

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Employment Equity and *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (ODA) Officer
Kate Lawton
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MANDATE

The EE/ODA Officer ensures the University is both pro-active and compliant in meeting its goals and obligations under the Federal Contractors Program (for Employment Equity) and the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (2001) and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (2005).

Acting as a catalyst for change, the Officer engages and advises the University's divisions and units in the promotion and implementation of both Employment Equity and ODA objectives and programs, and ensures compliance with timeframes, goals, measures of progress and requirements.

The Officer prepares annual plans that will identify, remove and prevent barriers to equity in employment and to accessibility at the University. The Officer evaluates and advances the Employment Equity and Accessibility plans to ensure compliance with legislation and University policy.

The Employment Equity and Accessibility plans report and reflect the work of many other positions at the University, both within and outside the EIAG. The EE/ODA Officer works collaboratively to promote inclusiveness to further the mandate of both accessibility and equity in employment.¹

PLANS FOR 2005 – 2006

1) ODA Accessibility Planning

The University of Toronto's 2005 – 2006 Accessibility Plan was formally accepted by Governing Council on October 27, 2005. It includes 48 initiatives for the coming year to address barriers in the following areas: attitude, policy, physical facilities, technology, instructional design, human resources, student life and mental health.

Among these initiatives a focus on mental health with direction to explore the complex issues of mental health and mental illness was identified as a priority. The newly established ODA Mental Health Subcommittee created two new initiatives to address this topic:

¹ Please note: the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (2001) applies to all members of the University community: students, staff and faculty and is the provincial legislation promoting accessibility for persons with disabilities. The Federal Contractor's Program and the *Employment Equity Act* (1995) apply only to faculty and staff of the University of Toronto with continuing employment. The 2005 Accessibility Plan and the 2004 Employment Equity Report are available at www.utoronto/hr.home

- Creating an inventory of mental health resources, services and programs available at the University of Toronto;
- Identifying barriers for students with mental health difficulties as they relate to the specific stressors of i) disclosure for the purposes of accommodation, ii) applicants transitioning into UofT through the Transitional Year Program and iii) the special concerns of international students.

Other new directions include research on best practices to improve the environment for people with chemical sensitivities, and a School of Graduate Studies working group to raise awareness and devise solutions to minimize barriers faced by applicants and admitted students with disabilities pursuing graduate studies.

The University's 2005 – 2006 Accessibility Plan is available at www.utoronto.ca/hrhome.

2) Employment Equity Reporting

The University's employment equity data is based on self-identification questionnaires completed by new staff and faculty at time of hire. In 2005 – 2006 the University will establish new baseline data by resurveying all staff and faculty to obtain a more accurate picture of the current representation of the designated groups at the University.

One notable feature of the census survey will be the inclusion of sexual minorities. The University's commitment to ensuring equity for sexual minorities is outlined in both the University's Academic Plan, "Stepping UP" and the Employment Equity Statement, a version of which appears on all of our job postings. The new survey will provide the University with baseline data about the representation of sexual minorities.

The survey will be conducted in collaboration with the equity officers and in consultation with our union groups.

The EE/ODA Officer position is focused on the advancement of equity among administrative staff, primarily, and works collaboratively with the Director of Faculty Recruitment and Retention. In addition to the regular 2005 Employment Equity report that will be presented to Business Board in February 2006, an interim report on the results of the census will be provided in the spring of 2006. Full reporting from the census will be included in the 2007 Employment Equity report.

In 2005 –2006 a Human Resources Toolkit will be developed of to improve the recruitment, hiring, retention and promotion of women, Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, visible minorities and sexual minorities among the administrative staff of the University.

The staff and faculty work climate survey planned for April 2006 will provide the University with data on the work climate and identify opportunities for improvement. Talks with First Nations House are continuing as we explore development of initiatives related to Aboriginal recruitment, hiring and retention.