Western Review

Submitted to Associate Vice President, Student Experience Jennifer Massey

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Preamble

In the writing of this report, the reviewers utilized a variety of mediums to inform our recommendations including interviews, our own experiences at various post-secondary institutions across the Country, and research and best practices in the field. In addition, the data collected through the CAS self-study process prominently informed our work and we are grateful to the Western Student Experience team for the work that was done. It is also important to note that there were two key reviews in 2016 (Newman-Simmie Report, 2016) and 2017 (Condra Report, 2017) that also provide useful recommendations which our report will draw upon. We want to be clear that the vision for Western Student Experience and the Thriving model of student services is based in best practice and supported throughout research. Without strong institutional support, its aspirations will be difficult to attain.

The reviewers want to highlight a few limitations in the report. First and foremost, we acknowledge the limitations of our own identities and perspectives. All three of us identify as white cis-gendered women, with advanced degrees and standing within our own institutions. Though we are all committed to dismantling systems and structures of oppression for the students on our respective campuses, we know this is a process of continual learning, reflection, and long-term commitment to doing better. We hope that the recommendations we make specifically regarding equity-deserving students will be implemented in collaboration with human rights and inclusion experts, and the students for whom they are intended.

Lack of data may mean that some of our insights and, in turn, recommendations may not fully resonate with all. We are making assumptions and taking some license based on the information we had available, while also being mindful not to extrapolate too far based on the few students we had the pleasure to meet. A critical theme you will see is the need for more student data to drive decision-making. The student story at Western, at least for the reviewers, is still unknown. This is such an integral piece necessary to achieve a Thriving campus culture. Who are Western students? What are their diverse needs and stories? Are the supports, programs and services meeting their unique needs? It is worth noting that a concerted effort has been made to try to answer these questions, but without understanding more about the Western student experience, this will remain a challenge to ascertain.

We also want to note that there is a great deal of focus on Accessible Education, and accessibility more broadly, throughout this report. We view this as the largest gap and area for the institution to do intentional and large-scale work. As you will see, there are several areas of concern and risk to the institution, but more importantly, this is an area where students experienced the most difficulty and disappointment. We want to be clear that this is not due to a lack of commitment or dedication from the AE team, but rather the lack of an institutional commitment to develop an accessibility strategy. This will be imperative to move forward in a meaningful way to support students, staff, and faculty alike.

It would be remiss of us not to consider the COVID context and general racial tensions on campuses across Canada. The Western students we spoke to reported dissatisfaction with the remote learning experience, which also adds additional barriers to access, particularly for students with disabilities. The pandemic has intensified experiences for historically and currently marginalized and equity-deserving students and all universities are struggling to address this. The pandemic has had a disproportionate effect on students who are already experiencing discrimination and lack of access. The voices of equity-deserving students in this review process came across loud and clear. They indicated

feelings of exclusion and came up against barriers and experiences of harassment and discrimination. These issues and concerns are highlighted prominently in this report.

As there are a number of recommendations contained in this report, we need to reiterate the need for a clear process around change management. Teams will need to be bold but also consider campus climate and staff readiness, human and financial resources, and the pace at which change can be made and measured. Some teams will need to walk before they run, and we believe there are some foundational pieces that have to be addressed first so that you are able to build together a culture of continuous improvement. Creating clear mandates and use of operational and realistic workplans will help prioritize next steps. A great deal can be achieved by focusing on what is within immediate influence and it is hoped that this review can help support the path forward. While there may be an impetus to change immediately, we believe a more sustainable and positive outcome will be achieved through a measured and iterative change management process.

Finally, we want to thank the students, staff, and faculty that supported this review. We know that this year has been challenging for all of us in higher education and we want to thank everyone for making the time to meet with us. We would like to thank Erin Huner and Sara Wills who did extensive work which provided us with the foundation to start our review process. Thank-you to Kim Miller and Jennie Massey, who were gracious hosts and who have entrusted us with this review. We know under your leadership and with your commitment to students, the aspirations of a Thriving campus will be achieved.

Executive Summary

Background

In fall 2020 the reviewers were invited to undertake an external review, as part of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) review process, of three units within the Academic Support and Engagement Department (ASE): Accessible Education (AE); Learning Development & Success (LDS); and Writing Support Centre (WSC). As noted in the terms of reference, the feedback will help "continue to build innovative departments, programmes and supports that meet external standards, as well as the needs of our diverse student population at Western University" and be used to advance Western Student Experience (WSE)'s mission "to build an equitable thriving campus at Western". As a first step, we reviewed the External Reviewer's Report provided to us, as well as the current staffing model, office composition and makeup, programming and learning outcome documents. We then virtually met with campus stakeholders (students, staff and faculty) over three days to discuss opportunities to continue providing, and further enhance, an excellent student experience.

Our report will include themes and recommendations based the information we received as well as provide clear answers to a set of questions specifically asked of us as part of the review. Through the review process, a number of common themes arose to the reviewers across all areas of ASE. As a result, we will address these first from the departmental level.

Key Themes:

Theme #1: Clarity of roles, policies and programming in ASE

It was clear through the review process that the ASE team is known across the institution for their commitment to student success and the quality of work they accomplish with limited resources. The Western community has a great deal of respect for the ASE team. A theme, however, is the challenge in understanding role clarity, policies and programming of each unit within ASE and ASE as a whole. There is a need for more understanding across the institution of the role of ASE and the leadership it has for student support, programs and related policies. This is especially true, as we will discuss later, when it comes to creating an accessible campus community. Having better communication with campus partners will help to increase their understanding of policies and procedures as well as break down the silos that were frequently mentioned. Students shared a similar narrative as it relates to the outcomes of ASE. The students who took part in the review indicated a general mistrust in the intentions of the institution and the ASE department. Students indicated that they felt that processes were fragmented and fractured, and they did not "believe" anything would come from the review process. Similarly, graduate students stated they did not see themselves in the services (other than perhaps the Writing Support Centre) and felt services were not applicable to them as graduate students.

A frequent narrative we heard from the students we spoke to was a desire for expanded and more varied hours of support. This goal can also be met through utilizing diverse approaches to student outreach. This is especially helpful to graduate and professional students who are often otherwise busy throughout the day. As well, drop-in hours should be considered as another delivery standard which would allow students to meet with staff for urgent or unexpected items and also can be a more effective

use of staff time as there are no cancellations or "no-shows". As one participant stated, "maximum flexibility" is needed.

Consideration should also be given to an on-location model that would enable partnerships with established learning communities on campus to provide programs and students "where students are at" in their academic community. Such relationships are important for fostering trust, enabling an understanding of local teaching & learning environments and for sharing and building knowledge with staff and faculty on-site. Once the goals and service model are determined, it is imperative that research, training, development and meetings within the team, as well as with campus partners are integrated to ensure robust and theory-informed service development and delivery. As a result, the Western community will have a clear and shared idea of what ASE are trying to accomplish and multiple access points to the ASE curriculum.

Another common theme related to programming was the over focus on one-on-one appointments and feeling that this was not sustainable over the long term. University supports and services count on the one-on-one setting to develop impactful relationships with students and anecdotally, many students often indicate their preference for one-on-one support. However, there is no such data available to indicate what Western students prefer. What we do know is that although one-on-one appointments are essential for the success of some students, it is impossible to serve all students in this manner. In addition, it is important to consider cultural implications where some students may thrive more in group settings rather than individual appointments. This is an example where one size does not fit all. A shift away from a counselling model of one-on-one support also reduces the need for intense supervision and presumably would free up time to focus on additional program development and oversight. Consideration also needs to be given as to what supports are available to all students (in particular, online), what supports are available at the programmatic/group level and what individualized supports are needed for students most in need.

Research also shows the power of peers in influencing positive learning and development. Peer leaders can assist as students' transition into the university environment and can help to enhance student learning. Peer mentors are integral in the formation of support networks and peers (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt et al., 2005). In addition to supportive relationships with their designated supervisors, research also indicates mentoring and advising are important for graduate student success, especially for "individuals of underserved and underrepresented racial, ethnic, multiethnic, and multiracial heritage" (Duranczyk et al., 2015; Spivey-Mooring & Apprey, 2014; Terry & Ghosh, 2015). Moving away from solely one-on-one appointments, as well as including more peer-to-peer programming will enable ASE to positively impact more students.

Recommendation: develop a communication strategy to inform the Western community and stakeholders of ASE supports and services.

Recommendation: provide intentional follow up to students to inform them of outcomes of the review process and next steps. Involve as many diverse student perspectives in the process as possible.

Recommendation: offer evening hours and drop ins to provide students with more flexible delivery options.

Recommendation: consideration of on-location roles, once additional staffing is in place.

Recommendation: create a shared measure for students to share feedback of their experiences related to the ASE units.

Recommendation: create a shared curriculum that addresses the uniqueness of students as well as what they need developmentally and when.

Recommendation: explore possibility of implementing shared peer programming across ASE.

Theme #2: Strong commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion and justice

Western Student Experience has incorporated the concept of student thriving and has embedded this into their student support programming. Through the review process, it was apparent that although most community members knew about the Thriving work and were supportive, how this actually was integrated in practice was unclear. According to the thriving research, creating a sense of community on campus is the single best way to help all students thrive. Through the research on thriving in university students it was found that although student thriving was influenced by a number of factors, the magnitude differed greatly across ethnicities.

This past year saw the first National Dialogue and Action for Inclusive Higher Education and Communities, facilitating a national conversation to develop concrete actions for change in higher education and in our communities. Post-secondary institutions across Canada have been called to task by students and equity-deserving communities to do more to dismantle the systems of power and oppression that run rampant in our communities. Western itself has also had equity-deserving students openly share their experiences with racism on campus and in the community, which has led to the development of the Special Advisor to the President on Anti-Racism. Clearly Western is taking this work seriously and is committing to this work. It is essential, however, that this work does not rest solely with this one position and that the Western Student Experience also make their own commitments to anti-racism and work to dismantle the barriers within their services, practices and structures. When speaking with students as part of this review process, we heard this theme loud and clear. One student said they constantly needed to fight barriers in the system. Another mentioned that Thriving didn't feel "real", as it didn't include all students. Over and over, we heard stories from students regarding barriers, racism and euro-centric content in their experiences.

