



The University of Western Ontario's
Accessibility Plan

September 2010 to August 2011

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

30 September 2010

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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. The Act mandates that every university prepare an annual accessibility plan.

Despite the passage of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, the requirements under the Act, specifically in reference to the preparation of this report, remain in force. As of March 2010, the University of Western Ontario has reported on its compliance with the customer service standard under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (“AODA”). To view Western’s compliance report under the under the AODA’s Customer Service Standard, please see:

<http://accessibility.uwo.ca/docs/AODAReportMar2010.pdf>

The following accessibility plan is prepared in accordance with the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*.

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 2009 (available at <http://www.accessibility.uwo.ca/reports.htm>).

Western’s Commitment to Accessibility Planning

As is stated in *Engaging the Future*, the University’s Strategic Plan:

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. Through 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;
- Compliance with accessibility standards consistent with regulations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, as they come into force;
- 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 2009-2010

Physical and Architectural Barriers

A number of departments and/or groups are committed to the removal of physical and architectural barriers at Western. Initiatives to remove physical and architectural barriers across campus include:

- The Campus Accessibility Review and Enhancement Committee ("CARE"), chaired by the University Students' Council, continues to allot funding, made available annually through Physical Plant and Capital Planning Services ("Physical Plant"), to address barriers on campus. While the accessibility enhancements are focused on improving the student experience, there is a beneficial impact for all members of the University Community as well as visitors to campus.
- Physical Plant plays a large role in addressing physical barriers and is committed to addressing physical barriers on campus. The department provides funds to CARE in its annual budget for projects to improve accessibility. Other sums are committed by other departments. All physical and architectural accessibility enhancements are coordinated through Physical Plant.
- All plans for new buildings and major renovations to existing buildings are reviewed to ensure that barriers are addressed at the planning and design stage where possible. Standards used by Western often go beyond the standards found in the Ontario *Building Code* (which are acknowledged to be a base only). It is expected

that contractors bidding on and completing work at Western will meet higher standards. The Barrier-Free Access Committee ("BFAC") assists Physical Plant in reviewing the accessibility of new and renovated buildings and recommended that Western adopt the City of London's Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS) for use as a guideline at Western.

- Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) Prevention Program: In 2008 the Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) Prevention Program was introduced to Hospitality Services. The aim of this program is to provide the training and tools to all workers so that MSDs (injuries to muscles, tendon, ligament, nerves, discs, etc.,) can be prevented. The roll out of this program in Hospitality Services has been completed. Western's Ergonomic Specialist and the Facility Safety Coordinator, Health & Safety are currently in the process of implementing the program in Physical Plant - Caretaking.
- Western's Ergonomic Specialists provide a variety of services including risk assessments, job coaching, physical demands reports, job matching and education sessions. They work with university departments to provide recommendations and develop solutions in response to safety hazards and to help focus on prevention opportunities.
- A pilot program focussing on ergonomics was launched in the fall of 2009 through a partnership between Rehabilitation Services and Hospitality Services. An alternate model of service delivery was implemented in order to address the unique needs of this group. One of Western's Ergonomic Specialists was assigned to Hospitality Services to provide both case management and hands-on ergonomic support. Early indicators demonstrate a reduced number of WSIB lost time injuries for Hospitality Services. Further analysis will be completed at the end of the academic year to determine how best to support this group in the future.
- At the D.B Weldon Library, Physical Plant installed accessible sinks in various washrooms, removing old vanities and adding new sinks, countertops and faucets. Washrooms renovated include room 23A, 24, 125, 126, M3, M4, 242, 244, 343, 345, 442, 444, 542 and 544.
- Additional study space has been added to Weldon Library resulting in 46 additional seats in an area that includes accessible furnishings.
- Student Development Centre's Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) facilitated academic accommodation and provided related services for approximately 300 students who had chronic illnesses or mobility impairments. These accommodations and services removed or significantly diminished physical barriers that these students would have encountered at the University. Most of these students used exam accommodations that allowed them a fair opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge (e.g., additional time, word processors, and/or voice

recognition software to prepare answers to exam questions). Forty-nine students used accessible campus transportation provided by SSD.

