Multi-Year AODA Accessibility Plan 2020-2025 Annual Status Report May 2022 – April 2023

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Introduction

Background

This report is a collaborative effort between the multiple units represented on the campus-wide Accessibility Working Group (AWG). The AWG was established at Ontario Tech University in September 2010 to create an inclusive and barrier-free campus for all individuals with disabilities. In response to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and, more recently, the Integrated Accessibility Standards and Regulations (IASR), which mandated province-wide accessibility planning to address the staggered implementation of the accessibility standards. The Ontario Tech AODA Multi-Year Accessibility Plan ("Multi-Year Plan") published in 2020 reaffirms the university's commitment to developing and maintaining a study and work environment that is inclusive and facilitates the full participation of all students and employees with disabilities.

Statement of Commitment

Ontario Tech University is committed to creating a campus community that includes all individuals and ensures equal opportunity among its members to succeed in their academic and/or employment endeavors. The university recognizes that successful learning and employment outcomes result from shared responsibility and commitment on the part of students, faculty, and staff. Therefore, the university expects all members of the community will advance the ongoing development of an environment that is accessible and inclusive while actively working to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities.

Accessibility Feedback

Ontario Tech University recognizes community feedback as a critical process in identifying, removing, and preventing barriers in its accessibility strategy. Feedback is essential to the University's plan to improve how we deliver our services and encourage inclusive community participation. Feedback may be given by emailing the Office of Risk Management at aoda@ontariotechu.ca or by telephone at 905.721.3201. You may also send feedback by completing our Accessibility Feedback Form or by mailing us:

Office of Risk Management
2000 Simcoe Street North
Oshawa, Ontario L1G 0C5

Institutional Achievements and Accomplishments

General

Initiatives related to accessibility that may or may not be directly associated with a regulatory requirement or initiatives that don't fall within a particular standard.

- The Accessibility Working Group (AWG) had four (4) meetings in the 2022 calendar year where members participated in strategic discussions and accessibility priority planning.
- The Athletics and Recreation department was awarded a grant from Parasport Ontario and the Toronto Accessible Sports Council to develop and run an adaptive sports program on campus for students.
  - Students tried adaptive bocce ball, adaptive goal ball, and seated volleyball on 'Try It' days, which also resulted into intramurals and additional 'Try It' days occur multiple times a month and are now a regular recreational program that the Athletics department offers.
  - Trained Athletics department staff by Provincial Sport Organizations (PSO) experts.
  - Collaborated with Student Accessibility Services for Ontario Tech University to promote and hire students to assist in administering the program.
  - An adaptive sport and recreation club has been approved for students on campus, and the Athletics Department finds facility space and time for adaptive and parasport activities.
- Supported the Durham Region 2023 Ontario Parasport Games, as Ontario Tech University hosted the wheelchair basketball event at the Campus Recreation and Wellness Centre, served as the presenting sponsor for the seated volleyball event, and had a significant volunteer presence at the Games.
- Hired an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Coordinator and Project Coordinator in a full-time continuing position to support the ongoing development and growth of the university's Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Posting for a new Assistant Vice-President, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging to head up and manage the ongoing development and growth of the university's Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.
- EDI launched an ongoing self-identification survey in May 2022, which includes disaggregated questions about disabilities. The data will be used to inform programs and strategies that will move forward our goals of becoming a more inclusive and accessible campus.
- Finalized data collection for an Employment Systems Review with the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI) in April 2022. Data collection included a dedicated focus group for employees with disabilities. Report/recommendations will be out later this spring.
- Led by our Ridgeback Leadership Council, our student-athletes participated in *motionball* on March 19 on campus. All the proceeds go directly to the Special Olympics Canada Foundation to help support individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- Continued partnerships with Canadian National Institute for the Blind, also known as CNIB, including re-launching the Phone it Forward program.

- During the Summer of 2022, the Equity Programs team ran a summer book club, #LetsTalkEquity, where the group read "Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century" by Alice Wong. The group had an online discussion to chat about their learnings and development on disabilities, accessibility, and anti-ableism.

Customer Service

Initiatives implemented related to the Customer Service Standards. For example, this can include training employees, updating/establishing policies, follow up on feedback received.

