2014-15

Accessibility Advisory Committee Annual Report

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Accessibility Advisory Committee

University of the Fraser Valley

2014-15

CONTENTS

THE IMPORTANCE OF ACCESSIBILITY

According to a Canadian Senate report (2011), people with disabilities have a lower participation rate in post-secondary education than non-disabled people (Olgivie and Eggleton). Almost 25% of students with disabilities did not finish high school, compared to 13.5% of non-disabled students, and are less likely to have a college or university credential (Olgilvie & Eggleton, 2011). If persons with disabilities are in post-secondary, they continue to face challenges and barriers. Often they are required to take a reduced course load which lengthens the time necessary to complete their credential. For example, a four year degree may take 10 years increasing the debt these students accumulate as they pursue their studies. Access to services and accommodations at schools can be a challenge due to availability of resources and staff.

Society's view of accessibility is changing as we move from a medical model of support to a social model. In the medical model, people with disabilities were seen as outsiders or people who did fit the "normal" world and its services. As such, people with disabilities were forced to adapt themselves, if possible, to a variety of systems, processes and other barriers to access services. The social model of disability views society as an inclusive space where all are welcome to live and work in an environment that meets all needs. Special accommodations are not required because the infrastructure is built to ensure inclusive access for all citizens. Systems, processes, buildings, etc. that prevent people with disabilities from accessing them are not seen as a problem with the person, but a problem with the system, and it is the system that must be changed to enable access. As British Columbia moves from the medical model to the social model of disability with its Accessibility 2024 Plan, the University of the Fraser Valley also continues its journey to improve accessibility for its students, staff and visitors.

ACCESSIBILITY VERSUS ACCOMMODATION

When we move to a more inclusive environment, we embrace accessibility. We understand that it is the role of everyone on campus to ensure that their services, teaching practices and interactions are barrier free. We want to remove as many impediments as possible to ensure that our students have access to our courses, materials and instruction.

As a university, we'd like to move away from individually accommodating each student with a disability to one where there is more universal access to learning and services. By focusing on accommodation, it puts the responsibility on the student to change how he or she interacts with the classroom and learning materials. The materials are seen as fixed rather than as flexible resources that can be directed and managed by the students as required. When content and resources are fixed, they create barriers to access. Flexible learning design, which can include various ways of presenting materials, expressing one's knowledge, and engaging with the materials provides for a greater learning experience for all students. All students are required to meet the course outcomes, but flexibility in how this is achieved better supports student learning. In some cases, a student may require a specific accommodation, but by incorporating a universal design approach in teaching and learning, we reduce the demand for special accommodations.

Poster by UFV student Desiree Johnston

The Accessibility Advisory Committee

Over the past year, the previous Disabilities Committee has evolved to take on a greater advisory role at UFV. It has become an official committee under the Student Affairs Department and changed its name to the Accessibility Advisory Committee. A call for members went to each department and the committee comprises 20 members – and more are welcome. Under its revised terms of reference, the committee members recognize its major goal is to inform and educate those at the university about the importance of accessibility and to assist as the university progresses towards its accessibility goals. Committee members are dedicated to improving the experience for those on campus with disabilities and bringing forth issues around potential barriers with suggestions as to how to overcome them.

When looking to increase awareness, the first place to begin is with the language we use. A presentation about how language impacts attitudes towards those with disabilities was presented at the initial meeting. Short but impactful, the presentation was used by many members of the committee to share at department meetings including Deans Caucus, seminars and in classes. This information was expanded and then incorporated into Communications curriculum where it will have a significant impact on our students. To see the respectful terms handout, please see Appendix 1.

Perhaps the most important person on the committee was our student representation. We were able to see and hear the many challenges students encounter at UFV from using washroom facilities to gaining access to course materials directly from personal experience. This led to several initiatives including information in university communications on how to interact with service dogs and correcting braille signage. We will be recruiting even more students to our committee in the following year.

