Western University's

Accessibility Plan

September 2014 to August 2015

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

Western

Table of Contents

Introduction

In December 2001, Ontario passed the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (the "ODA"). The purpose of the ODA 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 ODA mandates that every university prepare an annual accessibility plan.

Despite the passage of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, (the "AODA")* the requirements under the ODA, specifically in reference to the preparation of this report, remain in force. To view Western University's compliance reporting under the AODA, please see: http://accessibility.uwo.ca/resources/reports.html

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 2013 (available at http://accessibility.uwo.ca/resources/reports.html).

Western's Commitment to Accessibility Planning

As is stated in the University's *Accessibility at Western* policy:

> The University of Western Ontario is committed to recognizing the dignity and independence of all staff, students, faculty and visitors and seeks to ensure that persons with disabilities have genuine, open and unhindered access to University goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises.

Western University has been committed to accessibility planning for many years. In particular, we are committed to achieving barrier free accessibility for persons with disabilities studying, visiting and working at Western. As part of this commitment, there are a variety of services, groups and committees on campus devoted to promoting accessibility and to ensuring that individuals have equitable access to services and facilities. Western actively works towards meeting its obligations under legislation, as well as towards 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 identification and follow up of accessibility concerns and best practices on campus; and
- The provision of quality services to persons with disabilities.

A file review audit, led by the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, was conducted at Western University in August, 2014. The areas reviewed were:
- The multi-year accessibility plan
- Procurement and acquisition practices
- Training regarding accessibility standards and the Human Rights Code
- Training specific to Educators
- Receipt and follow up of feedback on accessibility concerns
- The recruitment process

Supporting documentation was provided and the Ministry indicated satisfaction with the information provided. As a result of the audit, the language on our accessibility website was changed to ensure feedback processes are accessible upon request on the same webpage.

Barrier-Removal Initiatives in 2013-2014

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:

- All physical and architectural accessibility enhancements on campus are coordinated through Western's Facilities Management Division. 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.

- During 2013-2014, physical/architectural barriers were addressed as part of the renovations completed on Ontario Hall which provided an additional 12 barrier-free housing units for the Department of Residence. A second barrier-free apartment was created in the Platt's Lane Estates which included an accessible shower.

- The Residence Programming Office, a resource centre for 350 residence staff and council members, relocated to Ontario Hall to make this resource area fully accessible.

- The main Housing Office also relocated to Ontario Hall to offer full accessibility. The Front Desk was designed to provide better customer service for individuals with mobility challenges. Staff received adjustable desks which allow movement up and down to allow individuals to sit and/or stand while working.

- Facilities Management installed new detectable warning surfaces at road crossings and other campus locations to assist those who have visual impairments.

- Additional barrier-free ramps, sidewalks and curbs were installed across campus.

- Installations of barrier free door operators and hold-open devices at various locations across campus.

- A renovation project for the Music building which began in 2013-2014 will include accessibility upgrades in the alterations to the main building site as well as the addition.

- The Business Library and Music Library implemented a Radio Frequency (RFID) coding system for all physical library materials. This changed the security gates used to remove the bars on the gates making them more accessible. The Business Library has implemented accessible self-service checkout stations.

- Renovation plans for the ground and lower ground floors, including the collaborative learning zone in the Taylor Library were developed with upgrades to meet accessibility needs for users.

- Changes were made to reconfigure the space at the Law Library (a multi-year project) and also upgraded public areas in the library, in keeping with accessibility requirements.

- The micro-scanner table in the Weldon Library is height adjustable to be more accessible.

- Student Development Centre's Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) provided services for 1,843 students with disabilities in 2013-2014. Most, if not all, of these services facilitated access to information and assisted students with communication. These services included exam accommodations (e.g., extra time, text & screen reading software, digital & Braille exams, computers for word processing) which allowed students to access information and communicate their answers during exams. Over 1200 students wrote exams with accommodation.

- SSD provided access to information shared in class through real-time captioning, sign-language interpretation, and/or computer note-taking for 27 students who were deaf or hard of hearing. SSD arranged alternative format textbooks (e.g., digital & Braille) for 174 students. SSD provided training or consultative services regarding the use of assistive technology to access information for 182 students. SSD also provided learning strategy instruction for 176 students with learning disabilities.

- Services for Students with Disabilities, Information and Technology Services, the Registrar's Web and IT Team, and Western Libraries collaborated to facilitate timely provision of accessible information in the classroom, on course websites, and on Reserve in the libraries.

