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

TO: University Affairs Board

SPONSOR: Kelly Hannah-Moffat, Vice-President, Human Resources & Equity
CONTACT INFO: 416-978-4865 | hrandequity@utoronto.ca

PRESENTER: Kelly Hannah-Moffat, Vice-President, Human Resources & Equity
CONTACT INFO: 416-978-7236 | ben.poynton@utoronto.ca

DATE: May 18, 2021 for May 25, 2021

AGENDA ITEM: 4

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

AODA Report 2020-2021

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

The University Affairs Board has responsibility for Equity Issues and Initiatives (Section 5)

Section 5.6 of the University Affairs Board Terms of Reference states: '*The Board receives annually, from the appropriate administrators, reports on services within its areas of responsibility, including but not limited to multi-campus services and offices, Campus Police, Human Resources and Equity, crisis response, and campus organizations.*'

GOVERNANCE PATH:

1. Planning and Budget Committee [for information] (May 6, 2021)
2. **University Affairs Board [for information] (May 25, 2021)**

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

At its meeting of January 14, 2015, the Planning and Budget Committee received the AODA/ODA Plan 2017-2018 for information only. Following this meeting it was determined that it would be useful for other Board Committees of Governing Council to view the document, specifically University Affairs Board.

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. The University has maintained this progress despite the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and has indeed used this as an opportunity to rethink everything we do through an accessible and inclusive lens. Our work is measured broadly 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 means going beyond compliance. This work 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.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no financial implications for the University's operating budget.

RECOMMENDATION:

The report is presented for information only.

DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:

AODA Report 2020-2021

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (AODA) REPORT 2020-2021

OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES & EQUITY

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (AODA) REPORT 2020-2021

OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES & EQUITY

STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL LAND

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.

A WELCOME MESSAGE

We are pleased to present the University of Toronto's 2020–2021 Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Report.

Photo Credit: Ken Jones

Navigating life during a pandemic over the past year was challenging for everyone, particularly members of the University community with disabilities. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted new and existing barriers to accessibility as we rapidly rethought our working and learning environments. Whether our community is on campus or at home, it is our responsibility to ensure that every person has access and opportunity to achieve their full potential. Through our UTogether Roadmap, returning to campus preparations, and policies such as mask guidelines, the University has embedded inclusive design into our COVID-19 response and adaptation processes.

This year's report reflects the ways in which the University community incorporated inclusive design into our learning and working environments, both in-person and virtual. Although this year has been different, significant work still occurred across the University and its divisions to advance our commitment to building an accessible institution. The University community continues to move beyond AODA compliance requirements to support our community and proactively address systemic barriers to accessibility.

Accessibility is interpreted broadly and acknowledges that visible and invisible disabilities vary from person to person and intersect with other forms of identity. Creating an accessible institution requires collaborative work to incorporate inclusive design into all aspects of our policies, planning, and programming. Together, we can enhance a climate of mutual respect for the dignity and worth of all persons.

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

Professor Micah Stickel
Acting Vice-Provost, Students

Karima Hashmani
Executive Director, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

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

STATUS OF THE UNIVERSITY'S AODA PLAN

Photo Credit: Ken Jones

In 2016, the AODA office embarked on a planning process, as stipulated under the Accessibilities for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, which has informed the work of this office and the University for the last five years. As part of this process, the AODA office consulted with members of the University community with disabilities. That planning period has ended, and many of the goals of that initial planning period have been achieved. Over the coming year, the AODA office will revisit the planning process and engage with members of the University community on the next iteration of the University's AODA Plan.

THE ROLE OF 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 how to meet these broad accessibility requirements. The office also acquires feedback on the accessibility of University services and works collaboratively to resolve concerns.

ACCESSIBLE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

In 2020–2021, the University met its regulatory requirements as per Ontario's built environment standards and to prioritize accessibility into its physical spaces and operations.
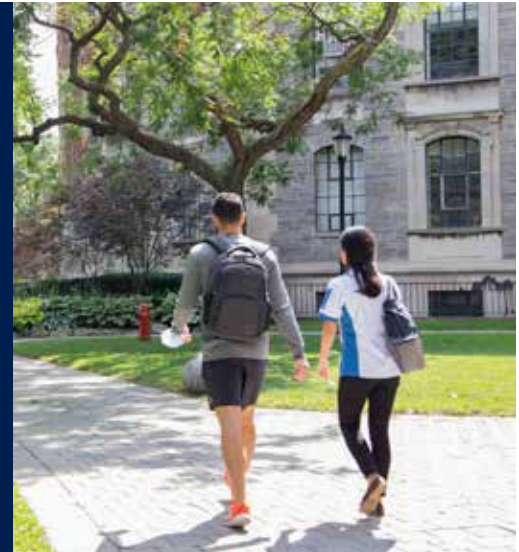
ACCESSIBILITY PROGRAM AT ST. GEORGE

This past year, Facilities & Services (F&S) for the St. George Campus improved the accessibility of our built environment. In early 2020, F&S assembled a tri-campus committee of representatives who are involved in the planning, design, construction and operational support of our built environment. Following a review of best practices and standards, the committee provided recommendations for new technical specification Standards for all new capital projects and major renovations. Work on the Standard development will continue in 2021.