Through the review process there was an apparent lack of coordination and intentional work in reviewing ASE's curriculum and services from an anti-racism lens. It is essential for university staff to understand how their own lens affects how they interpret student actions (verbal and non-verbal) and make judgments based on implicit biases. We must critically consider how we may engage in micro-aggressions against students, thereby harming the student and the ability to develop rapport. As a result, including critical theories as part of training and development is essential in helping us consider the impact of micro-aggressions, implicit bias, as well as to work to help become more aware of these issues.

Two such critical frameworks that can be applied are anti-oppression theory and critical race theory (CRT). Anti-oppression encourages a critical consciousness, challenging us to be cognizant of power differentials and how these differentials may inadvertently make supports and services an oppressive experience (Sakamoto, & Pitner, 2005). Developing a critical consciousness helps us to be cognizant of power differentials, as well as work towards the eradication of oppression through institutional and societal changes. Critical race theory challenges the notions of neutrality, while seeking

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to analyze, deconstruct and transform the relationship between race, racism and power (Heiser, C.A., Prince, K. & Levy, J.D. 2017). CRT highlights how the education system is not prepared for the realities of our diverse students and, in fact, avoids issues of racism, effectively oppressing students and their lived experiences. Engraining these theories with our practice, allows historically and currently marginalized students to share their own stories, as well as be experts in their own lived experiences (Heiser, C.A., Prince, K. & Levy, J.D. 2017).

Recommendation: engage equity-deserving students in reviewing practices, presentations and programming in the ASE portfolio. Specifically, look at the concepts of thriving and strengths with an anti-racism lens.

Recommendation: develop a training and professional development plan for the ASE staff to engage in anti-racism, anti-oppression, critical race theory and Indigenous ways of knowing with internal and external experts.

Recommendation: develop an HR plan to diversify staff within ASE to reflect the diversity of the student body. Hire BIPOC staff to ensure culturally-responsive services and support and so BIPOC students see themselves and their experiences represented in ASE.

Recommendation: engage in an HR audit to review barriers within the hiring process (including requirements, postings, interview process and questions, etc.).

Recommendation: develop programs and supports that are culturally responsive to diverse student population(s).

Theme #3: Incorporating assessment and metrics into the everyday

Understanding how students engage in our programs and services is essential in both measuring impact as well as ensuring that support is contributing to the overall learning of students. Western Student Experience has focused on this area immensely and is one of the leaders in the Country with their research and assessment focus. With the incorporation of design thinking and the process in which this review was conducted as examples, it is clear to the reviewers that this is a priority. However, when speaking with the practitioners and various university stakeholders there is a clear disconnect between assessment for learning and identifying access points and loads. According to the Education Advisory Board (EAB) (2016) report "Selecting Core Performance Metrics", it is essential for institutions to use data in a credible way and to drive data-informed decision-making. Not only do we need to understand how we impact student learning, we also need to be tracking metrics that evaluate operational effectiveness. To this end, leaders must identify the metrics that provide the greatest insight into unit performance gaps and set principled action triggers (EAB, 5).

The use of the CAS Standards to frame this review process is grounded in best practice and research. The reviewers were impressed with the breadth and depth of the information that was provided and the expertise in this area. However, when speaking to practitioners in the various ASE areas, the level of knowledge and comfort in assessment differed. In order to ensure that assessment is truly integrated throughout the entire division, it is essential that everyone sees the role they play and are invested in the process. ***It is highly recommended that the Division of Student Experience has full access to institutional data (CUSC, NSSE, NCHA, etc.) in order to inform their programing and for benchmarking purposes.***

Effective assessments require clearly articulated goals that are linked to the institution's mission and priorities. Research shows that evidence is rarely sufficient to spark meaningful reform. To counter initiative fatigue and to enhance the chance of evidence-based action, institutions and individuals should commit to these five practices (Blaich & Wise, 2011; Kuh & Hutchings, 2015; Walvoord, 2010 in Felton, et al. 2016):

- Establish clear improvement priorities for sustained focus.
- Communicate about the educational value and anticipated outcomes of each initiative.
- Gather enough data to have a reasonable basis for action and ensure the student voice was centered.
- Foster conversation about engagement with data so that those in positions to act have the opportunity to understand the evidence and shape the actions.
- Identify and celebrate successes along the way.

Understanding the student experience is essential in the development of programming. By utilizing survey results, we can better plan and implement programming that is not only theory informed, but also based on what students tell us. In addition, assessment that is not mindful of equity can end up becoming a tool that promotes inequities, whether intentional or not" (Montenegro & Jankowski, 2020).

Recommendation: develop a training program for practitioners in understanding assessment, developing learning outcomes and assessing student learning.

Recommendation: develop Division-wide Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and metrics measuring student access points. Develop benchmarks for types of students accessing services.

Recommendation: develop a plan to share assessment data with key university partners, including students and affiliated colleges.

Theme #4: Re-considering roles within the Division and beyond

When done well, there is no argument that good advising has a positive impact on student retention, being one of the major academic and social domains of the university experience that affect student decisions about staying or leaving (Metzner, 1989). Data generated by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) from 469 institutions revealed that students reporting the highest degree of satisfaction with the quality of their academic advisement were most likely to demonstrate the highest levels of student engagement in university (Kuh, 2002).

Advising relates to any experience where students are engaging with university staff in ways that support their academic journey (NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising, 2006). This may relate to academic support, course selection, or even international support. The role of "advisor" is consistent across the country on our post-secondary campuses. At Western, however, the term most commonly used is "counsellor". According to the CCA, Canada's leading association for counselling and psychotherapy, in most provinces, counselling and psychotherapy are not regulated but many employers require professionals to be ruled by a code of ethics, standards of practice and disciplinary procedure (taken from: https://www.ccpa-accp.ca). According to the CCA, the scope of counsellors promotes mental health by developing and enhancing:

- personal, relational, sexual, career, and spiritual growth and well-being,
- personal awareness and resources,
- decision-making and problem-solving.

Conversely, if we look at advising competencies from both [NACADA](#) and [CACUSS](#) we see subtle differences. Although many issues may arise during an advising conversation, the focus is around students' experiences at the post-secondary institution in which they are enrolled. If students are experiencing mental health issues that are affecting this experience, this falls out of scope for advisors and results in a referral. This distinction is important when best serving students, as it provides them with a wide variety of individuals that can support various aspects of their experiences. In addition, advisors often act as a conduit for students to access other supports, as it is sometimes seen as "safer" (in particular, when considering the needs of international students) than seeking counselling. The use of the term "counsellor" seemed to create confusion within the Western community and also for the reviewers.

Recommendation: change the position title of counsellors to more accurately reflect roles as advisors.

Recommendation: revisit the connection of "academic counsellors" to the ASE unit and review the job descriptions to more accurately reflect advising competencies.

Theme #5: Create a communications and outreach plan for students, staff, and faculty

We heard a strong need for additional and clearer communications about the supports, programs and services offered throughout ASE. Unfortunately, even with additional resources available to units, there is a clear disconnect between how to access these resources in a way that would address this issue. It will be helpful to have ASE engage in a strategic planning exercise with Strategic Storytelling and Digital Engagement once the units have a clear focus and vision for their services. This would also be used to help focus a communications and branding strategy for the units. Staff are not sure how to make time for this, or what is possible now that there is internal expertise available to them. There are experts in communications in the Division and there should be some attention paid to further developing these relationships so that an overall communications plan can be created. While Strategic Storytelling and Digital Engagement staff are keen and available to provide support ASE, staff in the respective centres are not sure what is possible.

Students also need help to shift their thinking about what services and supports look like to understand that generalized support is also helpful to them and they need to be included in communications and outreach plans. This may be a challenge to address and units will need help from a communications and marketing strategy about the benefits to students and the campus through a service model shift. Even staff seem to fear a move towards more programming as a loss of what one-on-one support brings. This does not have to be the case, but it will require a shift in culture and understanding of the opportunity presented by a shift or enhancement in the model. Communications strategies should also consider targeting particular groups and cohorts of students. Graduate students, international students, and equity deserving students may be more inclined to access services and supports if they are directly targeted toward them. Engaging students in how best to do this is a good practice.

The ASE would benefit from outreach through undergraduate programming and involvement in other undergraduate activities like summer orientation, orientation and programs offered through ASE (e.g. Summer Academic Orientation, Academic Success Program) and other WSE units and campus partners such as Housing and Western International. Engaging peers as mentioned above is also a good opportunity to connect directly with students. Several students noted the need for a stronger social presence and a more centralized hub to find resources. A few students mentioned that they are not sure what to search to find the services online and that units were not using language that students would use to find support. Students also mentioned that ASE units may suffer from the impact of historical negative student experiences of these services and a re-branding or new marketing that focuses on student success and ensuring that services and supports are not seen as remedial in nature. There is also a particular need for Accessible Education to engage in more communications, training and outreach to students, staff and faculty across Western which will be explored further below. This will help the Western community in understanding how best to support students with disabilities (SWDs) and ensure that SWDs receive need-to-know information to engage in all aspects of campus life.

In addition to a communications strategy, there are additional ways ASE can outreach to students, staff, and faculty. This could include holding regular meetings with key stakeholders, running focus groups with students, developing materials help to way find resources, and provide clear referral guidelines to key campus stakeholders. The academic counsellors indicated that they wanted more information about the programs being offered and how to make good referrals to their services.

In our discussions there was little mention of resource development and several stakeholders commented that unit websites were useful for faculty but less so for students. Students indicated that they want a hub or an app and ways they would be regularly reminded of the services available to them. Twitter seems to be somewhat utilized but students suggest moving to Instagram or other platforms like Tik Tok where students are more likely to come across an advertisement, for example. Utilizing central resources and providing additional training to staff on how to use social media and storytelling to engage students would be helpful.

Recommendation: training and planning exercise with Communications where sharing expertise and strategies used to increase student engagement and outreach to diverse learners.

Recommendation: create a communications strategy to increase findability, review web resources, and rebrand services to students, with consideration given to the diversity of students across campus.

