

FOR INFORMATION**PUBLIC****OPEN SESSION**

TO: Planning and Budget Committee

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DATE: September 10, 2020 for September 17, 2020

AGENDA ITEM: 4

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Annual Report: Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2019-2020

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

Section 4.1 of the Terms of Reference for the Planning and Budget Committee states: The Committee is responsible for monitoring and planning activities and documents as may be required by general policy, as specified herein or by resolution of the Academic Board.

GOVERNANCE PATH:

1. University Affairs Board [for information] (May, 21, 2020)
2. **Planning and Budget Committee [for information] (September 17, 2020)**

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

At its meeting of May 9, 2019, the Planning and Budget Committee received the AODA Plan 2018-2019 for information only.

HIGHLIGHTS:

The AODA Report and Plan is produced each year in order to satisfy the requirements of the AODA to report on how the University is meeting compliance and adhering to its accessibility plan. The report outlines the significant work that occurs across all three campuses, multiple divisions, and various departments that assists in working towards an accessible University environment. The report also conveys our broad commitments to accessibility and inclusion and how we endeavour to move beyond the point of compliance.

The report is structured into several sections covering accessible built environment, accessible communications, accessible service delivery, pedagogy, mental health, and innovations and partnerships. Recognizing that accessibility is a shared responsibility, each section highlights the work of the AODA Office, the University's Divisions and the University community as a whole to address and eliminate barriers.

Over the reporting year the University has continued to make significant progress in creating an environment that intentionally inclusive and that treats every member of the community in an equitable manner. This is measured against our compliance with the AODA, the Ontario *Human Rights Code*, as well as our adherence the University's Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities. However, we also recognize that fostering a fully accessible environment requires constant input, support and participation from all members of the University community. Therefore, the AODA Report and Plan also outlines next steps the AODA Office and its partners will take to ensure the University is keeping on track.

We would like to thank all those who have made a positive impact towards increasing accessibility and invite all members of the University community to engage with us to move forward together to advance equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility.

DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:

AODA Report and Plan 2019-20



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (AODA) REPORT 2019-2020

OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT,
HUMAN RESOURCES & EQUITY

REPORTING PERIOD:
2019-2020



We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

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For an accessible version of this report, please contact us at vp.hre@utoronto.ca



Featured in the Innovation & Partnerships section: researchers from the University of Toronto are working with Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities, to feature traditional play components modified for children of all abilities (photo credit: Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities)

A WELCOME MESSAGE

We are pleased to present the University of Toronto's 2019-2020 Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Report.

The University is committed to ensuring an intentionally inclusive community that treats every member in an equitable manner. Working to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities across all three of our campuses serves as an important part of our institution's mission to ensure every person has a fair level of access and opportunity to achieve their full potential.

Every year, significant work occurs across the University and its divisions to advance our commitment to building an accessible institution. Accessibility encompasses more than physical building features and legislative compliance: it also enshrines inclusive practices that create environments free from barriers to participation. The definition of disability includes visible and invisible disabilities, that differ from person to person, and can intersect with other forms of identity. Addressing this range and variation of difference necessitates the incorporation of accessibility considerations into all aspects of our thinking, planning, and programming. This report conveys our commitments and ongoing work to advance accessibility and inclusion, in addition to meeting the requirements set out in the AODA.

Fostering a fully accessible environment across all three campuses requires constant input, support and participation from everyone in our community. We recognize that our work will continue in order to ensure that persons with

disabilities have equitable access to opportunities for success. In recognizing that accessibility is a shared responsibility, we wish to acknowledge the efforts of all members of our community in pursuit of our commitment. Together, we can continue to create an environment where full participation is achieved through independence, dignity and equal access to opportunities for all persons.

We thank all those who have made a positive impact towards increasing accessibility at the University. We invite you to engage with us to move forward together to advance equity, diversity and inclusion at the University of Toronto.



**Professor Kelly Hannah-Moffat,
Vice-President, Human
Resources & Equity**



**Professor Sandy Welsh
Vice-Provost, Students**



**Karima Hashmani
Executive Director, Equity,
Diversity & Inclusion**



**Ben Poynton
Accessibility for Ontarians with
Disabilities Act (AODA) Officer**

ABOUT THE AODA OFFICE

The AODA Office is responsible for ensuring that the University meets its obligations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, the Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. The office provides training, consultation, support and advice to all members of the University community on meeting these broad accessibility requirements. The office

also takes feedback on the accessibility of the services the University offers and seeks to resolve accessibility concerns.

Over the coming year, the office will continue to meet these obligations and seek ways of further building a sense of community around accessibility and disability at the University of Toronto.



