Western

The University of Western Ontario's

Accessibility Plan

September 2006 to August 2007

Prepared in accordance with the *Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2001*

30 September 2006

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September 30, 2006

Introduction

In December 2001, Ontario passed the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (the "Act"). The purpose of the Act is to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the province. To this end, the Act mandates that every university, including The University of Western Ontario ("Western"), prepare an annual accessibility plan.

This is the fourth such plan to be prepared on behalf of Western.

Objectives

The purpose of an accessibility plan is to document barriers to accessibility that have been removed to date and identify those barriers that will be removed in the coming year. A plan must also identify how the barriers will be removed and present a plan for identifying and removing barriers in the future, and preventing the development of new barriers.   Plans must be made public and accessible to allow for input from the broader community.

The purpose of this plan is to update the last report, prepared in September 2005 (available at http://www.uwo.ca/equity/WODAC/WODAC_index.html).

Western's Commitment to Accessibility Planning

As is stated in *Engaging the Future*, the University's draft Strategic Plan (final report anticipated in November 2006):

> **Diversity:** as part of our commitment to excellence, we seek to recognize and remove the obstacles faced by traditionally under-represented groups in order to facilitate their access to and advancement at Western. We respect and celebrate the diversity of people who make up our community.

The University of Western Ontario has been committed to accessibility planning for some time now and has recommitted itself to such planning under the Act. With the formation of Western's Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee ("WODAC"), Western has committed itself to meeting its obligations under the Act, as well as to achieving the following goals:

- The continual improvement of access to University premises, facilities and services for all persons with disabilities;
- The participation of persons with disabilities in the development and review of its annual access plans; and
- The provision of quality services to persons with disabilities.

Barrier-Removal Initiatives in 2005-2006

1. Physical and Architectural Barriers

At Western, a number of departments and/or groups are committed to the removal of physical and architectural barriers:

- The student-funded Campus Accessibility Review and Enhancement Committee ("CARE") continued efforts to address barriers on campus that have been identified by students. While the accessibility enhancements are focused on improving student experience, there is a beneficial impact for all members of the university community and for visitors to campus.

- The Department of Physical Plant plays a large role in addressing physical barriers identified on campus and has also displayed a strong commitment to addressing physical barriers that are brought to its attention and to maintaining accessibility-related improvements such as door openers.   In addition to addressing issues as they arise, Physical Plant continues to make available the amount of $50,000.00 per year in its budget to direct toward projects to increase accessibility on campus. It should be noted as well that additional sums are committed by other departments on campus.

- All plans for new buildings and major renovations to existing buildings on campus are reviewed to ensure that barriers are addressed at the planning and design stage, and that no new barriers are created. Accessibility standards set by the University often go beyond the standards found in the Ontario *Building Code* (which are acknowledged as a base only) and it is an expectation that contractors bidding on and completing work at the University will meet these higher standards. It should also be noted that Physical Plant regularly engages the services of Design**able** Environments (Consultants in Accessibility and Future Care Planning) to review these projects. The Barrier-Free Access and Safety Committee (the "BFASC") was established at Western in order to ensure the accessibility of new and renovated buildings.

- Training on the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) continued for university members. Although the focus of the training is preventing crime on campus, participants are also trained in accessibility considerations. When participants conduct CPTED audits of

various campus buildings, they will also make accessibility recommendations, as appropriate.

Initiatives to remove physical and architectural barriers across campus in the past year include:

- A dedicated Access Van service has been in place since November 2005. This van has created accessible transportation for students on our large campus (including the affiliate campuses);

- In consultation with Services for Students with Disabilities, Housing provided assistive equipment (bed, lift, commode, hands-free phone) in a Perth Hall residence room.

- Installation of a barrier-free washroom on the second floor of The D.B. Weldon Library.

- Alterations to several classrooms in the Social Sciences Centre to allow for accessibility, including fixed tables removed and replaced with moveable tables for students who use wheelchairs.

- At the request of Services for Students with Disabilities, the classroom management team (Institutional Planning and Budgeting), reassigned classrooms to allow students with disabilities to attend classes in accessible classrooms.

- The department of Human Resources underwent renovations and ensured accessibility was considered in renovation plans. As a result, a barrier-free access door, accessible door openers and lever handles were installed. The Human Resources staff kitchen was also outfitted with an automatic, accessible door.

- Rehabilitation Services continued to offer its assistance to individuals for attaining parking permits for persons with disabilities, creating ergonomically correct workstations and accessing buildings on a case-by-case basis.

