

Advertisement



Disability Compliance for Higher Education / Volume 23, Issue 8

A Brief Conversation with... Catherine E. Johnson, J.D., M.A.

Engage community to create awareness of accessibility

Joan Hope Ph.D.

First published: 23 February 2018

<https://doi.org/10.1002/dhe.30398>

Get at KU

📄 About

📄 PDF 🛠 Tools 🔄

Abstract

When Catherine E. Johnson, J.D., M.A., became director of the ADA Resource Center for Equity and Accessibility at the University of Kansas, she planned a series of efforts to improve the Hawk Route, an accessible route across campus.

When Catherine E. Johnson, J.D., M.A., became director of the ADA Resource Center for Equity and Accessibility at the University of Kansas, she planned a series of efforts to improve the Hawk Route, an accessible route across campus.

Q: What steps were needed to get Hawk Route improvements to happen?

A: The route goes three-quarters of a mile, through five buildings and about 400 feet up a hill. The signage is a little confusing, and it's not clear it's an accessible route. The

first step was to create three videos about the route. I brought stakeholders together, including individuals with disabilities willing to talk about the importance of the Hawk Route. Media Production helped with the video and captioning, and another department provided audio descriptions.

Although the route was historically intended for people with mobility impairments, I wanted to include people with other types of disabilities. A colleague and I wrote an audio guide for visually impaired people and had individuals with visual disabilities test it.

We held a red carpet event featuring the people in the videos. I could tell from the comments it had been a really empowering experience. And the folks who helped with testing the audio guide were able to recognize their visual impairment as a type of expertise.

Q: You held a design contest for a new logo. How did that contest and the resulting logo enhance the project?

A: If you're not familiar with the route, it's easy to get lost. I wanted to update the wayfinding with a logo that would designate accessibility.

A professor in the design department has his sophomore class complete a project each year for a real-life client and thought this project would be appropriate.

I put together a committee to help outline what we were hoping to have in the final project and to choose five finalists and a winning design. The committee included faculty, staff, and students who worked with individuals with disabilities, individuals with disabilities, and representation from many campus units.

The design challenge was to show accessibility and inclusiveness in a new way.

A media campaign shared the top five designs, and the provost announced the winner. The signs are currently in production. On April 10, a red ribbon cutting ceremony will relaunch the Hawk Route with the new signage.

Email Catherine E. Johnson at cej2@ku.edu. To view videos about the Hawk Route and learn more about accessibility efforts at KU, visit <https://accessibility.ku.edu/>.