

**University of Toronto**  
St. George Campus

**Accessibility Services**  
**Programs & Services for Students With A Disability**

**Annual Report**  
**2001-2002**

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## **Executive Summary**

Accessibility Services (AS), St. George Campus, facilitates success for students with a disability in the University setting by providing support, advice and academic accommodations. AS also provides advice and information to applicants and advises faculty and staff on issues pertaining to accessibility and supporting students with disabilities. Reporting to the Office of Student Affairs, and as a member of the E.I.A.G., the Service advocates for the basic rights and responsibilities set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code and University's Statement of Institutional Purpose. The Service receives funds from the Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities and the University of Toronto.

The Service currently serves well over 1000 students who have a wide variety of disabilities including mobility, chronic health, hearing impairment, low vision, communication, mental health and to a large extent, learning disabilities, as well as temporary disabilities. Services include: academic accommodation advice; assessments (learning disabilities, adaptive technology, etc.); learning strategy and adaptive technology support; funding assistance; alternate test/exam centre; assistive devices; volunteer and computerized note-taking; sign-language interpreting; accessible transportation on campus; and advice and information on barrier-free accessibility.

Several changes to the Service were made in the 2001-02 year in an effort to be more student centered and responsive to student needs. The most dramatic change was the re-location of the service to the barrier-free accessible first floor of the Robarts Library, ideally located next to the Adaptive Technology Resource Centre. Students have access to a wide variety of specialists and generalists on both an appointment and drop-in basis; partnerships with faculties, colleges and services were forged across campus and in the community;

The 2002-03 year will see the office play a key role on the UofT Annual Accessibility Planning Committee, suggesting best practices to promote a more inclusive and barrier-free environment. The office will recommend additional staffing given the size of student caseloads, particularly given the influx of students fall 2002 which has seen our numbers increase to over 1000 registered students from approximately 800 students in the Spring, resulting in further strain on the already taxed test/exam centre and the note taking service. As well, the Service will continue the development and implementation of current projects.

# Annual Report

## 2001-2002 Highlights

- **Administrative Offices moved to an accessible location in the Robarts Library**
- **Design Plans for new Test And Exam Centre completed; project tendered and awarded**
  - **Full time staff hired in Health Unit to address increase in numbers of students with mental health and chronic health problems**
  - **Funding proposal submitted for 2 staff to enhance services for students with a learning disability**
  - **Captioned videos produced for a “picture tells a thousand words” opportunity to tell our story to University staff and the community at large**
  - **Partnership development with faculties, colleges and services across campus and the wider community**

### **Annual Summary:**

The 2001-2002 academic year was marked by a period of ‘putting our house in order’ while the Department continued to offer the best possible service to our students. We continued to build and improve upon the department’s infrastructure and fine-tuning of the organizational structure, policy framework, database and web-site.

Policies to reflect best practices were developed and implemented in following areas: Learning Disability Unit; Health Unit; Test/Exam Unit; Note taking Unit; and Administration Unit.

Accessibility Services continued to create partnerships across campus with various faculties, departments, and services as well as in the broader community. While our Administrative offices moved to a new accessible location in the Robarts Library, the design and plans for a new Test/Exam Centre were tendered and awarded.

### **Accessibility Service Office:**

- **Administration offices moved; test/exam offices designed and contract awarded**
- **Partnership with OISE/UT provides extra private rooms for test/exams**

Our Professional and Administrative Offices were moved to our newly designed and built space on the first floor of the Robarts Library. This barrier-free and accessible location is located in the hub of the University's student activities. With the Service on the main floor and two accessible washrooms near-by, the office is ideally situated next door to the Adaptive Technology Resource Centre, which ensures a seamless and integrated service, responsive to students who require adaptive technology assessments and accommodations.

The design, tender and contract was awarded for the new location of the Test/Exam Centre in the Robarts Library. The location will be built on a semi-circular design to enable the invigilators to view the private rooms and carrels.

Current demand for more private test/exam rooms resulted in a partnership with OISE/UT. Over 50 private carrels with windows on the doors are used for overflow of students at exam times. Student response to this new arrangement was positive.

