



Annual Report 2004-2005

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http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/oda_plan.html

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Executive Summary

This annual report covers the academic session 2004-2005 reflecting on key developments and highlights for UTM's Access*Ability* Resource Centre in that year.

The Access*Ability* Resource Centre is an academic service, student service and equity office for the University of Toronto at Mississauga campus. The Centre provides academic accommodations and services to students with disabilities studying at UTM and also consults with offices and departments at UTM and the greater university on issues related to disability and inclusion.

Over the years the perception of disability has changed, recognizing that society is responsible for constructing barriers that impede people with disabilities from participating in many opportunities afforded to those without disabilities. The Access*Ability* Resource Centre and UTM have embraced disability as a social construct and address it when designing or modifying spaces, policies, programs and systems on campus.

In 2004-05, the Centre provided accommodations and services to 252 students, an increase of 28 students from the previous year. Students presented with acquired brain injuries, sensory, medical, mental health, mobility, AD/HD and learning disabilities. There were 70 students who presented with more than one disability for which they received accommodations and services.

HIGHLIGHTS

The Centre increased its staff complement by 1.0 FTE. In February 2005 funding was provided through the Academic Initiatives Fund and a Disability Advisor was hired. This position deals specifically with the case management of students with sensory, mobility and medical disabilities. The Manager continued as the case manager for students with ADD/ADHD, mental health and learning disabilities.

CHALLENGES

The most significant challenge for the Centre was the continued shortfall of government and university funds. The Centre experienced another significant increase in registered students that had considerable impact on the Centre's staff, even with the addition of the Disability Advisor position.

As of May 1, 2005, formal confirmation of funding from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, for the Learning Strategist/Assistive Technologist position had not been received. This position was very beneficial to the Access*Ability* team as it provides enhanced services to students with learning disabilities and AD/HD that are not otherwise available.

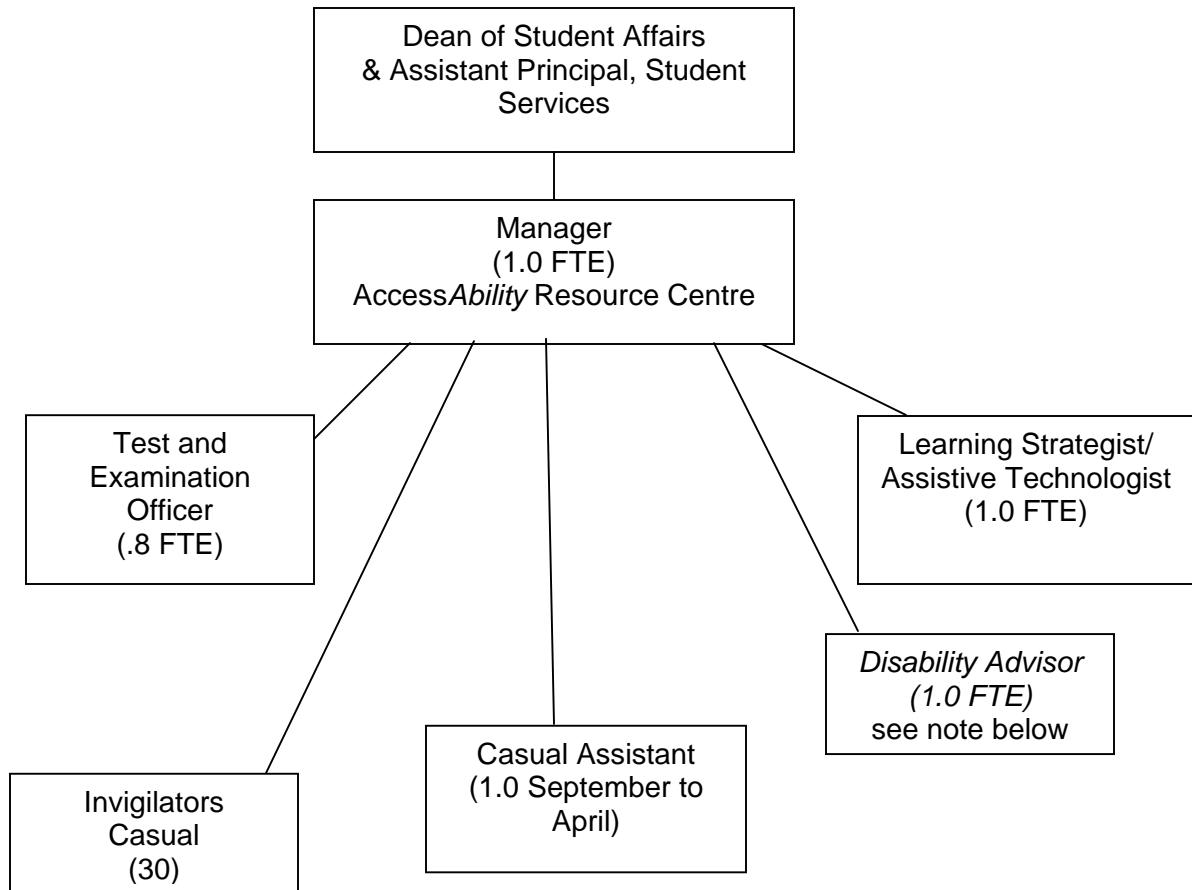
The availability of space and resources to provide academic accommodations also continued to be an issue.