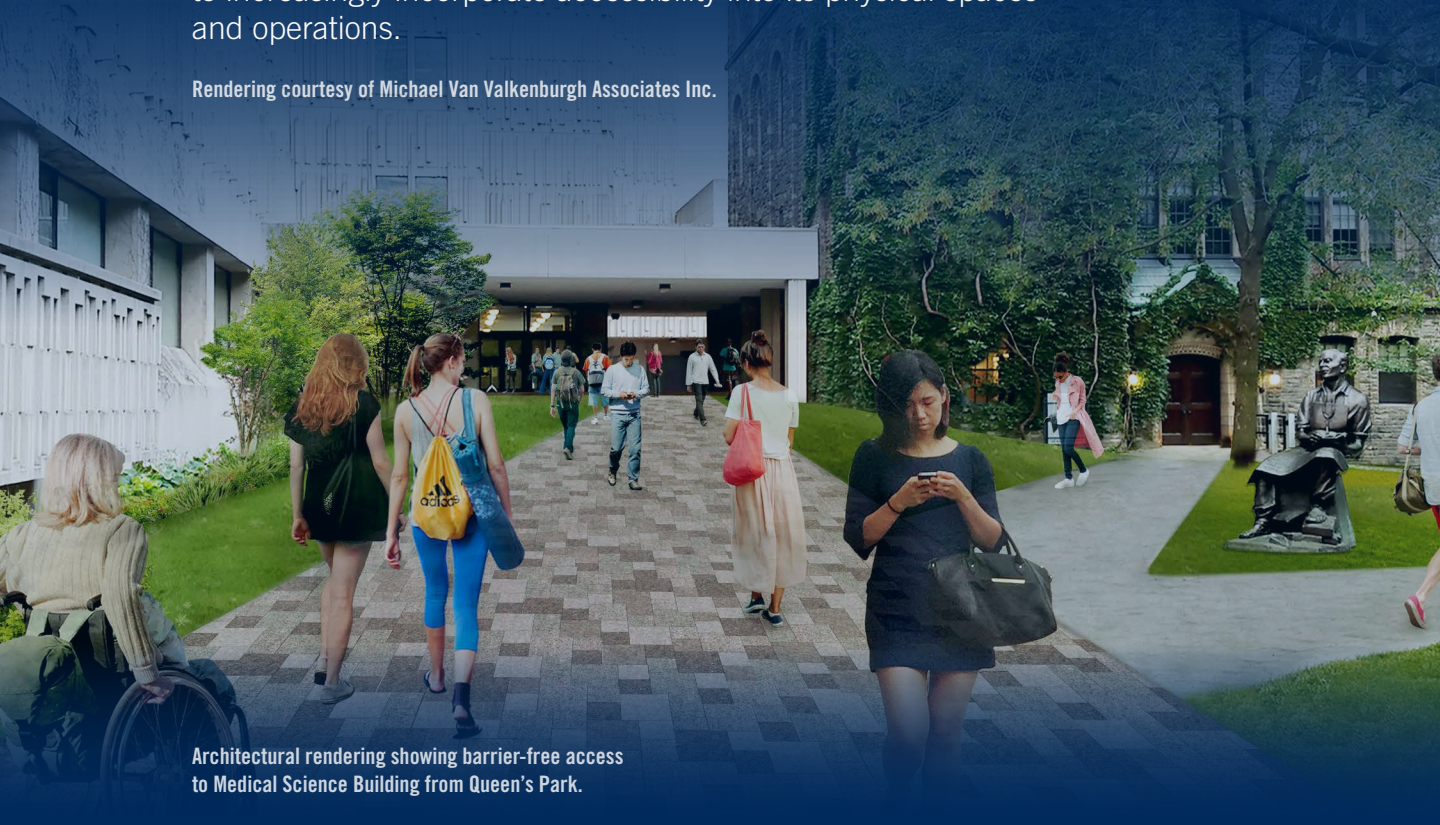
Photo Credits, Left Page, From Top:
Lisa Sakulensky, Johnny Guatto,
Andy King, Veronica Zaretski

Photo Credit, Right Page: Randy Landicho

ACCESSIBLE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

This section focuses on accessibility in relation to U of T's buildings and public spaces. In 2019-2020, the University continued to meet regulatory requirements as per Ontario's Design of Public Spaces Standards, and worked to increasingly incorporate accessibility into its physical spaces and operations.

Rendering courtesy of Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates Inc.



Architectural rendering showing barrier-free access to Medical Science Building from Queen's Park.

