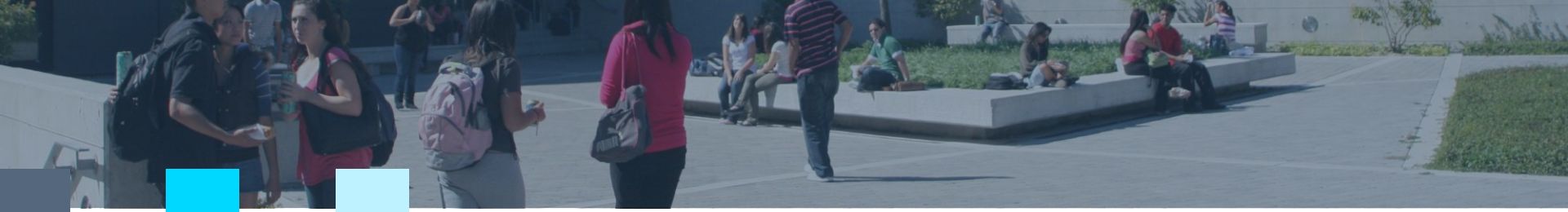


Making Learning Accessible: Accessibility Services and Accommodations

Michael Nicholson
Director, Accessibility Services

Ben Poynton
AODA Officer

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Interim Assistant Director,
Accessibility Services



Land Acknowledgment

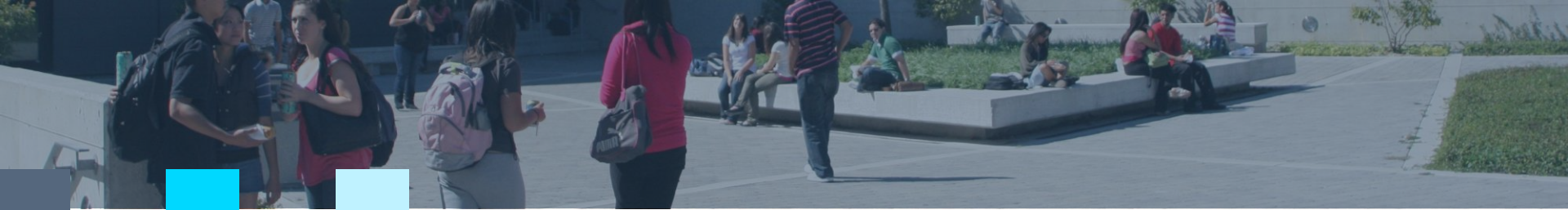
We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

- Revised by the Elders Circle (Council of Aboriginal Initiatives)

Access Check

We understand access to be a shared responsibility between everyone in this space. We strive to create an accessible space that reduces the need for you to disclose a disability or impairment for the purposes of gaining an accommodation. In doing this together, we strive to welcome disability, and the changes it brings, into our space.

- Is there anything about the virtual space that we should address now?
- Are there any other access needs that might affect your participation in the workshop that we could also address?



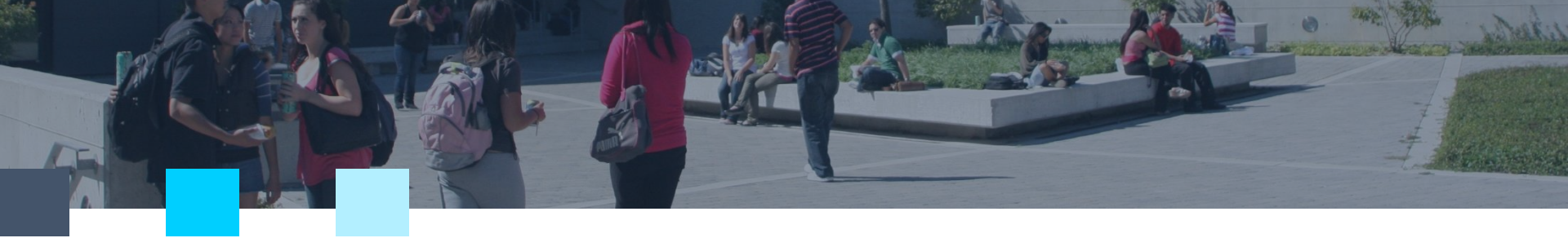
Learning outcomes

By the end of this session, you should be able to:

- Build community awareness of accommodation and accessibility supports for remote/online teaching contexts.
- Identify the framework that guides accessible and inclusive learning practices at UofT.
- Examine effective strategies and practices for improving accessibility in remote/online teaching contexts.
- Navigate and utilize support resources.

