Seneca

Seneca AODA Annual Status Report

Seneca has established a multi-year accessibility plan to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility and to meet requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the Integrated Accessibility Standards. This Annual Status Report details the required annual update for 2021 on the progress of measures taken to improve accessibility. The purpose of this report is to track our organization's progress and make the public aware of our initiatives. This report is available online on Seneca's Policies website.

General Accomplishments

In order to truly support the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, Seneca has maintained a centralized AODA Committee. This committee provides oversight to the college on all matters relating to AODA. An AODA budget dedicated to funding capital expenditures exclusively for the purpose of improving accessibility for all stakeholders has been in place for over 5 years. This budget (which is overseen by the Seneca-wide AODA Committee) funds employee accommodations, communications support, improvements to the built environment and a host of other improvements that continue to remove barriers and improve accessibility.

Customer Service Accomplishments

Seneca has required all employees to complete mandatory AODA training since 2009. All historical training completions are documented and captured in a database of completions. The training modules have been updated several times since 2009. The most recent content update was in 2020 and 2021. Seneca updated, rebuilt and improved the training modules and embedded them in a new Learning Management System.

Information and Communications Accomplishments

There has been significant progress in 2021 in the area of information and communication including the following:

- Newly updated and designed Accessibility for Library Users page.
- Seneca Libraries are equipped with additional accessible self-checkout kiosks. These accessible kiosks provide height adjustable controls, surface areas that holds bags and extra books and extra-large monitors designed to help make self-checkout more accessible to many.
- Seneca followed the W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 when developing and maintaining its website. The college tests its website using a combination of automatic accessibility checkers such as Wave by WebAIM, manual testing using screen-readers such as NVDA, and usability tests with members of the Seneca community who use assistive technology devices.
- Students and staff can request alternative formats for textbooks through the library.
- In order to make library collections more accessible to patrons with print disabilities, Seneca Libraries facilitates access to the Accessible Content E-Portal (ACE). ACE is a repository of books in accessible format that is managed by Scholar's Portal, a service of the Ontario Council of University Libraries. ACE provides books in the following formats: colour PDF, black & white PDF, DAISY, plain text and e-pub.
- Seneca offers built-in audio functionality that will produce a computer-generated reading of text-based content such as magazines, newspapers, and journal articles or e-book text. See the Databases with Text Reading Functionality page for lists of those databases at Seneca Libraries that do and do not offer this functionality.
- 95% of the library's collection is now in digital format to facilitate 24/7 access to resources for Seneca employees, faculty, students and staff across the globe.

Employment Accomplishments

In 2021, Seneca launched a major review of hiring practices with the goal of identifying and eliminating barriers. The following focus areas were in scope:

- General EDI statement and updates to statements: Draft sample EDI and accessibility sample statements for job postings and review current postings with a view to updating language to make more inclusive.
- Job Board & Question Library: Create list of resources to be used in reaching candidates from diverse communities, including people with disabilities.
- Outline of equitable hiring process: Draft a guide that provides key steps to designing an equitable hiring process.

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- Process outline for designated positions: Development of a resource guide that addresses approach to recruitment of designated positions for equity deserving groups. The guide will include posting template and language, approval path, advertising sources, the screening process, interview questions, onboarding process. Training will be offered to review the content of the guide.
- Hiring Panel Training: Provide training on the protected grounds (with a particular focus on the protected ground of disability) of the Ontario Human Rights Code, and how manage the recruitment process for preferred vs. designated positions.

The Employee Accommodation team experienced another very busy year. On any given day in 2021 the team managed over 150 active cases.

Transportation Accomplishments

Once the campus reopened the Campus Shuttle Buses once again were provided to staff and students. These shuttle buses are required to be fully accessible and equipped with wheelchair lifts and appropriate in-shuttle safety equipment. Operators are trained in appropriate equipment operating, safety protocols and AODA Customer Service training. Operators are also required to be trained in AODA Customer Service training and must receive the appropriate sensitivity training regarding the handling and managing of passengers with special needs.

Design of Public Spaces Accomplishments

Despite the limited number of student and staff that were on campus (as a result of Covid), progress on making Seneca more accessible continued in 2021. The following progress was made.

The CITE building featured extensive barrier-free and AODA accommodations including:

- All desks are height adjustable with extended range
- Kitchenettes are fully accessible with pantry style cupboards for easier access
- Kitchenettes – feature under-counter refrigerator/freezer units with drawers
- 34" counters with accessible dishwasher models
- Kitchenettes feature microwaves at several heights
- 2 Universal washrooms on every floor - one on each floor that comes with adult change facilities
- Regular accessible washroom stalls in multi person washrooms
- All meeting rooms accommodate wheelchair space

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Seneca's Newnham campus saw a variety of accessibility upgrades:

- Throughout Seneca's main campus computing commons – height adjustable tables sprinkled throughout.
- The Opticianry Lab created one dedicated "lane" for AODA use
- A barrier-free lift was installed in the School of Aviation flight hub.

All campuses have door operators added at various locations for improving access. In 2021 Seneca purchased and installed 19 new accessible podiums (with supporting technology) raising the number of accessible podiums to over 120.

In 2021, Seneca continued its progress in the construction of a new four-story parking structure. Seneca has ensured that the parking facility meets the accessibility requirements as outlined in the Design of Public Spaces standards. In addition, the team referenced The City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines and incorporated the provisions within. Seneca also adheres to all of the provisions included within the Ontario Building Code.

Summary of Consultations

Seneca's AODA Committee is comprised of individuals across the institution. The Committee advises on a whole host of matters including employment practices, accommodation, upgrades to facilities and resources and website development. This committee makes final decisions on the spending of all funds in the AODA budget. This Committee meets four to six times per year.

Next Steps

In 2022, Seneca will continue to operate the central AODA Committee and this committee will oversee the central AODA capital budget. Some planned actions include the following:

- Door Operator Upgrades have been budgeted and will be installed.
- Provide equipment, furniture and various modifications to support medically supported injury or illness related accommodation will continue to be a top priority. These requests could include other built environment needs, assistive technology needs and learning accommodation.
- Closed-Captioning (CC) for new video-based educational materials or alternative formats is budgeted and planned.
- From a Universal Design for Learning perspective, instructional, informational, marketing and promotional audio-visual materials produced by the College needs to be produced with CC. This would include course materials as well as employee trainings and presentations.

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- Partnering with vendor(s) to provide CC for all new video-based content.
- Purchase and install 20 accessible classroom podiums.
- Complete major review of hiring practices with the goal of identifying and eliminating barriers.
- Continue the process of proactively reviewing and converting critical employee forms and documents to an accessible format.

The upcoming year will provide a variety of challenges as Seneca constituents continue to work and learn in various combinations of on-campus and virtual functioning. The AODA Committee's challenge will be to continue the process of removing barriers and enhancing accessibility whether working on-campus, virtually or in a hybrid fashion.