Facilities & Services also developed an initial set of principles to prioritize types of projects and locations to receive financial support from the St. George accessibility fund. As a baseline principle, F&S determined that each building on the St. George campus should have a minimum of one accessible entrance and one accessible washroom. While most buildings on the St. George campus meet this principle, not all do. As such, buildings with the highest use by students and our campus community, but without accessible entrances and washrooms, will be prioritized to receive funds. In 2020, five highly used academic locations were chosen from this set of principles to receive funding.

A feasibility study is currently underway for these locations, with the goal of proceeding to capital projects in 2021.

RENOVATIONS AT NEW COLLEGE

In 2020, New College undertook accessibility renovations in two large spaces: the William Doo Auditorium and Wilson 1016. In the William Doo Auditorium, a platform lift was added at the new main entrance to the auditorium. This improvement provides viewing options for events: from the already accessible lower level of the auditorium or the upper level of the auditorium. The Auditorium now exceeds Ontario Building Code requirements. At Wilson 1016, an incline lift was added, giving students the option of attendance in the front or the back of the classroom during lectures. Previously only the back of the classroom was accessible. Now, this classroom can be used by instructors using mobility devices.

ONGOING ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS AT ST.GEORGE

This past year, accessibility improvements were made to the built environment at multiple locations across the St. George campus.

SIDNEY SMITH COMMONS

In 2020, students and staff opened the Sidney Smith Commons study space. This space provides a physically accessible area for independent study on campus. In addition, the "Welcome Services" renovation of the front desk area of Sidney Smith included height-adjustable service desks to accommodate anyone using a wheelchair, other mobility devices, or requiring the use of services at a lower height.

Photo Credit: Diana Tyszko

Photo Credit: Diana Tyszko

FACULTY OF KINESIOLOGY AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Motion sensor door operators were installed on the Clara Benson and Warren Stevens buildings' perimeter doors, and an assessment as to the feasibility of installing motion sensor door operators on all interior doors is underway. For the swimming pools, new Portable Aquatic Lifts have been purchased to provide assisted entry.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARIES

University of Toronto Libraries made progress on several renovation projects in 2020. Automatic door openers were installed in Robarts Library's third- and fourth floor reading rooms and designs were completed for accessible study spaces in the East Asian and Engineering & Computer Science libraries.

In the Gerstein Information Science Centre, a new dedicated space for the Centre for Research & Innovation Support (CRIS) was renovated this year. The University of Toronto Design and Construction project management team prioritized accessibility through all phases of the project, leading to Barrier Free (B/F) provisions throughout the space. These include an automatic main entrance door, width doors throughout, B/F height light switches, and B/F elevators and washrooms.
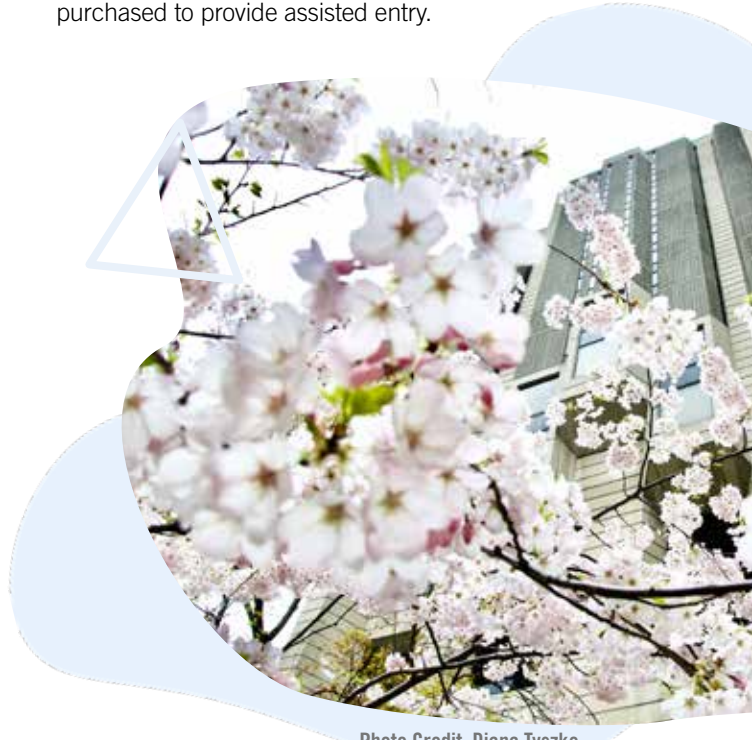

Photo Credit: Diana Tyszko

HART HOUSE ACCESSIBILITY UPDATES

Over the past year, Hart House has worked on several projects that will lead to the improved accessibility of spaces. The Arbor Room construction project, which began in April 2019, is well underway with anticipated completion in Spring 2021. The transformation includes a new floor, an accessible ramp, and a restaurant with accessible seating areas that will allow for physical distancing. Hart House worked closely with the Rick Hansen Foundation to achieve an accessible certification rating.

