# BEYOND PHYSICAL ACCESSIBLITY: CREATING A PROACTIVE CAMPUS CLIMATE THROUGH MULTIMEDIA

The University of Kansas’ main campus in Lawrence sits atop Mount Oread, affectionately referred to as “the Hill” by students, staff and faculty. Located on top of the Hill are the main administrative buildings, and the majority of buildings where students participate in classes. Located at the bottom of the Hill are research, science and human development buildings.

Students, staff and faculty frequently travel from the bottom to the top of the Hill for classes, and meetings. The topography of the campus, which features approximately a four-hundred-foot incline from the bottom of the Hill to the top, provides unique challenges for KU in ensuring an accessible route for individuals with disabilities.

In 2012, campus administrators developed an accessible route that allowed individuals with disabilities to travel independently travel from the bottom to the top of the Hill. This route, called the HAWKROUTE, was created through a partnership with the disability community, architects at KU, and the respective offices on campus providing services and supports to individuals with disabilities. The route employs buildings, elevators, ramps and accessible exterior pathways to ascend the Hill and is approximately three quarters of a mile each way. The HAWKROUTE ensures individuals with disabilities full access to all the primary buildings on Jayhawk Boulevard, and all the research, science, libraries, and human development buildings. In 2013, signage for the HAWKROUTE was created to enhance individuals ease in using the route. From creation until summer of 2016, the HAWKROUTE was used primarily by individuals with mobility impairments and people seeking to avoid harsh weather conditions while traveling up or down the Hill.

In the spring of 2016, the need to increase campus awareness of the HAWKROUTE and to enhance the route for individuals with disabilities was noted by the ADA Resource Center for Equity and Accessibility. A partnership was formed between Information Technology, Media Production Services, and the ADA Resource Center for Equity and Accessibility. In keeping with the spirit of KU’s core values of independence and inclusion, the partnership developed a plan to create videos of the HAWKROUTE, and an audio script to provide navigational assistance. The purpose of creating these videos/audios was to increase campus awareness of the HAWKROUTE, and to enhance KU’s climate of inclusivity for all individuals with disabilities.

In developing the videos, the team purposefully sought to include individuals with diverse disabilities in the videos. The first video includes individuals with disabilities navigating the route from the bottom of the Hill to the top. The second video is an overview of the route itself from the top of the Hill to the bottom. The third video is a mashup of the individuals that participated in the video discussing why they use the HAWKROUTE.

A further partnership was developed with KU’s Audio Reader in developing and testing an audio script to give individuals with vision impairments equal access to the route and to provide another source of navigational assistance. The audio script may be downloaded and used on individuals’ smart phones to enhance their experience navigating the route. Individuals with and without vision impairments tested the audio script multiple times. The revisions suggested through this process proved invaluable in creating the final audio script.

Additionally, the ADA RCEA collaborated with a professor in the Art and Design department to create new updated signage and a new logo to use on the HAWKROUTE and on future accessible routes through campus. The instructor assigned the project to two sections of a design class with instructions to have the new logo signify both navigation and accessibility. A panel of people reviewed the students’ work and chose a winning design. This is displayed on the poster and can be found at https://accessibility.ku.edu.Work is currently being done to create and update the signage on the HAWKROUTE using the winning logo. It is anticipated the new logo will further publicize the route, increase its usage and inclusivity.

The HAWKROUTE’s videos/audios improved physical accessibility to campus, started a new conversation on campus regarding accessibility, and empowered individuals with disabilities.

To View the videos visit [Accessible KU](http://accessibility.ku.edu/videos) or <http://accessibility.ku.edu/videos>

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