- SSD continues to provide accessible campus transportation for students with disabilities

- During 2013-2014, the Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) Prevention Program was delivered to various departments and services on campus. The aim of this program is to create awareness of MSDs and the hazards associated with them and to address potential MSDs through recognition, assessment and implementation of controls. Additionally, this process creates value for Ergonomic Services, as work areas that require further ergonomic assessment are clearly highlighted and can be acted upon.

- Western's Ergonomic Specialists continued to provide a variety of services including office ergonomic assessments, risk assessments, job coaching, job demands descriptions (JDD), job matching and education sessions. This service is available to all university departments in order to provide recommendations to promote safety and well-being.

- Rehabilitation Services continued to offer its assistance to individuals for attaining parking permits for persons with disabilities and improving the accessibility of buildings on a case by case basis.

- The University Students' Council provided funding for accessible transportation during orientation week.

Photo of detectable warning surface at road crossing. Courtesy of Paul Mayne, Western News
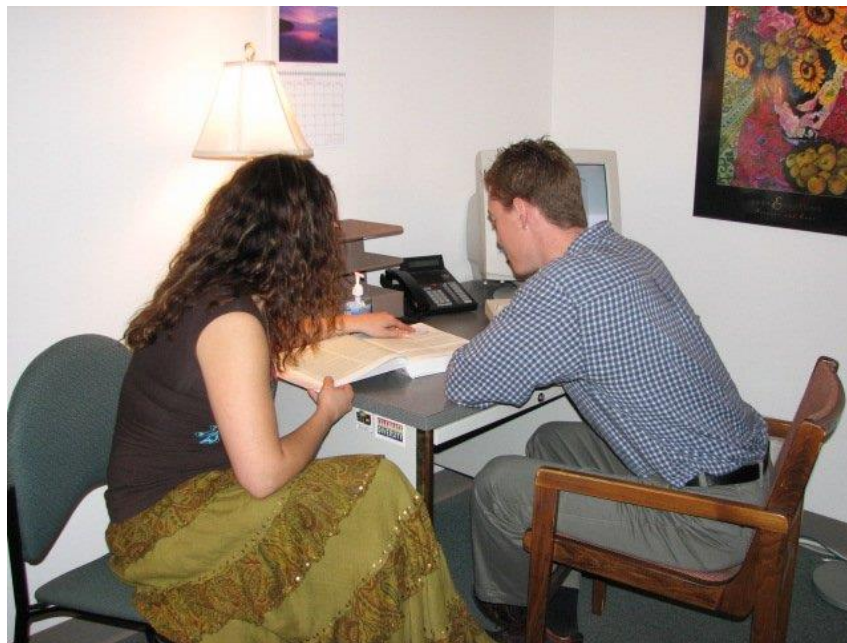
Information and Communications Barriers

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

- Western's Accessibility at Western website (http://accessibility.uwo.ca/) was upgraded using Western's most recent web standards.

- 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.

- Through the Accessibility at Western website, Western received feedback on accessibility issues. Between September 2013 and August 2014, fifty-six accessibility-related inquiries were received. Rehabilitation Services reviewed all feedback (received either by phone or email) and triaged all questions or concerns to the appropriate individual or service provider at Western for follow up.

- Student Development Centre's Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) provided services for 1,843 students with disabilities in 2013-2014. Most, if not all, of these services facilitated access to information and assisted students with communication. These services included exam accommodations (e.g., extra time, text & screen reading software, digital & Braille exams, computers for word processing) which allowed students to access information and communicate their answers during exams. Over 1200 students wrote exams with accommodation.

- SSD provided access to information shared in class through real-time captioning, sign-language interpretation, and/or computer note-taking for 27 students who were deaf or hard of hearing. SSD arranged alternative format textbooks (e.g., digital & Braille) for 174 students. SSD provided training or consultative services regarding the use of assistive technology to access information for 182 students. SSD also provided learning strategy instruction for 176 students with learning disabilities.

- Services for Students with Disabilities, Information and Technology Services, the Registrar's Web and IT Team, and Western Libraries collaborated to facilitate timely provision of accessible information in the classroom, on course websites, and on Reserve in the libraries.

- A Wellness Fair was held in the Social Sciences Building in February 2014. This was offered in conjunction with the Faculty/Staff Leader Conference. Display tables were set up with representatives from Rehabilitation Services, Human Resources - Benefits, Ergonomic Services, Workplace Health Services, Family Services Employee

Assistance Plan (EAP), Hospitality Services, Campus Recreation and Canadian Centre for Aging and Activity.