What is accessibility?

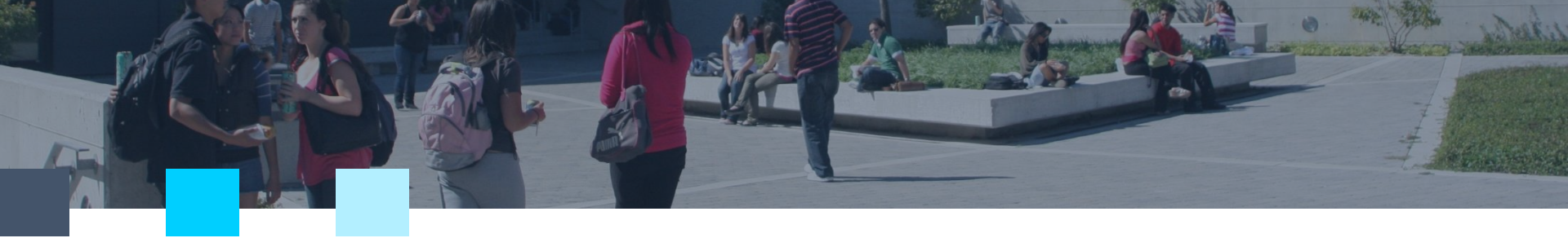




Accessibility is...

- A legal requirement
- A response to specific requests
- A shared responsibility



