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

TO:	University Affairs Board
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PRESENTER: **CONTACT INFO:**	Ben Poynton, AODA Officer 416-978-7236, ben.poynton@utoronto.ca
DATE:	April 3, 2024 for April 11, 2024
AGENDA ITEM:	3

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Annual Report: Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) 2023

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] (April 9, 2024)
2. **University Affairs Board [for information] (April 11, 2024)**

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

At its meeting of April 9, 2024, the Planning and Budget Committee received the AODA Report, 2023 for information only.

HIGHLIGHTS:

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Report is produced each year to satisfy the requirements of the AODA and demonstrate how the University is meeting or exceeding compliance and adhering to its accessibility plan. The Report outlines the significant work that occurs across all three

campuses as our community continues to embed accessibility and Universal Design into our systems, processes, and approaches.

Featuring initiatives across the tri-campus, the 2023 Report explores the following themes: embracing new standards and best practices related to accessibility; creating accessible physical spaces and structures; providing accessible services to students, staff, faculty, and librarians; increasing our community's understanding of Universal Design; and centring lived experience of disability.

Each year, we demonstrate greater ingenuity in our thinking and a deeper resolve in our efforts to change policy and practice, environments and attitudes. Throughout 2023, the University evolved and expanded its understanding of accessibility in many ways. This included hosting the virtual forum "Addressing Ableism, Disability and Accessibility: Progress and Continued Action Plans" for National AccessAbility week, reaching a significant milestone by formally publishing U of T's new Facility Accessibility Design Standard (FADS), creating more pedagogical supports and resources than ever before, and expanding Universal Design training and resources for all employees. Consultations with students, faculty, librarians, and staff with evident and/or non-evident disabilities informed the creation of these and other initiatives. Going forward, such consultations will lay the foundation of our Institutional Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, to be drafted in 2024.

Thank you to everyone across the tri-campus whose work is captured in this 2023 Report, and to all those who are advancing accessibility on their campuses and in their divisions, units, and Faculties. We also appreciate the feedback received from the Provostial Advisory Group, and have used this to enrich the Report. We will continue to collaborate to make the University of Toronto accessible to, and inclusive of, everyone in our community.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

N/A

RECOMMENDATION:

For Information

DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:

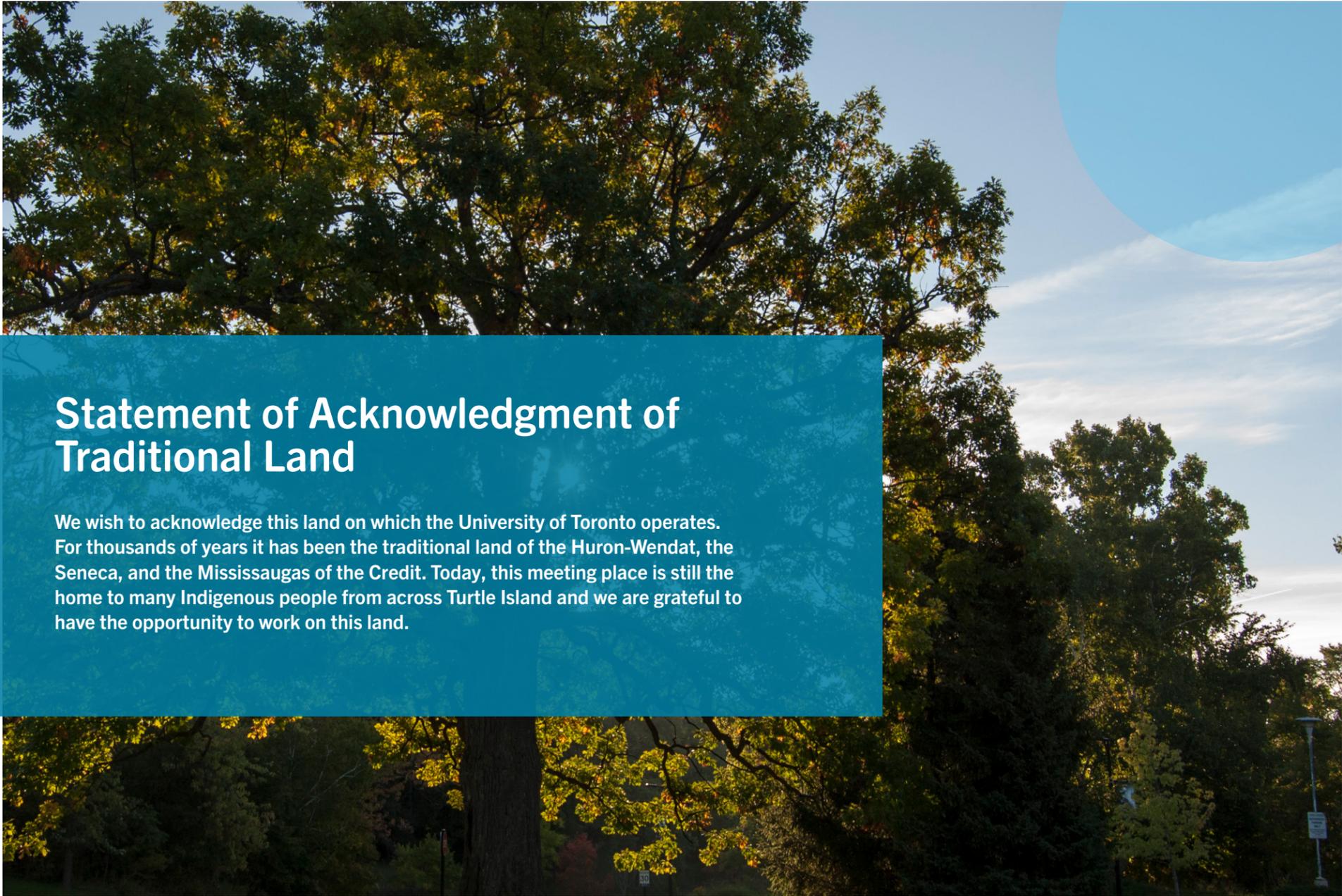- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Report, 2023