KEY FOCUS 1: UPDATING THE INSTITUTIONAL BARRIER-FREE DESIGN STANDARDS

In partnership with St. George Facilities and Services, University Planning, Design & Construction, and representatives from all three campuses, the AODA Office

commenced a review of the University's Barrier-free Design Standards in January 2020. These standards are part of a larger suite of standards developed by the University of Toronto Facilities & Service Department and Capital Projects Division, which are intended to facilitate the planning, design and implementation of new construction and renovation projects. The goal of this review is to develop standards better

reflective of legislative, and current barrier-free and universal design concepts through a consultative approach. Completion of this review is expected by the end of 2020.

KEY FOCUS 2: U OF T LANDMARK PROJECT TO MAKE ST. GEORGE CAMPUS' HISTORIC CORE GREENER, MORE WALKABLE AND ACCESSIBLE

Accessibility is a top priority in the Landmark Project to revitalize the historic core of the U of T St. George campus. This space will undergo a major revitalization, focused on Front Campus, Back Campus, King's College Circle, Hart House Circle and Sir Daniel Wilson Quad. The project will create more accessible public spaces, in line with, and in many ways exceeding, the requirements of the Design of Public Spaces Standards. The project will replace various stairs and ramps with gradual slopes, expand current and create new pedestrian-friendly areas, particularly around King's College Circle, Hart House Circle and Tower Road, and incorporate new rest areas, benches and places to sit. This area will eventually be closed to all traffic, apart from service and accessibility vehicles and will also incorporate above-ground accessible parking spaces and tactile surface indicators where pedestrian paths intersect with vehicle-permitted areas.

ST. GEORGE ACCESSIBILITY INITIATIVES

The Property Management Group, within Facilities and Services, of University Operations and Real Estate Partnerships, is creating an Accessibility Improvements Program for the built environment for the St. George Campus. The work has three main aspects: establishing a set of Standards for design and construction of capital projects (see Key Focus above), setting priorities for our buildings at St. George, and an ongoing construction budget to build improvements under the established priorities.

VALLEY LAND TRAIL AT U OF T SCARBOROUGH OPENED

The [Valley Land Trail at University of Toronto Scarborough](#) highlighted in last year's report was opened to the public in the summer of 2019. This trail reflects the University's commitment to inclusive excellence and provides better community access to a natural trail, year-round. This trail complies with, and in many ways goes beyond the Design of Public Spaces Standards.

NEXT STEPS: CONTINUING OUR DESIGN STANDARDS REVIEW & CONSULTATION

Working with Facilities & Services and University Design, Planning and Construction, the AODA Office will continue to review the University's Barrier-free Accessibility Design Standards. These offices have convened a group of internal stakeholders representing multiple divisions across all three campuses tasked with reviewing the existing legislative standards, the University's current barrier-free standards, and what other approaches might be taken to barrier-free design. This is work anticipated to be finalized by the end of 2020.

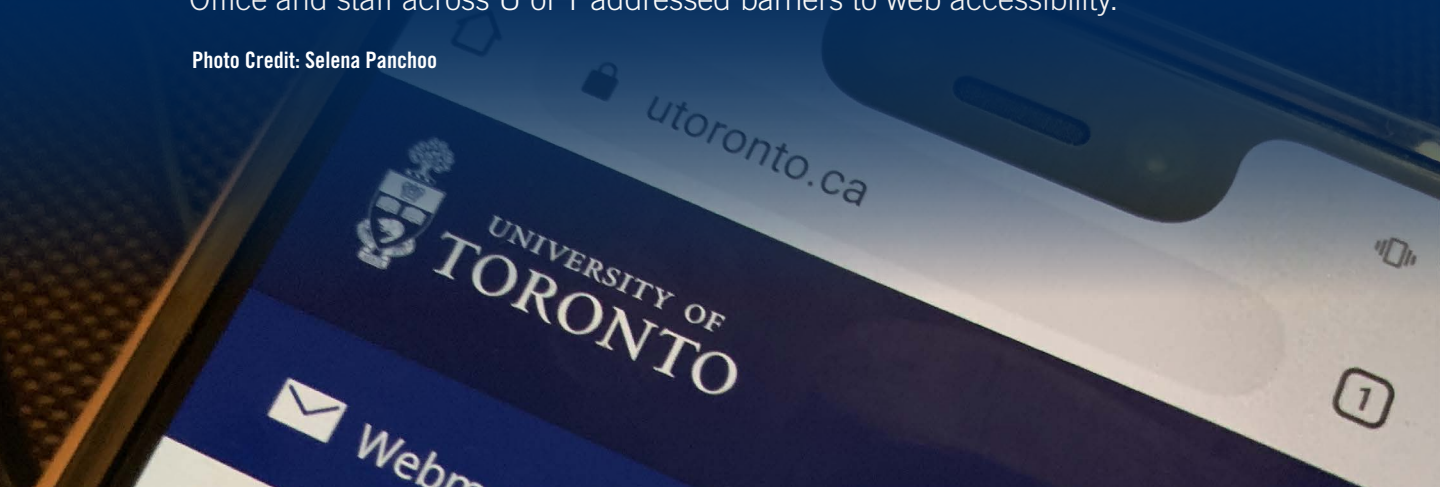
Complementing the design review process, the AODA Office will finalize its recommendations to planners across the University on how to meaningfully and appropriately conduct consultations with persons with lived experience of disability. Under the AODA, the University is required to consult with persons with disabilities on certain projects. These recommendations will provide guidelines on how to conduct consultations in a way that is sensitive to the lived experience of persons with disabilities and meaningfully incorporates the perspectives offered.

