



**FOR RECOMMENDATION**

**PUBLIC**

**OPEN SESSION**

**TO:** UTSC Campus Affairs Committee

**SPONSOR:** Prof. William Gough, Vice-Principal Academic and Dean  
**CONTACT INFO:** 416-208-7027, vpdean@utsc.utoronto.ca

**PRESENTER:** Prof. Mary Silcox, Vice-Dean Graduate  
**CONTACT INFO:** 416-208-2978, vdgraduate@utsc.utoronto.ca

**DATE:** April 27, 2020 for May 4, 2020

**AGENDA ITEM:** 4

**ITEM IDENTIFICATION:**

Creation of the Centre for Global Disability Studies as an Extra-Departmental Unit C (EDU:C)

**JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:**

Under section 5.1 of the *Terms of Reference*, the CAC is responsible for the “*Establishment, termination or restructuring of academic units and proposals for Extra-Departmental Units.*” Section 5.8.1 of the *Terms of Reference* provides that the CAC recommends to the UTSC Council “*on plans and proposals to establish, disestablish, or significantly restructure academic units...regardless of the source of funds. Proposals for Extra-Departmental Units (EDU)-A’s and B’s are considered and recommended for approval while those for EDU-C’s are considered and approved, pursuant to the Policy on Interdisciplinary Education and Research Planning.*”

**GOVERNANCE PATH:**

1. **UTSC Campus Affairs Committee [For Recommendation] (May 4, 2020)**
2. **UTSC Campus Council [For Approval] (May 26, 2020)**

**PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:**

No previous action in governance has been taken on this item.

## **HIGHLIGHTS:**

The University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC) is proposing the creation of the Centre for Global Disability Studies (CGDS) as a new Extra-Departmental Unit C, to be effective as of July 1, 2020. UTSC will be the Lead Division; the Vice-Principal Academic and Dean will assume active administrative and budgetary responsibility for the Centre, and will appoint a Director, who will be responsible for the administrative and financial operations of the Centre. The Centre for Critical Development Studies and the Interdisciplinary Centre for Health and Society will jointly provide an intellectual home for the CGDS.

Disability studies is a transdisciplinary field of study defined by (1) a commitment to pursuing more just futures for people with disabilities, (2) foregrounding the perspectives of people with disabilities with a critical intersectional approach, and (3) contributing to an emergent disability studies canon. A disability studies approach focuses on the social and political organization of disability, and takes a critical approach to medical understandings of health, illness, disability, sensory impairment, and mental health.

In global disability studies we trace the way that ideas of disability are configured across varied historical and cultural contexts, and transnational networks shift changing local understandings of disability and care. Global disability studies demands attention to the politics of disability advocacy and organizing in diverse national and transnational contexts, some of which challenge civil and human rights-based paradigms, questioning the nation state as the primary arbiter of justice. Moved by the diversity of cultural constructions of normalcy and disability, global disability studies also explores how our relations to disability are connected to our socio-cultural and historical contexts.

CGDS will be based in a social science and humanities approach to the study of disability, access, and ableism; disability studies in this tradition is distinct from clinical, medical, behavioral, or physiological approaches to human bodily and mental variation that involve research paradigms designed toward preventative and curative ends. CGDS will serve as a locus of disability studies expertise, and from that position interface with research groups with complimentary foci and other approaches to the study of disability. CGDS will support research that focuses on the following key areas: (a) transnational and global flows of categorizing disability as human difference, (b) systems that generate oppression and produce disabling situations, and (c) cultural differences in understandings of disability around the globe.

CGDS will position UTSC as a regional and international leader of the emerging field of global disability studies. It will capitalize on, and foster, collaboration between research faculty in the Centre for Critical Development Studies and the Interdisciplinary Centre for Health and Society, as well as faculty and staff across the campus, including the UTSC Library and *AccessAbility* Services, to promote and strengthen research activities, mentorship, graduate student training, and public-facing activities in the sphere of critical global disability studies. In addition, the CGDS will act as a tri-campus hub to foster interdisciplinary research and scholarly interest in the field, and will promote an ethos of

accommodation founded in the belief that the participation of people with disabilities in our scholarly community enriches the quality of the research that the University produces. In this way, the CGDS will contribute to raising the University's public profile as a leading global research university with a resounding commitment to groundbreaking, engaged scholarship addressing persistent issues of social and political justice in Canada and across the globe. Furthermore, the CGDS will activate core elements of UTSC's strategic plan *Inspiring Inclusive Excellence*.

CGDS will be supported by faculty with active and distinguished careers producing and supporting scholarship in disability studies. The CGDS Director will be appointed for a fixed term of not more than five years, and the Dean, with input from the Director and participating faculty, will appoint an Advisory Board to provide non-binding advice to the Director. CGDS will be supported in terms of administrative issues, including budget and allocation of funds, printing, and publicity by appointed university staff as determined by the Vice-Principal Academic and Dean (or designate) in consultation with the Director.

The proposal to create the CGDS was developed by a team of scholars comprised of faculty and staff members of the UTSC Dean's working group. There has been extensive consultation with other related entities across UTSC and U of T, including: the [SCOPE Lab](#) (the Health Humanities Learning Lab at UTSC), CCDS, Equity Studies at New College, Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies (SDS), Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), *AccessAbility* Services at UTSC, and the University of Toronto Mississauga.