Hart House has also worked with its campus partner organization, the University of Toronto Students' Union (UTSU), to make these important efforts in creating a more accessible space. The UTSU generously donated $100,000 to support the creation of a Universal Washroom on the basement level of Hart House.

Finally, in partnership with Angela-Mashford Pringle of the Waabkiness-Bryce Indigenous Health Unit at Dalla Lana School of Public Health, Hart House renovated the main floor of the Hart House Farm's Ignatieff building. Updates include an accessible ramp into the building, flooring to create contiguous hard-surface throughout main floor, installation of fully accessible bathroom facilities, and installation of automatic door openers.

Photo Credit: Diana Tyszko

NEXT STEPS: CONTINUING OUR DESIGN STANDARDS REVIEW & CONSULTATION

Working with Facilities & Services and University Design, Planning and Construction, the AODA Office reviewed the University's Barrier-free Accessibility Design Standards. The Office has convened a group of internal stakeholders representing multiple divisions 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 work is anticipated to be finalized by the end of 2021.

The AODA Office will also work with University planners on processes for conducting consultations meaningfully and appropriately with persons with lived experience of disability.

Photo Credit: Daria Perevezentsev

ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATIONS

As of January 1, 2021, all publicly accessible University of Toronto websites, new or existing, must comply with the Web Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 to Level AA. This past year, the AODA Office and staff across the University addressed barriers to information and communications and ensured accessible institutional online spaces. The rapid shift to virtual work and learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic created new opportunities for engagement and interest in this area.

Photo Credit:Diana Tyszko

GROWING OUR WEB ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS

The AODA Office regularly reviews websites for web accessibility compliance. The AODA Office conducted over 49 in-depth reviews and multiple consultations with tri-campus stakeholders. These efforts ensure web accessibility compliance requirements under the AODA are met by creating an inclusive online environment.

Since March 2020, the AODA Office has expanded the resources available to the University community on web accessibility principles and practices. The AODA Office shifted the popular **Web Accessibility Crash Course** to virtual delivery, which enabled the participation of over 240 individuals who learned about web accessibility and the tools for making online spaces accessible.

240+ PARTICIPANTS IN THE WEB ACCESSIBILITY CRASH COURSE

Finally, the AODA Office created a Web Accessibility Community of Practice (CoP) that grew to include over 200 staff and faculty members committed to learning and sharing best practices on web accessibility. This supportive environment provides the space for anyone working with websites at the University to connect, problem solve, and stay up to date. Each week, the AODA Office invited the CoP to participate in detailed professional development webinars, covering topics like captions, accessible PDFs, and how to test websites using a screen reader. Later in 2020, the AODA Office hosted weekly PDF clinics for those in the CoP with specific questions about a document they are working on. This work will advance the goal of creating accessible PDFs throughout the University.

200+ STAFF AND FACULTY MEMBERS IN THE WEB ACCESSIBILITY COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

UPDATED PHONE DIRECTORY

Launched in July 2020, the new U of T Directory/Phonebook is a high volume, important institutional site that now accessibly presents employee, departmental, and emergency contact information. The team overseeing the update of the Directory incorporated elements such as clear and understandable alternative text, screen readable landmarks, skip links, and clearly visible focus indicators for keyboard accessibility.

THE MAIN EVENT: PLANNING & HOSTING ACCESSIBLE ONLINE VIRTUAL EVENTS

Recognizing that the sudden shift to virtual delivery for many University events could create barriers to accessibility, the AODA Office partnered with Hart House, the President's Office, and the University's Event Professional's Group to offer a professional development session in May 2020 on planning and hosting accessible virtual events. Over 150 individuals participated in this session, which provided an overview of accessible design principles, platform-specific advice, and practical guidance for ensuring our virtual events are as accessible as possible. This session was followed up with multiple subsequent offerings by the AODA Office, including one provided to the Advancement College (representing University professionals engaged in several events). Overall, the AODA Office provided multiple sessions to over 400 participants.

OISE WEB ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES

To support the creation of accessible content in their division, the Education Commons at OISE produced a suite of web accessibility resources. These resources include guides on creating accessible documents, a checklist for website owners, and best practices for content authors. In response to positive feedback around these resources, the Education Commons is offering information sessions on web accessibility, accessible content creation and digital accessibility to their community.

WEB ACCESSIBILITY UPDATES AT ARTS AND SCIENCE

In 2020, the Faculty of Arts & Science updated its website and all associated templates to be compliant with WCAG 2.0 AA standards. While the Arts & Science Information & Instructional Technology (IIT) team worked on the template enhancements, the Communications team developed content updates. Arts & Science hired an external vendor to convert 582 PDFs to accessible versions and the Communications removed unnecessary PDFs and converted others to web content. In addition to these structural changes, accessibility and accessible PDF training was provided to all web content creators and all academic units in Arts & Science.