- The CARE committee approved funds to support the following projects:

  o Installation of an elevator at Brescia University College
  o Installation/improvements to an adaptive computer station at Huron University College
  o Improvements to Western's Adaptive Computing Technology Centre

- o Improvements to the Student Development Centre's Exam Room computer work stations as well as the purchase of exam room scanners
- o Purchase of accessible furniture and equipment for King's University College
- o Purchase and installation of accessibility signage to external entrance points for campus buildings (to be completed in 2006)
- o Improvements to the accessibility of the Medical Sciences entryway
- o Improvements to the Learning Opportunities Lab Room doors
- o Purchase of a laptop computer for the Student Development Centre to be used in the Law Building

2. Information and Communications Barriers

Initiatives to remove information and communication barriers across campus in the past year include:

- Services for Students with Disabilities coordinated convocation assistance for graduating students who have disabilities.

- Services for Students with Disabilities provided the first annual **Summer Transitions in Education for Students (STEPS)** program at Western for students with learning disabilities who are making the transition from high school to university.

- Services for Students with Disabilities launched a new website to provide information to incoming and current students with disabilities: http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/

- The Office of the Ombudsperson achieved a website re-design. Included in the design process was a consultation to ensure accessibility for persons with visual impairment and information processing difficulties.

- Western Libraries continued its commitment to web accessibility as outlined in the report found at: http://www.lib.uwo.ca/accessibility/.

- A "Workstation Ergonomics" website developed for use by staff and faculty. It includes a step-by-step guide on how to review one's own workstation. Website may be found at: http://www.uwo.ca/humanresources/facultystaff/h_and_s/rehab/ergonomics/index.htm.

- Western's Rehabilitation Services revised their Functional Accommodation Form to include cognitive components and added cognitive demands to the Job Demands Description. This has facilitated the accommodation process for individuals with mental health issues.

3. Attitudinal Barriers

This type of barrier is the most difficult of the barriers to identify and address. Western is fortunate to have a large number of interested and concerned individuals in its community who regularly take on the task of educating others about the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in our community, both formally in the work that they do and informally.

Some initiatives completed in the past year to move forward in addressing these barriers include:

- Members of WODAC attended at the "Building Momentum" forum presented by the Ontario Community Support Association in partnership with the Government of Ontario.

- The University Students' Council presented its first annual Disability Advancement Awards. A faculty member and a student were honoured.

- Rehabilitation Services completed extensive research in the area of mental health in preparation for the development of a mental health training program for Western's leaders and managers.

- Occupational Therapy students interviewed students with disabilities. Information gained for these interviews is intended to help educate students to improve self-advocacy.

- Western Libraries appointed a Student Services Liaison Librarian who, as part of her mandate, works directly with Services for Students with Disabilities to ensure appropriate library support is available for students with disabilities.

4. Technological Barriers

Efforts to remove technological barriers on campus are on-going and the removal of such barriers are priorities for various departments. Initiatives from the past year include:

Services for Students with Disabilities:

- Updated software and equipment in the Access Lab, Learning Opportunities Lab and the Services for Students with Disabilities' exam rooms (with funding from CARE), including:
  - exam room computers
  - Adaptive Computing Technology Centre computers purchased
  - Student Development Centre Exam Room Scanners purchased.

Western Libraries**:**

- Adherence to the W3C's 3 Priority Levels. These are 3 levels of specifications that are required, desired, or optional in order to adhere to web accessibility. For a site to be considered accessible, it is required to meet the 1st priority of items. The 2nd is desired. The 3rd (which is hard to achieve) is optional. Western Libraries adheres to all 3 levels!
- Use of Web Standards. Western Libraries' website is now driven by Cascading Style Sheets (CSS). This allows the ability to comply with web standards by separating content from the design. It allows the Western Libraries site to be more accessible from a variety of platforms – e.g. screen readers, mobile devices, etc. It also helps ensure the site appears properly in different browsers.
- Improved Drop Down Menus. The drop-down menus on the navigation bar are now driven by CSS instead of Javascript. As a result, all the pages load significantly faster than before – which is particularly noticeable on dial up connections. It also allows menus to be more accessible from screen reading software and other devices.
- Portal pages have a section labeled "Services for Users with Disabilities". This is designed to better serve the needs of this user group.
- Improved Mobile Accessibility. Because the Western Libraries site is now driven by CSS, Western Libraries can provide accessibility to mobile devices. Further enhancements are being investigated.

Human Resources:

- E-recruitment initiative begun. Hoped that it will reduce barriers to applying to Western.
- Updates to Rehabiliation Services website to provide more succinct information.
- Rehabilitation Services has provided assistance for persons with visual impairment, text and voice-activation.

Other:

- Hearing Accessibility Audit completed for 15 classrooms (effecting 2000 students and 27 professors). Plans to assess 8 more buildings.
- Evaluation of physical accessibility of University buildings continues, with a report regarding either additional buildings due in fall of 2006.