- Tactile washroom signage was added at Elborn College.
- As part of a \$2 million dollar project to eliminate physical barriers, new detectable warning surfaces have been installed at many road crossings and other campus locations to assist those who have visual impairments.
- Additional locations on campus now offer barrier-free ramps, sidewalks and curbs.



Photo of new detectable warning surface at road crossing. Courtesy of Paul Mayne, Western News

Information and Communications Barriers

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

- WODAC and Equity & Human Rights Services maintained and updated the Accessibility at Western website (<http://accessibility.uwo.ca/>).
- As part of its ongoing mandate Equity & Human Rights Services provided consultations and resources to staff, faculty and students on issues regarding the University's duty to accommodate.
- Rehabilitation Services continued to offer its assistance to individuals for attaining parking permits for persons with disabilities, creating ergonomically correct workstations and accessible buildings on case by case basis.

- The Wellness Series continued this year. These presentations are sponsored by Western Wellness and Western's EAP Committee and are open for all faculty and staff to attend:
 - October 2009 – Readyng Your Lawns and Gardens for Winter
 - November 2009 – Is your Job Causing you a Pain in the Neck
 - December 2009 – Managing Stress
 - March 2010 – What do the Labels on Food Products really mean?
 - April 2010 – Transition: Staying Resilient During Organizational Change
 - May 2010 – Effective Parenting Strategies for School Age Children
 - June 2010 – Parenting Teens

- Student Development Centre's Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) facilitated academic accommodation and provided related services for 1,298 students with disabilities in 2009-2010. Although some accommodations and services removed physical and other barriers, most, if not all, directly or indirectly facilitated access to information and assisted students with communication. For example, exam accommodations such as extra time, text or screen reading software, enlarged print, or Braille allowed students to access information during exams. Similarly, extra time and computers for word processing allowed students to communicate their responses to exam questions.

- SSD helped provide other accommodations and services that facilitated students' access to information for the purpose of learning, writing papers, and completing other assignments. Access to information shared in classes was provided through real-time captioning and/or computerized note-taking for 18 students who were deaf or hard of hearing. Other students used assistive technology on campus to access and work with information. SSD's assistive technologist provided training and other technological support for 157 of these students. SSD arranged for 86 students to use alternative format text (e.g., digital & Braille). SSD's learning strategist provided instruction regarding effective ways with which to work with information for 172 students who have learning disabilities.

- Other services in the Student Development Centre (Writing Support Centre and Learning Skills Services) helped students with disabilities develop skills with which to communicate in writing and learn course material.

- Western Engineering developed a departmental accessibility website that includes a function to provide Twitter updates relevant to accessibility.
<http://www.eng.uwo.ca/accessibility/>

- Western Libraries provides information about accessibility at all library locations on its website: <http://www.lib.uwo.ca/accessibility>



*Services include assistance with different learning strategies.
Photo courtesy of Dr. Sandi Spaulding*

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:

- The Mental Health First Aid Canada and Mental Health at Western for Leaders & Supervisors programs were available again this year. The aim of MHFA Canada is to improve the mental health knowledge of individuals who take the course. The objective of Mental Health at Western is to improve knowledge of mental health issues at Western including how to support employees and how to access resources. To date, 140 Leaders & Supervisors have been trained in mental health first aid. In addition, training specifically designed for Academic Counsellors, Police and Housing staff has been delivered. A website was launched in May 2010 which allows for ease of registration: http://www.uwo.ca/humanresources/facultystaff/h_and_s/mentalhealth/training.htm.
- In January 2010, 6 new additional instructors (from Western) were trained to conduct the Mental Health First Aid Canada program.
- Western Libraries sponsored a Teaching & Learning Forum for Librarians and Archivists in June 2010 that included an opportunity to hear directly from a visually impaired graduate student. The student gave a demonstration and spoke about her experiences conducting research using Western Libraries. Feedback from the event indicated that staff found the opportunity to hear directly from a student with

disabilities to be very helpful as they set out to adapt their teaching practice and make their classroom experiences more accessible.