CGDS will be subject to periodic review commissioned by the Vice-Principal Academic and Dean of the University of Toronto Scarborough.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

CGDS shall, under the authority of the Dean, administer a budget to sustain its activities. The Vice-Principal Academic and Dean has reviewed, and supports, the budget model. For more information, see the budget outlined in the proposal.

In addition, CGDS may also seek external funding to host postdoctoral fellows, to host visiting international researchers, and to promote other interdisciplinary and inter-institutional collaborations.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Be It Recommended to the UTSC Campus Council,

THAT, the creation of the Centre for Global Disability Studies as an Extra-Departmental Unit C as described in the proposal recommended by the Vice-Principal Academic and Dean, Professor William Gough, and dated April 7, 2020, be approved to be effective as of July 1, 2020.

**DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:**

1. Proposal: EDU:C – Centre for Global Disability Studies, dated April 7, 2020

# **PROPOSAL FOR A NEW EDU:C CENTRE FOR GLOBAL DISABILITY STUDIES**

**April 7, 2020**

## **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

We propose the creation of a Centre for Global Disability Studies (CGDS) as an Extra-Departmental Unit C (EDU:C) to be housed at the University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC). The University of Toronto Scarborough will be the Lead Division. The Vice-Principal Academic and Dean will assume active administrative and budgetary responsibility for the CGDS, and will appoint a Director, who will be responsible for the administrative and financial operations of the Centre. The Centre for Critical Development Studies and the Interdisciplinary Centre for Health & Society will jointly provide an intellectual home for the CGDS. Other units from across the University that may be associated with the CDGS by virtue of the involvement of individual faculty include: from UTSC, the Department of English, Department of Political Science, Department of Historical and Cultural Studies; from the Faculty of Arts and Science, Centre for Drama, Theatre & Performance Studies, the program in Equity Studies at New College, the Department of English, and the Department of Anthropology; from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), the Department of Social Justice Education; and from the University of Toronto Mississauga, the Department of Sociology. The CGDS is based in a social science and humanities approach to the study of disability, access, and ableism; disability studies in this tradition is distinct from clinical, medical, behavioral, or physiological approaches to human bodily and mental variation that involve research paradigms designed toward preventative and curative ends. CGDS will serve as a locus of disability studies expertise, and from that position interface with research groups with complimentary foci and other approaches to the study of disability. The CGDS will be effective as of July 1, 2020.

Disability Studies is a dynamic interdisciplinary field of scholarship and public advocacy. Recent developments in the field have pointed to the need for further research from global, transnational, cross-cultural, and critical decolonial perspectives on the social and historical construction of the category of disability and its political impact on social life. The proposed Centre for Global Disability Studies seeks to support and celebrate anti-ableist, justice-oriented research and advocacy that holds transnational and decolonial perspectives in disability studies as foundational and not supplementary to an intersectional approach to the study of disability as difference.

The creation of the CGDS draws on existing strengths to position UTSC as a regional and international leader of the emerging field of Global Disability Studies. The Centre will bring together faculty from existing interdisciplinary programs to facilitate collaboration in critical, global disability studies research. In particular, by fostering collaboration between research faculty in the Centre for Critical Development Studies and the Interdisciplinary Centre for Health & Society, CGDS capitalizes on a unique opportunity to approach the field of disability studies from a critical development perspective.

As previously noted, the Centre will bring together faculty from disciplinary and interdisciplinary programs across all campuses. The CGDS is designed as a tri-campus hub to foster interdisciplinary research and scholarly interest in the field, and will promote an ethos of accommodation founded in the belief that the participation of people with disabilities in our scholarly community enriches the quality of the research that the University produces. By supporting research in this field, the Centre will draw together and build on existing research activities (such as the Disability Studies Speaker Series housed in Equity Studies at New College, now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year; the new Disability Anthropology Working Group, now in its 2<sup>nd</sup> year; and the disability studies researchers in the graduate program Social Justice Education at OISE) to create a long-term hub that serves as a resource for disability studies scholars across the three campuses of the University of Toronto (U of T). In this way, the CGDS will contribute to raising the University's public profile as a leading global research university with a resounding commitment to groundbreaking, engaged scholarship addressing persistent issues of social and political justice in Canada and across the globe. Furthermore, the CGDS will activate core elements of UTSC's strategic plan *Inspiring Inclusive Excellence*.

CGDS work will:

- support faculty, postdoctoral, graduate, and undergraduate research activities across U of T in the field of disability studies, with a special emphasis on the global and transnational nature of disability as a category;
- support scholarly activities at UTSC including a speaker series, campus events, symposia, fine art exhibitions and performances (including but not limited to research creation), and academic publishing;
- become a resource for U of T graduate students seeking colleagues and mentors in disability studies;
- act as a resource for public and media inquiries regarding disability on a local and global scale;
- partner with *AccessAbility Services* at UTSC (and other relevant groups across the University) to mobilize resources in disability theory and critical research

in the service of developing groundbreaking methods in the application of disability access practices on university campuses;

- support the development of undergraduate disability studies curricula at UTSC;
- develop partnerships that support existing Scarborough community organizations, as well as its local newcomer community, thereby representing a diversity of global experiences and understandings around disability;
- collaborate with UTSC's *AccessAbility* Services to create a Disability Cultural Centre at UTSC. The Disability Cultural Centre will be a drop-in event space that seeks to foster a thriving disability culture and solidarity across intersectional justice movements at UTSC, in which we recognize the expertise and leadership of disabled people, the complexity of accessibility for heterogeneous needs, and the diversity of intersectional experiences of disability [we provide an early description of the activities envisioned for the proposed Disability Cultural Centre in Appendix 1, below].