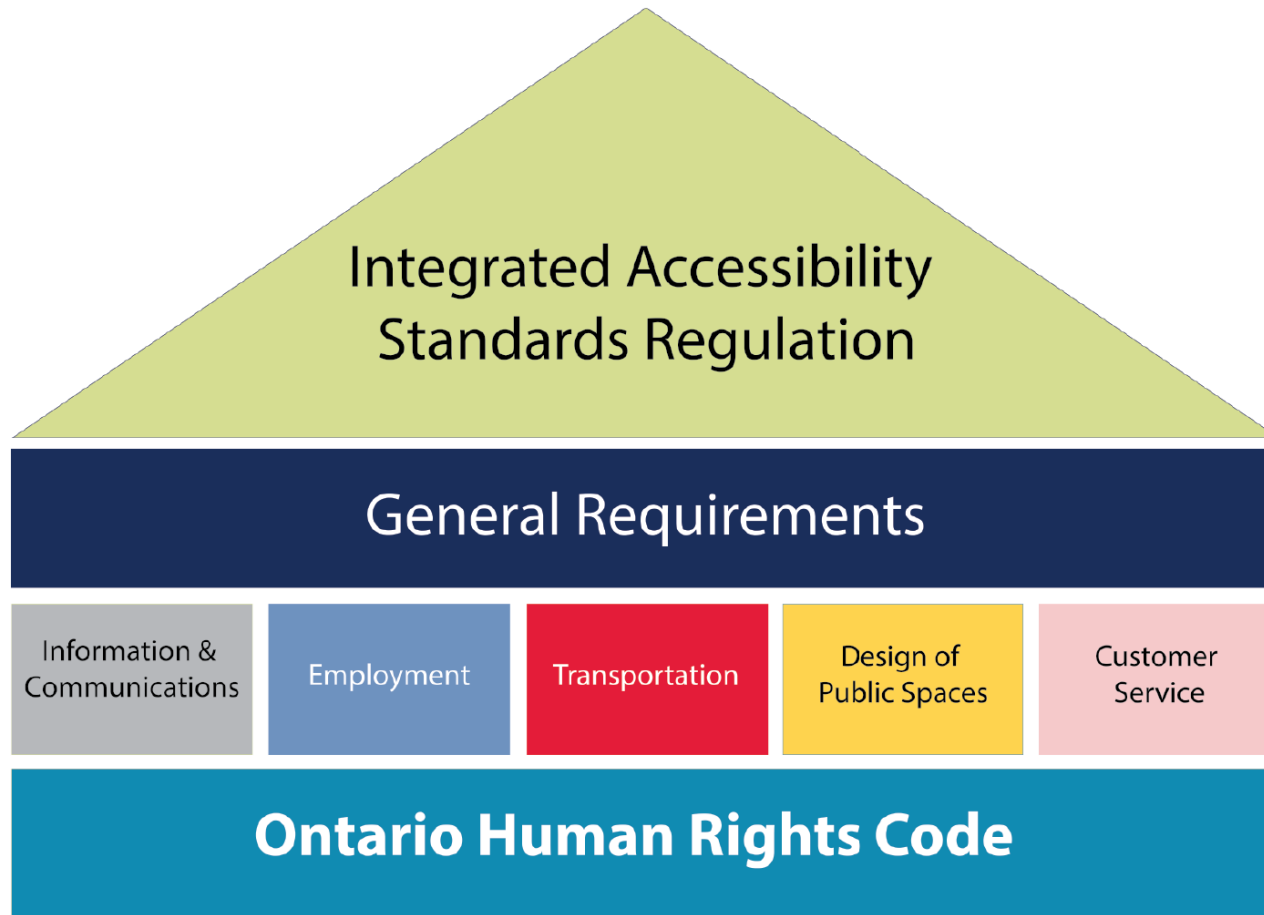


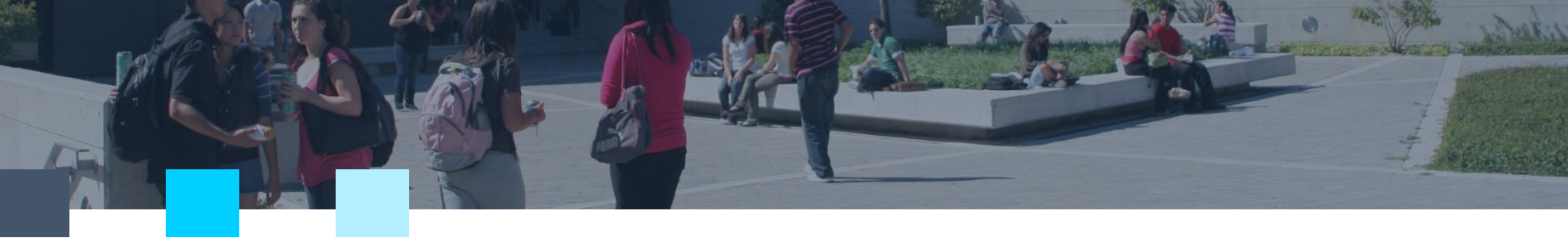
Legal requirement

- AODA & Ontario *Human Rights Code*
- Compliance-driven
- Notification of need
- Procedural and substantive

"design facilities, policies and procedures more inclusively, respond appropriately and in a timely way to accommodation requests, and effectively address complaints related to disability"