These next steps will help to ensure the University is designing its built environment to be as inclusive as possible and to address barriers to participation before they are encountered.

ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATIONS

By 1 January, 2021, our websites, new or existing, will need to comply with the Web Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 to Level AA. This section focuses on the University's ongoing efforts to ensure that information and communications within institutional online spaces are accessible. Over the past year, the AODA Office and staff across U of T addressed barriers to web accessibility.

Photo Credit: Selena Panchoo



KEY FOCUS 1: NEW WEB ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS AND RESOURCES

In 2019, a dedicated resource person was hired to assist Divisions comply with the web accessibility standards of the AODA. The Web Accessibility Specialist has worked with communications and IT professionals across all of our Divisions and campuses to provide support and resources to assist them in ensuring their websites are accessible. Over the past year, the Web Accessibility Specialist has offered accessibility reviews, tailored in-person training sessions, and consultation sessions with key stakeholders across the University. Individuals involved in content creation and design now have a substantial grasp of web accessibility principles. With the support of two web accessibility assistants

through the work study program, the AODA Office has completed 37 website accessibility reviews and supported website teams across the institution to strategize on making the recommended changes. These work study roles have not only assisted the University in meeting its web accessibility obligations, but have also provided students at the University with a grounding in inclusivity and accessibility principles that they will take with them throughout their studies and careers.

KEY FOCUS 2: ROLLOUT OF WEB ACCESSIBILITY TRAINING

The AODA Office has designed and facilitated training sessions on implementing web accessibility in everyday practices. Since March 2019 eight full-day sessions have been attended by participants across all

three campuses. Attendees were given a comprehensive foundation on web accessibility fundamentals, learning about the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0, the AODA, and their role in creating accessible communications at the University. Recognizing that accessibility is a shared responsibility, this training was offered to and attended by participants in varied roles such as communications officers, IT professionals, and administrative professionals.

LAUNCH OF NEW VICE-PRESIDENT, RESEARCH & INNOVATION WEBSITE

In December, 2019, the Office of the Vice-President, Research & Innovation launched a new website, and the development process incorporated accessible design throughout. The accessible design included robust vendor specifications around web accessibility conformance, a requirement for their build, leading to WCAG 2.0 Level AA compliance.

STUDENT LIFE, ST. GEORGE: A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

At Student Life on the St. George campus, accessible information and communications practices are embedded throughout their content development processes. Units within Student Life coordinate through their central communications team, who ensure their web and printed materials comply with AODA requirements. This includes documents, videos, and webforms. Further, Student Life IT is committed to bringing all of their existing websites and portal applications into compliance with the web content guidelines to Level AA. This commitment to accessibility also extends to e-learning modules, with Finding Your Own Mentor, released later this year, being built to comply with web accessibility standards.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARIES AND WEB ACCESSIBILITY

Web accessibility is a priority for University of Toronto Libraries (UTL), and involves the efforts of librarians, developers, and student assistants. Working to meet this priority has included developing procedures for web accessibility testing and remediation. An accessibility testing student assistant was hired by the library in January 2020 to complete manual accessibility audits on UTL websites, in collaboration with librarians and developers to remediate any issues identified. UTL ITS staff are also working with content creators, such as archivists and students writing their theses, to provide them with tools and instructions on creating accessible content that is hosted on library websites and platforms.

NEXT STEPS: BUILDING ON A PRODUCTIVE YEAR

Over the next year, the AODA Office, the Web Accessibility Specialist and the web accessibility working group will continue to provide support, training, and strategic guidance to the University on meeting our web accessibility obligations. The working group is composed of senior IT professionals representing various divisions across our three campuses. This group meets on a regular basis to develop and implement the University's web accessibility strategy.