Moving beyond compliance, the Arts & Science Communications Team embedded accessible design principles into its social media presence. The YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn channels were adapted to ensure alternative text for images, videos captioning, and that event information is shared by direct links to webpages.

FACILITATING ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN OUR LIBRARIES

The University's libraries addressed barriers to information that became more apparent due to our rapid move to virtual teaching and learning. Throughout 2020, U of T libraries provided staff development opportunities around the themes of remote teaching and accessibility. This included best practices for video creation and hosting, closed captioning and transcription, document creation, use of screen readers, and teaching methodologies. Further, the OISE Library captioned videos from its collection produced in-house in the 1970s and 1980s, and the Media Commons library updated the film guide to provide more closed captioning resources to students and instructors. The Robarts Library Accessibility Office provided support via referral from Student Accessibility Services to instructors needing closed captioning support for student accommodations. This support included advice on which platforms to use and how to enable captioning, as well as procuring captioning from vendors and software available to the University on the instructor's behalf.

During the transition to online learning, the team at the D.G. Ivey Library collaborated with faculty at New College to deliver a series of workshops on best practices and strategies for virtual teaching and learning. As a part of these workshops, librarians introduced strategies to make learning materials more accessible, including captions, creating accessible Word and PowerPoint documents, providing materials in advance, describing images, building flexibility into learning paths, and other strategies. The Accessibility & Public Services Librarian also created instructions on how to create accessible Word documents and PowerPoint presentations. Throughout the pandemic response, all librarians at New College have been actively working with faculty to improve adoption of automated captioning of live and pre-recorded lectures.

INCLUSIVE CO-CURRICULAR DESIGN RESOURCES

To support the facilitation of accessible co-curricular programming, the AODA Office, in partnership with Accessibility Services (St. George), convened an Inclusive Design Community of Practice aimed at furthering the use of inclusive and universal design practices. The work of this CoP culminated in the development of a Quercus shell hosting resources, tips, and strategies for incorporating inclusive and universal design into virtual programming.

NEXT STEPS: ACCESS COMMUNICATIONS AND BUILDING ON A PRODUCTIVE YEAR

The AODA Office is confident that these accessible communications efforts will eliminate existing barriers to information and communications and proactively address new ones. Next year, the AODA Office and tri-campus partners will provide support, training, and strategic guidance to the University on meeting the institution's web accessibility obligations.

ACCESSIBLE SERVICE DELIVERY

The University of Toronto prioritizes accessible options for the broad range of services provided to our community. Our work in this area ensures that the University fulfils its commitment to advance an equitable and an intentionally inclusive environment that meets the needs of all members.

Photo Credit: Daria Perevezentsev

REAL STORIES, REAL IMPACTS: HOW ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES FACILITATE STUDENT PARTICIPATION
IN 2020, THE UNIVERSITY SUPPORTED MANY STUDENTS WITH ACCESS NEEDS.

ALEX HAROLD

Alex Harold was diagnosed with Duchenne muscular dystrophy, a neuromuscular disorder, when he was four. He is now a University of Toronto graduate, having completed the management co-op program at U of T Scarborough. Harold credits the support he received from staff and faculty in the department of management and AccessAbility Services at U of T Scarborough. Harold spent four months on a co-op work term with Ontario's Ministry of Finance. Through his involvement, the co-op program at UTSC learned about working with employers to create more inclusive work opportunities for students that the management co-op team presented on the topic at the Co-operative Education and Work Integrated Learning Canada conference, and the World Association for Co-operative Education conference.

Photo Credit: Don Campbell

CARISSE SAMUEL

Carisse Samuel was a second-year undergraduate student in November 2016 when she was diagnosed with a rare autoimmune disease that attacks the brain. Following rehabilitation work in 2018 she slowly returned to school. She credits U of T Mississauga's Accessibility Services and her patient, supportive professors with helping her manage her workload by providing accommodations such as extra time to complete assignments and tests and allowing 15-minute breaks from class. Having now completed her undergraduate degree, Samuel is focused on completing a Master of Information degree at U of T's Faculty of Information.
Photo Supplied By: Carisse Samuel

PHILIZ GOH

In 2015 Philiz Goh was working part-time as an oncology nurse at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. She was studying for a Master of Nursing in health systems leadership and administration at the University of Toronto when a collision on Highway 401 changed her life. The collision left her with invisible damage to her brain and she was diagnosed with mild traumatic brain injury. When she returned to school two and a half years later, Goh's ability to read—hampered by her injury—gradually improved through therapy and the use of special reading techniques. However, the academic writing in her graduate-level nursing program was challenging. The neurological team lead, Irene Sullivan, at Accessibility Services on the St. George Campus met with Goh to address her unique learning needs. Sullivan helped Goh make arrangements with faculty and staff in her program, make referrals to outside specialists and introduced her to an adaptive technologist and learning strategist in Accessibility Services. The technologist helped her connect with an online tool that reads articles aloud and a learning strategist helped Goh break down academic readings and projects into more manageable parts. Goh successfully completed her master's degree.
Photo Credit: Johnny Guatto

