

## Mont Alto-Handicap Accessible?

**Emily Cowdrick**

College students have plenty of things to worry about -- grades, work, relationships, finances -- and worrying about operating a wheelchair on their college campus should not be one of them. The worry is legitimate at Penn State Mont Alto. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards for Accessible Design were updated as recently as 2010, and Penn State Mont Alto is held to them. While it may be that Penn State Mont Alto is legally ADA compliant, the campus is a disaster zone for a wheelchair user.

While there is wheelchair access to every public building on campus, there is a lack of wheelchair access between buildings on the campus. To the casual eye this may not appear so, but the only sound between-building wheelchair access on this campus is between the bookstore and The Mill. Even the General

Studies Building and the Science and Technology Building, though only a few yards apart, are not practically accessible to each other. They are separated by a hill steep enough to cause struggle to a wheelchair user. The passage through the Science and Technology Building double-door is separated down the middle by a bar, making a wheelchair difficult to maneuver through. The extreme is the hill between the Wiestling Student Center and the Multipurpose Activities Center; it is dangerous downhill and Everest uphill.

There is no practical on-campus housing option for wheelchair users. Mont Alto Hall is closest to the main buildings on campus, and it sits at the highest point on campus accessible only by hills. The Penn Gate complexes are significantly away from the main buildings on campus, separated by two public roads and a large hill. Because of distance, Mont Alto Hall can

be considered the lesser of the evils. Dormitories are classified as "Transient Lodging Guest Rooms" by the ADA, and there are requirements for Guest Rooms with Mobility Features. Based on the total number of rooms provided, there is a required number of rooms with mobility features, and within those numbers are requirements for roll-in bathrooms and showers. Because of the age of Mont Alto Hall, it may legally get away with not having roll-in showers. Students in Mont Alto Hall must resort to wheeling into the main area of the communal bathroom and crawling from their wheelchairs to the bathroom stalls and showers.

Behind technicalities only someone familiar with the code would know, Penn State Mont Alto could be entirely ADA compliant, therefore manageable to a wheelchair user. The school might even offer transportation to classes for the student. Manageable, right?

Imagine you are a resident of Mont Alto Hall, and you use a wheelchair. It is nine o'clock at night, and your friends want to go to The Mill for a quick snack before it closes. Social and hungry as you are, you want to go too. To do this, you might: exit the doors of Mont Alto Hall, get out of your wheelchair, drag it down the three stairs to the sidewalk, wheel over to the hill, wheel down the hill via the grass, wheel into The Mill, get food, exit The Mill, wheel up the hill without stopping so that you do not get stuck partway, get out of the wheelchair at the staircase that crests the hill, drag it up the stairs on your hands and knees, wheel to the building, drag

the wheelchair up the three stairs into the building, and wheel into the building you go.

Manageable, right?

A student's success should never be hindered by a disability of any kind. If you are in need of an accommodation, please contact Disability Liason Kendra Wolgast in the Academic Support Center.

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## Protests

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The protests in the Middle East have presented President Obama with a new foreign policy crisis, which was created less than two months before re-election. New information says that Obama has vowed to bring forth those responsible for the Benghazi attack to justice, and has sent warships

to Libya to prevent and give backup for any future situations. However, the U.S. embassy is still in the crossfire of the situation. In Tunisia, the ruling party of Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood, is going to keep protesting and organizing marches and mobs in front of Mosques, however, no activity like this is rising outside the U.S. embassy in Cairo, Egypt. Egypt disagrees with most of the protests, saying that the U.S.

should not be blamed. Egypt is, however, demanding that the U.S. take legal action against the offensive film's creator.

After interviews with the Italian leaders in Rome, President Mohammad Morsi is making a determined effort to protect foreign diplomats while in his countries. He also made it very clear in stating that the film that was made was unacceptable. Four arrests have also

been made in Libya to keep up the investigation on the attack that killed the U.S. ambassador Christopher Stevens. U.S. officials believe it was possible that it was planned, by an al-Qaeda-linked group. According to the Aljazeera news reporting. The video was clearly offensive to Muslims, but will the U.S. act against the films creators? Ultimately it is our right to free speech that will be protected amongst all.

However, the question remains, as U.S. troops prepare to leave the Middle East, what will happen to their nation?

