

# The University Toronto ODA Report 2011-2012

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Prepared in accordance with the  
Ontario Disability Act (ODA), 2001

January 2012



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## Executive Summary

The Ontario Disability Act (ODA) Report and Plan describes the progress of the University of Toronto in 2011 and our goals and commitments to increase accessibility on all three campuses for 2012.

While the Province of Ontario transitions from the 2001 ODA to the 2005 Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), and until such time as the ODA is repealed, public sector organizations, including post-secondary institutions, must implement both Acts simultaneously. This includes the continued development, implementation and monitoring of annual accessibility plans like this one.

The AODA sets the goal of developing a fully accessible province by 2025, applies to both the public and private sectors and includes five “standards.” The first standard to become law was the Customer Service Standard and the University was required to comply with this standard by January 1, 2010. This report provides further information about the Customer Service Standard and the University of Toronto’s ongoing commitments.

July 2011, saw the passage of the Information Communications, Employment, and Transportation standards embodied in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), 2011.

Within the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation the Information Communication standard addresses items such as accessible formats and communication supports, emergency procedures and public safety, educational and training resources and materials. The Employment standard addresses recruitment practices, accessible formats and communication supports for employees, accommodation plans, and return to work processes. Finally, the Transportation standard addresses the availability of accessible transportation and equipment required on transportation vehicles.

One additional standard, the Built Environment, is expected to be introduced throughout the next five years. The standard is expected to address access into and within buildings and outdoor spaces. At the University of Toronto all new buildings currently follow universal design principles and as such are on their way to meeting requirements under the proposed standard.

A key purpose of the annual ODA plan is to assist the University in developing a strategic approach to barrier removal and prevention; this report describes programs and initiatives which have been established over the past year in furtherance of these goals and, as well, will outline our progress towards meeting the requirements of the Integrated Standards.

## **Accessibility Planning Process**

A large institutionally representative group meets annually to review the ODA plan prior to its moving for information only to the Planning and Budget Committee. Many committee members identify as having a visible or invisible disability and bring with them expertise in the areas of teaching and learning, business operations, facilities and services, planning processes, legal affairs, equity, and health and wellness.

As in previous years Students for Barrier Free Access met with the AODA officer to include their projects and commitments to accessibility in the appendix of this report.

Smaller committees, focus groups, and project groups met throughout the year in order to respond to aspects of the AODA or address barriers that may be identified through the year and work towards removal of such barriers.

## Funding

No funds have been allocated by the Government of the Province of Ontario to assist in the implementation of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act; however, targeted funding is available from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to specifically address student academic accommodation through three offices: St. George Accessibility Services, UTM AccessAbility Resource Centre, and UTSC AccessAbility Services.

This past year the University received approximately \$1.7 million from the Ministry but spent approximately \$3.4 million to assist with student accessibility needs on all three campuses; the shortfall of \$ 1.7 million is financed through the University's operating budgets. As the standards under the AODA continue to roll out it is expected that costs associated with accessibility will rise in the coming years.

All other initiatives across the University are financed through the relevant unit budgets. For example the Office of the Vice President Human Resources and Equity, in addition to regular offices such as the AODA officer, Health and Wellbeing Programs and Services which are devoted to AODA work, provided over one hundred hours of staff time to various projects and commitments related to the AODA and its implementation. Facilities and Services spent approximately \$ 50,000 in accessibility renovations to current buildings.

While sources of funding may be strained, we continue to fulfill our commitments and work towards an accessible learning and working environment as we believe that an environment which is inclusive and accessible benefits everyone.

## Our Community

We have a vibrant and diverse community at the University and are committed to achieving accessibility for our members with disabilities while working, studying, or visiting the University of Toronto.

Over 2,600 students registered with an accessibility office on one of the three campuses during the 2010 academic year. Those who registered with Test and Exam centre to receive accommodation for test and examinations during the academic year rose by over 1,000 students to a total of just over 10,000 students taking exams with the service.<sup>1</sup>

On the St. George campus alone, 42% were first time registrants with Accessibility Services. Last year, mental health accommodations were provided to 32% of the students registered with the St. George service; this academic year that number increased to 37%, while the number of students receiving accommodation for a learning disability decreased by two percent.<sup>2</sup>

UTSC AccessAbility services provided accommodation to 324 students this year. Twenty five percent of those students were diagnosed with a learning disability and 28% with mental health needs<sup>3</sup>. The AccessAbility Resource Centre at UTM also experienced an increase in students registered with the Centre, 30% of students who were accommodated identified as having a learning disability or a mental health disability.<sup>4</sup>

Accommodation for undergraduates may include additional time for assignments and tests, or the provision of note takers, or personal assistants, and software for in class work. Graduate student accommodation needs may include the provision of software for lab work, personal support for field and bench work, and flexible work arrangements.