The committee met five times over the previous school year. The meetings were two hours long with one hour dedicated to professional development in the area of

> ### *Our students share - Cheryl*
>
> Because I was diagnosed with autism, I was told that I wouldn't be able to graduate from high school and going to university was out of reach. I studied very hard and had help from lots of great people. I was able to graduate and to come to UFV to continue on in my goal to be a social worker. After my first year, I was very tired but did well enough to make it through my classes and I am looking forward to continuing on to finish my degree in 2017. It won't be easy but I can make it!
>
> *Cheryl*

accessibility. Members were able to experience presentations on What is Accessibility; the Understanding Learning Disabilities documentary which focused on how students with learning disabilities interpret materials; how to create accessible Word documents and PowerPoint presentations; and Multiple Intelligences. Many of these presentations were shared across the UFV community with many other departments requesting that the information be presented at their faculty meetings and other staff events.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee aligns its goals to the Education Plan, the Strategic Enrolment Plan and the Institutional Learning Objectives by working to improve the learning landscape for students with disabilities, and in doing so, improves the opportunities for all UFV students. The AAC committee is comprised of members from across campus and enables cross-functional projects and programs, not specific to teaching or services. An accessible UFV improves student success, provides a rich and diverse learning environment for our students, and assists our community by providing highly qualified graduates with varied backgrounds of skills and life experiences. An accessible campus can improve student retention, provide an enhanced level of service making access easier for all, and improve the quality of the learning experience for students with disabilities by enabling independence rather than dependence on others for assistance, service and accommodations. Accessibility puts the dignity of the person as the priority reducing the reliance on others.

> ### Our students share - Kevin
>
> Coming to university has been my goal for a long time and I have always wanted to help people but I need a degree to do that. I started taking classes in 2006 and I am finishing my degree very soon. I will be graduating in the spring of 2016 after a long time and lots of hard work. Being diagnosed with cerebral palsy has made a lot of things difficult for me in university. For example, just taking notes in class is a big challenge with cerebral palsy. With a lot of help, hard work and lots of dedication, people with disabilities can make it through all levels of school.
>
> *Kevin*

DEPARTMENT GOALS

Each committee member was asked to go back to their respective departments to come up with, at minimum, one goal as to how they could improve accessibility in their own areas. The principle was to start with one small step – and if every department achieved that one step – the momentum towards full accessibility has begun. The goals varied by department, from installing accessible computer keyboards in labs to investigating video captioning on campus. Each year we will continue to improve. Please see Appendix 2 for a list of goals.

TRADES AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

UFV received a grant of $75,000 from the BC Government in the last year to develop an online module to teach trades and technology faculty about universal design for learning. A large number of students with disabilities are in our trades and technology programs and the grant will assist in the development of a training program to assist our faculty to ensure even greater success for these students. UFV reached out to partner with Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) to pool funds and to collaborate on a module that would meet the needs of both schools. While these funds specifically address Trades and Technology, the module has been developed to ensure all faculty are able to relate and understand the materials. The module should be ready to be used by December, 2015.

> ### *Our students share - Tisha*
>
> Tisha is a graduate of the TASK Program from 2012. During the Program, Tisha completed two work experiences at Rosedale Pre-School and the Rosedale Gas Station.
>
> In September, Tisha started back at UFV in UUP to up-grade her English. It hasn't been easy because of health complications, but her supportive instructors made sure she was able to complete her studies with her peers. Her next big goal is to enter the ECE Program at UFV Tisha's newest goal is to become a volunteer at the Chilliwack Hospital in the children's section.

UFV also received a grant of $50,000 from the BC government to continue to support students with disabilities in trades. Student Life, in partnership with Disability Services, is creating a peer mentoring program to assist those students with the transition from high school to trades programing, and then from UFV to the job market.

While it is easy to push UFV's accessibility requirements on to Disability Services, this department plays a specific role in supporting students. It is not one department's job to ensure an accessible UFV, but it requires the motivation, actions and vigilance of all UFV citizens to ensure our campus, services and learning are accessible to all.

Last year, there were 972 students registered with Disability Services, with the highest number having a mental health disability. This total number will continue to increase as diagnoses become more complete and supports for these students improve in high school.

Student Services – Disability Services serves students with disabilities at all UFV's campus locations who require specific accommodations. Working as a collaborative team, the Disability Services staff ensure students with disabilities have equal access to learning opportunities whether that is online or in the classroom.