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (AODA) REPORT

2023

Statement of Acknowledgment 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 the Mississaugas of the Credit. 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.

U of T Mississauga. Photo by Randy Landicho.

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A Welcome Message

It has been heartening to recognize that every year our collective understanding of accessibility at U of T is evolving and expanding. We are demonstrating greater ingenuity in our thinking and a deeper resolve in our efforts to change policy and practice, environments and attitudes. By embracing Universal Design principles, we are creating practices, processes, and environments that already consider the widest possible range of users.

A cornerstone event in last year's National AccessAbility Week provided affirming evidence of this progress. Hosted by University of Toronto Scarborough and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Office, the virtual forum "Addressing Ableism, Disability and Accessibility: Progress and Continued Action Plans" emphasized that we need opportunities to discover what each of us—in our individual teams, Faculties, or campuses—is doing to support accessibility. With this knowledge, we can develop partnerships that will increase the impact of our endeavours, centring the expertise of community members who identify as having evident and/or non-evident disabilities.

Understanding our current context will help us assess, individually and collectively, where we need to focus our future efforts. As you will learn in the Report's final section, such efforts include developing an Institutional Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. This plan, required by the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation of the AODA, will provide an essential roadmap as we share the responsibility of making the University of Toronto accessible to, and inclusive of, everyone in our community.

Kelly Hannah-Moffat
Vice-President, People
Strategy, Equity & Culture

Jodie Glean-Mitchell
Executive Director, Equity,
Diversity & Inclusion

Sandy Welsh
Vice-Provost, Students

About the AODA Office

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Office, part of the Institutional Equity Office within the Division of People Strategy, Equity & Culture and reporting dually to the Vice-Provost, Students and Executive Director, EDI, is responsible for ensuring that the University meets its obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the University of Toronto Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities, and the Ontario Human Rights Code. This includes overseeing the development of the University's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, required under the AODA. We also support the University community in finding ways of going over and above compliance to truly embed accessibility and Universal Design into our systems, processes, and approaches. Through this work we hope to create spaces that are barrier-free, flexible, and responsive.

