

A Framework for Creating a Campus Culture of Compassion:

A Participatory Action Research Approach to Equality

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

The presence of students with disabilities on university campuses is steadily increasing; however, their total integration and inclusion into campus life has not been as successful (Merchant & Gajar, 1997; Promis, et al., 2001). Canadian students with disabilities continue to be marginalized within universities, mainly because a framework for inclusion has not been firmly established (Promis et al., 2001). Although universities offer services to support academic success, other facets of campus life offered to the general student population, such as recreation or athletics, are often neglected for students with disabilities. These aspects of student life should not be considered trivial as they have many benefits and can enhance a person's experiences and quality of life at university (Ashton-Shaeffer et al., 2001; Blinde & McLung, 1997; Blinde & Taub, 1999; Promis et al., 2001). Guided by critical disability theory and the concept of embodiment, this dissertation used a participatory action research approach that united key partners from the University of Guelph community in order to examine issues around accessibility and inclusion of students with disabilities in campus recreational and athletic opportunities. The team included representatives from the University's Centre for Students with Disabilities and the Department of Athletics, an undergraduate student with a disability, and two university alumni. The ultimate goal was to develop a planning framework to guide universities in supporting the human rights and inclusion of students with disabilities in extra-curricular campus life.

Interviews were conducted with five research team members and 18 University of Guelph stakeholders, including: students with and without disabilities, staff members from the Department of Athletics and the Centre for Students with Disabilities, faculty members, and senior administrators. A focus group was also held to share findings and generate feedback on a preliminary draft of the framework. What emerged from data analysis of the interviews, the focus group, team meetings, and journal entries was the development of a framework for Creating a Campus Culture of Compassion. This framework identifies how universities can implement programs, policies, services and practices that better respond to the changing and diverse needs and interests of students with disabilities in order to ensure their full engagement in all areas of campus life. The framework centres around six guiding principles that help guide universities toward developing a campus culture that is compassionate. Essentially, a campus culture of compassion values: (a) access for all; (b) diversity and uniqueness; (c) interdependence and social responsibility; (d) diverse knowledge basis, voices, and perspectives; (e) the power of learning and education as a tool for social change; and (f) the whole person. The framework also indicates three fundamental characteristics that a campus culture of compassion must possess. In essence, post-secondary institutions and their community members must be: (a) interconnected, (b) supportive and enabling, and (c) informed. Six process pieces are included in the framework which enables a campus culture of compassionate to be fuelled and sustained over time. These pieces include: (a) creating a vision for the future, (b) constructing a plan to achieve the vision, (c) securing funds to put the plan in place, (d) thinking critically and measuring actions against the vision, (e) being proactive to make change happen, and (f) reaching beyond compliance. The framework encourages university stakeholders to collectively reflect, dialogue, and collaborate in order to create broader systemic changes. These changes are necessary since constraints to campus engagement can threaten a student's well-being and sense of self. This

framework can serve as a starting point to initiate these conversations and inspire universities to use a participatory approach to encourage positive social change within the university context.

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CHAPTER I: SETTING THE STAGE

There is an important point to be made when disability is seen as a policy issue: disability rights are civil rights. The right of a person with a disability to be treated as other persons are treated...is a civil right. And civil rights are NOT dependent on available funding or even the appropriation of funds...No distinction based on the existence of a disability can be tolerated, because such an approach is the essence of discrimination (Pfeiffer, 2001, p. 204, emphasis included).

When I was young, I truly believed that I could change the world. Although that might sound as though I was a naive soul who experienced delusions of grandeur, I simply believed that each person had the power to make decisions that could affect those around them, which would eventually spiral out and ultimately impact the greater community. I believed that it was through these small acts that we could all make a difference in not only our own lives but also in the lives of others, and I enjoyed the sense of agency that these thoughts provided. This idea has stuck with me throughout the years and provides me with the belief that we are all powerful agents capable of making the world in which we live a better place.

Perhaps it was these dreams and aspirations that led me to study issues of inclusion, accessibility, human rights, and community throughout my university career. My journey for societal change specifically in the area of disability initially stemmed from my first year of university when I experienced a medical condition which resulted in my needing to use a wheelchair for mobility. Although my physical condition was not permanent, the experience ignited a passion within me to question and challenge blatant or adverse discriminatory policies and practices that oppress persons with disabilities. The experience of using a wheelchair for mobility was a brand new experience for me that increased my awareness of issues such as accessibility, inclusion, segregation, stigmatization, discrimination and support. This experience enabled me to understand what it feels like to be perceived as 'disabled'. I also became acutely aware of on-campus support services and the benefits and limitations of these services. While I have always been sensitive to the needs of others, I became even more aware of the unique challenges and unnecessary barriers faced by university students with disabilities on a daily basis.

This experience facilitated my desire to understand how other students experienced life on campus with a disability, and I wanted to discover how I could help make a difference in this area. I was particularly interested in athletic and recreation opportunities for university students with a disability as this is an area of student life that has not received much attention in the literature (Promis, Erevelles, & Matthews, 2001). In my honour's thesis, I spoke with students with disabilities about their transition into university. One young woman described how she previously participated in athletics for students with disabilities in her high school, such as track and field, but no such opportunities were provided for her at university. This sentiment stayed with me and became the basis of my current research area. I have also consulted with some "experts" in this field, namely university alumni with disabilities, who have attested to the importance of this research area.

This area of study is also of importance since provincial and federal anti-discrimination legislation has resulted in Canadian universities increasingly recruiting and accepting persons with disabilities (Department of justice Canada, 1982; Duquette, 2000; Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2004). Although the presence of students with disabilities on campus is steadily increasing, their total integration and inclusion into campus life has not been as successful (Merchant & Gajar, 1997; Promis, et al., 2001). Canadian students with disabilities continue to be marginalized within universities, mainly because a framework for inclusion has not been firmly established (Promis et al., 2001). Many universities, under legal obligations, have begun to create environments that are accessible and accommodating for students with disabilities (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2003, 2004). They endeavour to support the success of students with disabilities by providing various on-campus support services, such as offices for students with disabilities, which address structural and attitudinal barriers on campus. Although support services catering to students' needs are beneficial, it is problematic when universities rely solely on these services to ensure students are included and accommodated within various elements of campus life. Relying only on these services means that accommodation and accessibility do not become an integral part of the university culture as responsibility is not shared by all university members. This traditional framework places accommodation and inclusion as afterthoughts, post-hoc solutions to 'problems' associated with disability. It would be more effective and beneficial if universities incorporated accessibility within its campus

culture and structure. Within this alternative framework, those who would traditionally depend on disability offices to facilitate inclusion would be included in a university culture that is proactive in attending to their needs and preferences. An accommodating university would provide accessible environments, accommodating policies, support services, sensitive faculty and staff, and equitable opportunities as not solutions to problems but as business as usual (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2004). Although a campus office for students with disabilities may serve to support specific student concerns and accommodation requests, disability within the university environment must be accepted as a typical and integral part of the university culture.

Another concern with on-campus disability services are that they typically focus on academics while other facets of university life are not fully addressed (Promis et al., 2001). One may question the necessity of increasing the accessibility of campus recreation and athletic opportunities for persons with disabilities, viewing them as extracurricular activities that do not necessarily fall under the mandate of the university's responsibility. It may even be suggested that students with disabilities locate and utilize specialized accessible athletic opportunities offered by the city or the private sector. Although research has indicated that many students with disabilities are interested in participating in campus recreation and athletics (Promis et al., 2001), others may feel that there is not enough of a demand to warrant the provision of accessible and equitable services. Regardless of such arguments, it is imperative that universities enable students with all abilities to be included in all aspects of campus life, including recreational, athletic, and extracurricular pursuits.

Extra-curricular recreational and athletic activities are understandably not a top priority of an academic institution; however, these social areas of university life should not be considered trivial (Promis et al., 2001). Research has quite clearly indicated that recreation and athletic opportunities have many benefits and can enhance a person's experiences and quality of life at university (Ashton-Shaeffer, Gison, Autry & Hanson, 2001; Blinde & McLung, 1997; Blinde & Taub, 1999; Promis et al., 2001). University students, in particular, benefit from such activities because they:

- a) assist in academic stress relief,
- b) foster a sense of community,
- c) build school spirit,

- d) enable healthy competition,
- e) help develop leadership skills,
- f) foster team work and team building, and
- g) help students develop a work ethic (Promis et al., 2001).

Universities recognize these benefits and consequently provide students with various recreation and athletic opportunities. Although the benefits of these activities are known, at present, only certain students can enjoy these benefits. Students with disabilities are often excluded from campus recreation and athletics, which includes informal and formal sports (e.g. intramural and varsity sports) and recreation opportunities (e.g., fitness classes), whereas their non-disabled counterparts are provided various athletic and recreational options (Ashton-Shaeffer et al., 2001; Promis et al., 2001). This is quite problematic because when students are not granted access to such activities, they are also denied opportunities to acquire the experiences and benefits associated with these activities. This is especially concerning since research has also indicated that students with disabilities, in particular, benefit from recreation and athletics because it enables them to “experience their bodies in new ways, enhance their perceptions of physical attributes, redefine their physical capabilities, and increase their perceived confidence to pursue new physical activities” (Promis et al., 2001, p. 42; also see Ashton-Shaeffer et al., 2001). Moreover, it has been shown that participation by persons with disabilities in campus recreation with non-disabled students helps increase socialization, break down stereotypes, and increases positive perceptions of persons with disabilities by their non-disabled peers (Ashton-Shaeffer et al., 2001; Blinde & McLung, 1997; Blinde & Taub, 1999).

Students with disabilities are often excluded from campus recreation and athletics because such activities are not fully accessible, inclusive, or designed to meet their needs (Ashton-Shaeffer et al., 2001). Moreover, persons with disabilities are at a disadvantage because many have been raised in a culture that has not fostered or fully supported their athletic and recreation aspirations. Specifically,

- a) people with disabilities often lack sporting programs and opportunities within their community,
- b) they are often excluded from informal athletic opportunities with their peers,
- c) they face stigmatization and prejudices when participating,

- d) sports facilities and recreation environments are often inaccessible,
- e) coaching and training opportunities are often not a priority for disabled sporting,
- f) they are often unaware of benefits associated with such activity, and
- g) they often experience economic, structural, attitudinal, physical, and transportation barriers (Ashton Shaeffer et al., 2001, DePauw, 1997; DePauw & Gavron, 2005, Promis et al., 2001).

It appears that universities have endeavoured to include students with disabilities within their current athletic framework, but these attempts have been somewhat futile. One Ontario University, for example, sought to address this issue by creating a buddy system called 'Rec Pals' where students with disabilities link up with students without disabilities who help them participate in various activities (University of Waterloo, 2007). Although developed with all good intentions, these types of patronizing and dependent support systems do not enable students with disabilities to independently access recreation and athletics, nor do they demand that universities modify their structures to accommodate the students' varying abilities. This system, in essence, infringes on the tenets of the disability rights movement which "is a political movement organizing for social change" (Neath & Schriener, 1998, p. 1). Students are expected to 'fit in' to the existing athletic and recreation structure without the university fully modifying itself to better include the entire student population (Neath & Schriener, 1998; Promis et al., 2001). The exclusion and lack of accommodation of students with disabilities in every facet of campus life is blatant discrimination.

Although students with disabilities should have access to these opportunities because of the positive outcomes associated with these experiences, I believe the benefits of an activity should not be the only basis for providing equal opportunities. Framing an argument for equality within a benefits model often shrouds the main points needing to be discussed, which are issues surrounding equity, choice, and human rights. Although simply stated, the fact remains that some students (students without disabilities) are entitled to something that other students (students with disabilities) are not. This is discrimination. I am not implying all people should be treated similarly (a tenet of formal equality), but rather that the outcomes must be the same (equality of outcome) (Rioux, 1994). A failure to accommodate students with disabilities, and provide them with athletic and recreational opportunities, restricts their ability to achieve similar outcomes

(Rioux, 1994). In essence, an inequitable university may prevent students with disabilities from having the opportunity to travel with their sports team across the country or make friendships with team mates that may last a lifetime. Restricting extracurricular involvement limits potential outcomes associated with the opportunity.

Campus athletic and recreational opportunities are also important because they indirectly indicate a university's ideologies surrounding inclusion and equity. As LaVaque-Manty (2005) explained, athletics is a perfect topic from which to explore issues of equity and fairness because the whole concept of sporting and athletics is based on discrimination and exclusion. It is a good issue to puzzle over since sporting and recreation are indicators of society's values and ideals. "They reflect society's broader ideas about merit and excellence, fairness and norms. They are profoundly conventional, which is to say, cultural, creations of human agency" (LaVaque-Manty, 2005, p. 4). Accordingly, sports provide a commentary that may challenge or reproduce practices of discrimination and oppression (LaVaque-Manty, 2005). In this regard, exploring university policy surrounding accessible athletics and recreation indirectly indicates universities' commitment to inclusion and human rights.

Although I have previously indicated the many benefits associated with athletics and recreation, I acknowledge that the values often associated with sports reinforce stereotypical hegemonic ideologies that serve to oppress various members of society who are not white, middleclass, heterosexual, able-bodied men (Connell, 1990; Long, 2000). As Promis and colleagues (2001) articulated, today's sporting frequently capitalizes on physicality, masculinity and sexuality which:

represent certain cultural "norms" that are embodied by the traditional European American, able-bodied, Judeo-Christian, heterosexual male whose "natural" attributes of aggression, independence, strength, courage, agility, and physical prowess are then used as the yardstick to exclude "other" bodies that deviate from this norm (p. 39).

In this regard, although some people may be critical of athletics and recreation, students with disabilities still have the right to equal access to campus life, including athletics and recreation opportunities. In order to achieve this, the role governments and universities play in providing accessible campus athletics must be critiqued in order to offer suggestions as to how campus athletics can evolve to become even more equitable, inclusionary, and beneficial to both the students involved and the university as a whole.

Problem and Purpose Statement

Canadian Human Rights laws and provincial legislations legally compel universities to support the human rights of their students with disabilities and accommodate them to the point of undue hardship (Department of Justice Canada, 1982; Government of Canada, 2004; Ontario Government, 2005; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 1990). Since campus athletics is an aspect of campus life, all students, regardless of ability, ought to have access to a variety of on-campus extracurricular opportunities. During a preliminary analysis on the availability of campus recreation and athletics for persons with disabilities, I was dismayed over the lack of opportunities being provided to students with disabilities (Gillies, 2005). Moreover, students with disabilities are fully expected to support campus athletics via their tuition fees without being able to fully reap the rewards (Gillies, 2005; Promis et al., 2001). This preliminary analysis also revealed that universities in the forefront of providing services appeared to have developed a working relationship between their university's athletic department and their offices for students with disabilities. This makes sense since offices for students with disabilities should represent the voices and perspectives of students with disabilities, thus communication between the departments would assist athletic departments in the provision of athletic opportunities that meet student needs. I, therefore, find it imperative to ensure that a line of communication remain open between the various departments within universities, and also with the students. Research to date has not fully explored the various aspects of the campus recreation service provision for university students with disabilities. It has not explored the perspectives of all key stakeholders, including students and department affiliates, to fully understand the students' perspectives (on such things as recreation barriers, preferences and opinions), the Department of Athletics' perspective (on such things as budgeting, staffing or practical concerns), and the perspectives of other university administrators and service providers.

In order to address this gap, this dissertation used a participatory action research approach to unite key university and community stakeholders in order to examine issues related to providing and accessing campus recreation and athletics programs for university students with disabilities. The ultimate goal at the start of the project was to generate solutions targeted at increasing the accessibility of campus recreation and athletic programs on university campuses in

order to fully support the human rights of all students. More specifically, this dissertation had two main goals, which were:

- 1) to create a participatory action research project that would unite (and create a dialogue between) interested and involved university stakeholders (such as students with and without disabilities, university campus recreation and athletic providers, and members of the disability office) in order to examine issues of accessibility and inclusion of students with disabilities in campus recreational and athletic programs; and
- 2) to use the experiences of the research team, and information generated, to develop a planning framework for how universities can better support the human rights and recreational/athletic needs of students with disabilities, athletic providers, and university administrators.

I also had a personal goal of gaining insight into how PAR projects work, particularly within a university context. I had read a lot about PAR and was curious as to what that experience would be like.

In order to achieve these goals, a research team was formed with partners within the University of Guelph and community members who are ‘experts’ in this area and who play a role in the administration, provision, and utilization of campus recreation and athletics. Specifically, the research team included two staff members and one student from the University of Guelph, two university alumni, and myself who worked together on this project to:

- a) initiate and expand the lines of communication,
- b) enable an in-depth understanding of each other’s perspectives and positions,
- c) generate a research plan that would explore issues faced by different stakeholders related to accessibility and inclusion, and
- d) develop specific recommendations and solutions of how university administrators and students can work together to ensure the athletic and recreational rights and needs of students with disabilities are met.

This dialogue is essential in order to better understand the needs of students, athletic providers, and administrators and to generate ideas regarding how the rights of students with disabilities are upheld within the university milieu.

It is important to note that the purpose statement and the accompanying research goals marked the starting point of this project. As is typical of PAR, the study evolved over time into something that was unanticipated. Throughout the process of the project, and specifically in working through the data, it became clear to the research team that a much broader approach and perspective was needed. Essentially, there was a movement from an emphasis on campus recreation and athletics to the broader notion of creating a compassionate campus community. In order to remain true to the PAR process, we had to remain flexible and embrace this evolution and enable the project to emerge in a way that was true to the data and the insights of the research team. The nature of how this project specifically evolved will be further explained in Chapter Three where I discuss insights that shaped the framework. I chose to present the study in a chronological order in order to demonstrate and remain true to the evolutionary nature of the PAR process.

Marrying Critical Disability Theory with Embodiment

I am aware that not being disabled restricts my inclusion in the disability community; however, I am a humanitarian and a disability ally and advocate who supports the human rights of persons with and without disabilities. As a disability advocate, I do not assume that it is my role to speak on *behalf* of any group; rather I am an advocate of human rights who seeks to make positive social changes towards inclusion and accessibility within universities and the community at large. Similar to white scholars who provide a critical race commentary, I acknowledge that my current status (not being disabled) privileges me within society, but I seek to advocate against this inequity (Glover, 2007). Moreover, I can relate to the notion of “temporarily able-bodied” in that disability issues affect everyone in some way, either directly or indirectly, and I know from my experience how this status can change suddenly and without warning. Thus, it is the responsibility of each citizen to make positive changes in this area of life. Throughout the course of my eleven years of post-secondary education, my passion for disability studies has evolved to the point where I now align myself with critical disability theory and I seek to critically explore the construction of disability within society.

This study, therefore, was approached from a critical disability theoretical framework in which I utilize the human rights approach. The primary assumptions behind a critical disability theoretical approach are as follows:

- a) disability is not seen as a medicalized condition inherent to the individual in need of treatment by doctors and therapists,
- b) disability is viewed as an inherent part of society and ‘treatment’ lies in the reformation of economic, social and political policies and redistribution of power, control, and autonomy to persons with disabilities, and
- c) the responsibility to ‘deal’ with disability becomes a social responsibility where the goal is to ensure that society provides political and social entitlements to these citizens (Rioux & Prince, 2002).

People with disabilities have been increasingly seeking to emancipate themselves from oppressive social policies, practices, stereotypes, and research (Kaufman, 2003) which continue to patronize, medicalize, and rationalize oppression (Neath & Schriener, 1998). As a critical disability advocate/ally, I support the tenets of a social mobilization approach which emphasize that action must begin with a critique, which is an “expression of outrage at man’s inhumanity to man [sic]” (Friedmann, 1987, p. 261). I do not support experts’ claims to knowledge on other people’s lives and experiences; rather I support one’s freedom to represent oneself. People with disabilities are continuously oppressed and alienated from society (Hyde, 2000), and as Friedmann (1987) states “alienation cripples our humanity; it destroys our natural sociality; it makes us dependent on powerful others, and in the end, it reduces us to the pitiable condition of the ‘one-dimensional man [sic]’” (p. 263). My goal is not just to critique, but to create action. As Friedmann (1987) suggests, I must amalgamate my passion and philosophy, I must critically describe the reality of the situation, and I must conclude with a vision of the future and indications of how it can be achieved. This will be achieved in my dissertation because I seek to move beyond a mere exploration of current practices and barriers towards creating solutions to the problems identified by students and others.

Although the human rights approach and social models of disability have had a profound impact on increasing the rights and well-being of persons with a disability, one criticism of these approaches is that they imply disability will cease to exist with the reformation of society and the re-allocation of resources and civic opportunities to persons with disabilities in order to support human rights (Williams, 2001). I concur with Williams (2001) who argues that:

Notwithstanding the socially constructed nature of embodied experiences, phenomenologically, disability has undeniably to do at some level with the pain or

discomfort of bodies, and this is a dimension of the oppressive quality of chronic illness and disability for large numbers of people. To say that disability is social oppression and that the body has nothing to do with it is curiously solipsistic and clearly not the whole story, and among those who otherwise support the broad viewpoint, there has been an attempt to bring impairment back into the picture (p. 135).

Although a political approach is needed to fight for rights, it may not allow for a discussion surrounding the experience of disability thus persons seeking to discuss their disability as an actual facet of their identity may be silenced.

I therefore acknowledge that ‘disability’ refers to both the social construction of disability (a label given by society to persons whose abilities differ from the ‘norm’) and as a personal experience (validating the experience of persons living with a disability) (Hughes and Paterson, 1997; Turner, 2001; Williams, 2001; Zola, 1993). The actual experiences of living with a disability must be acknowledged and not assumed to be solely a social construction that exists outside of the individual. Essentially, it is a social construction that has “real” consequences for persons who fit this label. In this regard, although disability is often socially and politically constructed, many people with disabilities still feel pain, they may be ill, they may feel ‘othered’, and they experience oppression. The effects, influence, consequence, and experience of disability and how disability is embodied cannot be omitted; rather, it must be acknowledged. Turner (2001) elaborates:

Disability, while socially produced by systems of classification and professional labels, also has profound significance for the self because who we are is necessarily constituted by our embodiment. Because our biographical narratives are carried in our embodiment, disability has to be mediated by its meaning for the self. The day-to-day difficulties of mobility and autonomy are not, as it were, merely accidental features of everyday life of the chronically ill, the disabled, or the elderly; they actually constitute selfhood by transforming the complex relationships between the self, body image, and the environment (p. 258).

Hughes and Paterson (1997) further articulate that disability involves a complex interplay between social oppression and human affliction. A failure to acknowledge the bodily and lived experience of disability, according to DeFelice, will weaken the disability movement:

The disabled movement has purchased political visibility at the price of physical invisibility. The crippled and lame had bodies, but the handicapped, or so the social workers say, are just a little late at the starting gate. I don’t like that; it’s banal. When we speak in metaphorical terms, we deny physical reality. The farther we get from our bodies, the more removed we are from the body politic...” (as quoted in Zola, 1993, p. 170).

I therefore argue that disability is as much a form of social oppression as it is a personal experience and source of identity formation (or disruption). The goal is that once ‘disability’ as a social construction and cause of oppression is removed, then a person’s impairment will remain as a personal experience that has no negative socio-political consequence (Crow, 1996). I utilize a combination of these approaches, marrying critical disability approaches with notions of embodiment, to critically examine disability issues within society, and in this case, to critique the treatment of disability within university. These theoretical frameworks guided me towards sensitizing concepts that are reviewed in the next chapter. Most importantly, these frameworks served as the interpretive lenses through which I approached all aspects of this study including how data were collected and analyzed.

In summary, this introduction highlighted the rationale behind, and the purpose of, this study and provided a discussion of the critical disability and embodiment approaches that are serving as the theoretical foundations for this study. This research is important because it will ultimately help inform university policy and practice regarding how to better provide equal opportunities to students with disabilities. The next chapter presents an overview of literature related to governmental and university policies pertaining to accessibility and inclusive athletic opportunities for students with disabilities. The third chapter outlines the methods I plan to adopt for this study while the subsequent chapters present the findings of the study and the implications of the findings on research and practice.

CHAPTER II: BEHIND THE SCENES

It is imperative to be critical of current laws, structures, and social policies to uncover discriminatory practices, because with criticism comes a potential for change. In this chapter, I explore and critique governmental and university policies pertaining to accessibility and inclusivity of campus recreation and athletic opportunities for students with disabilities. I begin this chapter with a review of provincial and federal legislations supporting university students with disabilities and then I explore government policies to increase sporting opportunities for students with disabilities. I conclude the chapter by examining the university's role in providing equitable campus recreation and athletics for students with disabilities to reveal areas needing improvement and provide suggestions for the future. This literature reflects the sensitising concepts that shaped my understandings as I commenced this project.

Provincial and Federal Legislations Supporting University Students with Disabilities

Provincial Legislation

In accordance with Section 1 of the Ontario Human Rights Code, every person has a right to “equal treatment with respect to services, goods and facilities, without discrimination because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status or disability” (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 1990, p. 1). The Ontario Human Rights Code applies to post-secondary institutions, since education is considered a service. The Code also states that all citizens have a right to “equal treatment with respect to the occupancy of accommodation, without discrimination” (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 1990, p. 1). Discriminatory treatment is not considered reasonable and *bona fide* unless it can be proven to the Commission, the Tribunal, or the Courts that a person could not be accommodated without “undue hardship on the person responsible for accommodating those circumstances considering the cost, outside sources of funding, if any, and health and safety requirements, if any” (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 1990, p. 1).

The Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) (introduced in 2001) sought to improve opportunities for people with disabilities through their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers (Ontario Government, 2001). In relation to post-secondary education, the ODA required colleges and universities to “prepare and make public annual accessibility

plans, in consultation with persons with disabilities” (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2003, p. 6). Unfortunately, the scope of the Act only reached the public sector, and thus the act was criticized for not fully serving the needs of people with disabilities (DisAbled Women’s Network Ontario, 2004). In response, Ontario’s Bill 118, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) recently overrode the previous ODA (Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2004). This new Act is unique in that it applies to both the public and private sector. One concern regarding the AODA is the 20 year window in which modifications are expected to take place. Nonetheless, this time frame may not be too lax if complete accessibility is actually obtained.

The Ontario Human Rights Code and the new Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act endeavour to ensure post-secondary students with disabilities receive their education in the least restrictive environment as possible. However, such legislative acts have not been entirely successful in the full removal of societal, attitudinal, systemic, and structural barriers that are faced by students with various disabilities. Post-secondary students continue to experience barriers when integrating into campus life (Gillies & Pedlar, 2003/4; Gillies, 2004), and one such example includes the exclusion of students with disabilities in campus recreation and athletic opportunities. Under these circumstances, many students are forced to work harder to ‘fit in’ with mainstream society (Gillies & Pedlar, 2003/4; Gillies, 2004).

A report by the Ontario Human Rights Commission identified that the scope of ‘educational services’ covered under Section 1 of the Ontario Human Rights Code. It includes:

the development of a student’s personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential, and may include co-instructional activities such as *school-related sports, arts and cultural activities, and school functions* and field trips (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2004, p. 3, emphasis added).

The inclusion of “school-related sports” under the scope of “educational services” appears to affirm that students with disabilities are entitled to campus organized athletic opportunities. This ought to convince Ontario universities that they have a legal obligation to support students within the athletic realm of university life. However, the Ontario Human Rights Code does not explicitly state that *post-secondary* athletic opportunities fall under the Code. Nor is it clear whether extra-curricular campus recreation and athletics are “school-related sports”. Moreover, provincial human rights codes vary according to provinces. In this regard, although the Ontario Human Rights Commission may state educational services include school related sports, not every province may indicate such, resulting in inconsistencies across the country. This

inconsistency results in students with disabilities having to select universities based on the services and opportunities provided, which restricts their choice of universities they might attend. This type of inconsistency clearly prohibits their equality of opportunity.

Furthermore, although school-related sports are of importance and should be included under the scope of educational services, this piece of legislation does not necessarily help increase the inclusion, acceptance, and accommodation of university students in casual recreational activities on campus. In a recent exploration of Ontario University's promotion of athletics and recreation for students with disabilities (Gillies, 2005), I found that although some universities included exceptional university athletes with a disability (such as Paralympic athletes) within varsity teams, non-exceptional athletes were not necessarily provided formal or informal athletic or recreational opportunities, such as intramural wheelchair basketball. It appears that unless a student is an elite athlete, they are not worthy of participating in on-campus recreation and athletics. Although university administrators may assume that the responsibility of providing 'accommodated' services lies outside of their jurisdiction, this is obviously (and perhaps legally) not the case.