## **ACADEMIC RATIONALE**

### **What is Disability Studies?**

Disability studies is a transdisciplinary field of study defined by (1) a commitment to pursuing more just futures for people with disabilities<sup>1</sup>, (2) foregrounding the perspectives of people with disabilities with a critical intersectional approach, and (3) contributing to an emergent disability studies canon. A disability studies approach focuses on the social and political organization of disability, and takes a critical approach to medical understandings of health, illness, disability, sensory impairment, and mental health. This critical approach seeks to support not only those who identify with a sense of disability pride, but also those groups that may not necessarily identify as disabled, such as those who identify as Deaf, blind, and/or Mad, and are proud members of these respective communities, or those who seek accommodations in daily life while not claiming the title of disability. This includes those who face disablement disproportionately produced as a result of systems and structures of oppression including war, occupation, poverty, state violence, anti-Black racism, environmental racism, xenophobia and exploitation of migrant labour, ongoing settler/colonial violence. Rather than the individualizing and pathologizing view of disability as lack, limit, or loss that centers prevention, cure, and rehabilitation, disability studies is interested in shifting the social, political, and cultural systems

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<sup>1</sup> Various groups in disability advocacy and scholarship prefer different language usage in reference to disability. This includes people-first language (i.e. people with disabilities, children with autism, adults with mobility impairments), while others prefer to put 'disability' at the fore (i.e. disabled people, Autistic people, wheelchair-users). As researchers, we recognize that language use is dynamic and changing, and seek to at once trace and track changes in usage while also being respectful of the diverse perspectives and positions taken by people with disabilities and disability justice advocates.

that contribute to the injustice, social exclusion, discrimination, incarceration, and other forms of domination and control that people with disabilities face. At the same time, disability studies is a field deeply informed by movements for disability justice that arise from activist social movements, informal networks of interdependence and caretaking, and political organizing of people with disabilities themselves. Disability studies considers the ways in which systems of ableism work in tandem with systems of racialization, heteronormativity, gender orders, settler colonialism, and classism. As an interdisciplinary field, disability studies draws together scholars from across many disciplines, such as anthropology, education, engineering, history, literature, occupational sciences, political science, sociology, as well as interdisciplinary studies, such as health studies, media studies, women's and gender studies, science studies, and Caribbean Studies. Disability studies is, in this sense, transdisciplinary. Further, as part of its critical praxis, disability studies is profoundly influenced by the practice of accessibility. We strive to create scholarly paradigms for research that are accessible to colleagues and peers with disabilities in the university, and to partners in the community, recognizing that access does not look the same for everyone. Our vision of disability studies is one that is informed by the work of our colleagues in *AccessAbility Services*, and our research and practice is informed by each other.

### **What is *Global Disability Studies*?**

Since the emergence of disability studies as a transdisciplinary field of research building on disability advocacy movements in North America and Western Europe, scholars have called for increased attention to the ways that the category of disability is enacted globally. Early studies of disability across global contexts focused on documenting the diversity of local concepts of disability. Subsequently, research has turned to examining how concepts of disability - both medical and social/environmental - are exported from the Global North/West as part of economic and humanitarian development, colonial and neocolonial paradigms, as well as transnational extra-governmental organization programs, and have been taken up in novel ways.

Global disability studies must continue to trace the way that ideas of disability are configured across varied historical and cultural contexts, and that transnational networks shift changing local understandings of disability and care. Global disability studies also now demands attention to the politics of disability advocacy and organizing in diverse national and transnational contexts, some of which challenge civil and human rights-based paradigms, questioning the nation state as the primary arbiter of justice. While the foundational coalescence of disability studies as a discipline focused on recognition and inclusion of people with disabilities as a special interest group in the context of liberal democratic governance, these models capture only some of the experiences of disability solidarity globally. For instance war and violent



conflict produce multiple and incommensurable kinds of disablement that entail different experiences of bodily impairment and provoke vastly different social and political responses: war veterans experiencing combat injuries and environmental exposures; civilians exposed to risk of bodily harm from landmines to insufficient nutrition; refugees experiencing poverty, precarity, and exposure to risk of contagion; native inhabitants of occupied land experiencing brutality and lack of access to care, education, and resources. Each of these cases requires nuanced, critical study, and community-led solidarity towards transformative social change.

The CGDS promotes research that considers disability in changing transnational context. This critical approach attends to the ways that global systems of extraction and domination produce conflict, environmental degradation, and labour conditions that impoverish people, thus impacting health and producing debility and disability. At the heart of these various forms of inquiry is a commitment to the experiences and perspectives of people with disabilities themselves, from diverse cultural and geographic contexts, and an engagement with critical social theories of normalcy and difference.

At CGDS, a transcultural, interdisciplinary global disability studies represents a commitment to troubling and reimagining commonly-held definitions of disability found in medical, rehabilitative, psychiatric, and bureaucratic settings. Moved by the diversity of cultural constructions of normalcy and disability, global disability studies explores how our relations to disability are connected to our socio-cultural and historical contexts. CGDS research critically rethinks disability and its impact on social life, and allies itself with contemporary struggle, recognizing disability justice movements in their many global and transnational forms.

