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## NKU makes ADA issues a priority

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**HIGHLAND HEIGHTS** - This year marks the 20th anniversary of passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act signed by President George H.W. Bush on July 26, 1990. Northern Kentucky University is marking the year with symposiums and discussions on campus.

"I cannot speak to the changes over the past 20 years, but I can tell you that in the four years I have been at NKU, the NKU community of students, faculty and staff take a deliberate approach toward making programs accessible to individuals with disabilities," said Lisa Besnoy, director of NKU's Testing and Disability Services.

Besnoy said her office works with more than 500 students with a wide range of disabilities. NKU has more than 15,000 students.

"Disability Services at NKU approaches the needs of students with disabilities on an individual basis," she said. "Some students require testing accommodations while other students require accessible workstations in the classroom. In addition to providing academic accommodations on campus, one area we are focusing on is providing transition services for students with disabilities."

Besnoy said transition services teach the skills that are needed to help them to be successful at the college level.

"This includes working with students on self-advocacy skills, training on assistive technology such as screen readers, and providing workshops on how to communicate with faculty, time management and study skills," she said.

Besnoy said much of her office's work is accommodating test taking.

"We have test-taking facilities that provide proctored exams with accommodations from extended time to the use of screen readers or dictation software," she said. "NKU's physical accessibility is excellent, with full access to all buildings across campus. We also have an accessible shuttle which connects campus with all residence halls. Disability services works closely with a great facilities management staff which quickly addresses any concerns about physical access, including the most recent snow removal endeavor."

Although some things have come far in 20 years, she said there's always room for improvement, namely assistive technology across campus.

"So far, we have been able to provide access to assistive technology across campus and in university housing computer labs," she said. She points to the use of Blackboard online learning Web sites for course materials administration as an example. She said it gives all students the opportunity to access the materials in a variety of ways, including in alternative formats for students with disabilities.

"We always strive to provide comprehensive services and accommodations to our students and look for ideas to improve those processes," she said. "I believe NKU is on the right path by providing a student-centered approach that prepares students to learn, lead, and serve."