

Section I
Plenary Sessions

Navigating Our Institutions¹

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Abstract

The disability field is changing and so are the institutions where we work. From faculty governance to curriculum revision, to strategic planning, to information systems, and to facilities design and construction, campus components and disability are constantly intersecting. How do we navigate ourselves and the disability agenda to ensure access? How do we infuse disability services into the total operation of our institutions? How do we promote an appreciation of disability identity, experience, and community? Sue Kroeger will address the importance of disability service providers learning how to dippy-doodle in ways that can empower themselves, disabled people, and institutions to create more inclusive cultures and universally designed environments.

Raymond Olson:

I'd like to speak on behalf of all of the PEP-Net directors in thanking you for taking part in this conference and making it such a huge success. As the conference comes to a close, I have the very great honor to introduce a lady that I have a lot of respect for. I count her as a mentor, and I think a lot of you could do the same.

When Dr. Sue Kroeger left Minnesota recently, it was our loss and somebody else's gain. She is currently the director of the Disability Resource Center at the University of Arizona. However, from 1985 through 1999, she was the director of Disability Services at University of Minnesota. She supervises and, I believe, mentors 40 employees that are either full-time or part-time at the University of Arizona.

She received her Master's degree from the University of Arizona and completed her doctorate at the University of Northern Colorado. She has worked in public and private rehabilitation

in addition to her numerous administrative duties. Dr. Kroeger has published articles on disability and higher education and was the coeditor of a book entitled, "Responding to Disability Issues in Student Affairs," published in 1993. She has been the Treasurer of the Association of Higher Education Disability (AHEAD) and is currently the President. She holds adjunct faculty status in the Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation at the University of Arizona. She has been the principal investigator of numerous federal grants and is a national and international consultant.

Dr. Kroeger will talk about how important it is for disability service providers to learn how to "dippy-doodle" in the ways that empower themselves, disabled people, and institutions, and how to create more inclusive cultures and universally designed environments. I think the word "dippy-doodle" is one that a lot of you can probably identify with.

Sue Kroeger:

Thank you, Ray. It's really great to be here. I wish that I could have been here for the whole conference. Since I arrived this morning, I've talked to a number of you, and all I have heard is what a wonderful conference this has been. I hope you are proud of it, because that is a major, major accomplishment. (*applause*)

Many of you may know Anita Stockbauer who will help me with my overheads. We were talking at lunch about the conference and decided that we will both take back many wonderful ideas and possibilities to pass on to the AHEAD folks. We'd like to see if AHEAD can make some significant strides forward in providing better access to its conference and services. Thank you for being

¹ This is an edited transcript of the plenary presentation..

a model, not only for all of our programs and services but also for AHEAD. We will look to you for guidance and support. I also want to add that PEPNet and AHEAD really are developing, I think, a wonderful partnership and relationship. I think it's strong and getting stronger, and I think it really has a bright future. So I hope that's as exciting for you as it is for me.

Last night, when I was packing to come here today, I was talking with my two daughters. One is 11 years old, and the other is 4 years old. Obviously, there is a big difference between an 11-year-old and a 4-year-old. While I was packing my suitcase, they were asking me where I was going, what I was doing, why I had to go, and why I couldn't call in sick. (*laughter.*)

I thought, "Well, they are both paying attention to me. Maybe I'll tell them exactly what I'm going to do." So I just started to explain about this trip. I might have only said one or two sentences about representing the association and a little bit more about what I was going to talk about. Just as I got to the end of the second sentence, the phone rang and my 11-year-old screamed, "I'll get it!" She looked back at me and said, "Cool, Mom. I think they'll love it," and she left the room. So I turned to my 4-year-old, thinking that she probably wasn't more interested in what I had to say either. She turned, looked at me and said, "Well, if you were telling that story at my school, it would have to be longer and have pictures." (*laughter.*)

So, you're going to get a little more than two sentences, and you are going to get some pictures. So bear with me.

I'm curious how many of you in the room were at PEPNet in Orlando. (*showing of hands*) Quite a few of you? Were any of you at that plenary panel where I was up on stage and the smoke started coming down? (*showing of hands*)

Well, you know, I didn't get very far in that little talk, which is probably why they were nice enough to invite me back. But when Debra Wilcox Hsu called and said she wanted me to do something more with that dippy-doodling concept, I thought, "Well, I don't know; that dippy-doodling thing might be saturated." I couldn't think what more to do with it. Then I really began to think about it and realized that how I talked about dippy-doodling a couple years ago was grounded in experiences that I was having at the University of Minnesota. As many of you know, I had

been at the University of Minnesota a long time, so I had established relationships. The staff and I literally grew up together. I think when I went in 1985, there were only a few of us. When I left in 1999, there were more than 45 people in the department. We all sort of evolved and developed our rationale around dippy-doodling together.

