



**FINAL REPORT:
REVIEW OF CENTRE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
FALL 2019**

PREPARED BY:

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I. Background

In January 2017 a review of the former Centre for Students with Disabilities (CSD) was initiated at the request of OCADU Student Union (SU) to evaluate program efficiencies and student satisfaction related to current best practices in post-secondary education. Under the leadership of Deanne Fisher, Vice Provost Students & International and in collaboration with the SU and OCADU Human Resources (HR) a thorough review of the former CSD was conducted and completed in Fall 2017. The review included multiple stakeholder interviews, focus groups with students, staff and faculty, a student feedback survey, an in-depth analysis of CSD user data between January to April 2017 and consultation with external best practice experts. In addition, a CSD Review Committee was established to receive the findings of the review.

Throughout the course of the review as recommendations and feedback for increasing accessibility for students was received, changes were implemented quickly at the program level, including the following:

- In September 2018 the former CSD and former Health and Wellness Centre (HWC) merged under the leadership of Jennifer Robinson, Director of Student Health, Wellness and Conflict Resolution and Robyn Shaw, Manager, Student Health & Wellness Centre.
- Restructure of CSD intake/registration process.
- Streamlined process for students seeking to provide confirmation of disability to the CSD from the OCAD Health and Wellness Physician. (Students are no longer required to have the physician complete the 10-page medical document and then deliver this to the CSD).
- Review and relocation of learning support to the Writing & Learning Centre, with the goal of diversifying programming and broadening access to learning skills support to students.
- Implementation of an online system (Papyrus) for requesting and retrieving materials in alternate format from the library.
- Enhancing access to assistive technology through the procurement of institutional software licenses for all members at OCADU.
- New training module for faculty in creating accessible course materials (launched November 2018).
- Faculty training in inclusive teaching & accommodations (in collaboration with Inclusive Design faculty) and accessible training materials (in collaboration with Faculty & Curriculum Development Centre).
- Review and redesign of the Student Accommodations Letter and supplementary

- educational materials via the Teaching and Learning Committee of Senate.
- Revamped notetaking service and leveraging the Bursary for Students with Disabilities (BSWD) program to fund professional notetaking.
- Promoting use of the BSWD to all eligible students, transferring appropriate functions to Financial Aid & Awards (as per Ministry manual.)
- Provision of ADHD/ADD and LD assessments via the HWC's psychiatrist and physician as appropriate and possible to reduce costs and speed up process.
- Development of referral database for tutors and other community resources to meet needs.
- Leveraging of HWC's active and popular social media channels to outreach for CSD.
- Consistent outreach to faculty to provide advice, problem solve and increase capacity to meet increasing accommodation needs.
- Implementing strategies in conjunction with HWC/CSD Peer Educators, to increase service usage and resources specific to BIPOC and LGBTQ students.

At a review committee meeting in January 2018 members requested an external reviewer to complete the review process. Dr. Frederic Fovet was retained via an RFP process and interview conducted by a committee of students, faculty and staff. The external reviewer was provided with all of the previously assembled data and consultation summaries, and conducted a number of interviews and focus groups onsite throughout the summer of 2018.

The external review final report was shared with all members of the CSD Review Committee meeting and makes some 26 recommendations at the strategic, institutional and operational levels.

This report outlines the action taken to-date based on the recommendations of both the internal and external review, the leadership's response to some of the key institutional and strategic recommendations, and next steps with regards to the ongoing advisory process.

II. Organizational Structure

1. Review the Integration of the former CSD within the former HWC

The external review recommended reviewing the decision to integrate individualized disability-related accommodations with health and counselling services based on the following considerations which are addressed throughout this report:

- 1) A loss of autonomy of the former CSD to develop collaborations with other units on campus.
- 2) Perception that integrating the former CSD within the former HWC suggests a medical model approach to disability thus contrary to a social model/critical disabilities studies theory.
- 3) A lack of expertise in Universal Design Learning (UDL) within the former HWC.