CGDS is committed to advancing research at the cutting edge of global disability studies, and to supporting scholarship that documents new ideas about disability and normalcy in global contexts, and proposing new theories and methods for a global approach to disability studies.

### **Current Strengths**

UTSC is uniquely poised to create a Centre for Global Disability Studies with local, national, and international impact. The campus is home to two existing units housing faculty with expertise in disability studies: the Interdisciplinary Centre for Health and Society (ICHS), and the Centre for Critical Development Studies (CCDS). By drawing together expertise from these existing units with interest from faculty and staff across UTSC and the wider University, including the UTSC Library and *AccessAbility Services* (building on UTSC's positive reputation for high standards in accessibility design and service delivery), the CGDS will promote existing research activities and

strengthen collaboration, mentorship, graduate student training, and public-facing activities in the sphere of critical global disability studies.

Currently, the University of Toronto does not house a research centre dedicated to the interdisciplinary field of disability studies. The Centre for Global Disability Studies, unique as a research centre in the breadth of its interdisciplinary commitment and its *sociopolitical* approach to disability, accessibility, and ableism, will thus fill this role for the broader university. In doing so, CGDS will build opportunities for collaboration with units working in related fields, including the following:

- The undergraduate program and undergraduate journal in disability studies, part of the Major in Equity Studies at New College, Faculty of Arts and Science;
- The graduate curriculum in disability studies, part of the Department of Social Justice Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE); and
- The [International Centre for Disability and Rehabilitation](#), a research centre based in the Rehabilitation Sciences Sector on the St. George campus.

Harnessing existing expertise and resources across U of T, CGDS will serve as a unique hub where existing ties can be strengthened and new collaborations are forged to enhance U of T academic and campus life.

### **Proposed Activities**

The CGDS will undertake an array of programming activities that reflect the University's commitment to creating world class scholarship, training leading scholars, and fostering scholarly collaboration across disciplines and units.

The Centre will support research that focuses on the following key areas: (a) transnational and global flows of categorizing disability as human difference, (b) systems that generate oppression and produce disabling situations, and (c) cultural differences in understandings of disability around the globe. Activities will amplify the scholarship on disability produced by scholars around the world, as CGDS becomes a hub and destination for an international exchange of ideas. Through online, campus, and community platforms, we will actively welcome, support, and foster connections among producers, users, and subjects of understanding in global disability studies. In order to enact the principles of intersectional global disability studies, CGDS will actively center anti-ableist, feminist, anti-racist praxis, and seek to enact transnational and decolonial justice and solidarity in all of its activities and practices, not only research, but community collaborations, leadership, hiring, and so on.

## *Academic Life*

(1) The Centre will foster collaboration and act as a hub by creating opportunities for faculty, visiting scholars and postdoctoral researchers, and graduate and undergraduate students to share their research activities in the field of global disability studies through campus events. The Centre will host and support events such as speaker series, film screenings, and symposia. It will promote and collaborate to further on-going disability studies research activity, such as the *Knots* undergraduate research journal in disability studies and the Disability Studies Speaker Series, housed in Equity Studies at New College. These knowledge mobilization and transmission opportunities will drive forward scholarship. While some events may be planned and hosted by the Centre's director and/or research assistants and administrative support staff, the Centre will also offer small grants to graduate students and faculty to support events planned by other units from all campuses across the university. This work will be carried out by graduate student RAs or research fellows, with support as necessary from administrative staff, and under the supervision of the Centre's director.

(2) The Centre will be uniquely situated to act as a beacon and resource for *disability access* in scholarship at the University. The Centre will create and maintain a "best practices for accessible academic events" document in collaboration with colleagues in *AccessAbility* Services at UTSC. Colleagues and students attending events sponsored by the Centre will therefore have an opportunity to become familiar with cutting edge innovation in accessible design for academic communication (including, for instance, ASL and simultaneous transcription; using audio devices and image descriptions; etc.). Over the long term, and in response to need and available expertise in collaboration with campus partners in *AccessAbility* Services and other entities, the Centre may develop further resources in this vein, for instance: best practices documents regarding accessibility in published research materials; resources for researchers and scholars with disabilities who may confront access barriers in the course of research (e.g. in the archive, field site, clinic, or lab); etc.

(3) The Centre will create a website and maintain a list of core and affiliated faculty, researchers, and graduate students with research interests related to disability studies. The website will thereby create a public record of ongoing research activities and the scholars with related interests at the University. The website will thus be a resource for graduate students seeking mentors and peers in disability studies; for faculty and researchers looking to connect; for faculty and researchers from other institutions hoping to identify disability studies experts at U of T; and for the broader community seeking expertise in this field. This work will be carried out and maintained by graduate student RAs, with support as necessary from administrative staff, and under the supervision of the Centre's director.

(4) The Centre will also act as an institutional anchor for parallel projects, helping to develop the undergraduate disability studies curricula at UTSC, and sharing knowledge with potentially similar efforts at other campuses or units. Through the ongoing activities of its director, core and affiliated faculty, and affiliated fellows and graduate students, the Centre will support, promote, and celebrate undergraduate activities including coursework, activism, and other University programming in disability studies. It will serve as a resource for faculty interested in disability studies, and graduate student teaching assistants in disability studies courses.