- Western Libraries continued to provide alternative text formats for library materials on an as needed basis. Between September 2013 and August 2014, the library converted 157 documents for library patrons requiring this service. Western Libraries continued to provide information about accessibility at all library locations on its website: http://www.lib.uwo.ca/accessibility

- All six Western Libraries library locations have Kurzweil 3000 and Zoomtext 10 software for use on public library computers.

- The USC drafted a proposal to implement a note-taking program to develop an online notes bank that provides access to notes for students. This proposal will be presented to the University by the new Council in the next Academic year.

- The USC introduced modifications at The Spoke restaurant by upgrading signage offering direction to the location of washrooms. Additionally, pocket menus are now available in the seated areas for individuals who have difficulty reading the digital boards.

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 attitudinal barriers include:

- The Equity and Human Rights Office added a new position to the team, Diversity and Accessibility Coordinator. This role will work with campus partners and community organizations to promote awareness and accessibility 'best practices'.

- The Mental Health at Western website continues to be updated and maintained. It has helped to increase awareness about mental health needs. This website directs students, faculty, staff, parents and families to mental health services and resources available at Western. The website is located at: http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/

- The Mental Health First Aid Canada (MHFA) program was available again this year. The aim of MHFA Canada is to improve the mental health knowledge of individuals who take the course. Four courses of MHFA Canada were provided to 41 participants in 2013-2014, bringing the total number of individuals trained since 2008 to 641. In addition, training was specifically designed and delivered for Western's Student Emergency Response Team (SERT) and four additional Instructors have been trained to deliver the program.

- The Mental Health at Western for Leaders & Supervisors program continued to be offered on campus. 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. This half day course was offered twice in 2013-2014.

- A new Mental Health Interactive Learning Module was launched in October 2013. Over 1200 faculty/staff and over 600 students have completed the training. The module was co-developed by Learning and Development and Student Health Services. Completion of the module is recorded on participants' Western training records and participants can also print a certificate of completion for their own records.

- Rehabilitation Services and Student Health Services delivered "Staff, Faculty and Student Mental Health: The Leader's Role" as part of Western's BASICS (Building Administrative Skills Through Innovation, Collegiality and Strategy) program.

- Rehabilitation Services offered a Mental Health First Aid Canada Youth training session for the first time in May 2014. This is a new 14-hour certification course focuses on the unique aspects of mental health in youth ages 12-24.

- Together with the Student Case Manager, Rehabilitation Services provided a session entitled 'Mental Health at Western' to the Student Leaders of the Student Success Centre as part of their orientation program.

- Through appropriate accommodation and support, arranged by Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD), students have demonstrated their ability to engage with their academic work and succeed at university. This demonstration has changed attitudes about students' limitations that were held by some faculty and staff. SSD also engaged in outreach within the University community for the purpose of increasing awareness among faculty regarding the rationale for various accommodations, the University's and students' responsibilities regarding accommodation, and SSD's requirements for documentation of disabilities. This outreach seemed to foster greater appreciation of the legitimacy and appropriateness of accommodation.

- In keeping with the requirements of the AODA Customer Service Standard, Western continued to offer online accessibility-related training. There are two versions of Western's online AODA Customer Service Training and each is targeted to the role of the individual in the organization. *Accessibility in Service* is intended for Academic and Administrative Leaders, staff members, student volunteers, and associated persons. *Accessibility in Teaching* is intended for Faculty, Graduate Teaching Assistants, Archivists and Librarians.

- Housing offers some key initiatives to help de-stigmatize mental illness. Suicide first response and suicide intervention courses continued to be mandated for all residence staff and managers in the form of two courses called Safe Talk and ASIST. The goal is to enable housing staff to identify those who may be having thoughts of suicide and to encourage open, direct and honest talk about suicide to increase the number of those seeking assistance.

- Housing and Ancillary Services continued to educate Orientation Week Coordinators about the need to accommodate students with disabilities to ensure that orientation-related activities are inclusive.

- The University Students' Council piloted the inaugural Access Awareness Exhibition which used artistic expression to showcase that not all disabilities use wheelchairs, and not all disabilities are visible. The goal of the exhibition was to increase awareness and tolerance of invisible disabilities through anonymous representations of Western populace.

- The USC initiated The Disability and Diversity Conference; an open forum with esteemed speakers to discuss how disability and accessibility is propagated into the real world in order to mitigate stigma. This opportunity offered a safe forum for discussion and understanding of how careers in developing inclusivity and social inclusion are the cornerstones of the future.