This work over the next year will help to prepare the University to comply with the web accessibility obligations of the AODA. Meeting these obligations will provide accessible websites for all of our students, staff and faculty, as well as members of the general public. With the deadline of 2021 upon us, this work will take on new and important significance.

ACCESSIBLE SERVICE DELIVERY

This section outlines the University's ongoing efforts to prioritize and deliver accessible options for the broad range of services we provide to our community. Our work in this area also continues to ensure that the University fulfils its obligation under the Customer Service Standard, and its commitment to advance an equitable and an intentionally inclusive environment that meets the needs of all members.

Photo Credit: Geoffrey Vendeville

Ellie Lutz, first-year student, with service animal Honey.



KEY FOCUS: ACCESSIBLE EVENTS TRAINING

In February, 2020, in partnership with Audio-Visual and Staging Services at Hart House and AccessAbility Services at UTSC, the AODA Office designed and delivered new training sessions on 'Planning and hosting inclusive accessible events'. Sessions were offered at St. George and Scarborough Campuses and attendees were introduced to the inclusive design process and practical tools for addressing barriers to the accessibility of events on our campuses. The training provided a way to inform participants about their obligations under the AODA and the Ontario *Human Rights Code* when planning events, and provided an opportunity to review how accessibility applies to all aspects of planning, promoting, and putting-on University events. Over 80 individuals from various departments participated in the two training sessions. More sessions are planned throughout the year.

NEW SERVICE ANIMAL GUIDELINE LAUNCHED

As part of our commitment to providing a welcoming and supportive environment for people with disabilities, U of T introduced an updated service animal guideline in compliance with the AODA. The guideline informs the community on what qualifies as a service animal, where service animals are welcomed on the three campuses, including in residences, and how to create an environment where service animals and those they are supporting feel included. Under the new guideline, members of the U of T community can choose to register their service animal with the University. This is an optional process offered to students by the accessibility service offices on each campus, and to staff and faculty through Health & Well-being Programs & Services. Owners of a service animal will receive an updated TCard with a symbol confirming the registration. The service animal guideline also raises awareness about the use of emotional support animals, recognizing that faculty, staff and students may

have service animals for invisible disabilities. Faculty, staff and students are already making use of the registration process and registering their service animals with the University.

ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS

Over the past year the University has provided accommodations and supports through its student accessibility services on each campus. Across all three campuses, student registration at our accessibility offices has totaled 7,043. This represents a ten per cent increase on the previous year. Tri-campus initiatives at these services have included: streamlining the inter-campus transfer process and protocols; creating a standardized process for students identifying with these offices as having seizure concerns to ensure appropriate actions are undertaken; revising the Vice-Provostial [Memo on Academic Accommodations](#); and creating student instructional videos on commonly used assistive technologies.

ACCESSIBILITY TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

It is the University's goal to create a community that is inclusive of all persons and treats all members of the community in an equitable manner. In doing so the University strives to provide support for, and facilitate, the accommodation of individuals with disabilities, and to eliminate or mitigate the adverse effects of barriers, including attitudinal barriers. In support of addressing these barriers, and as required by legislation, the University provides training on the requirements of the AODA through its online training module. Since its launch in 2017, 13,769 staff and faculty have taken the training, and, since its move to SuccessFactors, a new platform for employees, in September, 4091 have taken it. Although its content is foundational, having members of the University community take this training will help to ensure that we all understand our shared responsibility in addressing

barriers to accessibility. The AODA Office complements this training in several areas, including Universal Design for Learning, web accessibility, planning and hosting accessible events, and accessible recruitment.

Through its accessibility services for students on each campus (see above) and Health & Wellbeing Programs & Services the University provides support and accommodations to members of our community. Over the past year, Health & Wellbeing has continued to provide supports to employees with disabilities on workplace accommodation, and is committed to creating a healthy and engaged workforce through ongoing employee activities.

ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES, ST. GEORGE – A YEAR IN REVIEW, 2019

In 2019, Accessibility Services launched its first Accessibility Services Student Experience Survey. This was an opportunity for students to share their experience with the office, and to also offer input on current procedures. 1073 students completed the survey. Based on the feedback from the survey, St. George Accessibility Services began promoting external bursaries and scholarships to students, providing new Learning Strategist appointments and peer advising, and increasing drop-in hours. The survey also highlighted stigma as a primary barrier to students registering with Accessibility Services. In response, the office increased its outreach efforts, held Accessibility Dialogues with key stakeholders, and improved communications on navigating disability on campus. The office will soon be launching the Student Experience Survey for 2020 and has organized a range of events and conferences related to student and graduate success.