The Office of Health and Well-being works collaboratively with managers, HR, employees and sometimes union representatives to facilitate the accommodation of employees with illness, injury or some form of disability. In 2010, in addition to the many employees who were accommodated in order to facilitate a return to work after injury or illness, 83 employees were accommodated while at work. Without such accommodation

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<sup>1</sup> Accessibility Services St. George Campus annual report 2010-2011

<sup>2</sup> IBID

<sup>3</sup> University of Toronto Scarborough AccessAbility Services Annual Report 2010-2011

<sup>4</sup> University of Toronto Mississauga AccessAbility Resource Centre Annual Report 2010-2011

many of these employees would not be able to remain in the workplace. Managers' openness and flexibility are critical factors in the success of the accommodation efforts<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Human Resources & Equity Annual Report 2010

## **AODA Standards**

The purpose of the AODA is to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures, and premises on or before January 1, 2025.

The University is committed to eliminate or minimize the adverse effects of barriers, including physical, environmental, attitudinal, communication and technological barriers that may prevent the full participation of individuals with disabilities in the University community.

The Customer Service Standard was enacted in 2008 and outlined our obligations regarding delivery of service to persons with disabilities. Within the University context for the purposes of the standard all students and members of the public were defined as “customers.”

In June 2011 the Ontario Government released the Integrated Accessibility Standard, which combined standards for Information Communication, Employment, and Transportation.

The Information Communication Standard requires the University to develop accessible communication formats and supports. This standard encompasses websites, educational and training materials, and libraries of educational and training institutions. The Employment Standard focuses on the entire employment cycle in terms of accessibility and accommodation of disability. Finally, the Transportation Standard addresses accessible transportation requirements which will apply to the charter companies we use to move between our three campuses. Compliance dates for the Integrated Accessibility Standard are staggered and allow for gradual implementation.

We recognize that the standards require us to make some changes in practice and our goal is to ensure we accomplish those changes in the most efficient and effective ways possible. In particular, in partnership with the Council of Ontario Universities and the Ministry of Community and Social Services we are developing resources to assist U of T and all Ontario universities in addressing our obligations under the AODA.



# Report on Accessibility Commitments

## Customer Service

Starting in July 2009, training and information materials regarding the Customer Service Standard were provided to all staff and faculty across the University and ongoing efforts to continue awareness raising occur at all three campuses. The AODA officer provided twenty three sessions to staff and faculty on the Customer Service Standard and how small changes can make a large impact. In addition to outreach sessions the web site ([www.aoda.utoronto.ca](http://www.aoda.utoronto.ca)) provides information to the University community regarding the standard including an online training tool.

On all three campuses, facilities and services continue to implement procedures related to the provision of notice of temporary disruption. Such notice provides information to the community when elevators or power assisted doors, for example, are not working. Signage indicates when the equipment is expected to be operating as normal, whom to contact if there are questions regarding operation, and where to find alternative services if any are available.

Guidelines addressing the use of guide dogs on campus, support persons attendance, and feedback processes are located in the AODA office. Under the Customer Service Standard feedback on service related to a disability or a complaint related to a disability need should be addressed at the local level first by the departmental manager, following this, the AODA office may investigate the concern in order to offer resolution. The AODA officer assists divisions and departments in understanding their obligations and moving beyond compliance.

## Information Communication

The Information Communication standard is a part of the “Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation” or IASR. The requirements under the Information Communication standard will be phased in over time between 2011 and 2021 which allows the time required to build these practices into regular business process.

The AODA officer offered training sessions in partnership with the Office of Student Life, St. George on the creation of accessible materials and accessibility principles in “good design practices.” The employees who attended these sessions were responsible for printed materials in their department or for website maintenance. Sessions on accessible design continue to be offered twice throughout the academic year, registration can be found on the Organizational Development and Learning Centre’s website. Last year during one session there were over 150 employees registered.

The office has assisted Strategic Communications and Marketing to build accessible design awareness across the University. Such work included updates to the University style guide to include principles of accessibility, “alt tagging” the University logo for use on websites and online materials, and review and input regarding the updates to the University’s website.