INITIATIVES FOR 2005-06

As the Centre looks to the future it remains committed to playing its part in creating an inclusive community where students with disabilities are given equal opportunities to participate in the university experience. A combination of strategies, in partnership with other university departments, will ensure the further emergence of an inclusive student-centered learning environment. Key among these will be:

- Continued consultation with faculty on in-class accommodations for students with disabilities.
- A review of the campus' assistive technology will be undertaken by the Access*Ability* Resource Centre, Computing Services and the UTM Library to assess the suitability, availability and placement of assistive technology.
- Participation in the design of the of the new Student Services Plaza and other renovations on campus to ensure a welcoming and inclusive environment for students with disabilities.
- Partnerships on projects/committees with offices and departments at all three campuses including joint ability awareness initiatives, the Equity Issues Advisory Group, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Planning Committee and the Equity Advisory Board.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



- Clinical Specialist (Adaptive Equipment / Occupational Therapist) – Services contracted as required
- Registered Clinical Psychologist – Services contracted as required
- Disability Advisor position start date was February 10, 2005

CENTRE HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2004-2005

During 2004-05, the Centre provided academic accommodations and services to 252 students (an increase of 28 students from 2003-04).

Disability Management and Advising

The Centre continued to address transition issues students with disabilities encounter during their first year at university.

- The Manager continued to meet with all students registering or re-registering with the Centre and provided ongoing advising/support. In February 2005, a new Disability Advisor was added to the team and received training on case management and advising students with disabilities within the university system.
- In partnership with the Academic Skills Centre, the Centre's Learning Strategist/ Assistive Technologist participated as an instructor in the *Head Start Program* held over the summer for incoming first year students. Her presence during the program encouraged students with disabilities to approach the Centre for accommodations and services.
- Students with learning disabilities continued to meet with the Learning Strategist for ongoing instructional sessions throughout the year.

Administrative Processes

- The Centre's website was reviewed and updated to make it more accessible and user-friendly for students.

Outreach

Prospective and Incoming Students

- The Centre continued to send brochures and information to the high schools in the UTM catchment area. This information package is designed to aid students in their transition to university and also to assist in the recruitment of students as many students with disabilities and their families shop around to find out what services and accommodations are available.
- The Centre participated in UTM Discovery Day and a March Break event held by the Office of the Registrar for prospective students and their families.
- The Centre's website has information to inform prospective and incoming students about the services and accommodations available and documentation requirements. It also provided links to the recruitment information of other services (e.g. campus tours, Head Start Program) on campus.
- The Manager spoke with a number of Special Education Teachers and Guidance Counsellors from the Peel Region, answering questions about transition, documentation and accommodations and services provided.

