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Title: Access Your Letters: The Greek System and Its Place within Disabilities Awareness at the University of Illinois

About the Author: I am currently a sophomore studying Accountancy at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign. I am a member of a fraternity on campus whose house is undergoing major renovations, and a significant portion of the construction is related to accessibility.

Keywords: Greek, fraternity, sorority, accessibility, disability

Abstract: The University of Illinois has long been nationally recognized for both its Greek system and its support of disabilities awareness. However, these two reputations seem to have little to do with each other. Students come to this university to take advantage of one of these great opportunities, but never both. Using archival research, recent statutory amendments, and personal interviews, this paper examines the disconnect between these two reputations and its apparent source: apathy. Following a brief background and an analysis of these findings, a recommendations section provides ideas for immediate and long-term remedies for a way to narrow this gap: increased accessibility within Greek organizations.

Short Assignment on The Body Silent: Robert Murphy’s occupation as an anthropologist and ethnographer at the university level provides him with a unique perspective on disability in the world: few people have his experience not only as someone who studies Americans with disabilities, but also as a disabled American himself. However, this perspective, albeit unique, is also somewhat narrow-minded, as Murphy’s disability is not congenital, nor does it affect his mental abilities at all.

Some consider the term “anthropologist” to be the academic version of what lay people refer to as “people-watchers.” By profession, Murphy observes cultural trends and attitudes to the point that he “could write a book about it off the top of [his]
head” (Murphy 78). This assembled knowledge of American sociology allows Murphy the opportunity to make qualified statements about his new life as a disabled man. Many elderly residents of my grandmother’s assisted living complex comment that being in a wheelchair turns them into so-called “people-watchers,” since that is one of the few activities they can still independently undertake without mobility. Murphy’s condition forces him to sit back (literally) and observe the world in a different light: in addition to being an anthropologist, he truly becomes a “people-watcher” in the grandest sense of the word. For example, after a social worker asks him what his occupation was, Murphy immediately feels distanced from the able-bodied world, but he is able to draw on research and other academics who classify this phenomenon in situations other than those involving disability (e.g. the “see-through dress” on page 121). Again, Murphy’s deep understanding of American cultural tendencies enables him to place his personal experiences in a much broader context than someone without the title of “anthropologist.”

Despite Murphy’s insightful comments as both a certified anthropologist and ordinary people-watcher, there are some limiting factors in his perspective on disability. Perhaps the biggest bias is the fact that Murphy is not congenitally disabled, or at least he first faces his condition many years after his birth. Most of Murphy’s struggles come from the fact that he has to change his lifestyle to accommodate his disability; he comments that his “old comfortable house [is] now […] an obstacle course” (Murphy 56). In SHS 120, a CHP class dealing with language disability, we discussed how people who grow up with disabilities often comment that they would not know how to live without them; they do not only accept their disabilities, they embrace them. An extreme example of this is Martha’s Vineyard, a town in Massachusetts where deafness was so common that even people who could hear knew and regularly used sign language. Murphy’s late accession into the
ranks of the disabled does not afford him the same perspective as someone born into the supportive culture that many people with disabilities experience.

It is clear that Robert Murphy’s professional expertise provides an opportunity for monumental insights into the world of disability in this country. His unique familiarity looking both from the outside in and from the inside out allows him to articulate what many probably know as logical, but never experience firsthand. However, Murphy himself notes that “[e]verybody is disabled in one way or another” (Murphy 66): many people learn to live with their respective disabilities, whether they be anything from poor metabolism to quadriplegia, by growing up with them and dealing with them from a young age. Murphy does not have this opportunity, and therefore has a jaded perspective at times regarding what it is like to live with a disability.

Despite these differences, it is important to note that there is no correct answer to the question of disabilities awareness. Like Murphy’s analysis of the medical profession, it seems like people all too often want steadfast rules regarding how to treat disabled people—a “miracle cure,” if you will—instead of being motivated to work consistently toward slow but meaningful progress. It is with this second mentality that activists like Robert Murphy would want us as human beings to relate to one another.