(5) The Centre will partner with *AccessAbility Services* and the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at UTSC to develop capacity amongst all teaching staff, i.e. faculty, sessional instructors, and teaching assistants, towards creating more accessible and inclusive classrooms and learning environments. In this way the Centre supports the vision that pedagogical best practices in higher education can be achieved through partnership among scholarly researchers, classroom instructors, and accessibility professionals.

(6) The Centre may collaborate with UTSC Library staff to promote global disability scholarship. Collaborative endeavours could include jointly hosted events and curriculum support through the curation of library collections focused on global disability studies, as well as ongoing work with faculty members, teaching staff, and students to support disability studies curricula.

#### *Public Facing Outreach*

(7) The Centre will act as a resource for public and media inquiries regarding disability on a global scale, and may liaise with UTSC communications and media teams and other appropriate university and community resources to do this. This function will be carried out by the Centre's web presence, and inquiries to the director and/or support staff will be referred to the affiliate or core faculty or staff person with the most relevant expertise.

(8) The Centre will serve as a resource for university-community relations regarding disability. For example, the Centre may develop partnerships with community organizations in Scarborough and the GTA more broadly concerned with cultural differences in understanding disability in the local community representing a diversity of cultural experiences reflecting newcomers, long term immigrant settler communities, and First Nations communities. These activities may be carried out by director, core or affiliate faculty, or graduate students and/or graduate fellows engaged in relevant research or knowledge mobilization activities.

(9) The Centre will create public facing events that continually strive to engage with and be welcoming towards broader non-university communities. For example, larger hosted events, spearheaded by the director and carried out with the support of graduate student RAs and fellows and administrative staff, such as annual lectures, may be free, open, and advertised to the public, and will follow the same high standards for accessibility as academic talks hosted by the Centre.

(10) The Centre may develop partnerships with GTA-based cultural organizations to collaborate on research projects or public-facing research mobilization and support the development of collaborations between campus units and community partners. For example, the Centre might host a symposium in tandem with a disability arts exhibition installed at Tangled Arts+Disability and/or the Doris McCarthy Gallery at UTSC.

### *Campus Life*

(11) From its inception, the mission and operations of CGDS will be defined by ongoing collaboration with UTSC's *AccessAbility* Services and the future Disability Cultural Centre (see below and Appendix 1). While traditionally, institutions have separated academic research from the provisioning of disability support services, the Centre's collaboration with *AccessAbility* Services recognizes that theoretical research and applied services are two sides of the same coin, and that praxis and dedication to undoing ableism requires that both approaches continue to learn from one another. Scholars, activists, and practitioners in both Disability Studies and Student Accessibility Services are well aware of a long-standing tension between the disability studies/disability justice approach and the traditionally understood notion of accommodation on university campuses that has often relied on an individualized and medicalized model of inclusion by assimilation to normalcy, rather than changing social norms. The CGDS and the proposed DCC working together with UTSC's *AccessAbility* Services office seek to actively address this tension by fostering collective access practices and critically engaging the intellectual assumptions and practical outcomes of assimilationist paradigms. UTSC *AccessAbility* Services has long sought to implement services that go beyond individualized accommodations. With a focus on the lived experience of students with disabilities, the office is deeply involved in campus conversations about barriers in our environment and policies and processes to increase accessibility and eliminate or reduce the need for individualized accommodation. The partnership with the CGDS contributes to fostering the development of a vibrant and thriving disability culture at UTSC that engages emerging community disability justice movements as well as rights-based paradigms and disability leadership.

- a. The planned Disability Cultural Centre is a collaboration between CGDS and *AccessAbility* Services, based on cutting edge research, designed to:

- i. Foster disability pride and solidarity for intersectional justice;
- ii. Cultivate disability leadership;
- iii. Increase awareness of disability issues through events and encourage scholarship by academics with disabilities;
- iv. Develop a sense of connectedness and belonging;
- v. Provide a platform or space from which persons with disabilities can speak publicly in the spirit of the “Nothing About Us Without Us” ethos, in keeping with “the active involvement of persons with disabilities in the planning of strategies and policies that affect their lives” (WHO, 2004).

(12) In recognition of the global student community at UTSC, including both the international student population and students from Scarborough and surrounding GTA areas with familial ties that stretch around the globe, the Centre is uniquely positioned to be a hub for a global flow of ideas and will foster connections with student groups to encourage the uptake of disability studies as an interdisciplinary field.

(13) The Centre will act as a beacon for faculty, staff, graduate, and undergraduate students with an interest in disability studies and disability justice, offering an example of disability studies practices, and opportunities for undergraduate involvement in related events, research, and campus conversations. Furthermore, events will enliven campus life by bringing students, staff, and faculty into regular conversation with community members and organizations.

## **CONSULTATION**

This proposal was developed by a team of scholars comprised of faculty and staff members of the UTSC Dean’s working group, as well as two graduate student research assistants. We consulted other related entities across UTSC and U of T, including: the [SCOPE Lab](#) (the Health Humanities Learning Lab is a groundbreaking arts- and humanities-based research and education initiative at UTSC), CCDS, Equity Studies at New College, Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies (SDS), Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), and AccessAbility Services at UTSC, the University of Toronto Mississauga, and continue to seek further consultation with other units and colleagues.