Legal framework

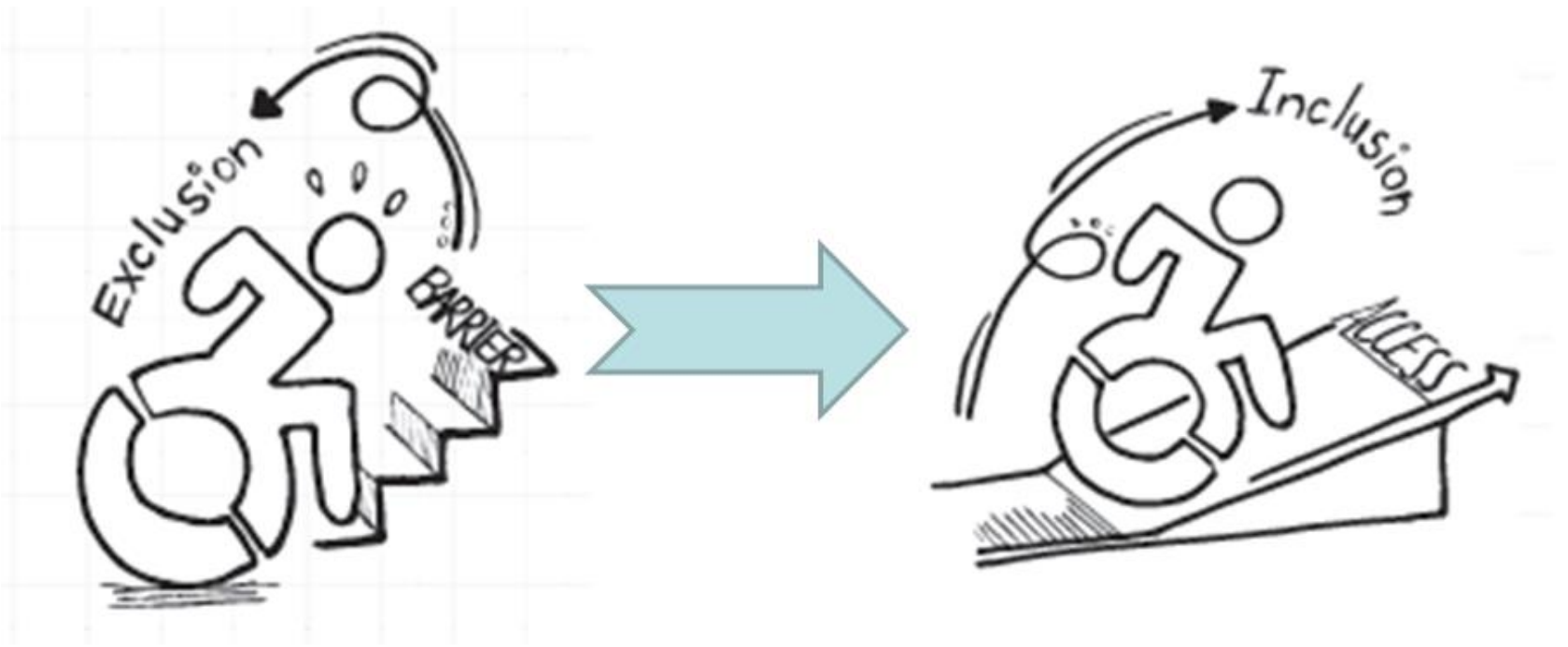




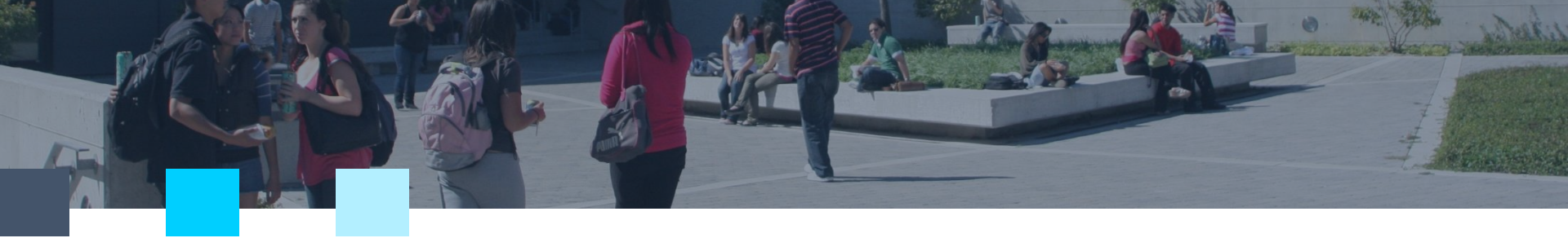
Defining Disability

MEDICAL MODEL	SOCIAL MODEL
Deficiency or abnormality	Difference
Negative	Neutral
Resides in the individual	Interactions between person & society
Cure or normalization of individual	Change in interactions
Remedy agent is a professional	Remedy agent can be individual, advocate or anyone who affects the arrangements
Responsibility only resides with professionals	We are all responsible for creating an accessible environment