Campus Map Assignment: NOTE: On my map, the blue path is my normal path, and the green path is the path I would have to take if I used a wheelchair.

For my campus map assignment, I decided to choose Tuesday, since it is my busiest day. Normally I leave my dorm through the eastern exit. However, even from the very first few steps, I realized that my day would be a lot different from the very beginning. For starters, I had to wait by the elevator to get down from the third floor. Furthermore, there is construction right around the six pack, so I could not exit the building on the east side like I normally do:
since the curb is now too high and there are no more wide sidewalks, I had to exit on the west side (away from the construction) and cross the street to get to a wheelchair-accessible path. Thus began my day down the path of a wheelchair-bound student.

After exiting my dorm, the path to Wohlers Hall was pretty normal: all of the sidewalks are slanted to accommodate wheelchairs, which was comforting to notice. Even entering the lecture hall was pretty painless: the ramped entrance was just a few feet away from the one I normally use. I later found out that Wohlers Hall (formerly Commerce West) was renovated in the mid-1990s, which is after the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed.

My next class in Gregory Hall, however, was not quite so seamless. The only handicapped entrance was on the north side of the building, which was completely opposite the normal door I go in. The people I was walking with told me that they would just meet me in the lecture hall. This was, however, much easier said than done. They found seats in the middle of the hall, and, much to my dismay, there were steps all throughout the seating area. This lecture hall posed two major differences than the one in Wohlers: not only could I not sit with people I wanted, but I also had to enter in the front of the classroom instead of the normal entrance in the back. This was not as big of a deal for me since I was not actually in a wheelchair, but I still felt as though I was taking some kind of special path that was only for “people who needed it.”

On Tuesdays, I usually meet my friend at ISR for lunch, and this went surprisingly well. Navigating the quad’s wide and flat sidewalks was very manageable—for the first time, I felt grateful to live in the flat Midwest—and everything in the dorm that I needed to access was on the first floor. I wondered if I would have problems reaching the food if I were in a wheelchair, but other than that I felt like everything was pretty accommodating. Similarly, the
trip to the English Building (for this class) was very standard: I had to take a slight detour around the building to get in the handicapped entrance, but the elevator is located right by the stairs, and I did not feel like I was going too much out of my way.

After taking the elevator up to the main level, it was finally time to go home. I could not cut through the library parking lot per my usual routine, but other than that, getting to my dorm was fine. I took a nap, and then woke up for Marching Illini practice. Luckily, our first practice on Tuesdays is a music rehearsal at the Harding Band Building, so I was able to participate. After taking the elevator down and exiting on the west side (it was already starting to get a little old), I took my normal path to the Band Building. Getting inside was not the hard part, but the crowded hallway outside the rehearsal room was when it really hit me. Even completely mobile people have problems getting through the gob of students trying to sign in on the attendance sheet; what would I do if I was in a wheelchair? After fighting through the masses, I sat down in my chair (which I noticed was very tightly squeezed in), and we began practice.

After music rehearsal, everyone went to dinner, which was on the first floor of Noodles on Green Street. However, on Tuesday evenings, the Marching Illini practices in Memorial Stadium for an hour and a half. I participated in the marching practice, but I also noticed how inaccessible the field is. Normally I enter just east of IMPE/ARC, but there are stairs right there. Instead, I was forced to go all the way down Fourth Street to Kirby Street and enter the stadium through the south entrance, or the “horseshoe.” I also had to enter alone once again. Now that I have seen how cumbersome it is to enter the stadium, I am genuinely interested to know how it accommodates wheelchair users in the general public for football games: surely they cannot walk up the countless stairs to even the thirtieth or fortieth rows. And what happens if they need to use the restroom? I plan to inquire about this the next time
we have a practice or game there.

