Evaluate and Improve the Accessibility of Campus Architecture and Pathways
Senate Resolution No. 37

SPONSORED BY: Nicholas Pierce '19, Senator
CO-SPONSORED BY: Dan Matthews '17, Senator
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ENDORSED BY: People First Initiative

WHEREAS, the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (hereinafter referred to as “ADA”) outlines a basic accessibility code intended to protect against discrimination based on disability; wherein "covered entities" are required to provide reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities;

WHEREAS, more precisely, the ADA holds institutions of higher education responsible for making their courses, campus, activities and services accessible to people with disabilities. This includes physical access to college buildings, transportation, housing, and other facilities;

WHEREAS, the ability to efficiently navigate campus pathways and access buildings is imperative to the success of, and can alter the quality of life for a disabled student; a campus that is generally inaccessible or difficult to navigate can inconvenience, or squander, the experience of visiting disabled prospective students, faculty, alumni, or community members;

WHEREAS, notwithstanding the University of Rochester’s adherence to ADA policies and its commitment to providing services and resources to disabled students, there are still disabled students that find navigating the campus inconvenient and inefficient, and for some particular cases, conditions, and routes, impossible;

1 The American Disabilities Act of 1990 is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public.
2 http://finduslaw.com/americans-disabilities-act-1990-ada-12-us-code-chapter-126
3 In this particular case, “covered entities” includes state funded schools such as universities, community colleges and vocational schools (Title II of ADA), and private colleges and vocational schools (Title III of ADA). If a school receives federal dollars regardless of whether it is private or public it is also covered by the regulations of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act requiring schools to make their programs accessible to qualified students with disabilities. (https://www.pacer.org/publications/adapq/504.aspx)
4 http://www.missouric.org/resource/tipsheet/collegeaccessibility
5 Postsecondary schools can do this in a number of ways: by providing architectural access, providing aids and services necessary for effective communication, and by modifying policies, practices and procedures. All programs and services, however, must be provided in an integrated setting. In some instances, architectural access may be the only way to make a program accessible. (Ibid)
6 This is nor backed by survey data. We were unable to collect sufficient data in the timespan provided to complete this resolution; rather, we utilized direct conversation with disabled students and an accessibility map of the campus.
WHEREAS, certain campus buildings, particularly those built before 1977 (such as buildings on the Eastman, Fraternity, and Residents Quad) contain levels, entrances, and pathways that are completely inaccessible or require extensive circumvention using other pathways — which may greatly inconvenience students in wheelchairs;

WHEREAS, the University of Rochester does not provide specific campus access guides, elucidate efficient or convenient routes for navigating the campus in the campus accessibility map, elevator and lift locations, or routes that are dangerous or impossible to navigate (such as steep hills or obstructed areas);

WHEREAS, not indicating potential building construction risks and pathway obstructions for or not reasonably accommodating disabled students can be a major liability for an institution, and has even resulted in lawsuits for some universities;

WHEREAS, after reviewing a few websites that ranked the ‘most accessible’ universities in the country, we found that universities with more accessible campuses generally provided more specific maps (which included hill grades, areas of obstruction, efficient routes to different buildings, etc.), campus access guides, and on-campus, wheelchair-accessible transportation;

WHEREAS, the State University of New York (hereinafter referred to as ‘SUNY’) Students’ Assembly has recently passed a resolution to push SUNY Student Government Association members to perform accessibility assessments at their respective campuses, and to make all of their respective campuses more ‘universally accessible’ for disabled students;

WHEREAS, it is clear after reviewing the quality of accessibility at peer institutions, that improving the quality of accessibility on our campus has the potential to drastically improve student life and boost the University’s standing as an inclusive, fair, and equitable institution;

WHEREAS, as new buildings are constructed — such as the imminent Wegmans Hall, and as the student population grows, it will become increasingly important that campus architecture is made more accessible and that current and new routes are assessed with more scrutiny, for the sake of safety, efficiency, and convenience;

WHEREAS, the University of Rochester states that “students with disabilities are an essential part of our community. They bring a broad spectrum of talents and achievements to our community.”

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7 Under the ADA, university buildings constructed before the 1977 date need not be made accessible if the college or school can ensure that its students with disabilities enjoy the full range of its programs through other means such as relocating classes to an accessible buildings. This clearly can be very inconvenient.

8 University of Rochester River Campus Accessibility Map

9 Lawsuit 1 / Lawsuit 2 / More on ADA Lawsuits against Universities

10 Web Source 1 / Web Source 2 / Web Source 3

11 SUNY SA Resolution

12 https://www.som.rochester.edu/diversity/students-with-disabilities.html *found on School of Nursing site, but still applies to the entire University
the Students’ Association Government seeks to represent and amplify the voices and interests of all students; and,

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Students’ Association Government Senate charges the 2016-2017 and future Executive Branch to liaise with the relevant administrative department to ensure that the accessibility of campus architecture and pathways is evaluated with greater scrutiny and current buildings and routes are assessed in a more comprehensive manner,

**LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED** that the Executive Branch liaises with the relevant administrative department to ensure that future architecture and pathways are constructed and renovated with accessibility in mind; that accessibility as a greater priority in the future; and input is solicited from disabled students and community members during planning, assessments, and construction of new architecture and pathways.

[Signature of Confirmation]

[Signature of Approval]

**Speaker, Students’ Association Senate**

**President, Students’ Association**

**Senate Votes:** Yes: 14  No: 0  Abs: 3  Date: 04/11/2016