Federal Government

The aforementioned report from the Ontario Human Rights Commission also stated that accommodation of post-secondary students is "governed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms" (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2004, p. 1). However, I was advised by my law professor at York University's Osgoode Law School that the Charter does not apply to universities because of constitutional division of powers (Professor Joan Gilmour, personal communication, April, 2005). The Canadian constitutional division of powers has resulted in the Canadian federation being increasingly decentralized. In this regard, "the provinces have assumed greater flexibility and control over health, post-secondary education, social assistance, and labour market training" (Cameron & Valentine, 2001, p. 31). The constitutional division of powers entails that each province implement and enforce specific pieces of legislation, such as provincial Human Rights Codes or policies surrounding education. In this regard, whether universities are covered under the Charter is questionable.

In the 1990 Supreme Court Case, *Mckinney v. University of Guelph* 3 S.C.R. (Supreme Court of Canada, 1990), it was established that universities are considered legally autonomous

private decision makers providing a public service which does not necessarily make them part of the government within the meaning of s. 32 of the Charter. In this case, it was affirmed that s. 32(1) of the Charter only applies to government action and that private activity has been purposely excluded. This case and others like it, protected universities from being scrutinized under the Charter. However, pursuant to the McKinney case, a community college was held to be part of government in the Douglas Kwantlen case (Supreme Court of British Columbia, 1990). In this regard, the college was considered crown agency “established by the government to implement government policy. It was simply in form and in fact part of the apparatus of government. The college was performing acts of government in carrying out its function” (Supreme Court of British Columbia, 1990, p. 571). Moreover, in the 1997 Supreme Court Case, *Eldridge v. British Columbia* 3 S.C.R. (Supreme Court of Canada, 1997), the Courts decided that when government delivers a universal program (a hospital in this case), it must provide services to the general population in a manner that allows persons with disabilities to gain equal enjoyment of the benefits of citizenship. Education is arguably a universal program, and according to Rioux and Frazee (1999), this ruling was pivotal because it asserted the Court’s view that “government cannot escape its obligations under the *Charter* by delegating functions to private institutions such as hospitals or universities” (p. 85). Moreover, it relays the message that “when government is delivering a universal program, it cannot provide services to the general population in a manner that denies persons with disabilities the equal benefit of such a program” (Rioux & Frazee , 1999, p. 85).

One may argue that post-secondary education is not a universal program, but as the ruling in the Douglas Kwantlen case illustrates, universities may be considered crown agencies. They are private institutions providing a public service for citizens who qualify, and accordingly, “government has a positive obligation to remove barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from equal enjoyment of benefits of citizenship” (Rioux & Frazee, 1999, p. 85). Rioux and Frazee (1999) further argue that “because of its constitutional nature, this guarantee of equality rights applies to all levels of legislative authority in Canada. Its reach is broad in that it applies to all Canadian law” (1999, p. 78), including education. What is a concern is that while elementary and secondary education is mandatory for all children (including children with disabilities), university is voluntary and is increasingly becoming privatized. It is, therefore,

uncertain if the rights of university students are protected under the Charter and this lack of affirmation “gives school authorities the power to interpret their responsibilities” (Rioux & Frazee, 1999, p. 82). Allowing universities leeway to interpret their responsibilities is problematic since it results in inconsistencies among Canadian universities, posing unnecessary barriers to students attending university.

Legislative acts have somewhat protected the rights of students with disabilities, but has not fully prevented discrimination within universities. Charter protection for university students with disabilities would be optimal. This is because the Human Rights code merely *prohibits* discrimination of individuals based on their natural characteristics, such as disability, on specified grounds with limitations under the ‘undue hardship’ defence which may protect the offending party (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 1990). For example, discrimination against persons with disabilities may be considered *bona fide* if the cost of providing an accessible workplace would exceed reasonable accommodation. Alternatively, the Charter serves to *guarantee* citizens’ rights to equality without discrimination and serves to ensure equal protection and benefits under the law. There is a serious need to move beyond the mere prohibition of ‘behaviour’ to a system that truly ‘guarantees’ that all students have equal rights and opportunities in life. Moreover, stronger pieces of legislation with a stricter enforcement criterion must be created to ensure systemic changes which benefit those who have been oppressed. As Rioux and Frazee (1999) state, we “must go well beyond the legal construct of a ‘duty to accommodate’ ” (p. 83).

Charter protection would go beyond the universities’ duty to accommodate a student to the point of ‘undue hardship’. It would set a framework for ensuring that universities question the means in which they are providing a service, and how the institutions could better ensure equality of well-being for its students. Currently, when students experience any type of discrimination in the post-secondary setting, and their needs are not accommodated or continue to be neglected, their course of action is to file a human rights complaint. This is problematic because the concerns of people with disabilities should not be considered a ‘complaint’, their rights should be guaranteed, and proactive approaches should be taken as opposed to ‘ad hoc’ remedies. Moreover, the human rights process is complaint driven, it is typically backlogged, and the cases that are heard are from people who have the “means to make the initial complaint

as well as the patience, resources and motivation to see the process through. For many reasons, including the stress of the investigative and decision-making process, human rights cases are frequently settled or withdrawn” (Mosoff, 2000, p. 190). Unfortunately, while these types of resolutions only serve to mediate or terminate the specific complaint of the day, the end process does not always act as a precedent setting ruling that could be called upon in future situations, as do court decisions. Mosoff (2000) conducted a study exploring the cases involved in human rights complaints and found that complaints that have greater social implications, such as cases surrounding discrimination within an educational setting, were not as successful as cases that involved individual ‘luxuries’ (such as access to a bowling alley) which did not have any greater social implications. It is also important to note that the popular means of retribution in the Human Rights cases is generally monetary compensation as opposed to the reformation of society or policies, which again does little to prevent discrimination in the future for other individuals. As Mosoff (2000) states, “it is extremely problematic that, on the basis of the data analyzed here, human rights legislation does not appear to be achieving its mandate of improving the overall dignity of persons with disabilities by increasing their access to mainstream institutions” (p. 191).

In summation, the Ontario Human Rights tribunals have proven ineffective in fostering acceptance and inclusion in universities because:

- a) of the lengthy time it takes to obtain a hearing;
- b) the onus is on the student to challenge discrimination; and
- c) such hearings do not provide legal precedence since monetary settlements are implemented (Mosoff, 2000; Rioux & Frazee, 1999).

Furthermore, there is a serious need to move beyond the mere prohibition of ‘behaviour’ to a system that truly ‘guarantees’ equal rights to university students. Although universities are increasingly supporting students in their efforts to attend university and succeed academically, university is more than academics. It is a community where students live, work, play, make social connections, and create networks. Limiting accessibility to only academics limits opportunities for socialization and inclusion within the broader university environment. Charter protection would ensure universities are cognizant of the services they are providing and it would better ensure equality of well-being for its students. It would also ensure that findings from

studies such as this would have a greater national impact on university policy since universities would be actively seeking ways to enhance inclusion in order to comply with Federal legislation.

Government Policies to Increase Sporting Opportunities for Students with Disabilities

The Government of Canada has committed to supporting athletes with a disability at the international competitive level, which ultimately affects university student athletes. The Government has implemented several policies and announced recommendations for how this support can be achieved. One such policy is Bill C-12: An Act to Promote Physical Activity and Sport, which serves to strengthen the Government's commitment to physical activity and sport. The act encourages participation of under-represented groups in the Canadian sport system. The Government of Canada (2004) also released a report entitled, *Advancing the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities*, which included a section devoted to sporting for Canadian athletes with a disability. The report acknowledges that, to have claim to full citizenship, athletes with a disability must be provided equivalent opportunities to develop their abilities and to compete at provincial, national and international sporting events. The Canadian Government has also developed policies to increase access and equity in sport for under-represented groups, including athletes with a disability. A branch of Canadian Heritage, Sport Canada, serves to assist athletes with disabilities by funding a variety of national sports organizations. This department increases participation by helping athletes further develop their skills and participate in national or international competitions. Coaching and training opportunities for Canadian elite athletes with a disability are provided through the organizations responsible for that sport, an example being the Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association for wheelchair rugby (Government of Canada, 2004).

The funding and support by Sport Canada plays a pivotal role in the existence and delivery of programs for athletes with disabilities. High calibre athletes with a disability receive financial support from a variety of organizations through Sport Canada and through integrated and segregated sporting organizations. Sports Canada recently introduced a Policy on Sport for Persons with a Disability (Canadian Heritage, 2006) which aimed to:

...reduce and ultimately eliminate sport-specific barriers that prevent persons with a disability from participating in sport...the policy addresses some of the environmental, structural, systemic, social and personal barriers that keep many persons with a disability from being full participants in Canadian society (para. 2).

This policy, geared towards all levels and forms of sport, builds on the Canadian Sport Policy (Canadian Heritage, 2009) and the Physical Activity and Sport Act (Department of Justice Canada, 2009) seeking to support under-represented groups in Canadian sporting. Particular attention was paid to increase involvement in the Paralympics, Special Olympics and Deaflympics and towards Long-Term Athlete Development.

It appears that providing sporting opportunities for persons with disabilities is a priority of the government. This support serves to strengthen the argument that athletics for persons with and without disabilities is an essential part of citizenship. Perhaps universities will be encouraged by these incentives and will strive to create similar policies. The concern with these initiatives, however, is that they cater to elite athletes and are still only small steps toward inclusion and total acceptance. While elite student athletes should have the opportunity to succeed in sports, such governmental legislation should also protect the athletic rights of all persons with disabilities, regardless of athletic potential. As previously stated, there appears to be a trend in both universities and governments where elite athletes are supported and students who are not exceptional athletes are not provided opportunities to participate.

The financial support provided by the government to assist athletes with disabilities is, not surprisingly, quite limited when compared to their non-disabled counterparts. For example, although the government provided the National Sport Organization Support Program \$42.6 million in 2000-2001 to develop athletes and coaches at the highest international level (Canadian Heritage, 2003), only \$3.8 million was allocated specifically for sport programs for athletes with a disability (Government of Canada, 2004). Similarly, during the 2000-2001 year, the Athlete Assistance Program was allocated \$15 million to provide athletes with financial support for their daily living (Canadian Heritage, 2003), where only \$2.1 million was specifically directed to athletes with disabilities. Of most concern is that in 2000-2001 the Government's Hosting Program, which provides support by hosting various sporting events and assisting athletes by enhancing both their personal and career development, was allocated \$25 million (Canadian Heritage, 2003) from the government of which only \$40,000 was directed specifically to events for athletes with disabilities.

Although these governmental policies are a step in the right direction towards inclusion and equal rights, these steps are limited. Persons with disabilities deserve the full rights of

citizenship and should be supported similarly and proportionately to their non-disabled counterparts.

Universities' Role in Providing Campus Athletics for Students with Disabilities

Research has not currently explored the role of Canadian universities in providing athletic and campus recreational opportunities for students with disabilities. In fact, there is a general lack of research on university age students with disabilities. Literature regarding campus athletics has focused on American universities and has mainly explored effects of campus athletics on stigma management (Taub, Blinde, & Greer, 1999) and has reported the benefits and barriers to campus athletics (Ashton-Shaeffer et al., 2001; Blinde & McLung, 1997; Blinde & Taub, 1999; Promis et al., 2001). Benefits cited in this literature include:

- a) the ability to experience their body in various physical ways,
- b) enhanced perceptions of physical attributes and physical capabilities, and
- c) an enhancement of confidence (Promis et al., 2001, p. 42; also see Ashton-Shaeffer et al., 2001).

Further, opportunities for recreation and athletics between those with and without disabilities help break down stereotypes while increasing positive perceptions of persons with disabilities by their non-disabled peers (Ashton-Shaeffer et al., 2001; Blinde & Taub, 1999; Blinde & McLung, 1997). Barriers result when activities are not fully accessible, equitable, inclusive, or designed to meet their needs (Ashton-Shaeffer et al., 2001). They also occur when people with disabilities are not familiar with recreation because they were raised in a culture that does not foster or support such a lifestyle (Ashton-Shaeffer et al., 2001; DePauw & Gavron, 2005; Promis et al., 2001).

As previously stated, I recently examined the official websites of seventeen accredited universities in Ontario to explore the availability of on-campus athletic opportunities for students with disabilities and the extent to which these opportunities are promoted by universities to these students (Gillies, 2005). This examination revealed a general lack of advertised athletic opportunities for students with disabilities. Of the seventeen universities, only five universities promoted disability awareness campaigns where sporting events, such as wheelchair sports, were used to raise disability awareness on campus. Only six universities provided elite student athletes (such as Paralympians) opportunities to train with, and sometimes be fully included on,

university sports teams. Moreover, only five universities featured adapted athletic opportunities for students with disabilities, such as intramural wheelchair basketball or able-swim. It was positive that nearly every university provided some commitment towards achieving physically accessible athletic complexes, including gymnasiums, arenas, or pools. That this type of accommodation was common may be because Ontario universities are required under provincial legislation to create and post accessibility plans which aim to attain physically accessible buildings on campus (Ontario Government, 2005).

While the findings of this study were not intended to undermine the universities' expressed commitment to students with disabilities, these results do provide general insight into athletic opportunities (or lack thereof) being promoted to students with disabilities. This lack of opportunity was especially true in cases relating to non-athletically-elite students. It is relevant to note that this study only reflected what universities advertised on their web pages. Nonetheless, this exploration offers an understanding of information being provided to potential or current students with disabilities. Such particulars would be presented if students conducted a web search to inquire about sporting and recreation opportunities at universities in Ontario. In this regard, this study provided some insight into what students would find on those websites and the limited choices they would have at most universities.

It is essential that university athletic and sporting administrators continue to critique, evaluate, and modify their programs to meet student needs. In this regard, the voice of students with disabilities must be heard to ensure current programs and services reflect the values and tenets of the critical disability movement. Universities must also increase involvement of people with disabilities within university, in both paid and volunteer positions at all levels, and in committees or meetings (Fink & Pastore, 1999). They must also continue to identify political, social, and economic barriers that students with disabilities face on campus which restricts the fostering of their full potential. Universities, and society as a whole, must also move beyond the social model of identifying barriers and embrace a human rights model that sees disability as an inherent part of university culture. From this perspective, students with disabilities ought to be accommodated and included to the same extent as other students, and not just 'dealt with' on an individual bases which serves to stigmatize persons being 'accommodated' (French & Hainsworth, 2001). Any form of discrimination within universities needs to be identified and

addressed in accordance with the standards set by provincial and federal laws. While many of these tasks are seen as uphill challenges, it is useful to reflect upon some positive changes that have taken place thus far to maintain the optimism and energy needed to further reform these organizations.

The increasing popularity and presence of the Paralympics within our society can serve as a framework for universities to follow. The Paralympics have transformed much of the public's perception of disability by promoting disability awareness around the globe. Landry (1995) states the progression of the Paralympics:

Bear[s] witness to the vigorous process by which the sports movement [for people with disabilities] has focused its energies, expanded and diversified its programs and services, acquired international stature, [and] penetrated public consciousness. It is now a manifest and an increasingly accepted fact that sports, and indeed their logical extension into top-caliber performances, is no longer the sole prerogative of the 'able-bodied' and/or 'normal' individual (p. 4).

Darcy (2003) further notes how the accessible layout and presentation of the Paralympics serve as a framework of how accessibility can be achieved both in sporting venues and in society as a whole. International sporting for persons with disabilities serve as an “indicator of change, a window as well, through which one could observe the dominant socio-economic principles and practices, policies and strategies ‘at work’” (Landry, 1995, p. 11). In this regard, the Paralympics reveal how societal changes can occur when government officials recognize the inherent rights of people with disabilities.

As previously stated, a lacking accessibility standard within Canadian has resulted in each university determining their responsibility in regards to accessibility and inclusion. What is problematic is that without strict accessibility guidelines, universities have failed to be proactive (or even reactive) in including students with disabilities within all campus recreation and athletics programs. One example demonstrating universities' discrimination against university students with disabilities within the realm of athletics are the policies and practices associated with Ontario University Athletics. Ontario University Athletics (OUA) is responsible for the organization and implementation of Ontario interuniversity sporting competition. Their mission is to “provide exemplary interuniversity sport competition experiences for student-athletes which respect the educational milieu of Ontario Universities and further to provide leadership in fostering sportsmanship and fair-play in the pursuit of athletic excellence” (Ontario University

Athletics, 2005a, p. 1). According to their Constitution and By-Laws 2004-05, some of the overarching principles include:

- the creation and promotion of meritorious athletic/educational experiences through a wide base of competitive opportunity which fosters both academic and athletic achievement; and
- the maintenance of a student-athlete centered interuniversity sport system (Ontario University Athletics, 2005b, p. 5).

It appears the OUA values intercampus sporting opportunities and views it as an integral part of the university experience. This is further demonstrated by the fact that many universities require a mandatory fee on tuition that covers athletic costs (Promis et al., 2001). However, students with disabilities are still not granted the full benefits of intercampus sporting. A thorough search on the OUA website and their constitution and by-laws revealed that students with disabilities were never mentioned. I concluded that the OUA perceives that students with disabilities do not actually fall under their mandate. This omission and exclusion of a significant number of students from their mandate can either be described as negligence or discrimination. The OUA should seriously explore means of including students with disabilities within their mandate, and within intercampus athletics. Universities must enforce a radical vision of change - one in which their programs and services include all people, regardless of abilities.

In summation, this review of literature identified the roles and responsibilities of universities, and the government, in providing accessible and equitable opportunities to university students with disabilities. It has uncovered that although policies, regulations, and laws have been implemented to ensure that students with disabilities are treated in a similar and equitable manner as their non-disabled counterparts, there is still much work to be done in this area. Students with disabilities are not guaranteed equity or access within their university environment. They are required to identify any discriminating aspects of their university career, report these grievances to the university and their human rights tribunal, and then have the time, patience, and money to fight for their right to equality. Universities should help remove this burden from their students and ensure that equality and accessibility are part of their university milieu. This study sought to identify specific ways in which universities can address this issue by incorporating inclusion and accessibility within the entire campus culture.

The literature reviewed in this chapter, and the theoretical frameworks guiding this study, sensitized me to various concepts as I began the research process. However, my understandings of these concepts expanded as I moved forward in data analysis phase of the project and, in some cases, new concepts emerged. In this case, the literature supporting these concepts was further explored in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER III: THE SCRIPT FOR AN ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

To reiterate, the two main goals of this dissertation were:

- 1) to create a participatory action research project that would bring together (and create a dialogue between) interested and involved university stakeholders (such as students with and without disabilities, university campus recreation and athletic providers, and university administrators) in order to examine issues around accessibility and inclusion of students with disabilities in campus recreational and athletic programs; and
- 2) to use the experiences of the research team and information generated to develop a planning template for how universities could better address the human rights and recreational and athletic needs of students with disabilities, athletic providers, and university administrators.

There were many steps that were involved in this process and this section will review how the project materialized.

Strategies of Inquiry/ Role of Researcher

In order to conduct research that is critical and action orientated, my strategy of inquiry was Participatory Action Research (PAR). This strategy of inquiry enabled me to achieve my overall goals because it involved the development of partnerships between myself and various members of the university community to produce research that would help inform university policy aimed at improving the quality of life for university students with disabilities (Pain & Francis, 2003; Reason, 2006; Sullivan, Bhuyan, Senturia, Shiu-Thornton, & Ciske, 2005). A PAR approach is consistent with my theoretical foundations because it incorporates a critical reflection about how things are, how they became that way, and how research can be used to facilitate change directly in the process (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Schratz & Walker, 1995). Gaventa and Cornwall (2006) also indicated that PAR often challenges institutional power dynamics and knowledge and works towards closing the gap between we-them approaches by raising consciousness, generating knowledge, and creating action.

Action Research (AR) is characterized by the linking of research to action. PAR projects are purposeful and the findings are useful to the everyday lives of those within the communities the research is serving. Although Reason and Bradbury (2006) indicate that all “action research

is participative research, and all participative research must be action research” (p. 2), others believe PAR to be quite different than AR or participative research. Park (2006), for example, indicates that PAR involves a research team where the ‘researcher’ merely plays the role of a facilitator or assistant while the community itself initiates and controls the study. I believe AR and PAR exist along a continuum, and this study leans towards the direction of PAR. Although members from the university community did not approach me to conduct this study, the project is guided by ideas that stemmed from persons with disabilities. Moreover, various alumni with disabilities served as consultants throughout the conception phase of this project and have provided insight into the need for such research. Ristock and Pennell (1996) acknowledged that researchers can conduct PAR on their own initiative and that collaborative working groups can follow various formats that include the community in various parts of the project. Research is participatory as long as the projects involve the production (and valuing) of collective group knowledge and is based on the principles of inclusion, reflection, participation, empowerment and social change (O’Neil, Woods, & Webster, 2005; Ristock & Pennell, 1996). This project met these criteria since it included and valued insights, perspectives, priorities, and statements of issues and challenges of relevant key stakeholders. The approach of working together helped the team to acknowledge the various circumstances faced by persons within varying levels of the university milieu related to inclusion and accessibility.

PAR projects are also considered ‘worthwhile’, practical, concrete, and applicable to the daily lives of citizens (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Reason & Bradbury, 2001, 2006). They provide opportunities for “shared learning, empowerment, democratized knowledge, and to connect with larger social change efforts” (Sullivan et al., 2005, p. 978). Although the results aim to benefit the group, PAR is also interested in emancipatory change on a larger scale (Kidd & Kral, 2005). This study developed a planning framework that will assist post-secondary institutions in providing an inclusive campus environment that offers equitable extra-curricular opportunities to all students. Information gathered from the study will help increase awareness of on-campus discrimination while generating solutions that will ultimately influence practices and policies related to university athletics.

PAR is also a form of action research where research participants work together as a community to create social justice and change (Kidd & Kral, 2005; Pain & Francis, 2003). PAR

involves a process in which the community and the research team work together to “develop goals and methods, participate in the gathering and analysis of data, and implement the results in a way that will raise critical consciousness and promote change in the lives of those involved” (Kidd & Karl, 2005, p. 187). This project met these criteria since each member of the research team had various roles and responsibilities, and all members were highly involved in decision-making, knowledge creation, and the identification of potential solutions.

My role as researcher was similar to that of a ‘radical planner’. Radical planners assist groups or communities in identifying institutional constraints and they provide skills and knowledge necessary to develop practical solutions (Beard, 2002). Radical planners are personally committed to social change on their own behalf and do not simply advocate for change on behalf of their ‘clients’. Radical planners use a bottom up approach to rethinking society (Beard, 2002). This approach begins with an assertion that being human is “based on social bonds rather than on the flawed assumption of the autonomous self-development of unattached, free-floating individuals” (Friedmann, 1987, p. 307). I felt comfortable acting as a radical planner since I have both experiential and learned knowledge of disability. I have been connected to several disability groups and communities over the years and I am entirely committed to working towards the full emancipation and freedom of persons with disabilities (Beard, 2003; Friedmann, 1987).

Based on the work from Friedmann (1987), my responsibilities as a radical planner included the following:

- a) I analytically critiqued the current situation of accessibility and inclusion within universities, which helped mobilize radical practices;
- b) I helped identify problems, solutions, and constraints;
- c) I helped provide the skills needed to create a successful action strategy;
- d) I helped with the logistical aspects of considering means of developing and disseminating our framework;
- e) I used a social learning model to facilitate group learning;
- f) I disseminated the group’s knowledge in appropriate ways;
- g) I helped make changes within the university structure;

- h) I included the participation of pertinent group members throughout the process, including the study's vision, theory, strategy, and action phases;
- i) I used my skills as a research to serve the groups purpose; and
- j) I took an active role in linking knowledge to action while realizing that this is best accomplished through the collective pursuit of the group.

Essentially, it was my responsibility as a radical planner and PAR researcher to amalgamate “theory, strategy, vision, and action” which “inform each other in social learning” (Beard, 2003, p. 17).

Social learning is a bottom up, person-centered approach that links knowledge and action by involving dialogue, mutual learning, and the incorporation of personal knowledge (Friedmann & Abonyi, 1976). In this approach, knowledge, which is generated through experience and practice, becomes a comprehensive part of action. Knowledge is believed to emerge from dialogue, involving a continual process of social experimentation, observation, and learning which leads to active social change. This model centres around the ‘actor’ as a task-oriented action group either consisting of an individual, a small group, a social movement, or a committee. Thus, the actor is also the learner (Friedmann, 1987). Social learning typically takes place in small face-to-face groups that are focused on a specific task, which typically only last the duration of the learning process (Friedmann, 1987). One concern with social learning is that in order to fully create social change from the bottom up, issues of dominance, power, and hierarchies must be addressed. In this respect, I helped facilitate social learning among the group by encouraging maximum group participation and ensuring power and control was not monopolized by one ‘expert’ or group member (Beard, 2003; Friedmann, 1987).

Research Process

The research team collectively determined the method, research questions, purpose, and data analysis techniques. This section will discuss the series of steps which formed the methodological procedure for this study.

Step One: Selecting a Study Site

The first step involved selecting an Ontario University to serve as a study site. I selected one site, as opposed to several sites, because my intention was to delve in and explore one university in depth. I also wanted to generate dialogue between its key members which I hoped

would help them, in future, communicate with one another more effectively. As previously mentioned, I also saw it as important to select a university that was at the forefront of providing equitable athletic opportunities to students with disabilities as I felt that exploring a school that already had a system in place would be most effective. Thus, I selected the University of Guelph since their official website advertised a variety of athletic opportunities for students with disabilities (Gillies, 2005). Their Department of Athletics focuses on both athletics (e.g., sports leagues and varsity) and recreation (e.g., fitness classes and lifestyle programs) and it works in conjunction with their Centre for Students with Disabilities (CSD). Their Department of Athletics houses a Lifestyle Fitness Program which offers specialized ‘Special Needs Programs’ (University of Guelph, 2008) such as: Therapeutic Aqua classes for persons with arthritis, fibromyalgia, or other ailments; one-on-one training based solely on individual assessments; and the Recreation Equity on Campus (REC) Club. The REC Club began eight years ago and was initiated by a student with a disability. The program is a joint initiative by both the University’s CSD and the Department of Athletics. It involves the partnering of a person with a disability with a qualified student volunteer who can provide assistance, guidance, and training in the swimming pool, in the weight room, or with other recreational activities. As stated on the website, “The goal is to ensure that EVERYONE can access the facilities at the Athletic Centre and experience the benefits of recreation... Collaboration between the Centre for Students with Disabilities and Athletic Centre allows for endless possibilities!” (University of Guelph, 2006, p. 1).

I therefore selected the University of Guelph as the study site because their commitment to increasing equity in their recreation programs was evident. Although the university is quite vigilant in their attempts to create an accessible campus, they are, as are most communities, not perfect and so could still benefit from being involved in such a study.

Step Two: Creating a Research Team

The next step involved approaching various members from the University of Guelph community to be a part of the research team. My intention was to develop a research team with representatives from the Department of Athletics, the University’s Centre for Students with Disabilities (CSD), alumni with disabilities, and students with and without disabilities. A research team brings together members of a community (in this case, representatives from the

University and the greater community) who have convergent or parallel interests and objectives that can be effectively achieved through a joint effort (Friedmann, 1987; Kaufman, 2003; Ristock & Pennell, 1996). Prasad (1988) views this linking together of interests as essential since “[a] program, howsoever desirable it may be, will not produce the intended result if it is planned and executed in isolation from other related activities” (p. 106). The bringing together of various community members into the research team enabled the group to “have considerable capacity to act in pursuit of their shared aim. A coalition is powerful in that sense; coalescence enables it to act” (Stone, Whelan, & Murin, 2000, p. 197).

In order to connect with key stakeholders, I first met with the Director of the University of Guelph’s Centre for Students with Disabilities (CSD) to tell him about the project and my intentions of developing a research team with a CSD staff member. He was interested in having the CSD involved in the study and connected me with Barry Wheeler¹, an enthusiastic and dedicated Advisor for Students with Disabilities at the CSD. Barry has a physical disability and as such has firsthand experience utilizing the University’s athletic facility as a staff member and former University of Guelph student. He is very committed to creating an accessible campus and so was very eager to join the research team. Barry is a friendly person who is connected with various students and staff around campus and was a great resource in terms of recruiting individuals to join our research team. Barry suggested that we recruit Chantal Huinik, a fourth-year student with a disability who is highly engaged in extra-curricular activities. Chantal agreed to join the research team and provided a very valuable perspective since she is involved in numerous accessibility and advisory committees. She also participates in campus athletics through the REC Club and is involved with its coordination. Barry, Chantal and I thought it would be a great idea to recruit Pat Richards, a genuinely caring woman who is the Coordinator for the Lifestyle and Fitness Program offered by the University of Guelph’s Department of Athletics. We were all very pleased when she agreed to be a part of the team since her involvement was critical. She sits on the Athletic Advisory Council, was involved in the creation of the REC Club, and works with the CSD to help offer campus fitness and recreation programs and services for persons with disabilities. I also recruited Jason Dunkerley, a talented University of Guelph alumnus with a visual impairment who utilized the CSD services as a student. I knew

¹ Each research team member agreed to the use of their full names within this document.