I do not think I fully understood the different areas of student life that are affected by being in a wheelchair until this exercise. The loneliness that comes with having to use completely segregated entrances is far worse than I thought, I was only walking through them. If there was poor weather or the electronic door button did not work, this route would have been far worse. I also would not be able to participate in one of my favorite activities on campus, the Marching Illini. I truly believe that students learn just as much through sports and activities outside the classroom as in an academic class, and I am now curious as to how limited the options are for people with both physical and mental disabilities. Is there anything the University can do (or more importantly, should be doing) to ensure that handicapped students have access to as many opportunities on campus as possible? I hope to answer this question as the semester goes on.

In an effort to find a more contemporary document regarding Greek housing renovations and the impact the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) has on their ongoing progress, I searched the Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) website for findings more recent than those listed in the Student Life and Culture Archives or the University Archives. Surprisingly, however, my search led me not to information about accessibility initiatives in Greek housing, but to another area of personal interest for me, athletic bands.

Using search terms like “greek,” “fraternity,” and “disabled” naturally produced results relating to Delta Sigma Omicron, the service fraternity for disabled students, whose Alpha chapter started at Illinois in the late 1940s. I clicked on a few of the links in hopes of finding something related to my question. As I perused the fraternity’s various
accomplishments, I found numerous articles about the wheelchair basketball team at Illinois. What intrigued me, though, was that one of the articles was about the “Ultimate Basketball Challenge.” This is a basketball tournament held at Huff Hall every April to raise awareness about the wheelchair team and DRES in general. The catch was that both the men’s and women’s basketball teams participated as well. In addition, this article and the photos were on FightingIllini.com, the University’s official (able-bodied) sports page. To top it all off, the words “handicapped” and “disabled” were nowhere to be found in either the article or the titles.

This brings me to my artifact. It is candid photo on the Ultimate Basketball Challenge website of basketball players (from all three teams) in very similar jerseys, as well as cheerleaders, band members, and Orange Krush fans. The caption of the photo reads, “Orange Krush, band, and cheerleaders made the UBC a fun experience.” After our extensive discussion of disability thus far in class, this picture struck me in many ways it would not have if I were not in this class.

For starters, the title of the tournament itself is significant. It is not called the “Wheelchair Awareness Shootout” or the “Campus Wheels Tournament”. It is the Ultimate Basketball Challenge, and it truly lives up to its name—the University’s best basketball players compete with each other in a relatively familiar (albeit idiosyncratic) environment. In class we mentioned how language plays a huge part in the stigmas regarding disability: I think this use of the phrase “ultimate challenge” is very similar to the phrase “universal accessibility” we discussed with regards to DRES and new classroom accessibility initiatives. The way both titles are phrased implies that no one is superior—only that everyone will be involved. The words “ultimate” and “universal” also suggest a sense of finality, as if they supersede all other challenges or forms of accessibility. The caption also described the event
as a generically “fun experience,” implying that it was not for any one group of people other than the student body at large. That struck me as very progressive.

The name and caption aside, the event itself has huge implications for the disabled on the University of Illinois campus. As a member of the UI Basketball Band, I know that this game was among those counted for points, i.e. the grade in the class: this game was treated no differently than any sold out conference game as far as we were concerned. I also know firsthand that the game was very well attended, and for good reason—people wanted to see all of the university’s best basketball players face off against each other. Seeing the star athletes from all three teams play each other was exciting for any sports fan, and I feel like every athlete who walked away from that game felt a great sense of pride not to be on the men’s/women’s/wheelchair team, but simply to be a basketball player at this institution.

Joseph A. Shapiro mentions in No Pity that the University of Illinois was one of the first universities to make accommodations for disabled war veterans and students in general. This legacy definitely lives on, especially in the sports arena. Although the able-bodied players also played in wheelchairs, they were not completely limited in their abilities. They still had their hand-eye coordination, their shot ability, their favorite pre-free-throw rituals. The cheerleaders did not have “handicapped” cheers, the band did not play “handicapped” pep tunes, and the announcer did not make “handicapped” commentary. The photo does a great job of capturing the school spirit for the game, not the different feelings for the different teams—it looks like a picture any college student could put on Facebook without a second thought.