#### **Service Delivery and Case Management:**

- **Students numbers increase caseloads**
- **Students with mental health problems increase**
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The 2000-2001 year supported 806 students registered with the program. It is important to note that this statistic does not reflect the 50+ students who applied and met with counselling staff but were not registered with the department. (Referrals were made to other services due the fact that these students did not meet the criteria for our Service.) Further, it does not reflect the students who graduated from UofT to return for supporting letters and documentation for applications to other Universities. It does not reflect the inquiries from prospective students and parents who were considering attending the University of Toronto. If these statistics were factored into the equation, we will have served well over 850 students.

The Department is broken down into the following areas with their own distinct responsibilities, namely:

The Health Unit (students with mobility, chronic health, mental health, hearing, low vision, communication and temporary disabilities)

The Learning Disability Unit

The Test/Exam Centre Office

The Volunteer Note-taking Program

The Financial Administration Unit

Further efforts were made to streamline the service delivery model within the units to continually improve and reflect a best-practices model. For example, information and registration packages were revised to provide information before an appointment to maximize efficient use of counsellors' time.

In a cooperative effort with the Adaptive Technology Resource Centre and the two offices for students with a disability in UTMississauga and UTScarborough, a joint proposal was submitted to the Learning Opportunities Task Force for funding to hire Learning Disability Strategists and Adaptive Technologists for the three campuses. We recently learned that St. George will receive funding for two full-time staff.

#### **The Health Unit:**

- **Full-time Doctorally prepared practitioner with extensive University experience hired to work students with mental health and chronic health problems**

The two staff members in the Health Unit saw approximately 400 students with mobility, sensory, chronic health and mental health and temporary disabilities.

To address the increase in number of students with mental health problems and systemic/chronic medical problems, a full time Disability Accommodation Specialist was hired. The Disability Generalist works 4 days per week counselling students with mobility and sensory problems and one day per week on outreach projects.

This Unit has spearheaded a number of new policy initiatives to increase efficiency and improve the level of service particularly with regards to student registration. Forms for required documentation for each disability group (hearing impairment, low vision, mobility, chronic health and psychiatric, temporary) were developed for students to take to their health care professional. The Unit continues to partner with staff at the St. George Counselling and Learning Skills office (CALSS). A student self-help Mood Disorder group meets regularly to share common concerns and discuss coping strategies.

### **The Learning Disability (LD) Unit:**

- **New partnership with the Faculty of Medicine results in support group**

The LD Unit provides assessments for students who suspect they have a learning disability or require an updated LD report. Four part-time staff, including a Registered Psychologist, provided 87 LD assessments. This in-house service allows for a seamless

Three part-time Counsellors (equivalent to 1+ FTE) provide accommodation counseling for approximately 400 students. Counsellors will work closely with the new Learning Strategist and the Adaptive Technologist in order to ensure that students are receiving the necessary support they require for success at University.

The Learning Disability Specialist formed a partnership with the staff at the Faculty of Medicine to create a self-help group for students to work on their social skills; a MSW student was brought on as a group facilitator.

### **Test and Exam Centre:**

- **3,849 tests/exams administered for 423 students – an increase of 692 over the 2000-01 year**
- **partnership with OISE/UT provides 20 extra private rooms**
- **test/exam scheduling automated**

Last year we reported that the Test/Exam Centre saw a marked increase from the previous year of over 650+ more tests and exams administered for approximately 400 students.

The 2001-02 fiscal year witnessed yet another marked increase in growth from last year: 1989 tests and 1860 exams for a total of 3849 test/exams - an increase of 692 for 423 students. The automation of scheduling the test/exams has helped to alleviate some of the demands on the Test/Exam Centre although a manual check of information is required before information is entered into the database to ensure accuracy.

The partnership with OISE/UT resulted in the provision of a second location for overflow during exam time. Approximately 50 private carrels with windows on the doors were provided for students.

### **Volunteer Note-taking Services:**

Volunteer note-taking services continues to be a challenge and plans are underway to re-think how we offer this service. Students are given written policies that state the service is dependent on volunteers. If volunteers are not forthcoming and notes not materialize, students are asked to book an appointment with their counsellor to discuss options.

