

To Participate To Learn To Achieve

A Review of Recent Documents and Developments
in Post-Secondary Education for
Students with Disabilities

Implications and Recommendations
for Fanshawe College



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FORWARD

*Equitable access to all arenas of life is the prerequisite for universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of people.
Striving towards an inclusive society for all is the essence of sustainable social development.*

The Montreal International Declaration on Inclusion, 2001

This document may be used in a variety of ways depending on the interest and need of the individual reader. The Executive Summary provides a broad overview of the purpose and highlights of my investigation of current developments in the field of accessibility and disability services at the post-secondary level. This would be helpful to readers who would like a brief synopsis of the report and decide if a more detailed review would be warranted. The Table of Contents will direct readers to the individual topics or sections of the report that may be of particular interest.

Those who would like a brief description of specific subjects such the Ontarians with Disabilities Act or the concept of Universal Instructional Design (UID) as they apply to post-secondary studies, will find it beneficial to focus on those particular sections in the first half of the document. The corresponding Appendix section provides further details.

Readers who are new to the field of disability issues will want to read the document in its entirety to get some sense of the development of disability services within the Province and at Fanshawe College in particular. Hopefully the full document will also provide the novice with a sense of the direction in which the field is moving in terms of demographic trends and relevant issues. A number of Internet links are provided throughout the document, and these will lead readers to much more detailed information as well as various strategies and resources for further exploration.

My colleagues at Fanshawe College and other colleges and universities who work in the area of student services should find the latter section on Facts and Fixes to be the most germane component of the document as it deals with suggestions for moving forward and further developing the services we now provide to students with disabilities.

Regardless of how the document is used, I hope it will be an informative resource and will spark discussion and positive action. I welcome feedback from anyone who reads this report and look forward to the exciting prospect of implementing many of the suggestions offered.

Frank G. Walsh
August 25, 2004

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of my professional development leave during the 2003-04 academic year at Fanshawe College, I had the opportunity to review trends and developments in the quickly evolving field of services to students with disabilities. This involved the examination of a wide range of task force or commission reports, journal articles, government data analyses, Internet resources, as well as recommendations from organizations that focus on post-secondary education and the requirements of students with disabilities in particular.

I also examined materials specific to Fanshawe College as they relate to accessibility and students with specific learning needs, including the recently published College Academic Plan for 2003 to 2008. My research findings are presented in the form of a brief written overview of each of the most relevant documents or developing issues in the field and an emphasis on any practical recommendations from the authors of these materials.

In response to my findings, I have also offered a number of suggestions or 'fixes' that could be applied at Fanshawe College to address the most relevant issues that impact on accessibility to education within our four campuses. These suggestions are provided in the context of fifteen subject areas:

- Faculty Education and Awareness
- Funding
- Equal Access for All Disability Types
- Alternative Formats
- Timely Individual Assessments
- Student Self-Advocacy
- Community Input
- Student Awareness
- Institutional Awareness and Commitment
- Transition Services - To College
- Transition Services - To Employment and the Community
- Evaluation and Accountability
- Information Technology
- Student Success and Continuous Improvement of Services
- Administrative Structure

My conclusion from this investigation is that Fanshawe College has much to be proud of in terms of its support for accessible education and the needs of students with disabilities. In many areas, we meet and exceed the standard set by external guidelines and legislative obligations.

As expected, however, there are also areas that should be addressed in order to maintain and enhance the College's ability to offer an equitable opportunity for all students to benefit from the many educational options available.

INTRODUCTION

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

T.S. Eliot

Sometimes the opportunity to explore and know the place for the first time is the result of an individual or system crisis that imposes a re-examination. I have had the much more positive opportunity to explore again our disability services system at Fanshawe College as part of a yearlong sabbatical and now respectfully submit my findings and conclusions. This report may be used as the basis for further consultation and discussion and could lead to a long-term strategic plan for the College to assist students with disabilities and others with educational challenges.

Over the course of my professional development leave I reviewed and researched material from a variety of sources, all relating to the theme of post-secondary education for persons with disabilities and more specifically the concepts of accessibility, transition, technology, staffing, service evaluation, accountability, flexibility, assessment and collaboration. I investigated task force documents, consultation reports, survey results, journal articles and research papers relating to these concepts. This included recently published documents from the following sources-

- The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC)
- The Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) -Ministry of Citizenship and Culture
- The National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS)
- The provincial College Committee on Disability Issues (CCDI)
- The provincial Learning Opportunities Task Force (LOTF)
- The Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario (ACAATO)
- Universal Instructional Design (UID) Research and Recommendations – Georgian College and the University of Guelph
- Fanshawe College Strategic Plan for 2004-05

- Fanshawe College Academic Plan for 2003 to 2008
- Fanshawe College Initial Accessibility Plan for 2003-04
- Fanshawe College Disability Services Vision, Goals and Objectives, 2003-04

When Fanshawe College first hired me in 1989 as a 'special education consultant', our approach to providing help to students with disabilities - or *special needs students*, as they were known at that point - was rather straightforward. Our small team of enthusiastic staff collected information to identify the student's type of disability as well as a series of problems that person was likely to encounter in the College. We then tried to come up with possible solutions.

We drew on the successful experiences of our counterparts at other Ontario colleges and universities and used resources from post-secondary disability organizations in the U.S. where such services had been formally provided in many locations during the previous decade.

As solutions proved their worth with an increasing number of students, we developed more formal structures for providing these supports. These planned supports included a peer assistance program, individual assessment and counselling, note taking services and a specialized exam accommodation service.

It is difficult to believe now, but in the infancy of our service development we were expected to contact the head of whatever program the student was applying to and inquire if it would be possible to accommodate the hopeful candidate if he or she were to be offered admission.

One of my first tasks in this new position was to contact an administrator to try to clear the way for a student to tape record a lecture because she had been told, "*we don't do that in this division...we've never done that*". Discussions about human rights, accessibility, accommodation, and 'leveling the playing field' often fell on deaf ears in those days, even among those with no apparent hearing loss.

Later in my first month of employment, I was urgently asked to meet with a coordinator who was at a loss as to how to deal with a particular applicant. This potential student was an excellent wheelchair athlete and had been inquiring about entering a program that would include a component of weight training and demonstration of physical fitness.

The only solution the program staff could come up with at that point was to encourage the student to apply to a university where it was thought he might avoid most physical activity and his obvious intellectual strengths could be better applied. The student went away disappointed, indicating that he probably would not want to attend an institution that did not seem to want him.



Fast forward to June of this year and a newspaper article in the London Free Press with the headline - "Star Wheelchair Athlete Graduates". It describes the academic success of Karen Blachford, wheelchair curler and member of the Canadian national wheelchair team who had recently graduated from Fanshawe College's independent study option through the Fitness and Health Promotion program. In the article Karen enthusiastically describes how "*The flexibility of this approach to education allowed me to pursue my academic goal while maintaining my job and spot on the national team.*"

A decade and a half ago, this flexible approach to education was much less common. There were well-known stories circulating around the College from before any formal disability supports existed. One of these accounts was that of a student who had eagerly relocated from northern Ontario to attend Fanshawe, although no one was aware he was blind until the first day of class.

The professors, department staff and others who wanted to assist the young man felt much sympathy and demonstrated sincere regret at his misfortune, but they just did not know how to help and couldn't imagine how he might complete the program without being able to see.

I introduce my sabbatical report with these anecdotes to illustrate where we began 15 years ago and to lay the groundwork for discussions of where we might want to go from here. I would like to consider what has transpired at Fanshawe College and other post-secondary institutions in recent years that contributed to positive outcomes for students such as Karen Blachford.

I would also like to consider what we might do over the next 15 years to continue that evolution and expand opportunities for qualified students with disabilities and other educational challenges.

It seems to me upon reflection that we spent much of the last decade and a half working earnestly and with genuine empathy *on behalf of students with disabilities*. However, we have less intentionally been working *with them*, and rarely with the stated expectation that they may know best what they need.

Motivated by the very best of intentions, we have operated under a model that is similar to that used in medical settings where the patient (student) is identified by his or her medical condition (type of disability) and we then focus on trying to prescribe a treatment or medication (accommodation) that will fix or at least reduce the deficiency.

In the pursuit of this goal, much of our time has actually been spent trying to compensate for the limitations or failures of the College in providing a fully accessible environment for learning.

This approach has led to several unintended side effects, one of which is the tendency for much of the College to see students with disabilities as a separate category of individuals, often identified as “*your students*” to disability services staff. As the special needs unit or disability services department, we have typically been seen as distinct educational professionals who possess some unique knowledge - problem solvers who can provide specialized help that is available in no other way.

Rather than continuing to operate within this model of difference and ‘deficiency’, I believe we need to begin working toward one that emphasizes the similarities among students, including those with disabilities. That means focusing more on the talents and abilities they bring to the College, capabilities that made them qualified applicants with satisfactory grades and a history of educational achievement.

If we emphasize the learning process more than the learning problems, teaching can be made more adaptable to a wide variety of student capabilities and preferences.

This may sound like an overwhelming challenge in a system as complex and entrenched as a large community college, but my research has uncovered many encouraging trends that clearly complement this intention to focus more on the system than the individual student as a means of making education more accessible.

Changing the Environment

As noted by English epidemiologist Thomas McKeown and reported in John McKnight’s The Careless Society, most of the significant improvements in our health and wellness over the years were the result of changes to the environment made by communities. Decisions to purify water, to isolate and dispose of waste and to pasteurize milk contributed greatly to improvements in physical health, quality of life and longevity.

Likewise, any great advancement in the educational opportunities for students with disabilities is more likely to come about through changes to the educational environment in which they are required to learn, rather than any single support or combination of particular services we might provide to help cope with an otherwise inflexible setting.

In education then, a model of effective and flexible learning is needed to replace the previous model that focused too much on disability, deficit, deficiency and disorder.

Just as the civil rights movement in North America progressed rapidly once this issue shifted from a perception of individual citizens with problems to that of a society in need of change to allow greater freedom and opportunity, a similar perceptual shift is required at Fanshawe College and other post-secondary settings with respect to students with non-traditional approaches to learning.

We need to redefine educational access for students with disabilities as relating to the College environment that needs to change and adapt rather than seeing the matter as a growing number of individual students with inadequacies that must be addressed.

In his 2000 book, Universal Instruction In Education, Frank G. Bowe provides a similar view that changing the learning environment is the key to wider educational accessibility.

Disability is an interaction between a person and an environment. It is not, in this understanding, a medical condition. Why does this matter? It matters because it tells us that if we modify the educational environment, even in small ways, students with disabilities will not encounter problems, or will face far fewer problems. We call the process of doing that 'universal design in education'. (pg 10)

In addition to her hard work and the support of good teachers, Karen Blachford was able to complete a challenging program at Fanshawe College in 2004 even though she used a wheelchair. She was given options and choices in fulfilling required learning outcomes, the same learning outcomes required of all students in the program. There was a focus on her ability, experience and individual potential more than her different way of moving about.

Fifteen years previously an equally talented young man was turned away from the College because we were unwilling or unprepared to provide the same kind of adaptability in the learning environment at Fanshawe College. That observable progress over the years has been a positive development and there is a need for more of it if we are to be true to our institutional mission:

Fanshawe College is committed to personal, social and economic success through quality education and learning for employment.

We enrich the lives of individuals and meet the changing needs of our diverse communities.

We are innovative and responsive.

We promote opportunity.

We are Fanshawe College.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND TRENDS

Before reviewing several recent developments that provide encouraging signs a systemic shift is taking place to bring about this change in perspective, and before suggesting strategies the College might adopt to encourage and advance those changes, it is helpful to examine the current state of education in relation to persons with disabilities.

The field of disability services at the post-secondary level is still a relatively young but rapidly developing endeavor. It was as recently as 1988 that the Committee of Presidents, under the leadership of Cambrian College president Glen Crombie, first lobbied for financial support from the Ontario government to help the increasing number of special needs students who so obviously required supports to pursue a college education.

While information about the numbers of adults with disabilities is rather inconsistent because of variability in definitions and methods of data collection, it is still useful to review available statistics to consider what a realistic representation would be at a community college such as Fanshawe. This also helps to plan for trends that are seen in the demographics of disability in Canada and Ontario.

In Ontario's publicly funded elementary and secondary school system, 12.5% of students were receiving special education programs and services in the fall of 2000 according to Ministry of Education data. Not all those students would be expected to continue on to post-secondary education, but the proportion of pupils with disabilities or special education needs among the general student population is probably a good indicator of potential participation rates at more advanced educational levels.

According to the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario (ACAATO), in the 2001-2002 academic year there were 8,188 university students (3.1% of full-time enrolment) and 13,549 college students (8.0 % of full-time enrolment) reported to be receiving accommodations for a disability.

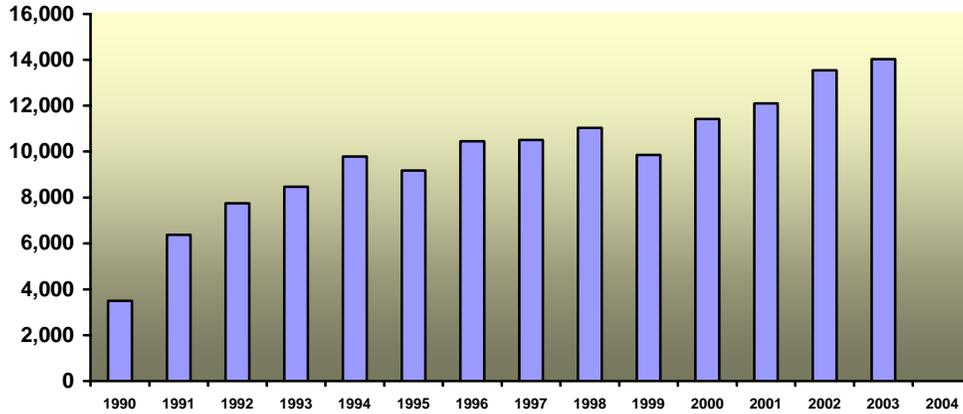
Between 1998 and 2004, the number of students with disabilities accessing service at Ontario colleges increased by 30%. The corresponding increase in students with disabilities using accommodations and support services at Fanshawe College during the same time period was 70% (464 to 788).

Overall college enrolment has been rising steadily over the past decade in Ontario and similarly at Fanshawe College. The student population is expected to continue to grow rapidly over the next several years. According to a 2001 report from the Research and Policy Office of ACAATO, provincial college enrolment was projected to increase by 32,000, or 25% by 2006. This is due primarily to the elimination of Grade 13, an increase in the population of 19 year olds in Ontario, and an increase in

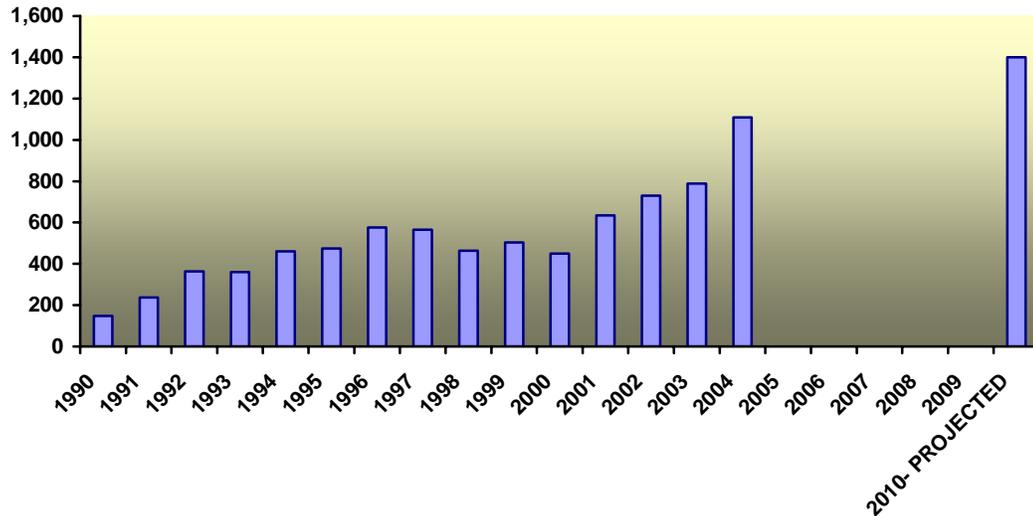
the participation rate of the 18-24 year old population.