Integrating disability-related academic accommodations within the HWC in 2018 was based

on feedback from the internal CSD Review and on the following rationale:

- Accommodations based on non-disability-related factors (e.g. extended illness, sexual violence, grief) were historically coordinated through the former HWC. Having a single source for students to access disability and non-disability-related accommodations and support and advice reduces confusion and ensures consistency in approach. Most importantly it allows us to support students who do not wish identify as a person with a disability.
- With an integrated model, students can identify a barrier or concern and be referred to and/or meet in the moment with an Accessibility Advisor. This facilitates timely, confidential and streamlined access to academic accommodations.
- A single reception area and consolidated information systems facilitates a seamless process for sharing resources and information and allows for additional staffing to support program delivery and enhancements.

The decision to integrate disability-related accommodations and services within the overall structure of the HWC has been re-affirmed through student feedback and a 15% increase in student access with close to 20% of the OCADU student population accessing academic accommodations.

| UNIQUE STUDENTS | JULY 2016 TO JULY 2017 | JULY 2018 TO JULY 2019 |
|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| CSD | 750 | 860 |
| HWC | 1015 | 1228 |
| TOTAL | 1765 | 2088 |

2. Creation of an OCAD U unit with responsibility for Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Drawing on the UDL expertise of the external reviewer, the review emphasizes the uptake of UDL at OCAD U as an institutional priority necessary to reduce systemic barriers to education and facilitate inclusive teaching for all students across our programs. Implementing UDL in course design and teaching practice has the potential to transform pedagogy, making our learning environment more accessible for all students, not only students identifying with disabilities.

It is important to note that UDL and individualized academic accommodations represent two distinct approaches to increasing accessibility and reducing barriers for students with disabilities. UDL refers to the process of making course concepts and skills attainable to a greater number of students, regardless of their differing learning styles, through faculty professional learning, course design and curriculum development. While UDL has the potential to reduce the need for several common accommodations, providing individualized disability and non-disability related accommodations will continue to be necessary to support students.

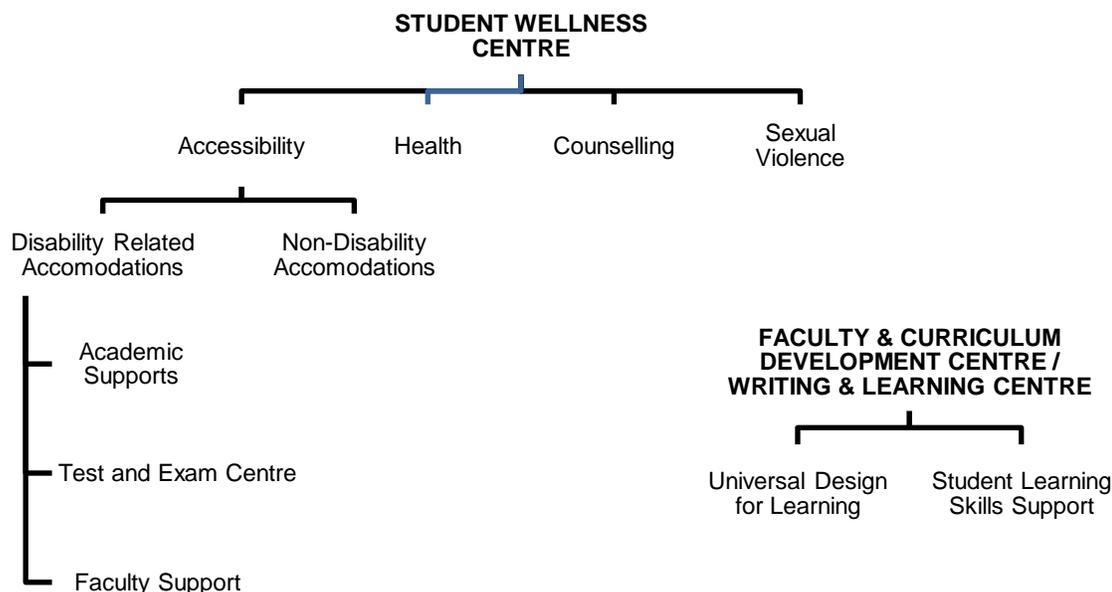
The function of UDL is therefore not ideally situated within the former CSD, in part due to the nature of government funding which is specific to the provision of individual accommodations to students. As per the funding mandate, Accessibility Advisors work with faculty members on creative course and assignment redesign primarily in the context of individualized accommodations.