SPEAKING TO POWER

On 6 November, 2019, Accessibility Services partnered with Ronna Bloom (U of T's resident poet in community), and the Multi-Faith

Centre for its third annual Speaking to Power with Clarity and Effectiveness session. The workshop, catered to students at any level of their studies, gives students practical tools to help them feel more confident when making requests for accommodations of any nature, from their supervisors or professors. Through poetry and creative writing, coupled with small group discussions, students explore the areas in which they feel hesitant in asking for help, which is a struggle frequently reported by students.

UTM ACCESSIBILITY INTEGRATED LEARNING STRATEGY PROGRAM

This program, provided by the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre at U of T Mississauga, offers students one-to-one appointments with a learning strategist to develop their academic skills including time management, organization, writing and test-taking. The strategist worked in the Accessibility Services department one day a week from October to April. This partnership also provided students with opportunities to participate in other Academic Skills Centre workshops and study groups.

UTSC CAREER & DISABILITY SYMPOSIUM

On 29 April, 2019, AccessAbility Services in partnership with the Academic Advising & Career Centre, hosted the University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC) Career Disability Symposium. The cost-free symposium was designed to prepare students with disabilities for the world of work. It included interactive sessions, panel discussions, and a resource fair covering topics on identifying personal strengths, and understanding how to leverage them in today's workplace, disclosure, accommodation and non-traditional job search, and work environments.



Photo Credit: Diana Tyszko

INNIS COLLEGE BUILDS COMMUNITY WITH FIRST-YEAR FOUNDATION SEMINARS

In February, 2020, for the first time, Innis College hosted first-year foundation seminars with an intentional focus on fostering connections between students, instructors and the college itself. In the seminar, Representing Disability, taught by Professor Katherine Williams, Department of English, students learned about literary depictions of disability through critical reading of drama, fiction and poetry. One of the goals of the course was to push students to question their environments and communities, asking themselves who is included and excluded. Ellie Lutz, a first-year student who attended the seminar, with her service animal, Honey, reported that the format made it much easier for her to interact with students.

ACCESSIBILITY TOUR OF ROBARTS LIBRARY

In partnership with Students for Barrier-free Access (SBA) and the Association of Part-Time Undergraduate Students, Robarts library offered students a tour of the library by the User Services & Accessibility Librarian. For the first time in this format, participants were

provided with an overview of services, supports, and technologies available for students with disabilities, information about booking accessible study rooms, a short walking/rolling tour of Robarts Library. Participants were also given a chance to meet the User Services and Accessibility Librarian at Robarts to ask questions. Students often report being unsure of the processes for requesting accessible materials at the library and these tours helped to address these barriers to participation.

NEXT STEPS: INCLUSIVE DESIGN GUIDELINES

Building on the success of our training sessions, the AODA Office will be developing guidelines and providing training on incorporating inclusive design principles into planning and hosting accessible events. These resources will assist event professionals and anyone organizing events to embed accessibility and inclusive design into their processes. University events represent a key, yet sometimes overlooked, aspect of the life of the University for all of our students, staff, faculty, alumni, and community partners. Making events more accessible by design will address barriers to participation, create more welcoming environments and ensure everyone can contribute to the University's mission.

PEDAGOGY

The University is committed to the delivery of accessible classroom learning. This section of the report highlights some of the resources, support and training provided to teaching staff on how to foster accessible and inclusive learning environments. Our work in this area also continues to ensure that the University meets AODA requirements to provide training to educators on the creation of accessible learning spaces.

Photo Credit: Nick Iwanyshyn

Early Career Teaching Award recipients with Vice-President and Provost Cheryl Regehr.





Photo Credit: Johnny Guatto

KEY FOCUS: IMPROVING UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING RESOURCES

In 2019, the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation at the University launched a new [Teaching Support webpage on Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#). The webpage provides advice, guidance and resources on strategies for incorporating UDL into pedagogical practices. This has created one place for all teaching staff and teaching assistants to learn the basics, sign-up for workshops, and delve deeper into the subject. Other key initiatives include expanded workshops on UDL, a CTSI Lunch & Learn Series, webinars on incorporating UDL into Quercus courses, and the development of guidelines to build accessibility into Quercus. This work represents a significant expansion in the provision of UDL tools and resources, and exhibits how the University is meaningfully addressing barriers to classroom accessibility.