## **FACULTY PARTICIPATION**

The Centre for Global Disability Studies is supported by a core group of faculty with active and distinguished careers producing and supporting scholarship in disability studies. The core faculty are supported by a complementary group of affiliated faculty members with relevant

research profiles who may participate in some research and training activities of the Centre for Global Disability Studies.

### Global Disability Studies Research Centre Members

Member	Academic Unit Affiliation
Susan Antebi	Associate Professor, Department of Spanish & Portuguese, Faculty of Arts and Science
Laura Bisailon	Assistant Professor Interdisciplinary Centre for Health and Society, University of Toronto Scarborough and Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
Hilary Brown	Assistant Professor, Interdisciplinary Centre for Health and Society, University of Toronto Scarborough
Leslie Carlin	Senior Research Associate, Department of Physical Therapy, Faculty of Medicine and U of T Centre for the Study of Pain
Andrea Charise	Assistant Professor, Interdisciplinary Centre for Health and Society, University of Toronto Scarborough
Bianca Dahl	Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto Scarborough
Tina Doyle	Director, AccessAbility Services, University of Toronto Scarborough
Andrea Duncan	Lecturer, Interdisciplinary Centre for Health and Society, University of Toronto Scarborough, Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, Faculty of Medicine
Jessica Fields	Professor and Director, Interdisciplinary Centre for Health and Society, University of Toronto Scarborough
Marleen Goldman	Professor, Department of English, University of Toronto Scarborough
Cassandra Hartblay	Assistant Professor, Interdisciplinary Centre for Health and Society and Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto Scarborough
Nancy Johnston	Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Writing in the Disciplines Coordinator, Centre for Teaching and Learning, Department of Historical and Cultural Studies, UTSC
Paul Kingston	Professor and Director, Centre for Critical Development Studies, University of Toronto Scarborough
Alice Maurice	Associate Professor, Department of English, University of Toronto Scarborough
Anne McGuire	Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Equity Studies Program, New College, Faculty of Arts and Science
Michelle Murphy	Professor, Technoscience Research Unit, Department of History, Faculty of Arts and Science

<b>Member</b>	<b>Academic Unit Affiliation</b>
David Onley	Senior Lecturer and Distinguished Visitor, Department of Political Science, University of Toronto Scarborough
David Pettinicchio	Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Toronto Mississauga
VK Preston	Assistant Professor, Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies, Faculty of Arts and Science

**ADMINISTRATION / GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE**

The CGDS Director will be appointed for a fixed term of not more than five years, renewable once, by the Vice-Principal Academic and Dean of the University of Toronto Scarborough (or designate). The Director will be responsible to the Dean for all facets of the CGDS including policies, budget, and administrative and financial operations.

In accordance with the Provost's Statement on the Role of Advisory Bodies (April 30, 1998), the Dean, with input from the Director and participating faculty, will appoint an Advisory Board to provide non-binding advice to the Director. Board members will serve multi-year renewable terms, and they will represent the Centre's various stakeholders, including representatives from faculty, staff, students, and the community, from all three campuses, and from a range of associated faculties. The appointment of board members from outside the University will not in any way interfere with University control and oversight of the CGDS. All operations of the CGDS will be conducted in accordance with University policy.

The CGDS will be supported in terms of administrative issues, including budget and allocation of funds, printing, and publicity by appointed university staff as determined by the Vice-Principal Academic and Dean (or designate) in consultation with the Director.

Furthermore, the Centre shall maintain a public list of members across the university (e.g., posted on the department website). Affiliated faculty and researchers have no administrative responsibilities to the Centre. Other affiliated persons include CGDS fellows (pre-doctoral and post-doctoral) and graduate students. Additionally, as the research activities of CGDS evolve, the Centre may develop long term collaborations with community organizations in the greater Toronto area (GTA) and/or research centres and other organizations around the world. These affiliated persons and GTA community and global partners may also be listed publicly. As the Centre develops, the director may form a Community Advisory Board, comprised of community partners. Partners on the Community Advisory Board will meet once a year to review activities, provide critical feedback, and inform future directions. They will receive honoraria for their



engagement; the honoraria will come from the CGDS budget.

## **BUDGET**

The Centre for Global Disability Studies shall, under the authority of the Dean, administer a budget to sustain the activities described below. The Vice-Principal Academic and Dean has reviewed, and supports, the budget model.

