



TO: Planning and Budget Committee

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AGENDA ITEM: #9

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

The University of Toronto Ontarians with Disabilities Act Accessibility Plan, 2003-04

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

Section 4.5.1 of the Terms of Reference for the Planning and Budget Committee, requires new policy positions to be reviewed by this committee.

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

N/A

HIGHLIGHTS:

The Ontarians with Disabilities Act, (ODA) 2001, received Royal Assent in December 2001. The purpose of the Act is to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that preclude their full participation in society. The Act requires institutions within the broad public sector to review their policies, programs and services as they impact upon persons with disabilities, and to develop accessibility plans that are intended to address existing barriers and prevent new barriers from being established. Each Ontario University is required to develop annual accessibility plans, as part of the annual planning process, and to file the 2003-04 Accessibility Plan by September 30, 2003.

The President assigned the responsibility for the development of the University of Toronto Accessibility Plan to the Vice-President Human Resources, who subsequently established a broadly representative ODA Planning Committee. Members of the Committee included faculty, staff and students representing a range of stakeholders and constituencies; several members of the committee were selected because of their

professional expertise in relevant areas (for example, information technology; instructional design; architectural design); others for their professional knowledge of disability and accommodation issues. The Committee included a number of persons with disabilities – some visible, some not visible. The work of the Committee was facilitated by Professor Connie Guberman.

The Planning Committee created eight working sub-committees, each facilitated by two co-chairs. The working committees focused on specific areas (Attitudes, Policy and Procedure, Information and Communications, Physical Facilities, Information Technology, Instructional Design – Student Accessibility, Instructional Design – Faculty Accessibility, Student Life, and Human Resources) and engaged in broad consultation with members of the University community, including persons with disabilities. The working groups were asked to outline what the University has done to date to address accessibility issues, what barriers have been identified and/or what process will be put in place to identify barriers; what measures will be put in place in the coming year to identify, remove and prevent barriers.

The 2003-04 Accessibility Plan is built upon the work of the eight sub committees and set within the context of the University's commitment to equity and excellence. The Plan represents continuation of excellent progress we have already made in some areas but notes where we must now focus new energy. Over the next year, we intend to broaden our consultation and communication to ensure we provide increased opportunity for persons with disabilities to participate in the process of the identification and removal of barriers that may prevent their full participation in the teaching, learning and research activities of the University of Toronto.

The approved Accessibility Plan will be submitted to the Ontario Government for September 30, 2003 and will be made public through the U of T website.

FINANCIAL AND/OR PLANNING IMPLICATIONS:

No new resources are required for the 2003-04 Accessibility Plan

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Planning and Budget committee recommend to the Academic Board

THAT the Governing Council approve the University of Toronto Ontarians with Disabilities Act Accessibility Plan 2003-2004.