I definitely think this photo and its implications could provoke further research in the field of disability studies. The University of Illinois is nationally recognized for its successes in wheelchair
basketball, but what about other disabled sports? How feasible would it be to start integrating other sports into Ultimate Challenge-type events? In a broader perspective, many general campus-wide events like Relay for Life already integrate students of all abilities because of their universally accessible venues; how does this aspect life of the disabled differ from that of “mainstream” students? Do events like Unofficial St. Patrick’s Day (or equivalents on other campuses) provide opportunities for able-bodied students to interact with the disabled? The success of this sporting event suggests that the general mindset of the students on this campus is ready to progress into a more universally accepting state of being, and I believe that further research could result in more opportunities for all students—regardless of ability (or anything, really)—to meet and learn from each other.


Jenn Baldwin’s analysis of the world of the disabled included some interesting points that I had never thought of before. For example, I never realized all of the nuances that work together in the environment of a coffee shop. Although not relating exactly to disability, it definitely provides a somewhat ironic kind of “accessibility” for the general public: a communal intimate setting. She also mentions accessibility functions that could pertain to the able-bodied: remedies the unlabeled cream in the coffee shop and the unclear links on the DRES website could benefit anyone who used them.

Baldwin’s interview with Ted, the wheelchair basketball athlete, was also very interesting. The fact that the police attempted to apprehend the student for lifting Ted up is definitely an example of the kind of pity that No Pity protests. He also mentioned that...
he could not get out of his apartment because of the snow. However, the Illinois Student Senate worked with the City of Champaign last fall to amend its Municipal Code (Section 9-5). It is now mandatory that within forty-eight hours of a snowfall, all sidewalks must be cleared of snow/ice by their owner (in the case of apartments, this would be the landlord). It was satisfying to note that one of Ted’s frustrations has already been addressed.

Overall, Baldwin’s paper allowed me a closer insight into the world of the disabled, particularly as it relates to students. Sometimes it is hard for me to connect with people in nationally published books. However, when someone whom I have potentially seen on campus tells his story, it becomes a lot more real.

**Initial Question:**

As a member of the Greek community at the University of Illinois, I have always been intrigued by the idea that students live in houses that older than their parents and grandparents: to me, they make campus feel more like a home environment. It is logical that period renovations are necessary in order to keep these residences livable for generations to come, and with these renovations come lots of rules and regulations. One of the most recent additions to these rules is the Americans with Disabilities Act, which has created many state statues that require accessibility for certain types of buildings. Since my fraternity house is undergoing renovations this year, I am able to see these statutes at work both in the planning and execution phases of construction. Having this viewpoint along with my general interest in the history of the Greek system has led me to my question for further research:

*Have the recent renovations of Greek houses on the University of Illinois campus been affected by the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990?*

*The Body Silent* is a big contributor to my initial question. In the book, Robert Murphy reflects on his
changing position within Columbia University as he becomes more and more disabled. His is a unique scenario in which he starts out able-bodied, but becomes less physically functional after he joins the ranks of academics. Because of this, he pushes for reform in both the public and private sectors of education. His observations of how previously familiar places became obstacle and prisons are the basis for my question. It is not that fraternities and sororities have to worry so much about making their facilities accessible to potential new members that are handicapped (by nature of their exclusivity, they are allowed to turn away anyone they want). However, should one of their active members become handicapped, it is important to take that into account when planning renovations for this generation and beyond.

In dealing with our house renovation, I have come into contact with Title 71 of the Illinois Administrative Code, commonly known as the Illinois Accessibility Code. This is a list of statutes that was passed in 1997, and it governs all public building alterations (in which Greek houses are included) on our campus. This is a direct result of the ADA, passed in 1990. These documents have helped me narrow the time and scope of my question by giving me a concrete set of dates to look at for my renovation research. I also know from the IAC that only houses whose renovations are between 15%–50% of the structure’s net worth are required to follow the same codes as for new constructions, which further defines the kinds of renovations I am looking at. Classmates’ comments in class about their own Greek house renovations have also provided me with a good starting point for figuring out which houses I should focus on in my project.

