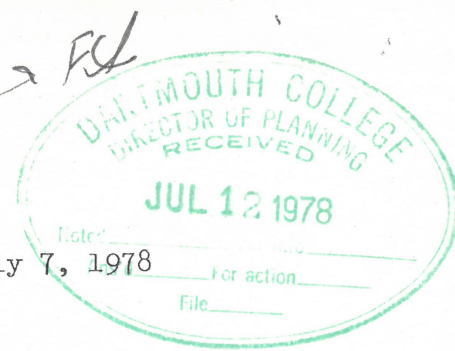


Self-Evaluation Summary Report:
Subcommittee for Academic Program Accessibility

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Robert Kleck
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The objective of this Subcommittee was to evaluate the adequacy of the Committee on the Handicapped's Transition Plan for implementation of H.E.W. Section 504's regulations as this Plan applies to each department and program at Dartmouth College, Dartmouth Medical School, Thayer School of Engineering, and the Tuck School of Business Administration. The chairman of each of these departments or programs was sent a memorandum containing: (a) a brief summary of the requirements of Section 504 and of the principal means by which these requirements are to be met; (b) a list of all proposed structural modifications, arranged in a proposed three-stage sequence of implementation and including the cost per building; (c) details of the proposed alterations to be made for each building involved directly with an academic program; (d) a set of questions designed to test the adequacy of these proposed structural modifications to assure that each major program and every course of instruction at Dartmouth and its associated schools will in some appropriate manner be made accessible to handicapped students. (The term "handicapped student" was arbitrarily limited to wheelchair confined, blind, and deaf students to make answering the questionnaire a feasible matter.)

The summary stressed that equivalency of opportunity and not strict equality is the principal criterion applicable to an institution such as Dartmouth. The summary further stressed that the rescheduling or shifting of classes from an inaccessible building to an accessible one whenever possible is to be the principal means of implementation, while architectural modification of existing facilities, necessarily very costly at Dartmouth, is to be carried out only when absolutely necessary to achieve Section 504's overall goal of providing "reasonable accommodation" of handicapped students "in the most integrated setting appropriate." The provision of readers for the blind and interpreters for the deaf in the appropriate circumstances also was stated as a given accommodation obviating further comment. The chairmen were asked in addition to consider possible "reasonable and feasible" waivers of any major requirements which might be physically impossible for a handicapped student to meet but which would not thereby impair the integrity of the major. Finally, the chairmen were asked to name any courses not usually a part of a major program which might possibly present a problem vis-à-vis physical accessibility.

After distribution of the questionnaire and accompanying materials, at least one member of this Subcommittee met with each of the four Divisional Councils of Dartmouth College to give a brief oral introduction to the problems connected with accommodation of handicapped students and, principally, to answer questions from the departmental and program chairmen prior to their completion of the questionnaire. Because Engineering exists both as an undergraduate department and as the graduate, Thayer School of Engineering, that associated school was represented at the Science Division council meeting. The other two associated schools were sent individual covering memoranda along with the standard questionnaire but were not contacted by us in person.

With only a few, mostly minor exceptions to be noted presently, all depart-

ments and programs of Dartmouth College and its associated schools reported that within the framework of the proposed Transition Plan architectural modifications they are entirely willing and either are or will be ready and able, upon completion of the modifications, to accommodate handicapped students generally and on a case-by-case basis, and that they will do so by whatever reasonable and feasible means are necessary. Many departments, particularly in the sciences, cited potential problems or obstacles to full participation by handicapped students in certain broad categories such as the blind or the wheelchair confined, but whenever feasible such departments stressed their willingness and readiness to try to accommodate themselves to the individual needs of such students as their cases arise so as to assure maximal participation without a priori discrimination. Typical of comments by departmental chairmen in this regard is the following by Professor Hoyt Alverson, Chairman of the Anthropology Department: "In my view, none of the obstacles cited above is contained within the curriculum in such a way that no substitute of equivalent educational value can be found. A person insisting on taking one or more of these courses who has a handicap might be accommodated, but it seems to me an intelligent assessment of our ability to accommodate handicapped persons would require a very precise delineation of the handicap. This I think is best deferred until a case arises. At that time the Department will certainly make every effort to provide the individual with an equivalence, if not equality, of opportunity to pursue his or her educational interests."