Information Technology Services ("ITS"), specifically through the Senate Subcommittee on Information Technology ("SUIT"), continues its efforts to ensure all Western's official departmental websites meet barrier-free web accessibility standards, as set out by the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Access Initiative (WAI).

5. Barriers Created by Policies or Practices

With an organization the size of Western, there are a great number of policies and practices, both formal and informal, which require review.   By promoting Western's obligations pursuant to the Act, it is anticipated that many of these will be reviewed by the appropriate departments, and barriers will be identified and brought forward, either by those departments or by individuals impacted. Resources such as Staff Relations, Rehabilitation Services, Services for Students with Disabilities and Equity & Human Rights Services are available to receive concerns and provide advice. These resources also continue to review policies and practices as part of their work on campus.

Some specific initiatives in the past year undertaken to address policy or practice barriers include:

For Students:
- Services for Students with Disabilities in coordination with the USC developed a process by which part-time undergraduate students can opt-in to the Bus Pass and Health Plan.
- Services for Students with Disabilities along with Student Financial Services developed improved funding for assessments.
- Services for Students with Disabilities provided services to approximately 1000 students in 2005-2006, which included arrangements for 6000 exams.
- Housing agreed to waive the meal plan requirements for attendants in two residence rooms.

For Staff and Faculty and the larger community:

- E-recruitment: Development of an on-line recruitment process. As part of this process, Human Resources is looking to improve access of the designated groups (including Persons with Disabilities) to Western's positions and postings and to ensure that the hiring process and requirements are fair and equitable to all persons and do not create unnecessary barriers to applicants. Human Resources is looking at ways to eliminate bias in the process and to strengthen the applicant pool to ensure a fair representation of the entire community. Some ways in which HR is attempting to achieve this are
  o Always including an Employment Equity statement
  o Ensuring the language is appropriate and unbiased
  o Advertising with contract groups serving designated groups
  o Ensuring selection committee members are trained regarding equity considerations
  o Ensuring all questions are based on the bona fide requirements of the position.

- o In conjunction with Equity & Human Rights Services, providing training for those involved in recruitment efforts.

- Outreach: Human Resources has been partnering with contact groups in the community which serve persons with disabilities. Some of the agencies that Western has connected with are Leads Employment Services Inc., ATN and Goodwill.

- Rehabilitation Services continues to be a resource/consultant for Faculty/Staff to provide help with illness/injury.

Plan for Removal of Barriers in 2004-2005

What follows is a list of recommended actions to be undertaken in the upcoming year to identify, remove and prevent barriers at Western.

1. Physical and Architectural Barriers

- Continue the work done by the BFASC to review all new projects and major renovations to ensure accessibility.

- Post signage in the form of the International Symbol of Accessibility to mark all accessible entrances, elevators, washrooms and routes through buildings (CARE funded).

- Improvements to the Accessibility for Learning Opportunities Lab at The D.B. Weldon Library. Three accessible rooms and three accessibility study carrels are planned.

- A new service desk is to be constructed in The D.B. Weldon Library. The desk will feature a lowered counter area to accommodate persons in wheelchairs.

- Installation of accessible door openers in the Archives and Research Collections Centre.

- Continue to incorporate accessibility considerations through the training and subsequent audits undertaken by the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) team.

- Continue to address physical barriers as they are identified by members of the community.   The community currently has a number of different committees and departments that may be approached with concerns. Discussions are currently underway to improve communication and/or amalgamate the work done by these various committees and departments

in order to better serve our community and respond more effectively to concerns regarding physical barriers.

- Continue to support the completion of the Campus Accessibility Evaluation and address barriers as they are identified. Careful review and attention will be given to the barriers identified and recommendations proposed for the four priority buildings identified in the July 2005 Accessibility Assessment.

- Housing will be transferring the hospital bed and Dynamic Tilt commode to London Hall (Western's newest residence). A Waverly Sling lift will be installed in London Hall as well.

2. Information and Communications Barriers

- A restructuring of the Barrier-Free Access Committee is planned.

- A "welcome kit" for students with disabilities is being developed. A new website for WODAC is being considered to support the new welcome kit.

- Finalization of WODAC's terms of reference. Further changes to the committee are anticipated as we await the new standards being developed under the AODA, 2005.

- Western is a partner in the 2006 Abilities First Conference, presented by TD Bank Financial Group and the London Chamber of Commerce.

- Formalizing and publicizing enhanced library services available for students with disabilities through Western Libraries.

- Creation of mp3 versions of library help guides currently accessible through the library website.

- Western Libraries will coordinate with Services for Students with Disabilities in their work to improve access to research materials for students, including examining the Access Code for potential barriers and supporting Services for Students with Disabilities initiatives regarding alternative text formats.