Jason from a previous project that we were involved in and we have remained in contact ever since. I thought he would be a great member of the research team since he could bring the perspective of being a former Varsity athlete and current Paralympic athlete. He also works for the Active Living Alliance in Ottawa as the Coordinator for an inclusive community recreation initiative called All Abilities Welcome. Lastly, I recruited Ava Ross, a vocal and political University of Waterloo alumna with a disability who is involved in community advocacy organizations. Ava and I completed our undergraduate degrees together from the University of Waterloo's Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies and have remained in contact throughout the years. I thought Ava could provide a unique perspective since she was not as actively involved in campus recreation and athletics as a student and so could speak to that experience. When I first contacted members of the research team, I discussed with them the opportunity to join a research team responsible for addressing how universities can increase campus recreation and athletic opportunities for students with disabilities. I also offered them a brief handout summarizing the project (See Appendix A and B) which outlined the overall issue to be addressed, the initial goals of the study, how the research team might function, and the anticipated benefits from their participation (McArdle, 2002). At our first meeting, we worked through my proposed purpose, goals, and research method for the study in order to ensure that the entire team had an opportunity to voice their opinion as to how the study should be carried out.

I was initially apprehensive that there may be power struggles amongst the group or that some may feel silenced or excluded. However, I later discovered that each person knew at least one other member of the research team and had already developed relationships through previous encounters. It was discovered that Ava and Chantal coincidentally attended the same summer camp when they were younger. Barry was formally Jason's CSD Student Advisor. Jason worked with Pat on recreation initiatives when he was in University. Jason and Chantal worked together on the CDS newsletter in the past. Pat and Barry worked collaboratively on the REC Club program of which Chantal was involved since she was a teenager. These previously formed working relationships helped to create a welcoming, friendly, and collaborative environment which enabled team members to learn and share openly with one another. We also created ground rules and a clear sense of group expectations which helped curb power differences. For

example, we all agreed that we were working towards achieving a shared goal. This helped create unity and cohesion amongst the team and ensured that all of our actions, decisions, or plans would support our main purpose. The ability to choose how each of us would like to be involved, and then having clearly defined roles, helped to ensure that each person felt like a contributing member of the team. It also reduced the potential for conflict or uncertainty in regards to what member would be completing a task. We remained flexible throughout the process which enabled members to take on new roles or modify their roles as the study progressed. We also remained very open to new ideas or new ways of doing things. We all agreed that although our specific roles on the team may vary, we would all be involved in all decision making and that all voices would be of equal worth. Ultimately, the research team followed the tenets of PAR in that it involved a social learning process where the team worked collectively to identify problems, generate solutions, and make positive change in a democratic and collaborative manner.

Each member of the research team brought to the partnership their unique experiences, viewpoints, and perspectives which truly enriched the study (Kaufman, 2003). It was essential to bring together these diverse individuals into the partnership since true organization and institutional change can only occur when the tools to do so are identified and created by those involved (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2006). Moreover, Gaventa & Cornwall (2006) indicate that social change is best achieved when persons within all levels of a community or organization are included in the process. A team consisting of staff members (including middle-management), students, and community members enable solutions and change to be created at various levels (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2006).

Step Three: Determining Roles and Responsibilities

Although each member of the research team was involved in all major decision making, each member chose their specific level of involvement and participated in different ways. Barry, Pat, and Chantal were actively involved in recruiting research participants for the study. Specifically, Barry and Pat displayed and handed out letters, which promoted the study with potential participants (Appendix C and D) as well as recruitment posters (Appendix F). They also used their contacts with students to recruit potential participants. Moreover, they talked about the study with their staff members and encouraged participation by allowing them to

participate in interviews during work hours. Chantal posted a call for participants in the CSD Newsletter and used her personal connections with students with disabilities to recruit participants.

It became apparent from our discussions in team meetings in the data collection and analysis phase that Chantal (who uses a wheelchair for mobility) had great insight into the areas on campus that either demonstrated accessibility and inclusion or inaccessibility and exclusion. In order for others to see the campus from her perspective, I asked if she would be interested in taking digital photos of areas on campus that reflected either accessible or inaccessible in order to supplement aspects of our framework. She agreed and several of these photos have been included throughout the dissertation.

Jason and Ava chose to be involved in data analysis. They reviewed all 23 transcripts and assisted with data analysis by providing insights and perceptions through individual phone conversations. Barry was also involved in the administrative aspects of the project, such as booking the rooms for our meetings and arranging the teleconferences which enabled Ava and Jason to participate. Each member of the research team provided insights throughout the process, was involved in all major decision making, and reviewed a synthesized report of the findings.

My role involved conducting the interviews and main analysis of the data. I also served as the research team's mediator or group 'facilitator' (Beard, 2003). In this capacity, it was my responsibility to shape the group culture, to commit to the group's mission and goals and enable the group to reach them, to facilitate a supportive and encouraging environment, to facilitate discussion involving several view points, and to encourage the participation of all group members. Although I served as 'facilitator' during this project, it is my hope that the research team will continue to dialogue about issues of accessibility and inclusion. I further hope coalitions at other universities will evolve based on our PAR approach and findings.

The team met on a 'need to' basis. I would call a meeting whenever we needed to brainstorm a plan for the project or when we had progress to share. The meetings provided an opportunity to touch base, make decisions, reflect on previous work done, assign tasks, and debrief after we have completed tasks. The meetings were held in several locations including Barry's office, a campus class room, and in a board room within the University Centre (UC) which is a main building in the University that is easy to locate and access. The meetings took

place during work hours at times convenient to the members but evening sessions were also planned with those who were unable to attend. Telephone conference options were available for our out-of-town team members, Jason and Ava. I met separately with members of the group if they were unable to attend the group meetings. Everyone was kept up to date through e-mails or through the sharing of 'meeting minutes'. We typically had meetings where everyone was involved but smaller meetings were also planned where I would meet separately with those responsible for a certain section of the project, for example, with Ava and Jason to discuss data analysis. A brief outline of our team meeting and update schedule is provided in Appendix G.

This project reflected a 'second-person' action research project which involves face-to-face encounters within a small group where the members "focus on an issue of common concern or interest" (Ladkin, 2004, p. 544). This is in contrast to a 'first-person' action research project which is a "self-reflective inquiry or self-study" (Marshall, 2004). The second-person action research project reflects a cooperative inquiry style where all members of the research team act as co-researchers. The team members essentially played two roles. Firstly, they played a large role in the designing and framing of the research project. In this regard, they helped design the research goals, the research questions, and the project's methodology while providing continuous feedback and formulating conclusions based on the experience (Reason & Torbert, 2001). The second role they played was that of co-subjects where they participated in research interviews which will be discussed further in the subsequent section (Reason & Torbert, 2001).

Step Four: Collecting Data

Data were collected in two formats: Experiential Data and Inquiry Data. Data collection and analysis was a cyclical process.

Experiential data, or knowledge, relates to the everyday experiences of the lived world (Reason, 2006). It relates to the experiences one has and the knowledge that is gained from that practical experience (Reason, 2006). In this study, the experiential data consisted of the 'everyday' knowledge and data that was gained, including any written observations taken throughout the process, including interviews and research team meetings. It also included observations of the interactions between the team members, the dialogues that existed, the power relationships that formed, details about the process, and the general mundane interactions of the group. These observations were documented within a journal I kept throughout the entire

research process. The journal was used to document thoughts, perspectives, opinions, and questions throughout the process and was used to log the daily events and interactions of the research team and processes. The journal also assisted in the reflection aspect of the project since it enabled me to look back on my notes, reflect on them, make new notes and observations based on the previous reflection, and identify reflective questions to be explored at team meetings. The action research group meetings were also tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim with permission from all participants.

Inquiry data refers to the data collected from interviews with key players within the research group or the recruited study participants or through other data collection strategies deemed necessary and appropriate (Reason, 2006). Since the goal was to examine the accessibility of campus recreation and athletics from a holistic perspective, the research team decided it would be best to speak with several involved stakeholders within the university.

We decided to interview students with disabilities as there is a lack of literature that explores students' perceptions of athletic opportunities and their preferences. We deemed it important to include the voices of students with varying disabilities since the experiences of students with disabilities (including visible and invisible) are highly diverse. We also wanted to gain the perspective of students without disabilities since they would be able to provide valuable insight into their comfort levels when interacting with persons with disabilities and any stereotypes or prejudices they might have.

In order to fully understand the phenomenon of campus recreation and athletics, we also thought it important to speak with those who provided services and programs in the Department of Athletics. We believed that the perspectives of these staff members would give insight into what they are currently providing for students with disabilities, what barriers they face as staff members, and what successes they have had thus far. We wanted to hear what they believed could be improved upon in terms of accessibility and how they felt that could be accomplished. Moreover, it was important to understand how connected they felt to the University's CSD, to students with and without disabilities, and to other university administrators in order to identify their needs.

We felt that the perspectives from the university's CSD staff members should be heard, as they play a large role in increasing accessibility and inclusion of campus athletics and recreation.

They are the link to students with disabilities and have a unique perspective of what works for students with disabilities and what barriers exist. We wanted to discuss with them their involvement with the Department of Athletics and what role they played in the development of targeted and inclusive programming at the university such as the REC Club.

We thought it important to interview a few university administrators. We contacted the Chair of the University's Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee (APDAC) who provided insight into the University's response to current accessibility legislation. We also thought it would be very helpful to interview the University's Associate Vice President of Student Affairs since she oversees all Student Affairs and programming (including the CSD, the Department of Athletics, and Orientation Week) and works closely with the President on issues concerning accessibility and inclusion. We realized the importance of gaining their perspectives and involving them in the study since their involvement is critical for systemic changes to occur.

It was important to strive to maintain anonymity of not only research participants, but also potential participants. Therefore, the research team helped recruit participants since they had existing relationships with most of these participants. For example, the CSD displayed copies of the study's Recruitment Letter/Letter of Information (See Appendix C and D) on the CSD reception desk and Barry and Pat personally informed students and staff who fit the criteria for the study and provided information on how to contact me if interested. Snowball sampling was also used. In this regard, study participants were encouraged to inform others who fit the criteria to contact me if they were interested in participating. This enabled interested participants to contact me directly and this proved to be an effective way of recruiting participants.

It was sometimes difficult to maintain the confidentiality of study participants with members of the research team, since they were involved in recruiting the participants and had insight into who was interested in participating. They also knew that the other members of the research team participated in interviews and so, although pseudonyms were used for each participant, the two research team members who reviewed the transcripts could potentially deduce who was participating in the interviews. This was anticipated at the outset of the project and so the research team members were asked to sign a confidentiality agreement which ensured that all knowledge and information that was gathered and shared throughout the research process

(as it pertained to individuals) would be kept strictly confidential and only discussed within the confines of our research team meetings (See Letter of Information/Consent in Appendix E).

The research team was able to recruit 18 additional interview participants beyond the members of the research team. These individuals contacted me directly by e-mail indicating their interest in being involved. I then worked with participants to coordinate a date and time to meet that suited their schedules and I re-sent them the Recruitment Letter/Letter of Information (See Appendix C to E) so they had all relevant information about the study. Participants covered a broad range of abilities and campus involvement (See Appendix H). As previously mentioned, I interviewed the other five members of the research team which amounted to 23 interviews in total. Specifically, I meet individually with:

- Six students with varying disabilities including cerebral palsy, acquired brain injury, visual impairments, and fibromyalgia.
- Two alumni with disabilities including muscle-skeletal disabilities and a visual impairment.
- Four CSD staff members who specialize in areas of mental health, learning disabilities, and physical and temporary disabilities.
- Six students without disabilities, one of which was a Resident Advisor and five who were part-time staff members with the Department of Athletics in positions such as fitness staff, personal trainers, and weight room supervisors. Three of these students who worked in the Department of Athletics were also REC Club volunteers working with students with disabilities in a fitness capacity. One was also a coach for the Special Olympics.
- Three staff members in management positions, whose positions have been omitted to ensure confidentiality.
- One faculty member who Chairs the University's Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee.
- The University's Associate Vice President of Student Affairs.

Face-to-face interviews, and two telephone interviews, were conducted by myself, as determined by the research team, and were tape recorded with permission and transcribed. Initial conversational guides are included in Appendices I to L. At the beginning of the interview,

participants were provided with the Consent Form (See Appendices C to E) and the Recruitment/Information letters was available for those who required an additional copy. In the instances where interviews were conducted over the phone, or where the individual had a visual impairment, the Information Letter and Letter of Consent were read verbally to the participants and they provided verbal consent that was captured on tape.

The conversational guide was merely a starting point since the material discussed in the interviews shifted over time based on emerging themes and ideas (Dupuis, 1999). The goal of the interviews was to gain a better understanding of the issue at hand (such as understanding concepts of inclusion, accessibility, and disability) from participants' perspectives and to develop practical strategies that would lead to the development of the planning framework. As such, concepts, ideas, or suggestions that emerged from interviews were then used as 'probes' for discussions in subsequent interviews. This enabled me to gain their perspective on emerging themes. This reflected an active interview approach, which involves a mutual disclosure between the interviewer (i.e. myself) and the person being interviewed where information from past interviews are shared in order to co-construct meaning within the interview (Dupuis, 1999; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). The interpretative and open-ended nature of this interview style enabled the study to truly reflect the perspectives, insights, and ideas of participants as they were not restricted to only discuss items in the conversational guide.

At the end of the interview, I handed participants the Letter of Feedback (Appendix M) which thanked them for their participation and provided them with information on how to obtain any further information on the study. I emailed a copy of this letter to participants who had visual impairments or who participated over the phone as they were able to access information using their computer. I sent each participant a copy of their transcript, none of whom followed up with any corrections or comments. As previously mentioned, two members of the research team read all of the transcripts as well.

In order to maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms have been used for all interview participants. Although each member of the research team agreed to use their real names in reference to their participation on the research team, pseudonyms were given to them when using data gathered from their personal interviews. Sometimes participants referred to other individuals by first name. For example, some of the student REC Club volunteers would refer to their REC

Club participant. In these instances, a pseudonym was provided for that individual within the quote. In instances where participants were referring to members of the research team, such as Barry Wheeler or Pat Richards, a pseudonym was not used as per their suggestion. I was also concerned that the identity of some of the participants, specifically staff members with specific job titles, may be deduced because of the use of their title. Thus I contacted four staff members who had specific job titles and asked how they would like to be referred to throughout the study. Two of the members asked for their titles to be omitted from this paper, while three of the participants felt comfortable using their titles. No reasons were provided as to why they did not feel comfortable revealing their positions.

Step Five: Analyzing Data

*“You are not simply looking at action,
but trying to see and record how learning enters into action”
(McNiff & Whitehead, 2006, p. 138).*

Data refers to “the pieces of information you have gathered about what you and others are doing and learning” (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006, p. 148). Data included journal entries, field notes, team meeting transcripts, interview transcripts, and all other documentations or recorded pieces of information. Data analysis was a continual process that began from the start of collecting data. Arai and Pedlar (1997) discussed this process by stating how “after each additional interview, as analysis continued, the themes and their properties were refined based on the insights of participants” (p. 173). Data were explored frequently and at various stages of the project. Essentially, I was continually assessing the data as they were gathered, sharing insights from the data with the team and facilitating reflection on the data at the team meetings. Arai and Pedlar (1997) also discussed three phases of data analysis: “the ongoing discovery phase, coding the data, and finally attempts to discount the findings” (p. 173). The first phase relates to “identifying themes and developing concepts and propositions” (Arai & Pedlar, 1997, p. 173). These themes are discovered and strengthened during the second phase where data are examined “in as many ways as possible” (Arai & Pedlar, 2007, p. 173). In regard to the last phase, the research team provided feedback to all involved parties in order to “engage in further discussion and reflection and [ensure] participants [had] the opportunity to take part in the problem posing and problem solving-an essential characteristic of action research (Pedlar, 1995)” (p. 173). These three phases occurred in the project and will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

Although my journal was used to log daily events and participant observations, I also created different sections within my journal where I took extensive notes related to: a) ongoing questions and uncertainties, b) new insights and epiphanies, and c) notes about the PAR process. The section on new insights and epiphanies is where I would document and work through emerging themes. Upon completion of data collection, field notes were typed up and organized in a computer file. These notes formed a rough outline for what would later become the planning framework. I then met with the research team to share these preliminary findings with them and all were in support of these emerging themes. They also provided insights which helped support these themes while offering suggestions for what could be further developed. This helped them all take part in the ‘ongoing discovery’ of the project and it helped to ensure that the data were examined from a variety of perspectives. These initial findings helped guide me while I was analyzing the interview transcripts while I remained open to new themes or concepts that might emerge.

Interview transcripts were stored, organized, coded and categorized into major themes using NVivo Software. NVivo was useful because it enabled me to ‘code’ or make notes directly on the transcript which assisted with recalling these notes and codes throughout the process. When reading through the data, I began with a general line by line analysis of data “using chunks of text as the unit of analysis and assigning codes that represent thematic units” (Reid, Tom, & Frisby, 2006, p. 320). These initial codes were then examined for common patterns which were then clustered together into broader categories. By organizing data into patterns and categories, I was able to uncover principal themes that related to the research questions (Arai & Pedlar, 1997; Judah & Richardson, 2006). For example, I had a file labelled “barriers identified by students with disabilities” which was further broken down by the types of barriers faced by these students (for example, social barriers, systemic barriers, physical barriers, personal barriers, etc.). These categories were then compared with the challenges and barriers identified by the participants in the CSD and the Department of Athletics (Reid et al., 2006). As the primary person conducting the analysis, the codes originally reflected my interpretation. However, as mentioned, Ava and Jason also contributed to data analysis. I provided them with all 23 transcripts and encouraged them to read through them and make notes on what they thought was most important or interesting. They were encouraged to identify key ideas or thoughts as they read the transcripts. I

spoke with Ava and Jason separately about their analysis by telephone. Ava wrote comments directly on the transcripts, which she shared with me and I shared with her a revised framework that I had developed based on data analysis. This enabled us to both have a reference point which helped direct our analysis meeting. During the analysis meeting with Jason, he spoke about the main themes that he identified and what he found most interesting. After he provided his analysis, I then described how his insights fit perfectly with the emerging framework. This helped validate the relevancy and strength of the emerging framework. I also used the meetings with Ava and Jason to run through each component of the emerging framework in detail in order to get their perspective. There were instances where they would provide an example based on the transcripts or develop a thought further which was then incorporated into a revised draft of the framework. I found it beneficial to have these two individuals as partners in analysis as they offered great insight in developing the themes further.

Step Six: Reflecting - A Cyclical Process

Researchers have described the action research process as cyclical (Ladkin, 2004, McNiff & Whitehead, 2006, Reason, 2001). It involves observation, reflection, action, evaluation, and another action, thus the cycle is referred to as an action-reflection cycle. McNiff and Whitehead articulated:

In your action enquiry you would identify something of concern, try a different way of doing things, reflect on what was happening, and in the light of your reflections try a new way that may or may not be more successful...The process of 'observe-reflect-act-evaluate-modify-move in new directions' is generally known as action-reflection...Because the process tends to be cyclical, it is often referred to as an action-reflection cycle (p. 9).

The research project was indeed cyclical in that once an action was taken, the research team once again observed, reflected, acted, and evaluated in order to determine whether we needed to move in another direction and whether other actions must be taken. Reflexivity was a major component of the action research cycle and it involved an ongoing self-consciousness and awareness of my presence within all aspects of the research project. Ristock and Pennell (1996) state that as researchers, we must be cognizant of "how we observe and affect actions and discourse, and how we attribute meanings and intentions; of what understandings we are creating through the research project and how we are creating them" (p. 48). The reflexivity involved in an action research project is also considered cyclical (Ladkin, 2004; Reason, 2001) because it is

so intertwined with every phase of the research project and because it is continuously occurring. In this respect, the research team would complete an action (like conducting a few interviews), then reflect on that action which would lead to another action (such as conducting more interviews) and another reflection. These cycles are not always neat, linear, and orderly, and sometimes a reflection may not follow the previous action (Ladkin, 2004). Rather, this process was unpredictable, fluid, and un-orderly. My personal reflections were documented in my research journal and group reflections during team meetings were captured on the audio recordings of the meeting.

Step Seven: The Development of the Planning Framework

A five page revised draft of the framework, based on our analysis, was then shared with all members of the research team. Everyone was encouraged to reflect on it in order to provide examples for the components or to identify areas that needed further development. We then met as a team to collectively work through and reflect on the initial framework. As a result of this meeting, the framework evolved and developed which added to the action-reflection nature of the project. For example, the original framework had five guiding principles and through dialogue with the group, a sixth principle was added. They also provided practical examples that further supported elements within the framework. They identified how components could better fit together and they reinforced the importance of some themes which I originally felt were less relevant. This process truly helped strengthen the framework as it was viewed from a variety of different perspectives.

Overall, the participants were really impressed with the comprehensiveness of the framework. As Pat stated:

I like the idea that you have the values in the middle and then you have your pillars and then you have how you can actually make that happen, specifically how that can happen. So I like that format...It's comprehensive, holly cow.

Chantal also felt that it was relevant and applicable and that it reflected her perspective perfectly. As Chantal stated, the framework is "everything that I think about but have never put down on paper". Jason further articulated how delighted he was with the framework and how that encouraged him to remain involved in this project:

I think you've covered it...I think that's great...I'm happy to help in whatever way I can and I think it's great work for sure, you know, and I'm happy that I'm still involved in some way, you know, a few years later.

Barry was also very pleased with the framework and he felt that it had genuine implications for other universities. He encouraged us to take this framework and introduce it to others who could benefit from it:

You've covered it quite well...With all the research and all this info, you can literally go into a work place or agency or whatever the place is and put this right in front of them, say, you know, 'this works, here is my recommendation to create a compassionate community within your work place'.

The meeting also enabled the team to critically reflect on themselves and consider ways that they could help improve the situation. For example, upon reviewing the framework Pat reflected on the training provided to staff at the Athletic Centre and stated: "You make a good point, if we have staff working in the weight room that need more training, we have to find a way to get them more training". Jason also reflected on his work at the Active Living Alliance and stated, "Well, actually I've been kind of learning from you over this discussion I think because we can definitely be a lot more innovative than we have been".

In order to ensure that the final framework truly reflected the perspectives of the participants, all 23 participants were invited to participate in a 'focus group' where we provided an overview of the preliminary findings. It was anticipated that focus group participants would provide feedback, offer additional insight, suggest further solutions for social change, reflect on their experiences, and gain insight from others (Boser, 2006; Chiu, 2003). Scheduling a time and date for the focus group was somewhat challenging. I sent an email to each participant with five suggested dates which had three different time slots. Participants were asked to indicate the dates and times where they were available. Six participants, along with three members of the research team, were interested in participating and I was able to coordinate a date and time that worked for everyone. The research team was very excited about this focus group and were quite disappointed when three participants declined approximately one week prior to the focus group - two students with disabilities were unable to attend because of conflicting school engagements and the other student was busy with other commitments. On the day of the focus group, one student withdrew because of conflicting responsibilities and one student with a disability did not show up to the focus group. This resulted in the focus group consisting of only one participant (a staff member with a disability) along with three members of the research team (Pat, Barry, and myself). Although I was disappointed at first that the focus group did not turn out as expected, it ended up being a great opportunity for some of the members of the research team to discuss the

framework one last time while gaining valuable insight from the one participant. The participant was quite vocal and had a lot of great insights. Although the focus group was scheduled for 1.5 hours, the participant stayed later to continue our discussion. As a department director she commented on the relevance of this framework in terms of what the University is trying to accomplish. As Colleen stated:

I mean this is everything that is being talked about right now at a director's level. And to be honest, I would almost pursue [the university] embracing this because you're helping her actually, well helping us as a group, do a whole lot of work, 'cause right now we're trying to articulate what you have nicely articulated.

I came to realize that a smaller focus group was actually a better fit and that 1.5 hours was not nearly enough time.

In order to ensure that those who were willing to participate in the focus group had an opportunity for their voices to be heard, I sent them a five page summary of the framework and asked them to provide their insights, but none responded. One of the major reasons why students were unable to participate in the focus group was because of their hectic school-work-life schedules and this time crunch may have prevented them from having the time to respond.

Final suggestions and recommendations from the focus group and team meetings were incorporated into the planning framework. The research team also discussed the best way of disseminating the planning framework (i.e., via email, in a newsletter format, or in a paper mailed to them). One concern that was brought up by Chantal was that she was not convinced that people reading the framework, or a summarized version of it, would be able to fully understand the impact of this work and how small changes can impact people's lives for the better. As she stated, "I'm worried that in this kind of University that people won't realize what a huge impact it makes. Like I feel like you need to be here to get it." We therefore decided that future steps would include turning this framework into a tool kit (perhaps on DVD, CD-Rom, or online) that would provide universities and colleges with practical tips, strategies, success stories, and examples on how to be more inclusive.

Insights That Shaped the Framework

As the study progressed and data analysis was completed, I had several revelations which ultimately altered the shape of this study. First, I started the project thinking that it would provide a framework for how universities could be more inclusive and equitable to students with disabilities seeking recreation and athletic opportunities. However, in speaking with staff and

faculty members, I realized that this issue had further implications than expected. Universities should not only make their environments accessible and equitable to students, but rather to all of the citizens who study, work, live and visit the university. Moreover, universities are not an island (although they sometimes appear as such) and so they should be welcoming and inclusive to all those who inhabit the greater community of which the University is part.

Second, I initially focused on the experiences of students with disabilities but this study has reinforced that all students have a multitude of attributes that make up their identity - be it race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and so forth - which creates an intersectionality of “power, privilege, and oppression as related to the dominant culture” (Iwasaki, Mackay, Mactavish, Ristock, & Bartlett, 2006, p. 170). A person’s identity is not solely defined by their disability and as such, universities must acknowledge that diversity not only exists within their campus community but also within each individual. As a result, I realized this study needed to extend beyond disability and explore how universities can be more inclusive, welcoming and caring for all its inhabitants, recognizing the multiple attributes that make up each person’s uniqueness and viewing these as assets not liabilities or burdens.

Third, the project initially sought to explore people’s involvement in campus recreation and athletics, which included fitness activities (such as yoga or aqua-fit), Varsity or recreational sports, and informal recreation (including pub nights, school clubs, and other leisurely hobbies or activities). Upon completion of analysis, we realized how people participate in campus life differently thus extra-curricular engagement is not just about sports, recreation, athletics, or leisure. Essentially, it is about the overall quality of people’s lives and their ability to be engaged in every aspect of campus life, be at the coffee shop, the library, or the campus pub. The University campus as a whole is a dynamic place and being engaged in all aspects of campus life is what really made life meaningful for the participants. Participants also emphasized the extent to which extra-curricular engagement contributes to their health (physical, spiritual, emotional), wellbeing, and overall quality of life.

These new insights, which emerged directly from the data, forced our research team to reflect on our original purpose of study. We realized that in order to remain true to the data we had to broaden the focus of the study. As the study progressed, we extended our focus to incorporate a reflection on how communities, be it the university community or community-at-

large, could be welcoming and inclusive for all of its citizens. The study is not just about whether the university is upholding citizen rights because it is not about compliance; rather, it is about compassion and a genuine desire to value diversity and support each individual's life path. It is not enough to just increase programs and services for segments of the population; rather, we need to become aware of the barriers that citizens face and proactively consider all citizens when developing or revitalizing a community. The study is not just about university students with disabilities; it is about all citizens who are of equal worth and value. Essentially, the study ended up exploring how communities can create a *culture of compassion* that involves universal responsibility for each citizen. A culture of compassion enables each person to achieve their highest quality of life, enjoyment, and personal success. We came to realize that we were no longer creating a framework for how universities can enhance recreation and leisure opportunities for students with disabilities. Our new purpose was to map out a framework for creating inclusive and compassionate communities, using the campus community as an example.

All of the literature I had reviewed to this point had been focused on issues pertaining to critical disability theory, human rights, and policy related to athletics and recreation, and so I thought it important to review literature pertaining to community development and community building and to review models of inclusive communities (such as youth-friendly initiatives, age-friendly initiatives, and diversity community initiatives). My thesis advisor and other colleagues were aware of the direction that my thesis had taken and as such I was invited to become involved with a new Age-Friendly Community Initiative being developed by the Murray Alzheimer Research and Education Program (MAREP) and the Alzheimer Society of Ontario in partnership with other community organizations and members. This project meshed perfectly with my thesis in that we were trying to identify ways that communities could be more responsive to the needs of those who are marginalized or isolated in communities, especially older adults. I mention my involvement in this project because it influenced how I eventually structured the planning framework that came out of this project.