The Vice President Human Resources & Equity, The Assistant Vice President Student Life and the AODA officer are reviewing emergency planning and practice to ensure a safe employment and teaching environment at the University for all members including those with disabilities. Partnerships across all three campuses, including students, alumni, faculty, emergency services, and accessibility services, have participated in this process.

Upon review of the Information Communication standard the University noted that there is a defined need for an electronic repository for resource sharing in alternative formats. To address this need a partnership project was formed led by the now retired chief librarian, representatives from the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL), Scholars portal, and the AODA officer.

## **Employment**

The Employment Standard is included in the Integrated Regulation (IASR) and outlines an institution’s commitments regarding employment practices and policies. The standard addresses the entire employment cycle of an individual from recruitment, hiring, retention to exit. This standard does not include those who are volunteers or completing an internship.

Most of the requirements under this standard come into effect by 2014. However, the University already incorporates many of the expectations in the normal Human Resource business operations. Our online application service is accessible for candidates with assisted software; print versions of postings are available for candidates upon request. Human Resource staff are aware of how to arrange interviews to be as accessible as possible and take into account a person’s disability. When organizing interviews generalists are asked to ensure that candidates are aware that they can speak to the generalist regarding any accommodation need and work together to find the most appropriate and reasonable accommodation for the interview. Upon hire, if a candidate requests accommodation, the office of Health and Wellbeing Programs and Services will work with the individual to ensure their needs are met.

In order to ensure that we continue to support diversity in hiring, the AODA office and the Division of Human Resources and Equity attended the National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) Job Search Strategy Forum. Hosting an

employment booth we worked to create outreach positioning the University as an employer of choice.

## **Transportation**

The transportation standard, alongside the employment and information communication standard, is included in the IASR. The majority of this particular standard does not apply to universities, rather provides organizations whose business operations focus on transportation with obligations to ensure such transportation is fully accessible.

Where the University provides transportation, for example, between our campuses, is covered under the Transportation standard. The UTM shuttle bus falls into this example. We are pleased to note that the University of Toronto Mississauga shuttle bus is accessible for all runs. Currently 80% of scheduled runs are on an accessible vehicle. Users who require an accessible bus on the runs where it is not already indicated to be accessible can fill out a form and arrangements will be made to ensure that an accessible run is available. Forms can be located at <http://www.aoda.utoronto.ca/standards/transportation.htm>

Whenever transportation is provided by the University, groups are encouraged to ensure that the mode of transportation takes in to account accessibility. Orientation leaders and Dons are provided with this awareness when planning excursions as are all staff across the campuses.

## **Built Environment**

The built environment standard is the most extensive of the four proposed standards, totalling 192 pages. In its current draft form the standard covers all buildings and public ways (portions of the land such as a street or roads). The proposed standard provides organizations with obligations regarding new construction (anything to do with the erection, installation, or extension of an element of the built environment), projects where there is extensive renovations and change of use, common access and circulation areas of buildings (e.g. entrances), interior accessible routes (e.g. routes through a facility), exterior spaces, plumbing elements and facilities, building performance and maintenance (e.g. air quality), special rooms, spaces, and other elements (e.g. team change rooms), recreational facilities, and transportation elements (e.g. bus stops).

In her 2009 Annual Report, the Minister of Community and Social Services indicated that the Accessible Built Environment is expected to be incorporated into the Ontario Building Code where applicable.

The University's planning principle stipulates that "the University's buildings, landscape and grounds must accommodate a diverse population in an open and inclusive campus.

The campus environment should adhere to the principles of universal design and is met with all new construction on campus. Where full accessibility may not be achievable due to existing conditions or the historical nature of a particular building, the University policy on accommodation will be met.”

## **Other Projects and Awareness**

Work continues across our institution to support and create an accessible environment and some of those 2011 initiatives are highlighted below. The goal of creating an inclusive and accessible working and learning environment, is university wide; these initiatives indicate the readiness of our community to ensure that we accomplish this goal.

