

MEDIA RELEASE

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Western Takes Action on Accessibility during Orientation Week

LONDON, ON: Students with disabilities expect and deserve the same great experiences during Orientation Week. This was the basis for the recent review initiated by The University Students' Council (USC) at The University of Western Ontario. The Orientation Week Accessibility Task Force was created to assess the accessibility of the Orientation program for students with disabilities. Many different facets were reviewed, some of which included the programming venues, literature and information provided to incoming students, and the training for over 800 volunteers involved in Orientation Week at Western.

"It is essential for us to ensure that all incoming Western students are able to participate equally in Canada's biggest and best Orientation Week," said Stephen Lecce, President of the USC and Chairman of the Orientation Week Accessibility Task Force. "At the University Students' Council, we run on a model of continuous improvement, and this task force is just one example of our commitment to providing the best student experience where all students can participate," Lecce said.

This initiative was supported by the Orientation Governance Board and is part of Western's commitment to providing an inclusive environment to all students. Members of this task force included stakeholders from the university: students with disabilities, Senior Administration from The University of Western Ontario, USC President and Senior Managers, the Orientation Coordinator, and Sophs (Orientation Week volunteers). The areas reviewed by the committee include improving residence life, programming, and Soph activities.

"The University will continue to work with the USC to improve accessibility for our incoming students through our programming particularly in housing," said Susan Grindrod, Associate Vice-President Housing & Ancillary Services at The University of Western Ontario.

"I am excited to begin implementing these changes for Orientation Week 2009," said Jeff Rajesky, USC Orientation Coordinator. "The need for this committee was clear, and I am confident that everyone involved in Orientation programming will benefit from these measures," Rajesky said.

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