Disability Services operates under the British Columbia Human Rights Code. Services are provided for students with documented disabilities. Accommodation supports can include:

- Adaptive technology training;
- Alternate format course material;
- Learning skills support;
- Testing support; or
- Transition support for incoming students.

Our students share - Davey

Davey graduated from the Workplace TASK Program in June, 2014. During the summer, Davey continued creating his clothing designs and he worked as a local Landscaper.

Currently, Davey is up-grading his Math and English in Upgrading and University Preparation as he wishes to enter UFV's Fashion Design Program in September 2015. He enjoys coming to classes as he has a chance to see old friends. Designing fashions for both men and women is Davey's joy. Davey designs animal logos such as snow leopards and pattern pieces for men's T-shirts and Hoodies. His designs for women include hand-made purses, totes, plus seasonal clothing and gowns.

Accommodations are made without compromising the key components of the program. Students registered with the Disability Services adhere to the same academic standards as all other students in the program. Accommodations are put into place to provide equal access to educational opportunities, rather than to give anyone an advantage over others.

UFV Registered Students with Disabilities 2014-15	Total Prep Pgms	Career, Tech, Vocational	Academic/UT		Gradua te	Total in College Level Programs	All Pre- Admission & Ongoing Clients
			Yr 1+2	Yr 3+4			
Chronic Health Impairments	7	3	24	21	0	48	55
Cognitive Disability							
a) **Mild**	1	1	0	0	0	1	2
b) **Moderate to Severe**	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Hearing Disability							
a) **Deaf**	3	1	4	1	0	6	9
b) **Hard of Hearing**	1	4	9	8	0	21	22
Mental Health Disability	44	17	117	62	0	196	240
Multiple Disabilities	2	1	3	0	0	4	6
Neurological Disability							
a) **CP/MS/ Parkinson's etc.**	10	11	42	25	0	78	88
b) **Learning Disability**	14	25	95	37	0	157	171
c) **Potential Learning Disability**	3	1	6	1	0	8	11
d) **ADD/ADHD**	6	7	51	22	0	80	86
e) **Autism/Asperger's**	2	4	34	5	0	43	45
Physical Disability	29	20	81	71	0	172	201
Visual Disability							
a) **Low vision**	0	2	4	4	0	10	10
b) **Blind**	1	0	4	2	0	6	7
Acquired Brain Injury	7	1	4	4	0	9	16
Speech Impairment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Disability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	133	98	478	263	0	839	972

NEXT STEPS

Barriers can exist at all levels within any organization from event planning, to procedures, to classroom interactions. The role of the committee is to make UFV more aware of potential barriers and suggest processes and procedures to remove them. Next year's goals include a review pertinent policies regarding accommodation and accessibility and offer suggestions for revision, if necessary. The committee wants to expand the individual department goals to crease the number of departments participating and the number of initiatives. The Accessibility Module for Trades and Technology faculty will be piloted and made available and a revised version for all faculty will be developed. The committee also wants to begin gathering narratives and artwork from students about their experiences with disabilities to share these with the UFV community. The stories from our students are very powerful and can assist our goals by increasing awareness and the need to make changes.

The committee would like to see even more members sitting at its table to help ensure its message of creating an accessible campus is more widespread. Accessibility not only enables student to access UFV, but also allows UFV to access the knowledge, creativity and brilliance of all its students. As UFV strives to have the best undergraduate education in Canada, accessible learning is a key component, and one that will differentiate this university in BC and across Canada.

Maureen Wideman, Co-Chair
Alyson Seale - Co-Chair
Alison Pritchard Orr - KPE
Barbara Salingre- TEP
Betty Wierda - Library
Cheryl Van Nes - Athletics
Chris Humphries – Security & Emergency Management
Chris Leach - History
Clare Dale – History & FSA
Diane Luu - Communications
Elaine Newman – Advising Centre
Glen Whitfield – Disability Resource Centre
Grace Tsurumaru – Visual Arts
Heather Chapman – Continuing Ed
Korina Gratton - Library
Kulwant Gill - UUP
Les Stagg – CYC
Mark Goudsblom - Facilities
Maureen Wideman - TLC
Melissa Banks - student
Patricia Ackland - Psychology
Rilla Apostolakis – Advising centre
Ted Zak - FATS
Tia Noble – Student Services

Inclusive Language

Words to use and avoid

Avoid passive, victim words. Use language that respects people with disabilities as active individuals with control over their own lives.