A shared responsibility



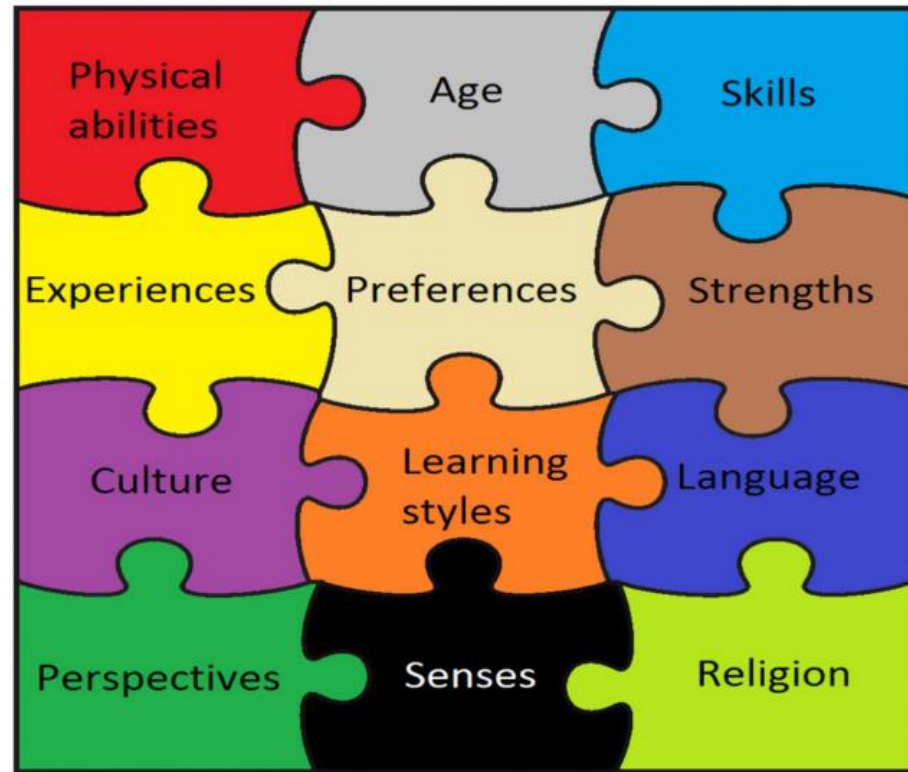
Credit: Tangled & Humber College



Defining UDL:

“UDL is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. [...] UDL provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone—not a one-size-fits-all solution but rather flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs.”

(National Center on Universal Design for Learning)




The UDL framework & accessibility



Provide multiple means of
Engagement →

Affective Networks
The "WHY" of learning




Minimize distraction

Background noise; visual stimulation; pace of work; availability of breaks

Provide multiple means of
Representation →

Recognition Networks
The "WHAT" of learning




Alternatives for auditory info

Captions; transcripts; ASL; descriptive text

Provide multiple means of
Action & Expression →

Strategic Networks
The "HOW" of learning



Optimize assistive technology access

Creating accessible documents; selecting accessible software



How can we implement UDL?



Multiple means of engagement

Using your syllabus

“If there are ways in which the overall structure of the course and general classroom interactions could be adapted to facilitate full participation, please do not hesitate to raise your ideas with the instructor: comments and suggestions about the format of readings, lectures, and class discussions are welcome.”



Multiple means of representation

Opportunities for asynchronous learning

- Record and upload synchronous content
- Use auto-caption feature in MS Stream
 - Next CTSI Course on Captions Wed, 3 Feb
- Create transcript
- Post audio files
- Online class discussion pre- and post-class

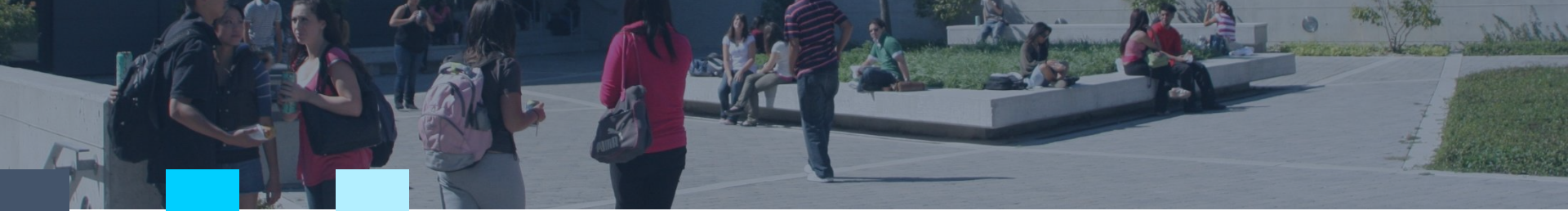


Multiple means of action & expression

Use of external tools

- Make sure using institutionally-supported tools
- Otherwise:
 - Do they have a product accessibility statement with resources?
 - If they cannot support something, can it be mitigated?
 - Learn how to create accessible content with the tool





Further resources

- [ThinkUDL](#) – podcast, resources by episode
- [UDL Guidelines](#), CAST
- [U of T UDL Resources](#)

What happens
when UDL can't
respond to all
student needs?



Policies regarding Disability and Accessibility at U of T

- “the University will strive to provide support for, and facilitate the accommodation of individuals with disabilities so that all may share the same level of access to opportunities, participate in the full range of activities that the University offers, and achieve their full potential as members of the University community.” (University’s Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities)
- Academic accommodations for students with disabilities are provided in accordance with the statutory duty arising from the Ontario Human Rights Code. Further information on accommodations are outlined in the Ontario Human Rights Commission’s [Policy on Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities \(2018\)](#).