Recommendation: develop a clear outreach plan for students, staff and faculty including regular meetings, focus groups, information sessions and training of key campus stakeholders.

Learning and Development Services and Writing Services Centre

Background

Throughout the review process, it has been evident that the staff in both LDS and the WSC are deeply committed to students and to their professional work. All staff clearly see their role as integral to the experiences and success of students, to the work of WSE and the academic mission of the University more broadly. The work of both units is deeply rooted in their professional identities and this, naturally, impacts the approaches taken to student service delivery. It is also clear from the discussions

and available data that there is an increasing demand of services and supports offered through both the WSC and LDS. When asked, staff interviewed generally agree with the primary outcomes of the internal CAS review and the need for change to move forward. The key to moving any of these recommendations forward will be to move at a pace that is sustainable and creates further buy-in from staff and students alike.

The CAS self-study report indicated that the WSC staff, along with key faculty and staff stakeholders, see their work primarily connected to the academic mission of the University and as somewhat unique to the overall mission of the WSE. Staff did indicate, however, that the concepts of a thriving campus lend well to the approach they take, particularly for graduate students. Staff in both LDS and the WSC noted their commitment to dismantling systemic barriers and to taking an anti-oppressive approach to their work. It is our hope that this review, along with the internal CAS review, provides an opportunity to reimagine supports and services to increase access to services for all students.

Key Themes:

Theme #1: Review programs and service models to ensure they align with the Thriving campus approach

As previously noted, there is a tension between finding a balance of one-on-one student appointments while also addressing the need to provide more diverse programming resources. Many discussions referenced the limitations of a counselling model, and the need to move towards a more multifaceted approach to service delivery, with a deeper focus and understanding of access and inclusion. Despite a shift in 2018, including renaming, staff in both LDS and the WSC continue to operate primarily in a counseling model focused on one-on-one support. This is also how stakeholders and students view their area of experience and approach to services.   Broadening program delivery methods, including enhancing online support, adjusting hours of operation and engaging peers more in the delivery of programs can lead to increased access for all Western students and further align with the vision of Thriving campus.

Theme #2: Need for a clear mission and mandate for in line with the vision for a Thriving campus

Student Experience: A Vision of Thriving (2019) clearly outlines the concepts required for a thriving campus where students "engage in the learning process, invest effort to reach important educational goals, manage their time and commitments effectively, connect in healthy ways to other people, are optimistic about their future and positive about their present choices, and are committed to making a meaningful difference in the work around them" (Schreiner, et al. 2012 as cited in Thriving 2019). This has helped create a brand for Western Student Experience. The Thriving model presents an opportunity to further articulate what it means to be a student-centric campus and the need for more work to center the experiences of all students, in particular, equity-deserving students.

Theme #3: Review staffing structures and formalize stakeholder relationships with clear roles, responsibilities, and scope of work

As the demands on services increase, each unit must ask themselves *how do we reorganize ourselves to meet the demands and diverse needs of current and future students?* Stakeholders seem focused on increasing the staffing levels, while taking the same approach to service delivery. As we have

seen across the country in counselling centres, this approach is not sustainable. Increasingly, roles are required to be flexible, focusing on the individual student needs as well as broader programmatic needs of the unit. Students often do not present with one issue and all student services staff are increasingly required to become generalists. While specific expertise is required in some areas, having a staffing composition that allows for flexibility and responsiveness is also important.

Q: To what extent should a counselling model (i.e., a model where some appointments are characterized by psychotherapeutic practices) be retained?

It is the opinion of the reviewers that while some students require counselling or clinical support to manage and learn with disordered stress, anxiety, and depression, this does not represent the needs of all students. Instead, many students may simply require brief interventions focused on skills development. In fact, it can be a barrier to some students to seeking academic support if they feel they are being medicalized, or *treated*, for struggles or difficulties they may be experiencing. The impact overall of this time intensive approach to services is also limiting and there is very little data available to understand how equity deserving students access services (Schwitzer, et al., 2018). With the recent shift to a centralized student wellness model, and the decision to keep LDS, AE and the WSC together within ASE, there is a compelling opportunity to move away from a counselling service model to a more multifaceted approach, building upon collaborations and relationships within the unit and amongst colleagues. Through our interviews, as well as the internal CAS review, we heard that individual students had built very positive working relationships with their LDS Counsellor, sometimes over multiple years with a single specialist. We heard similar reports on the benefit of one-on-one appointments within the WSC. There was, however, very little awareness about other types of support available provided by the stakeholders.

Q: In terms of programming what is the threshold of one-to-one appointments versus a programmatic approach? How do you structure the frequency and repetition of one-to-one appointments (i.e. unlimited recurrent versus 'quota' or bundle of sessions)?

We received limited information and data about the programs offered in both units. The documents provided demonstrated that there is some programming, although it was unfortunate that none of the students interviewed had engaged with the programs offered in LDS. The documents provided also indicated that the one-on-one program supports serves a somewhat smaller group of students (2018-19: 518 individual students for 1846 appointments), only 1% of the total Western student population. The reviewers would like to acknowledge that significant efforts have been made by LDS to diversify their service delivery which now includes the Peer Assisted Learning Centre (PAL), workshops, online resources and Campus programming and outreach (e.g. Academic Success Program, Own Your Future Program). These efforts should continue and be scaled-up. While no data was available regarding the WSC programming or appointments, it was reported that historically there has been little uptake on peer to peer and other forms of group programming. Students who had utilized programs at the WSC noted the need for more internal consistency in group presentations as experiences were quite varied across presenters and did not always take an EDI lens. In addition, students mentioned the need to include diversity of experiences, for example, in notions of "good writing" and wanting to see ways in which they can better incorporate their own diverse voices in their academic writing.

Little empirical data exists in Canada to compare services from one institution to the next and as both learning specialist and writing support services are unregulated fields there is no professional

guideline from which to draw. However, based on the experiences of the reviewers, and best practices in the field, most schools offer various touchpoints to increase student access. It is rare to find learning or writing specialists carry a caseload alone, per se. It should be noted that in recent years, and certainly over this past year, there has been a significant trend toward engaging with students through group sessions and utilizing passive resources and tools through online programs. There will always be a need for one-on-one support, however, it is expected that this trend will continue as students become increasingly familiar with accessing programs online.

As mentioned above, one area of possible dissonance, and where more discussion is required, is the degree to which there is a reliance or focus on one-on-one appointments. In reviewing the files and supplemental information, it is clear there is a breadth of additional programming provided by the units, however, there does not seem to be general awareness of this amongst staff, faculty, or students. In addition, there is also a perception that much of the services of the WSC are geared toward graduate students, and those of LDS are geared toward students with disabilities or mental health concerns. There should be increased consideration of the places and spaces where students gather and access support, including classrooms, residences and virtual spaces. Both units noted that opportunities to shift program delivery were presented during the pandemic, and it would be timely for the units to work collaboratively to determine how some of these approaches could be retained and enhanced. The pandemic has shown us that groups of students can be reached synchronously and asynchronously using virtual spaces, reducing the issue of inadequate space that is sometimes a barrier in group programming.

Engaging in broad outreach strategies to students across units will also help to raise awareness of the full scope of services and programs available from LDS and the WSC. It would also be beneficial for these units to engage more intentionally with students, both graduate and undergraduate, in their service delivery. This tactic might present an opportunity for LDS and the WSC to collaborate through shared triaging practices and perhaps shared programming. Work related to clearer triaging and referrals has been started in LDS but should be further formalized and include the WSC.

LDS and the WSC have strong campus relationships, however they are often historical and based on proximity. There is a need, and desire from many campus partners, to formalize informal networks and connections through programs and agreements with Affiliate Colleges, Western International and Residence Life specifically. There is also an opportunity to enhance these relationships and make formal connections with other units through formal and informal group structures such as working groups, knowledge networks and communities of practice (Wenger, et al., 2002). Both LDS and the WSC indicated support for utilizing strengths-based and anti-oppressive approaches in their programming. Collaborations with key stakeholders, including the new Equity and Inclusion Office, can provide an opportunity to demonstrate institutional leadership on developing inclusive programs and practices that support and engage diverse student learners.

Q: How do you determine the support that an ESL student receives and the intensity of that support versus a non-ESL student who presents with specific needs?

With a 154% increase of international students in Canada between 2010 and 2018, universities and colleges naturally should assess how they are ensuring effective transition and retention of international and newcomer students (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2019). Several stakeholders noted the need for additional English as an Additional Language (EAL) support or clearer instilling of strategies in all programs and services to make them accessible to diverse

populations of students. None of the interviewees could identify specific supports available to international students, for example, related to academic success (outside of the International Centre). This is an area of growth on all university campuses with one campus seeing 72% increase in usage of one-on-one EAL support (Queen's Division of Student Affairs, Annual Report 2018).

EAL learners in particular benefit from specific tools and techniques tailored to their specific needs and could include a combination of learning strategies, reading comprehension, writing, and language support (Pilin, et al., 2020). Pilin, et al. (2020) also state that it is good practice to have specific programs and services available to EAL learners delivered by staff who have expertise and training in culturally responsive pedagogy and ensure flexible and targeted approaches to supporting EAL learners. In addition, providing students the opportunity to practice or do independent study helps to develop confidence and self-assurance which is also key to longer term success (Bastien, et al., 2018). Assessing the interventions necessary and most effective should be an outcome of the service delivery and referral review.

Q: Based on best practices in the field, what are the appropriate credentials and skills for staff practicing in each unit?

While both have professional Canadian associations, no specific credential is required for learning support or writing support services in Canada. The *Learning Specialists Association of Canada* state that they *"are professionals whose work in higher education institutions supports and furthers students, faculty, staff, and administrative goals by providing comprehensive learning development support through a variety of assessments, methods, strategies, and programs that are developed using scholarship, empirical data, practical experience, and sound pedagogy. They are known by many titles, including disability specialists, learning skills counsellors, and learning strategists, but all are considered learning specialists" (retrieved December 30, 2020).* At our institutions, and others where we have worked, there has been a shift away from the counselling model of learning support toward a more hybrid approach. While LDS may benefit from having Registered Psychotherapists on staff, the work of a Learning Specialist/Strategist does not require registration with the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario. In fact, the reviewers would like to encourage a more diverse range of backgrounds, skills and training among LDS to achieve other, non-1:1, service delivery priorities. A combination of credentials and discipline-specific knowledge is important for writing centres, and increasingly there is a need for these professionals to have a deeper understanding of culture, and the diversity of learners (Natarajan, & Morley, 2020). While writing experience is key, often good writing is also about communication and learning more broadly.