EARLY CAREER TEACHING AWARDS

In October, 2019, the University of Toronto recognized some of its best and brightest teachers – and asked them to help further improve the U of T student experience. Award recipients were formally presented with plaques for this year's Early Career Teaching Award, which are given to faculty in the early stages of their career who go above and beyond to help students learn. Two of the winners were recognized for their commitment to accessible education. Matthew Sergi, Assistant Professor, Department of English, actively works with students to try to accommodate diverse modes of learning, in ways that are fundamentally part of the course. Anne McGuire, Assistant

Professor, New College designs her courses around collective access, a practice in disability studies that focuses on creating a classroom that works for students and instructors alike.

TOWARDS INCLUSIVE PRACTICES SESSION (TIPS) FACULTY OF APPLIED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING

Hosted by the Engineering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Group (EEDIAG), TIPS aims to create a space for faculty, staff and students in the Division to discuss topics covering equity, diversity and inclusion. In June, 2019, staff and graduate students participated in session on accessibility and student accommodations in design teams. Led by representatives from Accessibility Services and the AODA Office, participants engaged in the topic of Universal Design for Learning and accommodations.

NEXT STEPS: DESIGNING TOOLS & LEARNING FOR INSTRUCTORS

The AODA Office will continue to work with teaching and support staff across the University to provide support, tools and training on Universal Design for Learning to our educators. This will build on the existing work the AODA Office has done with CTSI, including the development of in-person training sessions and webinars.

Providing UDL training support will help to address barriers to participation for our students and create educational environments that welcome all.

MENTAL HEALTH

The University of Toronto is dedicated to fostering a safe and healthy environment that enables all members to thrive. This section of our report focuses on some of the initiatives the University has undertaken over the past year to increase our community's understanding of mental health, and advance our well-being support.

Photo Credit: Randy Landicho



PRESIDENTIAL AND PROVOSTIAL TASKFORCE ON STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

The final report of the [Presidential and Provostial Task Force on Student Mental Health](#) was released in January of 2020, along with an [administrative response](#).

After months of consultations with students, faculty and staff, the Task Force, led by Professor Trevor Young, called for a student-centric approach to harmonized mental health services to make it easier for students to get the help where and when they need it.

The report urges the University to expand community partnerships with hospitals and others in the mental health sector, such as the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), to better respond to the growing pressure on mental health resources. Though not part of its original mandate, the task force also decided to examine the “culture of excellence” at U of T and institutional policies that may affect students’ mental well-being based on the input it received. In the University’s response, the President and Provost accepted all [21 of the task forces’s recommendations](#). Progress towards these recommendations is being [tracked and reported publicly](#) by the University.

REINTRODUCING WELLNESS AND LEARNING FOR STAFF AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

In early 2019, the University, within HR & Equity announced the launch of a [new sustainable staff wellness initiative](#) to help meet the full spectrum of staff wellness needs, and enhance the coordination, collaboration and communication of wellness programs and services across the University. This will involve improving access processes, redesigning communication tools, strengthening offerings, and enhancing partnerships, all through an integrated, institutional approach.

WELLNESS PROGRAMMING THROUGH THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND DIVERSITY

Through the University of Toronto’s institutional membership with the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (NCFDD), all faculty, graduate students, and postdoctoral fellows have free access to professional development, training, and a mentoring community designed to help academics to improve work-life balance. Sessions have covered topics such as ‘How to Manage Stress, Rejection & the Haters in Your Midst’, and ‘How to Manage Chronic Illness and Academic Life’. 948 U of T faculty and graduate students have created accounts to take advantage of the NCFDD programming.

NEXT STEPS

The AODA Office will provide advice and guidance on the accessibility of the redesign of the Koffler Health and Wellness Centre on the St. George campus, ensuring that best practices in accessible design are incorporated into the project. The redesign is a recommendation of the Task Force report. The Office will be collaborating with staff wellness initiatives through training opportunities and supporting outreach efforts, by providing guidance on ensuring community consultations are accessible. As previously stated, the definition of disability is flexible and should be interpreted broadly, and includes invisible disabilities and mental health disabilities. As such, the AODA Office continues to embed these perspectives into its training, support and feedback processes.

INNOVATION & PARTNERSHIPS

The University recognizes that our commitment to intentional inclusion can be met by continuously innovating and engaging in partnerships. In 2019-2020, a number of innovative solutions for accessibility were created through our various partnerships.