Current Students and the UTM Community

- The Centre communicated with the UTM community through the use of:
 - Website
 - Flyers to residence
 - Participation in campus student events
 - Information in the university publications including UTM's Academic Calendar, "Faculty Guide to Services" and the Equity Issues Advisory Group's brochure

Accommodations and Services to Students

Students who register with the Centre are assessed individually to determine what accommodations and services they are eligible for.

In 2004-05 the Centre provided:

- Disability management and advising
- Test and examination arrangements
- Note-taking Services
- Volunteer Services – assisting students in the UTM Library and in lectures/events on campus
- Attendant care services (in partnership with the Ontario March of Dimes)
- Mobility Training (in partnership with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind)
- Computerized Note Taking
- Access to the OSAP Bursary for Students with Disabilities
- Access to assistive technology
- Onsite psycho-educational assessments
- Access to the Learning Strategist/Assistive Technologist (Students with Learning Disabilities only)
- Scribes
- Reading Services for students with visual disabilities
- Diagnostic screening for learning disabilities
- Access to materials in alternate formats (electronic, large print, Braille)
- Assistance with addressing barriers to participation in university life (e.g. physical, attitudinal, informational, policy/procedure)
- Referrals to on and off campus resources

In 2004-05 the Test Centre, located in the North Building, was fully operational and provided the Centre with an established site that met the accommodation needs of many registered students. Additional rooms on campus were also booked due to students' specific needs and the number of students writing at the same time.

Enhanced Services for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities

- The Centre continued to receive funding through Enhanced Services Funding provided by the Learning Opportunities Task Force (LOTF) for the Learning Strategist/Assistive Technologist (LS/AT) position.

- The LS/AT position was originally approved to meet with 15 students however, according to year-end statistics, 67 students utilized the enhanced services in 2004-05. This is a significant increase of 22 students from 2003-04.
- The LS/AT continued to meet individually with students and provided a number of services including skills assessments, screening for learning disabilities, instructing in learning strategies, demonstrations and training on assistive technology (e.g. Kurzweil 3000, TextHelp).

On-site Psycho-educational Assessments

- The Centre continued to provide on campus psycho-educational assessments performed by a Registered Clinical Psychologist. The entire assessment process was usually completed within two weeks from the initial assessment to receipt of the report.

Volunteer Services

- In 2004-05 the Centre recruited, trained and matched over 150 volunteers who filled the roles of note-takers, participation assistants, readers and typists.
- The Centre continued to train and supervise a large pool of active volunteers and manage the information and contacts of students waiting for volunteer positions.

Bursary/Financial Assistance

- The Manager continued to oversee and approve students' requests for the OSAP Bursary for Student with Disabilities.
- Students not eligible for the OSAP Bursary for Students with Disabilities applied for funds from the UTM College Bursary to cover disability related expenses. All psycho-educational assessments in 2004-05 were paid for using either the OSAP Bursary, the UTM College Bursary or other university funding.
- Students with specific questions pertaining to financial aid and scholarships, were referred to the UTM Awards Officer for advising.

Partnerships / Committees

Partnerships within University

The Centre continues to work closely with many departments and services within the UTM campus focusing on mainstreaming services where appropriate and increasing awareness of the barriers students with disabilities encounter while participating in academic and co-curricular activities. A number of successful collaborations took place in 2004-2005 and are detailed below:

- Academic Skills Centre
 - Head Start Program
 - Consultations and referrals

UTM Library

- Presentation on Disability and Accommodation to library staff
- Assisted with accessibility issues in the current library

UTM Residence

- Consulted with the Director of Residence on the access needs of incoming first year students with disabilities and assisted with establishing external support services (Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Ontario March of Dimes)

Psychology Department

- Presented “Access and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities” is PSY422.

