MYAP BRIDGE PLAN ANNUAL STATUS REPORT 2024

INTRODUCTION

In 2023, we outlined our second Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) in the form of a three-year Bridge Plan. The MYAP Bridge Plan 2023-2025 aligns our accessibility goals with Waterloo's strategic plan and the proposed Postsecondary Education Standards (PSES) under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The Bridge Plan also provides an opportunity to engage in meaningful consultation with the disability community as we develop the next MYAP.

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

ABOUT this report

This report organizes progress from fall 2023 to fall 2024 under the four themes outlined in the MYAP Bridge Plan 2023-2025:

LEADERSHIP refers to new initiatives in our shift to advance disability inclusion that require support from senior leaders, recognizing accessibility considerations must happen at the forefront of all decision-making.

ACCESSIBILITY INFUSION refers to incorporating accessibility into processes and leveraging existing initiatives to have accessibility integrated into how the University standardly operates and approaches our work.

INTERSECTIONALITY relates to initiatives that build on and make connections with campus partners who work on creating an inclusive community (e.g., Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism Office, Office of Indigenous Relations, Campus Wellness Health Promotion Team, etc). This ensures institutional activities take an intersectional approach, recognizing identity is multi-faceted and dynamic.

COMMUNITY emphasizes the importance of consulting people with lived experience as we engage in disability inclusion initiatives, upholding the core principle of "nothing about us without us".

For a summary of the 2018-2022 MYAP initiatives integrated into the University's standard operations, please refer to the Appendix.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The University of Waterloo acknowledges that much of our work takes place on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee peoples. Our main campus is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land granted to the Six Nations that includes six miles on each side of the Grand River. Our active work toward reconciliation takes place across our campuses through research, learning, teaching, and community building, and is coordinated within the Office of Indigenous Relations. The University's approach to institutional initiatives, including those shared within this report, take on an intersectional approach to advance our reconciliation efforts.

SUMMARY
of completed initiatives

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PROCESS IMPLEMENTATIONS

The Disability Inclusion Steering Committee (DISCo)

Established by the Office of the Vice-President, Academic and Provost in the 2022-23 academic year, DISCo is led by senior University leaders who are reviewing matters of accessibility and developing strategic plans to address barriers that limit access to the world-class quality of education that Waterloo offers.

DISCo's key mandate is to address the 185 recommendations included in the AODA's Postsecondary Education Standard (the "Education Standard") Final Recommendations Report 2022. To that end, DISCo completed an extensive review of Postsecondary Education Standards (PSES) recommendations and allocated specific recommendations to Executive Council members, who then identified Operational Leads responsible for developing actionable workplans for the recommendations.

SUMMARY
of completed initiatives

Resource Management

One of DISCo's mandates is to work across faculties and units to find efficiencies and interdisciplinary opportunities to create a sustainable, cultural change towards disability inclusion at the University. In 2023, as a result of DISCo recommendations, four new roles were developed to maximize and share resources:

> Disability Inclusion Coordinator (Campus Support and Accessibility) – *Permanent*

> Physical Accessibility Specialist (Plant Operations and Disability Inclusion) – *Permanent*

> Research Coordinator (Library and Teaching Innovation Incubator) – *Temporary*

> Educational Developer, Curriculum: Accessibility and Inclusion (Centre for Teaching Excellence and Teaching Innovation Incubator) – *Temporary*

Associate Provost, Campus Support and Accessibility

In March 2024, the University established the inaugural Associate Provost, Campus Support and Accessibility (AP, CSA) position. This portfolio creates a central hub for advice, intervention, resources, tools, and programs as it relates to ensuring an accessible campus, a healthy workplace, and support for resolving conflict. The Disability Inclusion (DI) Team moved into the AP, CSA unit alongside AccessAbility Services, Employee Health and Accommodation (including Occupational Health), the Sexual Violence Prevention Office, and the Conflict Management Office.

This restructuring will better position the University to provide campus-wide services and support, and will facilitate streamlined strategy development, minimize duplication of services, coordinate responses and oversight across departments, and ensure appropriate escalation and resolution for an improved campus experience for all community members.

Accessibility Options for Campus Visits

The Marketing and Undergraduate Recruitment team implemented new communication standards for the registration component of visits. Accessibility options available for students and caregivers are provided in advance for increased visibility and preparedness in planning for their day on campus.

Access Barrier Notifications

Notifications of access barriers are now posted on the Plant Operations website and in the Daily Bulletin. This promotes ongoing awareness and education to stakeholders in identifying where an access barrier exists.

SUMMARY
of completed initiatives

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

The Postsecondary Course Accessibility Guide

The Postsecondary Course Accessibility Guide, developed by Christine Zaza, PhD, Online Learning Consultant, intends to support instructors and instructional support specialists in preparation with the implementation of accessibility requirements and the PSES.