- The USC led a campus-wide launch of the SSD, (Services for Students with Disabilities), awareness video: https://youtu.be/f-s0YmVdXJA. This video was played in first and second year classes to promote awareness of the support offered by SSD.

Technological Barriers

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

- Information Technology Services ("ITS") continued its efforts to ensure all of Western's official websites are accessible according to standards approved by ITS and implemented by the Department of Communications and Public Affairs through the Western template.

- ITS continued to respond on an as-needed basis to requests for accessible content on websites where adaptive technology is being used by members of the Western community. Such websites include official University websites and course websites on OWL.

- Western's Learning Management System (LMS), referred to as OWL, meets accessibility standards. In those cases where improved accessibility is needed support has been provided by the ITS Instructional Support Team.

- Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) continued to provide assistive technology in its facilities at 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.

- Many students registered with SSD benefitted from technology-related exam accommodations that allowed them a fair opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge (e.g., word processors and/or voice recognition software to prepare answers to exam questions).

- Western Libraries offers Kurzweil 3000 and Zoomtext 10 software for use on the public library computers at all six library locations. Kurzweil 3000 is suitable for users with perceptual disabilities, while Zoomtext 10 is for use by patrons with visual disabilities.

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:

- Housing ensured that accessibility was a key consideration in offering their Residence Staff Training during 2013-2014.

- SSD staff members participated in outreach by delivering presentations to various London community organizations.

- SSD continued a partnership with two psychologists and a psychological associate in London for the purpose of referring students who require assessments. This arrangement and improved processes resulted in more timely assessments for students.

- Services for Students with Disabilities advised many departments at Western regarding practices that would enhance accessibility.

- Equity & Human Rights Services continued to provide advice to Academic and Administrative leaders on best practices with regards to Western's Duty to Accommodate, as it pertains to disability and the Human Rights Code.

- Representatives from SSD participated in decisions regarding admission to most undergraduate programs for applicants who had requested special consideration for health or disability related reasons.
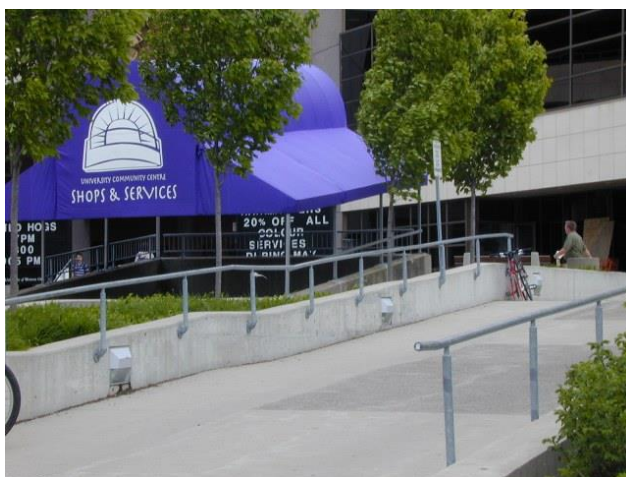
Plan for Removal of Barriers in 2014-2015

Over the coming year, Western will continue to focus on meeting and exceeding the requirements of the AODA. 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 (Rehabilitation Services and Health & Safety) will continue the Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) Prevention Program.

- Effective January 1, 2015 all construction on campus requiring a building permit will meet or exceed the amendments to the Ontario Building Code. The amended requirements will substantially enhance the accessibility in the newly constructed buildings and buildings scheduled for extensive renovations.

- Facilities Management Major Capital Renovation Projects will include renovations and an addition to the Music Building which will address accessibility.

- Facilities Management will be undertaking the following projects that will address physical/architectural barriers as part of renovations and/or upgrading at various campus locations:
  - Installing barrier-free ramps
  - ensuring further sidewalk and curb accessibility
  - pedestrian crossing including markings and tactile strips
  - installation of barrier free door operators and hold-open devices
  - barrier free washroom upgrades
  - removal of doors in public corridors (where appropriate)
  - Westminster foot bridge improvements

- 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.

- Delaware Hall will reopen in 2014-2015, offering 8 new wheelchair accessible washrooms, (2 per floor).

- Western Libraries will be undertaking the following projects that will address physical/architectural barriers within the libraries on campus:
  - Renovation plans for the Main and Lower Ground floors in the Taylor Library as well as those in the Law Library have been developed to meet accessibility needs for users within these spaces.