Given ACAATO's projected increase in college enrolment between 1999 and 2010 as the result of these demographic factors, the growing number of students with disabilities at Fanshawe College seems to be an accurate reflection of trends.

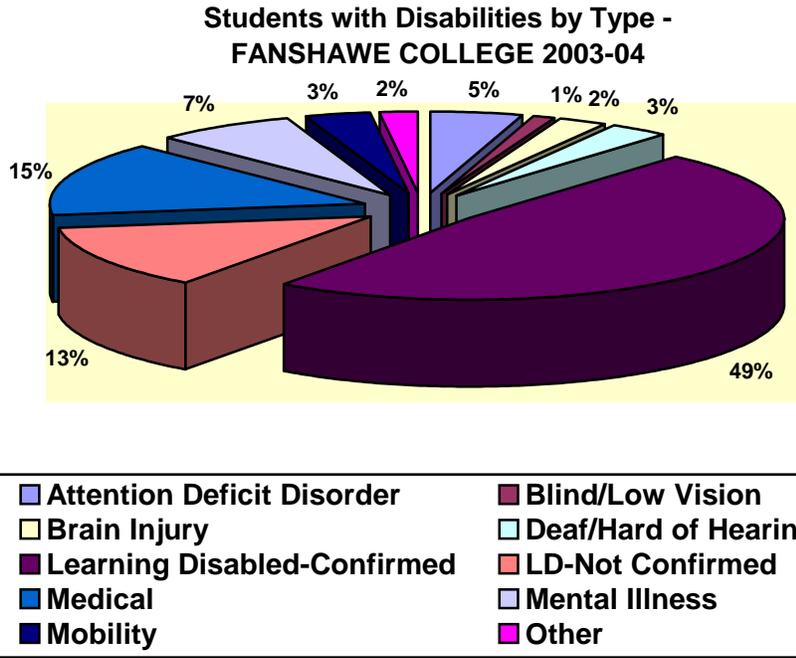
Students with Identified Disabilities - Ontario Colleges



Students with Identified Disabilities - Fanshawe College



Projections based on these reported trends would suggest that, by the end of this decade, there will be approximately 1300 to 1500 individual students at Fanshawe College in need of disability supports. This would be a tenfold increase from the numbers requesting service in 1990, when formalized supports were first implemented.



The Importance of Post-Secondary Education for Individual Opportunity

Although encouraging trends are noted, a study by the Canadian Council on Social Development, using Statistics Canada’s Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, illustrated the unequal access of persons with disabilities to post-secondary education.

In 1993 only 31% of persons with a disability aged 16 to 64 had completed post-secondary education, compared to 48% of those without a disability. By 1998 the situation had improved somewhat, as 36% of persons with a disability had graduated from a post-secondary program, in comparison to 51% of persons without.

There has been a slow but steady improvement in the rate of enrolment among persons with disabilities, largely due to improved support services and encouraging outcomes for those who attend. While historically the participation rate at college and university by adults with disabilities has not been equal to that of the general population, those who are able to access post-secondary education clearly benefit both socially and economically.

National statistics reveal that working persons with a disability have been far less likely to have full time employment than those without disabilities, but access to college and university education appears to increase employment opportunities.

In 1998, approximately 47% of Canadians with disabilities who had post-secondary education were employed full-time, while only 36% of those with disabilities who had only completed high school were similarly employed.

At the end of 1989, the first year in which statistics were collected, the provincial College Committee on Disability Issues (CCDI) recorded a total of 3,501 students with identified disabilities attending Ontario colleges. This represented about 3.5% of the full time student population at that time.

The numbers grew steadily across the province and the increase in participation rates was mirrored at Fanshawe College where the number of students with disabilities has climbed from 148 in 1998-99 to 1,109 during our last recorded academic year of 2003-04. This represents 10.1% of the full-time post-secondary enrolment at the College, which was 10,998 during the most recent academic year according to the College's Planning Services.

This demographic information clearly illustrates that more and more students with disabilities are seeking better economic and personal opportunities through post-secondary education in general and at Fanshawe College in particular. This is a welcome development, because it means our College population is beginning to reflect more accurately the broader community in which we function.

There are a significant number of students at Fanshawe and citizens in our community who learn, work, play, form relationships and enjoy life through a wide spectrum of ability. Many of these individuals have been excluded from participation in higher education because the environment has not been able to adapt to their unique needs and learning preferences.

But the times are changing and we will now turn our attention to some of the indicators that a shift in attitude and societal perception is taking place. These are changes that should lead to continued improvements in access for students with disabilities, including those attending Fanshawe College.

The Ontarians with Disabilities Act

The goal of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act of 2001 (ODA) is *“to improve the 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.”* As a public institution, Fanshawe College has a new obligation under the ODA to prepare annual accessibility plans in consultation with people with disabilities and to publicize these plans. The College’s first Accessibility Plan was published in the fall of 2003 and was required to describe-

- Steps taken to identify, remove and prevent barriers
- How policies, programs, practices and services would be assessed
- A list of policies, programs, practices and services that were to be reviewed over the year



The Accessibility Committee at Fanshawe College was coordinated by Cathie Auger, Vice President of Student and Staff Services and consisted of working groups led by administrators.

The individual working groups were to focus on the physical facilities of the College, academic services, policies, equipment, technology, publications and information, human resources, awareness as well as non-academic student support services. Each of the working groups was made up of College staff and in some cases, students or members of the student union. Most groups also included individuals with identified disabilities.

In the College’s 2004-05 Strategic Plan, reference was made to the work of the accessibility groups including a structured audit of all campuses that would result in a multi-year plan for addressing any barriers to physical accessibility. This audit was completed and reported in January 2004 by the Ontario March of Dimes Barrier-Free Design Consultation Services.

The independent audit concluded, *“Fanshawe College facilities achieve a relatively high degree of compliance with current standards for barrier-free access. Few high priority barriers were identified and many of the common barriers are being, or will be, removed as part of ongoing facilities upgrading and maintenance.”*

A survey of students with disabilities, College staff, and community members was also to be conducted as part of the first accessibility plan for the College and was intended to identify possible areas for improvement. The Plan called for revision of policies to be consistent with current accessibility standards and for the assessment

of the need for awareness training for staff members.

Based on the results of this evaluation, a training plan was to be developed and launched to increase sensitivity to disability issues and to improve accommodation. Finally, the College's accessibility plan committed to improvements in processes for providing students with textbooks and other learning materials in alternate formats.

With the motivation of legislated change, these are all positive developments and signal a shift within the College toward improving accessibility across the broader system rather than dealing primarily with individual students' needs through the disability services department and individual academic programs. The greatest challenge for the College will be to implement identified improvements to be made without additional targeted funding for accessibility strategies or physical improvements to the campuses.

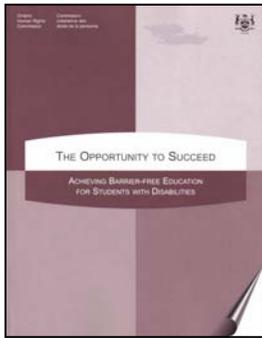
The Ontario Human Rights Code

As part of the protection for equal treatment in services, the Ontario Human Rights Code guarantees the right to equal treatment in education without discrimination. Education providers such as Fanshawe College have a legal duty to accommodate students with disabilities up to the point of undue hardship.

According to the Human Rights Commission's interpretation of the Code, the role of a post-secondary institution is to ensure that the facility and services are accessible, that appropriate, effective and dignified accommodation processes are in place, and that students who require accommodations because of their disabilities are accommodated to the point of undue hardship.

Educators at the post-secondary level are responsible for participating in the accommodation process (including the provision of specific accommodations), being knowledgeable about and sensitive to disability issues, and maintaining student confidentiality.

A student with a disability is required to advise the post-secondary education provider of the need for accommodation, participate in discussions regarding possible accommodation solutions, meet curriculum standards once accommodation is provided, and work with the accommodation provider on an ongoing basis to manage the accommodation process.



In July 2002, the Ontario Human Rights Commission released *Education and Disability: Human Rights Issues in Ontario's Education System*, a consultation paper that considered human rights issues in education. The Commission invited feedback from interested parties on the issues identified in the consultation paper and on other human rights matters in education through written submissions and participation in public hearings.

Participants in providing feedback included the provincial College Committee on Disability Issues (CCDI), the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and a wide spectrum of individuals, agencies and associations.

The final report from the Commission based on research and consultation was presented in July 2003 and titled The Opportunity to Succeed: Achieving Barrier Free Education for Students with Disabilities. It concluded that many students with disabilities do not have equal access to educational opportunities in Ontario, including access to post-secondary education.

The key barriers identified were *“inadequate funding, physical inaccessibility, cumbersome and time-consuming accommodation processes, negative attitudes and stereotypes, and a lack of understanding of the rights and responsibilities of all parties under*

the Code and Commission policy."

The consultation process concluded that academic accommodation at all levels of education is not always provided in a timely manner. It was also noted that there are delays at many stages of the accommodation process. The report reminded readers that educational institutions have a responsibility to deal with accommodation effectively and quickly as there can be serious and permanent effects when educational opportunities are delayed.

At Fanshawe College, these accommodation delays have most often occurred during peak periods such as September and January when the number of new students requesting services often exceeds the time and human resources available to provide them. Delays in specific accommodations such as access to textbooks in an alternative format are an ongoing problem at Fanshawe and other post-secondary institutions and system-wide solutions are required.

The OHRC emphasized to service providers that every student is unique and blanket approaches to accommodations that rely on categories, labels and generalizations are not effective. The authors also observed that not all students with disabilities who experience discrimination do so in the same way.

Students with disabilities may also be members of other historically disadvantaged groups. Examples of these groups at Fanshawe College would include First Nations students, international students, mature students and those with economic and social disadvantages.

The Commission report stated that the accommodation of students with disabilities is a shared responsibility. If students are to experience a welcoming and inclusive environment, educators, school staff, government officials, education boards, parents and students themselves all must take responsibility for becoming informed about disability and educational issues.

This highlights the need to maintain and improve information and awareness tools at Fanshawe College, both for informing students and staff of the availability of accommodation services and for encouraging self-advocacy among students.

It was observed through the report that various government structures, including the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities must work together with universities and colleges to develop better systems of accountability in accommodating students with disabilities.

The Commission emphasized that, while there are costs associated with providing certain forms of accommodation and support to students with disabilities, there are lifelong costs to not providing these supports. The *Code* requires education providers to accommodate students with disabilities up to the point of undue hardship.

Part of the duty to accommodate includes providing the resources that students with disabilities need to have the opportunity to succeed. While Fanshawe College has largely depended on annual targeted funding from the Ministry for most services to students with disabilities, the report is also a reminder that this Accessibility Fund is intended to supplement resources provided from general College budgets.

Finally, this OHRC report on disability and education outlined actions required of various participants in the education system if we are to collectively address the factors that limit equal access to education for students with disabilities. It referred to forthcoming Guidelines on Accessible Education, which a contact with the OHRC indicated would be available in the fall of 2004.

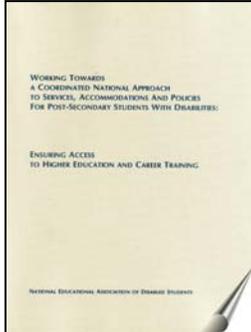
This resource material will be helpful in clarifying how we should apply the main principles of OHRC's primary policy positions in the area of accommodation at Fanshawe College. These are expected to include:

- A definition of disability that recognizes the impact of social handicapping (society's response to real or perceived disability);
- An emphasis on the right of persons with disabilities to integration and full participation;
- Recognition of the central importance of design by inclusion, and barrier removal for persons with disabilities;
- Reaffirmation of the importance of respect for the dignity of persons with disabilities;
- Recognition that persons with disabilities are individuals first, and should be considered, assessed, and accommodated on an individual basis;
- The principle that accommodation is a responsibility shared by all parties to the process; and
- A reaffirmation of the high standard of undue hardship set by the OHRC in 1989.

In reviewing and revising policies that relate to the accommodation of students and applicants at Fanshawe College, it would be prudent to base these on the updated guidelines for accommodation in educational settings as provided by the OHRC.

Details of the specific recommendations from the Ontario Human Rights Commission that relate to post-secondary education may be found in Appendix A.

The National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS)



In 1999, the National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) carried out an extensive countrywide survey of post-secondary students with disabilities and service providers. The results of surveys completed by 349 post-secondary students and 70 service providers were reported in July 1999.

Fanshawe College was one of the 18 publicly funded Ontario colleges that provided information and evaluative ratings about services offered to students. A total of 50 student surveys were distributed to individual students with disabilities attending Fanshawe College at the time.

The purpose of the NEADS study was to-

- Determine the level and type of services, the types of accommodations and the direction of policy with respect to students with disabilities across Canada and
- Evaluate service provision, accommodations and policy.

In terms of disability types included in the survey, the largest group of students indicated that they had a learning disability (36.1%), while a somewhat smaller percentage reported they had a mobility impairment (30.4%). Students who were deaf or hard of hearing (12.9%), blind or visually impaired (15.8%), medical disability (12.6%) and Other (10.9%) were also participants in the survey.

Mental health (5.2%) and speech disabilities (2.6%) were least frequently reported as the primary type of disability. Because students could indicate more than one type of disability when appropriate, percentages did not total 100. These proportions were generally consistent with those reported by Fanshawe College at the time of the survey.

Among the programs, services and features that service providers and students felt were most successful in establishing and ensuring campus accessibility, aspects of service delivery, and particularly the centres through which the services were provided, were mentioned most frequently. Other areas where respondents frequently identified successful programs, services and features were:

- Academic accommodations/modifications including extended exam time;
- Adaptive technology; and
- Academic support services such as note takers and tutors.

It is interesting to note that features of physical accessibility were listed by service providers and students both as areas of success and areas of least success depending on the setting. This probably reflects the wide variety of physical environments that students encounter at post-secondary institutions.

At the time of the survey, students reported that the lack of an office or staff person that focused on disability services issues was one of the least successful features of access at their particular institution. The opportunity to have personal contact with an individual who is knowledgeable, can understand and assess needs, and help in the resolution of problems was also considered a successful feature of service provision identified by student respondents.

Assessing student needs and providing counselling on types of accommodation and assistance were considered to be critical components of disability services provision. Students also frequently described various methods used to notify faculty of their individual needs, as a successful feature of disability services offered by colleges and universities.

Students often referred to other campus service providers (librarians, personal counsellors, computer technicians) as providing services they considered among the most successful feature of accessibility. Many indicated they do not always need to receive supports directly through the involvement of a disability service office. The placement of services seems less important than their availability and the assurance that such services will be “disability-sensitive” even if they are provided as part of a service that includes students with and without disabilities.

This is an interesting finding in light of the ongoing discussion at Fanshawe College and other post-secondary institutions as to whether students with disabilities would be better served through a separate department or one that is integrated with other student services or educational functions.