Funding from eCampus Ontario and the Government of Ontario enabled the guide to be developed into an online, externally peer-reviewed, bilingual resource. This guide is available publicly in eCampus Ontario's Open Library to support all postsecondary institutions with integrating accessibility and the PSES recommendations.

Individualized Emergency Response Plan

Created by the Occupational Health team and the Safety Office, the Individualized Emergency Response Plan outlines the process and details of emergency response for employees with disabilities as part of the employment accommodation process.

Special Consideration Request Form

Created by the Admissions Office, this form supports the prioritization of equitable admissions practices. Recognizing that every applicant is unique and may have experienced exceptional circumstances or challenges that affected their academics, we apply a form of adjustment to support the applicant to ensure they receive fair and equal academic treatment.

Siteimprove

Siteimprove, a website accessibility monitoring tool, was acquired to review and improve the accessibility of all Waterloo websites and has been integrated into the onboarding process for those who are starting to use the University's Web Content Management System (WCMS). It is also being used to identify websites that require remediation.

Ableism webpage

Through collaboration with individuals with academic expertise and lived experience, an Ableism webpage was created to increase awareness of how to dismantle ableism. This webpage is available on the Accessibility at Waterloo website, and will be referenced through the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism website in the future.

Supporting Neurodivergence at Waterloo webpage

Created by the DI Team, the Supporting Neurodivergence at Waterloo webpage is hosted on the Accessibility at Waterloo website. This website introduces the definition of neurodivergence, common behaviours and barriers in neurodivergence, and how to support neurodivergence at Waterloo.

The NeuroMinds Collective

The NeuroMinds Collective was developed by the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office to provide ongoing community and support to neurodivergent students.

SUMMARY
of completed initiatives

Universal Design for Learning and Wellbeing Community of Practice

Campus Wellness team created the Universal Design for Learning and Wellbeing Community of Practice. Three sessions over the past year carried a disability inclusion focus, including a session on supporting neurodivergence at Waterloo.

TRAINING AND ACCESSIBILITY AWARENESS

Consultation sessions

In fall 2023, with the support of the Disability Inclusion Coordinator, the Student Success Office hosted consultation sessions with students with disabilities to explore the accessibility of orientation and first-year transition activities.

Indigenous Disability Awareness Month and International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2023

The DI Team and Office of Indigenous Relations partnered to co-host a keynote speaker event, "Disability Decolonized: Lived Experiences, Indigenous Knowledge, and Teachings from Txeemsim" with Dr. Rheanna Robinson. The goal of the event was to raise awareness of Indigenous perspectives on disability in our community.

Accessible Communications Workshop

In spring 2024, University Relations held a half day Communications Workshop to promote awareness of how to plan and deliver accessible events, and distributed an accessible events planning guide.

Ontario Summit for Students with Disabilities

Developed by Emma Collington (PhD Candidate) and Samantha Fowler (MScCom, PhD Student), the Ontario Summit for Students with Disabilities was open to all Ontario postsecondary students with disabilities to build community and share knowledge. A summary report capturing voices, stories, and lived experiences was made publicly available. The University of Waterloo co-sponsored and provided planning support for the event.

Student Leader Training

Disability inclusion and accessibility awareness is now incorporated into student leader training (Connection Collective – Student Success Office [SSO], Visitor's Centre Student Ambassadors).

SUMMARY
of initiatives in progress

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PROCESS IMPLEMENTATIONS

Accessible Education Project

Launched by the Teaching Innovation Incubator, the project's focus is on fulfilling PSES recommendations that directly impact the student's academic experience. In addition to the project's leadership committee, there are three working groups who develop the following:

› Policy and Guidelines

› Instructional Programs and Practices

› Learning Tools and Materials

Accessibility Committee

The University is reviewing the ongoing work and scope of the committee, considering the consultation requirements of the PSES recommendations, as well as best practices in trauma-informed community engagement and consultation.

Information Systems and Technology (IST) documentation

IST has been developing processes for assessing and documenting the accessibility of educational technologies.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Outline

Outline is the standardized course outline tool that provides a single layout and repository for all Waterloo course outlines, and promotes course accessibility by incorporating the proposed PSES recommendations into the tool.

Decolonizing and Establishing Payment Practices with Indigenous Community Members

Co-sponsored by Finance, Human Resources, the Office of Research, and the Office of Indigenous Relations, this project addresses systemic barriers in paying people for additional activities outside of formal job descriptions. The project will explore payment options, payment timing, and payment methods with the goal of providing lessons learned for other units that support intersectional identities, including consultation with persons with disabilities.

