

# Western University's Accessibility Plan

September 2012 to August 2013

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

September 30, 2012



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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, Western University 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 2011 (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.

Western University 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 2011-2012**

### **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 Facilities Management, to address barriers on campus.
- Western's Facilities Management Division 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 Facilities Management.
- 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 initiatives to remove physical and architectural barriers across campus include the following:

- During 2011-12, physical/architectural barriers were addressed as part of the renovations completed on Lawson Hall, Stevenson Hall and the Physics and Astronomy Building.
- As part of a \$2 million dollar project to eliminate physical barriers that began in 2010, Facilities Management installed new detectable warning surfaces during 2011-2012 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.
- Contrast strips were added to exterior stair nosings at various locations across campus.
- Installations of barrier free door operators and hold-open devices at various locations across campus.
- The Student Development Centre's Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) facilitated academic accommodation and provided related services for approximately 307 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).
- The University Students' Council's CARE Committee provided funding for accessible transportation during orientation week. During the 2011-2012 academic year seventy-one students used accessible campus transportation provided by SSD.
- Housing and Ancillary Services continued to support and provide the necessary facilities for students with disabilities living within Western's Residence System. In addition, the following accessibility initiatives were undertaken:
  - a wireless power door opener was installed in Lambton Hall
  - a barrier free shower was installed in Platt's Lane apartment

- additional alarm strobes were installed in Perth Hall
  - a barrier free apartment in Lambton Hall was renovated
  - four power operated door openers were installed in the Perth Hall
  - contrast strips were added to exterior stair nosing of the North and South entrance of Elgin Hall.
- During 2011, the Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) Prevention Program was delivered to Hospitality Services, Facilities Management (Trades Services), and Animal Care and Veterinary Services. 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 Office of the Ombudsperson relocated to a dedicated space on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Western Student Services Building. As part of the relocation, accessibility of the office was a key consideration with respect to space planning and furniture requirements. Additionally, the new office is located one floor below Services for Students with Disabilities, making it very easy to refer students between the offices as needed.
- Western Libraries installed a rail at Elborn College, home to Library Information Resources Management and Library Technical Services, to assist individuals with access to the building from the parking lot.



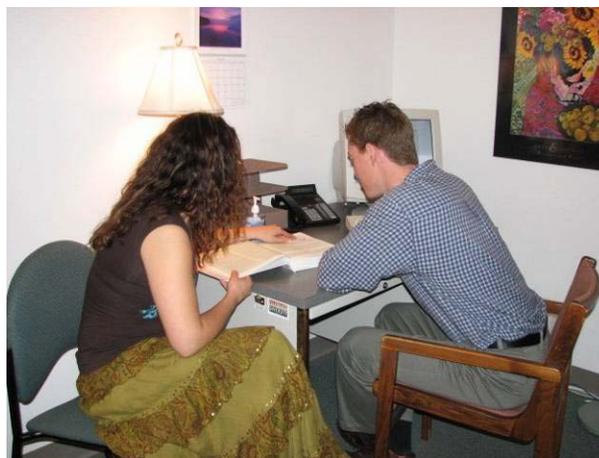
*Photo of new detectable warning surface at road crossing. Courtesy of Paul Mayne, Western News*

### **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.
- Through the Accessibility at Western website, Western welcomed feedback on accessibility issues. Between September 2011 and August 2012, thirty-three 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.
- The Student Development Centre's Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) facilitated academic accommodation and provided related services for 1,520 students with disabilities in 2011-2012. 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 31 students who were deaf or hard of hearing. SSD provided training in the use of assistive technology with which to access information for 156 students. SSD arranged alternative format text (e.g., digital & Braille) for 184 students. SSD also provided learning strategy instruction for 132 students with learning disabilities.
- Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) continued its work with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and representatives from five other disability services offices in Ontario to develop a repository for digital textbooks and a system to facilitate the sharing of these texts among publishers, universities and colleges. The pilot phase of this project was successfully concluded this summer, and the new system will be available for use by disability services offices at publically funded Ontario universities and colleges this fall. This system is expected to improve efficiency with which alternative format text is provided for students with disabilities, and thus assist institutions in meeting increasing demands for this text.
- The Western Wellness Series continued with a Wellness Fair held in the Support Services Building in December of 2011 with 90 individuals attending over the lunch hour event. Display tables were set up with representatives from Rehabilitation Services, Human Resources Benefits, Ergonomic Services, Workplace Health Services, Family Services EAP, Hospitality Services, 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 2011 and August 2012, the library converted 56 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>