Since I now live in the wonderful State of Arizona and work at the University of Arizona, I'm working with a staff that has a very long, rich history but not with me. So I think that has been an interesting challenge for me to think about dippy-doodling in a place where I don't have the relationships or the long history with the staff. In thinking about dippy-doodling, I've come to appreciate that you really need to plan for it. I'm not sure that I fully appreciated that prior to moving this past summer.

As many of you know and feel on a daily basis, the disability field is changing, and so are the institutions where we work—from faculty governance to curriculum revision, to strategic planning to information systems, and to facilities design and construction. All of those components in disability access are constantly intersecting.

So how do we navigate ourselves and our disability agenda to insure access? How do we infuse disability access into the total operation of our institution? How do we promote an appreciation of disability identity, experience, and community? How do we not only be let in the college or university door but also into the rooms of power and decision-making with the understanding that, once inside, we're probably going to want to rearrange the furniture, remove a few walls, build ramps, use sign language, and generally move in as co-owners, rather than short-term tenants that some are hoping we are? It is so critical that we as disability service providers and administrators learn the political dances, which I like to refer to as dippy-doodling, so as to empower ourselves, disabled people, and our institutions to create those more inclusive cultures and universally designed environments.

I want you to listen to this wonderful description of one of the world's most passionate dances, the Tango, and think of it as an analogy to dippy-doodling on the higher education dance floor. Imagine the disability services director and the college president facing each other, assuming the position, and breathing in anticipation. The powerful issue at hand swells for them to take in.

One partner initiates movement. The other feels the direction and the timing. They are now mirror image figures. One has the other's agreement to be led; of course, that would be the president, and therein lies the balance. Without agreement and balance, there is no Tango. How hard can it be for one of them to step, then walk back three steps, cross in front, step back, and close? Eight beats in all; its so simple, yet excitement grows. It is the prelude to exquisite communication. The passionate issue unfolds. You don't have to know the person or even want to know them. It seems different with each partner. You learn about yourself through the partnership. The Tango has begun. It takes your breath away. So breathe and relax. You want to know about posture and how to move your body, not just how to do the steps. You want to be elegant and poised, comfortable with who you are. The dancers seem to have no expression except concentration on their faces. The emotions are brewing within. Hearts are beating. This is the ultimate in dipsy-doodling.

Of course, there are many other types of dipsy-doodling that take place on our campuses that may not appear on the surface as smooth or choreographed as the Tango, like the Charleston or the Jitterbug. But there is a need for us to have a wide range of dipsy-doodle steps in our back pocket when we begin to advocate. All of the steps are designed to draw on the power of others vested with institutional power, such as the president, the provost, the deans, and the faculty. We dance to win influence with those in power and then retain that influence. These are critical activities in this work, whether you are administering a unit or providing direct services. Dipsy-doodling can help you to assess your campus culture, navigate the spaces of power, build alliances, and create universally designed environments.

The first slide shows a John Callahan cartoon. In this cartoon, there is a bunch of people from quite diverse groups standing around saying, "Hey, let's not take this diversity thing too far." In the middle of the group is a guy with a GOP sign on his chest. You know, I can do this now that I'm from Arizona where the GOP has a little more clout there than in Minnesota. But to do dipsy-doodling, it's really important to plan for it.

I don't know if you all feel this on your campuses, but when we start getting into diversity work, I just find that it's so easy for people's eyes

to glaze over. You know, one group after another comes in and pretty soon people think, "Okay, who's here this week wanting my time and attention?" I think a big benefit of planning your dipsy-doodling is that it really pushes you to articulate a clear mission and vision, which in turn increases your external support. I also think that when administrators understand the intent of your dipsy-doodling, they feel more confident in your future actions. So clarifying your values, your rationale, your activities, and your desired outcomes really provides a context for resource allocation on campus, and it also improves the image of your disability access initiatives.

I think the first step in planning for dipsy-doodling is to clarify the values that are core to your effort. I'd like to illustrate this with some examples. Certainly one of them would be the interdependence of the human community. You know, we in America are incredibly obsessed with individualism. I really think we have a somewhat distorted sense of independence, which I think thwarts the development of community. The disability community really is in a wonderful position to model and redefine what it means to be whole, interdependent members of the human community. So I think the interdependence of the human community is a core value.