- The Career Centre continued to provide the Employment Readiness Program to students with accessibility needs with career development support.
- The Career Centre developed and launched the Career Centre modules in Canvas for students to access resources asynchronously.
- The Student Engagement and Equity team provided workshops to students and employees on campus on the following topics:
  - "Inspired: Anti-Ableism and Invisible Disabilities" facilitated by the Equity Advocates to discuss invisible disabilities, how ableism affects those with invisible disabilities, and Spoon Theory. Individuals shared their experiences as students with invisible disabilities at the university.
  - "Dear Everybody Campaign Session" facilitated by Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital for students and staff to learn about disability advocacy and disability in the media.
  - "Anti-Ableism" Workshop by Respecting Individuals, Supporting Equity (RISE) Program facilitated once per semester for students. Participants can identify stereotypes targeting people with disabilities and discuss known cases of discrimination and harassment that have targeted people with disabilities.
  - "Equity Awareness Week" occurred twice in Fall 2022 and Winter 2023, which provided the Ontario Tech campus community with online and in-person opportunities to gain experience about various equity topics, including accessibility and anti-ableism, through online social media posts and in-person tabling.
- Continued training for all ambassadors and mentors in our Peer Leader and Ridgeback Mentoring Program to complete AODA training and Equity Level 1.
- The Office of Student Life ensured at both Ridgeback Orientations (September 2022 and January 2023) that activities were planned and implemented through an equity and accessible lens to ensure that all students attending orientation events and programming could participate fully.
  - This included volunteer training, activities in alternative formats, a variety of events, and programming for people with multiple abilities and needs related to accessibility as well, with an emphasis on self-care and health.
- The Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) trains content developers within Continuous Learning and those developing Microcredentials.
- TLC provided workshops on Universal Design for Learning (UDL).
- In 2022-23, the Library collaborated with Student Accessibility Services on an outreach email campaign to promote alternate format availability to students registered for accommodations through SAS. As a result of this campaign, five new students have

registered for alternate format access through the ACE Portal. In addition, Ontario Tech students have also downloaded twenty-seven alternate format books and chapters via ACE since April 1, 2022.

- The Library continues to offer collection access support, printing, and photocopying support, extended loan periods, and in-depth research support. In addition, we have expanded the accessibility of our services with online appointment booking and virtual appointment options via Zoom, Google Meet, MS Teams, or any platform that users are comfortable using.
- The Office of the Registrar implemented customer service changes initiatives, including:
  - The Admissions and Recruitment team created a new process to refund the application fee for those accepted through the equity admissions consideration policy.
  - The Admissions and Recruitment team also offer in-person and virtual methods for prospective students and applicants to connect with us to remove barriers to access.
  - Student Awards and Financial Aid (SAFA) has returned to offering in-person, virtual, and phone appointments from virtual only.
  - SAFA continues to work with Student Accessibility Services to support students with bursary assistance for registered students via TSA or the provincial Bursary for Students with Disabilities program.
  - Increased access to food security via direct deposit or physical food cards.
  - At the direction of the federal and provincial government, we now consider prolonged or persistent disabilities.
  - Records and Registration aligned the last day to withdraw from courses without academic penalty, with the term's lecture end date providing greater flexibility to students.
  - Reserved space on campus for students to write online exams in cases where they do not have reliable access to the internet at home.

Information and Communication

Initiatives implemented related to the Information and Communications Standards. For example, this can include creating accessible documents, updating websites to meet accessibility requirements, developing new policies to ensure information/documents are provided in alternate formats, follow up on feedback.

- Communications & Marketing (C&M) rolled out updates over the past year to place a more aggressive accessibility monitoring that prompts users if there are issues that are WCAG AA related and to become compliant with the university's Content Management System.
- Communications & Marketing:
  - Created and reviewed digital signage screens for compliance, focusing on font sizes and contrast.
  - Posted videos to digital platforms, which all include captioning options.
  - Transitioned to Single-Sign-On (SSO) on most platforms, which increases the ability to access protected content.

- - Reviewed and updated all new signages developed in Shawenjigewining Hall and Charles Hall for accessibility.
    - Major print publications and materials (i.e., viewbooks) designed to be fully AODA compliant.
    - Reviewed all digital ads run for the recruitment advertising campaign for compliance and accessibility.
  - Convocation on Polonsky Commons featured full flooring and pathways to ensure accessibility for all individuals.
  - The Athletics and Recreation department continued their progress on adding alternative texts on social media posts, video captions, inclusive language and CamelCase in hashtags.
  - The TLC provided an initiative-specific review of module content related to AODA and UDL.
  - The Library provides alternate formats, on request, for material held in our collections. This includes alternate formats for print via the [Accessible Content E-Portal](#) and captions and/or text transcripts for multimedia content.
  - The Office of the Registrar enhanced accessibility standards in communications, social media platforms, advertising, print, and the web.
    - Enrolment Services converted grade appeal PDF documents to machforms, allowing larger copies and inclusion on hyperlinking actions.
    - Enrolment Services converted support infographics from PDF format to web copy.
    - Admissions and Recruitment included alternative text with all images on all and future student social platforms and closed captioning on all videos.
    - Inclusive language was used on all content, including using #IncomingClass2023 and CamelCase in hashtags.
    - Continued to remove infographic PDFs from the website and use pages and alternate web tools that are AODA compliant.
    - Student Awards and Financial Aid adapted numerous PDF forms into online forms.
    - Records and Registration transitioned key paper forms into digital, eliminating the need to visit the Office of the Registrar to make certain requests.
    - The English Language Centre provides instruction in a hybrid model so that the program is accessible to those who cannot attend in person.