### **Built Environment:**

- The Justina M. Barnicke Gallery initiated an extensive renovation of physical space. The renovated space features an accessible ramp into the new gallery space. Automatic door openers have been included in the renovation allowing for ease of access throughout the gallery. Way finding and large print signage enhances the gallery for visitors.
- Accessibility improvements to various elevators across the St. George Campus including accessible push buttons, Braille signage, lighting changes and operations improvement.
- Heated accessibility ramps installed at the Munk Centre for International Studies and 170 College Street (Mining Building). Elevators and accessible washrooms were included in project renovations at both sites.
- Simcoe Hall elevator renovations are complete giving access to all floors in a larger cab.
- The Instructional Centre at UTM houses lecture halls which are equipped with cameras for potential videoconferencing enhancing accessibility in the classroom. Additional accessibility features include easy access learning stations, wide hallways, accessible washrooms and parking.
- The Terrence Donnelly Health and Sciences Complex and the Mississauga Academy of Medicine recently completed construction. Accessibility features include lecture halls and classrooms equipped with videoconferencing. Lectures are broadcast live from the St. George campus so that UTM medical students can engage in the lessons and observe dissections.

### **Awareness and Celebration:**

- A partnership between Keys to the Studio, Accessibility Services, New College Service Learning Program, The Equity Studies Student Union, and Students for Barrier Free Access brought the program “Arts! Ability! Access! a conversation

on access through artistic expression” to Hart House, for community members to learn about accessibility in a nontraditional forum.

- March 14<sup>th</sup> through to the 18<sup>th</sup> raised awareness during *Accessibility Awareness week* at Hart House. Various programs ran throughout the week including sporting events and a dance party.
- The Accessibility Awards were presented to faculty, staff, and students who had demonstrated a commitment to accessibility on campus.
- Mentoring events were held as part of the Peer Mentorship program through Accessibility Services St. George, which supports undergraduate students who work as peer mentors assisting incoming students with learning disabilities.
- AccessAbility services UTSC hosted “Mental Wellness: finding balance, one person’s journey celebrating diversity through dialogue” an event featuring Margaret Trudeau and how she learned to live with bipolar disorder.
- AccessAbility Resource Centre UTM in partnership with UTM students created two groups to support students with disabilities: *The social group for students with autism spectrum disorders* and the *beyond accommodation committee*.

### **Funding:**

- Accessibility services St. George in partnership with the School for Graduate studies developed a shared funding model to support graduate students who require additional time and funding to complete their degree.
- Hart House continues their accessibility fund which can be accessed by any student who may require funding for extracurricular activities.

### **Equipment and Technology:**

- AccessAbility Services UTSC partnered with Library and ITS staff to review low vision aids and best practices for provision of equipment.
- OISE Education Commons offers students an adaptive technology lab which is available for those students who require specialized hardware or software in quiet area, for example for use of voice input technology.
- U of T’s newest map (<http://map.utoronto.ca>) is interactive, layered and searchable. In one application users can access information including accessible entrances, washrooms and other building features.

## Teaching and Learning:

- The Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation (CTSI) launched an online learning module on large classroom teaching. This has been a collaborative project between CTSI staff, Teaching Academy members. Designed to help instructors and teaching assistants as they build and deliver their courses. This program recognizes that there is much more to teaching than simply providing content and more to assessment than mid-term tests. Learning opportunities include information on making the classroom more accessible.
- CTSI has developed several resources for instructors who wish to ensure that their courses and classrooms are inclusive to as many students as possible. Topic areas include:
  - [DIVERSITY IN THE CLASSROOM](#)
  - [INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY](#)
  - [ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES & ACCESSIBILITY OFFICES AT THE UofT](#)
  - [CREATING AN INCLUSIVE COURSE AND CLASSROOM: STRATEGIES FOR INSTRUCTORS](#)
- Accessibility Services St. George, provided workshops for faculty and teaching assistants through the Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation on how to support students and effective accommodation planning.
- In order to reinforce the value of student perspectives on learning, the AccessAbility Service UTSC and the Centre for Teaching and Learning published the results of a student survey in “Open Words: access and English studies journal” to raise awareness of the impact of accessibility in learning environments.

## **Partnerships and Projects (external)**

### **Enable Change Projects:**

In partnership with the Council of Ontario Universities and the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the University of Toronto completed an online tool kit for university administrators responsible for implementation of the AODA. This tool kit has been used across all Ontario universities with the goal of sharing best practice, utilizing expertise and resources across the sector and maximizes the efforts of those responsible for individual institutional compliance of the AODA.

A new partnership with the Council of Ontario Universities, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, York University, the University of Guelph and the University of Toronto is underway to develop resources for faculty pertaining to their obligations under the AODA. Such resource development between three larger institutions allows for advance planning and for efficient and effective leveraging of resources required to meet the AODA standards. This collaborative work will assist all universities across Ontario.