Some professors provide notes and information on web-sites; some students recruit their own volunteer note-taker in class; and some lecturers give out information in class. During the past fiscal year the Volunteer Note-taking Service provided the following:  
218 students requested note-taking in 456 courses  
355 note-takers signed up for note taking (often many from one course from which we picked the best note-taker)  
294 courses were filled with volunteer note-takers

### **Van Service:**

Our wheelchair accessible van on St. George Campus provided 1076 rides for approximately 8 months from September to April for 21 students. When the van was not in use transporting students, we were able to assist other Services on campus.

### **UofT Learning Skills Drop-In Centre:**

The Drop-In Centre is a joint project with Accessibility Services and the UofT Counselling and Learning Skills Service (CALSS). Students can attend the drop-in center four afternoons and one evening per week from October to May. Two learning skills counsellors offered support to 137 students across the campus on 377 occasions for help with writing and organizing essays, time management and learning strategies. Greater effort will be undertaken the coming year to determine the number of students with disabilities utilizing the drop-in centre. The model of service delivery is inclusive and integrated, flexible and responsive to individual student needs.

### **UofT Adaptive Technology Resource Centre (ATRC):**

Accessibility Services contracts the services of the ATRC to provide adaptive technology assessments by their Occupational Therapist. In the past year, 90 students were referred for consultation to determine what technology would best suit their needs. Additional students returned with questions regarding advances in technologies that could assist with their studies, or for further training on technology acquired in previous years. Students make inquiries and try out adaptive technologies during daily drop-in hours.

A workshop series was offered to students to train on adaptive technology to assist with their studies. These included basic Ergonomics, Voice Recognition, Organizational,

Screen Reading and Screen Magnification software programs. As well, the Centre offered consultations to Colleges and Faculties regarding installation of adaptive technology in computer labs.

### **Transitional Year Programme (TYP):**

- **New partnership with TYP provides a two year programme option for students with a disability**

Last year we reported that our Service continued to work with the Deaf Community to explore how the existing UofT Transitional Year Program could meet the needs of students who are deaf. A report, making a case for post-secondary education programmes in Ontario for people who are deaf, was completed and was endorsed by the Committee. Next steps were discussed in order to secure funding from government sources. Funding has not been secured to date.

In the interim, Accessibility Services and the TYP partnered to offer a two-year TYP option for students with a disability. The two departments work together to assist eligible students with their accommodations in order to facilitate a successful TYP experience.

### **Reorganization of 2001-02 Financial Structuring & Reporting:**

- Financial reports re-developed to facilitate analysis of income and expenditures
- Financial systems revised to re-cooperate LD Assessment funding
- Attendant Care Accommodation cost savings with fees formally paid from operating budget re-routed to community agencies funded by Ministry of Health
- Continued partnership with Admissions and Awards to support student not eligible for the Disability Bursary

### **Disability Endowment Fund:**

The Provost approved as a Campaign project an endowment fund that will assist students who are not eligible for the Bursary for Students with a Disability (BSWD) or a University Bursary.

### **Database Development:**

- **Database developed by Accessibility Services at UofT used as a model Ontario Universities and Community Colleges**

A database to automate the Service's Case Management functions and the Test/Exam Centre was developed in consultation with Service staff and the UofT Computer Networking Services and an outside consultant. The case management function is on going as students graduate and new students register with the department. The database can be refreshed and updated from time to time with the University's ROSI

information system (repository of student information). Confidentiality is ensured and maintained.

Ontario Universities and Colleges requested demonstrations from the developer of the database; feedback was positive.

### **Video Production:**

- **Ontario Universities order copies of UofT videos**
- **UofT Departments and Faculties view video and proclaim it an informative, inclusive, and well thought out piece about the Service**

A flier describing the videos and how departments and faculties could partner with the Service was distributed across campus

- 20 minute student video: aimed at providing information to incoming students with disabilities, it features students in a variety of locations across the campus who talk about accommodations for their disabilities and personal experiences
- 10 minute video: targeted at faculty and staff who teach and support students with disabilities, this video features a student who is legally blind who is working on his PhD in molecular biology with a focus on cancer research. The student's professor is also a key participant in the video.

Both videos are diverse and inclusive of people with disabilities and cultural backgrounds and are useful tools for recruitment purposes as well as for educational and public relation purposes both within the University community and externally.