The goal of the Age-Friendly Community project was to develop a tool-kit to support the development of age-friendly communities that built on an Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD) Framework developed by the Roundtable on Future Planning for People Affected by Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias. The ADRD framework incorporates

six guiding principles, three planning pillars (An Informed Society, An Enabling and Supportive Environment, and Personal, Social and System Interconnectedness), and five enabling mechanisms that should guide research and practice in dementia care. Compiling the literature for the Age-Friendly Community initiative, as well as reviewing the data from my thesis, helped me realize that the three pillars of an informed, supportive, and interconnected community proved to be a critical piece to any healthy community. My data supported the importance of these three pillars. I also came to understand through interactions with others about the ADRD framework that the format of the framework (meaning a value-based framework with pillars and enablers) was effective as it provided readers with the core principles that should guide all decision making, the pillars that need to be put in place to support a community, and the enablers to help them achieve their goals. Therefore, I used the ADRD framework as a theoretical template to house my analysis. In this regard, I saw that the themes and categories that I had already developed through analysis were best portrayed as principles, pillars, and enablers. For example, early on I had a section related to the importance of both physical accessibility and a supportive social environment. I therefore placed this heading under the pillar “Supportive and Enabling Environment”. Although I used the main headings of the ADRD Framework as a theoretical template, the content within the pillars (including sub-headings) as well as the actual guiding principles and enablers, were unique to this study and emerged directly from the data. I discussed with the research team the idea of using the ADRD framework as a theoretical template to house our analysis and they were in support of this development as they thought that the data ‘fit’ the framework. They also liked the idea of presenting our data in a value-based framework that provided readers with not only the pillars but also with the enablers (or ‘how-to’ pieces). I must reiterate that data analysis was not influenced by the ADRD framework nor was the data forced to ‘fit’ with the framework. Personal reflection and discussions with the research team was used to verify that data was genuinely reflected within the framework.

Strategies for Accountability

The validity of PAR projects is measured by accountability, integrity, value, and social change (Manning, 1997; Ristock & Pennell, 1996). In order to achieve this, I had to be cognizant and reflexive of decisions that I made and how I experienced the project. Action researchers are encouraged to “unearth” biases and assumptions that may influence the experience by rigorously

examining and critiquing one's biases (Ladkin, 2004). Although I am not making claim to producing value-neutral work, I am making claim to producing work that follows a framework of accountable subjectivity, where I acknowledge my subjectivity but remain accountable (Gillies, 2006). I use the term 'accountability' because the nature of PAR entails that I be accountable to a number of people and accountable for numerous outcomes. Essentially, I had to be accountable to the research team, for my actions, for the decisions we made, for all aspects of the research project, and for the dissemination of results. I was also accountable to all involved participants, and most importantly, to the community the research hoped to serve. I therefore consider 'accountability' as an overarching term and process by which I strove to demonstrate trustworthiness and integrity (Lincoln, 1995). Ristock and Pennell (1996) describe a similar concept of 'rendering accounts', which involves a process of being accountable to not only yourself but to others. Reason and Bradbury developed a criterion for judging the trustworthiness of emancipatory research, which takes into account those things for which I was accountable:

- the extent to which the research demonstrates emergence and enduring consequences;
- the extent to which the research deals with pragmatic issues of practice and practicing;
- the extent to which the inquiry demonstrates good qualities of relational practice, such as democracy and collaboration;
- the extent to which the research deals with questions of significance; and
- the extent to which the research takes into account a number of different ways of knowing (as cited in Ladkin, 2004, p. 539).

As indicated by Reason & Bradbury (2001) as well as Lincoln (1995), PAR research should be judged based on the extent to which the research fostered learning, sharing, and the incorporation of different knowledge bases (also see Manning, 1997). In this regard, accountability was measured by how equitable and fair the entire PAR process was and the level of collaboration that was achieved amongst the group. This project met this criteria by confronting and challenging traditional structures within the university by involving individuals within varying levels of the university (i.e., students and staff) and the greater community as equally valued research team members. It provided an opportunity for each member to be empowered to make decisions, provide solutions, and contribute towards a framework that can have genuine implications. The research was democratic, collaborative and based on principles

that value various ways of ‘knowing’ in that the perspectives of each person were viewed as equally valuable and each member had opportunities to voice perspectives and opinions in an environment that was accepting, supportive, and constructive.

Laurel Richardson used a metaphor of ‘crystalization’ to reflect the process of ‘trustworthiness’ within qualitative paradigms (Cho & Trent, 2006; Clough, 2004; Richardson, 1994). Richardson argued that validity is not achieved via a two-dimensional, three-sided perspective. Rather, research involves various complex perspectives and viewpoints that are always changing and must be considered. As Richardson (1994) stated:

I propose that the central image for “validity” for postmodernist texts is not the triangle - a rigid, fixed two-dimensional object. Rather, the central image is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, ultidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, alter, but are not amorphous (p. 522) . . . crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colours, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose. . . . In postmodernist mixed genre texts, we have moved from plane geometry to light theory, where light can be both waves and particles (p. 358).

This crystalization process proposes “a transgressive approach to validity that emphasizes a higher degree of self-reflexivity” (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 324), challenging the relationship between the researcher and the work he/she conducts. This project fit with Richardson’s crystalization metaphor because the study encompassed viewpoints and perspectives of multiple stakeholders, data were collected from a variety of sources, and the issues at hand were reflected upon and approached from various angles. Each stakeholder and participant shed light on the issue from a different perspective, which ultimately helped view the issue at hand more clearly and more comprehensively. The issues changed depending on whose perspective we were looking at just as the images portrayed by a crystal differ depending on what side of the crystal you are looking at. Crystals are colourful and vibrant, they sparkle and reflect, they are dynamic and interesting, as is participatory research. The challenge was to ensure all perspectives were included in the development of the Planning Framework. This was achieved by working closely with the research team and ensuring others had an opportunity to reflect on and provide feedback on the framework as it took shape.

Accountable to Reduce Power Inequities

Participatory Action Research maintains a steady flow of action and reflection on the part of the researcher, thus PAR researchers are reflexive and self-conscious. It entails that the researcher strive to develop and maintain non-exploitive relationships with the individuals with whom he or she works. Thus, researchers must be critical, inquisitive, sensitive, aware, and mindful of themselves and others. As Ristock and Pennell (1996) stated, researchers need to ask themselves: “were we critically analyzing and responsibly using power?” (p. 19). Throughout the research process, I would reflect on whether this project served to further oppress persons or reinstall negative power dynamics. My reflexivity was supported by my journaling (Dupuis, 1999) and through consulting with various members of the research team, which enhanced the study’s integrity and our accountability throughout the process.

I would often reflect on the power dynamics within the group and I came to realize that many of the research members referred to the framework as my project as opposed to *their* project or *our* project. This made me uncomfortable because I made a conscious effort to relay to them that this project was a group effort and that they should feel a great deal of ownership of the project. I also tried to ensure that I was not viewed as the researcher who held the power by demonstrating to them that our research team was strengthened because of all of our unique assets. However, I came to realize that perhaps this lack of ownership was not a result of them not feeling connected to the project, but rather they were just being respectful. For example, I was talking with Jason, a member of the research team who works at the Active Living Alliance, about an upcoming workshop where the entire research team was presenting our framework to campus recreation providers. Our conversation revealed how part of his hesitancy to take full ownership of the project was that he wanted to respect the work I put into it. I also believe that this may be a result of not having prior experience being a genuine partner in a research project:

Jason: I think this presentation could, in general, the idea would be to focus on **your work** as taking the university as a microcosm of the larger community as a leading influencer as effecting change and this is an opportunity based on **your work** and the application of it (emphasis added). [Jason continues to talk about the presentation a bit more]

Jennifer: And I mean this framework that we have, this is not just mine. This is yours too. You have been so involved in this project as have Pat and Barry and so I

hope that you feel that this is your project as well. Because it's not just mine at all, it's been a group effort and I realize that.

Jason: Oh, for sure. But you put it together and generated the dialogue that has come about but I think that it's come from a lot of different places which is really neat for sure.

[Later on Jason and I were talking about the links between our research project and his work at the Active Living Alliance]

Jason: We can definitely help you get your work out there [he continues to talk about this]

Jennifer: And with this project, you've been involved from the very beginning and now that you're part of the Active Living Alliance basically you guys are now a partner in this project.

Jason: Yeah, that's a way to look at it.

Jennifer: Yeah, this is something that you can say you're involved with as well. You're a partner. You're a key partner in this project so this is in some way an initiative of your organization as well.

Jason: (chuckles) Yeah, well, yeah, I know what you're saying for sure. But we also want to make sure that you get the credit for pulling all this information together too, you know, and that's yeah, like we want to have that recognized for sure.

Jennifer: Yeah, but what makes me happiest is to know that you all buy into this as well and feel that sense of ownership. I mean that was the whole point of us using a partnership approach and so this is such a part of you guys.

Jason: Yeah, for sure.

As indicated in the above conversation, getting the research team to use the phrase "our project" was quite difficult, but I still felt like the group felt highly connected to this project and that they realized that they were valued members of the research team. For example, when I asked the team if they were interested in co-presenting at the workshop for Campus Recreation providers all members of the research team enthusiastically agreed to take part (except Chantal who was unable to attend) and had several ideas on what they wanted the presentation to be like. This demonstrated that they felt connected to the project and I truly believed that our collaborative

working approach (which valued each person's perspective) helped to neutralize power dynamics as much as possible.

Accountable to Outcomes

As indicated by Reason & Bradbury (2001), accountability can be measured by the extent to which the research is significant and pragmatic and demonstrates enduring consequences. Our research aimed at being emancipatory in that it strived to liberate people from unjust social structures that inhibit the full development of their self-determination and self-development (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000); however, I am aware that researchers are not able to empower people rather people must empower themselves (Ponterotto, 2005). Empowerment begins when marginalized and oppressed groups seek power in themselves and their respective communities which enable them to fight for rights (Kaufman, 2003). I agree with Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) who stated that "research conducted within-not just on-practice can yield evidence and insight that can and do assist in the critical transformation of practice" (p. 593).

I believe that critical transformation, which includes both large and small scale outcomes, was accomplished through this research as I tracked these outcomes throughout the research process. For example, upon being involved as a member of the research team, Chantal wrote an article in the CSD newsletter about the role that recreation and physical activity play in her life as a student with a disability and she encouraged other students to utilize the programs and services offered by the CSD and Athletics Department to facilitate involvement. Although this is a small act, it reveals how she genuinely related to the issues that the research team was discussing and the outcomes of her article have the potential to be far reaching. Another participant, Jessica, who helped facilitate the REC Club spoke at length during our interview about the challenges she experienced when organizing the REC Club. During the interview, she indicated that she was now going to initiate a meeting with staff members involved with coordinating the REC Club to work through these challenges. This outcome was a direct result of her having the time to reflect on the REC Club and how it can better meet student needs. Upon interviewing the recently appointed Chair of the Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Committee, Joshua asked for a transcript of our interview so he could use the items we discussed to guide his future actions within this role. Melissa, another student with a disability spoke during our interview about the need for students and staff to have a better understanding of the

programs and services that are offered on campus. During the interview she became really motivated to personally create a resource book that would house all the relevant information that students and staff would need. Liz, a student without a disability, revealed in an e-mail message that she sent me agreeing to participate in the study that she had never thought about recreation for persons with a disability so being asked to participate challenged her thinking. Interestingly, a few weeks after our interview she broke her leg playing varsity rugby and e-mailed me that she had a new appreciation for disability and accessibility. At a team meeting, Pat and Barry both realized that they were individually trying to plan a wheelchair basketball game. Upon further dialogue, it was revealed that Barry had access to extra wheelchairs that people could use and Pat had generated a group of people who were interested in participating. They realized how they could share resources to get a game working so they set up a meeting to discuss it further. All of these small outcomes stem from the project and are a measure of the project's success and accountability and each of these small acts has the potential for larger outcomes.

I also shared the framework with a Director of Campus Recreation and Athletics at another South-western Ontario University who immediately saw the relevance of this framework within his campus setting. He asked our team to present our work at a conference being hosted by his university for campus recreation professionals, athletic and intramural practitioners. He also is interested in receiving more information about the framework in order to implement some suggestions and strategies within his department. This is evidence of the broader implications and the impacts of this study and its resulting framework (Manning, 1992; Manning, 1997).

Essentially, I fulfilled and confirmed my criteria for trustworthiness throughout the project by:

- a) uniting various university and community members to collectively problem solve;
- b) sparking discussion, dialogue, and critical reflection between team members using a democratic and collective approach;
- c) conducting research that is ethical and emancipatory;
- d) producing outcomes that reflect the issues and perspectives of all those involved; and
- d) creating a framework that will hopefully ignite and guide social change, not only on university campuses but in communities.

This section summarized the participatory action research approach used throughout this project. It introduced the five individuals with diverse community and campus experiences who joined me on the participatory action research team. This team was responsible for designing and implementing a research project that aimed at creating a framework for how universities can increase campus recreation and athletic opportunities for students with disabilities. This section also outlined the specific steps that were taken to collect and analyze data and the strategies that were implemented in order to share the findings with participants and promote dialogue to ensure the findings truly reflected their perspectives. The next section outlines the findings of the study, which will be outlined using the planning framework for creating compassionate communities.

CHAPTER IV: A FRAMEWORK FOR CREATING A CAMPUS CULTURE OF COMPASSION

This section brings together data collected from this study, as well as relevant literature, to describe the major components of the framework. As previously mentioned, this dissertation is presented in a way that reflects the chronological nature of how the study emerged. As such, it became evident that the initial review of literature (presented in Chapter Two) did not completely reflect all the themes and concepts that emerged throughout data analysis that came to form the basis for the framework. After data analysis, and in writing up the framework, new literature was examined and brought into this section in order to support emergent themes. In order to create a flow and readability to the framework, the literature supporting the themes presented in the framework are typically presented at the beginning of a theme (before participant quotes).

Compassionate Communities

Students, staff, and faculty members continue to face a myriad of barriers and challenges within the post-secondary education environment, including oppression based on gender, race, income and ability. According to Williams (2008):

The possibility of remedying social pathologies, realizing conditions of social justice, depends largely on the extent to which we make significant alterations to our collective value framework. Such transformative possibilities, I suggest, are dependent upon and nourished by the virtue of compassion. In its awareness of and regard for suffering as ‘deviating from the general conditions of human flourishing’ (p. 6).

From this perspective, oppression not only negatively impacts the individuals who are marginalized, but it also impacts the post-secondary institution and community as a whole since it stifles our collective ability to flourish and it pulls us further away from our true humanity (Freire, 2000, Williams, 2008). Therefore, inequality within a post-secondary environment must be addressed at both the personal and systemic level because genuine enhancements to a community can only occur when all citizens become engaged, supported, informed, and interconnected.

A post-secondary community seeking to maintain or achieve social justice based on humanistic principles should strive toward “the development and sustenance of social conditions

within which all persons have the greatest opportunity to realize their potentialities, both as unique individuals and as members of great communities and societies” (Williams, 2008, p. 7-8). This involves creating a culture where community members are sensitive to the needs and interests of each other because there is an understanding that one’s successes and failures are connected with that of others (Williams, 2008). According to Williams (2008), social justice and human flourishing can only occur when citizens develop meaningful relationships with one another and become aware of the interdependence that exists among us. Without this basis, injustices such as exclusion, harm and suffering will continue.

Compassion has been defined as the “disposition or way-of-being that is most fundamentally other-regarding – always interpersonal, always involving a regard for the good of the other” (Williams, 2008, p. 7). Compassion should not be viewed as restricting one’s freedom; rather, it should be viewed as a mechanism which fosters freedom. It enables us to become more aware of, and more sensitive to, the lives of others – to their suffering, oppression, pain, or exclusion. It challenges us to act in ways that positively contribute to one’s community instead of adding to its suffering or limitations. Compassion, according to Williams (2008), “might be understood as the moral foundation of social justice, with social justice promoted by and perpetuated through a collective value framework informed by an awareness of interconnectedness, [and] sensitivity to the needs and interests of others” (p. 8). A community that is based on a culture of compassion would therefore be a place that values, respects, supports, and considers the perspectives of all community members. It would have core values and mechanisms in place to help guide both decision makers and those impacted by such decisions in making their community a space that fosters humanity and growth.

A culture of compassion, although beneficial, may be difficult to create within a post-secondary community because of financial, attitudinal, and structural barriers and perhaps because of a lack of awareness of how to create such a culture. This framework for developing a campus culture of compassion was therefore created to address this gap and help guide individuals in creating a post-secondary environment that fosters social justice and inclusion. Although aspects of the framework can be applied to most communities, it specifically explores how the community within a post-secondary institution can better respond to the changing and diverse needs and interests of all individuals to ensure their full engagement in all areas of

campus and community life. It aims to support post-secondary institutions in the planning, development, and implementation of programs, services, policies, and/or practices that will enhance the well-being of community members, particularly those who are marginalized or excluded. The framework encourages individuals within all levels of a post-secondary community, ranging from students to decision/policy makers, to take strides toward developing a campus culture of compassion where each individual is valued, supported, and fully included within the community. A commitment towards better including all citizens within a community is not done in spite of individual differences but because there is an understanding that all individuals are entitled to access and benefit from the enrichment of community life. It encourages individuals to consider how their actions, both passive and active, either cause suffering or enable people to thrive, while replacing indifference with care and concern (William, 2008).

Components of the Framework

As seen in Figure 1, the framework is comprised of six guiding principles, three characteristics, and six process pieces, which work in conjunction to develop a campus culture of compassion (See Appendix N for a summary of the framework). The framework centres around six guiding principles (core values) that help guide a post-secondary community toward developing a campus culture that is compassionate toward all community members, particularly persons with disabilities. Numerical values were not given to the components of the framework in order to avoid a sense of hierarchy among them. All components of the model are of equal importance and will work best in conjunction with one another. Essentially, a campus culture of compassion values:

- access for all,
- diversity and uniqueness,
- interdependence and social responsibility,
- diverse knowledge basis, voices, and perspectives,
- the power of learning and education as a tool for social change, and
- the whole person.

The framework also indicates three fundamental characteristics that a campus culture of compassion must possess. Essentially, post-secondary institutions and their community members (including staff, faculty, and students) must be:

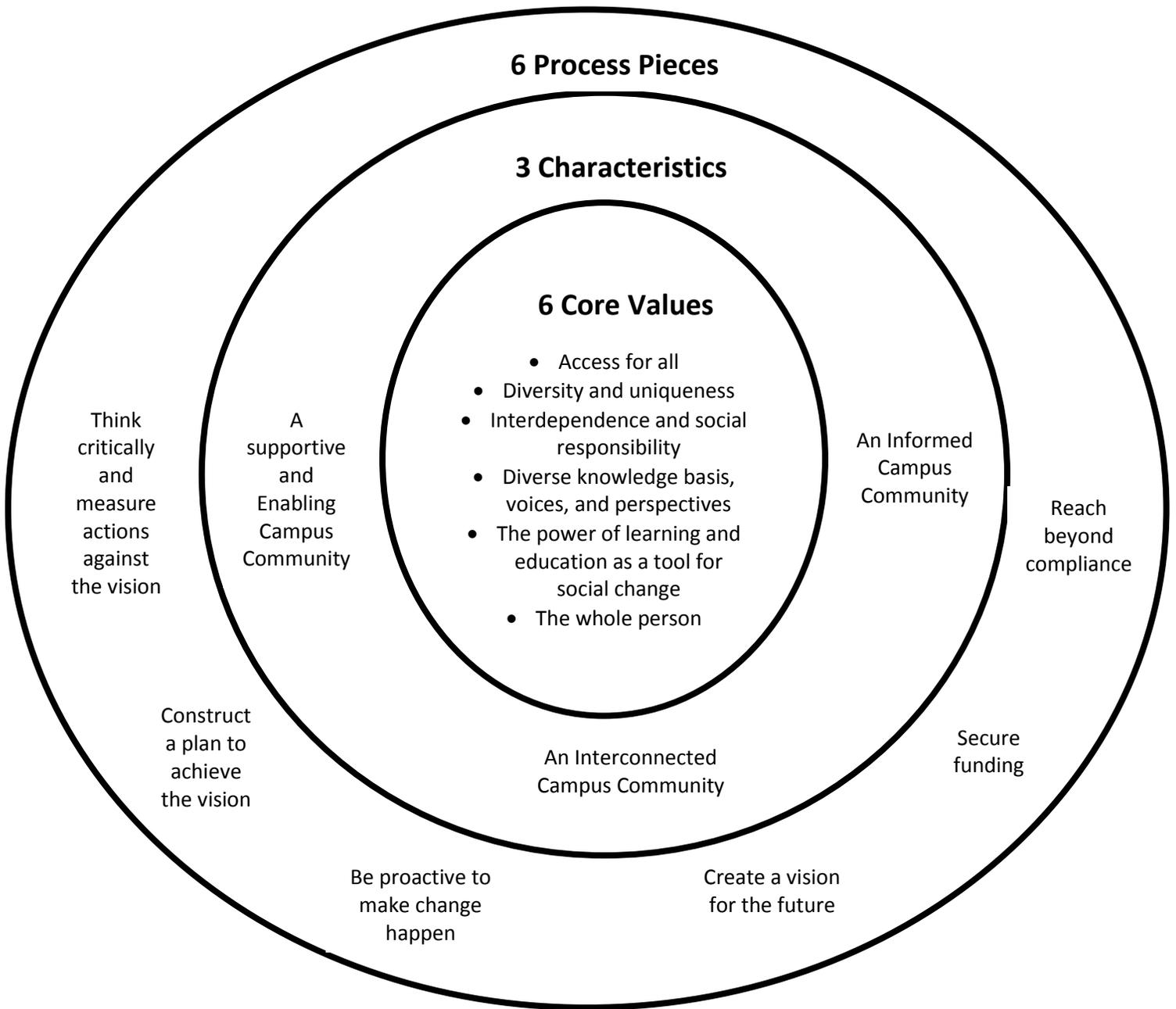
- interconnected,
- supportive and enabling, and
- informed.

Six process pieces are included in the framework which enables a campus culture of compassionate to be fuelled and sustained over time. Participants believed these process pieces were important factors for creating momentum and enabling a campus culture of compassion to thrive:

- creating a vision for the future,
- constructing a plan to achieve the vision,
- securing funds to put the plan in place,
- thinking critically and measuring actions against the vision,
- being proactive to make change happen, and
- reaching beyond compliance.

The framework can best be described using the metaphor of a birds nest. At the core are the values which form the foundation for the nest, the characteristics of the community are the materials that make up the main structure of the nest, and the process pieces are the materials that sustain the nest and hold the nest together. A bird's nest was used to describe the framework as it helps to illustrate how the principles, the characteristics, and the process pieces are distinct but are also intertwined, interconnected, and dependent on one another. For example, an environment cannot be supportive if it is not informed on what community members want or need, nor can a community be interconnected if community members are not informed of opportunities to connect. The birds nest metaphor seeks to reflect how communities can be complex, messy, and sometimes difficult to hold together. Sometimes the pieces are not held together strongly enough so there are gaps and holes in the nest or it breaks down or falls apart. In this case, they need to be maintained, re-structured, or even rebuilt. The image also represents the supportive nature of nests and their ability to be secure, comforting, purposeful, and strong. If birds are not satisfied with their nest they are known to abandon it, which also represents how

Figure 1: Components of the Framework



individuals will flock to or leave a community based on how supportive the environment is and how it meets their needs. This study alone found that students left previous universities to attend the University of Guelph because of its support services.

The framework reflects an ideal situation and so it is understood that some aspects may not be applicable or possible in every campus community. Community members are encouraged,

nonetheless, to reflect on the principles, characteristics and process pieces to determine how they can be applied within their environment over time. A detailed description of the three components of the framework will be offered in three parts:

Part 1- The Guiding Principles

Part 2- The Characteristics of a Campus Culture of Compassion

Part 3- The Process Pieces that Foster a Campus Culture of Compassion

Part 1 - Guiding Principles:

This framework is value-based, meaning that it is guided by core values. A value based framework provides readers with core values or principles that will help guide decision making and actions. As described by Dupuis, Gillies, Mantle, Loisel, and Sadler (2008), principles serve as a moral compass that help guide one's overall direction and decision making process:

Think of how one uses a compass. We use a compass as a navigational tool to help point us in the right direction. It does not tell us how to get there, but without this guide we could end up in a place we never intended to be. Think about the guiding principles as your compass for planning...they won't tell you what needs to be done, but they will guide your overall direction. It is the principles that will help guide the decisions you make and the planning process of how you get there (p. 6).

Each community is different and will therefore need to adapt the characteristics of the framework to meet their individual needs. Therefore, the guiding principles provide a foundation, or serve as a moral compass, to ensure that all decision making is guided by the principles that are at the core of any compassionate post-secondary community, regardless of the specific community context. There are six main principles that guide this framework which emerged directly from the interviews. These are described in the subsequent section.

Access for All

It has been well established that individuals become marginalized and oppressed when they experience various structural, financial, and attitudinal barriers which limit their ability to freely access resources, facilities, programs, services, and environments within their community. A campus community that is compassionate would genuinely believe that no person should be prevented access to spaces and amenities strictly because of personal characteristics, such as ability level, ethno-cultural background, socio-economic status, or sexual orientation. They would therefore commit to identifying and alleviating obstructions to meaningful community

participation. A campus culture of compassion is fostered when community members recognize that people access programs, services, or spaces in different ways. As such, barriers would be removed which inhibit people from gaining access in their own way. For example, someone with a visual impairment may access information about a program differently than a person without a visual impairment so one-size-fits-all approaches are not often appropriate.

Although the concept of being ‘accessible’ is often associated with making environments physically accessible for people with disabilities, it is important to reaffirm that this principle reaches beyond physical accessibility and encourages communities to create an environment that is both physically and socially welcoming and accepting of all individuals regardless of their physical attributes, background, or financial status. As Pat, the Coordinator for the Lifestyle and Fitness Programs at the University of Guelph and member of the research team, stated:

I like the wording access to all because that’s broad enough that it talks about a ton of different things. It doesn’t just mean physical access, that means breaking down barriers... Access means you’re thinking about the barriers that need to be removed to provide access. ...You may be thinking about removing the barriers of prejudice. It may be a statement from the president talking about how this is not tolerated in residence or, that’s what I think, I think my mind implies that we then work towards getting rid of barriers.

The principle of ‘access for all’ does not suggest that each individual be treated in exactly the same way, which is a tenet of ‘formal equality’; rather, the principle is more aligned with the ‘theory of equality of well-being and outcome’ (Rioux, 1994). From this perspective, equality is not achieved by treating everybody in the same manner but by making sure that everyone has equal opportunities to achieve well-being through full participation in economic and social life. Equality of well-being and outcome ensures that “all humans-in spite of their differences- are entitled to be considered and respected as equals, and have the right to participate in the social and economic life of society” (Rioux, 1994, p. 173). This type of equality can only be achieved through democratization, and the entitlement and exercise of fundamental human rights (Rioux, 1994) and it entails that some special measures may need to be provided in order to accommodate differences (Department of Justice Canada, 1995). In this regard, equality is achieved “not by treating different needs in the same way, but by devoting equal care to ensuring that they are met in the different ways most appropriate to them” (Tawney as cited in Johnston, 2003). This type of equality enables people to be proud of their differences as they are not the reason for negative treatment or oppression. Colleen, a participant with a disability, explained:

I don't want to be a man. I want the same opportunities and the same choices but I'm certainly, you know, not interested in becoming a man just simply so that I have different things available to me... This concept of access to all is like anybody can belong to the community... So it goes back to that just wanting the same opportunities.

Compassionate post-secondary communities commit to becoming physically and socially accessible as they realize that it is the cornerstone of being inclusive. It is nearly impossible for social connections and personal development to occur when segments of the population are literally excluded from various aspects of community life. All senior administrators, department heads, and community members within the post-secondary environment must commit to working towards becoming as accessible and welcoming as possible as doing so helps to ensure that all persons, regardless of ability, have equal access to opportunities. For example, it is essential to provide a variety of inclusive and accessible housing options since many of the students with disabilities indicated how living with other roommates provided opportunities for friendships and support systems to develop which proved essential to their life as a student. Mark, an undergraduate student with a visual impairment, indicated how his roommates helped him locate items that he misplaced and James spoke of how he built lasting friendships with his roommates. Without adequate housing (that is housing that is accessible to persons of all abilities, races, backgrounds, etc.), then such opportunities for friendship and social networking cannot be developed or maintained. As Natalie, an undergraduate student with cerebral palsy revealed, without accessible facilities and environments, groups and friends cannot socialize together.