Health Services

- Consultations with the medical professionals and personal counsellor in the Health Services at UTM
- Referrals to the medical professionals and personal counsellor

Facility Services

- Consulted on new buildings and renovations

Office of the Registrar

- Participated in prospective student events
- Presentation on Disability and Accommodation to recruiting staff

Student Affairs

- Participated in Academic Orientation 2004

The Manager continued as a member on both UTM and university committees:

- Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee (university-wide)
- Accessible Parking Committee (university-wide)
- Status of Women Committee
- Erindale College Council
- Equity Issues Advisory Group (university-wide)
- College Affairs Committee
- Student Centre Management Board (assessor)
- Principal's Advisory Committee on Access for Individuals who have a Disability
- Quality Service to Students (QSS) Committee
- Student Affairs Posse
- Volunteerism Committee
- Joint Health and Safety Committee

Workforce

- In February 2005, the Centre's staff complement increased by 1.0 FTE. The Centre was approved for funds through the Academic Initiatives Fund for a Disability Advisor. The position deals specifically with the case management of students with sensory, mobility and medical disabilities. The addition of this position reduced the number of students on the Manager's caseload.

- The Centre hired a casual clerical assistant from September 2004 to April 2005. The individual assisted with volunteer services for the Centre, maintained the database and assisted the Test and Examination Officer with test and examination services.

Professional Development / Memberships

Professional Development

The Manager attended:

- IDIA Professional Development Sessions
- CACUSS
- IDIA Annual General Meeting

The Learning Strategist attended:

- IDIA Professional Development Session
- Student Development 101 Part 2 – UTM

The Test and Examination Officer attended:

- Student Development 101 Part 2 – UTM
- Microsoft Access Intermediate Session - University of Toronto
- Typo3 - web software program training session

Professional Memberships

IDIA	Inter- University Disability Issues Association (ONTARIO)
CADSPPE	Canadian Association of Disability Providers in Post-Secondary Education (CANADA)
AHEAD	Association on Higher Education and Disability (U.S.A)
NEADS	National Educational Association of Disabled Students (CANADA)
CACUSS	Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CANADA)
ONAP	Ontario Network of Accessibility Professional
PPA	Peel Partners in Accessibility (Peel Region)

Listserv Memberships

IDIA	Inter- University Disability Issues Association (ONTARIO)
DSSHE	Disabled Student Services in Higher Education (U.S.A.)
DAWN	Disabled Women's Network (CANADA)
CSNNET	Canadian Special Needs Network
UID	Universal Instructional Design (CANADA)
DISABILITY- RESEARCH	Disability Research Discussion List (UNITED KINGDOM)
DS-HUM	Disability Studies in the Humanities (U.S.A.)

Accessibility and Inclusion at UTM

- In 2004-05 the Terms of Reference for Principal's Advisory Committee on Access for Individuals with Disabilities and an updated membership list were established.
- The Manager continued to consult with departments/services on access issues and how to ensure their environment is usable, welcoming and inclusive to students, staff and faculty with disabilities.
- The Parking Policies pertaining to UTM community members with disabilities were reviewed with new policies being developed and others being revised.
- The Manager consulted on:
 - New spaces and renovations on the UTM campus
 - The Academic Learning Centre to address access and inclusion
 - The Athletics and Wellness Centre to address access and inclusion
 - Accessibility in lecture rooms/computer classrooms and public areas of the Communication, Culture and Information Technology Building
 - The design of the Phase 8 Residence

REVIEW OF CHALLENGES

During 2004-05, the Centre provided academic accommodations and services to 252 students with disabilities. This is an increase of 28 students from 2003-04.

The Centre also coordinated and administered 1,627 tests and final examinations, an increase of 182 from 2003-04.

The staff of the Centre struggled again this year to ensure students received appropriate academic accommodations and services. The increase in student registration and requests for services resulted in staff and resources being stretched to the breaking point and an increase in staff overtime hours.

Funding Issues

- The limited funding the Centre received through the MTCU allocation and central University support continued to restrict the Centre's provision of academic accommodations and services.

Increase in AccessAbility** Student Registration**

- The number of students registered with the Centre increased significantly in 2003-04.
- The Centre managed the cases of 252 students in 2004-05. Wait times for appointments was up to two weeks, although the needs of students in crisis were addressed immediately.
- The Centre continued to experience an increase in parental involvement primarily at the beginning of the academic year. Meetings were held with the individual parent(s) and their student to provide them with an overview of the services their student would be receiving reducing the number of contacts made throughout the year.
- In 2004-05 the Centre continued to see an increase in students with mental health disabilities who required additional supports from staff.
- The number of students with visual disabilities increased with increased requests for assistive technology and transcription of print materials into accessible formats (e.g. Braille, e-text, large print).
- The number of students classified in the *multiple category* (more than one medical condition/disability) increased again in 2004-05 placing an incredible strain on all aspects of the Centre's volunteer services.