Another example that people may be tired of hearing from me is the sociopolitical definition of disability. I think we absolutely have to find a way to embrace it stronger and more widely. If you look around at our systems, our institutions, and our families, the medical and moral models of disability are alive and well. They are incredible barriers to our access agendas.

Another value is what I call the cross-disability community. We have got to find a way to subvert the disability hierarchies and appreciate the shared experiences as well as the very profound and significant unique differences among the different disability groups. But we need to find a way to build cross-disability community.

Another value might be global disability community networks. We have to find ways to end our isolation as individuals with disabilities by fostering these global networks.

Multicultural coalitions might be another value to consider. We need to challenge the prejudice and bigotry which exists within the disability community and build coalitions incorporating other social justice agendas into our agenda.

The cartoon displayed now has a person laying on the ground, kind of chopped up, and a guy with a knife is standing over him. When the police arrive, they said, "Don't arrest him. Instead, let's examine the root causes of the problem." I think that it's important to examine the root causes of the problem. It's important for us to take realities and trends into account. What are those external forces that will impact our dippy-doodling? What's the current situation that makes dippy-doodling necessary? I think we need to be clear on the rationale.

What is our rationale for feeling a need to go out there and build these relationships and navigate the campus? I think one reality is the perception that wrongs relative to the disability community can be righted through public policy. A short time before his death, Irv Zola, a disabled person, historian, writer, activist, and scholar, reviewed a few books on the history of disability and made this very important observation, which stuck with me over the years. He wrote, "We cannot and should not root the origin of our history solidly in the 20th century, since there has been an eternal existence of chronic disease and disability and also personal, social, and political attempts, both to deal with it and to deny it. Without this sense of history, there is no societal or even personal appreciation of the depth of the fear of disability. Without appreciation of the depth of the fear of disability there is a naiveté that wrongs about disability can be righted by single actions like the ADA. Without recognition of its presence through both time and space, we will ultimately seek the elimination and prevention of disability as our primary goals rather than its integration, acceptance, and ultimately its appreciation."

Another reality that we live with is that too many people still believe that disability access consists of making reasonable accommodations for individuals, rather than changing environments. This is prevalent in the moral and medical models of disability, where the deficit is lodged firmly with those of us with disability. Essentially, it's our problem to fix. The concept that the environment may be disabling or poorly designed really hasn't taken hold yet, although recently I have been hearing the phrase "universal design" over and over. It may be that we have designed and constructed all sorts of environments - whether it's an information environment, a physical environment, or an employment environment

- but these have been designed and constructed to exclude rather than include. So it may be that we are on to something with the concept of universal design.

Another reality, though, is that there are hardly any disabled people at the table all of the time and on all issues. On most of our campuses, critical decision-making committees or groups never consider disability access because there is usually no voice at the table to remind them of its importance.

Conservative backlash is another reality. You know, we have lawsuits, and we have accountability as to who is and who isn't disabled. How much funding do we have to provide for civil rights? We also have the reality that the demand for access is up and amount of resources is down. We have competing attitudes. As people with disabilities, women, gays and lesbians, and people of color become more active advocates, those with the privilege and power are claiming that these groups have an advantage.

Another reality is that most of our organizations and offices working on diversity just have too little clout. In honor of my daughter, Andie, I have another picture. This is a cartoon that shows poor design. The swing was not built to swing but to throw somebody's head into the ground. What this says to me is that it's very important for us to define a mission that is inspiring. That really is the highest function of a disability access initiative. This picture, however, certainly wouldn't fit as a great vision for our campuses.

I'd like to show you another picture. It's called a level playing field, and it's a picture of a cemetery. (*laughter.*) We talk about leveling the playing field, don't we? We need to be careful what we wish for. Again, I think defining the mission is fundamental. We have to find ways to really be visionary and strategic about our vision and mission. We need to be clear about what it is that we're working so hard for. Without these, it is hard to determine how to adapt the various dances to the diverse disability related issues and create healthy tension without reaching that dreaded *gag* response.

Another analogy I like to use sometimes is a dripping faucet. Just as with dance, a dripping faucet can be soothing or aggravating, depending on the context or the interrelated conditions in which the drips occur. Imagine yourself as a dripping faucet advocating for disability access. How fast are the drips? How hard do they hit the

surface? What other noises are competing with the drips? And probably most importantly, did your campus think the dripping faucet had been fixed? We hope not.