- In the spring of 2010, Western Libraries introduced a new area on the staff intranet for Accessibility. The website outlines accessible facilities and services provided by Western Libraries and includes access to training materials related to providing accessible customer service.
- Through the assistance of Services for Students with Disabilities, appropriate accommodation and support for students who have disabilities has allowed them to demonstrate their ability to engage, accomplish, and succeed at university. This demonstration has changed attitudes about people's limitations that were held by some faculty and staff.
- Representatives from Services for Students with Disabilities, Equity & Human Rights and Learning and Development participated in Western's large-scale initiative to educate all staff and faculty about accessibility and the AODA Customer Service Standard.

Technological Barriers

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

- Information Technology Services ("ITS"), specifically through the Senate Subcommittee on Information Technology ("SUIT"), continues its efforts to ensure all of 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).
- Western Libraries continues to ensure its website meets barrier-free web accessibility standards as set out by the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Access initiative (WAI).
- Western Libraries has purchased micro-scanning equipment which will allow users to produce digital scans of our microfiche and microfilm collections. Given the unique nature of our micro-format materials, which often aren't available in any other format, this scanning equipment will make it easier to produce accessible versions of unique items.
- Services for Students with Disabilities provided assistive technology facilities in the Western Student Services Building and the D. B. Weldon Library. The University also provided assistive technology in various locations in Western's libraries. This

technology removed barriers that students would have encountered if they had tried to use other computers on campus.

4. 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. Pursuant to obligations set out in the AODA, it is anticipated that many policies and practices 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:

- A project team continued its work on the implementation of the Customer Service Standard required under the AODA. This project team had representation from Services for Students with Disabilities, Rehabilitation Services, Equity & Human Rights Services, Human Resources (Learning and Development), Communications, and Internal Audit. This group's work included: developing a university policy and accompanying guidelines regarding the new legislation; developing a feedback process by which the University may be contacted about accessibility issues; developing a web based process and local signage to communicate service disruptions; preparing and distributing resource material for staff and faculty; and developing presentations regarding the legislation and Western's initiatives for compliance. The group delivered these presentations to senior administrative groups and approximately 3500 employees during more than 20 meetings and information sessions. The working group also developed a process by which the University was able to audit its compliance with the Standard which enabled reporting of this compliance to the government. The auditing process involved widespread examination of the University's policies and practices, and resulted in unit specific plans for enhancing accessibility.
- Many university departments and units have added a link to Western's Accessibility website (www.accessibility.uwo.ca) from their departmental homepages. In addition, many have included departmental-specific information about accessibility to their websites.
- As of the spring of 2010, Western Libraries has begun providing alt-format text delivery of library materials for qualified students, i.e. those registered with Services for Students with Disabilities. In September 2010, Western Libraries introduced a

new mechanism for students to submit requests for alt-format text of library materials through the library website.

- Access to computer equipped study rooms (sponsored by Services for Students with Disabilities) in Weldon Library was greatly expanded this past academic year with key checkout now available from the Service Desk seven days a week, day and evening hours. Previously these rooms were only available five days a week during regular business hours, i.e. 9-5.
- Services for Students with Disabilities advised many departments at Western regarding practices that would enhance accessibility.
- Representatives from Services for Students with Disabilities participated on university committees in order to help ensure that the committees' activities did not create barriers to accessibility and to facilitate the removal of such barriers whenever possible.
- A representative from Services for Students with Disabilities participated in decisions regarding admission to most undergraduate programs for applicants who had requested special consideration for health or disability related reasons.

Plan for Removal of Barriers in 2010-2011

Over the coming year, Western will be focussed on meeting the requirements of the AODA and any standards that come into effect. Currently, the *Integrated Regulation* and *Built Environment* standards are in proposed draft forms. Western is monitoring the development of the other standards under the AODA and will implement changes and/or project teams as necessary.

