

ACCESSIBILITY FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Issues and Resources

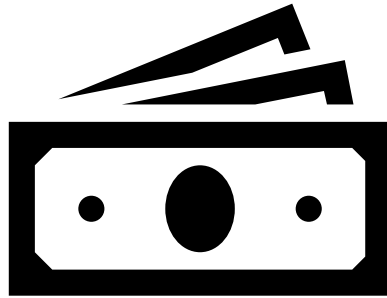


Motivation for report

- Need for report materialized through GSA-UW's advocacy
- The GSA-UW is interested in understanding issues that graduate students with disabilities face and existing available resources
- Report serves as starting point for further data-gathering and action



Funding



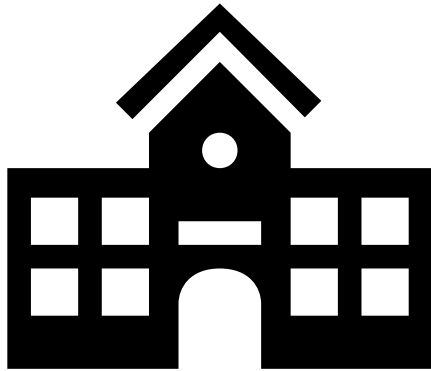
- [Ontario/Canada government grants](#)
 - Covers certain services and equipment
 - Maximum funding limits per year
 - Must be OSAP eligible – excluding many graduate students
- Internal awards
 - No identified UW-specific awards or grants for students with disabilities
- External awards
 - Searchable database: www.disabilityawards.ca
 - Many are disability-specific or otherwise limited in scope
- [Health and Dental plan](#)
 - Administered by GSA
 - Funds some access to mental health resources, medication, etc.

Services



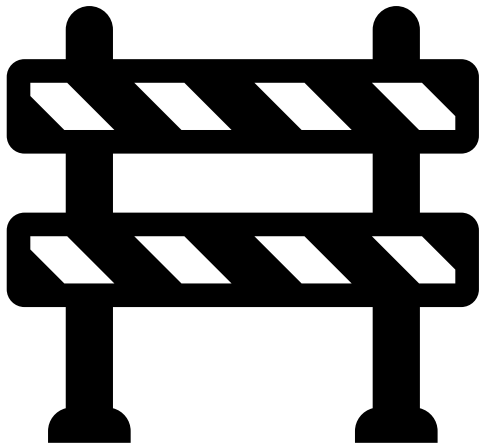
- [AccessAbility Services](#)
 - Service for disabled students at UW
 - Assists with an accommodation plans for graduate **academic** career
- [Campus Wellness](#)
 - Counselling Services offers counselling support for all UW students
 - Health Services offers on-campus health supports (covered by OHIP and UHIP) to all UW students
- [Campus Housing](#)
 - Accessible on-campus housing available with application
- [Equity Office](#)
 - Assists students, faculty and staff from underrepresented groups
 - Develops equity-related initiatives on campus, ie. [Equity Survey](#) (deadline: October 31st)
- [Centre for Teaching Excellence](#)
 - Offers accommodation tips for classroom instruction

Background



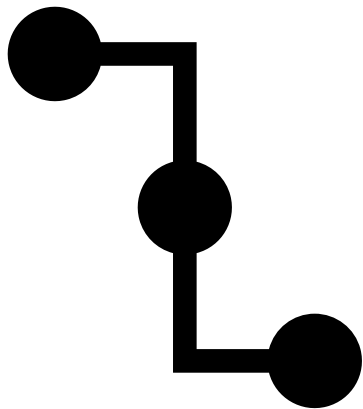
- Disabled students disproportionately underrepresented in post-secondary degree attainment
- Graduates have much higher unemployment rates, more difficulty repaying education debt than peers
- History of ableism in academia, with promotion of eugenics ideals in late 1800's to early 1900's
- Disability Rights movement from 1960's onwards
 - Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982)
 - "Nothing about us without us"
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)
 - Goal of accessible Ontario by 2025
 - Post-secondary institutional standards currently under development

Issues



- Lack of data on ableism and access issues in post-secondary education
- Lack of funding of disability resources, gaps in support
- Historic lack of inclusion of disabled voices in policy that affects population
- Continued culture of stigma and ableism
- WUSA survey
 - Issues in price and availability of accessible housing
 - Issues in accessing appropriate support through AccessAbility Services
 - Navigating transitions, accessing program break accommodations
- Graduate students have multiple roles
 - AccessAbility only supports academic accommodations, not staff roles
 - Lack of centralized accommodations process
 - No large-scale study of graduate students with disabilities in US and Canada

Recommendations



- GSA-UW issue survey examining experiences of graduate students with disabilities
 - Preserve confidentiality in data collection and storage
 - Opportunities for coordination with [UW Equity Survey](#), [WUSA Accessibility Report](#)
 - Consider diversity amongst population and graduate student specific issues in survey questions
- Support students through advising service
 - Career transitions
 - Disclosure, accommodations and stigma
 - Issues with supervisor relationship
- GSA-UW improves access to getting involved
 - Ensure communications are accessible
 - Hold accessible events
 - Support unit associations in ensuring access

Questions?



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