The NEADS survey and resulting recommendations are unique in that they represent the efforts of a student-based organization and focus on the perspective of the users of disability services at colleges and universities. The survey could serve as an excellent model and format for a similar investigation of student perceptions planned at Fanshawe College as part of the published Accessibility Plan.

It would be interesting to compare the results of our own survey with that of the national research, although qualifications would have to be made for the fact that data from the NEADS survey is now five years old.

A more detailed summary of conclusions and recommendations for best practices offered by NEADS as a result of the survey study may be found in Appendix B.

As the report authors noted, “many different kinds of needs exist and institutions may be better at accommodating some than others. Our recommendations will attempt to focus on what is being done, what can be done better, and how the varied needs of students with disabilities can be accommodated within widely varying institutional contexts.” (page 6).

The provincial College Committee on Disability Issues (CCDI)



The Committee of Presidents of Ontario colleges established the College Committee on Special Needs in 1987. This was in response to the increasing number of students with disabilities who were qualified and choosing to attend college and the expressed need to provide “strategies and procedures which will permit the colleges to better serve their special needs student populations”.

Each college designated a person, generally a disability services staff member, who would serve as a representative to the provincial committee. The CCSN members were to identify, research and make recommendations to the college system regarding the educational needs of students with disabilities.

A decade after it was initially established, the College Committee on Special Needs became the College Committee on Disability Issues (CCDI). This was in response to the trend among many college service areas to use the term ‘disability services’ rather than ‘special needs services’ because of student response and changing terminology in the field.

At Fanshawe College, the Special Needs Office had been renamed Services for Students with Disabilities a few years prior to this change at the provincial level.

CCDI has worked cooperatively with a similar organization representing student disability services at Ontario universities and together have contributed significantly to the rapidly developing field of post-secondary services for students with disabilities within the Province. These committees regularly consult and advise the government when various task forces, research bodies or inter-ministerial working groups have been established in relation to disability and education.

A detailed history of the development of CCDI, a description of its terms of reference, a list of the organization’s many achievements and contributions including longitudinal data reporting, may be found in [Orientation for Success: A Resource Guide for College Representatives of the College Committee on Disability Issues](#). This document as well as other useful resources are available on CCDI’s website, www.disabilityissues.ca

The CCDI representative for Fanshawe College has the opportunity to meet with counterparts for provincial meetings twice a year and there is broader participation by disability services staff at an annual general meeting and conference. This is usually combined with the annual conference for Ontario College Counsellors (OCC) and most recently with members of the Inter-University Disability Association (IDIA).

Active participation in CCDI allows Fanshawe College to provide input into disability issues that have provincial implications and to benefit from the collective knowledge and experience of other colleges. During the past 15 years, CCDI representatives have contributed to provincial activities including data collection, applied research, creation of faculty and staff education resources, developing guidelines for LD assessment and sign language interpreter services, as well as participating in Ministry consultation on a wide variety of topics relating to post-secondary education for students with disabilities.

Disability services staff members from Fanshawe College have been able to contribute to recent activities of CCDI including the organization's submission to the Ontario Human Rights Commission consultation on education and disability.

Key issues identified by CCDI in its submission to the Commission may be found in Appendix C.

A review of Ministry funding for post-secondary education including accessibility supports took place with the change of provincial government in 2003. With input from college representatives, the CCDI executive submitted a response to discussion questions in February 2004. These related to funding for accessibility services at Ontario colleges.

A summary of points in this submission, including suggestions for increased and reorganized funding, may be found also in Appendix C.

The Learning Opportunities Task Force (LOTF)

The Learning Opportunities Task Force (LOTF) was established by the provincial government in 1997 and provided with the following mandate:

- To improve the transition of students with learning disabilities from secondary school to post-secondary education, and;
- To enhance the services and supports that students with learning disabilities receive within the post-secondary educational sector, such that they can complete their education successfully.

These task force goals were established after the government's budget speech in May of 1997 declared that *"Too few students with learning disabilities get the help that they need to make the transition to college or university. To help these students realize their potential, we will establish pilot projects at the college and university level to provide real help to learning disabled students in a meaningful way."*

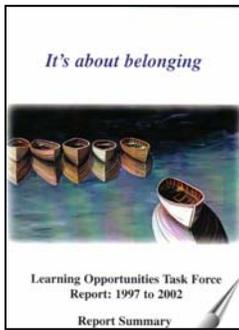
Preliminary research was carried out by LOTF consultants through surveys of post-secondary faculty. Visits were also made to many Ontario colleges and universities to meet with students and the staff who provided them with educational services.

Proposals for pilot projects were then invited from every post-secondary institution in the province and an external committee of experts in the field of learning disabilities carried out a 'blind' review of the thirty-five proposals that were subsequently submitted.

As a result, eight pilot projects were established in thirteen colleges and universities around the province and most began operation in the fall of 1998. One of these pilots was the Millennium Project at Fanshawe College, which involved more than 300 students with learning disabilities and eventually provided about 25 percent of all student data collected and analyzed by the LOTF over a four-year period.

Each pilot project also designed and carried out formative evaluation activities. Student participants were able to offer their opinion on the usefulness of pilot activities in helping them achieve educational and personal goals.

The LOTF also developed a database that included information gained from more than 3,000 student questionnaires, consisting of feedback at various points regarding each student's participation in the pilot projects.



After reviewing all research data as well as qualitative information provided by students and pilot project staff, the LOTF published seven key findings leading to twenty-four recommendations to the government of Ontario. These findings related to-

- Student success
- Diagnostic assessments
- Learning strategy and assistive technology supports
- Institutional responsibility
- Funding
- Access to post-secondary education
- The future role of the Learning Opportunities Task Force

Before the conclusion of the pilot projects in 2002, the provincial government committed to allocating additional funds to allow every college and university in Ontario to offer learning strategy and assistive technology supports to students with learning disabilities. An Enhanced Services Fund was established and post-secondary institutions were encouraged to submit applications to establish these specific LD services.

At Fanshawe College, many of the enhanced services offered through the Millennium Project were continued beyond 2002 with alternative sources of funding. Full time staff members are now employed to provide individual learning strategies instruction to students and to teach them how to effectively use assistive technology.

Details of the 24 recommendations offered by the Learning Opportunities Task Force may be found in Appendix D.

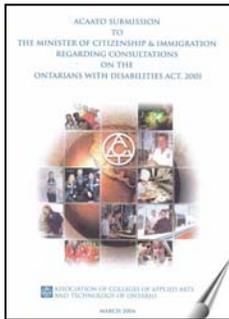
The Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario

A marketing and advocacy association known as ACAATO, or the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario represents the 24 provincial colleges. The mandate of this organization is “to advance a strong college system for Ontario”. ACAATO represents the collective views of the colleges’ governing boards, chairs and presidents.

Developing issues are identified and forwarded to ACAATO through five system-wide coordinating committees and one of these is the Coordinating Committee on Student Services (CCSS). In addition to disability issues relevant to the college system, CCSS also deals with topics relating to student placement, financial aid, health services, registration and admission, athletics, counselling, learning resources and student life. This structure allows a coordinated approach to promoting progress and developing new initiatives within the college system.

In its role of advocacy and communication, the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario recently published two documents relevant to the area of educational access and services for students with disabilities at the college level.

ACAATO’s Multi-Year Funding Proposal



In January 2004, ACAATO released a proposal for multi-year investment in the Ontario colleges system “to provide the programs, resources, services and supports required to reinforce and expand the educational pathways available to Ontarians.” Investing in Ontario’s Workforce: Strong Colleges for a Strong Ontario proposed specific initiatives in five essential areas:

- Programs
- Resources
- Students
- Facilities and
- Skills Initiatives

The two explicit areas outlined in the Student section included:

- Support student success to improve participation, retention and graduation to ensure access to critical supports; and
- Broaden supports for students with disabilities

ACCATO presented extensive supporting data as well as specific recommendations on increased investment in the Ontario college system. This included a multi-year plan that would raise the level of per-student operating fund to \$6,300 and increase the capital allocation by \$30 million and funds for skills initiatives by \$32 million, for a total estimated annual increase of \$362 million by 2007/08.

In Section 3.3.2 of the ACCATO document, specific recommendations were presented to broaden supports and services for students with disabilities. It was noted that colleges need additional resources to support the 60% of post-secondary students with disabilities who attend Ontario colleges.

The report made reference to the increasing numbers of students with disabilities continuing education after secondary school, including the 13,500 registered in Ontario colleges in 2001/02.

The ACAATO report specifically requested more investment in supports or services for the increasing numbers of students with multiple, complex or severe disabilities as reported by individual colleges throughout the province. Further funding was also called for to address the needs of graduates with disabilities as they make the transition to the labour force so that employment options and rate of employment might be improved.

ACAATO observed that current funding for college students with disabilities is one-third that provided for Ontario secondary school students receiving special education supports. At the time of the report, the Accessibility Fund for Students with Disabilities allocated by the Ministry totaled \$9.7 million, or approximately \$700 to meet the needs of each student with a disability registered in an Ontario college.

Even when additional sources of disability support funding were included, such as interpreter funds and the Enhanced Services Fund for students with learning disabilities, the total funding per college student in 2003/04 was estimated at \$1,000 and significantly below the average \$2,900 available to each special education student at the secondary level.

Based on this rationale, ACAATO proposed that a multi-year investment program be implemented with a target to reach an increase of \$10 million annually by 2007/08 targeted specifically to support the education of students with disabilities. This increased funding would help colleges manage the increasing numbers and more complex needs of students with disabilities and to:

- 1. Carry out thorough assessments of students with disabilities so colleges can provide appropriate services and accommodations to meet students' needs and maximize their opportunities for success**
- 2. Improve the preparedness of students with disabilities for college level study**

- 3. Serve the growing number of students with increasingly complex disabilities who are graduating from secondary school and seeking post-secondary education**
- 4. Equip college facilities with up-to-date technology, hardware and software to assist students with disabilities; and**
- 5. Increase liaison with, and support for, potential employers to improve employment rates of graduates with disabilities.**

The benefits anticipated from this increased funding included an increase in the participation rate in post-secondary education by students with disabilities as well as improved ability of Ontario colleges to offer the services and supports needed for students with disabilities to be successful.

By increasing the allocated per student funding to the proposed levels, it was expected that a more supportive environment for those with disabilities would lead to a higher probability of successful completion of post-secondary education and contribute to increased retention and graduate rates for this population.

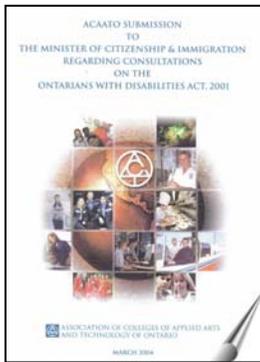
Employment-related benefits anticipated from the investment included opportunities for higher earnings, independence and self-reliance as well as *“improvement in the productivity of a pool of talent that has been historically marginalized in the Province.”*

In response to ACAATO’s funding proposal, and that of other post-secondary sectors, the provincial government announced in June 2004 that former Premier Bob Rae would be leading a comprehensive review of the design and funding of Ontario’s post-secondary education system.

A seven-member panel is to carry out the review and will be reporting findings and recommendations in January 2005. According to a government press release, Mr. Rae stated, *“Our review will look at not only what we have done in Ontario but more broadly at the world to consider what other jurisdictions with great public institutions of higher learning have done, are doing, and plan to do. We are seeking to put Ontario at the forefront of innovation in support for higher education.”*

This announcement regarding the post-secondary review was followed in July by an increase in investment of \$20.9 million in the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP). This funding increase was expected to benefit more than 50,000 students and was to be implemented for the next academic year beginning August 2004. Revised regulations would reduce the required parental contribution amount, increase access to student funding for newcomers to Ontario including refugees and help students in financial difficulty during repayment of student loans.

To date, there has been no response from the provincial government to ACAATO’s specific recommendation for an increase in the Accessibility Fund to support students with disabilities.



ACAATO's Response to Consultations on the Ontarians with Disabilities Act

In March of 2004, the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario submitted a position paper to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration regarding the implementation of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) and its relevance to Ontario colleges.

In this document, ACAATO clearly reinforced the commitment of Ontario colleges to applying the ODA and improving educational access for students with disabilities *"to the maximum extent within their financial capabilities"*.

This document noted the significant improvement in accessibility at colleges, demonstrated by a 30 percent increase during the previous five years in the enrolment of students with disabilities. Reference was made to the multi-year funding proposal submitted to the government two months previously.

ACAATO reiterated the serious under funding Ontario colleges were dealing with, highlighted by the fact that colleges were serving 49 percent more students than 15 years ago, yet receiving 44 percent less funding per student to provide the education.

The following recommendations were made by ACAATO for the purpose of strengthening the Ontarians with Disabilities Act and its implications for Ontario college students with disabilities:

1. That the government establish a new college capital fund dedicated to projects to remove physical barriers. This fund would be in addition to existing grants and the original multi-year funding proposal prepared by the colleges. It must be sufficient and remain in place long enough to meet all accessibility requirements.

2. That operating funding to colleges for support of students with disabilities be increased. These new monies would be in addition to existing grants and the original multi-year funding proposal prepared by the colleges. Examples of needed service improvements include:

- **Dedicated staff to help students with disabilities make the transition from secondary school to college, to co-operative education and work placements while at college, and to employment upon graduation;**
- **Out-of-classroom support for students;**
- **Enhanced support for students with more complex disabilities; and**
- **Acquisition of resources to provide all information and instructional materials in alternative formats in a timely manner.**

3. That the government encourage publishers to make textbooks available in electronic format.

4. That eligibility for the Bursary for Students with Disabilities (BSWD) be decoupled from eligibility for Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) funding and be granted based on the educational requirements of the effects of the disability and on the financial need of the student.

5. That the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) review of disability-related funding for students and postsecondary institutions consider each source of funding that falls under provincial jurisdiction in order to ensure:

- The availability of efficient, equitable, and timely funding for students with disabilities;
- The elimination of confusion and duplication of effort;
- The recognition that students with disabilities may take longer to complete their studies;
- Annual increases to reflect increased costs; and
- Harmonization with and complementing of federal financial aid programs.

6. That the government partner with colleges to assess province-wide supply and demand for needed support workers for people with disabilities;

7. That the government partner with colleges to provide education for Ontarians on disability issues.

8. That the government establish a central information bank identifying best practices to assist both employers and potential employees in removing barriers in recruitment and retention processes.

9. That the government continue the practice of requiring colleges to develop and publish Accessibility Plans, and that incentive funding be provided to implement revised or new ODA requirements.

Universal Instructional Design (UID) Research and Recommendations – Georgian College and the University of Guelph



In assisting post-secondary students with disabilities, the traditional educational approach has been to accommodate individual needs to the degree possible without changing courses in any substantial way. For example, a college might inform a deaf student that s/he will need to arrange for a sign language interpreter to translate spoken lectures in class.

A blind student would be expected to get brailled or tape recorded versions of printed materials. A student with a specific learning disability would be required to find a way to get copies of lecture notes from a classmate. Students could be informed about assistive technology such as text-to-voice systems that they might use to cope with academic work and these devices could be made available in labs, usually separated from the learning areas used by classmates.

Over the years, it has been possible to set up systems and programs to make it more convenient for the accommodations to be provided; however, the support model has continued to focus on helping the student to manage the established format or structure of a course, with little thought given to making the course itself more accessible in design or delivery. This disability-focused approach is known as ‘accessibility through accommodation’ and has been the primary service model used at Fanshawe College and most post-secondary settings in Ontario.