## Summary

With the implementation of the AODA and the University's ongoing commitments to increase accessibility, staff, faculty, and students have worked together on a wide range of initiatives to create a more accessible and inclusive environment.

Recently, the work completed through Enable Change projects recognized COU's and the University's leadership in accessibility. Rather than individual accommodation, the AODA calls for a system-wide, integrated and comprehensive response. As such, all areas of our institutions are affected. Engaging individuals and networks both early and often will, we strongly believe, have a critical impact on the successful compliance of the sector. However, it is important to note that while providing support for persons with disabilities is one focus area at the University of Toronto, we aspire to build a community which moves beyond compliance with legislation and integrates accessibility into all of our undertakings.

We continue to appreciate the ongoing efforts of our faculty, staff, and students in building an accessible learning and teaching environment.



## **Students for Barrier-free Access**

### **Submission for University of Toronto ODA Report for 2011-12**

*Students for Barrier-free Access is a separate entity at the University of Toronto that works on initiatives in partnership with other offices and organizations on campus. SBA's participation and contributions on behalf of the student body are welcomed as part of the University's accessibility planning committee.*

In the 2011-12 year, Students for Barrier-free Access will continue to build on its efforts to foster an inclusive community and to encourage student awareness of accessibility issues on campus. To that end, we will focus on the achievement of two the continuation of central goals: Community Building and Awareness Raising.

#### **1. Community Building**

While SBA has struggled somewhat with maintaining an active membership base over the years, we feel as though we have taken steps over the past year to build a community among the student body through our programming. Examples of such programming run in the past year include:

- Monthly social events such as pizza lunches
- Pub Nights and Movie Screenings
- ASL and CPR Courses offered to all students
- A Disability Dance Party
- Mental Health and Wellness Workshops

Through this programming, as well as frequent use of social media and community partnerships (including York Access, Hart House among others) we hope to develop a strong membership base that will foster an inclusive community. Our computer lab and lounge spaces are also open to all students, and help to further this goal.

#### **2. Awareness Raising**

In an effort to move towards a barrier-free campus, SBA continues to devote a lot of our resources to programming that highlight disability issues relevant to students. Accessibility Awareness Week and our ARCH Disability Law Seminars are prime examples of this awareness-first programming. We have also made efforts to raise awareness of our own organization through bake sales and Hart House's 5 buck lunch program. We feel that these initiatives will not only contribute to our campus as a whole but also ensure that there is a strong student voice for accessibility awareness.

### **Looking Forward...**

For this year and beyond, SBA will continue to engage the student body using innovative and creative disability programming (such as our Sex and Disability Workshop), as well as provide a safe student space and resources such as adapted computers. We will also develop more relationships with campus groups (such as the Sexual Education Centre) to effectively broaden our reach. We will continue to create social opportunities and help students overcome barriers they face. We believe in a barrier-free Ontario, and we know that we are a vital piece towards realizing that goal at the University of Toronto.

## **Committee Members 2011**

**Professor Angela Hildyard, Vice President Human Resources and Equity (CHAIR)**

**Andrea Carter, AODA Employment Equity Officer (CO CHAIR)**

Stephen Bailey, Office of Space Management

Cleo Boyd, Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre, UTM

Louis Charpentier, Office of Governing Council (sent representative)

Ray Cheung , Facilities and Services

Ko Clementson, Office of the President

Tina Doyle, AccessAbility Service UTSC

Sara Jane Finlay, Office of the Vice President and Provost, Faculty & Academic Life

Lucy Fromowitz, Office of Student Life St. George (sent representative)

Pam Gravestock, Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation

Laurie Harrison, Office of the CIO

Sean Kieft, Labour Relations

Myra Lefkowitz, Health and Wellbeing Programs and Services

Tanya Lewis, Accessibility Services, St. George

Victor Likwornik, CAPS (sent representative)

Roseanne Lopers-Sweetman, Faculty of Physical Education and Health (sent representative)

Anne MacDonald, Ancillary Services

Elizabeth Martin, AccessAbility Services UTM

Gail Milgrom, Capital Planning Projects

Mark Overton, Dean of Student Affairs and Services, UTM

Rosie Parnass, ODLC

Amanda Peet, Faculty of Arts and Science

Daniella Levy-Pinto, Graduate Student (SBA)

Carol Rolheiser, Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation (sent representative)

Helen Slade, Student Life St. George

Maureen Somerville, Alumni

Mahadeo Sukhai, Alumni