NEW ACCOMMODATED TESTING PLATFORM

Since 2010, the University of Toronto has seen a 146 percent increase in accommodated test bookings—from quizzes to tests and final exams. With the growing demand and success of the program, Accommodated Testing Services (ATS) created a new streamlined process for students, instructors and staff. ATS is responsible for coordinating quiz, term test, and final exam accommodations for students with documented disabilities who are registered with Accessibility Services on the St. George campus. ATS and Enterprise Applications & Solutions Integration (EASI) began designing a new test platform in March of 2019 to ease instructors' and administrative workloads and support students on their academic journey.

In 2020, ATS and EASI consulted with U of T Scarborough and U of T Mississauga about extending the new process— designed to be transparent, seamless and intuitive, and providing easy virtual access to information through existing U of T platforms—to all three campuses. The project is part of the Next Generation Student Information Services (NGSIS) program, which creates and deploys technological solutions to help students engage in rewarding learning experiences and achieve academic and personal success. The evolution of the platform has involved close consultations with a cross section of students, instructors, staff and senior leadership. To date, the instructor module has been piloted within multiple divisions at UTSC and UTM.

ACCOMMODATED TESTING DURING COVID-19

The mission of accessibility services at the University of Toronto is to level the playing field for students – and expand the opportunities available to them. Over the past five years, the number of students seeking support has grown by more than 60 percent, with mental health disabilities accounting for much of the increase.

ENSURED MORE THAN 7,000 STUDENTS WITH ACCOMMODATIONS ACROSS THE TRI-CAMPUS COULD COMPLETE THEIR FINAL EXAMS

When in-person classes ended in mid-March 2020, accessibility services staff at the University of Toronto's three campuses needed to ensure the more than 7,000 students with accommodations could complete their final exams. For some students, writing a test remotely presented no difficulty; for others, it created new barriers. The directors of accessibility services on each campus met daily with staff from the accommodated testing centres and accessibility advisers reached out to individual students and worked with faculty to modify exams as needed. In some cases, instructors permitted students to complete a project or assignment instead of the exam; in others, students were given options

for when they could take their exam. Testing centres on each campus remained open for any student who preferred to write exams in person.

INSTITUTIONAL ACCESSIBILITY SERVICE DELIVERY TRAINING

The AODA Office and Accessibility Services (St. George) partnered to deliver four training sessions on Accessibility & Language that explored how attitudes and the language we use can impact the accessibility of the services we provide. Beginning with defining ableism, 117 participants were invited to explore the history of ableist language and its everyday use. These sessions included sharing the intersectional experiences of persons with disabilities.

117 PARTICIPANTS IN THE ACCESSIBILITY & LANGUAGE TRAINING SESSIONS

In December 2020, the AODA Office and Procurement Services partnered to develop training on how to incorporate accessibility into procurement practices. This session re-introduced 89 participants to the general requirements of incorporating accessibility principles in all procurement processes, with a step-by-step guide on how to incorporate these principles into purchasing, evaluating a vendor's accessibility credentials, and including accessibility expectations into agreements.

MAINTAINING ACCESS FOR EMPLOYEES AND SUPPORTING COVID-19 PROTOCOLS

Health and Well-being Program and Services (HWB) assists HR & Equity manage or eliminate barriers to employee wellness and success. Directly supporting employees with disabilities contributes to HR & Equity's goal of creating an inclusive, diverse, and equitable culture. During the COVID-19 pandemic, HWB supported employees with disabilities as they adapted to a variety of workplace changes, while acknowledging that the pandemic response and recovery have differential impacts on persons with disabilities.

The work of HWB helped the University provide a new range of benefits and supports (such as paid pandemic leave) to employees facing new and complex work, health, and family care needs. This was achieved by: working with various partners and the Family Care Office to create and review documents and guidelines for employees and managers on a range of work-from-home and return-to-work topics; working with EHS and Occupational Health to manage cases for essential employees unable to work on-site for medical reasons; moving all operations online, utilizing paperless file management system and adopting technological solutions to help employees and physicians more efficiently manage accommodation and sick leave communications; sourcing ergonomists to perform virtual ergonomic assessments for employees with disabilities needing accommodations to work from home.

