



LaurentianUniversity
Université**Laurentienne**

Annual Accessibility Plan

September 2009/2010

Laurentian University

Submitted to

Accessibility Directorate
Ministry of Community and Social Services

Submitted by

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This publication is available in alternative formats.

INTRODUCTION

This report describes the measures that Laurentian University has taken and will take to identify, remove and prevent barriers to students and employees with disabilities in this post secondary institution. Laurentian has been proactive and committed to removing barriers since developing our Policy and Guidelines on Students with Special Needs

In June of 2005, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* became law. These Acts, designed and introduced by the Ministry of Citizenship, require the province, municipalities and the public sector to make their buildings, programs and services more accessible to persons with all types of disabilities. .

Laurentian University' is commitment to *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* by adopting its sixth annual Accessibility Plan.

The Special Needs office served in excess of 430 students with disabilities annually. However there are a percentage of disabled students who chose not to identify or did not need to use the Special Needs services.

Since the advent of our program, we have successfully identified and removed barriers as they have been brought to our attention. We underwent an accessibility audit in 1996. By 2005, Laurentian removed numerous barriers originally identified. We have prioritized the remaining barriers and developed a multi-year strategic barrier removal plan for future years. We also survey and have a close contact with student to address individual concerns pertain to accessibility.

For the academic year 2009/2010, we successfully introduced new faculty to the services Special Needs offers students.

Laurentian's accessibility plan will be made available on the Laurentian University website. The accessibility plan will be marketed and made available in alternative formats for individuals who require it.

Objectives:

The Annual Accessibility Plan will:

- 1) Provide a framework for developing cohesive accessibility initiatives which identify, remove and prevent barriers;
- 2) set annual goals for specific improvements to accessibility;
- 3) establish action plans for meeting those goals and initiating accountability at various levels;
- 4) Track progress; and
- 5) Seek input and suggestions from the wider Laurentian University community.

Our goal is to have a workable multi-year accessibility plan that will meet the needs of all our students and employees with disabilities.

Laurentian University's Achievements in Improving Accessibility

Here are highlights of Laurentian University's achievements in improving accessibility in the past year and the present year:

2009/2010

- Orientation provided to new faculty.
- Laurentian undertook a Summer Transition Program for students with learning disabilities. In this one week program, students learned about their disability and how to advocate for themselves. Students learned technology and had facilitated study technique workshops to assist them with their future academic success. There was a marked increase in the number of students utilizing the program this year due to increased marketing and promotion of this program.
- We updated software (Kurzweil) that assists students with Learning disabilities.
- The Ben Avery building was inaccessible however with the renovations undertaken this year with a new section added all floors are now accessible and we purchased an accessible pool lift.
- Our Teacher's College is now complete which is built to the specification of the Ontario Building code.
- Students can now schedule their appointments for Special Needs Office online 24/7. They get a confirmation email their appointments and a reminder email two days prior to their appointments. More students utilizing the internet and it is important to be accessible to them. Students who have emotional and psychiatric problems can book an appointment without embarrassing themselves on the phone.
- Our Students General and our Social Work Department have appointed ambassadors to work with Special Needs.
- We completed approximately 75% of nosing on stairs whereas the steps have yellow paint on each stair to assist individuals with low vision. Some of the stairways also have a slip resistant surface.
- Changed two automatic doors system to a slide door system similar to grocery store doors; therefore eliminating manual activators.
- We also created an emergency backup system where we have telephones and an alternative elevator to use in the event that our main elevator in the library breaks down. This exercise gave us the opportunity to plan what we need to do in order to meet customer service requirements.

Members of the Working Group

The Special Needs Office works with Physical Plant and Planning and students.

Laurentian University's Commitment to Accessibility Planning

Laurentian's Policy and Guidelines for Students with Special Needs is committed to creating an academic environment fully accessible to individuals with disabilities. The university has taken and continues to take a pro-active stance in adjusting physical facilities, surroundings, services and academic programs to allow full access to students/employees with special needs. The university is aware of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). I myself participate in the accessibility advisory standards on transportation and have been nominated by Dr. Judith Woodsworth (former Laurentian president), now formal President of Laurentian University to the Employment Accessibility Standards Development Committee. I was appointed by the Honorable Madeline Meilleur, Minister of Community and Social Services, Minister Responsible for Ontarians with Disabilities and Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs to the Employment Accessibility Standards Development Committee. These committees gave me the opportunity to affect change for issues pertaining to disabilities for the Laurentian community.

The goal of Laurentian University is to have an accessible, integrated environment that fully respects the rights and dignity of students and staff with disabilities and provides appropriate alternatives for learning and working for those who are unable to access the mainstream methods.

Barrier-Identification Methodologies

We have been utilizing our "barrier free audit" from 1996 to remove major barriers. Ongoing student surveys and input have also been used on an individual basis.

Barriers Identified

As a result of the barrier free audit and surveys, Laurentian University continues to prevent, identify and remove existing barriers. The majority of the barriers identified were physical. The policy and practice of removing and addressing barriers will be an educational experience to all who are involved. Policy development is a multi-year initiative.

Barriers to Be Addressed In 2009/10

The Special Needs Office works in collaboration with Physical Plant and Planning and students to remove physical barriers. We also work with senior management on policy/practice barriers, in a multi-year plan which was addressed in previous accessibility plans.

Review and Monitoring Process

The Special Needs Office will meet quarterly with Physical Plant and Planning and students to receive feedback on accessibility issues. The future meetings will help us plan to monitor the removal of barriers identified in Laurentian University's 2009/10 accessibility plan. Discussions will be held with different departments, employees and students with disabilities to ensure that the Laurentian University Accessibility Plan is implemented in accordance with their stated needs.

Communication of Laurentian University Accessibility Plan

The plan will be made available on the Laurentian University website and will be sent to individuals who wish to receive a copy of the plan.

The Laurentian University Accessibility Plan will be marketed via direct mail and email to students, local agencies dealing with individuals with disabilities and secondary schools. There will also be a public announcement regarding the implementation of the plan as well as its availability to whoever requests a copy.

Conclusion

Laurentian University has clearly demonstrated its proactive approach to improving access for students and staff with disabilities for more than a decade. Laurentian University is further committed to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and will do this by preventing, identifying, and removing barriers.