As referenced above and supported in the Condra report (2017), the use of the counselling title remains confusing and may be inaccurate in terms of the service being provided. Not all students who face academic challenges need or want counselling and instead want to learn tools, skills and about resources that can help them learn in their own way. The title and model of counselling may, indeed, be a barrier for some students availing of services. Post-secondary institutions are being told clearly that supports and services do not meet the needs of equity-deserving students and that their identities and perspectives are not reflected in our student leadership positions or staffing. These concerns bring about the opportunity to bring in diverse voices and experience through equity hiring process both for staff and continuing positions but also for student positions.

Q: What accountabilities should the unit have to faculty with respect to writing support?

It was noted that having multiple places where faculty are getting advice with respect to course development could be confusing, as the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) is the unit that faculty should be accessing for support with curricular design and course development at Western. This distinction should be made clearer by the WSC. As student needs and the demand for services increases there is a need to draw a clearer distinction between the student facing work and work that supports faculty and staff. Clearly defining partnerships and scope of work will allow LDS and the WSC to draw upon the expertise of all those involved and also contribute their expertise in sustainable ways. Typically, student services provide support to faculty and staff in their support of students and while this can be interpreted quiet broadly, a broad interpretation cannot be sustained as demands from students rise.

We heard from several students that the names of both centers do not resonate with them and may lead to obstacles in finding support or services when they need them. Understanding that LDS has recently undergone a name change, consider how the centre is marketed to students rather than another name change. In discussions with the WSC, renaming the centre to reflect the full scope of work seemed desirable. Centre for Academic Communication or a similar name should be considered. It was clear that graduate students, and perhaps other cohorts of students like international or Indigenous student might be more engaged when programs and outreach are specifically targeted for them.

LDS and the WSC staff support the theoretical concepts of thriving campus, however they are still unsure how they fit into the overall picture within ASE and WSE. Work needs to be undertaken to share the responsibility for the success of the units as well as WSE. There is the opportunity to provide clear direction as to why LDS and the WSC exist within ASE, and how they fit into the overall vision for the Division. Engaging the units in the process of articulating thriving goals and outcomes will also help others see how the thriving vision is directly linked to the academic mission. This work should be guided by the internal and external review processes and be used to develop annual and multi-year operational plans. Without a shared vision, there will continue to be a tension within a service delivery model lacking the ability to be nimble and responsive to changing student needs.

Recommendation: create a clear delineation of referrals processes.

Recommendation: formalize service and partnership agreements as well as informal networks so that there is scope and role clarity focusing on the provision of student services**.**

Recommendation: create clearer knowledge networks and/or internal communities of practice to help engage like-minded colleagues and increase collaborations.

Recommendation: diversify methods and modes of programming including additional platforms and spaces at times considerate of student schedules.

Recommendation: add dedicated resources with expertise in English as Additional Language practices.

Recommendation: each unit within ASE undergoes an operational planning exercise to articulate a response to the Thriving Campus vision. This should align the various areas.

Recommendation: move away from a purely counselling model of support in LDS and the WSC and discontinue the use of the title counsellor unless it is specifically required for the role.

Recommendation: hire more diverse staff with different skill sets and approaches to academic skill development, and culturally responsive teaching and learning.

Accessible Education

Background

The number of post-secondary students registered with offices for students with disabilities (OSDs) on Ontario campuses has been steadily increasing. At Western, over the last ten years, there has been a 178% increase in the registration of students with disabilities (SWDs) and a staggering 476% increase in students registering with mental health issues as their primary disability[1]. The complexity of mental health disabilities was on the rise prior to COVID-19 and it is expected the number of students requiring academic accommodations for a mental health disability will increase even further[2].

This trend is a positive one as access to higher education for people with disabilities as it helps to decrease barriers and increases their potential to move into successful careers. However, this increase in participation rates is met with increasing complexity in the administration aspects of providing academic accommodations especially in graduate and professional programs. Even with a much-needed focus on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and innovations in service delivery, additional resourcing for Accessible Education (AE) at Western is needed. ***It should be noted that a new funding model for Accessible Education that relies on institutional support rather than student fees must be a priority***.

Although some confusion exists with respect to who exactly has responsibility for the cost and provision of accommodation to SWDs in Ontario, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has been clear that it is a shared responsibility between the post-secondary institution and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). The University Operating Manual is clear that MTCU's Accessibility Fund for Students with Disabilities (AFSD) funding is only a contribution towards total accommodation costs: "Public assisted universities, as direct providers of post-secondary educational programs and services, have legal obligations to provide accommodations to persons with disabilities. Each institution's allowance under the AFSD is intended to supplement expenditures the institution makes from its general revenues to meet these legal obligations" (*Reporting Guidelines for the Accessibility Fund for Students with Disabilities (AFSD) for Universities*, pg.3).

Operationalizing the recommendations below will assist AE in considering the structure, function and service delivery model that is needed to meet this increased demand and complexity moving forward.

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[1] In 2010, 1773 students were registered and by 2020 this number had risen to 4099. The most significant increase was in the area of mental health (254 students in 2010; 1463 students in 2020)

[2] IDIA COU Briefing Note, 2020.

Key Themes:

It is noteworthy but not unexpected that the reviewers heard more about AE from students, staff and faculty than any other ASE unit given the rapid growth in student need. There is increasing tension between the responsibilities of the service unit to meet its legal obligation (i.e., "duty to accommodate") with the more holistic mission of supporting students with disabilities (SWDs). Both are essential to the well-being of SWDs, but Western is currently struggling to meet student needs in both these areas. The following themes were identified which are explored in more detail in the following sections:

Theme #1: Create a welcoming, accessible campus culture for SWDs at Western

Overall, the dominant theme is that there is confusion about roles & responsibilities at Western for creating an accessible and welcoming campus culture. There was a general sense among the reviewers that the mission and priorities for Accessible Education need to be broadened to go beyond one-on-one service provision to put student learning at its centre. A focus on self-advocacy and self-determination will help to ensure SWDs thrive during their time at Western and beyond. There needs to be a commitment to doing more than meeting the legal obligation for SWDs. Moving forward, with appropriate resourcing, Accessible Education must also be advocates for SWDs' full inclusion into all areas of campus life.

Theme #2: Ensure integration of SWDs into both the co- and extra-curricular learning environments

It is vital that all members of the Western community have an awareness of the barriers that may be experienced by SWDs and they must be given the knowledge and strategies to support these students effectively. SWDs conveyed concerns with the built environment including the accessibility of offices and accessible washrooms, protocols for accessing these washrooms and ***an understandable desire to be part of the accessible design of existing and new spaces at Western***. A strategic communications review should be undertaken on the best channels for information dissemination for various audiences, considering the communication needs and voices of SWDs. There is also a significant need for more faculty development & staff training, in partnership with the AODA Office and Centre for Teaching & Learning.

Theme #3: Enhance communications, outreach and training for staff & faculty on UDL strategies and information about SWDs

Increased growth and demand are placing substantial pressure on the service. Despite this, the fundamental service model remains unchanged. As the number of students registered with AE continues to grow, a new budget model is needed (one that is not student fee funded) and a more sustainable model of service provision is required. This should incorporate on location roles, a shift from one-one to more group advising and programming as well as increased staffing with specialist knowledge.

Q: Based on best practices in the field, what are the appropriate credentials and skills for staff practicing in this unit?

Student affairs is informed by the scholarship of student development, learning theory, and a range of discipline specific expertise. A growing number of student affairs professionals in Canada are choosing to pursue Master's and Doctoral programs to better prepare them for the field, to enhance their career development and in order to contribute to a growing body of research (CACUSS Competency Framework 2013: 3). This professionalization and focus on student development is reflected in all areas, including accessibility services. What is most important to accessibility service providers at Western, however, are the skills and competencies required to support a new service delivery model which emphasizes student learning.

The field of accessibility services often engages professionals from a variety of credentials and backgrounds, often in Education, Counselling, Social Work, Occupational Therapy or Physical Therapy. Increasingly, Master's degrees have become the entry-level requirement for these roles. Given the increasing diversity of students and complexity of their accommodations, the reviewers support that notion that a range of credentials is needed. It is also important to name the need to increase the diversity of the staff. Having Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) staff as well as staff with disabilities in OSDs help to contribute to ensuring culturally appropriate services as well as provide a variety of lived experiences. It is essential for BIPOC students to see themselves represented in the leadership roles and staff of these services on the Western campus.

Historically, positions in accessibility services were often "counselling" roles. However, in recent years, we have seen more of an emphasis being placed on student skill and competency. development, Additionally, the need to approach academic accommodation as a collaborative process requiring the active participation of faculty, has resulted in most services adopting the term "advisor", "educator" or "consultant". Given Western's laudable focus on "accessible education", which is reflected in the unit's name, a move from "counsellor" to one of the above aforementioned job titles would further align the vision of the service with an educational and social mission, rather than a medical model of disability.

OSD staff may be specialists or generalists or some combination of the two. Smaller institutions tend to have more of a generalist model, with advisors that can work across all disability categories. The advantage of this model is that students can be served by any accessibility advisor. The disadvantage is that staff require broad professional development and training to support a wide range of disabilities. As well, with the increasing numbers of students registering with mental health disabilities, many OSDs are hiring advisors with a background in facilitating mental health accommodations. With increasing numbers of students registering with ASD and ADHD, more specialist expertise is also needed in this area. Should additional resources be added, consideration should be given to creating some specialist roles, especially in the area of mental health and neurological disabilities to assist with more complex cases and provide training and support within the team. The need for training in these areas cannot be overstated and will be explored more below. A case in point is the increasing numbers of persons with learning, mental health, chronic medical and autism spectrum disabilities on campus. As the NEADS Landscape survey (2015:23) documented, the proportion of persons identifying with lived experiences in those spaces on campus today is 92%. Thirty years ago, when institutional and governmental disability policies were first being developed, only 10% of SWDs identified with lived experiences in these spaces.