Photo Credit: Ken Jones

INCREASING DIVERSITY WITHIN INTERNAL RESEARCH FUNDING PROGRAMS

The Vice-President, Research & Innovation portfolio (VPRI) manages several processes, such as the administration of internal funding programs (e.g. Connaught Innovation Award and Connaught New Faculty Award), internal awards (e.g. the President's Impact Awards) and institutional nominations for external awards and honours and funding programs (e.g. Canada Foundation for Innovation-CFI) that require adjudication and peer-review. Recommendations of the Equity and Diversity in Research and Innovation (EDRI) Working Group have resulted in changes to review processes to address barriers to accessing these programs. Reviewers on Connaught panels, for example, complete unconscious bias training and are provided with best practices in peer review that help mitigate the impacts of unconscious bias. A non-voting equity officer also sits in during the deliberation meeting to support the review panel in carrying out an equitable review and selection process. These practices are aimed at removing biases experienced by under-represented groups, and to contribute to a more equitable review process for applicants with disabilities.

ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES, ST. GEORGE – A YEAR IN REVIEW

Since 2019, Accessibility Services (St. George) has responded to the barriers service users identified in a 2019-2020 survey and emergent barriers due to the COVID-19 disruptions. Throughout 2020, Accessibility Services held 133 outreach, orientation, and workshop events, facilitated 306 hours of virtual peer-to-peer support, and welcomed an Indigenous student liaison onto their

team. Since moving to remote programming in March 2020, there were over 17,000 virtual appointments with Advisors, 30,000 volunteer notes, and multiples resources produced to manage mental health while engaging in virtual learning.

NEXT STEPS: ACCESSIBLE SERVICE DELIVERY IMPROVEMENTS GOING FORWARD

The University works to create an inclusive, equitable environment that meets and exceeds the needs of all members. Next year, the AODA will focus on providing tools, training, and support in planning and hosting accessible virtual events and accessibility language.

133 OUTREACH, ORIENTATION AND WORKSHOP EVENTS

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

The University of Toronto serves a large and diverse student, faculty, librarian, and staff population, and is dedicated to fostering a supportive and healthy environment that enables all members to thrive. The University undertook new initiatives which increased our community's knowledge and understanding of invisible disabilities, mental health, and wellness.
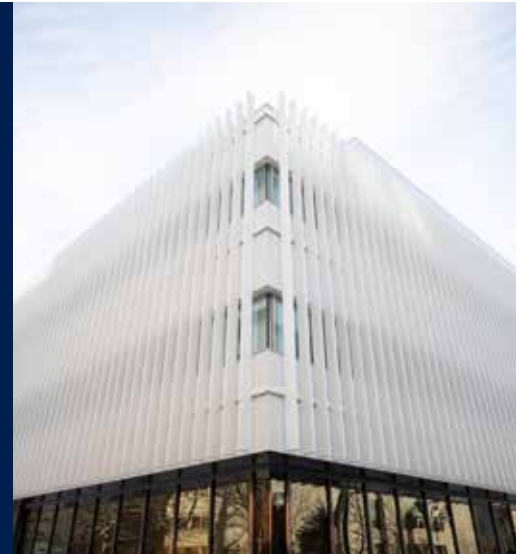
Photo Credit: Nick Iwanyshyn

NEW ONLINE STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH PORTAL

A new online portal for students to find mental health services and resources on our campuses and with partner organizations in the community was launched. It was developed in consultation with students as part of U of T's commitment to provide a more harmonized and student-centric approach to student mental health. The Student Mental Health Resource website enables students to find mental health services quickly and easily. The site allows students to support their peers by suggesting mental health resources they have personally found valuable, with U of T clinicians and practitioners vetting and adding resources to the site as appropriate.

The website is one of several recent initiatives launched in response to the findings of the independent Presidential and Provostial Task Force on Student Mental Health, which spent months consulting with students, staff, and faculty across U of T's three campuses. Other initiatives include: the addition of same-day counselling on the St. George campus and drop-in counselling during exam periods; the creation of the IBM-powered Navi virtual mental health chat assistant; expansion of the free, on-demand, multilingual counselling service My SSP; and a partnership with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

RESTORE @ U OF T BY ARCDO AND HILL STUDIO

Beginning in summer 2020, the Anti-Racism & Cultural Diversity Office launched Restore @ U of T— a Restoration Program for Black, Indigenous and Racialized Community in partnership with Hill Studio by Allison Hill. Restore @ U of T provided a series of Community Activations that addressed the impacts of racism through restorative activities. The Restore program was designed to establish a community-based space that supports the intersectional racialized identities of students, staff and faculty at the University of Toronto. Programs were led by Black, Indigenous, and racialized counsellors, therapists, and trauma informed yoga instructors, and were designed to activate agency, strength and restoration through dialogue, movement and meditation.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS THROUGH THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19

To provide additional support for students during COVID-19, an online discussion board where students can share stories about how they are dealing with their new reality was created. Students can join and participate anonymously in the discussion from anywhere; an important feature given that many U of T students are now living outside of Canada. This initiative was provided in partnership with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). The forum is monitored by social workers that volunteer advice and refer students to additional mental health resources, including CAMH's comprehensive guide on mental health and the pandemic.