Given the recommendations of the external review, leadership of UDL implementation will fall under the purview of the OCADU Faculty & Curriculum Development Centre (FCDC). Coupled with the student-facing learning skills support that has already been relocated to the Writing & Learning Centre (WLC), the FCDC has the mandate to push this agenda forward through collaborative research, programming and resource development. To this end, an Educational Developer has been hired in a newly-created role within the FCDC to focus on the development of the UDL portfolio.

3. Renaming and Rebranding

With thorough consultation from students, the integrated services and programs of the former CSD/HWC has been renamed the Student Wellness Centre (SWC). SWC includes the following service units: Student Accessibility Services (former CSD), one on one/walk-in/group counselling services, sexual violence support and health services.

Under this new umbrella are all of the supports students have come to rely on: disability and non-disability related-accommodations, counselling, health services (family physician and psychiatrist), the health and dental insurance, peer health educators, crisis support, and support and referrals for those who have experienced sexual violence.



III. Operational and Institutional Recommendations and Outcomes

1. Hiring & Training:

- Position descriptions were adapted to recruit candidates with pedagogical and/or Universal Design for Learning expertise, as well as a critical disabilities perspective.
- During Fall/Winter 2017/18 the CSD recruited two Accessibility Advisors, one Administrative Assistant and one Business System Analyst with cross reporting to the Office of the Registrar.
- The Learning Strategist position was redefined as a Learning Skills Specialist and transferred to the Writing & Learning Centre (WLC) in order to renew the overall program model and expand learning services to both students registered with the CSD and students with or without disabilities not registered with the CSD. This change enhances student access to a broader range of writing and academic support services through referral across WLC programs, building overall capacity and support for students with disabilities. Importantly, the new program model is grounded in an anti-oppression and Disability Studies framework, consistent with existing WLC programs.
- HWC/CSD is organizing anti-oppression and critical theory training for all HWC/CSD staff October 2019.
- Recruitment of OCAD U students for advising/consultation, and to provide support for CSD services including; peer notetaking, invigilating, tutoring, administrative support and student advisory.

2. Streamlining Service Provisions:

During Fall/Winter 2018/19, 880 students were provided service through the CSD. This represents a 15% increase in the number of students served over the previous year. The following service improvements have been implemented:

Restructure of CSD intake/registration process:

- Implementation of walk-in model of CSD service delivery to allow students to access an Accessibility Advisor as needed.
- Streamlined process for students seeking to provide confirmation of disability to the CSD from the OCAD U HWC Family Physician.
- Provision of ADHD/ADD and LD assessments via the HWC's psychiatrist and physician as appropriate and possible, to reduce costs and accelerate process.

Academic Supports:

- Organization of an Alternative Format Working Group during the 2017-18 year which developed and delivered an in-person training on best practices in Alternative Formats to new faculty. Online modules were also developed and are now made widely available through the online Canvas Guide for Faculty.
- Implementation of an online system (Papyrus) for requesting and retrieving materials in alternate format from the library.
- Enhancing access to assistive technology through the procurement of institutional software licenses for all members of the OCAD U community.
- Development of a streamlined referral process linking students quickly with external service providers having expertise in training students in specific assistive technologies.

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Financial Aid and Bursary for Students with Disabilities (BSWD):

- A working group has been created between SAS and FAA and tasked with monitoring, raising awareness and increasing access to the BSWD program and other eligible financial resources. Applications to the program have significantly increased over the course of the last two years.
- BSWD awareness campaigns have included posters, e-newsletter information. Information on the BSWD is shared with every student at every intake appointment.