Being engaged in post-secondary education does not only involve meaningful participation in the class room. It is about having meaningful opportunities to participate in all areas of campus life, including extra-curricular involvement. Therefore, access to spaces both in and around the university and within the community is critical. Environments that utilize universal accessibility standards just make sense as they help to ensure that all people can access spaces with ease. Kimberley, a student and part-time fitness instructor, stated that accessibility is essential because well-trained staff within supportive environments is futile if people cannot even get to the program or service. Kimberley elaborated:

I mean ideally in the future having the facilities more accessible would be obviously a big step because that's I'd say one of the hardest barriers because you can have all the training and experience you want but if they can't make it to the actual location then it's gonna be a lot harder.

A campus culture of compassion is created when the community commits to becoming physically accessible, but they also recognize that it is very difficult to consider and accommodate everyone since each person's needs are unique and sometimes these needs contradict each other. Committing to accessibility will therefore involve creative problem solving and the development of partnerships with various stakeholders in order to determine a strategy that will best work for all. Although not every person's needs may be met using universal standards of accessibility, what is important is that processes are in place to both systemically and individually accommodate needs.

Diversity and Uniqueness in All

Williams (2008) articulates that those whose interpersonal realities are “defined by difference and dissimilarity” are at greater risk of experiencing injustice (p. 7). This is often a result of prejudices and stigmas that equate differences with deficits (Johnston, 2003). Social justice therefore “calls upon us to refuse to invest in a social ethic that separates us from one another and instead to visualize all people...as being connected” (Wozniak, as cited in Williams, 2008, p. 7). A campus community that values individual uniqueness and diversity recognizes the unity that exists among all citizens. It recognizes that all individuals are unique and diverse and that this diversity is what binds us and makes us human (Allman, 1999; Gyatso, 1999). As Gyatso (1999) states, “we must continually remind ourselves of what is obvious: that basically we are all the same” (p. 172). Focusing on aspects of identity that make people unique from one another should not over shadow the reality that we are all citizens, all humans, all of equal worth.

As alluded to in the previous section on ‘access for all’, recognizing and appreciating the differences within all individuals helps to ensure that individual characteristics are not used as the basis for dividing a community nor should they be the cause for oppression or exclusion. People should not be excluded or provided preferential treatment because they are different; rather, we should ensure that all persons are provided opportunities for a meaningful quality of life in a manner that is fair and equitable because we all are entitled. Participants, particularly those living with a disability, commented on how they appreciated being in a campus culture that respected, supported, and accommodated all individuals, not just those with a disability or illness, because it helped to create an atmosphere of compassion and cohesiveness. It also helps to send a message that we are all different, all in need of support, and all capable. Melissa, a

student with a disability, elaborated: “I’m a person that has challenges. Everybody has challenges; mine are just different from everybody else’s...I would rather just be with everybody else. I don’t like being earmarked because I’m not different”.

Valuing diversity allows a community to recognize and draw from the unique perspectives and assets that all individuals have to offer, thus enriching the community as a whole. As Pamela indicated, diversity is an asset to a community:

In terms of diversity being an asset to the community, that’s part of training that we try to do in the fitness center and the fitness program. So part of the philosophy that we said is, very specifically, ‘we embrace that you are different and that’s important to us because that gives us a flavour’...It’s kind of a philosophy that’s here at Guelph for sure...It needs to be a philosophy that is talked about, maybe not necessarily talked about, but if the University or another community doesn’t have it, how are they going to get it? They need the leadership. They need to get it from somewhere. They need to buy into that concept.

Valuing diversity also means that people are not just accommodated, but that they are seen as valuable members of the community and that “you enjoy them, you think they’re really important” (Pamela).

Uniqueness and diversity need to be welcomed and included into the fabric of society. This involves re-conceptualizing how environments should be organized and structured. It involves active unlearning of traditional and/or offensive ways of thinking about things and relearning new ways of approaching things. It is about being open and active agents of change. Ultimately, it is about seeing people as holistic beings who have many facets to their identity. As Carla stated, “a huge part of my identity is in realizing that my disability is only one facet of who I am and there’s so many others that kind of take over from that”.

Interdependence and Social Responsibility

Williams (2008) argues that compassion entails “experiencing the suffering of others in such a way that we are compelled to act towards its alleviation. It involves ‘relatedness’ to that suffering and those others, and a consequent experience of suffering within oneself” (p. 7). Members who make up a campus culture of compassion would recognize that all humans are interconnected and interdependent and it is this collaboration and partnering that make our lives, and our communities, stronger and more enriched (Gyasto, 1999). When we recognize that we are all connected and interdependent, then it reinforces the need to, and the benefits of, taking

responsibility for others and the environment of which we are part. The writings of Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, provides great insight into the subject of universal responsibility, asserting that the concept involves a “reorientation of our heart and away from self and towards others...to develop an attitude of mind whereby, when we see an opportunity to benefit others, we will take it in preference to merely looking after our own narrow interests” (1999, p. 171). This enables us to become more sensitive to the needs of others, particularly those who are most in need of support. It recognizes that the problems of some are ultimately the problems of us all because the negative consequences of pain, suffering, or exclusion affect our communities and ultimately all those within it.

Compassionate campus communities are ones where individuals help, support, guide, and learn from one another and where citizens have genuine regard for each other. In these environments, community members genuinely want to help others because they feel that they have a responsibility to those around them and that they are ‘part of a team’. Beth elaborated:

I think that if you come from that core it doesn't matter if you're a person of colour, a person with a disability, or white middle class kind of whatever, there's this, you're part of a team so we need to look out for each other...I am always struck with how willing students are to support other students, like students will volunteer you know to do note taking, they'll volunteer to walk someone from classes, they'll volunteer to be the buddy in case of a fire. They'll volunteer.

Western societies have increasingly become more individualistic (Williams, 2008, Veenhoven, 1999). A greater concern for one's own well-being and a decline in the sense of social responsibility supports a society where people ‘mind their own business’ or fail to support someone in need (Gyatso, 1999; Hedge, 2001; Wilson-Simmons, Dash, Tehranifar, O'Donnell, & Stueve, 2006). There are many reasons why people may not offer to assist someone else in need. People may be afraid to offer their help because they are unsure of what is expected of them, or they may have experienced a situation where someone was offended by an offer of assistance. In order to create a culture of universal responsibility, a safe and welcoming environment must be created where people feel comfortable looking out for one another. A recent study on school violence indicated teachers and students were being instructed on how to act responsibly and proactively when witnessing a crisis or situation. This illustrates how a culture of universal responsibility may need to be taught and reinforced within a community. Pat described how she deliberately builds a culture of social responsibility within her department by

teaching her staff that it is their responsibility to look out for one another and that it is not okay to turn your back on someone who needs assistance. As Pat stated:

We do some specific training in athletics around not turning your back when you see people struggling, regardless of what it is. Where as in the past you kind of went, oh I'm not getting involved and we kind of walked away because it's not any of our business. So I think, I think we've changed quite a bit that way; we're starting to be more socially responsible for other people..... something specific like training we're talking about it more where people are coming into the office and they're saying I'm worried about somebody in the athletic center and we're saying that's a good thing, let's explore it.

Avery, a student resident advisor (RA), provided another example by describing how the RA training prepared them to take responsibility in creating a welcoming environment by addressing any identified issues of discrimination, oppression, or hatred:

We really do want everyone to feel included and it's part of building a community and making everyone feel welcome... We're keeping tabs on the community if we notice that like sort of like people are being gender exclusive or racist, like racist or something like that, we are sort of trained to take on the issue and sort of assess how we can initiate positive change kind of, like through programming or talking to people or things like that...if you identify like what you see is an issue in a building, like if somebody's being discriminated against an issue of race, you might talk to people in particular about it and like address it personally or you can sort of do a slightly more subtle addressing the entire building or the entire floor.

The above quotes illustrate the importance, and often the necessity, of deliberately creating a culture of universal responsibility.

It is easy for many people, particularly those who live a life of privilege, not to be aware of the struggles of others because it is easy to take privileges for granted. According to participants, compassionate campus communities must provide opportunities for community members to become aware of the plights of others. This helps community members to become more sensitive to others which may encourage them to use their voice as a tool for advocacy and social change. Participants believed that there is a responsibility for those who are privileged to speak up for those who are oppressed because such individuals are often expected to fight these battles alone. Joshua elaborated:

I think there is a role for people in positions like mine to speak about the issues...I want to go out and talk about those issues and those stigmas without having to depend on the person with the anxiety disorder, trying to get on his or her feet and talk about it to the other people, I wanna have somebody who's not confronted with those issues, talk about it too...For the people who are vulnerable in one capacity or

another, it's just an every day job for them, and while it may not be part of my conscience every day, it's part of their conscience every day, and that takes a lot of time and effort so to also ask them to sort of go fight the political fight.

A culture of universal responsibility, leadership, and volunteerism is essential because there are many people within a campus community that rely on others for support. Many participants spoke of how volunteers played an essential role in their life and without them, they would not be able to participate in many of their typical daily activities. An environment where volunteerism, peer support, and authentic partnerships (Dupuis et al., 2009) are part of community life will reduce the negative associations of 'dependency' or the fears of not being able to find those willing to provide necessary support. The experiences of the participants also suggest that such connections provide opportunities to build relationships and friendships which may otherwise not have been developed.

Diverse Knowledge Basis, Voices and Perspectives

Interconnectedness and strong partnerships within the community can only develop when the knowledge basis, voices, opinions, and perspectives of all individuals are heard, valued, respected and included. Each person is the expert on his or her life and everyone's experiences and perspectives are of equal value, regardless of status or any other attributes. The concept of valuing the diverse knowledge basis, voices, and perspectives within a campus community is similar to what Mitchell and Nicolas (2006) refer to as 'cognitive diversity'. Cognitive diversity relates to:

the extent to which the group reflects differences in knowledge, including beliefs, preferences and perspectives (Miller et al, 1998)...[it] will increase the likelihood of creative new knowledge emerging in groups. Conceptually, this connection is primarily based on the understanding that, through the integration of diverse knowledge, groups have the potential to overcome the factors constraining the development of new knowledge (p. 69)

It is believed that genuinely welcoming and including diverse perspectives within problem solving initiatives or decision making will stimulate thinking and form the creation of new and creative knowledge. In a recent study by Mitchell & Nicolas (2006), they found that knowledge creation was enhanced when individual members within a group felt that they had the freedom to express themselves in an open-minded environment and that their viewpoints were valued.

In the context of this study, staff members commented on how they strive to create an environment that makes others feel welcomed, included, and supported, particularly students who feel vulnerable because of the challenges they are facing at school. They regularly invited students to join councils, committees, or advisory groups to ensure that their perspectives were included in decisions that would likely impact them the most. Joshua described how the University's Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee actively seeks out the perspectives of a variety of individuals in order to strengthen the committee:

We work in various offices like occupational health services for example, health and student performance center, the library, learning commons, special office for persons with disability, places like that. It has student reps of the undergraduate and graduate level... we have brought in at least one new faculty member, I can't remember, I think there might be a second faculty member being brought in, but anyways, we try to get rough representation around campus and the different capacities that people work.... We do have representation on our committee from the health and performance center. It happens that the woman that we have on that, our committee, is physically disabled and uses a wheelchair and so she brings that perspective.

Pat and Barry from the athletics department and the CSD discussed how they saw their relationship with their students as reciprocal and mutually rewarding. Barry spoke about how he encourages and supported students to create solutions to their problems since they are the experts on their own lives. They felt that it is essential for all community members, but particularly those in positions of power, to listen to the ideas, perspectives, experiences and viewpoints of others in order to create a campus culture that is compassionate and responsive.

The Power of Learning and Education as a Tool for Growth and Change

Education and learning are key components to self awareness, personal growth, and personal and social change (Allman, 1999). Compassionate campus communities are open to new learning (and unlearning) and they see the value and the power of education and learning for all citizens. A campus culture of compassion would therefore encourage all community members, including faculty, students, and staff, to use education and learning as a vehicle to personal development, social awareness, empowerment, and social change. Brian, a student advisor from the CSD, discussed how CSD staff members are encouraged to attend educational opportunities provided by the university, such as professional development workshops, to broaden their awareness of relevant issues. As Brian recalled: "we get professional development days, working on focus on autism, working on focus on physical access. I went to one, focus on

psychological assessments, interpreters, everything”. Beth, the Associate Vice President of Student Affairs, highlighted an organization called, Academic Affairs, which provides daily and weekly e-bulletins as well as workshops on issues pertaining to post-secondary institutions, such as improving campus engagement or better assisting students throughout academic transitions. These initiatives help to provide staff members with the knowledge they need to create positive change within their environment.

Participants also suggested all persons, but particularly those in positions of power, need to be open to new ways of doing things and open to sharing information with all involved on all levels. Brian discussed how he and his colleagues keep abreast of the issues that are important to students through talking with them directly and through learning and sharing strategies with others through conferences or list serves. As Brian indicated, learning and sharing with others in similar situations through vehicles such as e-mail list-serves provides him greater access to individuals with different perspectives and experiences. This helps him and his peers learn from one another and collectively problem solve. Brian stated:

Inter-disability Initiative Association. And that’s where we have conferences in November, February, and May, and we all share notes...I usually attend during my quieter times and I like to go and share notes with other universities. “What are you doing that we’re not doing”? “What’s working for you guys what’s not working...It’s a great list-serve to be on just to share notes. ...‘have you ever come across this, that?’ We all work from each other so instead of having eight or twelve colleagues here, I have a hundred and twenty.

The entire post-secondary environment is a perfect vehicle for learning, social change and personal growth. At the University of Guelph, much of the curriculum, social events, and programs are centred on getting students and staff engaged in the issues that they, and their broader community, are facing. For example, the theme for every orientation week is centred on social issues with the 2007 theme being Agents of Change. As such, it was quite apparent that learning does not only occur in the classroom; rather, it happens when people are engaged in all aspects of campus life. Therefore, opportunities for all community members to learn and share with one another should be provided in a variety of formats, including social and extra-curricular opportunities. As James stated: “university holds a lot of the best learning and it really happens outside of the classroom and it’s going to make it better for everyone if that kind of culture is developed.”

Opportunities to learn need to be provided to all individuals willing to learn. As Brian indicated, one of the biggest factors that causes oppression and marginalization is people's unwillingness to learn:

It's a great time to be in the disability sector. When I say disability sector I mean working at offices of persons with disabilities in universities and colleges. I think high schools, in large enough high schools, you got something like that, they call it Special Ed. I don't like to use that word but, at least they have some education component on how to help a student to receive equal academic opportunities. Like equality across the board, whether it be athletics, housing, on campus events, those kinds of things, so it's a great time to be in this business because of all the inclusiveness and all the positive attitudes and all the positiveness that's happening. You're always going to get the, I'm in a poor position, just because of the financial implications and the ignorance and not having the education. The worst thing is not wanting that education.

The Whole Person

The function of communities can be complex and overlapping. For example, universities are not just spaces where people learn; they are places where they live, work, eat, play, socialize, and develop. As Carla, a fourth year student with a disability stated: "school is not just school. School is four years of life that preferably would be you know enjoyable and conducive to personality development as well as academic success". Therefore, compassionate campus communities cater to the various functions that they may serve by providing policies, programs and services that holistically meet the needs of campus community members. As Beth stated:

The one thing that is really important about Guelph is that when we talk about student support we see it very clearly as not just academic support, we see support as co-curricular...So, okay, what are they doing outside of that class room? What are they doing in residences? What are they doing to remain healthy?...So athletics would be important for part of that, you know, in terms of both keeping fit but going to games and getting involved in school spirit, like all that kind of stuff is part of that co-curricular, right? So when you hear us talk about support programs or co-curricular we're not just talking about the academic stuff we're talking about the social stuff as well. Trying to be intentional around pushing them into some social stuff that could you know then come back under reflective learning...If you go back and look for the past 25-30 years this institution's mission has always talked about, you know, service to society, always talked about supporting those who need support, and even though our tag line has changed over time, it talks about the development of the whole student it doesn't talk about the academic piece of the student it talks about the academic development of the whole student.

As indicated by Beth, campus communities must support individuals as a whole and understand that their life is multi-faceted. A successful life is not only about succeeding in one area of life; rather, a well rounded life which includes opportunities for physical activity, social interaction, meaningful engagements and personal development is a critical component to overall well-being and the enhancement of one's quality of life. Participants revealed that the well rounded person thrives because they are able to be connected, develop new skills, and maintain a balance within life. It has been clearly established, particularly from those involved in this study, that being actively involved in campus life and being physically active are critical components in their lives. They reported how physical activity assists with stress management, concentration, and academic success and accomplishment. It was also reported that being physically engaged builds self esteem and identity, enhances personal development, and provides enjoyment and satisfaction. The many health benefits of being active, including the ability to maintain a healthy weight and posture, help their "whole body work better" (Gareth). Physical activity also provides many social benefits such as providing opportunities to connect and network. The importance of being actively engaged is even more compounded for persons with disabilities or who have other health challenges since inactivity among persons with a disability is a major health concern. As Pamela stated:

For the person who is disabled, a huge issue is they're not active. Their disability gets worse. So they're gonna die earlier. They're gonna have a shorter life. That's probably why I do this, 'cause for those people, it changes their lives. For breast cancer survivors, if they, the reoccurrence rate for a breast cancer survivor is a sixty five percent chance that they'll get a reoccurrence. With activity, and research coming out of Laurier and it was around dragon boating that dropped to thirty-five. That's a HUGE difference of somebody just being a little bit more physically active. For anybody who's had a disability at any time, depression is positively impacted by being active in cardiovascular training... And if the University sits down and recognizes that, we know we have a responsibility for those people.

What is unfortunate is a holistic approach to well-being is often underestimated. Aspects of well-being, including recreation and leisure, are not often seen as a priority, particularly for students with disabilities. Carla, for example, recognized that participating in recreation may not be as essential as the need for adequate basic care, but she believes that being actively involved within her community contributes to "quality of life in general" (Carla). Pamela also commented that being active is an essential component of our humanity but it has been continually presented to people as a reward, a non-essential, or something that is outside of our humanity. This is

particularly concerning for persons with a disability who often feel obligated to put ‘school first’.

As Carla stated:

It took me a while to realize that for me recreation is not only a privilege but it's a priority in a sense that without doing recreational things such as swimming or working out I don't have other ways to naturally integrate physical activity into my daily routine. Other people walk or run to class and I'll just wheel my chair there so without specifically inserting things into my day then I could remain virtually inactive which causes ripple effects not only like physically but also psychologically in the sense of stress release.

Another component of valuing the individual as a whole is being able to provide services and programs that meet the complex needs of community members. A student who is living with depression, for example, will not be fully supported by just having an extension on an assignment. In reality, that student would benefit from being connected with support services in the counselling office, the department of athletics, the CSD, and so forth, in a manner that is straightforward and effortless. The University of Guelph strives to create partnerships and collaborations between the various sectors and departments within the campus and the greater community in order to ensure that they are prepared and capable of meeting the complex and varying needs of community members. Pamela elaborated:

We get to know the people in your area so I can make a call over to somebody over at counselling and say ‘I’ve got somebody down here that’s in distress. She’s in my office. Can we access the emergency care right now; can I send her up to you? And can she access that this afternoon?’ So I can deal with that if I need to or any of our staff can, any of our coaches can. So we, you know, we’ve got that collaboration in place...I think maybe that’s what a University needs to do identify some issues and then set up potential collaboration around it, from that point of entry.

As Pamela indicated in the above quote, the services provided within a community need to be interconnected and informed of one another if they ever hope to serve a person holistically regardless of their point of entry.

Part 1 Summary

Lincoln & Guba (1985) persuasively define values as “the criterion, touchstone, or perspective that one brings into play, implicitly or explicitly, in making choices or designating preferences” (p. 160). In this regard, values play a major role in personal and collective decision making which ultimately impact the overall culture within a community. This section identified six core values which stemmed from the insights and experiences of the research participants. It

essentially revealed that post-secondary institutions can create a culture of compassion if they commit to valuing the following: access for all, diversity and uniqueness, interdependence and social responsibility, diverse knowledge basis and perspectives, the whole person, and the power of learning and education as a tool for social change. Although post-secondary institutions may already have core values or principles on which they depend, data suggests that these six values serve as a critical foundation for developing a community culture that is compassionate, accessible, and inclusive to all individuals. Although each campus community will differ in terms of its resources, infrastructure, personnel and demographics, these principles can serve as a moral compass that can help guide decision making and actions to ultimately create a campus culture of compassion.

Part 2 - Three Characteristics of a Campus Culture of Compassion:

This section examines the three characteristics of a campus culture of compassion: An Interconnected Campus Community, A Supportive and Enabling Campus Community, and an Informed Campus Community. These three characteristics are all interconnected and work together to create a campus culture that is compassionate, supportive, accessible, and inclusive to all citizens.

Characteristic #1: An Interconnected Campus Community

The lives of community members (be it within a geographic community, a social community, or even an organization) are often intertwined, interconnected, and inter-reliant. A community that fosters meaningful partnerships and collaborations between individuals and organizations will be strengthened as it enables information and knowledge to be more easily shared between community members, partnerships to be formed and maintained, and a supportive environment to be developed (Crisp, Swerissen, & Duckett, 2000; Gyatso, 1999). As indicated in the previous section on values, interconnectedness and strong partnerships within the community can only develop when the knowledge basis, voices, opinions, and perspectives of all individuals are heard, valued, respected and included. As such, interconnected community members and partnerships entail that:

Every member is learning, teaching, contributing, and discovering; all forms of expertise are valued. All the partners recognize that they have divergent goals, but

they also understand that by combining their different strengths, each of their needs will be met (Holland, 2004, p. 13-14).

Therefore, the development and maintenance of strong working relationships and partnerships within and between communities is an essential component of creating a campus culture of compassion. As Lisa asserted, “We need to sit down and talk more...get everybody else on-line in terms of what they know and how we can help people”. Ava elaborated by stating that what is important is “getting people together, getting people talking”.

This section illustrates the ways that various members within a post-secondary environment can develop partnerships and connections both within and outside of the post-secondary community in order to better create a campus culture of compassion. This characteristic of a compassionate community has two main components. The first component, ‘Fostering Top-Down and Bottom-Up Interconnectedness’ focuses on the interconnections that are necessary between those who hold the power to create, regulate, and enforce policies and decisions, and those who are affected by them. The reciprocal relationships that should be fostered between them are also explored. The second component, ‘Developing Synergistic Partnerships’ focuses on the connections that need to be fostered both within and outside of the post-secondary community in order to develop sustainable partnerships that are mutually beneficial.

Fostering Top-Down and Bottom-Up Interconnectedness

The effectiveness and necessity of using both top-down and bottom-up approaches to social change initiatives has been established (Crisp et al., 2000; McMahan, 2002). It is understood that those ‘at the top’, which include persons in positions of power such as decision makers and policy makers, are in a well placed position to lead initiatives at the systemic level while encouraging approaches that strengthen partnerships with others (McMahan, 2002). However, the top-down approach is dependent on the insights and perspectives of ‘bottom-up’ community led approaches in order to ensure that programs, services, or policies are planned, implemented, and evaluated in accordance with the genuine interests and needs of those most affected by such decisions (Crisp et al., 2000; McMahan, 2002). Therefore, an essential component of building a campus culture of compassion is to create genuine connections and partnerships between those who are decision makers and those who are affected by such decisions. These partnerships need to

be based on mutual respect, shared power, and sincerity (Crisp et al., 2000). The partnerships and connections between all members within a post-secondary environment, including those at the 'top' (such as the University's President and senior administrators), those in the middle (such as middle-management staff members) and those at the grass roots level (such as students, front-line staff, and broader community members) should be reciprocal and cyclical. In this regard, issues should be brought forth from the grass roots level and pushed through to those at the top, and those at the top need to seek out and respond to the issues of those at the bottom. This multi-directional flow of sharing information and responsibility help strengthen the community. The subsequent section explores these relationships further and specifically examines how those at the 'top', those at the grass roots level, and members who connect those at the 'top' to those at the 'bottom' all play a specific role in helping to make inclusion a priority within the campus.

Fostering top-down connections to make inclusion a priority

Major decision makers, policy makers, and senior administrators are in a unique position to help shape a culture within a community (McMahon, 2002). They have the power, resources, and responsibility to enforce policies, reward behaviours, and systematically build a collective vision into the fabric of the community. In order to help create a campus culture of compassion that responds to the needs and preferences of all community members, it is essential for major decision makers and 'power holders' to connect with community members in a variety of ways in order to fully understand their needs and interests.

Those in positions of power within a post-secondary institution need to genuinely commit to understanding the issues faced by the community in order to create a campus culture of compassion. In this study, almost every participant mentioned how the President of the University of Guelph personified a committed leader of positive social change. They commented on how he makes it a priority to connect with members within the campus community in a variety of ways, such as through committees, informal dialogue, or by attending community events. His commitment to building working relationships with individuals within all levels of the community enables him to better understand their needs and perspectives. His genuine understanding of community issues and his commitment toward creating a campus culture of

compassion, results in him fighting *with* the community to enact change and help shape an inclusive and welcoming environment. Leslie explained:

If there's an event [the University's President] is always there. He's super supportive of the students. He's amazing, he's amazing....He's so involved in everything, like even when we had our planning meeting for the new building he came over. And he's at our football games and like in the bleachers with his face painted with the students, you know. And he's at any student event that they run on campus and he's amazing that way...so then when you want to make the changes you're not, you know, having somebody go 'oh I don't know how important that is'.

Many of the students commented on the approachability of the President and how this made it easy for them to connect with him to share ideas or concerns. One student with a disability commented on how she often speaks with the President about issues relating to disability, so much so that they are both on a first name basis. Those at the 'top' therefore need to be open and available to actively listen to community members and they must seek out the perspectives of persons within all levels of the community. Participants explained how this involves a commitment to not only 'talk the talk' but to 'walk the walk'. Many of the staff and students commented on how beneficial it was that the President and senior administrators spent a day or more using a wheelchair for mobility around campus in order to better understand the physical barriers that the university campus creates. Beth, the VP of Student Affairs, explained the importance of this commitment from her perspective:

The President and the Senior team need to be seen talking about it, walking it, you know, doing it, supporting it with resources. There's nothing that sends the signal better than everywhere you see it ... And then putting some pilot projects in place that people can see we're not just saying it, right? Or, 'she doesn't really think that but that's what they're doing'. Right? To try to change the culture...The past President and this President have been quite engaged in being concerned about disability issues and accessibility in general ...And this President walks, I mean he walks the talk too. I mean today almost of all of us were in a wheelchair, yesterday and he was in today and just being seen doing that, right? And trying to sort of say, 'we, you know, were trying to understand and, we're trying to walk your path' ...you know it's one thing for someone to say 'those little bumps hurt' but when you have to do it yourself, you know. So, trying to put himself in their shoes really helps too, so, and that's sort of how he does it...And that's gotta come from the top and there has to be a constant commitment to that.

When those in positions of power are committed to working directly with others within the community to understand and meet needs, and they commit to making inclusion and accessibility a priority, then this message filters down throughout the various levels within a community and can become a shared goal or policy. A vision that is guided by the community and is firmly

entrenched within a post-secondary institution through policies, strategic plans, services, and programs, enables the entire community to become aware of expectations, norms, and the values shaping the campus community. According to Astin and Astin (2000):

Students will find it difficult to lead until they have experienced effective leadership as part of their education. They are not likely to commit to making changes in society unless the institutions in which they have been trained display a similar commitment. If the next generation of citizen leaders is to be engaged and committed to leading for the common good, then the institutions which nurture them must be engaged in the work of the society and the community, modeling effective leadership and problem solving skills, demonstrating how to accomplish change for the common good. This requires institutions of higher education to set their own house in order, if they expect to produce students who will improve society (pp. 2-3).

Pamela provided an example of how the University's President helped shape a culture of acceptance by sharing his expectations with the entire community:

I think it's having a Senior Administrator believing in non-prejudice, no prejudices of any kind. And you know, an example here was, there was some graffiti found on the wall and that was, I don't know, it was graffiti around prejudice based, whatever. The President sent a message out to everybody that the University of Guelph does not tolerate this kind of behaviour. And the Senior Administrators, not only Presidents, but Directors, Senior staff need to make sure that we're all doing the best we can to help everybody who needs it and find ways to do that.