Photo Credit: Cesar Mejia

FORMALIZING PEER SUPPORT NETWORKS

The Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work's Graduate Student Association launched the Health & Wellness Peer Support service in 2020. This service is an easy way for University Toronto students to seek counselling and other support from peers; students can seek support from fellow students who are familiar with the numerous services and resources available across campus. Through one-on-one confidential virtual chats, the students involved with Health & Wellness Peer Support share firsthand experiences and practically apply this training as second-year or advanced-standing students at U of T's Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work.

SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES' MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19

The Division of HR & Equity developed a new suite of wellness resources. In response to the growing needs of our employees due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the new Wellness Hub and the Wellness & Working From Home Toolkit provide faculty, staff, and librarians with information on the internal and community wellness resources and provides resources for emotional, financial, physical, and social well-being including links to resources covering topics such as anxiety and depression, stress and resilience, and mental well-being.

NEXT STEPS: MENTAL HEALTH AT U OF T BEYOND THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC

The University is equipped to support our community in navigating the often-invisible mental health impacts of COVID-19, both short and long-term. Our support networks and resources will evolve as we deepen our understanding of the needs of University of Toronto students, faculty, librarians, and staff.

PEDAGOGY

The University of Toronto is committed to delivering inclusive design in all our learning environments. Over the past year, increased resources, support and training on how to foster accessible and inclusive learning environments have been made available to all teaching staff. Work in this area helps ensure that the University meets AODA requirements to provide training to educators on how to create these accessible spaces. Over 17,000 individuals at U of T have taken AODA training, an increase of 3000 more employees since last year's report.

Photo Credit: Diana Tyszko

CENTRE FOR TEACHING SUPPORT & INNOVATION—TEACHING & LEARNING SUPPORT WITH ACCESSIBILITY IN MIND

The Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation (CTSI), working with the Teaching Assistants' Training Program (TATP), Academic and Collaborative Technologies (ACT) Support, and Online Learning Strategies (OLS), worked extensively in 2020 to ensure that the shift to online teaching and learning was framed with accessible practice in mind. CTSI engaged in conversations on various aspects of accessibility in webinars; virtual roundtables; working groups and committees; individual, departmental, and divisional consultations, and integrating new educational technology for teaching and learning. The support provided by all CTSI teams in 2020 focused on internal and external collaborations with a range of units across the University. The aim was to enable faculty to design equitable, inclusive, and culturally responsible learning spaces through effective pedagogies and accessibility-responsive use of educational technology tools.

ONLINE ASSESSMENTS & ACCESSIBILITY

The move to online learning in March of 2020 led to many changes in how teaching and learning is delivered and how assessments are created and performed. To ensure a consistent and accessible approach to these new practices, the University's tri-campus teaching and learning centres and tri-campus accessibility services collaborated on a project to help instructors plan and implement accessible assessments and navigate accommodated testing considerations in the virtual environment. The Online Assessments and Accessibility Resource highlights a variety of approaches to accessible assessment of student learning in the virtual environment. It offers instructors an opportunity to explore different approaches to online assessments, and identify accommodations relevant to common types of formative or summative assessment.

INCREASING CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY IN UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework improves and optimizes teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights on how humans learn. This framework is predicated on providing multiple means of engagement, representation, action, and expression. Over the past year, the University has provided support and resources to educators wanting to incorporate these principles into their teaching. Both CTSI and TATP hosted a series of webinars focusing on applying the UDL lens to course development and learning facilitation in Quercus (the U of T institutional learning management platform). Webinars offered in June had four sessions on strategies for structure and navigation, assessment and feedback, student engagement, and accessible learning. In total, these sessions were attended by over 460 participants.

460+ PARTICIPANTS IN UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING WEBINARS

NEW UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING SUPPORT AT UTM

In 2020, the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre supported instructors through consults and resources with UDL in mind. The Centre worked with instructors to audit their course, assessment, and activity design to support multiple means of engagement, action and expression, and representation. Starting in July, the Centre identified evidence-based instructional strategies, support active-learning pedagogy, assisted in the revision of learning outcomes and objectives, and provide formative feedback on curricular documents such as syllabi, assignments, and rubrics to ensure alignment and inclusive awareness.

Photo Credit: Daria Perevezentsev

ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY IN ONLINE TEACHING AT UTSC

At UTSC, the Centre for Teaching and Learning led a webinar for participants on Accessibility and Inclusivity. Acknowledging that the move to online teaching offered both benefits and limitations for different learning, this session focused on adapting inclusive practices and pedagogical approaches to accommodate diverse learning needs. The session was facilitated by AccessAbility Services at UTSC, and offered a panel and open discussion on inclusive teaching strategies in virtual teaching environments - including examples from faculty panel members on teaching practices and approaches.

NEXT STEPS: THE FUTURE OF PEDAGOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY

The University recognizes the importance of modifying how information is both learned and taught as we navigate through this global pandemic and evolving technological climate. 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.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIPS

Photo Credit: Lisa Sakulensky Photography

The University of Toronto recognizes that continuously innovating and engaging in meaningful partnerships is critical to fostering an inclusive learning environment. In 2020, we advanced several projects and initiatives through various partnerships to continue developing innovative solutions for accessibility.