Space Issues

- The Centre continued to experience difficulties with appropriate space for tests/examinations as the test centre would be full or not an appropriate space for certain students (e.g. require scribing). It was also difficult to find space for certain volunteer services (e.g. readers, typists) attendant care services and staff offices which have access issues.

Staffing Level Challenges

In 2004-05 the staffing complement of the Centre consisted of:

- Manager 1.0 FTE
 - Test and Examination Officer .8 FTE
 - Learning Strategist/Assistive Technologist (1.0FTE funded by Learning Opportunities Task Force) - provided enhanced services to students with specific learning disabilities.
 - Disability Advisor 1.0 FTE (start date: February 2005)
 - Casual assistant (September 2004 – April 2005)
 - 30 Invigilators (casual)
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- The increase in registered students placed significant strain on the Centre's services. The hiring of the Disability Advisor relieved some of the Manager's caseload however, the expected increase in students in 2005-06 and their requests for accommodations and services will counteract any gain in staffing assistance the Centre would have experienced.
 - In 2004-05 the Centre continued to experience an increase in registered volunteers, requests for volunteer positions and requests for volunteer services by registered students. Due to the growth of this part of the Centre a request will be made to the administration for a staff appointed Volunteer Coordinator position.

CENTRE INITIATIVES FOR 2005-2006

The Centre will continue to move towards increasing the participation and opportunities of students with disabilities at UTM both academically and socially. With our move towards inclusion and our increased involvement with other services, departments, we will continue to strive towards providing students with a more welcoming and inclusive campus without barriers.

Workforce

- The Centre will continue to request additional staff to assist with case management and administrative duties.
- The Centre will continue to monitor the funding situation of the Learning Strategist/Assistive Technologist position.

Ability Awareness Program

- An “Attitude is Everything” Campaign will be launched bringing attention to the attitudinal barriers students with disabilities experience.
- Access*Ability* Seminar Sessions will be held monthly with disability related topics.

Space

- Although the Centre’s space concerns are anticipated to be resolved in 2007 when the new Student Service Plaza is expected to open, the Centre will continue to seek out functional and accessible space for staff, student supports and adaptive equipment.