KEY FOCUS: ACCESSIBLE PLAYGROUND DESIGN

[Researchers from the University of Toronto](#) are working with Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities, to feature traditional play components modified for children of all abilities. These components include aspects like double-wide ramps for wheelchair access and roller slides to eliminate possible static electricity build-up for those who wear hearing devices. Kelly Arbour-Nicitopoulos, Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Kinesiology & Physical Education and an expert in disability and physical activity and Ron Buliung, Professor of Geography at UTM, will co-lead a team of experts tasked with evaluating Jumpstart's playgrounds. The team's findings will help stakeholders understand how well the spaces work for children and their families, and if there are elements of the design that can be improved. The work of Professors Arbour-Nicitopoulos and Buliung will provide guidelines on how to create inclusive playground spaces for children of all abilities.

[Bin Liu, CEO of iMerciv, and Ryan Vroom, a digital accessibility expert](#) (photo credit: iMerciv)



U OF T STARTUP AIMS TO MAKE WORLD MORE NAVIGABLE FOR THOSE WITH VISION LOSS

[BuzzClip, developed by U of T start-up iMerciv](#) is a discreet, wearable device for persons with vision loss that detects obstacles using ultrasound. Through haptic feedback in the form of a buzz that can be felt through the skin, the BuzzClip provides early warnings about objects up to three metres away. BuzzClip is currently developing an app, MapinHood, that is more customizable and responsive to the user. Their app will be supported in part by Microsoft's [AI for Accessibility](#) program, which aims to harness the power of AI to amplify human capability for the more than one billion people around the world with a disability.

CONTINUED IDEA COMPETITION STUDENT SUCCESS

A team of three University of Toronto graduate students earned third place at the 2019 Universities Canada Innovative Designs for Accessibility (IDeA) student competition for their app, MuseGo. MuseGo maps out the indoor environment according to sensory criteria, such as noise level, lighting and temperature. The virtual map then informs an augmented reality interface that places icons on the screen describing sensory experiences visitors can expect to find in each area. The app is designed for caregivers and can help improve the accessibility of museums for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, FACULTY OF MEDICINE

In honour of International Day of Persons with Disabilities and in partnership with the International Centre for Disability and Rehabilitation (ICDR), Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), the Faculty of Medicine hosted a panel event on creating accessible spaces in health services, education and sciences. This event was open to all Faculty of Medicine learners, staff and faculty, and all members of event partner organizations. Medical learners gained a deeper understanding of challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in access to healthcare services.

HANCOCK LECTURE, HART HOUSE — DISABILITY JUSTICE

The 2019 Hart House Hancock Lecture was delivered by Sarah Jama, community organizer and co-founder of the Disability Justice Network of Ontario. The lecture focused on the history of the disability justice movement in Canada and the U.S. and how to build a world that truly uplifts the rights of people with disabilities. Jama took participants through her journey as an organizer and the steps she took towards building inclusive movements. The Hancock Lecture Series is organized by students and open to the public and aspires to ignite public conversation and debate.

GREAT EXPLORATIONS, UTSC

Building on UTSC's history of community engagement, [Great Explorations](#) (previously the Snider Lecture Series) is a series of well attended events offering an intellectually enriching experience that explores critical issues in the world today. For 2019-20, the four lectures focused on equality, art and disability. In Fall 2019, the series was led by the Honourable David Onley, Guest Lecturer

and Distinguished Visitor, Political Science, UTSC, with Rethinking Normalcy to Achieve Equality for Disabled Persons. This was followed by subsequent talks by Sean Lee, Director of Programming at Tangled Art + Disability, Assistant Professor Anne McGuire, New College, U of T, and Cassandra Hartblay, Assistant Professor, Interdisciplinary Centre for Health and Society & Anthropology, U of T.

STRENGTHENING ADMINISTRATION OF RESEARCH (STAR) PROGRAM WORKSHOPS

The STrengthening Administration of Research (STAR) program within the Office of the Vice-President, Research & Innovation, is an education and outreach program with the goal of providing educational resources that support the U of T research and innovation community. When hosting events, the program takes an active approach to addressing accessibility barriers in the design of its sessions to maximize participation from attendees. In support of these efforts, the research administration training specialist held a training session for presenters that covered Universal Instructional Design principles to support inclusive delivery, content, materials, and language in the STAR program.

HOSTING ACCESSIBLE RESEARCH EVENTS

The Equity and Diversity in Research and Innovation Working Group has recommended that the Office of the Vice-President, Research & Innovation create guidelines for event planning using an inclusion lens, and has taken initial steps to establish a subcommittee on hosting accessible and inclusive events. This subcommittee will bring together representatives from a number of administrative and academic divisions to develop guidelines for events that are both accessible and promote a sense of inclusion and belonging.

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