Academic Accommodations

- Any service, equipment or special arrangement that is put in place to support students with a 'disability' in the university setting.
- Students for whom accommodations are provided must meet the same academic requirements and standards as all students, although the manner by which students registered with AS meet these may vary

Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC – post-secondary)

- Goal is to accommodate a student's needs, vs. preference/expectations (although these are considered)
- When making accommodation requests, students have a responsibility to give education providers ample lead time where possible (i.e. register in early summer well before beginning of school year)
- The need for accommodation is demonstrated through the best information available, including medical documentation, student self-reports, history provided by the student, screening tools (e.g. AS Online Intake Form)
- Accommodations individualized, dignified, intersectionality lens
- Entire University has a duty to accommodate students – doesn't mean that everything that is requested will be granted, but we need to take requests individually, in good faith, gather relevant information, engage in dialogue – often not straightforward

How can Accessibility Services help?



Accessibility Services' Role

- Verify disability on behalf of university; determine accommodations
- Collaborate in accommodations process
- Problem solve with students, faculty and staff
- Organize services and supports

Keep in mind:

- Accommodations that impact your marking or require follow up from you is on a registered student's Letter of Accommodation and this is something you can request (note: specific test/exam accommodations usually are not listed)
- You don't receive, nor should you request, details medical documentation when a student is requesting a disability/health-related accommodation for which they are registered with Accessibility Services
- We may contact you in order to get a better understanding of the essential requirements in your course or program, navigate requests for accommodations, etc.
- You are welcome to contact the student's Accessibility Advisor should you have a question about an accommodation a student is requesting

Who and Where We Are

- Interdisciplinary group of professionals (Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, Psychologists, Special Education Teachers)
- 32 Full-Time Staff (Accessibility Advisors, Front Line Services, Learning Strategists, Adaptive Technologist) and 30+ peer mentors/advisors
- 14 Sites on the St. George Campus, main office at 455 Spadina Avenue (at corner of Spadina and College)
- Currently we are all working remotely

Registration with Our Office

3-Step Process

- 1) Student completes Online Student Questionnaire
- 2) Student obtains medical documentation speaking to their disability or health concern, usually in the form of our medical documentation form, but may also be in the form of a psychoeducational assessment, neuropsychological assessment, etc. We need to know the impacts of the student's disability or health concern on their ability to do academic work; can't simply list a diagnosis.
- 3) Student attends intake appointment (virtually) with Accessibility Advisor who they will become assigned to. Their name and contact information will be at the top of their Letter of Accommodation