Campus Community Survey

Institutional Analysis and Planning (IAP) is developing a Campus Community Survey that includes the PSES recommendations, Waterloo's Equity Survey, and required reporting through the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office. By considering all the different offices' survey needs upfront, the University will create efficiencies while meaningfully engaging with our campus community and minimizing survey fatigue.
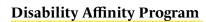
Equitable Community Engagement Guide for Disability Inclusion

This guide is meant to support those working to build meaningful engagement and an inclusive environment for the disability community. It serves as a consultation and advisory framework, and complements the *Guide: Consultations and Community Engagement with Marginalized Groups* from the Office of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism. These two guides describe technical considerations in community engagement and emphasize principles of intersectional equity in order to support campus partners in meeting legislative requirements.
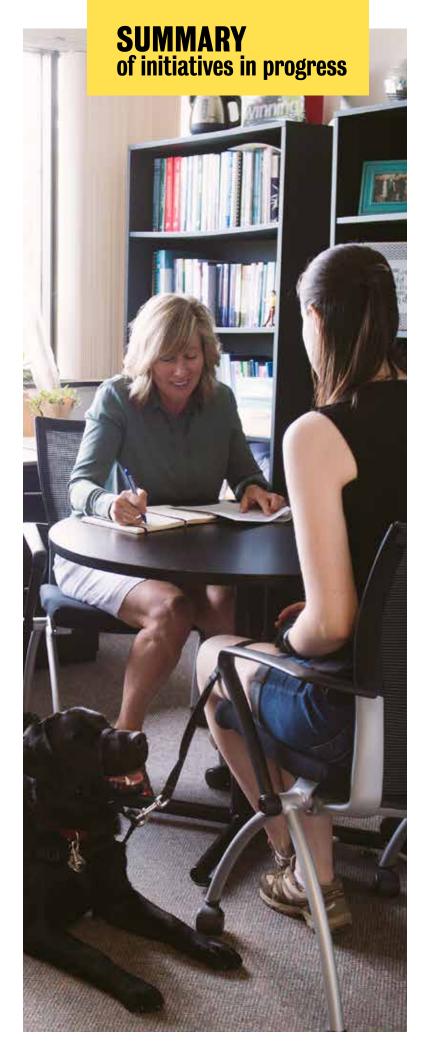
Disability Affinity Program

This program will create a meaningfully designed space at the University for students, staff, and faculty with current lived experiences of disability to connect for support and knowledge exchange. As a part of the broader community engagement strategy, networks will be created as new avenues of consultation, promotion, and participant recruitment.

The Disability Affinity Program furthers the University's strategic goals, including the Waterloo Student Experience & Engagement (WatSEE) Framework, which emphasizes the importance of fostering a sense of belonging and embraces students in all aspects of campus life.
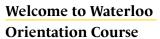
Inclusive Events Guide

In partnership with the Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association (WUSA) and student leaders on campus, the Disability Inclusion Coordinator is developing this guide for student leaders to improve accessibility of student-led events.

TRAINING AND ACCESSIBILITY AWARENESS
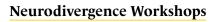
Welcome to Waterloo Orientation Course

Organizational and Human Development (OHD) is including a section on disability inclusion and accessibility resources in this course for new employees. The first session is anticipated to launch in fall 2024.

Neurodivergence Workshops

From fall 2023 to winter 2024, the DI Team and AccessAbility Services partnered to support neurodivergence at Waterloo by developing and facilitating seven workshops:

> Two through the Centre for Teaching Excellence,

> One through Campus Wellness, and

> Four through Organizational Human Development.

> Workshops on supporting neurodivergent employees continues to be offered every term.

APPENDIX
Summary of Progress on MYAP 2018-2022

The first MYAP (MYAP 2018-2022) set out goals related to each of the five AODA standards (Customer Service, Information and Communication, Employment, Design of Public Spaces, and Transportation). By the end of 2022, we reached our goals related to Customer Service Standards. This section describes initiatives related to the remaining standards. These initiatives have been adopted by various units as part of their ongoing operations.

Website Accessibility

Under joint sponsorship, University Relations and Information Systems & Technology have developed a strategy to improve the accessibility of all Waterloo websites, in compliance with the AODA standards. Much progress has been made since February; notably, the acquisition and implementation of Siteimprove. This project is on track to meet the goal of website compliance by December 2024.

Design Strategy to guide the development of accessible and inclusive spaces

In 2023, an Inclusive Physical Space Framework was developed with support from the Ontario government's EnAbling Change Program grant. The goal of this framework is to guide and empower the University in planning, building, operating, and maintaining physical spaces on and off campus which upholds strategies for accessibility, well-being, and sustainability.

Catalogue of Accessible Elements on our campus

Plant Operations continues to catalogue accessible elements. With the addition of the Physical Accessibility Specialist, this role will be dedicated to developing a systematic approach to defining the University's criteria for accessible physical space (recognizing the broad differences across buildings design throughout many years) and cataloguing these elements accordingly. This will support the inclusion of accessibility upgrades and maintenance of elements within the standard preventative maintenance protocols. For areas where protocols have not been established, a sustainable approach aligned with other maintenance protocols will be developed.