Gareth, a student and part-time staff member in the University's fitness centre, expressed how he believes that a top-down commitment to inclusion helped create a shared vision within his workplace, which ultimately helps create a supportive campus environment that benefits all those within the community. As Gareth stated:

Just having a culture like that established is important. You know, change in a workplace environment can be a really challenging endeavour but having all the supervisors definitely in line and having the same message and just treating people with respect and dignity and caring about people ... So having the supervisors really hammering that message into the staff I think is also really helpful, which at least here they do... Just building a culture of accessibility and caring. Pat definitely thinks that caring about people is important and anybody she works with gets that impression. It just rubs off on you. Having people who make it a priority to keep things inclusive and accessible and to make active steps, including financial investment if necessary, to ensure that those things happen is absolutely essential.

This illustrates the importance of ensuring that the perspectives of the community inform the policies and practices made by decision makers. It is then essential that there is good leadership

available who uses these perspectives to help shape a culture rooted in the genuine interests of the people.

It is essential for those in positions of power within a post-secondary environment to connect with, work with, and support, campus advocacy or advisory groups and committees in order to create a campus culture of compassion. Those in positions of power, including major decision makers, are in a unique position to provide the enforcement and support that is necessary to follow through and implement the solutions determined by a committee or group and helps ensure change happens more effectively and quickly.

When speaking with participants, it became apparent that some committees or groups were formed because those within the University demanded it, where as some committees were mandated by government (such as the Accessibility Committee). What was important was that all groups and committees involved a collaboration of individuals within varied levels of the university who were committed to working towards a shared goal of positive social change, including those in positions of power such as the University's President or Senior Administrators. According to the University's Associate Vice President of Student Affairs, although the perspectives of all members are relevant, welcomed, and valuable, what is critical is that there is support on such committees by those in positions of power who are able to provide the accountability and enforcement that is necessary to follow through with suggestions or enact change. Beth elaborated:

I sit on all these committees...They report to the President. And I think that is important that groups always should report to the President because it sends a signal that this is important and it's University wide...You have to make sure that the body whose on it has the authority to carry it down...You have to have me on it. You have to have the AVPA [Associate Vice President Academic] on it. You have to have a senior member from HR [Human Resources] because the stuff that's happening has to be carried back down, right, a faculty member or a staff member can absolutely give tones of good advice and that's why we have them on the committee as well but they don't have the line authority to move stuff down so you gotta have a committee like that for sure.

As indicated by Beth, it is essential for those at the 'top', including major decision makers and Senior Administrators to be involved with, and support, campus initiatives or working groups in order to provide the creditability that is needed to enforce the ideas generated by the group throughout the entire campus. Moreover, it further serves to build working relationships between persons within all levels of the community.

Fostering bottom-up connections to provide insight on inclusion

Although major decision makers play a substantial role in creating a campus culture of compassion, the role that individuals and grass roots initiatives have on shaping a campus culture cannot be overstated. Individuals, and those representing grass roots initiatives, are in a unique position to have an insider perspective on how the community could meet the needs and preferences of its members. They have the power and the responsibility to advocate for their rights and help shape the campus culture.

A campus culture of compassion will be fostered when those who are most affected by issues make their voices and perspectives known to those in positions of power, such as decision makers and policy makers. It is essential for campus members, including students and staff, to voice their concerns and advocate for what they need and want in order to help raise awareness and send a message that inclusion and equality are important issues that need to be addressed.

Kimberley, a student, explained:

It needs more advocacy and if enough people are speaking out about ‘we need to have this happening and we need to see this’, then the follow through will be a lot more effective and a lot more of it in general....It is something that has to be done in terms of raising the conscience of the people who are responsible for making those decisions to say that we want this to be a visible, you know priority, in our University.

Carla discussed how the complex and interconnected nature of campus support services make the process of advocating for certain issues simultaneously challenging and beneficial. It’s challenging in that students have to ensure that their perspectives are heard by all relevant parties but the interconnected nature of the system helps to increase the avenues where perspectives are heard. As Carla states, what is most important is that the student’s perspectives are heard:

It seems like there’s just a lot of links in a chain and it’s hard to get to the end of it but it’s really cool in a sense that you tell one person and 15 different committees know and they tell 15 more people and they tell 15 more people so words spreads and especially if it’s an important issue....when everything is compartmentalized it’s more and more important to make sure that we catch everybody.

Joshua, a faculty member and Chair of the University’s Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee (APDAC), indicated how the committee is not only open to hearing the perspectives of the campus community members but that this feedback is essential in order to guide their decision making around making the university more accessible for persons with a disability. The committee continuously encourages those affected by issues to connect

with the committee or a group to share their concerns and suggestions and, as Joshua indicated, there needs to be processes and mechanisms in place that enable community members to voice their concerns:

I think they [Accessibility Committees within post-secondary institutions] should provide opportunities for people to bring forward issues as well. That's part of the communication where we get material from the grass roots and not just wait 'til we hear about it in our committee. I think people can always communicate with the Human Rights office, with their student organizations, with their professional bodies like their Unions for example, then they can, that kind of communication processes is in place now.

The impact that community involvement and advocacy has on social change should not be overlooked. It was apparent that the input from students and staff played a key role in the development of university-wide groups and committees that ultimately contributed to shaping the University of Guelph's culture of compassion. As Beth stated:

It [initiatives around accessibility] doesn't come from, that it's being driven by the Centre for Students with Disabilities. It's being pushed up. 'How come we're not doing this?', you know, 'How come we're not doing this?'...So, some of these committees get funds over issues, right? So, some of them come to me and say 'we have an issue, blah blah blah' and I'll go 'well, that's a biggie', you know. I would take it to one of the standing committees or 'why don't we form an ad-hoc group and look at it?' A lot of them are driven from the bottom.... here has been a huge culture shift, right, and that's not all us. A lot of that is also coming from society...Students are coming up through schools now and being accommodated and learning to advocate better so some of it is coming naturally as well... And I think that's what builds it. It's gotta come from the top but it's gotta be supported at the bottom.

This subsection explored the important role that bottom-up initiatives play within a community. It further identified the role that these members need to take in order to build connections with those who will help move their ideas forward to create a campus that suits their needs and interests. Strategies to ensure that communities feel comfortable bringing issues forward and having their perspectives heard will be discussed further in the section Informed Community.

Supporting the service providers who connect those at the 'top' and 'bottom'

The first two subsections have discussed the importance of top-down and bottom-up connections; however, staff at the University of Guelph indicated that it is also important to acknowledge and support those who work within middle management positions as well as the staff members who help connect decision makers to those who are impacted by such decisions. Their insights revealed that it's not just those at the 'top' and those at the

‘bottom’ of a community that need to be connected; rather, it is necessary to have connections that move from the top *through* to the bottom and then from the bottom *through* to the top. As Pamela stated:

When we’re talking about ‘top-down’ ‘bottom-up’, you also have to be knowledgeable of middle management- the ‘middle’... The middle structure think quite differently than the ‘top’ or the ‘bottom’, they think very differently.

Middle management and staff members are often in a unique position in that they are following the policies mandated by their supervisors, but they are also connected to the issues and perspectives of those for whom they serve on a daily basis (students or broader community members). The staff members who were participants in this study, therefore, recommended that post-secondary institutions foster strong bi-directional connections, communication and accountability. As Colleen stated:

We are talking about the ‘top-down’ and ‘down-top’ but there’s a ‘middle’. We’ve kind of forgotten that there’s the middle there. And you know, in the business world, those are the middle managers and those are ones that tend to have a huge amount of stress ‘cause there’s push back from the ‘top’ to them and there’s push back from the ‘bottom-up’. And that’s the group that often ends up really in difficult positions because they see what great grass root stuff is going on, they hear the messages from the top but they still have responsibilities and restraints on some of the things that they can do to really make it all a very smooth...And that’s where funding comes in and that’s where prioritizing comes in....They hear the message of what the President wants the message to be and they’re, like you guys are a perfect example [referring to our research team], you’re doing these great grass root projects but somewhere at some point, you have to go ask [your high-up supervisor] for money or you have to, you know, fight for a cause to have more access to a pool, right? And then there are restraints... We can’t forget about that middle group because they’re very influential because they are the ones that hear the cries for help and proposals for new initiatives and...they’re getting often opposing pressures.

Staff members, particularly those in the front lines, often receive feedback from students or community members on how things can be improved. It is therefore essential to maintain strong connections and healthy working relationships between staff and major decision makers in order for them to feel comfortable bringing issues forward on their behalf. Leslie, Co-ordinator for the University’s Fitness Centre, indicated how helpful it is that her supervisor shares a similar vision of creating a welcoming and compassionate community. This enables her to bring ideas forward to her supervisors that emerge from interactions with her staff and students. As Leslie indicated:

Communication is pretty good and as I said [my supervisor's] got a great philosophy so I never feel that I can't take anything forward. And I never feel that it's like taken forward and they just kind of go 'yeah it's a great idea' and then when I leave they go 'whatever'.

As indicated by Leslie, it is helpful when persons within all levels of the campus community, including those at the 'top', 'middle' and 'bottom', share the same vision for the campus as this helps to ensure that all members are 'on the same page' in terms of decision making and program planning. According to Colleen:

Some of the difficulty to is that the 'buy-in' has to be all the way up to the Director's level and then all the way back down to the grass roots, right? So there has to be encouragement.

This section described the connections that are essential between various segments within the campus community, including major decision makers, staff members in middle management positions, and individuals and organizations representing grass roots initiatives and perspectives. This next section will explore the necessity of developing strong working connections and partnerships between the staff members working within different areas in the campus community as well as the relationships that need to be fostered between the university and the broader community beyond the campus borders as these relationships have the potential for mutual benefits and outcomes.

Developing Synergistic Campus Partnerships

A synergistic partnership approach occurs "when individuals come together and collectively use their wealth of abilities and strengths to come up with a combined solution or response that often far exceeds what any one individual could come up with" (Dupuis et al., 2008, p. 21). Such partnerships recognize that community members are all interdependent and that these reciprocal relationships involve shared mutual learning, trust, and a commitment of all partners (Dupuis et al., 2008).

In the post-secondary context, it was apparent that connections were necessary within the campus community (between various University Departments) and outside of the community (between the University and the greater community). Such partnerships are essential in creating compassionate campus communities because it is these connections and collaborations that make the community stronger, more enriched, and better equipped to meet needs.

Nurturing strong interdepartmental connections

A post-secondary institution can be considered a community unto itself. As such, it is essential for collaborations and connections to exist between the various Departments and offices on campus in order to provide seamless services in a holistic manner. Maintaining these connections can be easier said than done because it is very challenging to keep up with changing personnel and department changes and many staff members are too busy to take the time that is needed to foster such connections. Sidney, advisor for the CSD, explained:

I think that's gonna really vary from staff person to staff person, right? How much do I as a staff person take on the fact that I work within a system and there's a lot of other resources that I can connect with? And, what am I gonna do, myself, professionally, to put myself out there to connect with other people to, you know, bridge that, to make those connections with other people so that, you know, I'm keeping it in my conscience awareness when I am meeting with students? It's like 'okay, what other resources can we draw out? Okay, I might want to call Bill in that Department and connect a student with him.'...It's hard to keep updated about what's going on whether it be on the University campus or whether it be in the community so and you're only gonna be keeping that near conscience awareness if you're actually kind of putting yourself out there and keeping up to date with what's available and what's out there..It's still really challenging to people. Systems change all the time. That's why people who do case management in corporations have jobs, really, because it is a complicated system to work with... One place is named XYZ one day and the next day it's you know ABC, their mandates changed, their phone number is different. Yeah, it's complicated.

Staff members, particularly those working in social services like counselling services or accessibility supports, need to work in collaboration and partnership with others departments in order to provide adequate services and programs that holistically meet needs and create an inclusive environment. Each department needs to recognize how they may be connected with others in order to understand the interconnected web of support that is necessary to create an environment that is helpful, welcoming, supportive, and inclusive. As Sidney stated, you have to know who you should be connected with and how to navigate the system:

It all comes down to relationships. Do people know about the information? Do they know how to ask us things? Do they know who they can connect with about anything, any barriers that they might experience, some tangible resources available to help them overcome any barriers? ...Things change so it's tough, like a relationship. It's a constant, you know, reconnecting with people, building those relationships with services and different people in those services, so then we can navigate it when we need to.

As indicated by Sidney, it all comes down to the development of partnerships and relationships between those within the campus community.

Fostering partnerships between and within the campus community

The CSD was said to play an integral role on campus in terms of creating a culture of compassion. Therefore, it was deemed essential that the CSD develop strong working relationships with other Departments and individuals within the University community, including other student service providers such as Counselling Services, Student Life Coordinators, Health Services, the Department of Athletics, and even faculty members. These connections were considered essential because issues surrounding accessibility, inclusion, diversity, and support should be a campus-wide priority and not just the responsibility of the CSD. Carla provided an example of how she wished that issues of accessibility and support would extend beyond being seen as a responsibility of the CSD toward being seen as something that everyone can do:

I feel like we need to start what do you call it when you like branch a plant and diversify and like spread out the energy like I feel like the more people that know me and know I'm not "just a disabled person" or disabled person or someone with CSD or whatever the more people that can say 'oh you don't need the CSD I can help you do this. I don't need to be an official note taker with the CSD I'll just photocopy my notes and give them to you'... The emphasis needs to be placed on other departments to acknowledge that the CSD doesn't represent the student for themselves they represent CSD...but that students are just students like any other.

Carla's statement relates to the notion of social responsibility and the importance of informal support systems (students simply helping other students). A campus that is proactive in considering ways to better include and support *all* individuals will help to create a holistic approach to meeting needs. It will also help to provide awareness of the needs, preferences, and challenges faced by persons with disabilities, which will help ensure that these needs are taken into account during program planning or policy development. In order for these issues to be at the forefront of the entire campus, the CSD must be well known and have strong working relationships with various individuals and departments within the university community which will help break down barriers and facilitate accessibility and inclusion.

Through speaking with participants, it became apparent that the CSD had many strong connections with other individuals and organizations around campus. For example, the CSD worked collaboratively with those responsible for planning and implementing the University's

Orientation Week (O-Week) which helped to ensure that their activities and programs were accessible and inclusive. As noted by Mark, a student with a disability, the interconnection between the CSD and the Orientation Committee ensured that his needs were met which enabled him to participate fully in orientation week:

I think for accommodations, they were very adequate because I know with the CSD usually ask them [students] ‘what type of help do you need around, what type of activities are you interested in?’ So that way they [Orientation Committee] know what type of difficulties I might walk into. So that way they can try to figure out a way around it instead of everything going haywire. And it’s very helpful.

The development of strong working relationships between the CSD and other campus Departments enables staff members to draw upon the resources and expertise of each other to better support the students. As Deborah indicated:

We’ve got a lot of connections, you know. Even if I don’t know something specifically I can, you know, talk to Barry and chances are he knows somebody that can help with issue X and he’ll make a call ...There’s a lot of different ways we can connect people to make sure that they’re getting the best kind of services and support...Barry’s the kind of go-to guy just because he knows a little bit of everybody so you know, chances are he knows someone from athletics by first name. He can just pick up the phone and be like ‘hey John, like, you know, we got a student who wants to do this, like what can we do?’ Right? So, a lot of it’s just through that personal, those personal connections that he’s made so he’s the like an awesome resource for everybody here for sure.

Another key partnership that was identified was between the CSD and the various areas within the Department of Athletics, such as the campus weight room, fitness centre, and aquatics centre. This connection is essential in order for the staff to effectively consider and meet the needs and preferences of campus members, particularly those with disabilities, and assist with joint programming. For example, the Recreation Equity on Campus (REC) Club is a joint initiative between the two departments and communication and collaboration between them is necessary for the success of the program and for the benefit of participants. Liam, a student volunteer for the REC Club, described how he felt that collaboration between the departments was needed in order to support him, as a volunteer, and the student with a disability with whom he works. His role was to develop a fitness plan for a student with a disability and he believed that support from the DA and the CSD, in terms of tips and strategies on how to help his partner, would have been helpful. As Liam explained:

I think there needs to be more of a group effort to help students like that because if it's just left to one person, it is a lot of work to organize everything. And for one individual to come in, I mean I didn't think about this before, but there is a lot that needs to go into it, a lot of different levels need to be working together.

Several of the REC Club volunteers are students who also work in the campus fitness centre as certified personal trainers or fitness instructors. Leslie, the Coordinator of the University's Fitness Centre, therefore feels comfortable with these staff members supporting REC Club participants with a disability within the fitness centre because she knows that they are qualified to provide such support. However, she felt that a stronger link needed to be made between her Department and the CSD particularly since she was concerned about the safety and liability of those using the fitness centre with CSD volunteers who were not properly trained in providing fitness support. As Leslie indicated:

Right now I'd like to see better unity between [the REC Club and the fitness centre] because there's a lot of them that I don't know when they're coming in and I know a lot of the times I don't know the people that are working with them, and that's always my concern 'cause anybody who trains in my facility or works in my facility is trained by me and is legally able to be in that room because of certification and they're qualified, whereas as sometimes I find they come, somebody from the centre of disabilities comes in with a disabled client, they're working with them in the weight room but I have no idea if they even know what they're doing or how to use the equipment. So we're looking at having a better union obviously between the two and being able to facilitate and help out a little bit more... So it's not just you know legal responsibility for me, obviously that's an issue but I'm generally concerned about the people that are coming in, are they getting what they need and a lot of the times if people don't have theoretical training or have never had a personal trainer, taken a certification course, if you walk into any gym most things people do are incorrect and ... So a lot of the time what they're doing isn't as efficient or as safe as it could be so that's generally my concern and why I feel that we need to have a better link between the two.

It was also deemed helpful for CSD staff to maintain collaborate working relationships with staff members within the fitness centre. For example, Brian indicated how he connected with a fitness instructor who had a student with a visual impairment sign up for her class. She was having difficulty providing the student with the support that he needed in the class while helping the other 35 participants, so they collectively determined a solution. Brian explained:

I talked about the student taking two dance classes and he approached the instructor 'Oh, you know, no problem, you know, I'll work closely with you' but then we realized that he was going to need a helper for access, instructions, you know, following the group... The instructor and I talked, you know we talked that it was best

if we can get a student helper just to help with instructions and following through otherwise she's taking away from the other 35 members of the class to help him which really isn't fair to the others because they already paid their \$45 and he is too, but he needs a little bit more help... So that's why we, the volunteer is a paid helper, it doesn't matter, it's a peer helper... We hire students, there's nothing wrong with that, no problem. It was best... I would rather that students just show up and the instructor is trained around disability issues. But, unfortunately, not all of them have the expertise, so it all comes back to us to work out.

Although there appeared to be collaboration between the CSD and the department of athletics, there were still instances where enhanced dialogue was needed. For example, CSD staff and REC club participants expressed how many of the REC Club volunteers leave the University over the summer and so there is a shortage of volunteers. In speaking with the Fitness Coordinator, she revealed how many of their clients also leave for the summer and so her fitness staff members are often looking for more responsibilities. This revealed an area where collaboration could occur to create a win-win situation but this solution had not yet been identified because of a lack of communication between the two departments on this issue. Leslie explained:

I'd love to see us more united to CSD and other associations on campus so that we can work together. I find for us, and I think anybody in athletics will say that, we're kind of our own little community within athletics... So we're looking at having a better union obviously between the two and being able to facilitate and help out a little bit more... CSD volunteers are gone (in the summer), so all of a sudden this person gets help for eight months and then for four months they sit there, well that's somewhere where I could be involved and go 'okay, well we'd take that on for the four months and my personal trainers can facilitate that'. Makes my trainers busy, gets them doing what they do anyway and it's great for the clients. So it's win-win if we could make a better union between the two... We just need to network more. We need to sit down and talk more. ... And maybe I need, you know, my staff need to be more involved in that area or the awareness needs to be built in ... Maybe they [the CSD] don't even know that we're interested in even helping them... Whether they really understand that we're willing to step forward and help with that that, I'm not sure.

It is understandable that it may be challenging for members within the CSD and the department of athletics to work collaboratively in every instance. In order to combat this, some participants suggested that it may be necessary to have a permanent person (be it staff or volunteer) responsible for maintaining these connections who is affiliated with both the Department of Athletics and the CSD. This person would act as liaison in order to better connect the two departments and to specialize in providing accessible programming. Colleen's quote explained:

I think we need to have somebody who can connect the pieces and it would be great if that person was well known to the center for students with disabilities and that person also was well known to the different clubs and fitness instructors, sort of who might have the most skill to be able to adapt, that kind of thing.

Currently, a student volunteer is responsible for maintaining the REC Club. Her duties entail recruiting volunteers, generating interests with the students with disabilities, linking up the partnerships, and supporting the partners in their activities. This is a lot of responsibility for a student volunteer so it was suggested that a permanent staff member or volunteer be responsible for this program in order to maintain consistency and avoid the problems associated with regular turnovers that happen with student volunteers. Melissa, a student with a disability affiliated with the REC Club, elaborated:

I think that's a really good idea having somebody, if you had a full-time individual that coordinates everything 'cause that was a big deal not having somebody that could coordinate everything. The length of time trying to find somebody I remember waiting almost three weeks...Always turning over and the person's knowledge gets turned over and you don't share that and it's such a big deal because everything that's learned gets lost...It's again a dynamic process because things change and so those things get lost. There's a certain amount of learning that you just can't pass over. And so one person would be nice so they could coordinate it and keep that in the one spot. And again if they had special training that would be good or knew where to then go to, have it so they had a reference individual that they could ask questions of etc. etc. etc. that would be nice.

The person in this position would provide support to the REC Club partners and all staff members with the Department of Athletics to help create programs and services that are inclusive. They would also be available as a resource to help share information and tips on how to enhance programming for persons with a disability. As Kimberley stated:

It is a nice idea to think if there was even someone that the entire staff knows that this person is more specialized and works closely with different disabilities so if you have these questions, we can refer you to them and they can definitely help you out because that's their role. So I think it would be a benefit to have kind of a role in the gym, in the management or what have you, that their role is to provide that kind of assistance if the program is gonna become more accessible.

Strategies to strengthen partnerships

As previously mentioned, interconnected staff members are better able to direct students to resources and better meet student needs and preferences. However, it may be confusing and difficult for staff to develop and maintain such interdepartmental connections for a variety of reasons, including lack of time, concerns related to identifying potential

partners, and because of a lack of support in creating these partnerships. Participants identified a variety of ways to strengthen interdepartmental connections and develop strong working partnerships between campus departments.

The first strategy was to create a resource book which identifies various student and community services (including contact information) in order for staff and students to easily identify available resources and services and potential individuals with whom they should connect. Melissa, a student with a disability, was excited about creating such a resource book as she felt that it would be quite beneficial to all involved:

A separate reference manual. That would be great. Then it would always be there...A reference book so that we can all go to it and say 'OKAY this is where I need to go'. So at least there we can see it and then even if names change it doesn't matter 'cause at least it's there...all the information would be there about the peer helpers, the structure and you know what's available you know the whole recreational thing, the activities, everything. Everything would be there so that would be my suggestion. Get a reference manual put together with what's available - The committees, who's involved, all the support, everything. Somebody could do that. Maybe I could do that. .. Because not having the education, not having the awareness of what's available and then it's your ability to even consider what would be an opportunity. And that makes a big difference because then everything looks this big. Once you have an awareness of what's available then you have an opportunity.

It may also be helpful to host a resource fair where various departments gather to learn and share with each other about what resources are available and what services they provide, in order for them to better refer one another to students needing that support. At the university, all resident advisors were expected to attend a resource fair which Avery described as being very beneficial:

If a student came to me at the very least from training I was made aware of the resource that would be helpful for them or and if I couldn't immediately direct them to, oh this room in this building, I could, I would know a name and I could look it up or at the very least...I had other people that I could talk to who would know. But for everything that occurred I had some idea of who I should go to and I looked it up and I looked around or I'd direct the students to a place and the one.

Sidney, a recent CSD staff member, was also expected to attend the resource fair which she found extremely helpful. As Sidney stated:

I started August thirteenth so I had kind of a three week period where there was a lot of information fairs going on. A lot of people coming together and talking about services and what they provide. You know, what's specifically for a new student or for the R.A.s [Resident Advisors] coming in. But I certainly, as a new staff, has had a

huge benefit from that with connecting with other people ... I've personally made a good connection over with wellness as well, health services, athletics - I was beside them for an information fair so I had good conversation with them, housing.

Sidney further recommended that all staff should be encouraged to attend the fair on an on-going basis in order to remain informed on what services and programs are available on campus.

It may also be beneficial to host interdepartmental training sessions. This enables staff to get to know one another and understand the interconnections between their departments. This better enables staff to serve students and community members more holistically and effectively.

As Sidney stated:

I was involved with some of the training with the R.A.s when they came in, they do a really neat training called Behind Closed Doors. It's this in-vivo training opportunity where at the end of their, their week and a half where they're together for training, they do all these uh scenarios. They wanted a residence from over across campus and so the students arrive to the residence's door, there's a blurb on the door about what's going to be going on when they actually arrive into that environment and so one person plays it out with the two actors or one actor or three actors and everybody in that, in the room and then there's five or six people watching so you learn to do what they're doing and learn by watching. So it's a really good style for training and that was really across campus so you know campus police were involved and, and obviously all the R.A.s, in wellness, athletics, here, you know it was a really good opportunity to make those connections with other people.

Interdepartmental social events put on by the university are another way that connections and relationships can be developed in an informal environment. Deborah explained:

We've got socials. Like we've got you know socials coming up for the holidays and so you know our boss is like 'We gotta go. You gotta talk to somebody you don't know and just try to, you know, meet some people and figure out who does what' so that when something comes up you're like 'oh, I know someone from athletics'.

Meetings and personal development days are other ways that staff can become informed of other departments and the connections that are necessary. As Leslie stated, "Pat and I are, you know, we're together all the time because we're sort of the same unit and all of us programmers we meet on a weekly basis so the communication is pretty good."

Having support services in close proximity is also a great strategy to build connections and to help with referrals. At the university, all student services are on the same floor in the student centre which helped students easily access various services and it helped staff to be more aware of other departments while having easier access to each other's resources. Deborah, a staff

member of the CSD, described how their close proximity to the Orientation planners helps them to be more cognizant of issues pertaining to accessibility:

They [student life planners] would probably consult with us. Like I don't think they'd have someone there specifically that says CSD, but I think even given their proximity like they know, they know what we're about, I'm sure they make tons of referrals to ask, so they probably are more tuned into accessibility just because where we're all located on the third floor.

Committees that involve representatives from various departments are a perfect way to connect with others with a similar mandate in order to help solve complex challenges or address a university-wide issue. Participants in the study identified how there are a multitude of campus committees which have interdepartmental representation and described how these are valuable in helping to create a campus culture of compassion. These committees are not only purposeful in that they help to identify issues in order to collectively problem solve, but they also serve to unite people from different departments and capacities across campus. This helps build a network of campus connections and relationships that can be drawn upon whenever necessary. A few committees that may be helpful within a post-secondary community were provided.

The Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee (APDAC) is an interdepartmental committee whose mandate is to help identify and address barriers on campus relative to accessibility through policy changes and development and through education and awareness:

It's a sort of a large University-based committee, which makes recommendations and provides advice to the University administration...We write reports, an annual report, we help the University ensure that it's in compliance with provincial and federal legislation...There's communication between us and the Human Rights Office, there's communication between us and the Senior Administration, certainly we have the head of physical resources on our committee as well, so that we need somebody to help push to make something happen on the physical resources side..and the CSD are all covered on our committee.

The committee is comprised of a variety of individuals who all play a role in creating an accessible university. Brian, CSD Student Advisor, provided an overview of those involved:

That committee consists of Human Rights, CSD, all the major stakeholders. A lot of Directors are on that committee. We have a rep. We have two student reps, CSA- Central Students Association, Graduate Student Association, it's a huge committee, over 20 people, and they meet every, once a month, and it's all accessibility- website accessibility, universal structural design. And they put a report together at the end of the year by August 30th, we have to have the report is submitted to the Ontario

Government. It states the barriers we face and how we're going to work on breaking down those barriers.

The Accessibility Committee is affiliated with APDAC but is the group responsible for actually enacting the physical modifications that are identified by APDAC. Joshua explained:

While we [APDAC] are sort of the policy guys and the advice guys and the compliance guys, the accessibility group are the 'can-do' guys and so they're the ones who get a request to get automatic door openers on or build ramps or etcetera. And, put out the work orders, tend to the contracts, bring in contractors and supervise the work, so, there's also that committee who actually get the work done, it's almost all physical accessibility issues. And I sit on that committee to provide liaison between the two committees and we support each other. So there is also just a go out and get the job done group as well as a let's think about it and critique it that we are.