Partnerships

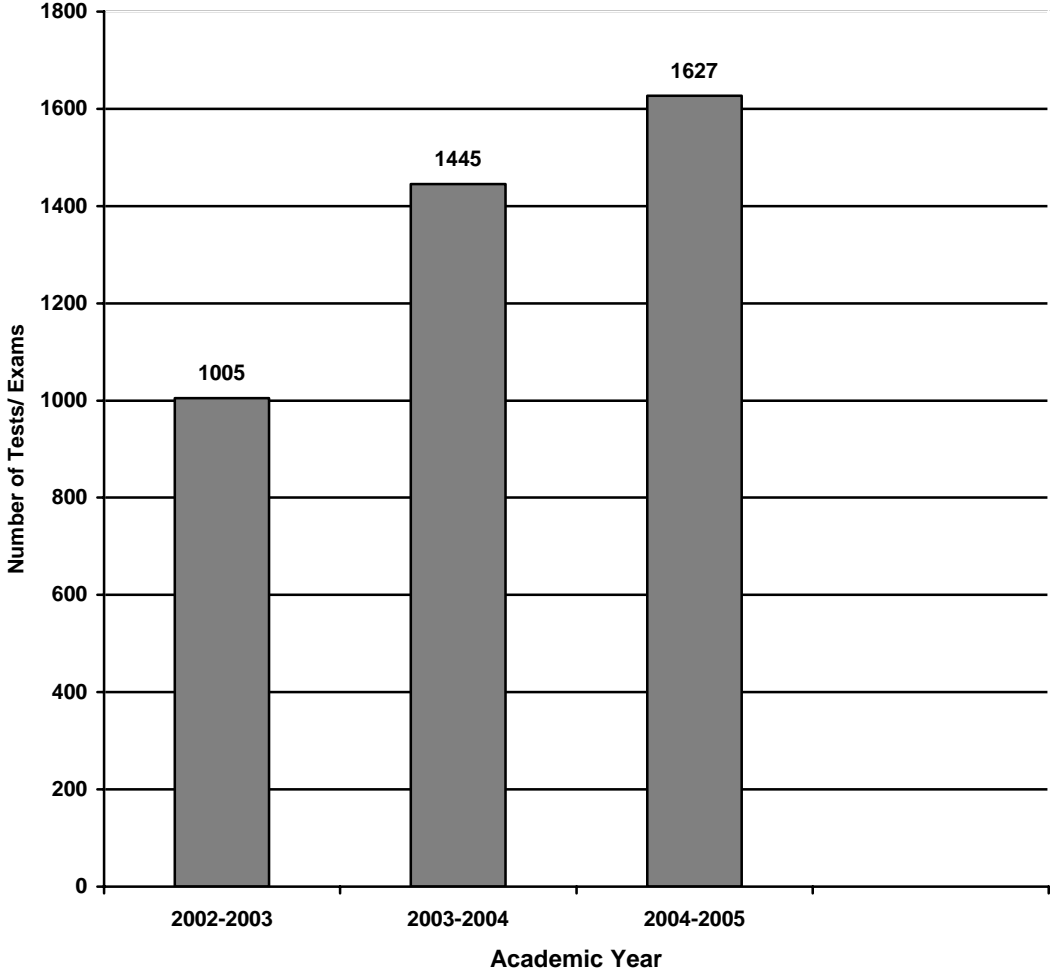
- Library – The Centre will continue to work with the library in integrating assistive technology and inclusive practices.
- Office of the Registrar – The Centre will continue to work with the Office of the Registrar in the areas of recruitment, admissions and petitions.
- Residence – The Centre will continue to work with Residence staff in establishing support services (e.g. attendant services, mobility training) for students who have disabilities.
- Facility Resources – The Centre will continue to work with Facility Resources in creating accessible and inclusive spaces on campus.
- Student Affairs – The Centre will continue to collaborate with the Student Affairs Office and Student Services at UTM in providing inclusive programming and services.
- Equity Initiatives – The Manager will continue to collaborate on equity initiatives with colleagues at the university and continue to participate in equity and awareness programming at UTM and the university.

- University of Toronto Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) Planning Committee – The Manager will continue on as a member of the ODA Planning Committee and working groups.
- Tri-Campus Managers Meetings – The Manager will continue to meet with the Managers at Access**Ability** Services (UTSC) and Accessibility Services (St. George) to collaborate on access and inclusion initiatives at the university and discuss maintaining service processes that allow students to receive academic accommodations in a timely manner at UTM, UTSC and St. George.
- The Manager will continue to participate on UTM an university wide committees and maintain professional memberships.

