabilities.

Anne Beard and Melissa Butler will co-chair the advisory group from fall 2023 through spring 2024. The advisory group will meet in early fall 2023 to discuss updates and identify priorities for fall 2023/spring 2024.