- o The Weldon and Taylor libraries will implement RFID tags and gates in their facilities for a barrier free entrance during the 2014-2015 year.
- o The Business Library will design and implement a barrier-free library book drop.
- o The Weldon Library is investigating the upgrade to an automated accessible opener for the accessible bathroom on the 2nd floor.

Accessible ramp at the University Community Centre

Information and Communications Barriers

- The Western Wellness Series, offered through Rehabilitation Services, will continue.

- Western Libraries will continue to provide alternative text formats for library materials on an as needed basis to students, staff and faculty through the ACE project and through individual requests.

- Western Libraries, along with other OCUL libraries will investigate how to make our media collections accessible by or before the 2020 deadline.

- Western Libraries, in partnership with the Bookstore, will pilot a new online system, (ARES), to manage supplementary course materials, regardless of format or method of delivery to students. Course textbooks and library course reserves, (with appropriate copyright clearance and payments when necessary), will be digitized and made available through OWL – Western's learning management platform. This will greatly improve accessibility, as many course materials will automatically come in alternative text formats.

- A staff member from SSD will deliver a presentation entitled *Accessible Course Material* at Information and Technology Services' Teaching with Technology Institute in May, 2014.

Attitudinal Barriers

- Starting early in 2014, Mental Health First Aid Canada Basic Training is being offered to both the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS) and the Student Emergency Response Team (SERT). Additional training sessions will be offered in 2014-2015.

- Mental Health at Western for Leaders and Supervisors training is ongoing and will be offered again in 2014-2015.

- Western will be offering its annual Wellness Fair. This will be offered in conjunction with the Western's Staff and Leader's Conference in February of 2015.

- Rehabilitation Services, in partnership with Student Health Services, will be delivering "Staff, Faculty and Student Mental Health: Leader's Role" training through the BASICS (Building Administrative Skills through Innovation, Collegiality and Strategy) Program in 2014-2015.

- Rehabilitation Services will be offering Mental Health First Aid Canada Youth training again in 2014-2015. This is a new 14-hour certification course focuses on the unique aspects of mental health in youth ages 12-24.

- Housing and Ancillary Services will continue to work with campus partners to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities are accommodated within the Residence System, in order to provide a positive campus experience for these students.

- 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

- Effective January 1, 2015 all new websites will meet the WCAG 2.0 Level A requirements.

- Information and Technology Services (ITS) continues to respond on an as-needed basis to assist with making accessible content for users of adaptive technology.

- ITS continues to work with the community to ensure that the learning management system (OWL) and content placed there by instructors is accessible.

- Information Technology Services, 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 according to standards approved by ITS.

- The Office of the Ombudsperson will be creating a new website in 2014-2015 and will ensure that its design complies with accessibility guidelines.

Barriers Created by Policies or Practices

- Services for Students with Disabilities is working with the Web and IT Team to develop functionality that will allow SSD to schedule note-takers for students with hearing impairments and to respond efficiently to changes in students' course

registration at the beginning of each term. This scheduling function will help to minimize disruptions in access to classroom information that follows students' course changes during Add/Drop.

- Housing will ensure the accessibility for their Residence Staff during 2014-2015 Training sessions.

- Western will continue with the development of any new policies, procedures and processes required under the accessibility standards related to the AODA, 2005.

- Several representatives from the University will attend the Accessibility Conference at the University of Guelph in May 2015.

- The USC plans to promote accessible intramural sports to provide a platform for students with physical disabilities to engage in friendly sports and exercise.

Review and Monitoring Process

The University will continue to comply with all applicable Federal, Provincial and Municipal legislation with respect to accessibility and will implement the standards specified under the AODA. Western is committed to actively identifying and addressing barriers on our campus. As part of this commitment, there are a variety of services, groups and committees on campus devoted to accessibility and to ensuring that individuals have equitable access to services and facilities. Through the establishment of strong partnerships among campus partners, we will review and monitor accessibility on Western's campus. As a community devoted to accessibility, we will continue to work together to find reasonable and timely resolution to accessibility concerns.

Appendix

Report Contributors
September 2013 to August 2014

Department	Contributors
Equity & Human Rights Services	Larissa Bartlett Terri Tomchick- Condon Lesley Oliver
Housing & Ancillary Services	Ruta Lawrence
Human Resources	Jane O'Brien, Melissa White
Information Technology Services	Jean Savage
Office of the Ombudsperson	Jennifer Meister
Facilities Management Division	Mike McLean
Rehabilitation Services	Barbara Froats
Services for Students with Disabilities	Deborah Stuart
Western Libraries	Monica Fazekas
University Students' Council	Emily Addison, Cathy Li