**To:** Professor Erika Paterson

**From:** Ashley Yuan

**Date:** October 13, 2020

**Subject:** Proposal for Improving Accessibility at the American Club Fitness Center in Taipei, Taiwan

**Introduction**

A couple years ago, the American Club has renovated and included a fitness center on the second floor of the building. Although this new addition has been largely welcomed by the members of the club, it is not accessible to members with mobility, visual, and/or auditory disabilities. This creates an issue for this population not only in terms of the maintenance of their health and well-being, but also the inclusion and equal treatment of these members in the club. Consequently, a lot of members with disabilities choose only to stay on the first floor of the club (in the dining areas) or terminate their membership altogether.

**Background and Intended Audience**

The American Club was created to provide the international community in Taipei with a space for social interaction and recreation. Currently, there are over hundreds of members who gather to do classes, work out, get hair and nails done, and more. This formal report would be addressed to the American Club’s Fitness and Recreation Director, Christopher Spencer, and the Governor of the Sports Committee, Liran Golan. The formal report would also be addressed to the club’s fitness faculty and members to bring awareness and spark change in the club’s fitness programs and attitude towards individuals with disabilities.

**Statement of the Problem**

Firstly, the new fitness center is located on the second floor with no elevator accessible to club members. Secondly, the organization of the fitness facility does not allow for wheelchair access or accommodate those with vision and auditory impairments. Finally, the fitness classes offered do not meet the accessibility needs of individuals with disabilities. The major implications of these issues are: 1) early deterioration of physical and mental well-being of individuals with disabilities and 2) promotion of a club culture that excludes these individuals. First, if individuals with disabilities do not have access to fitness facilities, it may lead to early deterioration of their mobility and strength. This results in greater difficulties getting around and performing activities of daily living (ADLs), reducing their autonomy and health. Further, the lack of accessibility in fitness facilities can unintentionally exclude these populations from engaging with other members, which could lead to social exclusion and unequal treatment of these members.

**Proposed Solution**

Some possible solutions would be to change the placement of fitness equipment to in the gym to allow room for wheelchair navigation, to make the elevator accessible to club members, and to bring awareness to fitness instructors to encourage them to make their fitness classes more inclusive to this population. These small, cost-effective changes could increase the participation and inclusion of members with disabilities in the club’s fitness facilities.

**Scope**

To assess the feasibility of this solution, I aim to explore the following questions:

1. What do members with disabilities look for in the club’s fitness facility?
2. What are the costs of redesigning and relocating fitness equipment?
3. What form of education and/or training do the fitness staff require to safely help and teach individuals with disabilities?
4. What are the costs of this additional staff training and/or the hiring of qualified staff?
5. Would any changes negatively affect current users’ experiences of the fitness facilities and classes?
6. What actions could the club take to change the exclusive culture and attitudes towards those with disabilities in fitness environments?

**Methods**

The primary sources of my research would be interviews and surveys with club members (both those with disabilities and those without) and the fitness staff in the club. I would also carry out some observation research within the fitness facilities and classes to evaluate the current culture in the fitness center prior to bringing this issue to their attention. Surveys would allow me to get the opinions of the general member population. And conducting one-on-one interviews with the fitness staff as well as members with disabilities would allow me to assess the feasibility of solutions and to obtain a needs assessment of the target population.

**My Qualifications**

I have obtained a bachelor’s degree in Kinesiology and Physical Education, where I took courses in Adapted Physical Activity, Ergonomics, and Aging and Physical Activity. Within this program, I have conducted accessibility assessments on different fitness facilities around the University of Toronto and gyms in downtown Toronto, and ergonomic assessments in different workplaces. These experiences would equip me with the tools to determine a feasible solution to this problem.

**Limitations**

Due to the recent pandemic, there may be limited contact with members with disabilities (especially seniors), other members of the club, and the club staff. As a result, it is important to note that the research carried out may not be fully representative of all members of the population within the club.

**Conclusion**

Overall, change within the fitness facilities is needed to ensure that members with disabilities have the ability to maintain their physical and mental well-being and to foster a club culture of inclusion and equity. With the assessment of the fitness facility and the evaluation of the above questions, I can verify the feasibility of improving the accessibility of the club’s fitness facility, which holds implications for the members’ well-being and the culture of the club. This research is planned to be conducted in the next 13 weeks, so your approval and support is highly appreciated.