The development of campus advisory committees are another method of connecting related stakeholders, including those who plan, implement, and utilize programs or services, in order to gain insight on how programs or services can be enhanced. Both the Department of Athletics and the CSD developed Advisory Committees which provided opportunities for students, staff, and high level administrators, to connect and voice their concerns with one another. The CSD Advisory Committee includes representation from six students with a range of disabilities including learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health issues, and sensory disabilities. What is unique about these advisory councils is that they invite individuals outside of the immediate department to their meetings in order to gain a broader perspective of the issues at hand. For example, Alexis, a student with a disability, described how a member from the campus' maintenance staff was invited to a CSD's Advisory Committee meeting so they could collectively problem solve around snow removal. Students had an opportunity to express how inadequate snow removal was preventing them from being able to access the campus and both the students and the staff from the maintenance department gained an increased understanding of each other's perspectives. Alexis reported how being able to talk directly with those capable of making change was beneficial and she wished that there were more opportunities to do so:

There were a lot of other people that came to the meetings like the grounds people or anything like that so it was a very beneficial meeting 'cause you got to talk to more of the higher ups. So it would be nice if to see if they could have those types of meetings more than just the once or twice a year...It would just seem more beneficial if you could do that more often or at least have meetings with the people that can make that kind of stuff happen. Because you can voice your concerns a lot but there's no guarantee that what you actually say can um be done if you don't get to talk to the right people.

The Department of Athletics has an Athletics Advisory Council which includes interdepartmental representation such as student and staff members from the CSD. Andrea, a student with a disability, spoke of the benefits of being included on such a committee as it provided the students with opportunities to understand the intentions behind the actions of service providers, and it provided staff with opportunities to better understand the needs and preferences of students. Andrea explained:

Let's say there's a particular student comes and has a bunch of requests that they would find really helpful, then, and maybe they've been really frustrated with the athletics center because they haven't been able to do things, then it can be helpful to them as well to hear the other side of the story, like 'really wanting to do that but because of whatever reason we haven't been able to but we hope to within the near future', then they might sit back and realize 'oh okay well it's not that just they don't know and that they don't care, it's that they can't'. So I think that could really help as well...And to know that they know how they can help you right? Like when I tell someone I have a brain injury it's like okay what does that mean? I don't know what I can do to help you when you tell me that, right? Or I have low vision, okay I don't know that it's helpful for me to walk on your right hand side, you need to tell me that. It's not just assumed.

Creating ad-hoc committees based on specific issues is another great way to connect people within the post-secondary community. There are numerous issues that students face, such as depression, addictions, or eating disorders, thus, it is helpful to bring relevant stakeholders together around an issue in order to problem solve collectively. These committees are a perfect way to trial-run scenarios to ensure that all the services and persons are in place to support students and community members holistically. Pamela elaborated:

That may be part of what works here within our student service division which is athletic center, residences, counselling, center for students of disabilities, all those things that we call here student services. There's a collaboration that happens around a whole bunch of issues so you know and I know each other and Barry and I know each other and we have a collaborative approach to how we deal with, with these kinds of situations and we talk about them. Same with we have a collaborative approach dealing with eating disorders on this campus so that if we identify someone here we're worried about I can connect with counselling, I can connect with health services, I can connect with people on campus who have similar concerns or areas. So we try to set up collaborations around issues. And that may be part of the solution...So we've had a number of issues where we pull people from different areas together to talk about, like you know whenever we have a student on campus that dies from something whether it's you know self, self inflicted or alcohol related or drug related, we try to pull a task force together from different areas that talk about it and say what can we do and can we sit...It would just be bringing teams of people

together to put focus in place. Here's an issue we're worried about...Like our eating disorder coalition that we formed...Where we meet probably once or twice a year and just see how everybody is doing and 'what are you worried about now'?

This section explored strategies to enhance relationships and collaborations between departments and individuals within the campus community. The next section will explore the necessity of developing strong partnerships and connections with those outside of the immediate university community.

Fostering strong campus-community partnerships

Campus communities are strengthened by the connections and partnerships that they foster with those outside of their immediate community. This relates to the principle of universal responsibility in that the actions of one individual or community will likely impact the lives of other individuals and the broader community (Gyatso, 1999) and so it is beneficial if strong, productive, sustainable, and mutually benefiting relationships are built between them (Holland, 2004). These relationships are essential since post-secondary institutions are increasingly using satellite services or web-based learning options, which requires that students need access to community resources or programs. Moreover, as Sidney indicated, although campuses can serve as a 'localized' community, it's important to recognize that they are not an island unto themselves:

I think what's key, too, is to really remember, you know, whether it's Waterloo or whether it's Guelph that the University is not an island unto itself. I think sometimes students, faculty, staff, start thinking about that because to a very large degree a lot of your needs can be met on campus, you know. But we are part of a larger community. There are a lot of other resources available in the community that aren't available on campus. And again that's a real challenge for each and every staff person, to kind of go above and beyond what's actually happening here to the broader community as well. But the reality is students live in the community. Yes, they have a lot of students living on campus, but people are people and students are citizens of a broader community and I think far too often in a University environment that's forgotten about... There's a broader community and we have to remember that there's other resources available in other places that people can connect with as well.

Although post-secondary institutions have increasingly seen the value in developing strong campus-community partnerships, these relationships can be impeded if the university or college maintains "old habits of positioning the campus as expert and the community as laboratory" (Holland, 2004, p. 13). It is therefore critical that post-secondary institutions develop strong connections and partnerships with others within the community, such as

local research centres, community groups or organizations, service providers, and other post-secondary institutions, based on principles of shared power, decision making, and resources (Holland, 2000). Holland (2004) believes that authentic partnerships between the university and community will only be sustained if the partnership:

...reflects candidly on the motivations, goals, and expectations of each partner, articulates the historic tensions that might exist between campus and community [and] develops a new understanding of each partner's interests, capacities, and limitations. These steps will help ensure that the partnership leads to mutual benefits, respect, equity, and reciprocity (p. 13).

The University of Guelph has made a commitment to the community by working toward developing scholarship, research, and services that will improve the lives of others. As indicated in the 2008 annual President's Report (University of Guelph, 2008):

Our responsibility to society is to share our knowledge and use our skills to improve quality of life... We appreciate that our activities have a direct impact on our neighbours in the City of Guelph, and we are inspired by the University's history of knowledge transfer that has improved the lives and livelihoods of people across Ontario and Canada and, indeed, around the world (pp. 1 and 2).

Connections and relationships with services and resources outside of the immediate university community have the potential to be mutually beneficial and can serve several functions which will be discussed further in the subsequent sections.

Building relationships and connections with other groups or organizations that offer relevant services or programming, such as a community recreation complex, can provide opportunities for both the greater community and the post-secondary community to blend and share resources. This approach can save money, reduce inefficiencies and redundancies, and ultimately provide enhanced services and opportunities. Sidney provided an example of how the university can easily draw upon community resources instead of duplicating services:

Before I took this position I was working in the Waterloo region with the Distress Centre and Mobile Crisis Team and I was really thankful when we would be getting calls from the University. The Mobile Crisis Team, we would go out and we would respond to the campus ...It's like you know what, we don't have a mobile crisis team on campus, but there's one in the community and what a great resource to be able to bring into this environment to assist here and to bridge that. We don't need to recreate it here, it's not necessary to recreate it here because it's already available and accessible to us.

A single community will not have the resources or infrastructure to meet all needs and preferences of the community. Therefore, partnerships between post-secondary institutions and

organizations within the community could help campus and community members to access services or programs that may otherwise not be available. For example, a campus that is unable to offer a program like wheelchair basketball can provide a voucher for students or staff to access a similar program being offered within the community at a price consistent with campus recreation costs. Jessica elaborated on the benefits of blending resources with another university:

Obviously Guelph isn't gonna have everything we need. But maybe if we can make connections with other places, go other places to get help or learn from them, we could do more... If we had someone with paraplegia get in touch with Mac [McMaster University] and maybe they'd have a study going on that needs people with paraplegia 'cause they have the walking frame... So it would be the type of thing where if this actually really flew and became something big it would be 'well, let's get in touch with someone from Mac. Maybe Mac has something going on there that we can work with'.

Further, opening up campus programs and services to the greater community, and vice versa, can help increase participation rates in both community and campus activities. As Ava, a resident of the City of Waterloo stated:

A system where they can tap into what is already being done at the City of Kitchener or the City of Waterloo, like the City of Kitchener has a whole Inclusion Department so they ran a number of different sports already, like if there was a way to integrate that into some part of the campus then it's a great opportunity for people to get more involved in the community, definitely.

Making community connections and blending resources is clearly a win-win situation.

It is mutually beneficial for post-secondary institutions and the greater community to open up their programs and services to one another as doing so will provide increased promotional opportunities. Joint membership or initiatives enable individuals to become more aware of the programs and services that are being offered either in the community or on campus. For example, the University of Guelph's REC Club is open to all community members with disabilities interested in being linked up with a student volunteer to help them access recreation opportunities on campus or within the community. Carla, who is currently a University of Guelph student, explained how she participated in the University's REC Club as a young child, which enabled her to become familiar with the University of Guelph campus and develop relationships with various university students and staff. The connection that she developed with the university over the years inspired her to attend the University of Guelph upon graduating High School. Campus programs and services that are open to the community serve to promote

the University and recruit potential students. As Ava stated: “There’s no down side ... I mean you’re educating the young people about the campus at the same time, not just about athletics but they’re seeing what’s possible and being able to go outside of the box”. Post-secondary institutions that enable the community to access programs and services create opportunities to promote their campus, generate extra income, and gain community support. Pamela indicated that all of the programs that they offer are open to the public, like their Beyond Breast Cancer Program or their Lifestyle and Fitness Program, and not only does this promote the university and generate income, but community outreach is also just a good thing to do:

It’s seen as a community outreach. It’s a way for us to make some dollars too but we don’t make a lot of money out of it but it’s seen as how we outreach to our community and get them involved in our programming. The Beyond Breast Cancer is a program that my dragon boat team is housed in, so again I get that started as a community based program but we have seventy percent of our members are University of Guelph alumni family or people that work here...I see it as a win-win situation. We push this and then there’s a lot more people coming into our program and more people, you know we tie into the school and we’re gonna have more schools coming to our games...that’s the win-win, if more people come to the games we’re changing their mindsets on them being active themselves.

A post-secondary institution that has developed strong relationships and connections with local high schools can assist students in experiencing easier transitions into university, which can ultimately enable them to become more engaged in campus life. James, a former University of Guelph varsity athlete, recalled how he was able to continue his interest in track at the varsity level because his High School track coach connected with the varsity coach to support him in developing strategies to include a runner with a visual impairment on the team. James explained:

At the end of high school, I wanted to keep going at the University. But the environment at Guelph is completely different because, you know, going from a school like the blind school where I went to where blindness was a normal thing, you know, and they encourage us to do sports to at the University at Guelph where I really had to try really hard to sort of become integrated with the team. And the first few weeks when I was at Guelph someone that had coached me when I was in High School came up to Guelph and the three of us met with the a cross country coach at Guelph...the whole thing was new to him but especially coaching a blind runner was really new to him so and he was open to it. I mean he said ‘you know, this is something that I can definitely help you in any way I can’. ...That’s the thing ‘cause I think without that [support from my former coach] it would have been harder for sure. That sort of started the process, for sure...especially as a first year student, you know, like its different stuff.

The University of Guelph provided opportunities for community based sports teams to use their gymnasium facilities. They saw this as a great opportunity to reach out to the community while educating university members on available sporting opportunities outside of the university. Pamela recalled how they used to have the national wheelchair basketball team use their facility which helped spawn wheelchair basketball activities in their university. As she stated: “We had the Canadian Wheelchair Basketball Team training here during summer but when we had people who were actively wheelchair people and wanted to start basketball, it kind of happened again, that’s probably a community thing” (Pamela). Ava provided another example of how she witnessed an accessible sledge hockey team playing games in her campus’ gymnasium. This enabled her to become aware of the availability of such a sport which motivated her to join the team. Opportunities for post-secondary students and community members to become engaged in campus and community life is therefore dependent on these partnerships.

There are also altruistic reasons why post-secondary institutions would want to build partnerships with organizations and service providers within the community. The University of Guelph offers programs for everyone, including community members, because they see it as their responsibility to offer programs and services that increase the health and well-being of all community members, particularly for those who need it most. Aside from opening up all specialized programs to the community, Pamela also sits on a community coalition whose objective is to enhance activity in the daily lives of all persons. She is thrilled that her supervisors encourage her to represent the university on this coalition because she believes the university (and all persons for that matter) should connect with others who care about the well-being of community members in order to make positive social change. Pamela elaborated:

They allow me to sit on that collaborative and represent the University on that collaborative. And the University is very supportive of it because it’s a very strong community based collaborative and our President, that’s what he likes. The fact that the University’s taking a leadership role could mean that we could have an impact in the lives of people in Guelph...we could actually change people’s lives and change our culture. ...But it’s a lot of work and there’s a lot of barriers, a lot of barriers that we’re running into but we’re committed to this. And thank goodness my director’s allowing me to do that....And that’s, you know, certainly at Guelph, our President is very supportive of us connecting with our community and being a part of our community. So we, we tend to do that probably more here ‘cause that’s what we want to do.

Providing opportunities for individuals from the greater community and the post-secondary community to interact in meaningful ways can help build relationships, increase awareness and understanding of each other's perspectives, blend resources, and provide opportunities for individuals that may otherwise not be an option.

This section examined the interconnections and partnerships that are necessary within all levels of a campus community. It also discussed the interconnections that are necessary between post-secondary institutions and the service providers, organizations, and citizens within the community at large. This section revealed that all individuals, including major decision makers and everyday citizens, have an equally valuable role to play in shaping a community's culture. This helps to reinforce that those who are most affected by decisions, policies, or services should be included as true partners in all aspects of decisions making. The implementation of policies, practices, and strategies that foster collaboration, the sharing/blending of resources, and the building of supportive networks, will ensure that programs and services are offered in an efficient and effective way. It will also help create an environment that is compassionate, supportive, and responsive to the needs and preferences of all community members.

The following section will examine the second characteristic of a campus culture of compassion: Compassionate Campus Communities are Supportive and Enabling. Specifically, it will reveal how physical and social environments within a campus community need to be supportive and accessible which enables all persons to be actively engaged in campus life.

Characteristic #2: A Supportive and Enabling Campus Community

The social model of disability asserts that it is both the social and physical environment that creates barriers and excludes individuals, causing differences of ability to become a 'disability'. This exclusion of others often goes unnoticed because it is viewed as a result of an individual's 'inability' rather than society's inability to incorporate diversity into its culture (Atchison, 2003; Barnes, Mercer, & Shakespeare, 1999; Bickenbach, 2001; Crow, 1996; Oliver, 1993; Rioux, 1997, 2003; Shakespeare & Watson, 2001; Wendell, 1996; Williams, 2001). From this perspective, it is imperative that all aspects of an individual's identity, be it their race, ability level, age, or sexual orientation, be viewed as a natural part of society. Having a visual impairment may be unique in that there are limited amounts of students on campus who experience this as part of their identity, but this aspect should not be the reason why they are

excluded in campus life. A compassionate post-secondary community would therefore be supportive and enabling by considering both the social and physical needs of its members. It would adhere to, and reach beyond, legally mandated accessibility building codes to ensure that all citizens are able to access physical spaces regardless of their diverse abilities. The campus would be a safe and welcoming environment that provides various support services and opportunities for all community members to develop and thrive.

This section examines how compassionate post-secondary communities can become supportive and enabling to all of its members by:

- a) ensuring that the campus is physically accessible,
- b) being a safe, supportive and welcoming environment, and
- c) providing a variety of opportunities for members to build social connections and personal development.

Ensuring the Campus is Physically Accessible

Inaccessible and unwelcoming environments are problematic because they dis-able individuals, making what should be a component of one's identity become a cause for exclusion or oppression. As Natalie explained, it is like a “slap in the face” when an environment is not accessible because it reminds persons with disabilities of how they are excluded and how they are ‘different’ because they access spaces or information in different ways. Carla’s quote, below, reinforced this idea:

An accessible world - anywhere would help me not to notice my disability not in a sense that I’m not comfortable with it but in the sense that I want to be so comfortable that it doesn’t cause me any differences...I like when my disability doesn’t necessarily enter the equation... So like if there’s a ramp right beside the staircase then the staircase isn’t going to bother me if I come up to a huge staircase then I’m like ‘oh crap, whose gonna help me?’ you know....But yeah for me the perfect world would be one in which my disability causes no obstacles. The more obstacles we can eliminate the happier I’ll be.

Therefore, compassionate campus communities commit to adhering to, and perhaps going above, mandated accessibility standards because they realize that accessibility is a key component of being inclusive. As Natalie revealed:

The basic accessibility issues need to be targeted first before you can make somebody feel inclusive. Because for someone to feel like included, they have to be able to get to the location or wherever they’re going, right? And so like ramps or elevators or whatever you’re gonna put it, that’s what would need to be done first.

And I think that's the thing I would tell schools wherever is not to underestimate people because if you build it they would come, as corny as it sounds right? And as much as we may say "it's fine, it doesn't matter", it **does matter**.

As Natalie stated, accessibility does matter. It is nearly impossible for social connections and personal development to occur when segments of the population are literally excluded from various aspects of community life. University is not just about being in the classroom. It is about having equal access to the environments both around the university and within the broader community. It is about being able to hop on an accessible bus to catch a film with your friends. It's about having the snow ploughed from your front door in the winter so you can leave your house. It is about being able to live life. To do this, every facet of the university community must be accessible and welcoming. Spaces that are inaccessible limit participation whereas accessible spaces make it easy for friends of different abilities to easily come together without much preparation and planning. As Natalie stated, "I think because Guelph is accessible, it's never like 'we can't invite her because she can't go' which therefore stops the seclusion. It makes it more friendly." Many of the participants spoke of the importance of having spaces that enable access through universal design. Natalie suggested that spaces be accessible "but not obvious", meaning accessibility features should simply be part of the space and not a separate or segregated feature.

Creating an accessible outside environment

As previously stated, physical accessibility is the first step in enabling people to access facilities and programs and be engaged in community life. The accessibility and usability of outside spaces within a community need to be carefully considered. One obvious consideration is the need for push door buttons. Several students indicated that push door buttons are still a problem around campus, particularly for older buildings. Having adequate buttons that are regularly maintained to ensure that they work are critical. So too is ensuring that they are at the proper height and are available for all of the doors that both enter and exit a building. Natalie elaborated:

I would say the push button doors. With that, they're not everywhere and, which is fine and a lot of the times they don't work. So that would definitely be a big hindrance in the process, 'cause sometimes you know before you go it's like it's not gonna work and you have to wait for somebody to open the door and la-la-la. You're just like; I don't even want to bother.

Another obvious suggestion is to have ramps that provide access to buildings. Chantal provided a photo (image 1) of how a ramp is not available to enable her to access the university's Co-op Bookstore.

Image 1: Lack of Ramp to Access Campus Co-op Book Store



Chantal identified other campus buildings that did not have ramps to enable access to buildings and services on campus. This should not be permitted. It is also important to recognize that building a ramp is not enough - they must be wide enough to fit a variety of mobility devices such as scooters and automatic wheelchairs. It is also critical to ensure that the slope is not too steep. Alexis explained how communities should test accessibility features with a variety of persons to ensure that they are in fact useful and safe:

One of the things that I had a lot of problems with since I know that the University is older and a lot of the buildings are older is the fact that they had to build a lot of the ramps or things around the buildings and they weren't actually built wide enough. So wide enough ramps that when you get up to the top of one you don't have to do a fifteen point turn in your scooter to get up the next section of the ramp and things. And just making, basically, having someone in a wheelchair go through the entire campus.

Other participants described the need for accessible cross walks. Providing accessible cross walks with auditory signals, plenty of crossing time, working push buttons, and clear road

markings help to ensure a safe environment for all persons regardless of ability. Mark spoke to the dangers of some crosswalks:

Some of the crosswalks on campus I don't find that friendly because sometimes the button is frozen, the pole is not that clear to figure out and um with the flashing sometimes the cars drive right through and then other crosswalks there's no light, no nothing so you have to watch out for yourself. So you have to walk very quickly to cross that one. first of all, our crosswalks would have um a noise, I'm not too sure what the proper term is for ita little bit of a noise signal whether it's okay or not to cross. That would be extremely helpful.

Many people may not consider the challenges that road and path construction pose for persons with disabilities. Any detours which arise from construction need to be in accordance with accessibility standards in order to ensure access. Mark elaborated on this hindrance:

When they're doing construction I find that's a huge thing because there's, I don't know why but there's always some form of construction going on campus (**both laugh**) no matter where I go and it's just a pain because you have to go around it and not through it, which I understand but trying to find the way to get around it is sometimes difficult and sometimes they put the truck or whatever they're using in front of the ramp so you have to switch over to the stairs and you don't know that until you get near in front of it when the construction worker notices you and tells you sorry 'it's blocked off'.

Accessibility should also be considered when planning the ground surface area. Stable and smooth surfaces are most helpful for persons with disabilities, particularly for persons using mobility devices who have sensitive spines or persons with balance challenges. Melissa, who experiences vertigo, explained the danger and frustration of unstable surfaces:

When I walk and am on anything that's not flat, I'm toast. You wouldn't believe it, grass is the most deceptive thing... You don't see it so whenever I'm walking on something, on grass that has like a hill like a divot or a big bump underneath, whoops. And then me trying to get up, all freaked, and I look like I'm totally drunk and nobody understands. It's because the grass may look fine but there's holes underneath that my body can't adjust for and I stand up and I try and find my place and it's just like whoa whoa whoa.

Adequate and timely snow removal is particularly important in Ontario's climate. As Colleen indicated accessible buildings are important but "if it's all snowy, you might not even GET to the building". It is critical that snow is removed from all walkways and paths leading to buildings, parking lots, main roads. All on-campus residences need to be ploughed and services that support students who need mobility assistance in the snow should be offered, such as a student accessibility van.

Creating accessible inside spaces

Participants identified a variety of physical barriers that obstructed their ability to access or move around freely within buildings on campus. Once inside a building, the lack of push buttons on doors continue to pose barriers, particularly for emergency exit doors which were identified as being heavy and difficult to open. Accessible elevators are also essential to ensure that people with mobility devices can access a space. Chantal provided a photo (image 2) of the accessible elevator that leads to the campus pub. Although it is accessible, it requires that a person obtain a key from an office which is problematic for many reasons: a) the place to obtain the key has limited hours of operation which reduces one's ability to come and go as they please, b) it is inconvenient for people to have to go to a separate area to pick up and return a key when simply trying to access the second floor of a building, c) it requires that the individual is able to manipulate a key, and d) it is highly stigmatising since the elevator provides single access to only those who have a disability which does not enable a person to ride the elevator freely with his or her friends.

Image 2: Isolating Accessible Elevator Requires Use of a Key



The campus athletics facilities were identified as one of the primary areas on campus that posed the most barriers. As Kimberley indicated, accessibility is essential because all the training and attitudinal accessibility is not enough if people cannot even get to the program or service. Pamela echoed this point and articulated how an inaccessible facility will taint the flavour of any initiatives built to welcome persons with disabilities because if they cannot access the facility then it will not be welcoming.

All participants expressed concerns about the challenges faced by persons with disabilities wanting to access the University's weight room. The weight room was located on the second floor. Those who wanted to use the weight room had to get changed into their fitness clothes on the first level, then go outside and enter the adjacent building which has an elevator that leads to a corridor to the fitness centre. This already challenging process is compounded by the fact that the doors leading to the gym from the corridor requires a key for access. This is not only a hassle, but it can negatively impact a person's health and well-being. Gareth explained:

We're trying to get Jim a little bit more flexible and a lot of the flexibility things are gonna be undone. He's gonna have muscle problems with spasticity just getting out in the cold. So like before and after a workout, unless he wants to try to climb and go down the stairs, then we've gotta go outside of the building to get back to the change rooms... We have to go outside to another building to use the elevator... And it's completely unprotected.

Chantal provided another photo (Image 3) of an unwelcoming stairwell that leads to the fitness centre. As she indicated, a sign that directs students to the nearest accessible route should be provided but is not.

Once in the weight room or fitness centre, the spaces within these facilities need to be free of clutter and obstructions and equipment should be put back in a consistent place to assist those with vision impairments who rely on items being in a consistent location. Adequate lighting for persons with low vision should also be considered. Another consideration is to provide accessible and enabling equipment. Participants with disabilities described how some of the equipment is old and awkward to manipulate which necessitates that a volunteer be present to assist them with this. It was suggested that facilities invest in equipment that is easily adaptable and that meets the needs of a variety of individuals, such as treadmills that move in small increments, a variety of free weights and resistant bands, easily adjustable stationary equipment, easy pool access, and arm-powered bicycles that enable a variety of people to participate.

Image 3: Inaccessible Access to the Fitness Centre Lacks Signage of Accessible Route



Another priority of the university should be to provide a variety of accessible housing options. Moving away from limited and segregated housing options toward housing options that are accessible to persons of various needs are essential to create an inclusive environment which fosters opportunities for the development of friendships and supports. Many students with disabilities in this study discussed the friendships they had formed in residences with other students and how these relationships were pivotal in their personal development and enjoyment while at school. When considering accessible home environments, it is important to not just think of ‘access’ as being able to get into the front door. An accessible residence, for example, would ensure that the student with a disability is able to freely access all public areas within the space, including the lounge or social areas. As Beth indicated, planning for accessibility is complex and so requires careful consideration:

You have to find a way to make that accessible because it is not enough to say ‘your room is accessible’, right? “Where are your friends going”, you know, or “how are they, where is the programming happening?” And you gotta make it that way. So some of that is investment in physical stuff and some of it is just being smart to the groups [resident groups who plan events and outings] and saying “don’t hold it, I mean, hold it in an accessible place. Think about it”. And once they think about it, that’s why the forms [that students must use to plan campus events that make them consider accessibility] are important, “oh I didn’t think about that, I didn’t realize it”. So, we spend a lot of time thinking about that. Are we completely accessible to

everything? I would never say that. But I think we respond whenever we realize we're not, I think we always respond.

Although creating a campus that is physically accessible is critical, it is also understood that it is very difficult to consider and accommodate everyone since the unique needs of various individuals can sometimes contradict each other. Committing to accessibility will therefore involve creative problem solving and partnerships with various stakeholders in order to determine a strategy that will work for all. As Carla stated:

You can't make every accommodation for every person like it's just not possible....the trouble with modifications is there's like always like a necessary evil. For example um curb cuts are perfect for people in wheelchairs because we can just roll right onto the road. They're horrible for people who are blind because they rely on you know the difference between the sidewalk and the road and so um I think maybe, maybe not, the problem is that perfect world might look very different to every student and in some cases may even contradict you know....'cause my perspective is totally like the whole world should be flat you know but so for me yeah let's make the whole world flat and then everything will be perfect and I won't have to worry about anything, flat open concepts awesome um but that's not gonna suit everyone and so I think a major part of making the community as rich as it is, is realizing that the perspective that you're not the only one and that there is value to accommodating a diverse set of people. Just in the sense that you know maybe certain things aren't the best things but maybe they can work better.

Physical accessible spaces might be difficult to create but it is essential that efforts are made to not only meet the necessary accessibility standards mandated by law, but that campuses endeavour to go above and beyond and create environments that are socially supportive. This enables all campus community members to be included and meaningfully involved in campus life. Thus, it is important to consider that accessibility is not enough; it must also be safe and welcoming and socially accessible as well.

Building a Community that is Safe, Supportive, and Welcoming

Physical accessibility within an environment is important, but so too is providing a space where people feel welcomed and supported. As Kimberley stated, "I think they're on the right track ...they [the university] want to make sure not only that everyone is accommodated but that everyone feels happy and welcomed" (Kimberley). A safe and welcoming environment is one that is close-knit. It is a place where all members feel safe and comfortable. Such an environment also involves supportive and welcoming community members that help to facilitate

inclusion and acceptance. Safe and welcoming environments make diversity visible which helps to make people feel like they belong and that diversity is celebrated.