1. Flagship events (e.g. a semi-annual or periodic public lecture; film screening series; symposia or conferences) to be planned by the director(s) and core faculty. (\$3000 to be supplemented by external grants and support from other campus units)
2. Small grants to affiliated faculty and graduate students to co-sponsor events (e.g. 10 grants of \$200-500 toward hosting a visiting speaker, film screening, book launch, etc. annually) on a rolling basis.
3. Small matching grants to support accessibility elements at a research-related campus or public event (e.g. 10 grants of \$1000 to support ASL, CART, or other accessibility measure annually) open to any U of T researcher hosting an event with deadlines for requests at the start of each term, and a requirement that the applicant obtain matching funds from another source such as Dean's office, Departmental budget, *AccessAbility Services*, or external grant.
4. Predoctoral fellowships (e.g. to offer two fellowships each academic year to late-stage doctoral students writing dissertations on a topic related to global disability studies. Each fellow receives \$5000 stipend, gives a public talk, and is offered \$1000 to plan an event). To be implemented in stages, stepping up to two fellowships per year by the third year of the Centre's inception.
5. Campus events (Publicity, food, accessibility, and printing costs for small campus events, such as roundtable discussions or undergraduate student research presentations). 3 events at \$2000 each bi- annually or in years when there is not a flagship event.
6. Graduate student RA-ships (two graduate student RA-ships each year to support the work of the center and support graduate student professionalization by developing skills in running an academic research center, such as updating the website, planning and hosting conferences or speakers, publicizing events, serving on grant committees). Two RAs at 100 hours @ current union rates.
7. Accessible research fund. Small grants to support researchers with disabilities in accessing their field sites, archives, laboratories, etc. or presenting their research at a conference (e.g. a wheelchair-user requiring more expensive accommodations than typical grant budgets allow in a given city; a graduate researcher with diabetes who needs financial assistance to ensure they will have sufficient insulin throughout a year

long period of research abroad; a researcher who will present at a conference but needs extra funds for a support worker to travel). Ten grants of \$500 on a rolling basis.

8. Small honoraria (\$500) for community members involved in the Community Advisory Board, who meet annually to discuss areas of strength and improvement for CGDS.
9. Administrative support staff (.4 time) to facilitate the operations of the EDU-C in collaboration with the director and with the assistance of the RAs. Duties include collecting and compiling application submissions for grants, RA-ships, fellowships; managing event RSVPs; sending publicity emails related to Centre activities, etc.
10. Yearly honorarium (\$3000) for Centre director, either as research stipend or personal remuneration.
11. Yearly Materials and supplies budget (\$2000). Printing costs for flyers, pamphlets, posters. Office supplies such as pens, markers, paper, folders, etc. Acquisitions of objects or resource library materials for the Disability Cultural Centre collection. To be administered by the Centre's director and administrative staff.

The Centre may also seek external funding to host postdoctoral fellows, to host visiting international researchers, and to promote other interdisciplinary and inter-institutional collaborations.

## **REVIEW**

In line with normal practice, the CGDS will be subject to periodic review (normally every 5 years) commissioned by the Vice-Principal Academic and Dean of the University of Toronto Scarborough. The review will assess the EDU's sustainability, performance, and achievements relative to the goals set out at its establishment. A possible outcome of the review may include closure of the Centre. The first review will be scheduled by 2025-26.

## **APPENDIX 1: The Disability Cultural Centre at UTSC**

Prepared by Tina Doyle (Director, AccessAbility Services, UTSC) and Cassandra Hartblay (Assistant Professor, ICHS, UTSC)

### **The Disability Cultural Centre model**

#### ***What is a DCC?***

The concept of a *disability cultural centre* is one that has emerged as a standard bearer in campus composition on North American University campuses as a model for promoting disability inclusion by supporting students and faculty with disabilities as leaders in academic excellence and campus life. In this model, the purpose of a Disability Cultural Centre is manifold. A DCC seeks to: (1) to foster a sense of connectedness and belonging for all; (2) to encourage and celebrate leadership of students, faculty, and staff with disabilities on campus, and (3) to be a physical manifestation of a mission-driven partnership to promote inclusive excellence between disability studies (as an academic endeavor) and student-facing accessibility services and faculty and staff disability equity. And, (4) above all, a disability cultural centre recognizes the unique social innovations of disability culture as rooted in shared principles of accessibility developed over generations of disability rights and disability justice movements in Canada and abroad.

We envision the Disability Cultural Centre (DCC) at UTSC as a dedicated space on the UTSC campus chartered as a partnership between the Global Disability Studies Centre and campus AccessAbility Services in collaboration with other campus units with related missions and expertise. The DCC space is multifunctional: it serves as an office space for student researchers and fellows working with the proposed EDU-C; as a space for academic events such as guest lectures or research group meetings; as a possible location for pertinent campus life activity programming such as film screening, meetings of the Best Buddies chapter or other disability-related student advocacy or social groups, AccessAbility Services outreach events, etc.; as a drop-in safe space for students, faculty and staff seeking solidarity or recognition; and as a home to a resource library related to disability inclusion and access.

The DCC model draws on the broader concept of multicultural campus centres to foster diversity, belonging, and recognition of marginalized identities, and to promote awareness of the lasting impact of historical systems of oppression that continue to impact diversity, equity, and inclusion on university campuses. In this way, DCCs are cognate entities with LGBTQ Centres, Women & Nonbinary Centres, Indigenous centres, etc., that seek to move beyond diversity models to cultivate solidarity and advocacy in the face of systemic violence.

### ***Why is it needed?***

The University of Toronto is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion and UTSC's priority is "inclusive excellence". The broad goals of the *Disability Cultural Centre* are aligned with, and would strengthen, these commitments. The University of Toronto's reputation is important for recruitment of students, staff, faculty and funding. The University demonstrates significant pride in receiving *Canada's Best Diversity Employers Award* for "exceptional workplace diversity and inclusiveness programs" (Mediacorp, 2019). The Centre would contribute to the recognition of this award for future years and strengthen the university's reputation as a leader in equity and diversity.