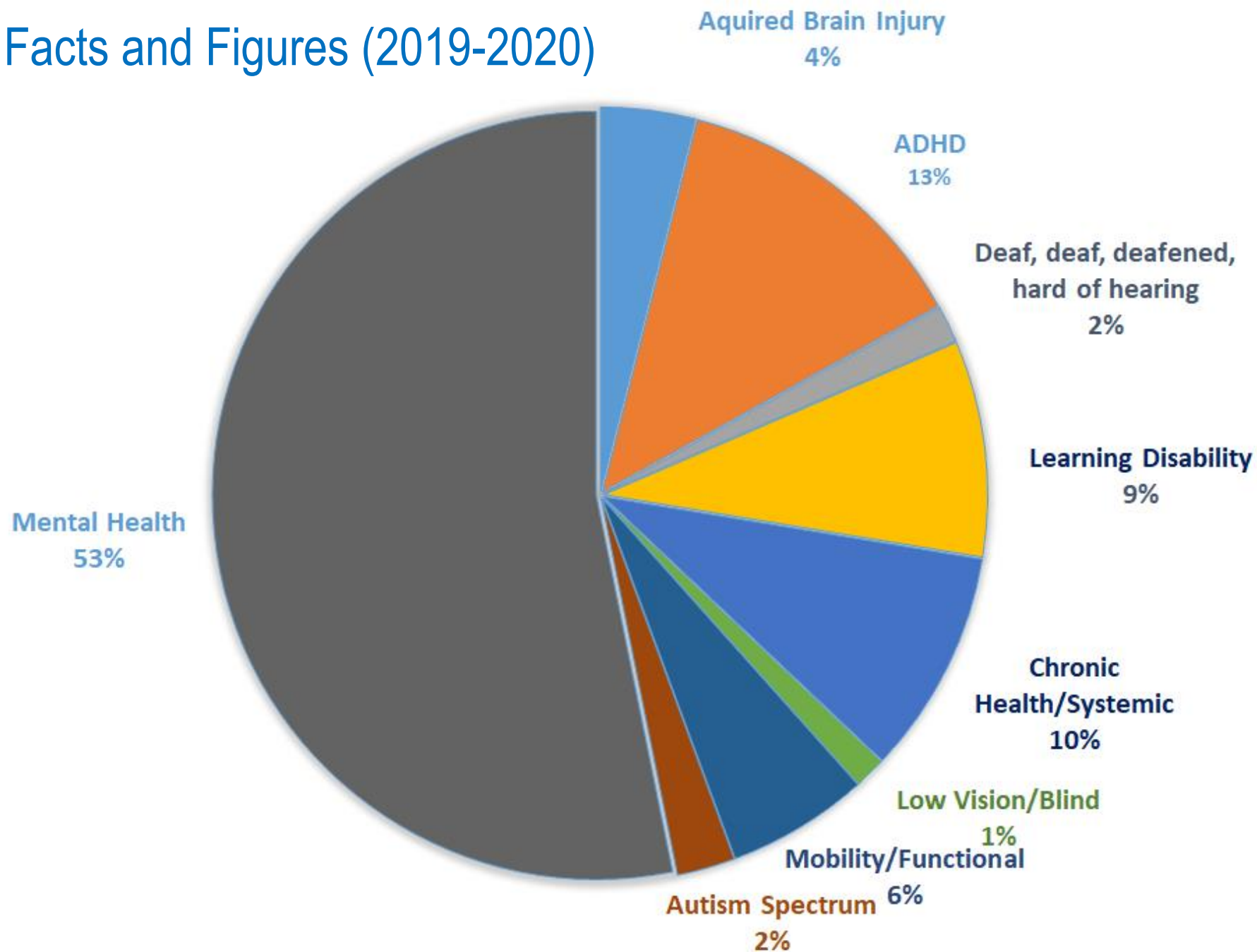
Keep in mind:

- During busy times, there can be long waits, so we encourage students to register as early as possible – you may hear from a student that they are waiting for their appointment with AS but we can't confirm any accommodations until we meet with them
- Registration with our office can occur throughout the academic year; therefore you may receive Letters of Accommodation throughout the year, rather than all at once

Facts and Figures (2019-2020)

- We work with students from all faculties and disciplines - undergraduate, graduate, PhD, professional faculties, etc.
- 4946 students total
- 1437 – graduate professional, second entry, research stream
- 3509 - undergraduate
 - Brain Injuries – 4%
 - ADHD – 13%
 - Deaf/deaf/deafened/hard of hearing – 2%
 - Learning Disability – 9%
 - Chronic Health – 10%
 - Low vision/Blind - 1%
 - Mobility/functional - 6%
 - Autism Spectrum Disorder – 2%
 - Mental Health – 53%

Facts and Figures (2019-2020)



When You May Hear from Our Office

Before Course Begins

- Some students may require alternative formats for readings
- Some students may request a copy of the syllabus before the course starts, if available

Letter of Accommodation

- Outlines student's accommodations
- Lists student's Accessibility Advisor - if you have questions or concerns, please reach out to them
- Process for accessing letters differs by campus (sorry...)
- You may receive LoAs at any time during the year
- Extensions - up to 7 days from the deadline; further extensions may be requested beyond one week in extenuating circumstances; ex. A student in hospital, a significant flare-up in symptoms, etc. In these instances, the Advisor will have had a conversation with the student regarding these circumstances, their health, how they are managing/balance course work, how much work has been done up until that point.
- Peer notetaking – if a student has peer notetaking as an accommodation, you will receive an e-mail from requesting that you make an announcement to your class; students are aware this is not guaranteed

Continued

Accommodated Testing Services

- Provide accommodated testing for registered students; work has really shifted in the online/remote context
- Assessments used to be provided and facilitated in person, but now you will hear from them by way of e-mails confirming your assessment information (date, time, duration), and providing you with accommodation information for students in your course
- If you are teaching over Quercus, you can give them access to your course and they can add the accommodations for you
- Students may request to write in person at the ATS site, but this has been rare
- Deadline for students to register to write with accommodations is 14 days or more before the assessment, so please ensure the information about the assessment is available to your students by this time so they can register
- Students need to register for each test/quiz/exam they want accommodations for

Contact:

tes.info@utoronto.ca <https://ace.utoronto.ca/ats/>

Information for Faculty and Staff:

https://ace.utoronto.ca/ats/info_for_staff.html#onlineinfo

What are some
key accessibility
considerations for
online learning?