Accessibility

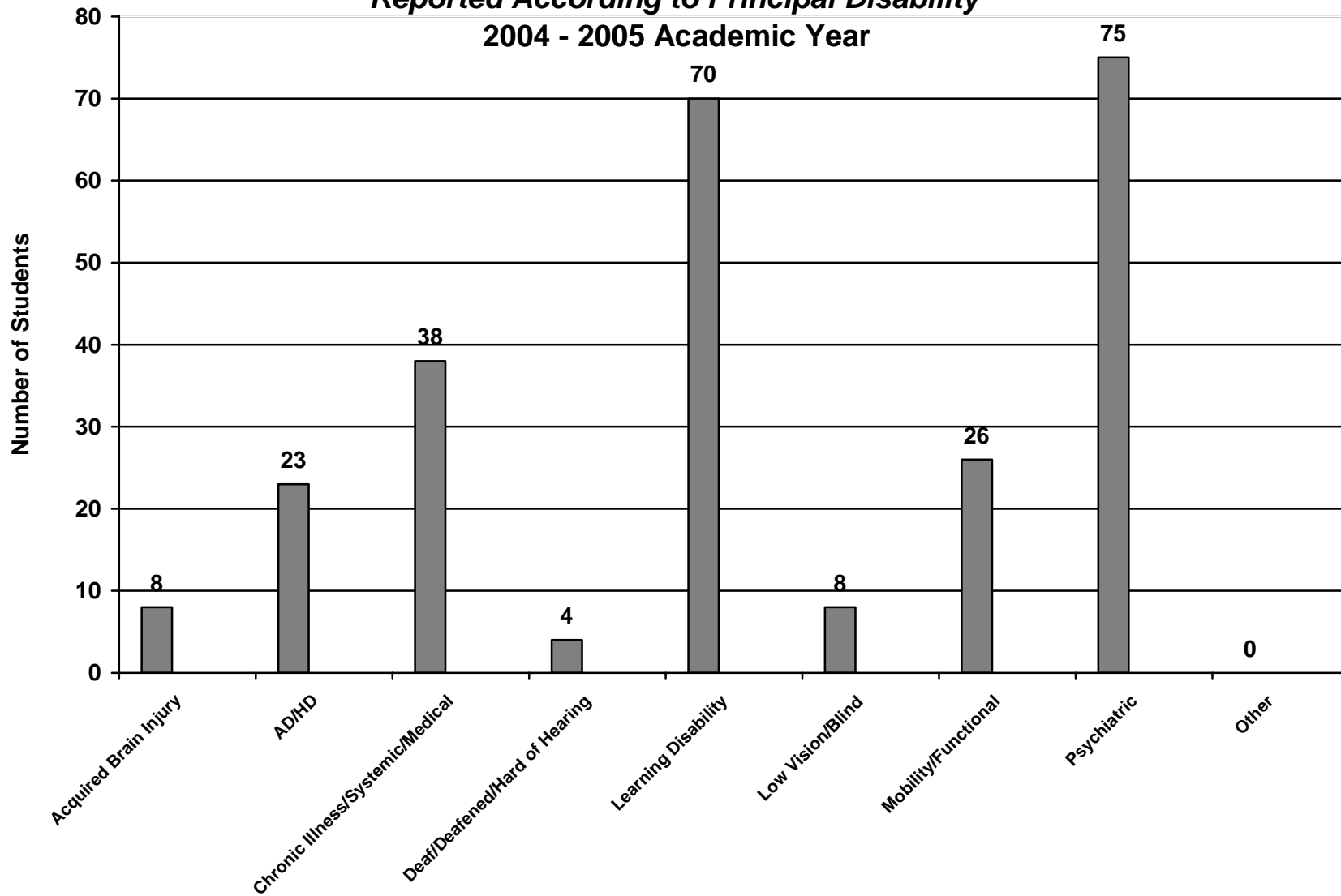
- The Manager will continue to consult on new buildings, new spaces and renovations to ensure they are accessible and inclusive for students, staff and faculty with disabilities.

**Total Number of Tests/Final Examinations
Coordinated and Supervised by the AccessAbility Resource Centre
for UTM Faculty
(Three Year Comparison)**



2004-2005 – Increase of 182 tests/examinations coordinated and supervised by the Centre from previous year

TABLE I
Total Number of Students with a Disability
Reported According to Principal Disability
2004 - 2005 Academic Year



Number of Registered Students – Three Year Comparison

2002-2003 188 students	2003-2004 224 students	2004 – 2005 252 students ↑ of 28 students from previous year
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Volunteer Services

VOLUNTEER STATISTICS			
Volunteer Position	Academic Year		
	2004-05	2003-04	2002-03
Note-takers	89	96	69
Other (Library Research Assistants, Readers, Support Workers, Special Events Assistants)	43	45	34
TOTAL	132	141	103

Reduction in note-takers due to instructors placing course notes on the internet.

Computerized Note-taking

COMPUTERIZED NOTE-TAKING			
Note-taking Activity	2004-2005 Academic Year		
	SUMMER	FALL	WINTER
Number of students requesting computerized note-taking	1	3	3
Number of courses where computerized note-taking were used	1	14	14