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

Physical and Architectural Barriers

- Human Resources (Health and Safety) will continue the Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) Prevention Program.
- Physical Plant will be undertaking the following the following projects that will address physical/architectural barriers as part of the renovations:
 - Physics & Astronomy Renovations (ongoing)
 - Stevenson Lawson Renovations (ongoing)
 - Elborn College barrier-free washroom
 - Widening existing barrier-free ramps and retrofitting existing entrances at various campus locations

- Ensuring further sidewalk and curb accessibility
 - Pedestrian crossings including markings and tactile strips at various locations
 - Contrast strips to exterior stair nosings at various locations
- Housing and Ancillary Services will continue to support and provide the necessary facilities to students requiring changes to their living accommodations within residence rooms and suites.



*Accessible ramp at the University Community Centre
Photo courtesy of Terri Tomchick-Condon*

Information and Communications Barriers

- The Western Wellness Series will continue.
- In 2010/11 Western Libraries will continue to investigate methods for improving accessibility of library collections. This includes working with our various vendors to ensure search interfaces and full-text content are accessible to users with disabilities.
- Over the last few years, Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) has worked with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and representatives from other disability services offices in Ontario to develop a pilot project for alternative format text. The project consists of a repository for digital text books which will facilitate the sharing of these texts among universities and colleges. Western will use the new system during 2010-2011 in fulfilment of the second phase of the pilot project. This system has the potential to significantly improve the efficiency with which alternative format text is provided for students with disabilities. Such improvements are especially important in light of the 45% increase in number of Western students who have requested alternative format text over the last four years.
- Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) partnered with a psychologist in private practice in London to provide Cogmed training to Western students whose

disabilities include weaknesses in attention and working memory. Results obtained so far are promising; however, a more in-depth evaluation of this training will be conducted after more students have completed it.

Attitudinal Barriers

- Mental Health First Aid Canada and Mental Health at Western for Leaders and Supervisors training is planned for 2010 (in October and November) and 2011 (February, March, April, May and June).
- Services for Students with Disabilities will continue its work with Career Services and a community employer to facilitate the transition to employment for Western students who have disabilities
- With funding from the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, Services for Students with Disabilities will deliver a summer program which is designed to facilitate the transition from high school to university for students who have learning disabilities.



*Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all who study, work at or visit our campus.
Photo courtesy of Dr. Sandi Spaulding*

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.

Barriers Created by Policies or Practices

- Development of any new policies, procedures and processes required under the accessibility standards related to the AODA, 2005.

Review and Monitoring Process

WODAC continues to take an active role in identifying and addressing barriers on Western's campus. The committee will continue to focus on finding a reasonable and timely resolution to accessibility concerns. In the coming year, WODAC will be playing an important role in the development of University programs and policies needed to meet the new accessibility standards. The committee will work towards establishing strong partnerships with its campus partners to continue to address accessibility issues.



*Accessible pathway at Western
Photo courtesy of Terri Tomchick-Condon*

Appendix

Members of WODAC September 2009 to August 2010

WODAC members may be reached via email to accessibility@uwo.ca.

Department	Committee Member
Equity & Human Rights Services	Larissa Bartlett (Chair) Terri Tomchick- Condon
Housing & Ancillary Services	Ruta Lawrence
Human Resources	Jane O'Brien Mark Shannon
Information Technology Services	Merran Neville
Office of the Ombudsperson	Adrienne Clarke
Physical Plant Department	Mike McLean
Rehabilitation Services	Barbara Froats
Services for Students with Disabilities	Deborah Stuart
Western Libraries	Jennifer Robinson
Western Faculty	Lisa Klinger
King's University College	Joan Aldis
Brescia University College	<i>Vacant</i>
Huron University College	Nina Reid-Maroney
Society for Graduate Students (SOGS)	Chelsea Mohler
University Students' Council *	Will Bortolin
Student Member-at-large	Jennifer Francis
Student Member-at-large	Emma Arenson
Staff/Faculty Member-at-large	Cheryl Jamieson
Staff/Faculty Member-at-large	<i>Vacant</i>