In 1990, a movement began in education to think again about who should be responsible for accessibility and assistive technology. This involved the examination of courses, texts, schedules, and other aspects of education, and questions were posed by forward thinkers in the field such as: *Is it really necessary to present most instruction through speech? Must we assign only printed materials for student reading? Are multiple-choice formats the best or only option for evaluation?*

The concept of ‘universal design’ had originated several years before in the planning of buildings and homes. Because family and organizational needs were known to change over time and with evolving circumstances, the goal was to design a physical environment that could continue to suit these changes.

Led by developments in the fields of architecture and physical design, a new concept emerged that focused on maximizing the usability of products, services and environments for everyone- young and old; short people and tall; people with disabilities and without. This also promoted the idea of trying to make features that are necessary for people with disabilities or particular physical needs (curb cuts) attractive to people without (those pushing carts or carrying heavy loads).

Ron Mace, founder of the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University has described seven principles of universal design that make it possible to market 'accessibility' as a characteristic that has much appeal to the general population while providing critical assistance to persons with disabilities.

1. The design can be used and marketed to all kinds of people (automatic doors)
2. The design incorporates a wide variety of preferences and people have choices in how they use it (DVD movie with option of captions)
3. The product or service is easy to understand and use and it avoids unnecessary complexity (printer manual with diagrams).
4. It works in all kinds of settings, so that even in visually busy or noisy environments, people can use it with ease. (train station information board)
5. The design accommodates error, so people can make a mistake without disastrous consequences (ATM includes 'cancel' and 'correction' buttons)
6. The product or service requires minimal effort to use and neither intense nor sustained physical effort is required. (door levers)
7. It accommodates variations in size and position, which means people can use it while standing, sitting or reaching (elevator control button)

Just as buildings and consumer products can be made user-friendlier to the benefit of everyone, it is also possible to design educational approaches that improve access for all students in ways that particularly benefit individuals with disabilities. With universal design applied to the learning environment, it was anticipated that only a small number of students would need 'special' accommodations, primarily those who could not use even universally designed instruction.

In response to findings and recommendations of the Learning Opportunities Task Force (see previous section) the concept of universal instructional design as applied to post-secondary studies has recently been introduced in Ontario.

Applied research has been funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and undertaken at Georgian College in Barrie and through the University of Guelph's Teaching Support Services. Researchers at the University of Guelph introduce the UID project in this way:

In recent years, some educators have suggested that courses designed and delivered with the needs of disabled students in mind are likewise more accessible and effective for all people – regardless of possible disability, learning style preference, or personal background.

At its core is the principle of inclusiveness and equity. UID suggests that ideally all students should be able to fulfill course requirements without special accommodations (i.e., it avoids segregating or stigmatizing any student). This creates a classroom environment that respects and values diversity.

A learning environment that follows principles of universal instruction design is characterized as:

- *Accessible and fair to all parties*
- *Flexible in use, participation and presentation*
- *Straightforward and consistent*
- *Explicitly presented and readily perceived*
- *A supportive learning environment*
- *Involving no unnecessary physical effort or requirements*
- *Using space that accommodates both students and instructional methods*

Source: www.tss.uoguelph.ca/uid/uidintro

In Principles of Universal Design for Instruction, Stan Shaw, Sally Scott and Joan McGuire describe how this approach can improve educational opportunities, both for students with disabilities and the general student population.

These applied researchers at the University of Connecticut are also carrying out ongoing investigations into the advantages and challenges of introducing this concept at the post-secondary level.

They report several benefits to universal instructional design including the following:

- UID results in the creation of environments and products that are as useable as possible by a diverse range of individuals
- UID anticipates the needs of diverse learners and incorporates effective strategies into curriculum and instruction to make learning more accessible
- By focusing on methods and strategies that promote learning for all students, UID embraces an inclusionary approach that enables students with disabilities to overcome some of their barriers to education

By adopting principles of universal instructional design, the responsibility for making curricula, materials and the overall learning environment accessible to and useable by all students is placed upon the professor, service staff members and the institution. Students are provided with an accessible and adaptable learning environment, rather than one that must be coped with and managed through individual accommodations.

As noted by Frank G. Bowe in Universal Design In Education: Teaching Non-Traditional Students *“these alternatives are built into the instructional design and operating systems of educational materials – they are not added on after the fact.”*

Flexible course materials and learning activities that provide alternatives for students’ differing abilities are the most important components in achieving universal design in education. This involves the design of teaching materials and instructional activities that make learning outcomes achievable by students with wide differences in their abilities to see, hear, speak, move, write, understand English, organize, concentrate and remember.

Georgian College has also recently carried out applied research in the application of universal instructional design through a project involving colleges, universities and a military training facility. A practical guide for introducing the concept of this approach in adult learning environments has recently been published and shared with all post-secondary institutions in the Province.

Jim Bryson states in UID in Post-Secondary Settings- An Implementation Guide:

“The implementation of universal instructional design principles into post-secondary classes is, at one level, an effort to move some ‘student services’ practices directly into the classroom where everyone benefits equitably. To do so, we transfer those ‘student services’ skills to teachers. In combination with their teaching skills, commitment to student success and willingness to make flexibility a key component in their instructional toolbox, they provide a more accessible education.”

The strategies embraced by this approach consider ways to make education more convenient for time-pressed students, more comfortable for students from diverse backgrounds and more flexible for students with varied learning modes. Through this approach, information is presented in multiple ways and more options are offered for students to interact with and respond to curricula and learning materials.

STAR WHEELCHAIR ATHLETE GRADUATES

Although the term ‘universal instructional design’ was probably unfamiliar to staff in the Fitness and Health Promotion program at Fanshawe College while Karen Blachford was completing her studies, the flexibility and learning alternatives offered through the program were consistent with this concept. As noted by reporter Joe Matyas, *“The academic achievement was testimony to Blachford’s perseverance and Fanshawe’s flexibility”*.

Karen was able to access most of the program material, receive assignments from teachers and communicate with them through e-mail. Because of the learning alternatives available to Karen and her classmates, her use of a wheelchair and preference to study while maintaining full-time employment were not barriers to participation in the program.

These were options built into the design of the program in advance of her registration, and were not individual accommodations specifically required and arranged because of her disability. They were features of the program that improved opportunities to all students and simultaneously allowed critical flexibility to a student who otherwise would have required individual accommodations.

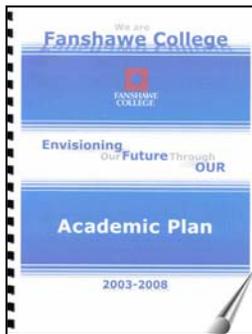
The independent study version of the Fitness and Health Promotion program was designed in such a way that the principles of universal instructional design were naturally implemented.

The program provides equitable use, meaning students with a variety of modes of learning can participate; it includes the use of natural supports available to all students including teacher conferencing, study skills assistance and academic tutoring when required; it offers a supportive learning environment according to Karen and objective observers; it includes perceptible information meaning easily accessible to a student in a wheelchair; it involves multiplicity in design, delivery and evaluation including various electronic communication and evaluation options; and offers flexibility in use as the pace of instruction and learning are intentionally elastic (Karen completed the two-year program over a period of five years through part-time studies while maintaining employment and participating in international curling events).

As we shall see in the following section, many of the principles of universal instructional design are naturally embraced through innovative methods of providing education to today's adult learners. Fanshawe College's formal Academic Plan for 2003 - 2008 includes many complementary principles and recommended techniques that benefit all students, but provide necessary flexibility and learning options for students with disabilities.

Further information about universal instructional design including specific examples of strategies recommended by applied research completed at Georgian College and funded through the Learning Opportunities Task Force may be found in Appendix E.

Fanshawe College Academic Plan for 2003 – 2008



The Fanshawe College Academic Plan was published in the spring of 2004, describes a modern philosophy of learning and is intended *“to allow various areas of the College to integrate the plan’s elements into their own long-term goals”*.

Under the leadership of Senior Vice-President – Academic, Joy Warkentin, this comprehensive plan was developed after consultation with the College community of students and staff, as well external partners in business, industry, health and social service.

There are numerous references within the plan to the critical importance of effective student support services and continued development of opportunities for access through flexible, multi-faceted approaches to learning and evaluation. Of particular relevance to students with disabilities, the plan notes, *“services that support academics are as essential to student success as are excellent programming and teaching”*.

In describing how the Academic Plan could be used effectively for strategic planning and to benefit students within the College, the document also explicitly refers to Student Services – *“Services provided by the many departments and divisions concerned with aspects of student access and support are integral to helping students succeed. These areas will also use the academic plan in their discussions about how they can continue to improve the quality of services and supports to students.”*

The Plan refers specifically to initiatives of the Fanshawe Board of Governors, which emphasized long-term goals related to improved quality and student success initiatives. College support for well-planned and effective student support services that provide access to educational opportunities and improve student success is clearly articulated throughout the planning document.

In terms of new fundraising plans, the Academic Plan outlines the intention to finance strategies to *“improve and enhance student learning and student success”* in addition to other projects and facilities. The authors of the Plan observe that, in accordance with the College’s mission statement of *“We Promote Opportunity”*, the Fanshawe community seeks to increase access opportunities.

This includes additional *“support for new learners and those with special needs”*. Academic excellence, a key goal of this long-term plan is described as including the encouragement of a diversity of approaches to learning and instruction.

Details of this commitment to academic excellence through access and opportunities include the Vision of Learning at Fanshawe College stating that we will:

-design our facilities and services with a focus on providing a full range of supports for learners and for the teaching and learning process.

-design learning opportunities that are genuine, engaging, relevant, and reflective of the workplace environment while addressing the diversity of learning styles and needs.

In an effort to ensure that qualified students are given every opportunity for success, the Academic Plan articulates the commitment to *“helping students find the right program for their talents and career goals.”* The Plan describes the positive results of improving recruitment techniques and increasing web presence in that Fanshawe College has clearly become a college of choice for many Ontario applicants.

Once these students arrive at Fanshawe, the Academic Plan calls for continued early detection of “at risk” students, increased advertising of academic services, mentoring programs, orientation sessions, and student success initiatives that are helping Fanshawe students succeed in their studies.

This blueprint for the academic future at Fanshawe encourages academic distinction, and makes it clear that *“Fanshawe College is firmly committed to excellence in teaching and learning... in the provision of facilities and support services which will further students’ success...”*

The Academic Plan also describes the intention to develop centres of excellence at Fanshawe as part of the goal to promote strengths of the College.

This would be determined through an internal review of potential centres of excellence based on eight criteria including 1) external recognition 2) quality 3) resources 4) support of college mission statement and strategic goals 5) programs and services 6) contribution to applications of knowledge 7) marketability, and 8) strategic educational partnerships.

In light of the success of the Millennium Project, which provided provincial leadership in the field of post-secondary services for students with learning disabilities between 1998 and 2002, the College may also wish to consider the benefits of promoting service centres of excellence in addition to academic centres at Fanshawe.

One of the two primary quantitative goals of the Academic Plan is to increase graduation rates by 5% by 2008. The Millennium Project research showed that retention rates were consistently higher for students using support services than matched comparison groups consisting of non-disabled and learning disabled students.

The percentage of attempted courses passed by students increased by 12% from pre-pilot indicators and the graduation rates for LD students increased 7% in comparison with students who did not use enhanced services. Many of the strategies that proved effective with students with learning disabilities including individual assessment, intensive tutoring, use of assistive technology and learning strategies instruction, could be applied to the broader student population.

Closely allied to the concept of universal instructional design, the College's Academic Plan also calls for the Fanshawe community to *"expand existing flexibility in the structure and delivery of our programs to increase accessibility for more part-time, international and other non-traditional students."*

The academic plan includes a call to provide a broader array of learning options to meet course and program outcomes and to support the differing needs and styles of learners. Examples of these options include *"hosting learning in a variety of modes and settings, including classes augmented with tutorials or small labs, or offering courses via a variety of alternative and distance technologies supported by libraries, virtual spaces for courses, and scholarly exchanges on the Internet."*

Flexibility in evaluation and instruction appears to be a key component of academic planning over the next several years at Fanshawe College, and this is a direction that is fully compatible with the principles of universal instructional design. The Academic Plan promotes assisting faculty to make use of teaching methodologies that address a variety of learning styles *"by providing access to a pedagogically sound curriculum development tool."*

Technological approaches are seen as a viable and flexible means of improving accessibility to all students. The Plan encourages a diversity of approaches in the classroom and lab and recognizes the need to provide opportunities for faculty to learn how to adapt teaching approaches and course design to different instructional designs.

Perhaps most critical to the successful integration and success of students with disabilities, the Academic Plan promotes support and training for College staff *"in order to ensure sensitivity to the diversity of our population and foster awareness and inclusive practices in both learning and support."* The authors of the Plan see inclusiveness and accessibility in education as being fully compatible with the further goal of ongoing innovation in teaching, learning, evaluation and curriculum development.

The concept of access is also an explicitly described component of the College's academic plan through 2008. The document states that "*Fanshawe College is committed to ensuring fair and equitable access for all learners by offering opportunities for education and life achievement that are not restricted by income, race, gender or demographic variables.*" (disability is implied but not specified). *The College seeks to provide a welcoming atmosphere free from harassment, where all are welcomed and supported in their learning.*"

The Academic Plan does specifically refer to students with disabilities or special needs in a section dealing with access and describes the plan to "*continue and increase liaison opportunities with secondary school teachers and counsellors to ensure a smooth transition between revised secondary school curriculum and college programming*".

The Plan also calls for an expansion of testing and counselling services to applicants and learners with special needs. To increase student success, a protocol is proposed through which students are identified as soon as possible as 'at risk' and subsequently provided with "*timely advice, support or redirection*".

The Plan envisions an increase in the use of appropriate technology to provide support services to students to increase the speed of access and to allow greater flexibility in format, location and timing of the services. A full range of on-line student services are anticipated.

Just as new technologies can help students in instructional and evaluation settings, they are also seen as helping to identify where students need individual assistance and as a means to provide access to learning for those who cannot access the traditional classroom.

The Academic Plan also refers to the need to provide professional development opportunities for faculty to learn how to develop, seek funding for and carry out applied research projects. This is a goal that has implications for service delivery as well because, with the exception of the Millennium Project, very little program evaluation has traditionally been carried out in counselling and disability service areas at Fanshawe College to determine the effectiveness of supports provided.

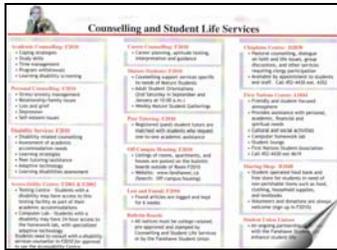
In addition to other stated goals, the Fanshawe College Academic Plan for 2003-2008, concludes with a commitment to:

- offer quality comprehensive programming and support services

- offer students increased academic opportunities and services, and multiple entrance and exit points, methods, and modes of instructional delivery, and learning ladders

- provide increased levels of access, academic service, quality education, opportunities for student success, and learning for employment

Fanshawe College – Services for Students with Disabilities: Vision, Goals and Objectives



As part of the accountability requirements for the Accessibility Fund received each year from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to support students with disabilities, Fanshawe College is required to submit an annual report. This report includes a review of activities relating to services provided for students, a financial report, as well as planned initiatives and anticipated outcomes for the next year.

The Accessibility Fund has increased over the years as the number of students with disabilities served at Ontario colleges and universities has continued to grow. However, as with general operational funding for post-secondary institutions, the per-student funding provided through this allocation has gradually decreased since it was first introduced in 1988.