As a best practice, it is suggested that AE adhere to the AHEAD professional standards, program standards and performance indicators. Adoption of these standards presents an opportunity for AE to address a number of themes which emerged during the review including:

- the need for information dissemination,
- staff & faculty awareness,
- program evaluation,
- training and professional development.

To serve graduate and professional SWDs, the training offered through the Coalition for Disability Access in Graduate Health Science and Medical Education may be of interest. The Coalition facilitates a list-serv to assist disability service providers and administrators with disability related questions. The coalition also hosts a yearly symposium addressing the unique needs of disability providers in the health sciences. Once AE staff themselves are trained in this area, training should also be offered in partnership with the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPDS) to ensure that graduate staff and faculty understand how to best implement accommodations in graduate education, especially in fieldwork, practicums, placement and other experiential learning activities.

Increasingly, there is a focus on student learning and adaptive technology in OSDs. These roles require distinct training and there are many college and University offerings in this area. With the use of more technology in education, opportunities should be facilitated for all OSD staff to learn about specialized accessible computer technologies, as well as the application of mainstream technologies in an accessible context.

Given the need for AE staff to increasingly take on education and training functions, it may be that training and professional development is needed in the areas of program development & evaluation, curriculum development and even instructional design/technology. There are some excellent certificates in adult education and workplace learning available at various institutions across Canada. Another recommended area is that of group advising. The training and resources developed by NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising, in this area may be helpful. Once AE determines its scope of service, it is important to think about what theories, methods and approaches will underpin the work and provide appropriate training to staff. It should be noted that given the need for Accessible Education to broaden its service delivery model, it is especially important that AE develop skills in these areas.

Finally, it is worth noting that there is a need for training in UDL as a design standard for programs and services offered by AE to help influence the campus community d. While this may seem counter-intuitive, feedback from Western SWDs indicates that students sometimes "need accommodation for the accommodation process" (Fisher et al., 2018). As noted by Thornton et al. (2010), OSDs need to model the shift from the medical model of disability to the social model by carefully examining and revise policies and procedures to reflect this paradigm shift. In this area, there is work to be done in training and supporting the Western community with respect to developing universally accessible programming for students.

Recommendation: move towards a specialist staffing model, as more resources become available, especially in the areas of mental health and neurological disabilities.

Recommendation: adopt and integrate AHEAD professional standards into service delivery.

Recommendation: train staff in the implementation of academic accommodations in practicums, placements, fieldwork, laboratories and graduate education.

Recommendation: broaden training opportunities for staff in AE to include group advising as well as program development & evaluation.

Recommendation: ensure that AE staff are trained in UDL standards for the provision of their own supports and services and also train others.

Q: What defines a case load, and based on this definition, is there an approximation of a counsellor: student ratio for case load?

Caseload (student-to-staff ratio) is a metric commonly used by administrators to inform budgetary allocations. Unfortunately, there is scant research and recommendations for appropriate cases loads in the post-secondary accessibility field in Canada. Brown et al (2020)[7] found that the average caseload among U.S. post-secondary institutions (PSEs) is 133.0 students per disability practitioner. In offices with four or five full-time staff, they averaged 126.6 students and those with six or more full-time professionals carried a caseload of 135.2 students. Inter-University Disability Issues Association (IDIA) tracks caseloads across Ontario PSEs and of the 14 institutions who responded to the survey in 2018-2019, 4 institutions had caseloads ranging from 101-200 students per advisor and 4 institutions had cases loads ranging from 301-400[3]. Only one institution had caseloads above 500. Caseloads at Western are now surpassing 500+per advisor. Case-loads in the area of 250-300 students is advisable. High caseloads make it challenging for staff to meet their duty to accommodate but also may make it difficult to engage in other valuable and needed activities at Western such as communication, outreach, training and programming.

It should also be noted that although caseloads are a reliable indicator of some aspects of work-load, not all cases are equal, and caseloads can disguise varying levels of complexity and the amount of time taken to administer. As well, practitioners may have workload responsibilities beyond their student caseload. Furthermore, it does not account for the varying needs of students. Some students may need more reoccurring support than others. Students with more complex disabilities or accommodations and graduate and professional students may also require more case management support. ***Benchmark data*** beyond caseloads should be collected to provide a comprehensive understanding of staff workload. Regardless of what benchmarks are used, it is clear that in order to meet this demand more resources and a new service delivery model at Western are needed.

The nature of academic accommodation is that because it is so individualized, one-on-one advising is an important and necessary element of support. However, AE is strongly encouraged to consider more group supports, especially for students with ADHD and ASD, two growing demographics at Western. Although it was stated that groups were attempted previously and had low attendance, the reviewers still suggest looking at best practice models in the field including the pilot program developed at York University. This program, aimed at students with autism spectrum disorders, includes mentorship programs, workshops and support groups, 1:1 coaching, parent information hubs, sensory spaces, therapy dogs and paid Work/Study opportunities, supports and programming. The use of peer mentors at Western is especially noteworthy and given the success of the peer mentorship program in

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[3] IDIA Shared Data Pool 2018-2019.

LDS, there is an opportunity to model this in Accessible Education. This would also support one of the recommendations in Western's Metal Health Strategy which suggests the promotion of "structured supports that foster peer mentorship, leadership and community connection".

Group advising is also another opportunity to potentially reduce caseloads, especially on informational topics such as financial support. Group advising is an efficient way of sharing factual information with students, especially when there is general important information to be shared. It is also an opportunity for students to learn from one another and to enhance peer involvement. Although issues of privacy and confidentiality need to be considered, both group support and group advising are used effectively in other areas in higher education where similar issues may arise and are addressed.

Increased attention needs to be provided to co-curricular programming as well. The student experience in post-secondary education has evolved over the past 20 years to include not just the academic learning environment, but also the co- and extra-curricular spaces within university (NEADS, 2015:10). We know from higher education literature that students who are engaged in postsecondary co-curricular activities have a higher GPA, are more satisfied with their college experience, more self-confident, better able to manage emotions, and are more emotionally independent from their parents than students who were not involved (Elliott, 2009). If SWDs are to receive these advantages, opportunities must be broadened for their full inclusion into the co-and extra-curricular campus life at Western. The student experience is comprised not only of academic integration but social integration as well.

In order to accommodate this work, a number of models could be considered. Caseloads could be reduced so that each advisor can incorporate group support/advising and programing into their role. This may necessitate hiring additional staff. Another option is to engage graduate students from Social Work, Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy on practicums providing individual and group support and thereby creating enhanced capacity for the team. Or, with additional resources, a student learning team could be created which could coordinate programming and partner with other units across WSE.

Recommendation: establish support groups for students with ADHD and ASD, peer mentorship programs and group advising to build additional service capacity and support SWDs in community building.

Recommendation: reconsider the staffing model with the goal of enhancing capacity for AE staff to take on non-advising tasks and responsibilities, including more opportunities for programming that will enhance student learning and belonging.

Q: Where no institutional strategy for accessibility exists, what should the scope and boundaries of this unit's work be, based on best practices in the field?

The reviewers would like to suggest that what is needed beyond accessibility policies, frameworks and strategies is attention to campus climate for SWDs. This is especially important in light of SWDs strong perception that they do not belong at Western.

Disability should be considered part of Western's equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives. As noted in a recent Inside Higher Education article, "Disability is Diversity", higher education has been slow to recognize disability as an identity group or include it in programming around diversity and

inclusion. Feedback suggested that a process like the development of the Indigenous Strategic Plan could be modelled for accessibility. As well, this would enable a fuller integration and examination of the intersectionality between race and disability. This would be in keeping with OHRC's call for an intersectional approach to disability. The reviewers suggest that there needs to be more engagement of all stakeholders across campus to ensure equitable access to the Western Student Experience. As noted previously, SWDs must be integrated into all aspects of the student experience, not just the classroom learning context.

The reviewers would like to suggest that this leadership come not only from AE but also from the soon to be established EDI office. Specifically, this could incorporate efforts at improving campus climate for SWDs. As noted by Zehner (2018), to facilitate student success and institutional goals for student performance, institutions must establish a campus climate where SWDs expect fair treatment and effective accommodation. While the reviewers found almost universal recognition and awareness of the legal requirements to accommodate SWDs, students expressed that the campus climate was neither welcoming nor accessible. In order to facilitate more meaningful transformation, grassroots change strategies, along with attention to the relationships between accessibility and institutional priorities should be explored.

The reviewers are aware that there are some resources dedicated centrally, outside AE, to supporting Western's AODA obligations and efforts. The fact that the scope and mandate of this role was unclear to the community suggests that more work needs to be done to help the community understand the purpose and scope of this role. There was significant confusion with respect to responsibility for the built environment. The SWDs consulted as part of this review shared many stories of struggling to navigate the physical campus. While OSDs can be a source of advice and guidance on improvements and enhancements to the built environment, at most institutions the responsibility for accessible infrastructure sits outside the service.

As noted above, it is recommended that AE focus more on student learning rather than counselling. It is now considered a best practice for OSDs to focus on programming for students both within the service and in collaboration with others across campus. Over sixteen years ago, in 2004, the National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) launched a project recognizing the need for a more inclusive campus life for post-secondary SWDs. SWDs, like their non-disabled peers, benefit greatly from the non-academic facets of campus. The reviewers noted that there was virtually no programming offered for SWDs within AE or across ASE (or WSE) units. Western prides itself on its student experience so there is tremendous opportunity for Western to also be a leader in providing inclusive, accessible opportunities for SWDs to be involved in Western's rich campus life.

This is especially important for SWDs as they experience lower participation rates in the workforce. Given the barriers to employment for SWDs, the reviewers would like to focus on the need for career support in particular. SWDs participation in professional development programming, have become increasingly essential to their employability (NEADS, 2016: 11), especially for graduate SWDs. To ensure Western SWDs can access these experiences, training needs to be provided to the entire campus community on creating unique programs for SWDs and making all offerings inclusive and accessible.