The Office provides strategic consultations, education, and guidance to all members of the University community on how to create these spaces. Additionally, it acquires feedback on the accessibility of University services and works collaboratively to resolve accessibility concerns.
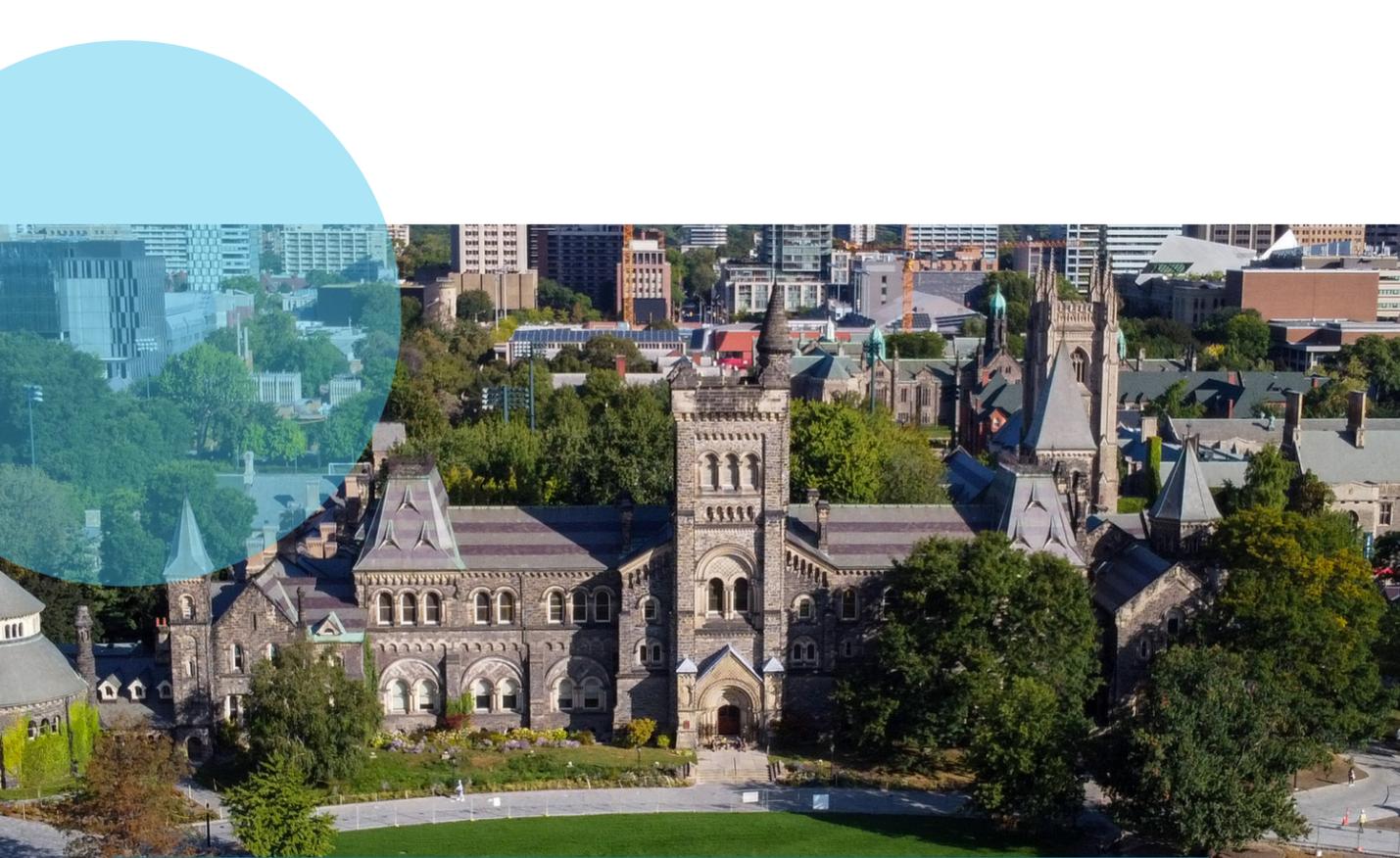
If you would like a consultation regarding the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act standard obligations, embedding Universal Design, or have feedback regarding services provided by the University of Toronto relating to accessibility, please contact us.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Office
155 College Street, Faculty Offices, Room 356
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Front Campus walkway, U of T St. George. Photo above and cover by Diana Tyszko.

EMBRACING NEW STANDARDS AND BEST PRACTICES RELATED TO ACCESSIBILITY

The University constantly seeks new standards and best practices that support our efforts to make spaces, programs, and services accessible to everyone in our community.

Above: Front Campus Landmark Project renovations, U of T St. George. Photo by David Lee.

Launch of a new Facility Accessibility Design Standard (FADS)

The University reached a significant milestone by formally publishing U of T's new Facility Accessibility Design Standard (FADS), aligning the University's accessible design standards with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), Ontario Building Code, and current best practices. Effective June 15, 2023, the FADS applies to all new construction and significant renovations, with the ultimate goal of supporting planners and architects to create University spaces that are truly barrier-free.

A tri-campus technical working group representing several Faculties, student accessibility services, space planning, capital project design, and the **AODA Office** met bi-weekly over multiple years to identify gaps and opportunities to make updates, propose additions and changes, and socialize the FADS University-wide by working through any potential local barriers to adoption. Throughout this intensive process, the University sought and received feedback on the FADS from across the University. Ongoing feedback will help inform future revisions to the FADS to ensure they remain relevant to our community.

In tandem with this work, **Facilities & Services** (F&S) continues to identify a set of objective criteria—including, but not limited to building use, size, and compliance with design standards—to prioritize accessibility improvements across University buildings. F&S's Senior Project Manager for Accessibility remains actively involved in providing accessibility-focused input during the design review process of major projects.

Best practices in accessible communications & event delivery

The **AODA Office** increased our community's understanding and awareness of best practices in accessible communications through strategic compliance reviews, consultation and support, and training. Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the University's publicly accessible websites and social media must conform to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 to Level AA (with some exceptions).

This year, the AODA Office delivered nine, two-day sessions of the "Web Content Accessibility Crash Course" to tri-campus employees responsible for creating, designing, and/or maintaining content on institutional websites. The sessions provided detailed knowledge of web accessibility principles, practices, and tools that can be directly applied to their daily work.

The AODA Office offered five sessions of "Accessible Social Media." These sessions enhanced employees' understanding of the University's obligation, both legal and social, to create accessible content and provided guidance on common social media platform accessibility features and how to design accessible content within social media apps.

To complement this training, the AODA Office delivered eight sessions of "Accessible Events" to faculty, librarians, and staff to promote understanding of how the University's events can follow best practices in accessibility. Participants reviewed the critical components of planning and implementing accessible in-person, hybrid, and online events. Topics ranged from finding barrier-free locations to considering how to design for neurodiversity.