ACCESSIBLE GAMING AT THE ISCHOOL

To create more accessible video games, researchers at the University of Toronto partnered with major studios, non-profit organizations, an inclusive online gaming hub, and influential gamers with disabilities through U of T's new Accessibility Arcade. The Accessibility Arcade, in the Knowledge Media and Design Institute (KMDI) in the U of T's Faculty of Information, provides a collaborative space for designers, developers, researchers, and gamers to design more inclusive games and features the most recent hardware in inclusive gaming and accessible titles. Gamers with disabilities can experiment with equipment and explore options. Game designers can learn about accessible gaming and use equipment to ensure games are compatible with the latest technology. Adaptive gaming equipment is often extremely expensive and difficult to acquire, but at the Accessibility Arcade, gamers and designers with disabilities can use adaptive equipment without having to buy it.

NO BODY/MIND LEFT BEHIND AT KINESIOLOGY & PHYSICAL EDUCATION (KPE): A LIVE PODCAST RECORDING WITH ALEX LOCUST

As part of the U of T Sport & Rec Annual Diversity & Equity Conference, Sport & Rec at KPE partnered with Hart House for an expansive dialogue centered on lived experiences of U of T students with disabilities, in discussion with disability justice advocate Alex Locust (also known as "Glamputee"). Mr. Locust and a panel of students with disabilities explored how disability justice offers a framework to create community on campus that uplifts people with disabilities where no body/mind is left behind. He challenged U of T to reframe it's thinking about sport and physical activity on campus and offered ways students could support this type of transformation.

YOUR SHAPE: A PEER LED DISCUSSION ON DISABILITY, PHYSICALITY & HEALTH DURING COVID-19

As part of U of T Sport & Recreation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, student leader Beau Hayward shared lessons in adaptation, progress, goal setting, and how he's remained healthy during isolation with a physical disability in an open forum peer-led discussion. Joined by other students with disabilities, this forum unpacked ideas such as advantageous adaptation, and touched on topics like motivation, curiosity, procrastination, and what these mean within each student's unique experience. Through this initiative, students with disabilities supported and learned from each other towards understanding and cultivating health and wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Photo Credit: Nick Iwanyshyn

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) was first proclaimed by the United Nations (UN) in 1992, following the International Year of the Disabled Person in 1981 and the UN Decade of Disabled Persons, 1983-1992. The day was created to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities, and to increase awareness of their experiences in all areas of society. In 2020, the AODA Office, Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Officer (ARCDO), and AccessAbility Services (UTSC) partnered to deliver a session entitled 'The Intersections of Disability and Multiple Identities: Fighting Stigmas, Advancing Opportunities'. This session, attended by 150 participants, sought to emphasize the connections between ableism and racism and the tools required to eliminate stigma, advance opportunities, and increase the accessibility of racial justice movements. Attendees were offered a powerful recounting of the very real impacts of ableism and racism by keynote speaker Dr. Roberta K. Timothy, and panelists Rabia Kedr and Meenu Sikand.

150 PARTICIPANTS AT THE INTERSECTIONS OF DISABILITY AND MULTIPLE IDENTITIES SESSION

ACCESSIBLE CONTENT E-PORTAL ACCESSIBILITY UPDATES

The Accessible Content E-Portal (ACE) from Scholar's Portal by the Ontario Council of University Libraries is a platform that provides access to a collection of books that have been digitized and made available online in accessible formats for participating Ontario universities and colleges. Hosted by Robarts Library, ACE is one of several accessibility initiatives at Scholars Portal that is focused on advancing equality for library users with print disabilities. This past year, ACE upgraded the journals platform for greater compatibility with screen reader technology and implemented a new accessibility problem report form.

U OF T REPRESENTATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW AODA STANDARDS

This year a Provincial AODA Standards Development Committee developed recommendations for a proposed accessibility standard to address barriers in publicly funded post-secondary education provided by colleges and universities. The University of Toronto is leading the work of this committee, chaired by Tina Doyle, Director, AccessAbility Services, UTSC. The committee has developed recommendations that support the end goal of achieving accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities in the postsecondary sector. These recommendations will be made available for public comment in 2021. Next year, the AODA office will collaborate with key stakeholders across the University to prepare for the changes the new standards will bring to the University.

WHAT'S NEXT: LOOKING AHEAD AT ACCESSIBILITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Photo Credit: Daria Perevezentsev

Maintaining our commitment to creating and being an accessible institution.

Over the next year, the AODA office will take a leadership role in creating an accessible University. A key component of this will be to build community by strengthening employee peer groups and designing an accessibility advisory committee. The office will also maintain our legal responsibilities under the AODA by revisiting our plan and preparing the University for the new postsecondary education standards. Finally, we will maintain and grow our outreach and capacity building to empower all members of the broader university community to inclusively design all aspects of our university life.