For further research, I need to take a few more visits to the Student Life and Culture Archives to look at minutes from the Society for the Preservation of Greek Housing minutes. From what I have read online, almost every major renovation that happens
comes to their attention in one way or another, and in many cases this board is against altering the houses solely for accessibility purposes (mainly for historical preservation of the properties). It would definitely be interesting to get this opposing viewpoint to see if they have been able to fight the recent statutory amendments.

I have considered interviewing members of the various houses and/or their alumni corporation boards, but that seems like it would pose a barrier even with the promise of confidentiality. I do not imagine our corporation board would give out information regarding renovations to anyone other than current active members, and they certainly would not want specifics published in a public research project, anonymous or otherwise. Because of this, I hope to use these people as a resource for finding more empirical data and using that data (rather than their personal testimonies) to establish different facts regarding renovations on campus and their adherence to accessibility laws.


The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 is a landmark compilation of statutes that provides for the accommodation of all persons with disabilities in the United States. There are multiple titles relating to employment, public services/transportation, public/commercial facilities, and telecommunications. This act caused a lot of controversy, but in and of itself did very little. It did, however, cause the passing of many state statutes with regards to accessibility (see below), including the Illinois Accessibility Code. Another point of contention this law poses for the Greek system is whether or not the residences of fraternities and sororities are considered public. Based on this distinction, different provisions in the Illinois Accessibility Code would apply to new constructions and renovations. This act does not contradict any
other information. While there seems to be no overt bias to the statute, there is definitely ambiguity regarding who is actually disabled: this has since been addressed to a degree, resulting in an amendment that will become effective in January 2009 including even more people in the category of “disabled”.


A byproduct of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Illinois Accessibility Code is an explicit collection of standards and regulations regarding accessibility standards in new constructions and renovations. This is the single most relevant statute and current document to my question, since it is the only law to date governing accessibility in the Greek system. As previously discussed, this law poses the question of publicity with regards to Greek housing. However, it can also be argued that while fraternities and sororities can reject disabled students, active members can become disabled after initiation into the organization. Therefore, the present standing is that Greek housing must, in fact, comply with the standards for public facilities. This document is a great point of reference for my question – I can compare its provisions with documented renovations to various houses on campus to see whether or not they are mentioned. The only possible contradiction this source has with others is that some of the renovations do not mention any accessibility accommodations, but that is not necessarily an indicator that there are none. There also appears to be no bias in the statute (it does not address who is classified as disabled).

Student Life and Culture Archives, Fine and Applied Arts, Urban and Regional Planning Department, Greek Chapter History Records, 2000–2008, Record Series 12/8/50, Box 2, Sigma Chi History, a compilation of oral histories dating from the
fraternity’s installation in the late nineteenth century.

After reading in a newsletter published by the Society for the Preservation for Greek Housing that Sigma Chi underwent renovations during the 1995 school year, I decided to see if any of them were documented in the history published in the archives. This directly relates to my question, because it is one of the few Greek houses that underwent a complete renovation since the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed. I found out that there was a lot of money spent on aesthetics, but there was no mention of any accommodations for disabled people. This does not contradict any of the other sources, but there is a definitely possibility for bias: much of the historical content came from oral histories and active members of the fraternity. Therefore, I believe I will just take the numerical figures presented in the history and hopefully verify them with any numbers I find in the building permits for the City of Champaign.

Student Life and Culture Archives, Fine and Applied Arts, Urban and Regional Planning Department, Society for the Preservation of Greek Housing, Record Series 12/8/24, Box 1, SPGH Newsletter, Volume 5, Number 2, Winter 2000.