Guide for workplace disclosure & accommodation

The Office of the Vice-Provost, Students' **Career Exploration & Education** and **Accessibility Services (St. George)** teams—in consultation other tri-campus career and accessibility services partners—launched the [Disclosure and Accommodation Guide for the Workplace](). This guide helps students navigate disclosure and accommodation conversations throughout their job search process. It covers topics such as comparing academic and workplace accommodations, characterizing accommodation needs, and understanding the right to access accommodations.

Clinical Accommodation Process

The **Lawrence Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing** established a Clinical Accommodation Process that enhances the accessibility of clinical placements for their BScN and MN programs. Program directors and instructors additionally incorporated considerations for accommodations into academic and clinical settings. To expand awareness and understanding of related challenges and opportunities, a group of faculty members and a graduate student began work on a scoping review of literature that documents processes, experiences, and outcomes of accommodating Nursing students.

Health Sciences Building, U of T St. George. Photo by Johnny Guatto.

User experience guidelines

Information Technology Services created the initial draft of a [UX Accessibility Guide]() that both enhances an understanding of accessibility more broadly and suggests how to design an accessible user experience. It shares resources and tools to guide design decisions and processes and addresses topics such as PDF accessibility, web accessibility evaluation tools, and the UX Team's best practices. **Enterprise Applications and Systems Integration** will release the guide widely after additional consultation.

Quality assurance guidelines & procedures

At U of T, creating, reflecting on, assessing, and developing plans to change and improve academic programs and units must follow a University-wide process called UTQAP (University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process). As of 2023, UTQAP requires that "Universal design principles and/or the potential need to provide mental or physical disability-related accommodations" be substantially considered in program design, implementation, and delivery. This significant revision implemented by the **Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs** supports the University of Toronto's commitment to upholding the [University's Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities]() and providing high-quality learning experiences for everyone in the community.

The IT instructional design team at the **Faculty of Kinesiology & Physical Education** laid the groundwork to instill accessibility reviews as a necessary part of the Quality Assurance process for Quercus course elements. This year, they expanded their services to faculty and instructors by evaluating the compliance of Quercus course materials with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Success Criteria. Such criteria include ensuring that all video content for Quercus courses has available subtitles and transcripts. Discussions continue about how best to ensure that an accessibility evaluation is completed prior to publishing course content.

U of T Scarborough. Photo by Matthew Dochstader.

CREATING ACCESSIBLE PHYSICAL SPACES AND STRUCTURES

Each of our campuses at the University of Toronto has a unique built environment in which our community learns and works. It is our institutional and legal responsibility to remove physical barriers and create accessible spaces that support in-person learning, research, and teaching and enable everyone to access campus facilities with ease and dignity.

Above: The new science building under construction at U of T Mississauga. Photo by Nick Iwanyshyn.

New buildings & structures

Barrier-free access to the vegetative roof and internal courtyards are just two accessibility features at the new science building at **U of T Mississauga**, which integrates inclusive design throughout. The Tipi and Indigenous teaching lodge, raised in Fall 2023, are also fully accessible. Work is currently focused on expanding accessible pathways around each structure to create a durable and welcoming space for Indigenous ceremony and community building, land-based learning, and reconciliation.

Renovations

University Planning, Design & Construction (UPDC) enhanced a variety of buildings and spaces on St. George campus to ensure alignment with the Ontario Building Code and the University's new Facility Accessibility Design Standard. UPDC focused on improving paths of travel and accessibility features in various buildings, including Hart House, 33 Ursula Franklin Street, Knox College, and the Medical Sciences Building. Building enhancements spanned improvements to washroom facilities (including adding universal washrooms), ramp and/or elevator installation, and the installation of automatic door operators and accessible handrails at building entrances.

The Faculty of Music requested a consultation by the **AODA Office** on how to improve physical access to their buildings for students, employees, and visitors. One significant recommendation—to improve wayfinding throughout the Faculty—led to the creation of more than 130 new, accessibly-designed signs. This process involved consulting with the Faculty of Music community on the signs' text and placement. Each finished sign is numbered and includes a QR code that leads to an anonymous feedback form. Feedback will be incorporated into the final iteration of signage, to be installed by late January 2024.

The Indigenous Centre Tipi at U of T Mississauga. Photo by Nick Iwanyshyn.

Event spaces

The **Rotman School of Management** undertook a comprehensive Accessibility Review of Event Spaces. This initiative, led by the Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and the Director of Building Operations and Client Services, focused on Desautels Hall, Rotman's largest and most frequently used event space. The review identified constraints in current space configurations due to code requirements for ramp run and slope and recommended improvements to wayfinding, confidence monitor placement, seating angles, and accessibility seating. Addressing these recommendations will ensure that Desautels Hall is accessible and offers clear visibility and comfort to all attendees.