While serving 237 students with disabilities in 1990-91, Fanshawe College received \$250,789 through targeted funding or \$1,058 per student. For the 2002-03 academic year, a total of 788 students with disabilities received support services. Funding from the Ministry had increased to \$428,727, but this provided only \$544 per student. Even when recently introduced Ministry funding for enhanced services for students with learning disabilities is added to the Accessibility Fund, the per-student financial support is significantly below earlier levels.

Despite these financial challenges, Services for Students with Disabilities has continued to provide comprehensive and effective supports to students through innovative approaches. The OSAP-based Bursary for Students with Disabilities, partnerships with community agencies such as the Network to Learning and the Fanshawe Student Success Bursary introduced in 2002 are examples of initiatives that have allowed the College to maintain services at a reasonable level.

Increasing pressure to assist students with more complex disabilities and the continually growing number of students seeking access to college education, adds pressure to maintain quality and timeliness in disability services.

Appendix F includes details of planned initiatives that Services for Students with Disabilities included in the 2003 Accessibility Fund report to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

A Vision for the Future

In January, 2004 a number of staff members from Counselling Services and Services for Students with Disabilities at Fanshawe College met to discuss a shared vision and long term goal setting. The report from this discussion describes a plan to work toward the establishment of a regional centre for disability services and resources that would include the following components:

- Specialization in learning disorders that would encompass all disabilities
- Providing service to internal and external post-secondary settings
- Applied research
- Training to others in the field of disability services
- Individual assessment
- Application of specialized technology
- Provision of expertise with a clear focus on education

The vision of this planning group also included a wider focus on outreach to the community, access to additional funding through multiple sources such as new partnerships and fees for service, and a commitment to identifying service needs through analysis of previously collected client/student data.

In accordance with principles of universal design in education as well as the College's Academic Plan, the group noted the importance of working more with Fanshawe staff and faculty to address disability issues in the classroom rather than focusing exclusively on individual student accommodation needs.

The necessity of finding creative and flexible approaches to assisting increasing numbers of students with disabilities was also emphasized through the discussions. Envisioned service delivery would involve less primarily counsellor-determined support and greater self-advocacy among students as they are helped to choose the amount and type of service received.

PART 2

Based on the information reviewed from these multiple sources, the following suggestions are offered in the form of facts and possible fixes covering fifteen specific areas. Some of these suggestions could be implemented immediately, while many will require further discussion and extensive planning and implementation over a number of years.

These recommended actions are all based on objective information derived from the research I carried out. Many reflect the successful approaches taken at other colleges and universities or are suggested by research findings and recommendations from various investigations. They all are intended to improve access to education for students with disabilities and would help Fanshawe College move forward in its role as an institution that strives for equity in opportunity for all community members.

I. FACULTY EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

FACT:

There is consistent evidence from a variety of sources that faculty knowledge and awareness needs to be improved if students with disabilities are to meet with success at the post-secondary level.

FIX:

Increase incentives, options and accountability for Fanshawe College staff to learn more about the educational needs of students with disabilities.

1. Services for Students with Disabilities and Staff Development personnel to collaborate on development of variety of resources for College staff members who need to learn more about accessibility and disability issues.
2. Introduce requirement that professors and librarians use one of every 20 professional development days for the purpose of increasing awareness and knowledge of academic needs of students with disabilities.
3. All new faculty members participating in *Orientation to Fanshawe College* program to receive expanded introduction to disability supports, applicable policies, principles of accessible education and disability awareness as part of required sessions.
4. Services for Students with Disabilities staff continue to collaborate and expand involvement with western region *College Educator Development Program* at Ridgetown, focusing on disability awareness, academic accommodation, accessibility and universal instructional design.
5. Provide appropriate incentives for teaching staff to adopt strategies that promote accessible learning and to implement principles of universal instructional design of curriculum and evaluation.

6. Increase Internet-based resources for faculty and staff through Fanshawe College website materials and additional links; include existing Faculty Guide and manual for instructing students with learning disabilities in addition to other critical information needed by professors who want to provide appropriate classroom supports.

7. Increase visibility of disability services staff for consultation in academic areas through annual attendance at department meetings to discuss disability and accessibility issues.

8. Introduce a standard accessibility statement to be included in all course outlines as a means of increasing awareness among faculty. An example from Cambrian College is-

“If you are a student with a disability, we encourage you to identify yourself to (the Disability Services Office) at (519-452-4282) or by e-mail at (disabilityservices@fanshawec.ca) so that support services may be arranged for you.”

II. FUNDING

FACT:

The number of students with disabilities attending Fanshawe College is expected to continue to increase given current demographic and social trends. The disability support funding per student from government sources has continually decreased since 1990.

FIX:

Support efforts to lobby for increased Ministry funding and seek out alternative sources.

1. Continue active involvement with CCDI, ACAATO and support efforts of these provincial organizations through sharing data, attending provincial meetings and conferences and participating in executive functions.
2. In anticipation of a positive response from the provincial government to ACAATO's multi-year funding proposal to broaden supports for students with disabilities, the College should begin to develop a list of priorities to which any increased funding might be applied. Any changes to disability funding allocations are not likely to occur until January 2005 when the post-secondary review panel headed by Bob Rae is expected to report to the provincial government.
3. Continue and further develop cooperative relationship between disability services and the Partnership Office at Fanshawe College to actively engage in funding proposals and to anticipate new opportunities.
4. As part of planned \$15 M capital campaign for Fanshawe College, include opportunity for donors to contribute for specific disability and accessibility-related activities or capital projects; consider assigning a proportion of all donated funds to disability services and supports that enhance student success.
5. Develop existing partnerships with community organizations such as the *Network to Learning* and actively seek new opportunities to share resources and expertise and to gain access to new sources of funding from other provincial and federal ministries.
6. Consider innovative approaches to increased funding such as fee for services to community clients and use of extended health plans for students receiving psychological services.
7. Consider a student accessibility fee for all students similar to that introduced at University of Toronto (\$2 annually), or a student services/student life fee as

implemented at several post-secondary institutions. Target funds to specific disability or accessibility-related activities that are highly visible to all students.

8. Use existing Fanshawe College funding structures including the Computer Technology Fee and Research Committee resources to supplement targeted funding from the provincial government.

9. Consider option of having academic areas contribute a proportion of operational funds to support some services for students with disabilities such as the AccessAbility Testing Centre and Computer Lab where these supports directly relate to divisional academic activity.

10. Include a standard section in all funding proposals for adult training and apprenticeship programs that requests a set funding amount per student participant for disability supports (\$800-\$1000 X 10% of anticipated student enrolment).

11. Support provincial efforts to de-couple eligibility for Bursary for Students with Disabilities (BSWD) from eligibility for Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) and improve access to required individual funding for disability supports in post-secondary education.

III. EQUAL ACCESS FOR ALL DISABILITY TYPES

FACT:

Because of the Millennium Project and new provincial funding for students with specific learning disabilities, there is a current imbalance between level of service and array of supports available to students with other types of disabilities.

FIX:

Take specific steps to further develop supports and services for non-LD students through quantitative investigation and strategic planning.

1. Compare recent Fanshawe College demographic data with provincial distribution of students with various types of disability provided through CCDI; identify any discrepancies and develop specific strategies to reach out to students that are under represented or under served.
2. Complete student survey as part of initial Accessibility Plan, involving students with a variety of disability types; consider any areas of unmet need and areas where services might be improved.
3. Meet with special education staff at secondary schools and community organizations that work with traditionally under represented students at the College including those with mental illness, deaf individuals and those with severe physical disabilities; collaborate to develop strategies that would make the College more accessible and inviting to these students.
4. Support provincial efforts to increase availability of qualified sign language interpreters and other highly specialized disability service professionals.
5. Formally adopt and implement guidelines for sign language interpretation at Ontario colleges as published by provincial College Committee on Disability Issues (CCDI).
6. Disability services and counselling staff to develop closer ties with College health services staff and the consulting psychiatrist to benefit students with mental illnesses; discuss effectiveness of current screening and identification methods on campus and develop collaboration with relevant community agencies.
7. Provide additional professional development opportunities for disability services staff to expand expertise in serving students with disabilities that are currently under represented at the College; to include credit courses, conference workshops, on-line courses, membership in professional organizations.

8. Join CADSPPE (Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers in Postsecondary Education) for access to conferences, developing professional standards and various resources.

9. Consider hiring staff or developing contract consultative services with personnel experienced in working with adults with severe physical and cognitive disabilities; these might include occupational therapists or community mental health specialists.

IV. ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

FACT:

It continues to be far too difficult for students to obtain textbooks and critical course materials in alternate formats such as digital, Braille and audiotape versions within an acceptable period of time.

FIX:

Support efforts to lobby for federal or provincial legislative requirements to address the problem while developing local solutions as an interim approach.

1. Continue to support the provincial College Committee on Disability Issues (CCDI) as the executive seeks improvements in provincial sources for alternative format materials including the Resource Services Library at the W. Ross Macdonald School in Brantford.

2. Support provincial efforts to require that textbook publishers provide electronic versions of textbooks at a reasonable cost as alternative to printed copies; support the call for such a requirement to be added to obligations under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act or federal communications requirements.

3. Fanshawe College to consider a policy of giving preference to purchase textbooks from publishers who provide an electronic or audio version of the material when other comparative factors are equivalent.
4. Services for Students with Disabilities to collaborate with Reprographics Department and Library to offer high-speed scanning option for students who require print alternatives and are able to use existing text-to-speech software.
5. Services for Students with Disabilities to review and possibly expand services for students in offering alternative format material when no other options exist; this would include hiring of more part-time staff or peer assistants to scan material to digital formats or to read material to audio tape in a timely manner so students are not disadvantaged by inconvenience or delays.
6. Through professional development activities and accessibility education, encourage professors to make electronic versions of classroom material available through course website, e-mail or disk.
7. Continue administrative reminders to faculty to ensure textbook selections are made early enough that students can order alternative formats in advance of semester; consider a formal policy including an appropriate deadline to ensure compliance and improve general student success.

V. TIMELY PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

FACT:

Students with cognitive disabilities including learning disabilities and attention deficit disorders require comprehensive and up to date assessments in order to be eligible for bursaries, accommodations and certain academic supports. Many students do not have timely access to these assessments at Fanshawe College and other post-secondary institutions.

FIX:

Expand assessment services and standardize the procedure for screening and individual evaluation in accordance with current professional standards.

1. If current CCDI standards for documentation of cognitive disabilities were implemented at Fanshawe College, at least 100 new or updated psycho-educational assessments would need to be completed each year. Current assessment services must be expanded to meet this requirement.
2. Hire contract services to assist with ongoing waiting list for psycho-educational assessments and to supplement evaluations carried out by full time staff in Services for Students with Disabilities; this is particularly critical during peak service periods such as September and January when staff are busy with intake and orientation activities so assessments generally are not scheduled.
3. Disability services staff to collaborate with assessment referral sources including general counsellors to ensure appropriate screening of students with possible cognitive disabilities; review effectiveness of current screening methods to maximize efficiency; consider expanding role of support staff in screening procedures.
4. Collaborate with area school boards and psychological services departments to encourage comprehensive assessment or re-assessment of students with cognitive

disabilities *prior to* transition to post-secondary studies; clarify documentation standards required for access to accommodations, bursaries and support services including recency of assessment and need for a clear diagnosis by a qualified practitioner.

5. Establish working relationship with Regional Assessment and Resource Centres established by the Learning Opportunities Task Force (LOTF) and explore possibility of accessing the mobile assessment team to supplement existing assessment services at Fanshawe College.

6. Establish policy of providing student assessments on campus whenever possible to maintain ease of access for students and to minimize disruption during study periods.

7. Develop and expand relationships with community organizations including the Network to Learning to make use of assessment services funded through alternative government programs.

VI. STUDENT SELF ADVOCACY

FACT:

Student success is positively correlated with the degree of self-advocacy and personal responsibility for learning that is assumed in post-secondary settings. Students with disabilities generally underutilize on-campus student organizations and lack self-advocacy skills.

FIX:

Increase efforts to support student attempts at Fanshawe College to organize for self-advocacy and improved accessibility in education.

1. Review results of student survey to be completed as part of initial Accessibility Plan for Fanshawe College and take steps to clearly demonstrate that input is valued and promptly acted upon.
2. Establish an advisory panel made up of students with various forms of disability and consider inclusion of representatives from relevant community agencies.
3. Continue and expand the existing social group established for students with cognitive disabilities, without unintentionally segregating participants from opportunities within the general student population.
4. Assist students to make use of advocacy resources available on campus through the Student Union and through broader student organizations including the National Association of Disabled Students (NEADS); add a link to NEADS from the Fanshawe College website location for disability services.
5. Consider providing funds to supplement any available through the Student Union for the establishment of a disabled student organization at the London campus.
6. Provide information to students about advocacy resources through orientation activities, newsletters, student newspaper articles and the College website.
7. Review the process of including student representation on the College Committee on Student Disability Issues at Fanshawe College to ensure meaningful and consistent participation.

VII. COMMUNITY INPUT

FACT:

There is a wealth of knowledge and information available through various community organizations that support persons with disabilities. This knowledge has not been fully utilized in the provision of services to students with disabilities at Fanshawe College.

FIX:

Develop greater collaboration with community organizations, school boards and referring agencies to benefit students with disabilities.

1. Consider establishing a regular “service review process” modeled on the program reviews completed for all College academic programs. This review could be carried out every four years and involve students, College staff and community agency personnel.
2. Continue and expand on the recent information day offered to secondary students with learning disabilities and the special education staff who work with them.
3. Offer a similar community information session on an annual basis for the benefit of students with other forms of disability; use part of these information days to obtain community input through structured focus group discussions.
4. Provide printed information packages about disability services to various community organizations that serve individuals with disabilities and invite feedback on how the College might better meet post-secondary education and training needs of clients.

VIII. STUDENT AWARENESS

FACT:

It is critical that prospective and current students with disabilities have easy access to information about disability services if they are to be appropriately supported at Fanshawe College.

FIX:

Review relevance and effectiveness of existing information sources and develop additional strategies for increasing student awareness by actively advertising services.

1. Ensure that all prospective students have access to information about disability services and supports prior to making decisions about self-identification.
2. Ensure that all critical information provided to students throughout the College is available in alternate formats upon request. Use a standard symbol and accompanying statement to make staff and students aware of alternate formats.

Examples include-



3. Consider how departmental identification in the student services area might be improved to avoid confusion and make it easier to locate required information and services. The current department title, “Counselling and Student Life Services” does not clearly identify the fact that at least half the staff members, activity and department resources are focused on services for students with disabilities.
4. Consider following the lead of the University of Toronto which uses the departmental title of “Accessibility Services” for the disability support area to more accurately reflect an emphasis on access to education for all students, including those with disabilities.
5. Update existing information on the disability services website location for Fanshawe College and add additional resource material to increase student awareness; a systematic review of other post-secondary websites and methods used by various human service organizations would be helpful to identify best practices.
6. Using the model of Georgian College, provide a series of ‘QUICK TIP’ sheets in PDF format for students and staff through the disability services website location; include topics such as ‘Disclosure’, ‘ADHD and Education’, ‘Note-Taking’ and ‘Interviews for Employment’.
7. The website of The Canadian Health Network (Health Canada) at www.canadian-health-network.ca recently received an award for presentation and effectiveness. This may serve as a helpful model for enhancing the Fanshawe website location for disability services.
8. A disability awareness statement on every course outline (see earlier section on FACULTY EDUCATION AND AWARENESS) would also increase student awareness and encourage self -identification.