Every season the Society for the Preservation of Greek Housing publishes a newsletter both to update the general public on its progress and to solicit its services to the Greek community. This issue detailed recent renovations to the Phi Delta Theta house in Champaign in 1999. What was interesting, however, was that there were major renovations to the house in 1989, just before the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed in 1990. The renovations in 1999 were related to simply heating and “fire code regulations.” There are similar cases mentioned where the renovations were done in multiple stages, many of which started before 1990. While this may not be directly related to the ADA, I will definitely keep that in mind when considering dates. There is
probably not much bias in this article, since the newsletter is not written by active members of the fraternities and sororities it details.

Student Life and Culture Archives, Fine and Applied Arts, Urban and Regional Planning Department, Society for the Preservation of Greek Housing, Record Series 12/8/24, Box 1, SPGH Newsletter, Volume 6, February 2002.

This was the most recent newsletter available in the Student Life and Culture Archives for the Society for the Preservation of Greek Housing. In each issue, the society publishes a list of possible renovations for which they would likely award a grant. Among the items are such provisions as “fire code regulations” and “heating systems,” but there is no mention of accessibility in any sense (positive or negative). This leads me to wonder whether or not the society has ever considered including accessibility-related renovations in their list of supported constructions. However, as a historical society, I doubt they would advocate a large change simply for accessibility reasons. This is definitely something to look into further as I continue to research Greek preservation initiatives through both Greek organizations like the Interfraternity and Panhellenic Councils and organizations like the SPGH that are not affiliated with the University. This list provides the first clear bias in most of my sources, as it is very much a product of those who were around before accessibility standards were mandatory for Greek housing and public facilities in general.

Student Life and Culture Archives, Rehabilitation Education Services Division, Rehabilitation Films and Videotapes, Record Series 16/6/14, Box 5, Film 7, Interview with Timothy J. Nugent concerning accessibility standards, architectural barriers on campus, the Division of Rehabilitation Education Services and its philosophies, methods, and Recreation and Athletics program, 1960s.
This film was an interview with the director of the university’s rehabilitation program in the 1960s, Tim Nugent. In the interview, Nugent responded to questions regarding academics, physical therapy, and (what I found most relevant) social life for disabled students. The class agreed that his responses were very much ahead of his time, and that definitely was true about my question. He asserted even then that the key to increasing the status of disabled students was to allow them access to able-bodied social groups. I found it very interesting that while he did not denounce Delta Sigma Omicron, the disabled service fraternity, he did not seem to think that it was sufficient for disabled students to be truly integrated in the university. This really resonates with my question, and is one of the solidifying factors in my research. The University of Illinois has a convergence of two unique features: It is one of the most progressive universities in the country with regards to disabilities awareness/studies, and it also has the largest Greek system in the world. Both of these were true even in Nugent’s time, and my question is an attempt to continue his ideas. Nugent was most certainly biased in favor of those with disability, but his responses did not seem fabricated at all; much of what he said was supported by other films we saw in class.

Revised Question: As a result of sources I have found since I wrote my initial question, I have come to a few conclusions regarding the scope of my research. My initial question was, “Have the recent renovations of Greek houses on the University of Illinois campus been affected by the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990?” However, after finding new sources and discussing the elements of an effective paper, I have broadened the scope of my question, which I believe will ironically lead to a more focused and meaningful work:

*How has the Greek system at the University of Illinois aligned itself with the university’s reputation for progressivism toward the disabled student?*
community on campus?

In class, we each evaluated our paper’s “evil twin” that would focus merely on a yes–or–no answer or a regurgitation of fact. My initial question not only lent itself to a one word answer, but my researched focused on empirical data, not on a deeper societal issue related to the disabled community at large. Through interaction with my classmates, I realized my interest is not in which houses got renovated or even what they specifically did. It actually concerns the apparent apathy and ignorance I have found regarding both disabilities awareness and accessibility issues in the entire Greek community.