The **John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design** increased a large ramp to the stage in the Main Hall of the Daniels Building, a notable public events venue and lecture space. This enhancement increases accessibility and clearly signals that all members of the community are welcome to participate in onstage activities and events.

PROVIDING ACCESSIBLE SERVICES AND TOOLS TO OUR COMMUNITY

U of T is committed to the principles of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). We strive to make our services and processes as accessible as possible and provide accommodations as required for all students, faculty, and staff with disabilities.

Above: Students accessing a computer terminal in the Bridge Lab, U of T Scarborough. Photo by Moussa Faddoul.

Student services & programs

Accessibility Services (St. George) and **the IT team at Student Life**—both within the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students—partnered to innovate service delivery for the Peer Advisor program. For three days a week/11am to 3pm beginning in Winter 2023, they engaged with the community using a new chat feature embedded into the Accessibility Services webpage. The new service option has significantly improved response times and enabled Accessibility Services to provide more frequent peer-to-peer assistance. Their Winter 2023 interactions with students increased 156% over Fall 2022.

At the **Faculty of Information**, the Office of the Registrar and Student Services worked closely with student groups like the Accessibility Interest Working Group and Accessibility Advisor, organizing inclusive activities and offering flexible academic and personal advising sessions.

The Discovery Pharmacy at the **Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy** enhanced service accessibility by offering varied appointment modes and piloting translation services for non-English-speaking clients, notably in partnership with UHN's Diabetes Pathway program.

The **Centre for International Experience** within the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students offered multiple avenues for student engagement with services and programs, including International Student Advising and the University Health Insurance Plan (UHIP) program. The International Student Advising team hosted Q&A sessions via Zoom, which offers simultaneous closed captioning, and their instructional videos are hosted via MS Stream on SharePoint, which includes a side-by-side transcript. The UHIP team provided sessions with closed captioning and distributed AODA-compliant slide decks to attendees and registered students.

Following a consultation with the **AODA Office**, the **Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work** improved the accessibility of its digital communications. It prioritized work to transition the Faculty from sharing PDF attachments to using web-based information, and improved the screen readability of online documents. The Faculty also produced a suite of online videos about its programs and admissions process to share information with prospective students in alternative formats.

All-community services

TCard Services, in partnership with Robarts Library's User Services at the **University of Toronto Libraries**, and consultation with the **AODA Office** and the **Canadian National Institute for the Blind**, launched a Braille label project that makes TCards easier to identify by touch. Students, staff, faculty, and other community members with blindness or low vision can have a Braille label "t" sticker placed on the TCard when they pick up their new/replacement TCard. They may also drop by their campus TCard office or Robarts Library's Reader Registration to have a sticker placed on their current TCard.

The **Fitness Centre at Hart House** reconfigured its welcome desk to enhance service delivery to guests with diverse needs. The desk now includes three stations, all fully adjustable from standard height to standing height. The front-facing counter for guests reflects accessible best practices design, and the desk is equipped with assisted listening systems to address communication barriers.

Additionally, the Fitness Centre launched a project to remove barriers for anyone wanting to access opportunities for wellness. A new video series, set to launch in Fall 2024, will guide guests wishing to learn how to use various pieces of exercise equipment within the Centre.

Teaching, learning & research tools

Information Technology Services and the **Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation** collaborated to develop an online platform—the Active Learning Classrooms (ALCs) Hub—to assist instructors teaching in Active Classrooms across U of T. Active Classrooms are spaces that create opportunities for students to engage in critical thinking, problem solving, self-reflection and improvement, and agency sharing with instructors. In this way, well-designed ALCs will develop expert learners who are purposeful and motivated, and strategic and goal-oriented, goals of the UDL guidelines.

New College's Closed Captioning Pilot Project, first launched in the 2021-22 academic year, assisted students and instructors alike by removing barriers to understanding course materials. The project enabled instructors to share online lectures with accurate closed captions, thanks to a team of students hired to manually verify and correct auto-generated closed captions. Once complete, the captioning is available as a default on the recorded lecture, removing the onus on students to request any special accommodation or intervention.

Also at New College, the Accessible Course Reader Service enhanced course readings with accurate Optical Character Recognition, tagging the text's reading order and document structure (including headings, and figure and table labels), and adding alt-text for images. The service ensured that students with visual impairments or a preference to learn through audio rather than text could engage with their course readings as easily and effectively as their peers who rely on the printed word. In turn, it supported instructors by allowing them to assign readings to all students, confident in the knowledge that the resources will be AODA compliant. The Accessible Course Reader Service can be used to share materials not available online that are scanned under fair use or with a purchase licence.

The Information Technology Accessibility Support Program at the **DG Ivey Library**, meanwhile, ensured that screen reader, screen-magnification, and learning support software is available on all Library computers, allowing a diverse range of learners to engage with their course materials without requiring special accommodations or interventions.