While our vision for dipsy-doodling might be universally designed communities that honor and appreciate disability as an integral part of the human community and diversity, the mission might be about getting our campus communities to take responsibility for their self-awareness and their other awareness to become visionary, energetic, and enduring. Our dipsy-doodling mission is to build community capacity. I see community capacity as the combined influence of a community's commitment and a community's resources and skills that can be deployed to build on community strengths and address community weaknesses. So commitment refers to a community-held will to act based on awareness of problems, opportunities, and workable solutions. I think commitment also refers to a heightened state of support in key parts of the campus to address problems, solve problems, and strengthen the campus response.

Resources, as you can imagine, refers to financial assets and means to deploy them intelligently and fairly. It includes information or guidelines that insure the best use of funds. Resources also refers to skills and knowledge, including all of the talents and expertise of individuals and organizations that can be marshaled to address problems, seize opportunities, and add strengths to the community.

Communities and the groups and institutions within them vary tremendously in capacity. Think again of your campus community; even those most seemingly broken down do have capacity and are capable of developing more.

So the three essential ingredients of community capacity - commitment, resources, and skills and knowledge - do not just happen. Rather, they are developed through effort and willingness to work and initiative and leadership, à la dipsy-doodling. To build community capacity, dipsy-doodlers must adjust their dance steps and ask some very key questions. To what extent will my campus increase its capacity to improve access for disabled people? Where do I see increased commitment, resources, and skills? What more needs to be done to garner and deploy resources and to galvanize campus support, skills, and action?

The final set of decisions made in shaping our dipsy-doodling vision and mission is the iden-

tification of the key activities that we need to move a college or university from the existing to the desired state of affairs. To keep our focus, these should be limited in number and should concentrate on substance. Some examples might be: (a) educating community members, helping shape opinions, and galvanizing commitment; (b) attracting and collecting financial resources, compiling information, and shaping ways for deploying these resources to catalyze change in the way problems are addressed and opportunities seized; and (c) organizing people and work, developing skills, and coordinating or managing sustained effort that builds up the positive qualities of community life that can begin to resolve a problem.

Finally, it's important to think about how to measure dipsy-doodling progress toward our vision. What are the desired dipsy-doodling outcomes? Some examples might be the presence of disabled people at all levels of the institutions or improved attitudes of disabled people.

My favorite outcome, but one that is probably hardest to get on a campus, is creating incentives and sanctions for all units with respect to their accomplishments in improving access. This includes evaluating the performance of all administrators regarding their effectiveness in improving disability access and developing programs for disabled people in supervisory positions to expand their job skills and increase local pools for advancement. This results in increased commitment, skills, knowledge, and resources. Models of universal design are identified, recognized, and exported to new areas. Finally, data is refined, systematically collected, analyzed, publicized, and factored into the institutional reward system.

The last cartoon I have shows two older men sitting, backwards in their chairs, on a front porch. One guy says to the other, "I think if I had to do it all over again, I'd sit on this chair frontwards." (*laughter.*)

One thing we don't want to do is put a lot of time and effort into an initiative and then have that feeling at the end that maybe we should have done something different or tried things a different way. Or, like the men in the cartoon, we wouldn't want to feel like if we had the chance to do it over again, we'd do it another way. What we really want to do is try a lot of things, keep trying, and not give up. This work is too important and it requires so many of us to do it. There really are no panaceas in managing a disability access agenda, but I think dipsy-doodling, or po-

litical dancing, or whatever you want to call it, can be a useful tool in moving higher education systematically toward universal design.

Over the years, I've learned that strong leadership from the top is as absolutely indispensable as a talented and productive disability services staff. I've also learned that we need to dippy-doodle within a broad range of constituencies. We can't focus just on upper-level administrators. We have to change departmental cultures as well. We have to remain flexible and adaptive, within reason, and maintain a certain amount of wiggle room. We need to have allies in strategic locations of the campus. Most important of all, we

need to demonstrate the passion and the fun of creating inclusive cultures and universally designed environments.

I want to thank you again for inviting me here today. I encourage all of you to participate with us this summer at the AHEAD conference in which our theme is universally designed environments in higher education. We look to you for guidance and support in modeling a universally designed conference.

Thanks for all your wisdom, your passion, and your expertise. Again, thank you for inviting me here this year. And I hope you all have a wonderful trip home. *(applause)*