One thing that sparked my interest in the research I have done up to this point is the fact that despite the meticulous accounts of Greek house renovations to date, literally none of them (including those completed after the Illinois Accessibility Code of 1997) include any documentation of accessibility elements whatsoever. This at first led me to believe that there is complete apathy within the Greek community regarding the disabled community. However, many fraternities and sororities have national philanthropy events focused on raising money for certain disabilities. Some chapters even have events unique to the University of Illinois. For example, Sigma Phi Epsilon and Kappa Alpha Theta hold a yearly 5K run event called Jog for Josh, which benefits the son of a university faculty member. Facts like these make me think that there is at least some concern for disability, and addressing this apparent disparity is the central issue in my revised question.

To address this new question, I will need to include some different research in my paper. First of all, the building permits I found are most likely not relevant to my new focus: all they serve is just verification that housing renovations happened, not as descriptions of the constructions. One additional source I hope to include is an interview with disabled
students (hopefully I will be able to find willing candidates through DRES) regarding their perception of the Greek system. I feel like gaining their perspective on prospective admission to Interfraternity and Panhellenic Council organizations (i.e. “able-bodied” fraternities and sororities) would provide a valuable insight into the impact of the activities and efforts within the Greek community. Also, I believe more research involving the various Greek chapters and their university-specific philanthropies would be useful in assessing the extent of disabilities awareness. Furthermore, I wonder if these initiatives are fueled (and funded, for that matter) by a genuine interest in the disabled community or an interest in positive public relations.

Through my revisions, I have written a new question that is a direct result of new research and input from both faculty and fellow students. Overall, I believe my revised question is not only a more interesting issue to consider, but also a more thorough analysis of an issue facing the disabled community on this campus.

Looking forward, there are a number of ways in which the Greek system can become more accessible. In a Delta Sigma Omicron meeting, dialogue between members and Ashley Dye indicated that a formal written communication between students with disabilities and the housing corporations (groups of alumni who govern the various chapter houses on campus) would be a very practical start (Field Notes & Minutes, Delta Sigma Omicron meeting). I affirm this recommendation, as it serves as a direct remedy for the apathy present in the hierarchy of Greek organizations, and also extends to alumni members not on campus. By bringing it to their attention in a positive and constructive manner, it will provide a basis for dialogue and mutual understanding to accompany
the new building codes and regulations.

On a more immediate note, many recruitment activities can occur in public areas that are accessible by everyone. Barbecues, outdoor parties, and movies on the quad are all examples of ways to remove the physical barriers that currently exist within the housing units themselves (Housing administrator interview). Furthermore, the United States Access Board has introduced a topic which it calls “visitability,” a term referring not to the residences of people with disabilities, but rather to the residences of their friends and people they would like to see (“Regulatory” 2004). In the Greek system, fraternities and sororities frequently call on each other for dinner announcements, providing a very practical application for increasing the visitability of these houses. Knowing that a student with a disability could not only enter his or her own house, but any other Greek house on campus (even if just on the ground floor), would serve as a positive motivation for those students to pursue membership in the Greek system.

Perhaps the hardest barrier to overcome with regards to accessibility is the mental stigma of tradition that exists within the Greek community. Being based on ritual, most Greek organizations pride themselves on their adherence to fraternal bonds and values, and in many cases also restrict themselves to the mindsets of those who came before them. Dealing with this issue seems rather difficult, and it was Kevin Fritz who came up with a very unique answer to this problem. Part of the tradition in the Greek system includes devaluing the individual in favor of membership to a group. While I originally thought that more of a focus on the individual would lead to more accessibility, he suggested that these organizations place even less value on the individual. This logic implies that de-emphasizing the individual to an extreme would also de-emphasize whether or not the student was disabled. According to Kevin,
“[Fraternities and sororities] need to de-emphasize the individual so much that there’s no such thing as someone who can walk or can’t walk, someone who’s heavy or thin, someone who’s gay or straight, black, white, anything. They need to de-emphasize all those stereotypes and just be empowered by their mission.” (Kevin Fritz interview)

Although this would have to come after eliminating physical barriers, it seems like the right mindset to pursue in order to promote a higher level of accessibility.