The **Division of the Vice-President, Research & Innovation** launched a new tool with enhanced accessibility features to assist researchers, academic administrators, designated support staff, and designated central administrators engaged in research funding administration. Called the University of Toronto Research Account or UTRAC, the tool is a browser-based interface whose responsive layout adapts to a variety of devices, from phone or tablet to PC. It has the flexibility to be keyboard-enabled (allowing navigation using the TAB key) or modified for touch input (increasing the size and spacing of controls). Moreover, it offers options to adjust colour contrast, ensuring it can be perceived by a diverse range of users.

At UTM, the **Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre** in the **Institute for the Study of University Pedagogy** released two resources—Creating Accessible Documents for Teaching and Learning and Writing and Sending Accessible Emails—to assist instructors in understanding how to integrate accessibility into their daily communications and course materials. A pilot session for instructors on creating accessible Word, PowerPoint, and PDF documents complemented this learning.

The Institute also offered sessions focusing on how instructors can support neurodivergent learners in the classroom. These included "Supporting Neurodiversity," a two-part series examining how neurodivergent learners might be excluded from learning activities, and additional sessions offering pedagogical strategies to support ADHD learners.

INCREASING OUR COMMUNITY'S UNDERSTANDING OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Universal Design (UD) is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. We design for diversity when we create environments that are accessible to everyone and cultivate a sense of belonging.

Above: Interior of One Spadina after renovations, U of T St. George. Photo by Nic Lehoux.

Training & events

The **AODA Office** enhanced our community's understanding and adoption of Universal Design (UD) principles through a variety of initiatives. To all employees, they offered regular sessions of Universal Design 101 (now a permanent offering in the roster of Accessibility trainings). For managers across the tri-campus, they released the University's first Universal Design Inclusive Employer Guide to raise awareness about how UD principles can be applied in the workplace. Suggestions included promoting UD training among teams, encouraging feedback on how to make the workplace more inclusive, and rethinking approaches to daily activities, such as meetings.

The AODA Office delivered customized sessions as well. These included a day-long workshop at the **School of Continuing Studies** that invited senior leaders to apply Universal Design principles to the School's new Strategic Pillars. Leaders additionally examined how the concepts of "co-design" and "co-creation" might support an accessible Lifelong Learning ecosystem.

The AODA Office also partnered with the **Centre for Research & Innovation Support** on a tri-campus workshop about using Universal Design principles to eliminate barriers for research participants. Called "Promoting Accessibility in Research Ethics," the workshop considered how ableism and attitudes towards disability may impact research ethics and research involving humans. It contributed to the series "Learning Together: Applying Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Concepts in Research Ethics Review," which explored a range of research ethics topics through the lens of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2).

The **Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation** (CTSI) expanded awareness of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) concepts through the University of Toronto Teaching & Learning Symposium, an annual event presented in partnership with the Offices of the

A class at U of T Scarborough. Photo by Moussa Faddoul.

President and Vice-President & Provost. The 2023 closing plenary by renowned UDL expert Andratesha Fritzgerald concluded two days of engagement on the topic of "building belonging" in teaching and learning environments.

In partnership with the Centre for Faculty Development in the **Temerty Faculty of Medicine**, CTSI additionally launched a new two-day workshop grounded in UDL principles to assist instructors in offering more inclusive, accessible, and flexible learning opportunities to their students. This well-received session will become a regular offering in CTSI's Course Design Institute.

In summer 2023, the **Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy**'s Course Support team offered instructors training sessions on Universal Design. This training, along with resources from the AODA Office, empowered instructors to create accessible content for every learner.

Meanwhile, Education Commons at the **Ontario Institute for Studies in Education** (OISE) worked to integrate Universal Design principles into OISE's digital landscape. Development teams engaged in comprehensive training to understand expectations for incorporating UD into all website and web application development. Regular meetings provided opportunities for ongoing discussion and refinement of UD practices.

Resources & supports

At the **Faculty of Information**, the Learning Hub increased understanding of Universal Design by conducting syllabus and Quercus course reviews, providing templates, and promoting best practices through regular updates. Under their guidance, instructors revised course slides, Quercus set-ups, in-class activities, and teaching strategies.

At UTM, the **Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre** in the **Institute for the Study of University Pedagogy** offered ongoing individual consultations to instructors, post-doctoral fellows, and graduate students to support the implementation of accessible pedagogy and UDL in assessments, activities, and courses.

The **Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation** (CTSI) released a Quercus resource hub focused on UDL course design and began developing a self-paced virtual resource on Course Design Foundations that integrates a UDL focus. CTSI expects to release the latter resource in Spring 2024.

A student studies in Maanjiwe nendamowinan, U of T Mississauga. Photo by Moussa Faddoul.

CENTRING LIVED EXPERIENCE OF DISABILITY

Centring the perspectives and expertise of individuals with lived experience of disability can build awareness and understanding and drive meaningful change.

Above: Image by karastock, Adobe Stock.

