

**Truly Equal Access:
A Policy for Physical Accessibility
at the College of William and Mary**

Prepared by the Inter-Ability Action Coalition

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Table of Contents

TRULY EQUAL ACCESS: A POLICY FOR PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY AT THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY	1
GUIDELINES FOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION	2
<i>1. Routes.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>2. Facilities</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>3. Recreation.....</i>	<i>5</i>

Truly Equal Access: A Policy for Physical Accessibility at the College of William and Mary

Laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and the 1973 Rehabilitation Act guarantee educational access. These laws set minimums, but the College must seek excellence in its physical accessibility. The College must ensure access for students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, and visitors with permanent or temporary disabilities.

The College must preserve its historic campus, but throughout history, many Americans were denied the opportunities afforded others. While the *ADA Standards for Accessible Design* allows exceptions for historic structures, the College must seek accessible solutions for its historic, old, and new buildings.

1. Standards. All new construction, renovation, and equipment should follow the *Americans with Disabilities Act and Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Guidelines*, not the *ADA Standards*, which is less comprehensive. *ANSI A117.1 Standard on Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities* provides additional standards.

2. New Construction. All routes, doors, spaces, and facilities should be accessible except when technically infeasible. If a feature must be inaccessible, an accessible alternative must be provided.

3. Renovation. The College should audit campus accessibility, then develop a timeline for improvements.

A. Access Essential to Academics. Spaces essential to academics, including classrooms and faculty offices, must be accessible. If a space cannot be made accessible, the use of that space must be reassigned to another location.

B. Access Not Essential to Academics. Although not protected by the same laws, all public spaces not essential to academics should be accessible.

C. Degree of Accessibility. A minimum of two accessible routes and entrances should be provided for each space, though more are preferable.

4. During Construction. Accessibility must be maintained throughout the construction process. Wayfinding signs must identify changes in accessible routes and entrances.

5. Equipment. All classroom, laboratory, dormitory, office, and recreational equipment should be chosen for accessibility.

6. Implementation. The Disability Advocacy Committee and Awareness Board should ensure implementation of this policy, through representatives on building committees, by monitoring progress, and by creating a mechanism for reporting inaccessibility.

Guidelines for Policy Implementation

The following guidelines are intended to aid the implementation of this policy. Many, though not all, of these guidelines are derived from the *Americans with Disabilities Act and Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Guidelines*. A copy can be found at the following web address:

<http://www.access-board.gov/gs.htm>

For each item, the relevant sections of the *Guidelines*, and corresponding sections in the *ADA Standards for Accessible Design*, are indicated. Additional specifications are found in ANSI A117.1 *Standard on Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities*. The guidelines below exclude elements of campus that already are sufficiently accessible, such as parking spaces.

The *Fair Housing Act Design Manual* contains a list of accessible products and information about their manufacturers. A copy can be found at the following web address:

<http://www.huduser.org/Publications/PDF/FAIRHOUSING/fairfull.pdf>

1. Routes

Slope and Width. Unless technically infeasible, routes should be accessible in terms of slope and width. The width should be sufficient to avoid the need for passing spaces; otherwise passing spaces must be included.

Guidelines chapter 4, especially 403 (*Standards* 4.3)

Ramps and Stairs. If a portion of a route has sufficient slope to qualify as a ramp, it should conform to *Guidelines* specifications. Stairs should be avoided but, if necessary, conform to the *Guidelines*. All new and existing ramps and stairs should include handrails.

Guidelines 405, 406, 504 (*Standards* 4.8, 4.9, 4.30)

Surface Material. The ideal surface materials for outdoor routes are concrete and asphalt. While brick is a popular paving material, it should be avoided for new construction. Existing brick routes must be well maintained.

Inaccessible Routes. If an inaccessible route is necessary, it must be paired with a fully accessible alternative. Routes paved with brick or including stairs are not considered accessible.

Wayfinding. For new construction and the existing campus, wayfinding signs should indicate accessible routes to all possible destinations. At a complex of buildings or other features, a map at the entrance to the complex should indicate the accessible routes.

Guidelines 703 (Standards 4.30)

Curb Ramps and Dumpsters. Curb ramps should be constructed along the road for each walkway or building entrance. A raised walkway should be constructed adjacent to dumpsters to improve access.