9. Similar statements on all major publications including college calendars, program brochures, and all student handbooks should be reviewed and possibly expanded.

10. The Publications working group of the College's Accessibility Committee will be examining information accessibility and its recommendations should be implemented in a timely manner.

11. A wide variety of strategies and resources for improving communication with students with disabilities can be found on the Internet at www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility and on the *Paths to Equal Opportunity* website: www.equalopportunity.on.ca

12. Consider hiring a qualified accessibility consultant to carry out an information/communications/publications audit for the college. This would complement the recent physical accessibility audit completed by an outside consultant. The Ontario March of Dimes includes a list of such consultants on their online *Directory of Accessibility* at www.accessibilitydirectory.ca

13. Because of its critical importance, review methods used to inform students with disabilities of existing safety, emergency and evacuation policies. Detailed explanation of these procedures during orientations and regular reminders throughout the academic year are needed to ensure student safety.

IX. INSTITUTIONAL AWARENESS AND COMMITMENT

FACT:

A clearly articulated institutional culture of accessibility with strong administrative support has been proven beneficial in supporting students with disabilities.

FIX:

Support current administrative commitment to accessible education at Fanshawe College and examine methods to broaden awareness among board members, administrators, professors and other College staff.

1. Carry out a comprehensive review of Fanshawe College policy 2-A-9 on the Accommodation of Applicants and Students with Disabilities. Use forthcoming guidelines from the Ontario Human Rights Commission to ensure compliance with legislative requirements in relation to accessible educational services.
2. Update Policy 2-A-9 to include practices and procedures that have been introduced at the College to the benefit of students with disabilities including a modified admissions process in certain circumstances, a guarantee for part-time registration in required courses, and access to the full-time student benefit package for part-time students with disabilities.
3. Because many students with severe disabilities are not eligible for academic scholarships and awards due to full-time registration requirements, the College should consider recognition of part-time course load (40-100%) as equivalent for students with disabilities that limit full time participation.
4. Provide professional development activities for all new board members and administrative staff to ensure adequate understanding of disability issues, accommodation guidelines and College policies relating to students and staff with disabilities.

5. Demonstrate a clear institutional commitment to accessibility in education in all College publications and presentations.

6. Convene a meeting between the Manager of Counselling and Student Life Services/Services for Students with Disabilities, the Senior Vice President-Academics and the Vice President - Student and Staff Services to discuss how the College Academic Plan and the principles of accessibility and universal instructional design in education may be jointly promoted at Fanshawe College.

7. Consider integrating human rights requirements and Academic Plan principles (flexibility, individualized approach, options in learning) into the College policy on the accommodation of students with disabilities; this would help to make the policy Fanshawe- specific and demonstrate more clearly an academic commitment to accessible education.

X. TRANSITION SERVICES - TO COLLEGE

FACT:

Several reports or investigations have identified the need to improve the preparedness of students with disabilities for college level study.

FIX:

Develop strategies to assist students who choose Fanshawe College to prepare effectively for the transition from secondary school or other sources.

1. Improve communication with, and information provided to, secondary schools and community agencies that work with students preparing for post- secondary education; several strategies suggested under COMMUNITY INPUT and STUDENT AWARENESS are also relevant in this area.

2. Disability services staff to consider offering an on-campus, weeklong transition program for students with disabilities similar to those offered by several colleges and universities and funded through the Ministry's Enhanced Services Fund.
3. Staff members to participate in the *Network to Learning* annual community conference and offer workshop on the topic of transition planning for clients with learning disabilities.
4. Invite special education staff from area secondary schools to visit and participate in disability services activities at Fanshawe; consider hosting staff during professional development days or for longer educational training periods.
5. Depending on the outcome of increased funding request to the Ministry through ACAATO, consider hiring a new staff member to act as a liaison and transition coordinator in collaboration with secondary schools and community agencies.
6. Building upon the transition strategies introduced through the Millennium Project, identify several partner secondary schools and develop collaborative projects to improve preparedness of students with disabilities.
7. Invite senior Fanshawe students with disabilities to serve as an on-line mentor and advisor to Gr.11 and 12 students with disabilities who are considering post-secondary education.
8. Follow the example of the University of Toronto and produce short video presentations featuring current students or recent graduates who discuss how they successfully coped with a disability; offer a link to these through the College website or loan videotapes to secondary schools.

XI. TRANSITION SERVICES- TO EMPLOYMENT/ COMMUNITY

FACT:

Many students with disabilities who are successful in the college setting find it difficult to make the transition to work placements. Others who are not academically successful need help connecting with alternative supports in the community.

FIX:

Develop new strategies to assist students in the transition from Fanshawe College to other settings.

1. Improve tracking methods to more accurately identify students who are preparing to leave the college so appropriate transition supports can be offered.
2. Develop a transition package that includes community and employment supports that would be of benefit to students with disabilities; this would include information about the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and employment accommodation requirements under the Ontario Human Rights Code.
3. Provide website links to employment and disability organizations including www.WORKink.com (on-line career development and employment portal for Canadians with disabilities) and Persons With Disabilities On-line (www.pwd-online.ca) a site where students can access a wide range of information on disability related programs and services in Canada.
4. Develop greater collaboration between disability services and career services staff at the College to identify any unique vocational needs of students with disabilities; prepare resource materials in co-operation with Career Services staff on topics such as disclosure options during interviews and human rights in the workplace.

5. Participate in annual career fair at Fanshawe by offering information of particular interest to students and potential graduates with disabilities; invite participation by community employment services for persons with disabilities including

Leads Employment Services London Inc.

6. Consider implementing a “workplace accommodation form” for students with disabilities on field placements, co-op placements and in other program-specific employment settings; this would be modeled on the current academic accommodation form used at the College and include the name of a counsellor or advisor contact for employers to consult when necessary.

7. Examine outcomes from the Learning Opportunities Task Force’s ongoing longitudinal study of students who participated in the Millennium Project and other pilot projects (1998-2002) to consider former students’ opinion of strategies that would have helped their transition from college.

XII. SERVICE EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

FACT:

There has been little objective evaluation of the effectiveness of disability services provided at the College and accountability for the funds allocated to these services is rarely addressed.

FIX:

Implement applied research projects to evaluate outcomes of services and take steps to account more publicly for the application of funds from various sources.

1. Building upon the program evaluation methods used during the Millennium Project, prepare and administer student questionnaires to rate the usefulness of various accessibility services.

2. Apply for research funding through the Fanshawe College Research Committee or the research fund of the provincial College Committee on Disability Issues (CCDI) to investigate issues that have broad application to disability services and accessibility within the college system.
3. Continue and develop relationship with the Partnerships Office at Fanshawe to identify possible funding for applied research.
4. Support and participate in the goals of the Fanshawe College Academic Plan relating to practical research including the establishment of an Office of Applied Research.
5. Disability services staff to participate in professional development opportunities recommended in the Academic Plan *“to learn how to develop, seek funding for, and carry out applied research projects”*.
6. Designated disability services staff to be given sufficient time and resources to use existing data base information for applied research purposes and evaluation activities that would contribute to service improvements.
7. Actively encourage partnerships with other post-secondary institutions that are participating in applied research projects (e.g., University of Western Ontario investigation of WORDQ writing software for students with cognitive disabilities).
8. Following the lead of other post secondary institutions, publish the annual Accessibility Fund report to the Ministry for public review on the College website.
9. Invite greater input from students in use of discretionary funds including assistive technology upgrades and additions in the AccessAbility Computer Lab.

10. Review the process of allocating Bursary for Students With Disabilities (BSWD) and consider increasing student input in use of total funds available for individual use. (e.g. student decides use of eligible funds up to \$10,000 for services or equipment that can be approved by a disability services counsellor).

XIII. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

FACT:

The use of assistive technology by college students with disabilities has proven to be one of the most popular and effective means of making education more accessible.

FIX:

Review and build upon the strong assistive technology service currently offered through Services for Students with Disabilities and the AccessAbility Lab at the London campus and to a lesser extent at area campuses.

1. Disability services staff to be provided with resources and opportunities for ongoing professional development so they may remain current in the rapidly progressing field of assistive technology.
2. Consider new strategies for moving assistive technology further into the mainstream of academic life at Fanshawe College; consider designating a specific proportion of general computer lab space to accessible hardware and software; avoid approaches that “ghettoize” use of specialized technology and which may limit opportunity for student with disabilities to interact with classmates and teaching staff.
3. Maintain 24-hour access to accessible computer labs, while enhancing availability of support services on site to instruct students in use of technology and to assist with trouble shooting technical problems.

4. Submit annual proposals to the Fanshawe College Computer Technology Fee Committee to provide upgrades and improvements to technology at all campuses.
5. Review access to assistive technology for students with disabilities at the Simcoe, St. Thomas and Woodstock campuses; provide regular professional development activities to information technology staff and teaching staff at those locations.
6. Raise awareness of the need for accessible technology whenever academic programs introduce new software; help computer services staff understand how disability-related hardware and software may or may not be compatible with computer systems available to all students on campus.
7. Maintain the current system of introducing students to new assistive technology prior to bursary applications and requiring a period in which the student demonstrates the effectiveness of the technical aid to cope with the disability; guard against making the process of obtaining personal computer systems or technical aids unnecessarily complicated or time consuming for busy students.
8. Review and develop methods that allow students who use assistive technology to effectively apply these strategies when writing tests and exams.
9. Until eligibility for the BSWD is decoupled from OSAP eligibility, students at Fanshawe College who demonstrate sufficient need should be able to acquire assistive technology through the Fanshawe Student Success Bursary; implications and alternatives need to be discussed with the Manager of Financial Aid.

XIV. STUDENT SUCCESS AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF SERVICES

FACT:

The current emphasis on student success within the college system is consistent with the stated goals of Fanshawe College's Academic Plan, principles of Universal Instruction Design and the objectives of Services for Students with Disabilities.

FIX:

Increase awareness within the Fanshawe College community of the link between positive academic outcomes and the availability of comprehensive student services; take steps to continuously evaluate and develop services that promote student success.

1. Gradually introduce principles of Universal Instructional Design within Fanshawe College through collaboration between disability services staff, academic program staff and curriculum consultants; use available implementation guide and other resources from Georgian College, the University of Guelph and U.S. sources; address issue of need for sufficient preparation time and technological awareness among teaching staff to adequately provide fully accessible curricula.
2. Services for Student with Disabilities to examine previous Key Performance Indicators (KPI) reports and review trends in satisfaction ratings for disability services; follow this investigation with the establishment of clear goals and strategies for improving results reflecting student satisfaction and success.
3. Disability services staff to participate in annual review and planning days to discuss developing issues and to work on specific plans for continually improving services to students.

4. Review outcomes for specific disability services including note-taking, peer tutoring, disability counselling, exam accommodations and individual assessments; consult with students, staff and counterparts at other colleges and universities with goal of applying best practices when effectiveness is clearly demonstrated.
5. Consider feasibility of moving towards more electronic and on-line methods for providing many paper based functions including test and exam scheduling, scheduling of assessments, storing of student records, and referring for various services within the College.
6. Consider feasibility of integrating some accessibility functions into other areas of the College, where appropriate; (e.g., the College library to become access point for provision of textbooks, resources material and course handouts in alternate formats).
7. Consider process used at Queens University in which students with disabilities are invited to create their own draft version of an accommodation form via the University website, with the final form for distribution being subject to a disability counsellor's endorsement.
8. In recognition of students' increasing computer and Internet proficiency, provide additional methods via website for on-line self-identification and request for services.
9. Consider payment for classroom note-takers or provide end of term stipend to increase quality and reliability of this critical service to students with physical or written language disabilities. Monitor quality of notes provided as condition of payment.
10. Because of increasing numbers of students with complex disabilities including multiple physical and medical needs, review division of responsibility for medical, transportation and non-educational services that many students expect will continue

from school board services. Invite greater collaboration with *Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care* and the *Community Care Access Centre of London-Middlesex*.

11. Implement process for earlier contact with academic program staff to plan effectively for the physical accessibility needs of new students.

XV. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

FACT:

To maximize educational accessibility in an institution as multifaceted as Fanshawe College, it is critical that disability support services be structured and administered in a manner that allows for flexibility, creativity and rapid development to respond to new challenges.

FIX:

Review the current administrative structure of Services for Students with Disabilities at Fanshawe College and the unit's role within the larger student services department.

1. Investigate administrative structure of student services and disability services departments at other large colleges in Ontario and consider formats that may provide a more manageable approach.

2. Examine the administrative structure at post-secondary institutions such as Cambrian College, Trent University, Algonquin College and the University of Toronto which have been effective leaders in the field of accessibility and disability services; consider any administrative advantages that may be applicable at Fanshawe College.

3. Depending on allocation of new funding, consider creation of a new position-Manager of Accessibility Services. In addition to administration of current disability services, responsibilities would include:

- Financial supervision of all disability-targeted funding;
- Coordination of College functions and obligations in accordance with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act;
- Collaboration with faculty, administrators, and service staff to identify and reduce barriers to education for students with disabilities;
- Increasing awareness and implementing principles of universal instructional design in College physical setting, instruction, information and procedures.

4. New staff position to work closely with Manager of Counselling and Student Life Services and Manager of Career Services to effectively provide a comprehensive range of student services.

5. New staff position to reduce increasing administrative demand on Vice President of Student and Staff Services and Manager of Counselling and Student Life Services, to address many current administrative challenges, and to position Fanshawe College to develop its role as a leader in innovative and effective service to students.

APPENDIX A

[Recommendations from the Ontario Human Rights Commission report of July, 2003: The Opportunity to Succeed: Achieving Barrier Free Education for Students with Disabilities.](#)

A Summary of Actions Required by Post-Secondary Institutions

- Prepare accommodation plans that, in addition to meeting requirements under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (O.D.A.):

- Set goals, identify steps taken and report on achievements made with respect to adhering to the principles of inclusion by design, barrier removal, most appropriate or next best or interim accommodation of remaining needs, individualization, confidentiality, and shared responsibilities in the accommodation process. Accessibility plans should also report on policies, procedures and mechanisms of implementation, monitoring, education and training, input, dispute resolution and accountability;
- Include timelines, performance measures and accountability structures; and
- Respect the dignity and the right to integration and participation of students with disabilities in the process of planning for and implementing accessibility.

- Private post-secondary institutions, including private career colleges, private universities, and professional accreditation bodies should also develop and make public accessibility plans that incorporate the broad definition of accessibility outlined above; include timelines, performance measures and accountability structures; include monitoring and review mechanisms; and are developed through a process that respects the dignity and right to integration and full participation of persons with disabilities.

- Review their policies with respect to part-time students, with a view to identifying and removing barriers to students with disabilities.

- Take steps to develop and implement appropriate education strategies for faculty and staff with respect to disability-related issues.

- Work together to develop and share best practices for service delivery and supports for students with disabilities.

- Develop and implement dispute resolution procedures for accommodation requests that comply with the *Code* and *Disability Policy*.

- Institute and communicate to staff and faculty confidentiality guidelines with respect to students with disabilities that comply with the requirements of the *Code* and *Policy*.

-That faculty make all classroom materials (handouts, etc.) available in alternative formats in a timely manner.

- Take steps to move away from reliance, in their admissions procedures, on tests that fail to provide appropriate accommodation and confidentiality for students with disabilities.
- Encourage educators to adopt the principles of universal design when developing course curricula, and delivery and evaluation methods.
- Ensure that staff and faculty comply with the requirements of the *Code* and the *Disability Policy* with respect to appropriate accommodation.
- Reaffirm their primary responsibility, as institutions, to ensure that they provide equal, non-discriminatory educational services to students with disabilities.