Outreach and Provision of Online Services:

- Recruitment of a Business System Analyst within SAS with cross reporting to the Office of the Registrar with an emphasis on recommending IT solutions to streamline processes and mitigate administrative barriers to students with disabilities (e.g. revised intake process, test and exam procedures and notetaking requests).
- Utilizing popular social media channels for outreach of CSD related to service updates, important deadlines and supports and resources.
- Implementation of strategies in conjunction with HWC/CSD Peer Educators, to increase service usage and resources specific to BIPOC and LGBTQ students.
- Consistent outreach to faculty to provide advice, problem solve and increase capacity to meet increasing accommodation needs.
- Development of a monthly e-newsletter sent to all registered students, featuring key announcements, program updates and requests for feedback.

3. Faculty Education and Support:

- Implementation of a faculty and academic leadership consultation process which includes one on one and group accommodation consultation. Addressing gaps by educating and supporting faculty in the accommodation process continues to be an ongoing priority. SAS has begun and will continue to facilitate faculty education initiatives and other professional development resources in collaboration with FCDC and the newly recruited UDL Educational Developer.

4. Student Accommodation Letter:

- Review of the Student Accommodations Letter and supplementary educational materials via the Teaching and Learning Committee of Senate and consultation with faculty and academic administrators.
- Redesign of the Accommodation Letter; creation of a faculty training module and "Glossary of Terms".
- The Revised Student Accommodations Letter will be implemented by Fall 2019 and communicated widely.

5. Re-examine Petition Process:

The Vice-Provost, Students & International will initiate a collaborative process with key stakeholders to rethink the principles and practices involved in the petitions process, particularly as they impact students with disabilities. (Petition fees are already waived upon referral by HWC/CSD.)

IV. Establishing Process for Communication and Advisory of Stakeholders

With the completion of the review process, ongoing methods of community input are being established.

1. Student Advisory:

The Student Advisory Group was developed in Winter 2019 to inform further responses to student recommendations and program decisions related to the CSD. Recruitment of students for the committee was widespread including; email to all registered CSD service users, posters and social media campaign. The group actively engaged in meetings over the course of the semester and provided consultation on rebranding/name change and general CSD service provisions. The group is in the process of developing their terms of reference and will be reconvening in Fall 2019.

2. Faculty Advisory:

Ongoing feedback and advisory related to student accessibility will be sought through the Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC), a sub-committee of Senate. The TLC has already proved effective in developing the Academic Accommodations Policy, the revised Accommodations Letter and related documents. Positioning an advisory process for guiding relevant policies, practices and professional learning resources to support implementation of the accommodation process within the TLC ensures that it will receive appropriate consultation and approvals within academic governance structures. TLC membership includes a number of key stakeholders including; faculty members representing each of the OCAD U Faculties, students, the library, the FCDC and the WLC.

Consultation with other stakeholders, i.e. Associate Deans, Program Chairs, Office of Diversity, Equity and Sustainability Initiatives, Student Union and others will continue through the TLC on an as-needed basis.

3. Streamlining the Process for Complaints:

A detailed Complaints Procedure is outlined in the [Academic Accommodations Policy for Students with Disabilities](#). This policy outlines progressive measures for students and faculty experiencing barriers and requiring support with the accommodations process. As a means to support students, staff and faculty through this process and expedite the resolution of complaints, the process for this will be communicated widely.

V. Acknowledgements

The process of reviewing and re-positioning the functions of the CSD (now SAS) has been extremely rigorous and thorough. OCAD University is thankful to the many, many stakeholders who participated in this process — including the many students who responded to the survey, met with the reviewers and have served on the new advisory — as well as members of the review committee. Throughout this period of change, staff of both the (former) CSD have embraced the changes, including relocation, major restructuring, new technology and, finally, a new name. OCAD U is exceptionally grateful to them for their ongoing dedication to service improvement and commitment to access, equity and student success.