A characteristic of self-determined behavior that may be developed through inclusive co- or extra-curricular activities is self-advocacy. It is frequently suggested that the most important skill for SWDs to possess or develop in today's post-secondary environment is that of self-advocacy (NEADS 2018:46). It should be noted that there has been some critique of self-advocacy as it can perpetuate the

very issues of discrimination, labelling and legitimization that it is designed to resolve (NEADS 2018:6). So, the self-advocacy framework needs to be re-imagined according to the principles of inclusion and universal design. Nonetheless, the skill acquisition of self-advocacy and self-determination is important for SWDs, as they may choose to disclose accommodation needs to administration and instructors, and later to employers. As well, greater levels of self-determination can positively impact the retention and college completion of SWDs. However, many SWDs do not disclose and instead are likely accessing traditional campus supports. Therefore, accessibility services professionals play an important role in helping all professionals working with SWDs to be knowledgeable of self-determination and its related components. This focus is also well aligned with the academic determination factor of Thriving.

Consistent with a key recommendation brought forward by the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) in 2016 in their letter to Ontario-post secondary institutions asking them to implement specific measures to reduce systemic barriers to post-secondary education for students with mental health disabilities, there is a need for enhanced communication, training and outreach. More communication with all audiences is needed to explain what AE actually does and why. For example, the University of Toronto has an [on-line handbook for undergraduate students seeking to register with the service](#) that provides a roadmap to the institutional accommodation process that includes information on how to register, how to activate accommodation, supplemental information (including financial assistance, adaptive technology and co-curricular programming) and student responsibilities. A graduate version is in development. It is also critically important to explain what an academic accommodation looks like in a research-intensive learning environment and specifically within the Western context.

The AE web site is a key communications channel which, in it is current state, provides basic information on the office, its mandate and the services offered, but nothing to pro-actively engage visitors. There is also limited online functionality for students. The review identified a lack of communications activities and materials (e.g., attractive step-by-step guides, videos and visually appealing and easy to use checklists and forms) to effectively deliver key messages. Staff engaged in the self-study indicated significant frustration with the website and communications in general. Although enhanced communications supports have been improved, more support is needed at the unit level.

There is also a need for enhanced outreach, training and resources to support staff & faculty in implementing academic accommodations at Western. Faculty indicated that they receive limited training in supporting SWDs. As well, academic administrators such as Associate Chairs, who are often consulted on complex student cases, indicated that they require more professional development. Faculty reported they are not always clear about what specific academic accommodations are appropriate, what their role is in the academic accommodation process is, what strategies work best and what campus resources are available for help. Yet, getting faculty to take advantage of these offerings can be quite challenging. Established training opportunities for faculty & academic administrators, such as new faculty orientation or training for academic administrators, could be augmented to include more information on the academic accommodations process. It may even be helpful to consider mandatory training through the new EDI Office in partnership with AODA Office and AE. For example, at Queen's University, every educator who communicates and interacts with persons with disabilities on behalf of Queen's University must receive training on accessible instruction.

Academic counsellors also shared that they feel "they are in the dark" when it comes to the academic accommodations process. Skilled advising can go a long way towards ensuring the success of a

student with a disability. Accessibility services staff members are often seen as "disability experts," yet these same professionals may or may not be "advising experts." As such, it is imperative that AE work with academic advisors to achieve competency in advising students with disabilities. NACADA has a community of practice dedicated to advising students with disabilities and excellent resources (see "Advising Students with Disabilities: Striving for Universal Success"). The informational component of the NACADA Academic Advising Core Competencies also stresses that academic advisors remain knowledgeable of the needs of emerging student populations (NACADA, 2017). There is also an opportunity for AE to provide advisor training on the needs of SWDs with specific abilities such as ADHD and ASD as well. The reviewers noted that there was academic success programing and early intervention supports for student athletes but not for more vulnerable or marginalized students such as SWDs. By engaging in outreach, AE can engage the Western community in making comprehensive, informed efforts to implement appropriate accommodations and remove barriers to success. A lack of knowledge and awareness of the issues that face these students is contributing to a challenging climate for SWDs. Hence the need for AE to engage in training and outreach.

In particular, there is a need for faculty and staff to become more aware of the academic accommodation process including roles, responsibilities and timelines. Good examples are the "Demystifying Academic Accommodations" booklet created by the University of Toronto to clarify faculty roles & responsibilities. More communication with all audiences is needed to explain what Accessible Education actually does and what it does not do. There is some confusion in the community as to whose role it is to engage in broader education & training. The reviewers recommend a cross-functional approach to ensure that an understanding of disability is developed across units.

Recommendation: develop targeted co-curricular programming in AE for SWDs, with a focus on career transition and self-determination.

Recommendation: ensure that co-and extra-curricular programming at Western is made accessible to SWDs by ensuring that all staff and peers who work with students are trained in working with SWDs.

Recommendation: develop information resources and regularized training to assist faculty and staff in better understanding the academic accommodation process and how to liaise with the service to support their students.

Q: In what ways can the unit measure KPIs of success beyond number of students served? How do you suggest assessing 1:1 appointments and AE programs?

It is acknowledged that neither the numbers of students served, nor caseloads, is a reliable indicator of the workload of individual OSD staff or the demands upon the service overall. With an expanded service delivery model that incorporates group advising, peer mentoring, student programming as well as education, training and outreach to Western staff & faculty, there are opportunities to measure a much broader range of KPIs. However, staff may be too overwhelmed with the daily needs of individual students to find the time to engage in program evaluation (Goodin et. al, 2004). Therefore, it is anticipated that additional professional development resources and staffing will be required to support comprehensive, consistent assessment and evaluation efforts in AE.

The process of discussing and defining student learning and development outcomes has become an important focus for assessment efforts in student affairs/services. The Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) has been a member of CAS since 1981. Applying this expectation to

the area of OSDs, however, presents some inherent challenges. For example, do the typical tasks of reviewing accessibility documentation, meeting with students to discuss barriers and accommodations, and facilitating assistive technology and services promote student learning? The CAS Disability Resources and Services Standards and Guidelines are a tool for addressing these accessibility assessment questions.

Despite the profession's commitment to assessment, disability is rarely addressed as part of research or assessment design within student affairs, very little information is available about how OSDs develop and use student learning outcomes. In 2016 a survey of AHEAD members gathered baseline data to learn more about how AHEAD members are using SLOs as part of institutional assessment activities. In their analysis, Ashmore et al. (2018:113) noted that respondents reported having knowledge of SLOs and are aware their peers in departments across campus are using SLOs as an aspect of program evaluation. Yet, OSD staff state they have limited knowledge of the CAS Standards, and very few use SLOs or outcome data as an aspect of program evaluation. The reviewers suggest that both types of SLOs become sources of feedback for Accessible staff with an expectation that the data will be used for continuous program improvement both in terms of processes and services provided by AE and SWDs time at Western. OSDs units are often isolated and sometimes insular for reasons mainly focused on their unique responsibilities, especially when it comes to confidential services and legal compliance. This is certainly true of Accessible Education. However, the CAS standards for OSDs indicate that institutional duties to advise, consult, and collaborate in creating an inclusive and accessible educational environment for students who experience disability is as or more important than provision of individual student services (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2015).

Disability-as-diagnosis, disability-as-identity, and disability-as-experience are also all pressing measurement issues in learning outcomes assessment (Edelstein, et al. 2020). We can learn a great deal by examining student-level experiences of disability, but we can learn even more by examining their learning environments. To create high quality learning outcomes assessment in student affairs and enhance reflexive practice, assessment instruments and plans must be accessible to students with disabilities, and disability must be considered as a variable affecting assessment results (Edelstein, 2020).

One-on-one advising and group advising can also be assessed. NACADA has long promoted use of SLOs and program assessment and are therefore a resource for accessibility professionals as they strive to adopt learning outcomes along with program assessment and review (see the NACADA Core Values 2005 and the NACADA Concept of Advising, 2006). To begin, AE is encouraged to develop programmatic goals to allow assessment to be performed more effectively. It may also be beneficial to gather baseline or benchmarking data. There likely exist institutional data such as retention rates, grade point averages, and other student tracking data that may be utilized.

Program evaluation is also rapidly becoming the norm in higher education and OSDs are increasingly encouraged to demonstrate accountability specified through appropriate benchmarks. This is also important for influencing decision-making and securing additional resources. A number of general benchmarks or principles for OSDs have been developed in the field (see Parker et al., 2003). The AHEAD publication, *Program Evaluation of Postsecondary Disability Services: From Theory to Practice* (Goodin et al., 2004) is also a useful resource. For a modest fee, AHEAD offers a set of assessment tools designed to provide disability resource professionals with 360-degree feedback from

key stakeholders. Dukes (2011) created the iEvaluate OSD assessment instrument which may also be of value to AE in their evaluation efforts and is free of charge.

Student satisfaction surveys are still an important aspect of program evaluation. An annual survey of student with disabilities is recommended. This was also one of the recommendations put forward by Condra and Condra (2015). They noted that many students commented on the lack of opportunity to comment on their experience as a user of academic accommodations. Given the high levels of dissatisfaction at Western among SWDs, receiving feedback from SWDs who are "at the centre" of the accommodation experience would provide valuable information to help Western review its practices and consider improvement based on student feedback.

There is also an opportunity, once a student equity census is introduced at Western, to gather intersectional survey data on SWDs which is also recommended by OHRC in their Accessible Education policy (institutions should "collect, analyze and make publicly available intersectional, demographic data on SWDs and accommodations provided").

Another recommendation from Condra and Condra (2015:23) that should be adopted by AE is a student advisory committee. This committee would advise the Director and AVP on matters related to accommodation trends and the need for specific accommodation-related resources. As noted by Condra and Condra (2015:23), this committee could also be tasked with the responsibility of measuring the effectiveness of any new accommodation policy/procedure/process to determine its impact on staff and students' awareness of the accommodation process and on the removal of access, integration and learning barriers for SWDs. This would also help to address the "Nothing About Us Without Us" sentiment expressed by SWDs in the review.