3. Attitudinal Barriers

- Continue to improve understanding and awareness of mental health and mental illness across campus, especially among managers and supervisors, through further education and training initiatives. A workshop on Mental Health Issues is planned for Leaders and Managers.

- Bring learning opportunities to campus which bring together persons with disabilities from across the Western community, their supporters and administrators to discuss accessibility issues, highlight existing barriers and brainstorm ways to remove and prevent further barriers.

- Completion of the employment equity guide for use by those responsible for staff hiring and promotion, which would include considerations for hiring and promoting persons with disabilities.

- Continue to develop and present various educational programs across campus (for example, a duty to accommodate workshop for staff, faculty and students).

4. Technological Barriers

- Continue to respond on an as-needed basis to requests for adaptive technology to assist members of the community.

- Continue to monitor and ensure all official Western websites are accessible according to standards approved by ITS.

- Creation of mp3 versions of library help guides currently accessible through the library website.

- Services for Students with Disabilities will be investigating the use of remote real-time captioning and its ability to pick-up classroom discussions.

- The Hearing Accessibility Audit report is due in the fall. Report will suggest strategies to reduce noise and improve the ability to hear lectures.

- Human Resources to purchase computing equipment for the HR Communications Centre to provide access to persons with vision impairments.

5. Barriers Created by Policies or Practices

- Consider a review of the existing policy on Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities.

- Consider collaboration with the City of London's Accessibility Committee.

- Communicate about the new Ontario legislation when it is passed and Western becomes aware of its roles and responsibilities arising under that legislation.

- Human Resources will continue its e-recruitment and outreach efforts to recruit persons with disabilities to Western's workforce.

- Formalizing and publicizing enhanced library services available for students with disabilities through Western Libraries

Review and Monitoring Process

Over the past year, WODAC has taken a more active role in identifying and addressing barriers. This is the first year that WODAC has existed in its new committee structure. Although still evolving, WODAC hopes to develop a clearer and more integrated process for those who identify accessibility issues and forge relationships between departments, groups and individuals that will assist in finding a reasonable and timely resolution to accessibility concerns. This identification of short term and long term goals will be reflective of the obligations that are anticipated under the forthcoming Ontario legislation. We look forward to the upcoming year.

Appendix A

Members of WODAC

The following members of the University community served as members of WODAC between September 2005 and August 2006:

Functional/Administrative Group Members (one representative each):

Department	Committee Member	Contact Information
Equity & Human Rights Services	Larissa Bartlett (Chair)	(519) 661-2111 x83334
	Terri Tomchick	(519) 661-2111 x81428
Housing & Ancillary Services	Ruta Lawrence	(519) 661-2111 x85978
Human Resources	Jane O'Brien	(519) 661-2111 x84261
	Veronika Elsie	(519) 661-2111 x85580
Information & Technology Services	Merran Neville	(519) 661-3976 x83976
Office of the Ombudsperson	Adrienne Clarke	(519) 661-2111 x83573
Physical Plant Department	Flemming Galberg	(519) 661-2111 x88880
Rehabilitation Services	Barbara Froats	(519) 661-2111 x81398
Services for Students with Disabilities	Deborah Stuart	(519) 661-2111 x82147
Western Libraries	Jennifer Robinson	(519) 661-2111 x82229
Western Faculty	Lisa Klinger	(519) 661-2111 x88963
King's University College	Joan Aldis	(519) 433-3491 x4316
Brescia University College	Vacant	
Huron University College	Vacant	

(The functional/administrative group member shall represent and take the necessary action in accordance with his or her university role or position. The functional/administrative member may be, from time to time, required to research, consult with University leadership or administration, and take immediate or intermediary action in order to respond to issues raised at the committee meetings by the stakeholder/expert group members or other Western members).

Stakeholder/Expert Group Members:

Group	Committee Member	Contact Information
Society for Graduate Students (SOGS)	Melissa Fraser	
University Students' Council	Kelly Wilson	
Student Member-at-large	Lorin MacDonald	
Student Member-at-large	Jeff Preston	
Staff/Faculty Member-at-large	Cheryl Jamieson	
Staff/Faculty Member-at-large	Vacant	

Appendix B

Annual Accessibility Plan- King's University College
September 2005-August 2006

Submitted to: Western's Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee
                       The University of Western Ontario

Submitted by: Joan Aldis - Coordinator of Counselling & Student
                       Development and Services for Students with Disabilities

This report addresses:

1. measures taken to remove barriers on the campus of King's University College

2. measures to be taken in the current year to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities including faculty, staff, students, alumni and members of the public.

Barrier- Removal Initiatives in 2005-2006

- Two labs were upgraded for accessibility.
- Information Technology has upgraded King's website using the principles of universal design.
- Cafeteria was upgraded for accessibility

Plan for Removal of Barriers in 2005-2006
- Bathrooms to be upgraded for accessibility