### **Outreach to Students:**

- **Partnerships with Registrar offices; 7000 brochures distributed**
- **Information Workshops offered to new and returning students**
- **Web-site offers update to programs and services**

The web site continues to be a major source of information for students and staff. Information includes required documentation, registration on line, accommodations by disability, test and exam policy and procedures, barrier-free educational initiatives and map of the campus, resources for students and staff, financial aid, programs such as the ATRC and the Learning Skills Centre and resources throughout the campus and community.

The Service distributed 7,000 brochures in the spring to students via the College Registrars to encourage eligible students to register with the department in a timely fashion.

An Information Workshop was held for incoming students in late summer. The workshop gave new students and their families an opportunity to learn about Accessibility Services and the University resources and supports.

### **Outreach to the University Community:**

- **Presentations made to various Faculties, Departments and Services**



Staff held meetings and gave presentations to UofT faculties, departments, services, as well as outside community groups. Further, the Service was in contact with a number of departments and services, providing information on disability issues and encouraging partnerships across campus. These include the Registrar Offices, Faculty of Physical Education, Family Care Office, Faculty of Social Work; Status of Women Office; Admissions and Awards Office, and the Faculty of Law, Teaching Assistants, Department of Sociology, etc. This practice will continue to grow and expand as the Service becomes more inclusive and responsive to the University Community.

The Service's Coordinator is a member of the University's Equity Issues Advisory Group which meets quarterly with the President of the University to advise and update him on various issues related to respective equity areas.

### **Outreach Beyond the University Community:**

Coordinator is:

- elected Co-Chair of the City of Toronto Disability Advisory Committee;
- elected Vice President of the Inter-University Disability Issues Association (IDIA);
- member of the UofT Equity Issues Advisory Group;
- member of the Canadian Standards Association Consumer Standards for People with Disabilities Committee;
- member of the UofT Equity Conference Planning Committee;
- Board member of the nominating committee for the Terry Fox Hall of Fame.
  
- Staff professional development - attended conferences (AHEAD; Learning Disability conferences, etc. ) and workshops that addressed specific professional development needs
  
- Partnerships with Attendant Care Services in the Community were established to provide attendant care to UofT students while on campus.
  
- Further, the Service offers information sessions to community high schools and service organizations.

### **Barrier-Free Accessibility Initiatives on Campus:**

- **2002-03 Students voted to support a \$2 student levy to support accessibility projects on campus**

The Coordinator continues to be active as a member of the Student Administrative Council Wheelchair Access Committee (SACWAC) to help administer the remaining funds from the endowment for accessibility projects as well as act as a resource, advisor and facilitator on barrier-free access issues on campus.

This spring the student body once again voted to support a levy from their student fees for the next three years for barrier-free initiatives for all disabilities across the three campuses. The University Administration matches the student funds.

Further to the enacting of the Ontario Disability Act in December 2001, a Committee of students and staff from all three campuses will be formed to develop a plan to prioritize buildings that require barrier-free access and assure barrier-free access standards are part of the design stage of any new building. With the University's proposed \$500 million building campaign over the next few years, it is time to review and make recommendations for barrier-free standards upgrades to ensure accessibility in all new buildings.

### Summary:

The Service continues to improve its core services to students with commitment and dedication. The Service has improving services for students and reaching out to the University community.

The move to the new location, the implementation of a database and a web-site, the re-development of policies and procedures, outreach to the University community, etc. all contribute to a solid foundation for the Service and provide an integrated and responsive infrastructure to situate itself as part of a broad context of student services all engaged in supporting the University's mission statement.

## Accessibility Services University of Toronto St. George Campus Statistics – 2001-2002

Disability	1999-2000		2000-2001		2001-2002	
	Number of Students	Percentage of Students	Number of Students	Percentage of Students	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Systemic/Chronic Medical	207	29%	261	41%	215	27%
Mobility	75	10%	52	7%	79	10%
Blind/Low Vision	33	5%	33	4%	26	3%
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	19	3%	12	2%	13	2%
Learning Disability/ ADD/ ADHD	336	47%	327	41%	377	46%
Multiple	46	6%	94	12%	75	9%
Other (UTM, UTSC, etc)					21	3%
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>806</b>	<b>100%</b>