Through use of comprehensive data, including achievement of identified learning outcomes, AE can determine whether programmatic goals are being achieved and students' needs, and learning goals are being met to continuously improve services for SWDs. As well, by putting SWDs at the centre of all decision-making processes and listening to their feedback, there is an opportunity to establish more trust and confidence in the service.

Recommendation: establish clear programmatic goals and use SLOs, including outcome data, to assess and evaluate programs & services offered by Accessible Education and the overall learning environment for SWDs at Western.

Recommendation: survey SWDs on an annual basis to determine their satisfaction with the service.

Recommendation: establish a Student Accessible Education Advisory Committee to provide leadership opportunities for SWDs and to ensure that their voice and lived experience is reflected in program and service design.

Q: What types of activities are markers of formal collaboration/networking/partnership? What are some ways to increase collaboration?

Historically, disability services focused on serving the needs of SWDs who formally disclose a disability to their office. However, with only 35% of SWDs self-disclosing to disability services, the majority of SWDs must navigate post-secondary education without the use of accommodations (Lalor et. al, 2020). This suggests the importance of accessibility services professionals using campus

collaborations and campus outreach initiatives to provide information about all SWDs to a range of campus partners.

One of the markers of collaboration is the number and quality of partnerships that exist. Due to the one-on-one service delivery model in AE, few examples of collaboration were described by staff either in the self-study or interviews with reviewers. To serve SWDs well, enhanced partnerships and collaborations are needed across the institution as other units assist SWDs in accessing academic accommodation, resources and support from the Western community.

One of the ways to enhance the quality of academic accommodations for SWDs at Western and provide a more seamless service delivery is to consider an on-location model for accessibility advising in Western Faculties/departments. As well, designing effective accessibility solutions for SWDs requires knowledge of the essential requirements of the course, program or discipline, as well as the functional impact of the student's disability(ies) in the context of the learning environment(s) the student is in. The reviewers suggest that Western should strive to adopt an "embedded" or on-location delivery model for academic accommodation. This seamless service delivery model provides services that meet the needs of students "where they are at". On-location partnerships also build an understanding of local needs and priorities, including the teaching & learning environment which is essential for accommodating students in complex programs and setting including practicums, placements and laboratories.

Another "on-location" model to consider is a staff or faculty liaison in each Faculty who can work with the student, faculty and Accessible Education to assist with information exchange, issue resolution and outreach & training. Such a role would help bring knowledge of academic programs requirements to ensure that academic accommodations preserve the essential requirements and academic integrity of the University's courses/programs. This could be an existing staff or faculty member with advising responsibilities. Given current staffing levels in AE neither on-location model is feasible at this time. Once AE is appropriately staffed and should additional funding be available, an on-locations model is recommended to ensure strong support for students, staff and faculty both locally and centrally.

Collaboration across all WSE portfolios is needed, not just ASE. As noted above, accessibility for SWDs at Western needs to integrate all aspects of the student experience, not just the classroom learning context. Ideally, SWDs would be able to seamlessly access all programs, supports and services throughout the portfolio which have been designed with a UDL approach. However, co-curricular learning environments have been developed without concurrent thought to accessibility support. Western SWDs shared a collective sense of loneliness and exclusion from their co-curricular life. In terms of programming offered by AE or in partnerships with these units, there seems to be no targeted programming offered to SWDs or programming that is designed with UDL principles in mind to create a welcoming co-curricular environment to engage them more deeply in co-curricular life on campus. There is also an opportunity for Accessibility to partner with Transitions, Leadership and Enrichment and Office of Residence Education & Programs (OREP) to provide training for student leaders/peers (e.g., workshops) as well as resources (e.g., checklists, toolkits etc.) to ensure their events/activities are accessible to SWDs. Increased support for SWDs to particulate more fully in co-curricular learning will enhance SWDs academic success, retention and completion and help students develop learning skills and resiliency early on.

Another important partner is the Western Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL). Accessibility professionals in higher education settings have been promoting the concept of universal design for

decades to provide wholly inclusive experiences for all students. The recent pivot to online presents an opportunity for our campuses to consider how Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles can support both instructors and their students, including those with disabilities. A new study from the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO: 2020) finds that, on average, more students with disabilities reported experiencing challenges once their education moved entirely online than students without disabilities. Online learning is not an area in which access has been strongly considered for SWDs, nor are most faculty members aware of best practices for accessibility when teaching in this medium. Given that hybrid learning may be here to stay, more attention to supporting students with online learning is needed. Moving forward, AE staff should be assisting faculty developers in the Centre for Teaching & Learning and with enhancing faculty members' competency in inclusive instructional practices. This will help to increase awareness of the disability-specific learning needs of students, especially students with learning disabilities, to ensure that all courses are accessible to the wide range of diverse learners at Western. It should be noted that at many institutions this is done in collaboration with the AODA office and the teaching and learning office. Leveraging these offices can be helpful as teaching and learning centres have expertise in faculty development and AODA offices can contribute advice on AODA and OHRC legislation and expectations. Institutional awareness and support for collaboration among these offices on UDL is a priority.

The reviewers did find evidence of collaboration with the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS) and this is to be encouraged. Over the past three years, the number of graduate and professional students registered at Western has grown by 27%. Targeted resources for graduate and professional students and graduate faculty/administrators are needed as a growing number of these students are registering with Accessible Education. Consultation with SGPS also reinforced this need to understand the unique academic experience of graduate SWDs especially with respect to how best to accommodate graduate students in comprehensive examinations and the productions of theses. As acknowledged by the NEADS Graduate Experience Taskforce (2016), it is important to develop accommodation frameworks in the context of graduate education. For example, information for graduate students on accommodations specific to the research and experiential components of their program would help graduate students see that the service meets their particular needs. (See the "Information for Faculty and Academic Staff on Effective Accommodations for Placements, and Practicums" developed by the University of Toronto). The reviewers were pleased to learn of a taskforce that has been established in the School of Graduate Studies to develop graduate-specific accommodations especially in the area of experiential learning (e.g., clinical experience, internships, and work placements). As Condra and Condra (2015) noted, fieldwork requires different behaviors and skills than those needed for success in the classroom; as a result, a student's functional impairments may be location and task-dependent, requiring an iterative academic accommodation process, effective communication between the institution's OSDs, supervising faculty and the placement site.

Finally, it is important that Westerns' excellent professional development programing for graduate students be inclusive of SWDs. There is also an opportunity once on-location roles are established to embed an accessibility staff member at SGPS to develop an understanding of the unique accommodation needs of graduate students. Accommodation is an institutional responsibility and does not reside solely with AE. The development of partnerships and collaborations will help to create an accessible, inclusion-minded culture at Western.

Recommendation: consideration of on-location roles to facilitate an understanding of local needs and to assist with communication, outreach & training once additional staffing is in place.

Recommendation: expand collaborations and partnerships with all WSE units to build additional capacity and social support for SWDs in community building and to ensure accessible co-curricular activities.

Recommendation: collaboration between AE, CTL and AODA Office to provide training and resources for teaching assistants & instructors on best practices in teaching that would support the creation of inclusive and accessible learning opportunities.

Recommendation: continued partnership between AE and SGPS to enhance understanding of the specific needs of graduate and professional SWDs and to deepen an understanding of graduate academic program requirements and the research process in AE.

Q: What should the formal relationship be between Western's approach and practices and those of the affiliated university colleges who may offer similar supports, understanding that affiliated students may access supports at their home campus and on the main campus?

It is helpful for students to receive services where they are at and yet, there is also a need with accessibility to ensure consistent practices across Western and the affiliated university colleges.

The on-location model for accessibility services facilitates the opportunity to provide consistent supports and services on site at affiliated university colleges while also developing an understanding of the unique needs of students in these settings and develop relationships with staff & faculty at the affiliated university colleges. This would also facilitate a "total service approach" which was suggested as the ideal model by affiliated university colleges in the review.

It is not feasible with current resources to have full-time staff on site, but it may be possible for existing staff to spend a half day or a full day at each affiliated university colleges. This may also address some of the concerns expressed by affiliate participants who note that their students pay Western student fees and want local access.

In terms of partnerships and collaborations, it is also recommended that staff look to staff at affiliated university sites to co-deliver programming. A train-the-trainer model will expand the capacity of AE but also encourage information sharing and relationship-building.

With the inclusion of peer and group programming as part of AE's offerings, this will also enable a greater reach and enhanced capacity while ensuring that SWDs at the affiliated university colleagues foster local peer connections.

As well, the formation of a student advisory committee provides an opportunity to include SWDs from affiliated university colleges so that their insights are reflected in program and service design.

Finally, it is recommended that an annual report with affiliated University college data be provided to each site so that they have a better understanding of their students' usage, needs and feedback on the services delivered.

There is an opportunity for much more information exchange, coordination and collaboration between AE and the affiliated university colleges. The outreach from the AVP Students was appreciated

by the Deans of Students at the affiliated university colleges. The next step is for AE leadership and staff to meet more regularly with affiliated university college staff and engage in intentional networking and relationship building.

Recommendation: provide on-location accessibility programs & services at affiliated university colleges.

Recommendation: include SWDs from the affiliated university colleges on the AE Student Advisory Committee.

Recommendation: establish a culture of communication between AE and affiliated university colleges including an annual report on their SWDs.

Conclusion

Western prides itself on being a student-focused institution that offers an outstanding academic and social experience to students. A commitment to continuous improvement of the Western Student Experience is also underscored by this review. With the adoption of the concept of Thriving, Western is working towards its aspiration to foster equitable learning environments. The challenge, however, is reiterated in the Thriving document: "[Western]" must make the story we want to have told about us true in every action, communication, and relationship." It is the enacted or "living" mission rather than the stated mission that matters more to student success because it reflects what students *actually* experience (Kuh, 2006). WSE must be certain that their organization does what it says and says what it does. To achieve this, a systemic approach involving programs and initiatives that foster a healthy climate in which all students, particularly those from equity-deserving communities can thrive rather than merely survive is urgently needed.