Government – Post-Secondary Level – Summary of Actions Required

- Review funding programs for students to ensure that their requirements do not directly impose barriers or adversely discriminate against students with disabilities, and that students with disabilities have timely access to appropriate accommodation.
- Review communications vehicles regarding programs for students with disabilities to ensure that students with disabilities are able to access information about funding in a timely, dignified and effective manner.
- Require private career colleges to prepare and make public accessibility plans, as a condition of their licensing. These accessibility plans should incorporate the broad definition of accessibility outlined above; include timelines, performance measures and accountability structures; include monitoring and review mechanisms; and are developed through a process that respects the dignity and right to integration and full participation of persons with disabilities.

Other – Test Providers – Summary of Actions Required

- Implement policies and procedures to ensure that students with disabilities receive appropriate, dignified and confidential accommodations to test procedures.

Other – Textbook Publishers – Summary of Actions Required

- Comply with their duties as service providers under the *Code* by ensuring that texts are available in both traditional and alternative formats.

APPENDIX B

[Recommendations from the National Educational Association of Disabled Students \(NEADS\) Report - Working Towards a National Approach to Services, Accommodations and Policies for Post-Secondary Students with Disabilities: Ensuring Access to Higher Education and Career Training.](#)

INSTITUTIONAL FUNDING

- Disability service provision must be fully supported by post-secondary institutions and governments with sufficient financial and human resources to meet student needs. Meeting the academic objectives of the disabled student population in Canada requires as wide a network as possible of accessible post-secondary institutions, and funding to meet the needs of these students.
- Students must be able to receive the best and most appropriate education regardless of their geographic location. Therefore, supports to students should be fully portable and students should retain the right to move from one province to another in order to obtain an education.

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT FUNDING

- Students need to be made aware of the existence and rules for accessing publicly funded, provincial bursary programs directed at students with disabilities. Institutional staff whose primary responsibilities include providing information on financial aid must be capable of providing information on government-funded aid programs for students with disabilities. Governments should strive to simplify the language used to describe programs, and make this information available in print, through provincial websites as well as in alternate formats.
- Eligibility criteria for bursary funding may prevent certain students from using funds to purchase equipment or services they deem necessary. Students with learning disabilities, in particular, should be targeted with information on financial aid programs, since they often have difficulties finding support for their studies.
- A more flexible funding system is needed, one that recognizes that each program of study has unique demands, requiring different forms of support, depending on the individual student. Specific support funding needs to be flexible enough to mirror the actual realities that students face, and should not be based on presumed needs and a calculation of average costs.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT DISABILITY SERVICES

- Students need more and better information on the aids and services they may need to complete their studies. Post-secondary institutions cannot merely react to requests, but must be actively advertising the services/supports they provide to students with disabilities.
- While communicating information to either a prospective or current student about the full range of programs and services available to them, an institution

should be providing specific details about any specialized services/supports that are available to students with disabilities. Such information should be included with course calendars/catalogues, acceptance packages, Internet web sites, and any other means an institution uses to inform students. The same information should also be made available to relevant community service providers. Students should not be obligated to self-identify themselves before receiving information about disability services and supports.

- An institution should strive to provide any/all forms of such communication in alternate and/or accessible formats, so students with disabilities may inform themselves without the assistance of someone else. On websites, the presentation of information should conform to guidelines of universal accessibility. Information should be easy to find and should not require a time consuming search.
- To aid a student in making educated decisions about where they will pursue studies, institutions should provide complete details about 1) the types of services/supports available to students with disabilities on campus; 2) the eligibility criteria for each type of service/support available; and 3) information on who to contact, and where to go if the student would like further details.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

- Because student respondents were largely unaware of any existing safety, emergency and evacuation policies in place at post-secondary institutions, orientation activities should address this need. As part of an overall orientation to services available to students with disabilities, a detailed explanation of these procedures is necessary to ensure the safety of students.

BROAD ACCESS TO ACCOMMODATIONS

- Disability service provision needs to address the range of disability need – physical, health and learning related. Fewer institutions believed they could accommodate students who are deaf/hard of hearing and those who have medical and mental health disabilities than they could students with other forms of disability. All institutions should be fully inclusive and accommodating, regardless of the numbers of students being served.
- Students should not be discouraged from attending an institution of their choice based on the lack of accessibility features and services. All post-secondary institutions should be constantly reviewing and updating their policies and attempting to improve the level of accessibility on their campus and in consultation with students who use the services. The Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers in Post-Secondary Education (CADSPPE) and the National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) may be invaluable resources for such reviews.

DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

- While documentation of a disability from a relevant specialist provides a key assessment tool for determining appropriate accommodations, there may be

legitimate reasons (including cost and lack of facilities) why a student may not possess up to date documentation. The out-right refusal of service because of dated documentation falls outside the spirit of supporting students with disabilities and exercising a less rigid approach in such cases would be helpful.

- Students and service providers need to work together to advocate for better access to testing. Providing on campus testing, or sharing such a service that may exist at a nearby institution would help address the problems. Provincial health care plans should make some provision for assistance to persons seeking diagnosis and attestation of disability for the purpose of pursuing post-secondary education.

ACCOMMODATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Student respondents valued the role played by disability services providers in the context of ensuring accessibility. However, it is not the sole responsibility of one department or individual to advocate for, and commit to accessibility. Efforts should be made to ensure that the entire campus community, from the student union president to the staff of the physical plant, plays a role. Issues of access for students with disabilities are the responsibility of everyone in the community, not a select few.
- Because of their critical importance to the accommodation of those with disabilities, students should not be charged for services related to the provision of exams or tests in alternate format or at alternate times. Also, individually based assessments of extended time that can take into account specific disability-related needs and feedback from instructors are preferred over standard formulas. Students should be made aware of the criteria used to assess time needs prior to the administration of an exam. Students should not feel that decisions have been made arbitrarily without reference to their specific needs, and there should be an environment that encourages open discussion at all times.
- Institutional policies on accommodation generally aim to guarantee a fair process of academic evaluation in exams and assignments. However, student respondents were less satisfied with access to forms of accommodation such as program changes or alterations in time limits on program completion. These aspects of student need should be recognized and incorporated into policy, taking into account problems of a disability-specific nature.

MATERIALS IN ALTERNATE FORMATS

- Academic accommodation should provide for the timely delivery of academic materials in suitable formats to students who require them in cooperation with individual instructors. This involves both in-class (textbooks, handouts, overhead sheets) and out-of-class (library research) material that supports students' learning and research efforts. Students also have a responsibility to articulate their needs when alternate format materials are required. A student with a disability should not be left in poor academic standing because of a

lack of availability, or the late delivery of academic material in a suitable alternate format.

FACULTY AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

- Despite steadily increasing awareness among faculty of the needs of students with disabilities, many still resist the requirement to accommodate and do not act in ways that aid the process of learning for some students. There is a particular need to sensitize professors to the existence of “invisible disabilities” including learning disabilities and mental health disabilities. Colleges and universities should provide training on diversity issues that includes disability awareness, to all staff. Service providers and student organizers can broaden contact by providing disability awareness training a departmental and faculty meetings, as well as meetings of the wider governing bodies of the institution.
- Instructional strategies that address the needs of students with learning disabilities need to be more broadly taught through in-service programs. While faculty members in all disciplines are sometimes resistant to the notion that they need to alter their teaching style, survey responses from students suggests that those who teach in vocational programs may need particular attention, because these instructors often have little formal training in teaching.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY AND COMPUTER ACCESS

- Assistive technology was widely used by student respondents to the survey. Most expressed a preference for some form of centralized provision of adaptive technology but did not wish to have their needs ‘ghettoized’ in consequence. An assistive technology centre that is close to, housed within, or otherwise linked to other student service facilities and that provides training in the use of technology and software was considered one aspect of an ideal service provision. Students with disabilities also wished to see assistive technology and physically accessible terminals included in general use computer labs, where extended hours of access and convenient location are more often the norm.
- Because of the dramatic increase in Internet and web-based instruction, institutions need to identify and direct information systems/computer services staff to understand how disability-related technologies interact with the computer systems available to all students on campus. It is important to recognize where expertise lies, and to pool resources so that students with disabilities can have the same access to the Internet and other technologies.
- Those responsible for making campus-wide computing decisions must be sensitized to the need to make educated choices in the selection of software that is accessible to all students. Incorporating accessibility for students with disabilities within any campus-wide computer implementation strategy is also crucial.

- Expense of provision and speed of improvements in the area of computer technology mean additional funding is necessary at the institutional and the individual level. Students with disabilities need to be a part of any consultative processes to review the need for, and purchase of specialized equipment, as they will ultimately be the end users.

NOTE TAKING SERVICES

- The survey research indicated that students with disabilities frequently have access to and use the services of a note taker. Programs are not always centrally administered and students are sometimes left to recruit their own note takers in class. The use of volunteers and recruits sometimes results in poor quality service that leaves the student feeling frustrated. Students and service providers need to cooperate in assessing the utility of such services and whether training, wider recruitment strategies, or other factors might improve service.

PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY

- It was apparent from student comments that many classrooms are not yet barrier-free and not all students have access to classroom relocation services. All institutions should have a definite plan in place with appropriate funding allocated to improve physical accessibility with set times for completion of projects. The establishment and maintenance of accessibility committees with disabled student representation is vitally important.

SELF ADVOCACY

- Students with disabilities need to be supported in their attempts to organize themselves to ensure representation and integration of accessibility within all aspects of campus life. Students should also be encouraged to make greater use of the resources that wider student organizations can supply. Campus-based student councils, unions or student societies are in an excellent position to provide the support to ensure that all campus facilities and activities are made accessible and inclusive of students with disabilities.

APPENDIX C

Key issues identified by the College Committee on Disability Issues in its submission to the Ontario Human Rights Commission consultation on disability and education- November 2002

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

- Transition from Secondary School to Post-Secondary Institutions
- Financial hardship: Cost of Extended Time to Complete a Program of Study
- Financial hardship: Cost of Adaptive Equipment and Other Disability Related Services
- Access to Alternative Format Materials; recommend requiring textbook publishers provide alternative format textbooks to college bookstores at the same time they provide print copies.
- Access to Computer-Delivered Courses; recommend that accessibility standards be developed and applied
- Physical Accessibility; recommend that there be informed consultation from disability services offices during construction and renovation of campus buildings
- Access to Privately Funded Institutions

DISABILITY AND OTHER FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

- First Nations People with Disabilities; educational options are limited by factors in combination with disability-related problems of access.

NEGATIVE ATTITUDES AND STEREOTYPES REGARDING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

- Faculty Attitudes and Stereotypes Regarding Persons with Disabilities; recommend that OHRC guidelines include specific reference to the roles and responsibilities of teaching staff; recommend that disability awareness training be mandatory component of professional training of faculty.

LABELLING

- Disclosure of Disability Information in Post-Secondary Institutions; recommend that OHRC guidelines reaffirm the need of colleges to verify a student's disability to ensure appropriate accommodation; recommend that any student with a disability be provided with interim accommodations and supports until supporting documentation can be obtained.
- Disclosure of Disability Information to Faculty/Staff; support OHRC guidelines that indicate the rights of an individual to choose whether or not to disclose a disability, with the understanding and acceptance of all possible implications.
- Disclosure of Accommodations Provided on High-Stakes Tests or College Documents; recommend that OHRC guidelines explicitly prohibit the disclosure of accommodations received or other disability-related notations on college transcripts, entrance test result forms or licensing exam result forms.

APPROPRIATE ACCOMMODATIONS

- Maintaining Qualification and Academic Standards; recommend that the onus and responsibility for determining essential requirements, components, or learning outcomes of an academic program rest with the educational institution; recommend that accommodations be provided in the interim where proof of the essential nature of outcomes is still to be determined.
- Competing Rights; recommend that the accommodation needs of students (including taping lectures for personal use) supercede the intellectual property or academic freedom rights of faculty

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Respective Responsibilities of Students and Disability Service Offices in the Provision of Accommodations and Services
- Responsibility of Government Departments to Coordinate Services to Students with Disabilities; recommend that government departments be required to harmonize and coordinate the delivery of programs to students with disabilities. This is to ensure that students are not disadvantaged when they access more than one department's services or when they fall under one department's jurisdiction rather than another.

UNDUE HARDSHIP STANDARD

- Clarifying the Level at Which the Undue Hardship Standard Should be Applied; invites clarification from the OHRC that each post-secondary institution and/or the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities is responsible for claiming undue hardship. This to recognize that the whole organization, and not just the disability service department, has a duty to accommodate students with disabilities.

[CCDI Response to the Ministry's Disability-Related Support Review Discussion Questions- February 2004](#)

FUNDING TO INSTITUTIONS

- Suggest a review of funding for deaf and hard of hearing students; recommend a review to examine the mandate of various funding sources and determine the most efficient method of providing equitable, timely services to students who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Following ongoing evaluation, suggest folding alternative funding sources for students with learning disabilities, including the Enhanced Services Fund, Mobile Assessment Team, LOTF Innovative Projects, into the existing Accessibility Fund which is provided annually to each college and university.

FUNDING TO STUDENTS

- Suggest that bursaries for students with disabilities be granted on the basis of educational requirements of the effects of the disability and on the financial need of the student, rather than simply eligibility for OSAP

- Disability services providers to collaborate with Financial Aid Offices to develop an appropriate financial needs test that could be correlated with the disability needs test and applied equitably at each institution

FUNDING TO OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

- Suggest that funds currently allocated to the Educational Support Services of the Canadian Hearing Society for part time students who are deaf or hard of hearing be added to the Interpreter Fund shared by colleges outside Toronto.

FUNDING FOR PRINT ALTERNATIVE MATERIALS

- Suggest a review of the current funding of a centralized source at W. Ross Macdonald School, and consider benefits of providing all transcription services in-house at each institution
- Suggest that textbook publishers be lobbied to provide materials electronically
- Suggest that government enact legislation or regulations similar to that in the U.S. regarding e-text
- Suggest institutions be provided with resources for staff editing and high speed scanning hardware/software to provide books, handouts, and other print materials electronically

FUNDING DISTRIBUTION

- Suggest that the Accessibility Fund provided annually by the Ministry continue to be based on the full-time equivalent (FTE) enrolment data for each institution

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING SERVICES FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS

- Suggest that colleges outside Toronto be provided with appropriate funding to allow competitive rates of pay for interpreters for each class hour and to ensure parity with universities
- Suggest establishing a graduated pay scale for service providers based on qualifications and experience (includes interpreters, computerized note takers)
- Suggest eliminating paperwork, service delays needed to book services for part-time students with Education Support Services/Canadian Hearing Society by transferring funding to current post-secondary Interpreter Fund

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Suggest continuation of the existing requirement that each college submit an annual Accessibility Fund report to the Ministry
- Incorporate reports on new initiatives or programs such as the LOTF enhanced services activities into the annual Accessibility Fund report once adequate research and evaluation is completed.

IMPACT OF EVOLVING ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS REQUIREMENTS ON THE COLLEGE SYSTEM

- Suggest that colleges have additional funding to provide dedicated personnel to liaise with secondary schools for student transition initiatives
- Suggest that disability services departments be provided with resources and

commitment to carry out applied research on the type and effectiveness of accommodating different disabilities

- Suggest that increased accessibility funding be provided to include support and assistance to graduates with disabilities in making the transition to employment
- Suggest that additional funds be added to the Accessibility Fund to provide timely and useful assessments for students with non-visible disabilities

OTHER MINISTRY SUPPORTS

- Suggest that an advisory board be established to advise the Ministry about system-wide issues and to bring cross-disability issues to the attention of the government in a coordinated manner
- Suggest that advisory offices such as Learning Opportunities Task Force continue to play a role in specific supports and research
- Suggest that the Ministry examine the costs to students with disabilities studying part-time and review maximum funding allowed under the Ontario Special Bursary Plan (ODSP) for tuition, books and travel
- Suggest that the MTCU coordinate efforts with the Ministry of Education and Apprenticeship Branch to provide a continuum of appropriate services to students with disabilities
- Joint advisory committee of disability service providers to MTCU and Ministry of Education to improve transition, promote best practices and share resources

APPENDIX D

Recommendations from the Learning Opportunities Task Force – 2002.