*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 creation of a new Mental Health at Western website 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 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, 329 participants have been trained in Mental Health First Aid Canada and 161 Leaders and Supervisors have participated in Mental Health at Western sessions. In addition, training was specifically designed and delivered for:
  - Western's BASICS (Building Administrative Skills through Innovation, Collegiality and Strategy) Program
  - faculty and staff that work with graduate students
  - Ivey HBA Mental Health Staff
  - Student Success Centre
  - Western's Staff and Leader's Conference
- 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.
- In keeping with the requirements of the AODA Customer Service Standard, Western continued to offer online accessibility-related training, particularly for new members. 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 implemented 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. A campaign entitled “How are you?...No, really, how are you?” was implemented with the key message to look out for each other and check in when you notice that someone may be struggling. Additionally, residence staff and sophs (a total of 950 people) have been trained on active listening, initiating meaningful conversations and connecting to campus resources.
- 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 implemented the Accessibility Ambassador Program to improve accessibility during Orientation Week. *Accessibility Ambassadors* were on-call for any student with a disability or any soph teams that had questions about how they could make their programming more accessible.

### **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.
- Information Technology Services (“ITS”) continued to respond on an as-needed basis to requests for adaptive technology to assist members of the community.
- Western’s new Learning Management System (LMS) – OWL (powered by Sakai) - has been implemented during 2012. All credit courses offered by Western are now being taught using the new OWL. The AODA accessibility standards were included in the selection criteria for the new product and ITS ensured that Sakai met the standards.

- Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) continued to provide 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.
- 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 has purchased and installed Kurzweil software for use on the public library computers. This software, suitable for users with perceptual disabilities, is available in five campus library locations. The library also upgraded and expanded access to Zoomtext, a software program for use by patrons with visual disabilities. Zoomtext is also available in five campus library locations.

#### **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:

- Many university departments and units have added a link to Western's Accessibility website ([www.accessibility.uwo.ca](http://www.accessibility.uwo.ca)) from their departmental homepages. In addition, many have included departmental-specific information about accessibility to their websites.
- SSD engaged in outreach activities intended to facilitate students' transition to university. This outreach consisted of presentations to teachers, guidance counsellors, school board personnel, and high school students, and addressed transition issues, available services, and processes for accessing them in a timely manner. This outreach facilitated efficient and early access to services for new students.

- Housing ensured that accessibility was a key consideration in offering their Residence Staff Training during 2011-2012.
- Services for Students with Disabilities advised many departments at Western regarding practices that would enhance accessibility.
- 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 2012-2013**

Under the AODA, the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* came into effect on July 1, 2011. The regulation sets out the requirements for three areas: transportation, employment and information & technology. Over the coming year, Western will continue to focus on meeting the requirements of the AODA. Additionally, Western is monitoring the development of the *Built Environment Standard* 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 (Rehabilitation Services and Health & Safety) will continue the Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) Prevention Program. The program is currently being offered in Hospitality Services. In 2013, the program is expected to be delivered to Animal Care and Veterinary Services, as well as Facilities Management's Caretaking Services and Operations and Maintenance.
- Facilities Management Major Capital Renovation Projects will include renovations addressing accessibility in the former Ivey School of Business Building (now HBA) and in the Social Sciences Building (SSC) main floor renovations (including barrier free washrooms).
- Facilities Management will be undertaking the following projects that will address physical/architectural barriers as part of renovations and/or upgrading:
  - Installing barrier-free ramps at various campus locations
  - ensuring further sidewalk and curb accessibility
  - adding contrast strips to exterior stair nosings at various locations
  - applying for federal funding for barrier free accessibility initiatives

- 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. Planned changes for 2012-2013 include the installation of a second barrier free unit in Platt's Lane.
- Western Libraries will be undertaking the following projects that will address physical/architectural barriers within the libraries on campus:
  - Accessibility has been taken into account in the planning and design of Western's newest library located in the newly constructed business school building.
  - Weldon Library will be under-going renovations as part of the plan to create the new Map and Data Centre and accessibility of the facility will be taken into account as part of the renovation.