However, despite significant work towards creating an inclusive and accessible campus at UTSC there is currently limited demonstration of a disability community amongst students, staff and faculty. Recent changes in the workflow of *AccessAbility Services*, along with the planned *EDU-C Global Disability Cultural Centre*, mark an important opportunity to develop the modest material facilities necessary to invest in growing greater visibility for disability inclusion, or, more specifically, to develop a thriving disability culture.

The rationale for a Disability Cultural Centre is well-supported by research regarding accessibility, diversity, and inclusion in secondary education. The need to develop a sense of disability pride and culture is driven by the importance of overcoming stigma and internalized ableism facing members of our university community. Studies show that "a sense of belonging has been associated with academic motivation, success, and persistence" (Vaccaro et al 2015 p. 670). Furthermore, "Scholars have long argued that social acceptance is the foundation for a sense of belonging, and higher education studies have affirmed the significance of supportive relationships" (Vaccaro et al., 2015, p. 671). By elevating disability culture on campus, we can contribute to "fortification, unification, communication and recruitment" in the university (Forber-Pratt 2019 p. 242, citing Gil (1995)). A Disability Cultural Centre can therefore contribute and strengthen the academic mission of student success and faculty retention.

The broad goals of the *Disability Cultural Centre* are to:

- 1) Foster disability pride through recognition and celebration of leaders in the disability community and the advancement of disability studies;
- 2) Foster solidarity for intersectional justice movements that relate to disablement as a product of systemic violence;
- 3) Cultivate disability leadership;
- 4) Increase awareness of disability issues through events and encourage scholarship by academics with disabilities;

- 5) Facilitate the uptake of accessibility best practices across the university community by hosting events that model excellence in disability access;
- 6) Develop a sense of connectedness and belonging for all;
- 7) Provide a voice for persons with disabilities, which is in keeping with the motto 'Nothing about Us, Without Us'. The principle of this motto is to ensure "the active involvement of persons with disabilities in the planning of strategies and policies that affect their lives" (WHO, 2004); and
- 8) Materialize a unique collaborative long-term partnership between academic disability studies (the proposed Global Disability Studies EDU-C) and university administrative units concerned with disability access (*AccessAbility Services* and others).

This initiative is aligned with the former Chief Commissioner for the Ontario Human Rights Commission, Frazee (2002), who highlighted "Citizenship means having rights, but it also means belonging. Belonging in schools and universities...Our rights as equal citizens, arguably, should get us in the front door. But once we are inside, our citizen's place of belonging assures us (or ought to) that we will be valued and heard."

### ***Where does it currently exist?***

Currently several universities in the United States are home to a Disability Cultural Centre, "D" Centre (indicating an overlap between Deaf and disability cultures), or similar permanent institutional entity with ties to research and campus life. These centres were chartered through student and faculty advocacy in partnership with university administration with a farsighted commitment to disability access and inclusion, as part of a broader campus climate of diversity and equity. Examples of note include the Disability Cultural Centre at Syracuse University, the Disability Cultural Centre at the University of Illinois Chicago, the Disability Resource Center at the University of Arizona, and the D Center at the University of Washington Seattle. It is our understanding that should the University of Toronto create a DCC, it may be the first of its kind in Ontario, if not in Canada. For instance, although McMaster has an "Accessibility Hub," that unit holds cultural events in other locations around campus, and aside from a services office, there is not a dedicated cultural space for students to gather. It is important to note that the University of Toronto student-run club Students for Barrier-Free Access does maintain a permanent space on the St George campus; SBFA is an important partner in this initiative.

### **UTSC future Disability Cultural Centre**

***Where will it be housed and what resources will it require?***

We are currently working to identify a suitable space to be the future home of the Disability Cultural Centre on the UTSC campus. The space should be a centrally-located, physically accessible room with a door that closes, with space to seat 30-40 people for events. The space should be outfitted with: 2-5 desk area workspaces for GDSC fellows and research assistants; bookshelves and a comfortable seating area (with flexible arrangements to accommodate mobility devices) for a resource library; a worktable for small group meetings or projects; folding chairs for large group events; a projector and projection screen and built-in sound system and microphone (audio amplification is essential for accessibility) for events; a branding backdrop for photos during public events.

***How will it be staffed and what organizational entities will be involved?***

The DCC will be founded as a joint project of the GDSC EDU-C and AccessAbility Services. The DCC's mission statement will be authored by and carried out by the director of the EDU-C charters in collaboration with the director of AccessAbility Services, and in consultation with the director of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion and the Vice Dean Faculty Affairs & Equity as needed. The DCC will also have an important partnership with Students for Barrier-Free Access, a student-run club with a dedicated drop-in space on the St George campus, and other relevant student groups at UTSC.

In the future, the day-to-day operations and programming of the DCC will be carried out by a permanent professional staff person to run the DCC and DCC programming.

Founding a DCC at UTSC also represents an important opportunity to consider instituting the DCC in the name of a significant campus figure, alumnus/a, Toronto disability advocate, and/or donor, who may or may not be named in the Centre's name and/or hold a title related to the centre.

We look forward to further developing and implementing this vision.

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### **Existing Disability Cultural Centres and Cognates:**

UofT Students for Barrier-Free Access  
<http://uoftsba.com/>

Arizona  
<https://drc.arizona.edu/cultural-center>

Syracuse  
<http://sudcc.syr.edu/>

UIC  
<https://dcc.uic.edu/>

UW Seattle  
<https://depts.washington.edu/dcenter/>