It is important for Western to ground these student experience commitments and aspirations in a solid foundation and in ways consistent with their mission, vision, and values. The three Academic Student Experience units would benefit from a refreshed mission, vision and values and most importantly, from engaging all staff to address the core question, "*Do I understand what this organization values, believes in, and hopes to be?*" Following this, it is important for each unit to clarify the scope of services and delivery. Differing perspectives among campus leadership, administrators, and staff are making it challenging to agree on what types of services should and should not be offered on campus. Establishing a unit-level and pan divisional co-curricular curriculum will provide a solid foundation and articulation of the student learning that guides the development, delivery, assessment and evaluation of all ASE's programs and services. Students require context in order to meaningfully engage in these activities. A diverse range of student experiences, academic interests and demographics should be considered in the design of the learning framework. And of course, students themselves should be meaningfully included in this process as partners.

It will be important to think about what theories, methods and approaches underpin the work and provide appropriate training to staff so that they have a shared knowledge base. The ASE units will need to make a pedagogical and philosophical shift to a more self-directed learning approach that provides students with opportunities to practise these skills in their community. This marks a distinct shift from a medicalization and counselling model. Individual advising appointments remain a critical part of this new approach. Caring, sustained relationships between students and advisors is important, especially for students who are at-risk or struggling. However, a move to more campus events, group advising, peer mentors, workshops and programming will not only build unit capacity but help students develop a sense of belonging at the institution. These programs and supports are especially important for students from historically and currently underrepresented backgrounds, whose experiences of exclusion on campus can impede their retention and progress to graduation.

Another core priority in Thriving is to foster a positive campus climate for all students. Creating a more welcoming, equitable, and inclusive environment is arguably one of the most important recommendations from the ASE review. While we have learned about some meaningful change and progress, we understand that there are Western students, particularly students with disabilities, who continue to have negative, hurtful and harmful experiences. It is essential that Western identify cultural properties that are obstacles to student success. Efforts to enhance student success often falter because too little attention is given to understanding the properties of the institution's culture that reinforce the

status quo and perpetuate everyday actions (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). Western will need to engage in frank, difficult, and challenging conversations; review data, programs and initiatives; respond to immediate community concerns; and monitor and acknowledge campus community initiatives that address issues of equity, diversity, inclusion and campus climate. If such conversations are to occur, new forums will have to be created that are conducive to honest, constructive, and creative dialogue with diverse students from equity-deserving communities. Creating a responsive, safe, and welcoming campus climate for everyone is essential and everyone's work. For Western to create a more welcoming, inclusive, and equitable learning environment a steady, unwavering focus on equity-deserving students and their experiences must permeate the entire institution—from senior administrators to faculty, professional staff, and support personnel. It must be reinforced at all levels of the organization.

It will be important for ASE units to know their students. It is easy to dismiss the importance of "knowing your students" as either a platitude or a statement of the obvious. However, the process of coming to know today's diverse students and understand how best to support them is often missed. Yet, it is the most important foundational step in the program and service design and development process. We cannot make assumptions. As demographics shift, the experiences of more and more students resemble those of staff and faculty less and less. Who are today's students at Western? Where do they come from? What are their interests? What are they seeking to accomplish? What are their preferred learning and talents? When and where are they likely to need help? Assessment is a strength of WSE and should be connected to institutional assessment efforts to more fully understand Western students' needs now and, in the years, ahead. Needs assessments do not guarantee learning and student success, but it is hard to improve without collecting and sharing assessment data. Cultivating such cultures demands focused change leadership over an extended period of time. The AVP Students may find it helpful to draw upon the change management theory of Kotter which focuses more on people experiencing large organizational changes rather than the changes themselves. As well, the Kubler-Ross change curve usefully reminds us that if we lose sight of whom these changes impact the most (students), then the attempt to make those changes will be for naught. Changing campus culture is hard work.

Finally, it is important that the recommendations that will be adopted be grounded in an action plan that is accountable and transparent to students. Social accountability is key to cultural change. Consideration needs to be given to how the recommendations of the reviewers will be shared with the ASE teams and wider community, but especially students.

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Appendix A: Recommendations

Academic Support & Engagement:

1. **Recommendation**: develop a communication strategy to inform the Western community and stakeholders of ASE supports and services.

2. **Recommendation**: provide intentional follow up to students to inform them of outcomes of the review process and next steps. Involve as many diverse student perspectives in the process as possible.

3. **Recommendation**: offer evening hours and drop ins to provide students with more flexible delivery options.

4. **Recommendation:** consideration of on-location roles, once additional staffing is in place.

5. **Recommendation**: create a shared measure for students to share feedback of their experiences related to the ASE units.

6. **Recommendation**: create a shared curriculum that addresses the uniqueness of students as well as what they need developmentally and when.

7. **Recommendation**: explore possibility of implementing shared peer programming across ASE.

8. **Recommendation**: engage equity-deserving students in reviewing practices, presentations and programming in the ASE portfolio. Specifically, look at the concepts of thriving and strengths with an anti-racism lens.

9. **Recommendation**: develop a training and professional development plan for the ASE staff to engage in anti-racism, anti-oppression, critical race theory and Indigenous ways of knowing with internal and external experts.

10. **Recommendation**: develop an HR plan to diversify staff within ASE to reflect the diversity of the student body. Hire BIPOC staff to ensure culturally-responsive services and support and so BIPOC students see themselves and their experiences represented in ASE.

11. **Recommendation**: engage in an HR audit to review barriers within the hiring process (including requirements, postings, interview process and questions, etc.).

12. **Recommendation**: develop programs and supports that are culturally responsive to diverse student population(s).

13. **Recommendation:** develop a training program for practitioners in understanding assessment, developing learning outcomes and assessing student learning.

14. **Recommendation:** develop Division-wide Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and metrics measuring student access points. Develop benchmarks for types of students accessing services.

15. **Recommendation:** develop a plan to share assessment data with key university partners, including students and affiliated colleges.

16. **Recommendation**: change the position title of counsellors to more accurately reflect roles as advisors.

17. **Recommendation**: revisit the connection of "academic counsellors" to the ASE unit and review the job descriptions to more accurately reflect advising competencies.

Learning Development and Success & Writing Support Centre:

18. **Recommendation**: training and planning exercise with Communications where sharing expertise and strategies used to increase student engagement and outreach to diverse learners.

19. **Recommendation**: create a communications strategy to increase findability, review web resources, rebrand services to students, with consideration given to the diversity of students across campus.

20. **Recommendation**: develop a clear outreach plan for students, staff and faculty including regular meetings, focus groups, information sessions and training of key campus stakeholders.

21. **Recommendation**: create a clear delineation of referrals processes.

22. **Recommendation**: formalize service and partnership agreements as well as informal networks so that there is scope and role clarity focusing on the provision of student services**.**

23. **Recommendation**: create clearer knowledge networks and/or internal communities of practice to help engage like-minded colleagues and increase collaborations.

24. **Recommendation**: diversify methods and modes of programming including additional platforms and spaces at times considerate of student schedules.

25. **Recommendation**: add dedicated resources with expertise in English as Additional Language practices.

26. **Recommendation**: each unit within ASE undergoes an operational planning exercise to articulate a response to the Thriving Campus vision. This should align the various areas.

27. **Recommendation**: move away from a purely counselling model of support in LDS and the WSC and discontinue the use of the title counsellor unless it is specifically required for the role.

Accessible Education:

28. **Recommendation**: hire more diverse staff with different skill sets and approaches to academic skill development, and culturally responsive teaching and learning.

29. **Recommendation**: move towards a specialist staffing model, as more resources become available, especially in the areas of mental health and neurological disabilities.

30. **Recommendation**: adopt and integrate AHEAD professional standards into service delivery.

31. **Recommendation**: train staff in the implementation of academic accommodations in practicums, placements, fieldwork, laboratories and graduate education.

32. **Recommendation**: broaden training opportunities for staff in AE to include group advising as well as program development & evaluation.

33. **Recommendation**: ensure that AE staff are trained in UDL standards for the provision of their own supports and services and also train others.

34. **Recommendation**: establish support groups for students with ADHD and ASD, peer mentorship programs and group advising to build additional service capacity and support SWDs in community building.

35. **Recommendation**: reconsider the staffing model with the goal of enhancing capacity for AE staff to take on non-advising tasks and responsibilities, including more opportunities for programming that will enhance student learning and belonging.

36. **Recommendation**: develop targeted co-curricular programming in AE for SWDs, with a focus on career transition and self-determination.

37. **Recommendation**: ensure that co-and extra-curricular programming at Western is made accessible to SWDs by ensuring that all staff and peers who work with students are trained in working with SWDs.

38. **Recommendation**: develop information resources and regularized training to assist faculty and staff in better understanding the academic accommodation process and how to liaise with the service to support their students.

39. **Recommendation**: establish clear programmatic goals and use SLOs, including outcome data, to assess and evaluate programs & services offered by Accessible Education and the overall learning environment for SWDs at Western.

40. **Recommendation**: survey SWDs on an annual basis to determine their satisfaction with the service.

41. **Recommendation**: establish a Student Accessible Education Advisory Committee to provide leadership opportunities for SWDs and to ensure that their voice and lived experience is reflected in program and service design.

42. **Recommendation**: consideration of on-location roles to facilitate an understanding of local needs and to assist with communication, outreach & training once additional staffing is in place.

43. **Recommendation**: expand collaborations and partnerships with all WSE units to build additional capacity and social support for SWDs in community building and to ensure accessible co-curricular activities.

44. **Recommendation**: collaboration between AE, CTL and AODA Office to provide training and resources for teaching assistants & instructors on best practices in teaching that would support the creation of inclusive and accessible learning opportunities.

45. **Recommendation**: continued partnership between AE and SGPS to enhance understanding of the specific needs of graduate and professional SWDs and to deepen an understanding of graduate academic program requirements and the research process in AE.

46. **Recommendation**: provide on-location accessibility programs & services at affiliated university colleges.

47. **Recommendation**: include SWDs from the affiliated university colleges on the AE Student Advisory Committee.

48. **Recommendation**: establish a culture of communication between AE and affiliated university colleges including an annual report on their SWDs.