

BBI helps support new Global Universal Design Commission; SU's Peter Blanck named chairman of board

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Peter Blanck, University Professor and chair of the Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University (BBI), has been named chairman of the board of directors for the new Global Universal Design Commission Inc. (GUDC). The commission, a nonprofit organization and collaboration supported in part by BBI, brings together some of the most knowledgeable and influential people in the areas of accessible design and legislation.

The mission of the GUDC is to create universal design standards for the built environment to impact communities in the United States and around the world. The GUDC was initiated and funded by Joshua Heintz and William Gilberti, partners of the Syracuse-based law firm Gilberti, Stinziano, Heintz & Smith, P.C.

A preliminary meeting of the GUDC took place May 30 at the Carousel Center Skydeck. The meeting was hosted by Destiny USA, whose founder and chairman, Robert Congel, is a local pioneer of universal design for commercial uses. The inaugural meeting begins a public process to draft and adopt voluntary guidance standards to be used in new and existing commercial buildings across the country.

With bipartisan support in the United States at the federal and state levels, and the involvement of the design, development, disability and aging communities, the GUDC's goal is to accelerate adoption of universal design concepts. The GUDC advocates design for the range of human performance and preferences -- beyond compliance with law -- with a vision of good design that provides ease of use without disadvantage to any group or individuals.

The first meeting of the GUDC also included the participation of His Excellency Luis Benigno Gallegos Chiriboga, ambassador of Ecuador to the United States, a leader in disability advocacy worldwide. His participation brings international attention to the GUDC's mission. Gallegos's commitment to forging a consensus and his constant advocacy to advance the social, civic and economic participation of people with

disabilities worldwide has been widely recognized. He was instrumental in the inclusion of disability in the U.N. human rights legal framework.

The GUDC is supported by Gilberti, Stinziano, Heintz & Smith; BBI; the Center on Inclusive Design and Environmental Access (IDEA Center) at the University at Buffalo; the National Council on Independent Living; and members of the GUDC Board of Directors: Berthy de la Rosa-Aponte, a member of the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities; Blanck; Joshua Heintz, partner, Gilberti, Stinziano, Heintz & Smith, P.C.; Graham Hill, CEO of Ice Miller Strategies LLC; Andrew Houghton, president of Disability Inclusion Solutions; Carmen Jones, president of Solutions Marketing Group; John Lancaster, executive director of the National Council on Independent Living; and Edward Steinfeld, director of the IDEA Center at the University at Buffalo.

For more information on the GUDC, contact James Schmeling at BBI at (315) 443-8953 or jschmeli@syr.edu.