Outreach opportunities

The **School of Continuing Studies** (SCS) provided an eight-week placement for a neurodivergent student as part of the "Moving Towards Opportunity" program. The Daniels Corporation, a long-standing partner that provides employment opportunities for equity-deserving youth, initiated the project. To ensure a successful work opportunity for the student, SCS and Daniels teams collaborated to identify the student's needs and support the student through tasks. At the conclusion of the placement, the student reported that it was an excellent and rewarding experience.

The **Faculty of Kinesiology & Physical Education** introduced a new community-engaged learning course that involved Bachelor of Kinesiology students and adults with complex developmental disabilities. The course, "Advanced Adapted Physical Activity," required students to apply their theoretical knowledge while delivering physical activity programing to participants with limited access to such recreational instruction.

The **Faculty of Music** introduced a six-week graduate unit that aims to help vocal students with disabilities sing with confidence. The unit, called "Disability in the Voice Studio & Voice Pedagogy, A Transformative Experience," provided education and tools to those working with vocal students with disabilities. It addressed a range of topics including neurodiversity, ableism and language, singing after a stroke, singing after/with cancer, teaching students with low vision/blindness/vision-related disabilities, those with disabilities impacting the vocal tract and breathing system, and working with students who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. Some sessions were recorded to allow for asynchronous learning.

Students playing badminton, U of T Scarborough. Photo by Matthew Dochstader.

Working groups & consultations

At the **Faculty of Law,** the University of Toronto Disabled Law Students Association, in collaboration with the Students' Law Society and the Law School Senior Leadership Team, convened an Accessibility Roundtable to recommend innovative ways to embed accessibility into the law school's processes and reduce barriers to law school campus culture.

The Disability Inclusion Working Group at the **Temerty Faculty of Medicine** developed 31 recommendations to meaningfully address disability within the Faculty. The recommendations focused on four areas: education, system navigation, infrastructure, and institutional relationships, and identified barriers that prevent equitable accessibility and full, dignified participation in the Faculty's activities and environments. In addition to bringing an interest in disability justice, Working Group members represented a wide variety of lived experiences and related professional roles within Temerty Medicine.

The **School of Continuing Studies** established a working group to update its Accessibility Plan. This plan reflects the Division's progress toward addressing barriers and incorporating the recommended regulatory requirements for the new post-secondary education standard for the AODA. The working group anticipates completion of the new plan by Spring 2024.

Under the Accessibility Improvement Program, **Facilities & Services** (F&S) now incorporates facilitated lived-experience consultations into all projects. In these consultations, students with disabilities provide feedback into facilities upgrades or renovation projects aimed at improving the accessibility of physical spaces. In 2023, F&S facilitated a lived experience consultation for the addition of an elevator, a ramp, and three accessible washrooms in the Clara Benson building. F&S also facilitated a lived experience consultation with caregivers of children who have accessibility

A group working at U of T Scarborough. Photo by Moussa Faddoul.

concerns, diversifying the range of perspectives and voices incorporated into the design of accessibility improvement projects.

Expert faculty from the Disability Studies Stream in the Critical Studies in Equity and Solidarity program at **New College** consulted on accessibility improvements to the lower level of Wetmore Hall. New accessible areas included classrooms, IT services, the Stats Aid Centre, and new offices/meeting rooms.

Student Life within the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students focused on integrating the lived experiences of disability into its support services for students. Partnering with **Viability**, a neurodiverse, youth-led organization, **Career Education and Exploration** and **Accessibility Services (St. George)** organized staff development workshops to deepen understanding of how to support neurodiverse students. These workshops explored resources for students and employers, transition strategies from school to work, and the practice of professional allyship.

