

DISABILITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE 2001 – 2002 ANNUAL REPORT

Deborah C. Haynes, Chair

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Deborah C. Haynes, Chair, Educational Support Services
Jeff Cargile, Human Resources
Donna Collins, Facilities Management
Joe Fortune, University Housing
Bobby Gist, Equal Opportunity Programs
Shealy McCoy, Risk Management
Karen Pettus, Disability Services
Jacob Rivers, Veteran Services
Daphne Sipes, General Counsel
Dr. Linda Walling, Library and Information Science
Dr. Maryann Wimsatt, English Department
Jonathan David Winn, Student Representative

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

The Disability Affairs Committee met three times during the 2001 – 2002 academic year. The committee addressed the following issues: 1) Section 508 regulations for technology accessibility; 2) review of recent court decisions regarding disability issues; 3) ways to get more student participation on the committee; and 4) accessibility problems in Swearingin Building and the Blatt PE Building.

Section 508 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 requires federal agencies to make information technology accessible to persons with disabilities. Computer Services and the Office of Disability Services met to discuss Section 508 and its impact on USC. As a result of this meeting, three committees were formed: 1) *Advisory Committee* on which Deborah Haynes as Chair of the Disability Affairs Committee will serve; 2) *Working Committee* on which the Director of Disability Services will serve; and 3) *Consulting Committee* which will be called on as needed.

Two recent court decisions could have an impact on how accommodations are provided for students with disabilities at USC. One involved a student who sued because his university determined that his documentation did not support his request for accommodations. The Fourth Circuit Court ruled in the student's favor. The other case, decided by the United States Supreme Court, involved an employment issue but could

affect the educational arena. The ruling dealt with how to determine that an impairment impacts a “major life function” and is truly a disability.

Student participation on the Committee has been a problem for several years. This year Student Government nominated two students and both declined to participate. Suggestions were made to look for students in health-related majors and for graduate students in disciplines that deal with persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities receiving services through the Office of Disability Services will also be contacted for possible appointment to the Committee.

Although the University is one of the most accessible campuses in the Southeast, there are still some buildings that are not accessible to persons with disabilities. Two of these buildings are the Blatt PE Center and the Swearingen Building. The ADA Coordinator received a complaint about the lack of accessible seating around the swimming pool and no accessible bathrooms at the PE Center. Possible ways to create accessible seating and accessible bathrooms will be evaluated. Access to Swearingen has become more crucial because many students with physical disabilities major in the technology areas. The possibility of putting automatic openers on the doors on the Assembly Street side will be explored.