Avoid	Use
(the) handicapped, (the) disabled	disabled
afflicted by, suffers from, victim of	Person has [name of condition or impairment]
confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair-bound	wheelchair user
mentally handicapped, mentally defective, retarded, subnormal	with a learning disability (singular) with learning disabilities (plural)
cripple, invalid	disabled person
spastic	person with cerebral palsy
able-bodied	non-disabled
mental patient, insane, mad	person with a mental health condition
deaf and dumb; deaf mute	deaf, user of American Sign Language (ASL), person with a hearing impairment
the blind	people with visual impairments; blind people; blind and partially sighted people
an epileptic, diabetic, depressive, and so on	person with epilepsy, diabetes, depression or someone who has epilepsy, diabetes, depression
dwarf; midget	someone with restricted growth or short stature
fits, spells, attacks	seizures

UFV Accessibility Progress Report			
Initiative	**Department**	**Progress to Date/Planned Adjustments**	**Completed**
Communications Department			
Showed "What is Accessibility?" to the department in Fall 2014 Handout included	Communications	Suggestions to provide alternatives to the CMNS 235 mandatory oral presentation	Completed November 2014
Adapted "What is Accessibility?" to be used in Communications courses.	Communications	Will make PowerPoint available to CMNS 125 and 155 professors during the March 6 department meeting	Will be completed March 6
Discuss access to all in CMNS 235 - action plan brainstorming	Communications	Will discuss during March 6 department meeting	Will be completed March 6
Accessibility action plan	Communications	future implementation	
Teacher Education			
A continued inquiry by our department members is how we can best support the learning of all students, particularly if there has been no disclosure of any type of learning disability.	Teacher Education Department	Continued	
University Upgrading Program			
Investigate how to create an accessbiley PDFA	UUP	Use resources at ETS (Adobe Pro); Booked Glenn Whitfield to attend UUP Dept. Meeting on March 6th to discuss technology we currently have to help students (sticky keys, changing font colour etc)	In progress
Look at our current evaluation tools and see if we assess/evaluate using different means	UUP	Still pending	

Find out how to close caption vidoes and how to convert our current videos to CC option. Many of our faculty members are making videos through Camtasia and posting to blackboard	UUP	Discussion to take palce between Glenn Whitfield, Claude Dorian from ETS, Sheryl Newton, and Alyson Seale to figure out some ideas	In progress
Teaching and Learning			
Provide a web presence for UDL	TLC		Completed
Develop instructional videos on making accessible documents	TLC	2015	
Develop workshops on UDL	TLC	On-going	
Develop online UDL tutorial	TLC	Dec-15	
Library			
Update library signs to have larger and clearer font, with more white sapce	Library		Done
Have adjustable keyboard trays installed	Library		Done
Group study room door adjusted to make room accessible (Abbotsford Campus)	Library		Done
Clear low space at Circulation desk for accessibility	Library		Done
Adjust furniture in photocopy room to make it more accessible (Abbotsford Campus)	Library		Done
Adjust library website to be more accessible and provide library handouts on website	Library	New website committee has been formed and is considering accessibility in it's designs	
Planned 2016 first floor renovation to include accessibility design ideas	Library	Just started with planning	
Talk at staff meeting about inclusive language and making accessible documents	Library	Looking at future meeting agendas to verify which one we can speak at	
Add accessibility information to all research databases	Library	Information is under "About this Database" link	Done

Increase staff education on accessibility issues	Library	Ongoing	Done
Update Library Service for Patrons with Disabilities page	Library		Done
Added computer workstation dedicated for patrons with wheelchairs	Library		Done
Added priority seating stickers on several computer workstations	Library		Done
Changed location of decorative plants to clear traffic paths (Abbotsford Campus)	Library		Done
Adjusted comfortable seating for easier access to newspaper stand (Abbotsford Campus)	Library		Done
Add trackball mice and high contrast, large font keyboards to accessibility stations	Library		Done