Meanwhile, **Accessibility Services (St. George)** used insights from its Accessibility Services Student Experience Survey Reports over a four-year period (which included feedback from over 900 students) to develop programs such as "Talking to New People." The program facilitates relationship-building and connection opportunities for students, responding to a survey-identified need for more interaction among peers.
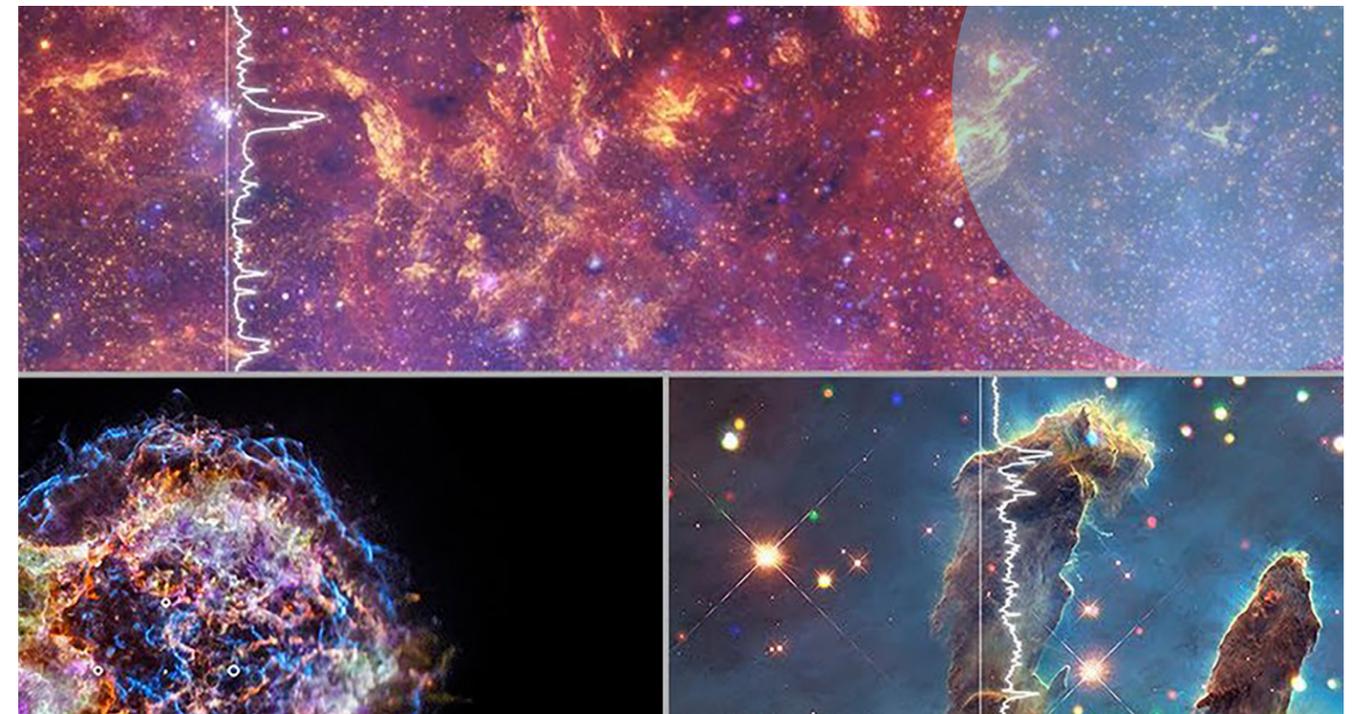
Public talks & lectures

Collaborating with STREET Lab, the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Unit, DSA Accessibility Committee, and MISC Accessibility Interests Working Group, the **Faculty of Information**'s Dis/Usability Speaker Series promoted a deeper understanding of disability justice in the realm of technology. The inaugural session featured Christine Malec, a blind artist and advocate, who demonstrated the use of sonifications to make space exploration data about black holes accessible through auditory means. In another session, Professor Alison Harvey from York University discussed inclusivity in creative technology industries and explored strategies for fostering equitable creative workspaces.

The **John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design** hosted the public lecture Architecture of Disability by architect and scholar, David Gissen, a disabled designer and historian of architecture, and professor of architecture and urban history at Parsons School of Design at the New School in New York City. Glissen proposed a vision of architecture that fully integrates disabled persons into its production and reimagines current modes of architectural practice, theory, and education.

The Inclusion in Action Speaker Series, a collaboration between the **Institutional Equity Office** and the **UTM Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Office**, hosted a session for over 200 community members exploring disability justice and its principles, with a focus on intersectionality and Blackness. Dr. Sami Schalk, Associate Professor of Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison opened the session by sharing practical strategies to embed disability justice within post-secondary environments. Dr. Schalk then joined a panel of U of T community members to analyze how ableism manifests and can be disrupted in places that we learn and work. Participants reported gaining a deeper awareness of how to apply disability justice to post-secondary environments.

Sonification: NASA/CXC/SAO/K. Arcand, M. Russo & A. Santaguida.

2024 & BEYOND

Above: The Instructional Centre, U of T Scarborough. Photo by Matthew Dochstader.

Priorities of the AODA Office

The AODA Office remains committed to leading the University in meeting our current AODA requirements, including the recommendations made by Ontario's Postsecondary Education Standards Development Committee in 2022.

In addition to consulting, providing training and resources, and collaborating with our community on projects and initiatives, we will undertake a comprehensive review of institutional initiatives and activities affirming compliance to date. This review will support the development of a new webpage that clearly identifies AODA Standards, our institutional progress in meeting these Standards, and concrete pathways to achieve compliance. This webpage will be updated regularly and will serve both as an accountability mechanism and ongoing resource for the U of T community.

Moreover, the AODA Office will draft a new Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for the University focused on five standards within the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation of the AODA: Customer Service, Information and Communication, Design of Public Spaces, Transportation, and Employment. The expertise and insights of a Consultation Committee—including tri-campus community members with lived experience of disability, academic and administrative leaders, and representatives of University offices and services—will crucially inform this plan.

We will continue work to support the creation of an affinity group for employees who identify as having non-evident or evident disabilities. We will also identify ongoing opportunities to highlight scholars and experts in the field of disability, accessibility, and Universal Design through events and programming, including during National AccessAbility Week 2024. Centring these perspectives and encouraging discussion and learning will, in turn, both inspire and guide innovation across all the activities of our University.

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

Walkway outside Hart House, U of T St. George. Photo by Diana Tyszko.