Guidelines 406 (Standards 4.7)

Doors. Doors should be accessible in terms of width, maneuvering clearances, opening force, and thresholds. Exterior doors should include push handles and buttons for automatic operation, which remain operable whenever the building is unlocked. Interior doors should be operated by lever handles. Doors should lock automatically, without the use of a key. A high color contrast between the door and its frame assists the visually impaired. A glass panel in the door allows users to see oncoming traffic.

Guidelines 404 (Standards 4.13)

Elevators. Buildings more than one story should include an accessible elevator.

Guidelines 407 (Standards 4.10)

Room Signs. Rooms and facilities should be marked with signs accessible to the visually impaired, including tactile identification.

Guidelines 703 (Standards 4.30)

2. Facilities

Kitchens. Kitchens should include accessible work surfaces and appliances. Appliances should be chosen and positioned for accessible reach ranges. Appliance controls with operation closer to that of a lever are more accessible. Appliances, controls, and storage spaces should allow tactile identification. In addition, kitchens must provide clearance and an accessible route around furniture.

Guidelines 304-8, 703 (Standards 4.2)

Laundry Rooms. Washers and dryers in dormitory laundry rooms should be accessible in terms of their dimensions, positioning, operable parts, and reach ranges. Washers and dryers should be front loading and should not be stacked. Controls should allow tactile identification.

Guidelines 308, 611, 703 (Standards 4.2)

Bathrooms. While one accessible toilet is sufficient for each bathroom, all sinks should be accessible and lever operated. Sink controls should not require constant pressure. Soap and paper towel dispensers should be within accessible reach ranges. Each dormitory bathroom should contain an accessible bathtub, with a permanent seat and a shower spray unit.

Guidelines 308, 604-10 (Standards 4.2, 4.16-24)

Lounge. Lounges should provide sufficient clearance and an accessible route around furniture. Lounge amenities, such as televisions, should be selected and positioned for accessible reach ranges. Vending machines, games, and other amenities should be chosen for accessible operable parts and reach ranges and identification by the visually impaired.

Guidelines 304-8 (Standards 4.2)

Light Switches, Thermostats, Outlets. Light switches, thermostats, outlets, and jacks for telephones and the computer network should be located within accessible reach ranges, with sufficient clear floor space, and should allow tactile identification. Wireless network access avoids the difficulty of reaching a network jack.

Guidelines 304-8, 703 (Standards 4.2)

Windows. Windows and window shading should be accessible in their operation, with sufficient clear floor space to allow access.

Guidelines 304-8 (Standards 4.2)

Classrooms. To allow full participation in classes, all areas of a classroom must be accessible, including the front of lecture halls. This can be achieved by placing the main entrance to lecture halls in the front.

Laboratories. Laboratory arrangements should allow clearance and an accessible route. Equipment should be chosen for accessibility and located within accessible reach ranges. Labeling should allow tactile identification.

Guidelines 304-8, 703 (Standards 4.2)

A/V Equipment. Audio-visual equipment should be chosen for accessibility and either located within accessible reach ranges or operated by remote control. Controls should allow tactile identification.

Guidelines 304-8, 703 (Standards 4.2)

Projection Screens. All projection screens should be automated. The controls should be located within accessible reach ranges and allow tactile identification.

Guidelines 304-8, 703 (Standards 4.2)

Sliding Blackboards. Sliding blackboards should not be used unless they are automated.

Drinking Fountains. Drinking fountains should be accessible in terms of reach ranges, clearance, and controls.

Guidelines 602 (Standards 4.15)

Bus Shelters/Boarding Areas. Bus shelters and boarding areas should be accessible, including clear floor space within the shelter for a wheelchair.

Guidelines 810

3. Recreation

Rec Center. Accessibility of the Rec Center is important because of its potential for physical therapy for people with permanent and temporary disabilities. Equipment should be chosen for accessibility and ease of transfer from a wheelchair and be arranged to allow clearances and an accessible route. Equipment should have tactile or audio instructions and controls.

Guidelines 304-8, 703 (Standards 4.2)

Sunken Gardens. Railings on the stairs will make the Sunken Gardens more accessible, but a fully accessible entrance is needed. The gate should always be openable, at least wide enough to admit a wheelchair if not a car. A space near the gate with a hard surface and benches in the Sunken Gardens will help all people enjoy this space.

Benches. Benches should be on accessible routes with an adjacent hard-surface clear ground space for wheelchairs.

Guidelines 903