In the one "either/or" matter in the Transition Plan, the choice between Silsby or Reed, the respondents to the questionnaire indicated an absolute preference for Silsby, with several departments citing access to Silsby as "essential."

Several putative problems cited in the responses were resolved simply through investigation. These included access to the Wren Room floor of Sanborn, cited as essential by the English Department, which is accessible by means of the heretofore unused walkway between Sanborn and the "1902 Room" of Baker Library, and access to the Wilson Hall Museum and Carpenter Gallery, which will be secured as a part of the renovation of the east side of Hopkins Center in the near future. Several other seeming problems of accessibility cited were in fact the result of an incorrect emphasis in the questionnaire on primarily the first stage of the proposed three-stage process of architectural modification. Although only this first stage has indeed been approved by the Trustees, the second and third stages are, with some possible changes yet to be decided on, generally agreed upon as modifications which are essential, which will be effected, and which therefore only lack official, funded approval by the Trustees.

There remain, nevertheless, several problems, or at least problematical matters of accessibility. A broadly problematical concern involves classroom space for humanities courses. There was general agreement among chairmen at the Humanities Division meeting that more facilities suitable to and currently used by these departments should be made accessible. The most strongly recommended were the first floor of Thornton, 13 Carpenter (because of its large but intimate character unusually suited to large lecture-discussion courses), and 105 Dartmouth (for similar reasons). This concern will have

to be further explored and resolved. The one distinct problem involves the Music Department, which is currently accessible by wheelchair only by a far too awkward sequence of aided perambulations. The presumption was that accessibility to the Music Department would be effected in some manner with a planned addition to Hopkins Center, but the status of this addition is at this time in considerable doubt, and the matter therefore remains unresolved. Another matter to be resolved is plans for Tuck Business School; although seemingly not a difficult matter, these plans have yet to be put in final form. Finally, there is disagreement as to the need to make North Fairbanks accessible: the building is easily ramped, there being only one small step at the rear door, the Drama (Film) Department has cited accessibility as essential, and the Art Department for general classroom use for slide showing considers accessibility highly desirable, but, as with any campus building, once the building has been designated as "accessible," costs for, at the least, alteration of bathroom facilities - a necessary concomitant to accessibility - quickly mount. Alternatives to North Fairbanks are currently being considered, but the issue is not yet settled.

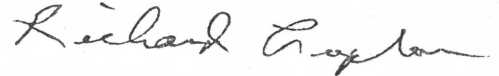
For the most part, Dartmouth's foreign study programs are inaccessible to a wheelchair confined student and sometimes difficult or impossible for otherwise handicapped students. However, departments involved with such programs have assured this Subcommittee that (a) if a given foreign study program is a major requirement, that requirement can be waived, and (b) whether a major requirement or not, such programs when inaccessible are so because of the architecture of buildings owned by foreign governments and therefore the problem is not amenable to correction by Dartmouth College. The problem of physically difficult off-campus programs within this country, such as Geography Department field trips, would seem to be best approached on a case-by-case basis, with full cooperation by the departments involved assured.

In order to evaluate thoroughly the adequacy of the Transition Plan in allowing handicapped students to meet academic requirements, this Subcommittee also examined the status of the two requirements for graduation not connected with any single major program: the foreign language requirement and the physical education requirement. The latter was found not to be a problem inasmuch as all entering freshmen are already given a Physical Education and Intramural Handbook which clearly states that the medical record of each student will be reviewed and that students not physically able to take part in the regular courses will either be provided with a special program or will be exempted from the requirement. As for the foreign language requirement, there was unanimous agreement that no prior procedure for the waiving or modification of the requirement need be made. The chairman of each foreign language department, moreover, assured this Subcommittee of the particular readiness of his department to accommodate itself pedagogically to the case-by-case needs of handicapped students as these needs arise. And, of course, in extreme cases the requirement can be waived by normal petition to the C.C.S.C.

In the cases, therefore, of the foreign language and physical education requirements, the situation is clearly the same as it is for all programs in

all departments of Dartmouth College and its associated schools. Under frequently rather difficult physical circumstances, Dartmouth is making itself ready to assure entirely "reasonable accommodation" of handicapped students by every feasible means in order to provide maximum opportunity for participation by such students in Dartmouth's education process "in the most integrated setting appropriate."

Richard Luplow

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Richard Luplow", written in dark ink.

RL/jmb