

End of Summer Report

My name is Oziel De La Fuente Tavera; this summer, I had the opportunity to explore accessibility through the lens of architecture. At Albion College, the Bobbitt Visual Arts Center is not ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act)-compliant but was grandfathered in because it was built in 1965. The building is not readily accessible, as fundamental architectural barriers exist that physically limit the extent to which people with disabilities can surmount and utilize the building, along with its classrooms and studio space. To achieve this, I first needed to understand the history of disability, then complete the ADA checklist for Existing Facilities with the help of the Director for Accessibility, Elizabeth Rudolph, and at the end, hand over the complete architectural package to Albion College.

Did I achieve all my goals? Yes, FURSCA was an eight-week program. I spent the first two weeks completing the walkthrough, Bobbitt, but this took longer than expected. Bobbitt followed some of the baselines, which was quickly proven false. When we started the walkthrough, I followed the path the tour guide gave us my first time at Albion as a prospective student. We took the front entrance on Cass St (**Figure 1**); the first problem was no signage for the accessible route. We then walk to the back, where the ramp and parking lot are located (**Figure 2**). When we first looked at the parking lot, almost everything was compliant. We had the designated accessible parking lot, the path was “clear” to the entrance of the building, and we had the correct number of parking spaces. The first problem was the designated parking spot in front of the dumpster gate. It would not be a problem if when the dumpster was open, it would not be hitting the car. A simple solution would be to move the parking spot to the other side, and we would also create the accessible aisle needed for each space. This new spot would also lead to a more straightforward path than before; the “clear” path had a 3-4” jump that made the ramp unusable (**Figure 3**). Looking at the ramp, we have an obvious problem: it needs to be resurfaced to clean up any damages that would make it less sturdy. Finally, we make it to the first floor/lobby, where the only accessible route to the rest of the building requires a flight elevator (**Figure 4**). Taking a closer look at the bathroom, we see the actual space of the bathroom and note that most of it is not accessible (**Figures 5 and 6**). During these two weeks, I also annotated *A Disability History of the United States*, written by Kim E. Nielsen. In her book, we are taken through the very start of disabilities, which happens to be when the Spaniards first “discovered” the Americas. We then take into account how disability has changed throughout time, which was hugely impacted by slavery and the idea of “others,” other being humans that were seen to be inferior to others. This also changed with war and how people were affected by war. I also read *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability*, written by Robert McRuer. McRuer begins his book with an introduction to his theory of able-bodiedness. This system produces disability and is woven together with the system of mandatory heterosexuality that produces queerness.

I wanted to start working on learning Rhino, but my timeline got pushed back about four weeks due to the need for more equipment. I tried to get a laptop for more accessible transportation and the possibility of working from the dorm, but we did not have any laptops compatible with the software, so we decided to get a desktop computer that was stationed at Bobbitt. Once I got my desktop, I was able to start learning Rhino. When I first started, I felt lost, confused, and in the dark. This led to me using YouTube, LinkedIn, and McNeel Forums. My first project on Rhino was to model a primary home, and from there, I went to the gigantic task of

modeling Bobbitt. This had one main problem: blueprints were nowhere to be found. This was challenging since modeling a building without blueprints will take time. I started with the schematic plan (**Figure 7**), found in the archives of Bobbitt, and from there worked my way up. Unfortunately, I could not finish this, but I plan to have it ready for Elkin R. Isaac (if blueprints are provided).

Thank you to everyone who helped run FURSCA along with the Art and Art History Department and the Jean Bengel Laughlin, '50 and Sheldon Laughlin Endowment. Thank you to my advisor, Dr. Nancy Demerdash, for the undying support and encouragement. Participating in FURSCA has offered me a unique, hands-on approach to architecture. I will present my research at the Elkin R. Isaac Research Symposium on Albion College's campus in April 2025.

Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figures 5 and 6



Figure 6