After reviewing all research data as well as qualitative information provided by students and pilot project staff, the LOTF published seven key findings relating to twenty-four recommendations to the government of Ontario.

STUDENT SUCCESS

Students with learning disabilities (LD) are as able to succeed in post-secondary education as their non-disabled peers, provided that:

- their academic and social experiences during the elementary and secondary school years appropriately address the individual needs of students with learning disabilities;
- their transition to post-secondary education is appropriately facilitated;
- the necessary individualized supports, services, programs and/or accommodations are available to them during their post-secondary years and they choose to use them.

Related Recommendations-

1. The results of the work of the LOTF and the pilot institutions be distributed to all secondary schools and post-secondary institutions throughout Ontario.
2. School boards consistently be held accountable for compliance with regulation 181/98 under the *Education Act*, which mandates the development of transition programming and planning for all students with disabilities who are 14 years of age or older.
3. Proven transition planning should be available to all students with learning disabilities who are going on to post-secondary education and are interested in participating in such opportunities.
4. All post-secondary educational institutions introduce and implement a full range of LD-specific service and program options appropriate to the needs and identified disabilities of each individual student.
5. Incentives be made available to all post-secondary educational institutions to promote collaboration with secondary schools and other public sector organizations and agencies within their communities to offer intensive outreach and post-secondary orientation to adolescents and adults with identified or suspected learning disabilities.

DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENTS

A significant majority of students arrived at the pilot institutions with no, or at best inadequate, diagnostic information. As a result, students had neither appropriate documentation nor an understanding of their own learning disabilities. A comprehensive, up-to-date diagnostic assessment is essential for the provision of requisite supports, services, programs and accommodations for students with

learning disabilities. Almost all (85%) of the pilot students required professional (re-) assessment to enable them to succeed in their post-secondary education. The total process of (re-) assessment encompassed an explanation of individuals' specific learning disabilities, identification of strengths and difficulties, current functional skills, learning styles, potential coping strategies and compensatory skills, and the accommodations needed to overcome the negative impacts of their disabilities in order to reach their potential.

Related Recommendations-

6. The Province of Ontario endorse a consistent definition and a comprehensive diagnostic assessment protocol for learning disabilities to be used in all publicly funded programs such as education, social service, health and other service areas.
7. The Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process for the identification of a learning disability, in accordance with Regulation 181/98, should always and consistently be based on an appropriate and comprehensive diagnostic assessment.
8. The Province adopt and endorse an early screening and intervention program designed to identify and assist all children at risk for school failure.
9. The preliminary diagnosis of a learning disability should be publicly funded through Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) or some other public or universally accessible funding mechanism, as is the case for all other disabilities.
10. The Province should establish, implement and evaluate the concept of Regional Assessment and Resource Centres.

LEARNING STRATEGY AND ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SUPPORTS

Pilot students consistently identified that, in addition to an improved understanding of their learning disabilities, they most valued:

- provision of learning strategy supports by appropriately qualified and engaged staff, and
- access to, and instruction in assistive technology from, staff with expertise in both the technology and learning disabilities.

Related Recommendation-

11. The newly established Enhanced Services Funding (ESF) projects be monitored and evaluated. Success in achieving their goals should ensure that these services be maintained enabling post-secondary educational institutions to continue to provide enhanced programs, services and supports to students with specific LD who need these and commit to their utilization.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Pilot students consistently reported that lack of or limited faculty awareness and understanding of learning disabilities, and faculty attitudes toward requested accommodations presented the greatest external barrier to students' post-secondary educational success.

Students, staff, programs and services thrived at institutions where there was demonstrable awareness and support from senior administration.

Related Recommendations-

12. Incentives be provided to support innovative practices for faculty orientation and training at all colleges and universities. The goal is to ensure that all faculty and staff are made aware of and informed about the needs and entitlements of students with specific learning disabilities and the institutions' obligations to meet the accommodation needs of all such students.

13. The Ministry of Citizenship amend the recently released guidelines for Accessibility Plans for colleges and universities under the ODA (Ontarians with Disabilities Act) to include the following reporting and accountability requirements:

- applying a more inclusive definition of access beyond physical access,
- measurable goals,
- detailed implementation plans,
- realistic time lines,
- inclusion of appropriate learning disabilities provisions (beyond the current appended reference to the largest group of students with disabilities in the post-secondary education sector),
- the delivery of faculty and staff training and professional development,
- full compliance with the "undue hardship standard" for the accommodation of students with disabilities as expected under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*

14. The principles of UID (Universal Instructional Design) and its proven benefits for teaching and learning be disseminated throughout the education system.

FUNDING

A significant percentage of pilot students expressed ongoing concern about their inability to access the Bursary for Students with Disabilities (BSWD). The BSWD was established to help with disability-related costs in college and university and the listing of eligible expenses specifically mentions LD assessments. Many students cannot afford the costly assessments, assistive technology and other supports that compensate for and accommodate the effects of their learning disabilities, yet cannot access the BSWD, primarily due to their ineligibility for the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP). The continued linkage of the BSWD and OSAP is a significant post-secondary barrier to academic success.

Systemic adjustments to MTCU's Accessibility Fund are required because of adverse impact on staffing complements, assistive technology facilities and thereby student success.

Related Recommendations-

15. The Province of Ontario separate eligibility for BSWD from OSAP so that all students with disabilities can access bursary funds equitably.

16. The Province of Ontario review and amend its current legislation and funding policies which result in discrimination against persons with learning disabilities.

17. The Accessibility Fund allocation from MTCU should reflect the total full time equivalent enrolment of all students at the institution *and* the number of students with disabilities served by the institution.

18. Each post-secondary institution should receive adequate base funding, as part of the distribution of the Accessibility Fund allocation, to ensure that properly trained and qualified staff are available to provide assessments, intervention, training, coaching and support in learning strategies and assistive technologies to students with specific learning disabilities and properly equipped and staffed computer lab facilities available to students with specific learning disabilities.

ACCESS TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

The majority of pilot students reported that they:

- had no access to useful supports in secondary school that would enable them to cope with, compensate for, accommodate or overcome the effects of learning disabilities;
- had no access in secondary school to assistive technology or other accommodations that would enable them to succeed in their studies;
- received no meaningful individualized transition planning support in secondary school, despite the requirement of regulation 181/98; and
- surpassed their own expected performance levels at college and university once appropriate accommodations and supports were made available.

Related Recommendations-

19. The Ministry of Education enforce compliance with the *Education Act* and Regulation 181/98 so that students with specific learning disabilities are guaranteed access to appropriate special education programmes and services, diagnostic assessments, learning strategy training, assistive technology use and training, transition planning, a full range of special education placement options and all other entitlements that they have under the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the *Education Act*. Where students are denied *any* of these entitlements, they must be guaranteed a right of appeal.

20. The Ministry of Education, the Faculties of Education and the College of Teachers must ensure that all teachers in the Province are taught about learning disabilities, including specific instruction in:

- recognizing the needs and entitlements of students with learning disabilities
- recognizing the fact that students with learning disabilities can achieve the Provincial curriculum benchmarks and outcomes at the same level as their non-disabled peers, provided that they are taught in ways in which they best learn and are guaranteed access to requisite accommodations;
- how to adapt and differentiate their teaching methods;
- how to utilize the principles of UID;
- how to offer appropriate accommodations to meet the needs of students.

21. The Provincial special education funding formula be amended so that all students with learning disabilities (most of whom are not and should not be Intensive Support

Amount / ISA-eligible) receive appropriate special education programs and services in accordance with their identified strengths and needs.

22. To facilitate improved transition planning, the Ministry of Education must immediately release the long-awaited transition planning guide for school board implementation and include in it exceptionality-specific components.

23. To facilitate successful graduation from secondary school, when taking the Grade 10 literacy test, students must be guaranteed access to the requisite accommodations listed in their IEP. Where students are initially unsuccessful in the test, they must have access to diagnostic assessments to determine whether they have an unidentified learning disability, or to a review of existing special education provisions to determine whether they require some additional or differentiated teaching prior to and accommodations when re-taking the test.

THE ROLE OF THE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

The final recommendation of the LOTF to the provincial government dealt at length with the possible future role of the task force or its successor agency.

APPENDIX E

Examples of strategies in relation to **principles of universal instructional design** described in Georgian College research study-

Equitable use (ensure the course outline and/or syllabus includes a clear statement about your recognition and willingness to accommodate the needs of students with specific learning and other disabilities; permit students to submit their assignments electronically via e-mail; permit students to use test centres to complete exams when they require a quiet or private space to work)

Use of natural supports (understand and refer to appropriate supports for students with disabilities through knowing the student services system and making recommendations to use those services; encourage the use of peer mentoring, the use of tutors, where required, early in the course before students fall behind; develop and use a course based website as a primary place to put advance organizers, summaries, announcements, course information, notes and slideshows, assignments, marking schemes and grades)

Supportive learning environment (establish, maintain and demonstrate commitment to two-way communication in the knowledge that such interaction enhances accessibility, learning and development; provide available office hours and set standards for returning e-mail and telephone messages that are consistent and predictable by students; provide sufficient information about evaluation processes and criteria to prevent unnecessary anxiety about performance.)

Perceptible information (choose and use a textbook that supports accessible learning and that comes with a complete electronic version – not just a CD of resources and supplementary materials – although these too are helpful; provide clear expectations and regular feedback on content, assignments and additional work to be completed; develop test and exam questions that clearly relate to the intended learning outcomes of the course.)

Multiplicity in design, delivery and evaluation (alternate activities regularly during classes and consider a format that includes lecture, activity, group work and independent study balanced to maximize student attention and provide varied learning methods; use alternate knowledge sources such as other related texts, videos, audiotapes and guest lecturers; develop tests and exams that include several forms of questions so that students have a balance of tasks.)

Flexibility in use (encourage student feedback on sequence of topics and pace of delivery and movement through the content; provide options for a variety of ways for students to complete assignments and demonstrate knowledge; build in frequent checks for student understanding of information presented and review information that was not clearly understood in alternate formats that might be more easily understood.)

Method of implementation –

Pace may differ depending on program, service area, department. Move from comfort zone to first order changes, second order changes, to third order changes.

First order- small steps forward in how we teach, serve, inform students at Fanshawe; minor adjustment; closely associate with current methods; minimal challenge and time to develop is short.

Second order- change is more significant and time-intensive; still associated with current practices, but demand a stretch that can be challenging (e.g., search for better textbook)

Third order- significant changes in how we provide educational services; requires personal retraining and significant time, energy and expertise. (e.g., development of course website for teachers with little or no experience)

APPENDIX F

Planned Initiatives for 2003-04

FANSHAWE COLLEGE – Services for Students with Disabilities

Annual Accessibility Fund Report to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

POLICY REVIEW

- Review College policy and procedures as they relate to access for and accommodation of students with disabilities.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

- Addition of disability services intake officer
- Addition of part-time assistive technologist to work with non- LD students
- Addition of half time learning strategist to work with non- LD students
- Revise role for support staff position to focus exclusively on test and exam accommodations
- Increased use of student proctors, lab monitors and trainers

SERVICES AND ACCOMMODATIONS

- Updated orientation sessions for new students with disabilities
- Information sessions for students eligible for BSWD
- Group training sessions for use of assistive technology
- Development of new AccessAbility Centre for test and exam accommodations and assistive technology lab.
- New office facilities for disability services staff as part of Counselling and Student Life/Career Services departments
- Development of multi-media presentation for students focusing on learning strategies
- Support group for students with learning disabilities, emphasizing stress management and social skills
- Meetings with principals of three area campuses to review provision of disability services, focusing on assistive technology and exam accommodations

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Collaboration with other areas of College to ensure standards of ODA
- Outreach to Human Services division to increase awareness of disability services
- Investigate providing on-line resources for faculty and staff working with students with disabilities

- Workshops for new college faculty through western region College Educator Development Program
- Partnerships with Literacy and Basic Skills to provide services to apprenticeship students

MARKETING AND INFORMATION

- Review of Disability Services brochures, publications to reflect up to date information
- Add or update website information, particularly that regarding students with physical, medical and psychiatric disabilities

PARTNERSHIPS/ COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS/ LINKAGES

- Continue and develop partnership with Network to Learning including participation in a regional conference
- Carry out focus groups on improving services to non-LD students involving students, consumers, community service professionals, and school board staff
- Collaboration with Literacy Link South Central of the Thames Valley DSB to investigate screening methods to identify students with LD

RESOURCES

Bowe, Frank G. (2000) *Universal Design in Education: Teaching Nontraditional Students*. Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey

Bryson, Jim (2004) *Universal Instructional Design in Postsecondary Settings: An Implementation Guide*. Georgian College. Available on the Internet: www.lotf.ca

Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (1999) *Towards Developing Professional Standards of Service: A report on Support for Students with Disabilities in Post-Secondary Education in Canada*. Available on the Internet at : www.cacuss.ca

College Committee on Disability Issues (2002) *Written Submission to the Ontario Human Rights Commission's Consultation Paper on Education and Disability*.

College Committee On Disability Issues (1999-2000) *Orientation for Success: A Resource Guide for College Representatives of the College Committee on Disability Issues*. Available on the Internet: www.loyalistic.on.ca/services/ccdi/

College Committee on Disability Issues (2004) *Response to the Disability-Related Support Review Discussion Questions*

Killean, Emer and Hubka, David (July, 1999) *Working Towards a National Approach to Services, Accommodations and Policies for Post-Secondary Students with Disabilities: Ensuring Access to Higher Education and Career Training*, National Educational Association of Disabled Students, Carleton University, Ottawa.

McKnight, John (1995) *The Careless Society: Community and Its Counterfeits*. New York: Basic Books, a Division of HarperCollins Publishers Inc.

Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (2001) *Portals and Pathways: A Review of Post-Secondary Education in Ontario*, report of the Investing in Students Task Force. Available on the Internet: www.edu.gov.on.ca

Ontario Human Rights Commission (July, 2003) *The Opportunity to Succeed-Achieving Barrier-Free Education for Students with Disabilities*. Available on the Internet: www.ohrc.on.ca

Shaw, Stan F., Scott, Sally S. and Joan M. McGuire, (2001) Principles of Universal Design for Instruction, Centre for Postsecondary education and Disability, University of Connecticut.

Silver, P., Bourke, A. and Strehern, K.C. (1998) Universal Instructional Design in Higher Education: An Approach for Inclusion. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 31(2)

Statistics Canada – Canadian Social Trends (Spring 2004) Profile of Disability in Canada. Catalogue No. 11-008.

ADDITIONAL WEBSITES:

www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/guide.htm
(Contains OHRC report on accessibility in education)

www.gen.umn.edu/research/CTAD/guide/Section_3ppt

www.equalopportunity.on.ca
(Resources for removing barriers in a post-secondary educational setting)

www.uid.ca
(National resources site on universal instructional design)

www.umass.edu/ldss

www.brown.edu/Administration/Dean_of_theCollege/uid/html/what_determine.shtml