*Accessible ramp at the University Community Centre*

### **Information and Communications Barriers**

- The Western Wellness Series, offered through Rehabilitation Services, will continue.
- SSD explored ways in which to expand the interventions and support it offers to students who have learning and attention disorders. Through previously established partnerships, SSD has provided Cogmed training for the purpose of improving students' attention and working memory. SSD is pursuing less expensive ways to provide this training in an effort to make it more accessible to students. SSD also will be providing neuro-feedback training to a small number of students for the purpose of improving their attention and self-regulation.
- Western Libraries will continue to provide alternative text formats for library materials on an as needed basis.

## **Attitudinal Barriers**

- Mental Health First Aid Canada Training is planned for October and November of 2012. Sessions will also be offered in January, February and April of 2013. Human Resources (Rehabilitation Services and Learning and Development) will review the existing Mental Health First-Aid Training Program to assess if it can be delivered online or in a combination of online and in-class learning. This is to meet the needs of participants by reducing the current 2-day time commitment to complete the program.
- Mental Health at Western for Leaders and Supervisors training will be offered in December 2012 and May 2013.
- Staff, Faculty and Student Mental Health: Leader's Role training will be offered through the BASICS (Building Administrative Skills through Innovation, Collegiality and Strategy) Program in early 2013.
- 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.
- Services for Students with Disabilities will maintain 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 continue to deliver a summer program which is designed to facilitate the transition from high school to university for students who have learning disabilities.
- Due to the success of the Accessibility Ambassadors Program, the University Students' Council will retain this program for the 2012-2013 academic year.
- The University Students' Council, through their Barrier-Free Standing Committee, will continue to advocate on and raise awareness for accessibility issues. An Accessibility Awareness Day will be held in the Spring of 2013.
- During 2012-2013, the USC's Accessibility Commissioner will collaborate with the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) on an initiative regarding Accessibility policies at Ontario universities.



*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**

- Information and Technology Services (ITS) continues to respond on an as-needed basis to requests for adaptive technology to assist members of the community.
- 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 according to standards approved by ITS.

### **Barriers Created by Policies or Practices**

- Services for Students with Disabilities established relationships and referral processes with new services providers in London to whom students will be referred for assessments in 2012-13. This initiative is expected to reduce students' wait times for assessments.
- Housing will ensure that accessibility is a key consideration when planning their Residence Staff Training during 2012-2013.
- The University Students' Council will continue to work on improving event planning procedures and clubs training with respect to accessibility issues. The USC Accessibility Commissioner will continue to be available for all student organizations and clubs with questions about making their events more accessible. Also, as part of the USC club's training, club executives will continue to be encouraged to think

about mobility issues and to confirm accessibility of venues before confirming events.

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

### **Review and Monitoring Process**

WODAC's role is to assist 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. The committee will work towards establishing strong partnerships with its campus partners to continue to address accessibility issues.

## Appendix

### Members of WODAC September 2011 to August 2012

WODAC members may be reached via email to [accessibility@uwo.ca](mailto: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
Information Technology Services	Merran Neville
Office of the Ombudsperson	Jennifer Meister
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	Neil Carruthers
Society for Graduate Students (SOGS)	<i>vacant</i>
University Students' Council	<i>vacant</i>
Student Member-at-large	<i>vacant</i>
Student Member-at-large	<i>vacant</i>
Staff/Faculty Member-at-large	Cheryl Jamieson
Staff/Faculty Member-at-large	<i>vacant</i>