Considerations for Accessibility in Online Learning

All students reported

- Increased uncertainty, overwhelm, and isolation
- Increased challenges with motivation
- Decline in mental health
- Difficulties with collaborative learning
- Perception of increased workload

Students with disabilities reported

- Increased difficulty focusing
- Inadequate access to accommodations or accessible materials
- Difficulty communicating and building supportive relationships online
- Changes in uses of technology



Pichette, Jackie, Sarah Brumwell and Jessica Rizk. *Improving the Accessibility of Remote Higher Education: Lessons from the pandemic and recommendations*. Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2020. Available online: <http://www.heqco.ca/en-ca/Research/ResPub/Pages/Improving-the-Accessibility-of-Remote-Higher-Education-Lessons-from-the-pandemic-and-recommendations.aspx>

Navigation of online systems

- Tech learning curve and desire for "systempathy"
- Increased distractions – including chat functions
- Difficulty with screen readers
- Students with low vision reported difficulty with online learning platforms
- Video conferencing/increased screen time more challenging for students with pre-existing conditions (e.g., acquired brain injury, concussion)

Addressing Impacts

Students	Accessibility Services	Faculty
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timely communication w/ Accessibility Advisor of learning needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussing impacts with student and updating accommodations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information shared/ stored in multiple areas on Quercus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sending Letters of Accommodations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *New* Remote/ Online Course Accommodations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consideration of time zones
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessing accommodations (ie. Reduced courseload) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online learning-specific strategy supports (group sessions, 1:1, workshops, videos) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration with Accommodated Testing Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Booking tests on time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual Accountability Check-ins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarity of testing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessing appropriate supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing Mental Health in Online Learning resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Framing participation requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactive identification of specific in-class only accommodations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Create certainty when you can."

Academic and Overall Wellness Resources Explained

Resource/Department	What do they do/who is eligible?	When might you refer them?	Contact Information
Accessibility Services	Provide academic accommodations for students with temporary or on-going disabilities or health concerns. Students need to provide medical documentation/, student questionnaire, and attend and intake appointment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -student shares they are living with a health issue or disability that is impacting their ability to do academic work -student shares they used to have accommodations at another institution or high school 	416-978-8060 Accessibility.services@utoronto.ca https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/accessibility-services/
Academic Success	Any student (undergraduate or graduate) who needs assistance with academic work, such as time management, planning/organizing, notetaking, test-taking, productivity/motivation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -student shares they can't keep track of all their assignments -student shares the work in university feels much harder than in high school -student shares they are procrastinating -you feel it might be helpful for them to meet one on one with an academic coach/learning strategist 	https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/academic-success/

Continued

Resource/ Department	What do they do/who is eligible?	When might you refer to them or connect with them?	Contact information
Health and Wellness	Student health clinic – provide health services, immunizations, sexual and reproductive health consultations, counselling support including individual and groups	-student shares they aren't doing well and can't see their family doctor who is out of town/province/country -student asks for mental health resources on campus	https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/health-wellness/
Student Crisis/Progress	NOT directly student-facing – best for staff/faculty to connect with them when concerned about a student	-concern about a student's safety or well-being (disturbing behaviour, reference to violence or suicide, etc.) -Best to phone their central Intake Line and their Coordinator will direct you to the appropriate resource – no harm in phoning them if you aren't sure.	https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/service/faculty-support-for-responding-to-distressed-students/ 416-946-7111 (Intake)

Continued

Resource/Department	What do they do/who is eligible?	When might you refer to them or connect with them?	Contact information
Registrar's Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Every undergraduate Student has a Registrar in their Faculty or College -assist with course enrolment, adjustment of course load, important dates and deadlines, financial concerns, grants/bursaries, provide other resources such as writing centres, peer support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -student wonders about dropping a course or applying CR/NCR designation -student expresses financial concerns -student has questions about majors/minors/specializations -student shares information about life circumstances that may be compromising their ability to do their work (ex. ill family member or death in the family) 	https://future.utoronto.ca/current-students/registrars/

THANK YOU

**STUDENT
LIFE**

**Accessibility
Services**



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

CENTRE FOR TEACHING SUPPORT & INNOVATION