Employment

Initiatives implemented related to the Employment Standards. This can include, for example, accommodating all candidates during the recruitment process and employment life cycle, steps taken to ensure accommodation plans, and ensuring employees have accessible emergency information.

- Joined forces and brought key stakeholders together with the development, implementation, and monitoring of accommodation plans. This work has involved the Employee, Labour Relations, Health and Disability Management Specialist, a third party Disability Consultant, and Health and Safety Officer.

- Collaborated with Student Accessibility Services during times when the university has hired a student in a limited term capacity and to ensure accommodations currently in place are given full consideration if/when needed in their role as an employee.
- Manager, Employee Health and Wellness hired in December 2022; the new position focuses on strategic initiatives to support an employee's mental health and well-being.
- The Archibus tracking system is now leveraged to ensure that the submission of requests for equipment and space adaptations are managed in a timely and efficient manner.
- The EDI Coordinators have conducted workshops for faculty and staff hiring committees, tenure and promotion committees, and continuing appointment review committees, including best practices for recruiting, supporting, and promoting applicants and faculty identifying as persons with disabilities.
- Human Resources in consultation with an organizational development consultant, delivered enhanced 'Managing in a Unionized Workplace' workshop, which covers how to best respond to a request for accommodation as it relates to workplace accommodation within a Collective Agreement.

Design of Public Spaces

Initiatives implemented related to the Design of Public Spaces Standards. This can include, for example, installing accessible playgrounds, tactile walking surface indicators, and establishing design guidelines that take into account accessibility.

- Office of Campus Infrastructure and Sustainability (OCIS) completed accessibility audits of the 151 Athol, 61 Charles, 55 Bond, Campus Ice Centre (CIC), and SIRC,.
- OCIS and the Library collaborated to have a staff washroom converted into a universal washroom. The second-floor accessible washroom opened at the North Oshawa Library, expanding accessible access to bathroom facilities on campus.
- The second and third floors of Charles Hall and the ground and fourth floor of 55 Bond were renovated to accommodate vacating 11 Simcoe from our downtown campus.
- The emergency exit signage in the Science, Business & IT, ACE & Engineering, ERC, Library, 151 Athol, and CIC buildings have been upgraded and changed for the running-man signage.
- Lighting upgrades continued throughout 2022, returning several areas to design levels. Lighting upgrades will continue to be upgraded and changed through 2023 by our OCIS team to meet design levels.
- Items being addressed in 2023 are; exit signs in various buildings, lowering various elements to with control heights, adding evacuation plans in various locations, updating wayfinding in various locations, updating stair nosing and adding textile plating
- Items for 2024 are currently being reviewed and prioritized.
- The Campus Fieldhouse exterior was renovated to update and meet compliance requirements, which included installing new doors and a new accessible ramp.
- Student Mental Health Services designed, furnished, and accessorized Quiet Rooms to accommodate students with mobility concerns at our North and Downtown locations.
- Two height-adjustable workstations were installed in the Downtown Campus Library at Charles Hall.

- In January 2023, based on feedback from students and staff in Student Accessibility Services, we implemented a booking system for our Adaptive Technology space on the fourth floor of the North Oshawa Library. Students can now book the room for 4-hour blocks up to one week in advance. The room is available on a first-come, first-served basis when not reserved. Students and staff can book the space on the Library website.
  - As of January 23, 2023, 9 individuals have reserved the space for a total of fourteen reservations.
- The English Learning Centre has upgraded to a new space, the U5 portable, which is fully accessible compared to their old area.
- The Records and Registration team worked with Student Accessibility Services and academic faculties to ensure students with mobility concerns had classes scheduled in specific buildings/floor levels when required.

Next Steps

- Ontario Tech University to prepare and submit the 2023 Accessibility Compliance Reporting.
- Review and update the Accessible (AODA) Instruction Module for Educators.
- Review and update all accessibility-related policies and procedures.
- Resubmission of the capital funding request for the new adaptive technology workstations on the main floor of the North Oshawa Campus Library for the 2023-24 fiscal year. If successful, we will install height-adjustable tables and adaptive furniture in the space. We will also consult the university Adaptive Technologist on recommended computer hardware and software for procurement in 2023-24.

For more information

For more information on this Annual Status Report, please contact:
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Attention: Compliance Officer
Standard and accessible formats of this document are available upon request.