Cultivating a ‘close-knit community feel’

Communities that are close-knit, in how they are felt if not in actual size, encourage “mutual support and caring, self-esteem and a sense of belonging, and enrich social relationships” (Lomas, 1998, p. 1182). This occurs because people share a connection with one another and the greater community in which they are a part. A close-knit community feel is typically easier to achieve in a small sized community as people are more apt to know one another and share similar life experiences. However, a sense of community connection and a close-knit feel can still be accomplished in a larger community or even within a post-secondary environment - it just needs to be deliberately created. This can occur by creating a campus environment where people feel that they are working together towards shared goals or a common vision. It is created when campus community members, particularly persons in positions of power, think and speak with sensitivity and recognize the anxieties and stress that others may be feeling. It is also fostered when campus members act in ways that make others feel welcomed and included. Jessica, for example, indicated how staff members can help create a welcoming and close-knit atmosphere within the campus fitness centre by being approachable, supportive, and sensitive to those entering the facility. As Jessica stated:

You know smile at them, welcome them, let them in without a grumbleBe like ‘Yeah come on in you know you guys are welcome here too. Oh, what’s that, you need the wheelchair access key? Here we’ll come and help you’.

Participants spoke of the important role that a close-knit feeling has on their experience within the community, particularly since a university can be a large and isolating environment where it is difficult to make connections and feel comfortable. James provided an example of this by drawing upon his experiences with being a member of a small, tight-knit community running club as compared to his experience on the larger varsity running team. His example indicates how being part of a tight knit environment enabled him to feel connected to his team mates, making him feel more confident that he would receive the peer support that he needed. As James elaborated:

Here in Ottawa it’s a bit of a smaller group...The coach here from day one has been, like I would come to the track and he always would say ‘oh make sure you take James with you’, kind of thing...That’s being a part of a smaller group ... I never have

to worry about having someone to run with, like there's always people that are offering to help you know, so it's never a problem. But in Guelph it was a little, it was a little different because being a bigger group ... I wasn't connected so much I guess to people in the beginning so it took a while, a little longer for that to happen I think, you know? But they would never say, oh you know, 'take James with you' like it would always be sort of left and I would be asked at the end. I'd had that sort of uncomfortable feeling of what if I don't find someone or the group is gonna kind of leave and I'll be here stuck here on my own type thing. And that, I mean that got better as time went on for sure and I got to again know people more and what not and people would offer to help me but at the start it was that, it was that missing sort of link there.

James' experience also highlighted that the 'close-knit' feeling can exist within an environment that is not necessarily small in size; what matters most is that people within the community are encouraged to be supportive, attuned to, and responsive to the needs and preferences of others. For example, several participants referred to the University of Guelph as being a close-knit community even though the population of persons within the university is quite large. However, as Mark indicated, it is all about how the environment makes one feel: "I find it very cozy and accessible and home-like". It is therefore important that community members have opportunities to build relationships with one another which help to foster social cohesion and support. This will enable even a large community to feel 'close-knit' and not like a "faceless university". Sidney elaborated:

It's being able to build a relationship with you know not just kind of a nameless, faceless University. You know eighteen thousand people at the University of Guelph, you know, like by being able to connect individually, whatever that looks like. It's complicated right? It's a complicated world of looking at how to create [inclusion] across the board. How do you provide opportunities in environments where people are feeling welcome and that they belong and that they can connect you know in a meaningful way? Again, thinking about, look at policies, practices, principles guiding whatever you want to call that.

Many participants believed that creating a supportive and close-knit environment is almost more important than creating an accessible environment, because, as Carla stated, "You don't need physical accessibility when you have people that are open minded enough to make it accessible to you". In this regard, although physical accessibility is key to inclusion, they felt that it is just as important to be part of a community that is supportive, open minded, and comfortable. As Natalie stated:

I would just say be welcoming - As basic as it sounds and as corny as it sounds. Because not all schools can be built like Guelph's built because they don't have the

population to do it. Because like Malaspina, if I look at it, they could make strides to make it more inclusive or whatever but logically... You can't force what's not there... So I think rather than trying to achieve like completely equitable, completely accessible, just work with what you got, make it work, make it so people feel comfortable.

Ensuring a safe and comfortable space

Persons with disabilities are often subjected to environments that are unsafe or uncomfortable which limit their ability to access certain environments, thereby impeding their inclusion and engagement within the campus. An environment that lacks adequate space or is cluttered with obstacles can be quite dangerous or uncomfortable, particularly for those with equipment or mobility devices and for those who find tight spaces claustrophobic or inaccessible. For example, Chantal provided a picture of an emergency exit located inside a campus pub (see image 4). Although the door has an accessible push button, the pathway to the door is completely blocked by physical obstacles which make the space unsafe for her and others using mobility devices.

Image 4: Unnecessary Obstacles Block Exit in Campus Coffee Shop



It is therefore essential that enough space is provided to manoeuvre around a room or building, be it a gym, a pub, or pathways, and that spaces are clutter free and emergency exits are cleared. Gareth, a weight room supervisor, acknowledged how the University's weight room is filled with

equipment which does not provide enough room for people to safely manoeuvre around, such as his client who uses forearm crutches. As Gareth indicated, the layout of a space is critical to ensuring that people have opportunities to participate:

Space to move around is pretty important... Getting around between, just the way to the machinery can sometimes be a challenge. Jim uses a pair of forearm crutches so he probably takes up a metre and a half laterally and balance sometimes can be an issue. It's, for example in the fitness centre there's resistance bands set up but it's sort of in the middle of nowhere so if we're gonna do any leg work Jim either needs to use his crutches or just hold on to me for balance. And having stationary things nearby is kind of essential...Really thinking about the layout, and how it's put together is pretty important.

Loud spaces can also pose a barrier to persons with hearing impairments, visual impairments, or other anxiety challenges as it can be uncomfortable or overly distracting. As James, a person with a visual impairment stated: "Going to pubs or going to a bar sometimes can be tough because you know sometimes the music's really loud and it's difficult to really hear much so I probably didn't go out much as I'm sure a lot of people did". Although the noise level of certain events or environments cannot be controlled, it is helpful for post-secondary institutions to offer a variety of extra-curricular and social opportunities that cater to people's various needs and preferences. For example, students recalled how the university offered a variety of first year orientation events which enabled people to pick and choose the activities that best suited their needs and interests. Quieter and low crowd options were provided, and were advertised as such, which was appreciated by many participants.

Many students, particularly newcomers or those living with anxiety or mental health challenges, can easily feel overwhelmed or anxious in a new environment which can also limit full community engagement. Persons who feel uncomfortable, unsafe, or are unfamiliar with an environment require support services to help them navigate the campus system and ensure the help and support they need to feel comfortable engaging in all aspects of community life. Sidney elaborated:

The environments' very different. The learning style is very different. The system is completely different than what you're gonna have in high school... For students with schizophrenia too, like you know, increasing that anxiety often means an increase of symptoms too, right? So then a person might of had a stable disability before coming to University, you know, you get in that environment, you have that much stimulation and then you know your anxiety goes up and then often you know your symptoms are getting increased too. And so then it can be a really challenging first

semester....‘Cause it’s a complicated system to navigate. You know, it’s all new in terms of figuring out recreation facilities, yoga class, your, your lecture hall, who’s your prof, sometimes profs change within the class, like it’s just a huge amount to navigate.

A community that is difficult to physically navigate can also pose a challenge for individuals to find their way around a space which can be a hassle and a safety hazard. Inadequate signage can be dangerous, frustrating, and can limit a person’s ability to access spaces. A supportive environment is, therefore, one that has adequate signage that clearly marks features such as elevators, emergency exits, push door buttons and so forth. Chantal provided a photo (image 5) which illustrates how a sign was posted at the bottom of an accessible ramp that directed individuals to the next accessible entrance.

Image 5: Accessible Ramp and Appropriate Directional Signage



In this case, adequate signage and an accessible ramp make the experience of entering a building easier, safer, and more comfortable. Adequate support services can also help individuals navigate campus environments. For example, the university can link up volunteers with persons with visual impairments to help them explore the campus to become more self-reliant. As James said: “Not knowing your way around is another difficult part... I mean you really rely heavily on people, people you live with and people that you meet”. He appreciated being provided with a volunteer guide who helped him get to know the campus when he first attended University and he later became a guide for another incoming student to offer the same assistance.

Individuals who feel intimidated within an environment will not feel secure or supported and this will lead to reduced community engagement and isolation. For example, several participants spoke about how the university’s weight room intimidated them thereby limiting their participation. Liam, a personal trainer, admitted that “there’s an ego in the weight room that you feel, honestly, like you walk in and you’re like sometimes you can just feel there’s tension and it’s just a competitive nature”. Alexis, a female student with a disability, explained how the sense of insecurity posed a barrier to her participation:

Truthfully, I haven’t been that involved with the athletics at the University. Sort of attempted to when I first started University, I bought the gym pass... But never ended up going very much. I found it to be quite intimidating at times. The way it was set up then there was always big guys you know lifting two hundred pounds and there I am with my two-pound hand weight.

A sense of embarrassment or a perceived lack of skill or ability can also limit engagement.

Colleen, a staff member who recently acquired a disability, explained:

If the person feels embarrassed or un-skillful, if that’s a word, then, it’s like, you know, the negative reinforcement of, you know, ‘why do I want to do this because I’m going to a yoga class and I can only do four out of the twenty five moves that are actually done in the class, I look like an idiot, everybody’s looking at me, you know, la-la-la-la-la’. You can easily see why people just say screw it.

An uncomfortable and unsupportive environment can make individuals hesitant to ask for assistance, particularly if they feel disconnected from the environment and those within it. For example, Melissa would love to go ice skating but she would need two volunteers to assist her. She never asked the REC Club coordinators for this assistance because she felt it would be selfish and not permitted. As Melissa stated:

I’d like to go skating. Only problem with that is because of the balance issues I probably need two peer helpers, one on either side and I know that’s not really likely

to happen. So because of those, because my balance issues I think it excludes me from some of the activities. So that's a challenge that saddens me so much... I don't think it's fair for me to ask for two peer helpers. Is it?...I mean it's an awful lot for me to ask for one, asking for two, absolutely not (chuckles). Terribly selfish. I think it's a huge burden for me to even ask for one.

It appears as though Melissa felt a lack of entitlement to recreation, as though her needing support was a burden. Alexis, another student with a disability, displayed a similar sense of lack of entitlement to spaces that meet her needs. Alexis explained how some of the activities during orientation week were not accessible, but she felt it would be unreasonable for the orientation planning committee to change a location simply to accommodate "a few people". As indicated in her quote, she felt that it was acceptable to miss out on activities because they were inaccessible as though not all students are equally entitled to participate:

I know there's gonna be certain ones that they can't make accessible just from the location and I can't expect them to move the location just for a few like, like a hand full of people. So I would just go and find something similar that was like, that, to do during that time.

A safe and comfortable place would be one in which people felt entitled to access spaces, services, and supports and that no request for support is a silly or selfish request. This would enable people, particularly individuals who are uncomfortable asking for help or those who fear that their request will be rejected, to participate. A culture also needs to be created that supports individuals in realising that they are entitled to be included in the same aspects of campus life that are available to the rest of their peers.

People may also believe that asking for help it is a sign of weakness or that they should be able to do it all themselves. Melissa explained the struggle she has with balancing the necessity of asking for support with the negative associations she has with asking for help:

In our family, asking for help was a weakness so that's what I grew up with and having problems with migraines has forced me to ask for help... I have to get over that because I have no choice. And not being able to take care of me, take care of myself that's part of everything I'm dealing with is this inability to deal, help with, help myself and dealing with this personal issue of asking for help. It's a huge one. It's a leap that I have to jump over every time...I feel like I'm a five-year-old. You know 'help me please' you know that's awful.

It is quite apparent that an environment that is safe and supportive is essential for the safety and security of all community members. Safe and secure environments enable people to try new activities and participate in activities that would otherwise be deemed too risky. For example,

James provided an example of how he tried rock climbing for the first time in university with the support of a peer helper. A safe environment with support enabled him to try something new. As James stated:

I was kind of curious to try it so in a safe environment like the gym ...She came with me and you know would be at the bottom of the wall as I was climbing up and you know you're harnessed in and she was telling me okay there's a, you know, a grip you know three centimetres above your right hand to the left... so gave me good exposure to it for sure.

Although it is important for communities to look out for others to help keep one another safe, it is also essential that community members have the freedom and self-determination to make their own decisions, take risks, and try new things. Carla recalled a time when someone supported her in jumping off the diving board which is a memory that she will always hold dearly. Although jumping off the diving board in the arms of another person had some risk associated with it, she felt secure enough with the lifeguards around and with her friend that she felt it was a risk that she was willing to take. Carla elaborated:

As camp counsellor, [I was] participating in such a backseat kind of way. And so he jumped off the diving board swam over to me came underneath me and all of a sudden picked me up in the water. I said 'Chris what are you doing?' and he said 'we gotta go off the diving board'. I said 'no we don't' he's like 'no I know we gotta go' and so we got to the diving board and the lifeguards hadn't really quite caught on to what was going on and he said 'are you ready?' and I said 'no but okay' and so he had clutched with both of his hands and I'm not really sure what was going through his head at the moment but I plunged into the water with him and we came up laughing and it was great and he got out of the pool and ran around again and we did it one more time before the lifeguards killed it and said this was illegal and you know we could've died and whatnot and looking back I could've really been in trouble but Chris seemed as if he had understood his limits and understood mine and Chris said that would be okay, thankfully because of that I had the experience of jumping off the diving board and so that in itself is something... I also realized that it's important not to be an over optimist in the sense that like bad things can happen. You have to be constant like exactly what your capabilities are and a large part of enjoying life is knowing what your capabilities are and also not being scared to push the envelope so um it's a hard balance but it's cool 'cause I get to jump off random diving boards and not drowned and tell people about it.

Participants spoke of not wanting to be over protected or to live their life in a secure bubble. As Natalie said: "Do not try and over, I don't know what the word is, don't try and build this like complete bubble of not hurt ... because that's not real life". They do not want to be denied opportunities to participate in life because people are afraid of them taking a risk. As

Carla explained in the following quote, although she always swims with a partner, she wishes she would be able to swim alone and take the same risks as everyone else:

Wouldn't it be cool if somebody could just like drop me off at the pool and let me go swimming, you know? I'm not gonna drown by myself and if I do the lifeguards are there to assist or whatever. And you know, but like I'll propose that and they'll be 'whoa, you know I can't leave you, what if you drowned?' Well the lifeguard will jump in and save me. ...doesn't mean that you need to like be more concerned about me than someone else you need to be concerned with. It just means save my life if I start to drown you know. But I've spent enough time and I don't want to drown any more than the next person so it's not gonna be a regular occurrence.

It is important that individuals are able to make decisions about their lives and that they are supported in their right to self-determination.

Fostering supportive and welcoming community members

Community members play a large role in shaping a campus culture of compassion. The attitudes and behaviours of community members greatly impact the flavour of the community or the program being offered, which can cause a person to either engage or disengage from the community. Colleen provided an example of how unsupportive coaches at her tennis club resulted in her leaving the club even though she was an avid tennis player:

I went to the first session. Found it frustrating because the coach didn't know anything about wheelchair tennis and he was trying to coach me like I was an able-bodied player... I mean it really was handled like it was, you know, this sort of like, 'well, she's interested, we can't say no', you know, 'we're going to include her'. so when I finished the second month, I basically said to him, 'do you feel like', and I don't know how I phrased it, it didn't sound quite this harsh, but, 'do you feel like you're creative enough to continue to include me in future lessons as the group progresses and things like that?'. And the bottom line was no, he wasn't creative enough. It was, you know, he just saw all of the challenges and no opportunities. And so, that was it. I had no interest in continuing with him.

Those responsible for hiring staff need to take into consideration the impact that staff members' attitudes and demeanours have on the overall culture within a community. As Gareth indicated, hiring people who fit the university's mandate of 'improving life and changing lives' is an essential component in maintaining the university's culture of compassion:

And there's a lot that can be done in the administrative levels and I think that when hiring for higher up positions that needs to be taken into account. I think that's definitely an important step. People who have experience and background in the area and just kind of a proven track record in helping people and being constructive and inclusive is definitely central. And creativity.

Staff members who are innovative problem solvers, and who are supportive of those with different abilities, can help create opportunities that may otherwise seem impossible. As Colleen stated:

I took Pilates when I was first out of the hospital... And the instructor, she didn't have any formal experience with someone with a spinal cord injury, but she could problem solve enough. And here was an activity where I thought there would be no way under the sun I'd ever be able to do it and yet I was.

Many participants recalled how supportive staff members inspired them to participate in activities and try new experiences. This sent a message to individuals that any opportunity that they wanted was possible and that nothing was off limits. As Natalie stated:

The thing about Guelph is what I've noticed in comparison is nothing seems to be off limits, which I think is a really good quality. And I think it depends on the person who you have advising you, like I have Barry so he's just very whatever you want to do, do.

Natalie's quote really illustrates the importance for campus communities to be flexible and prepared to learn new ways of doing things. They need to be adaptable and creative in order to meet requests which enable people to participate. They need an open mind to update or change policies or programs to better meet student needs. They need to think outside of the box of what they currently provide and embrace new ways of doing things which can make their programs or services even better.

Participants also felt that their experiences were enhanced when they worked with staff members who 'got it'. Participants felt more comfortable approaching staff members who fully understood their experiences, either because they shared similar experiences or because they demonstrated sensitivity to the needs of others. They were individuals with whom they could relate. Sidney explained how her students feel more comfortable with her because she is seen as 'getting it':

I've done community mental health for a long time so I know about that ... I can really see when I work with students, kind of, when I'm talking to them about their barriers I'm you know, I'm getting it you know. But you know you can really see that in a person's face when it's like okay I don't really have to explain this, like I might have to explain it to somebody else who doesn't really have this level of understanding of what the experience might be. And you know how, how intrusive they can be in a person's life and how they can be a completely huge step getting over and yeah, yeah, and trying to work together to build a plan, somebody to do it with them.

Staff members who provide support to those who need it, in a manner where it is just 'business as usual', enables people with disabilities to participate without the necessity of additional volunteers. Mark provided an example of how the staff at the fitness centre came to understand how to provide him with the accommodations and support he needed to access the fitness centre on his own. This enabled him to be more spontaneous with going to the gym as he was not dependent on the schedule of his volunteer. Mark explained:

Somebody from the cardio room, they come down and they walk me upstairs ... And they help me get on the equipment that I'm using and they make sure that I'm going with the proper, like they check on me every so often to make sure that I'm going the right RPM and let me know what my heart rate is, how long I've been on the machine, show me where I can stretch, which is extremely helpful, especially when they're very busy and all the machines are taken because I have no idea where I can stretch.

A number of factors can inhibit staff members from being supportive and accommodating such as not having enough time and resources to help others, and not being encouraged or rewarded for taking the time to go above and beyond the typical call of duty. Liam explained how a lack of incentive can easily reduce a staff member's willingness to excel at his or her job:

I find a lot of weight room staff isn't motivated to go out and seek out the client who is doing things wrong because they're getting paid like nine bucks an hour. There's no other kind of incentive to do that. I mean, yes, it's in the job but it's pretty crappy wages and there isn't that like kind of group dynamic and motivation, you know. And I think like professional development workshops, you know, would get people motivated. They'll be like 'hey I just saw this in the workshop, I learned a new way to do a seated row, like maybe I'll go and see if I can explain it'. Like okay maybe that's not the best way to get people to do their job but it's a motivation technique and if you want to be a good, provide a good service to the client then these are things I think need to be looked at.

As indicated by participants, the people who make up a community are critical to their involvement in the community. Special consideration should therefore be given when hiring staff members within an organization to ensure that their values and vision match that of a campus community of compassion so those using the services or programs will have a consistently positive experience.

Meeting needs at the system and individual level

Participants spoke of the need for post-secondary institutions to create policies, programs, or services that will broadly meet the needs of all community members, including those who are marginalized. This involves designing and implementing broad based policies, programs, or

services at the systemic level that strive to ensure that the environment is as accessible as possible and responsive to a wide range of needs or preferences. As Beth stated: “If you build that culture then that culture will support anyone, right? Rather than building that, ‘we need a strong program around disabilities’, because it comes naturally.” Ensuring that accessibility is considered at the broadest level will help to eliminate barriers before they are experienced.

However, participants were aware that not all needs will be met at the system level because each person is unique so their challenges are all different. As Carla stated:

We’re all individuals like everyone in the whole world is individual and whatever framework that you get isn’t gonna suit everyone and it’s the people aren’t frameworks you know some will fit in some won’t fit in and some will be on the borderline...The point is to find out what works.

Systems have to consider diverse needs and be flexible enough to address individual differences and preferences. Although broad policies, programs, and services may help ensure the campus is accessible to a wide range of individuals, it is also essential that post-secondary institutions consider individual needs and preferences. Natalie provided an example that although the University strives to make the environment as inclusive as possible, there is still a need for the CSD to consider her life, as an individual, to help her to address any challenges that she may face in going about her daily life:

You’re never going to satisfy everyone’s expectations but to make a valiant effort is appreciated ...Well especially with Barry, what I’ve noticed is from day one he took my life and he kinda said ‘so you’re going from here, here, here, here, let’s make sure there’s no pile of snow, this is your route’. If I said ‘look Barry, I want to go and take a Yoga class’, that would have been factored into that, ‘okay, we plan for this, this and this’. So he’s always taken a very like individualistic approach.

Comments from Sidney, a CSD staff, echoed Natalie’s remarks in that she believes that proactive policies around inclusion and accessibility are essential but may not address the specific, ever changing and complex needs individuals may face. She viewed the role of the CSD office as providing up-to-date support to students that address the specific issues that they are facing at that time. She therefore acknowledged the importance of being genuinely person-centred:

Some of them start to sound a bit cliché right? ‘Cause we’re always talking about ‘person centered’, ‘person driven’ and students in this environment, ‘student driven’. Yeah, it’s one of my own personal [issues] with it because, you know, making sure that it is what it actually is. That it’s not just because it looks good on your plaque on the wall, but you actually live those values. So what does that mean to be ‘person centered’ and ‘person driven’ and you know it’s a difficult, it’s a hugely difficult task because it means you know

it's not just about the group, right? You're breaking it down individual by individual. We talked about it before you know, barrier by barrier to help people.

Joshua, the Chair of APDAC, agreed that front line staff have the responsibility to assist students on the individual level to ensure they have all the support and resources they need to gain a successful experience at university. The broader university's role (through APDAC) was to support the staff in doing their job through the creation of relevant policies:

I think you need both. I mean I think what you're hearing from staff is a function of their job. I have enormous respect for them. They're dealing with the frontline issues. So I talk about people with various disabilities that they're not in my office saying 'fix this for me today or I won't graduate'. So the people we're talking about, frontline staff, those are the issues they deal with. And so I think, they, by definition are going to be dealing with individuals. But it's our job then to create collective policies that facilitate their work, minimize the work they need to do because we'll address some of the issues before they happen... So I think you need both (Joshua).

Promoting visibility and representation of diversity

It can be challenging for individuals who are a visible minority to feel genuinely included within a community. An article written by Dr. Torres, a professor of colour who is a visible minority within his university, explained how he often feels expected to fit into "pre-defined and narrow roles" within academia and the pressures he feels to fit into a "prescribed role" which is based on assumptions of how he ought to behave (Torres, 2006, p. 67). He acknowledged that although it is commendable that universities are increasingly hiring and celebrating the diversity of their staff and students because they see the value of diverse voices and perspectives within the university, he fears that they are often merely "window-shopping for diversity" (Torres, 2006, p. 67). He argued for universities to consider real systemic and structural changes that enable visible minorities to have true access to the opportunities that others have and that they are encouraged to be themselves rather than 'fit in' to the culture of 'others'. As Torres (2006) stated:

We need to do the hard work of opening up the possibility of deep structural and culture change at our institutions of higher learning without falling into the racialized tropes that have come to define what diversity is. This means moving campus culture both inside and outside the classroom away from the simple Manichaeian categories that have tended to wall off people of color and other forms of difference from the rest of the university (p. 67).

Genuine and systemic changes that address oppression, prejudices, and exclusion should help to make those who are visible minorities to feel valued and included within a community. This can

also be achieved by providing supportive services and programs that attract diverse individuals, by creating a supportive environment that makes all people feel welcome, and by making diversity visible within the community representation in media or other campaigns.

As indicated by Torres (2006), it is important to move away from 'token diversity' and create a space which makes diverse persons feel included and valued members of the community. Many participants explained how important the visibility of diversity is to creating a space that is welcoming and inclusive because it helps to take diversity out of the closet and make it visible and common. In the quote below, Jessica described how an ideal university community would be one that works diversity into the fabric of the community so diversity becomes a common experience within an environment. She described how a visibly diverse environment would help create an atmosphere which promotes inclusiveness and a safe and welcoming environment:

I think the campus would look a lot like what ours looks like. You would see ramps everywhere. You would see lifts...You would see students all over campus in chairs like going around different places you'll see people limping because of a certain deformity of a leg or you'll just various times you'll see them on campus. They would be a prominent role. They wouldn't be 'oh look there's somebody in a wheelchair, I didn't know we had people with wheelchairs'. You'll see things like the President rolling around all day in a chair you know getting stuck on a bank or a hill or something and you'll see a student pushing him out like that type of thing is what you'll see and that's what you see on Guelph...A fully inclusive campus would, you would see it, you would know it. Like you would just walk on campus and you would know it's not 'Oh do you guys accept disability students?' The second you're on campus 'oh yeah they accept disability students you know and they have a program with places to live'....So just to see it, visual (Jessica).

A visibly diverse environment helps to create a campus culture of compassion where diversity is common thereby reducing the stigma and 'otherness' often associated with having a disability. Natalie recalled the experience of how switching from a university with low representation of persons with a disability to a university with much more visibly diverse students enabled her to feel included and not centred out for having a difference. Natalie described:

When you first think about coming to school here, they make it very known that Guelph is about disabilities...And that is almost relieving to a point because it's very like, it's very just like whatever it is, it is. And when I first came the first day, I walked into a lecture and I actually took my scooter to class and I remember thinking 'oh God, everyone's gonna be looking' and I looked up and no one cared. I sat down

beside a girl and she started talking to me and that would have never happened in Quebec, ever, ever, never...Here I've never felt like riding a scooter was odd, I guess 'cause the students see it more often....I've noticed other people riding scooters and which was not something you would of seen at Malaspina. Everybody knew me because I was the girl that rides the scooter...Part of the reason that I left is 'cause I got tired of being 'that' girl.

Pamela also described how important it is for others to witness the realities and lives of persons with disabilities or differences because it helps to increase awareness and create an inclusive culture where each individual is viewed as capable. As Pamela articulated:

I often tell my team one of the greatest benefits of the Breast Cancer Survivors Program is them changing with other women who do not have breast cancer, who are not very aware of it and then those people watching those women go in and work out or the men in the weight room seeing the breast cancer survivors doing bench presses. You know, it's that witnessing, that indirect example of inclusively and that all people are capable.

An environment that showcases the accomplishments of those who are often silenced or living in the margins helps to showcase their abilities and demonstrate to others the possibilities of living with a disability, illness, or difference. As Carla stated, it helps to show others that persons living with a disability are "on a level playing field". This philosophy was undertaken by the planners of Toronto's Abilities Festival, which showcased and celebrated artistic excellence through visual and performing arts by persons with disabilities (Disabled People International, 2005). As indicated on the website:

Abilities Festival will be more than just a showcase; it will be an opportunity for aspiring artists with disabilities to learn, share experiences and expand their own horizons and opportunities. It will be an opportunity to awaken children with disabilities to the prospects and possibilities that await them... by highlighting the outstanding accomplishments of artists with disabilities, the Abilities Festival will serve to facilitate a shift in perceptions and attitudes that prevent society from benefiting from the full spectrum of creative talent... Abilities Festival is part of a global movement bringing disability arts out of the shadows and into the mainstream (Disabled People International, 2005, para. 4-6).

Numerous arts, recreation and cultural events around the world, such as those organized by the Toronto's Abilities Festival or the global Abilities Arts Festivals, serve to demonstrate how recreation and leisure specifically, and a supportive environment generally, can serve to showcase the abilities and strengths of persons with disabilities as a way of breaking stigma, demonstrating possibilities of living with a disability, and inspiring others to become engaged within their community (Abilities Arts Festival, 2009; Disabled People International, 2005).

Such opportunities also help to increase the visibility of diversity within a community – creating a new normative standard that celebrates diversity and difference as essential components. A visibility of diversity within a community creates a cycle where diverse individuals are then attracted to an environment because they feel that the space is welcoming and inviting. Many participants with disabilities explained how they attended the University of Guelph specifically because it was known for being an inclusive and diverse environment capable of supporting their needs. The visibility of diversity was also created when issues of those with diverse backgrounds and abilities were promoted on campus. This helps to increase the sensitivity towards, and understanding of, the experiences and issues facing diverse individuals within a community.

Providing Opportunities to Build Social Connections and Enhance Personal Development

Opportunities for recreation, leisure, and other social engagements are essential to the lives of all persons. As identified by the literature and the participants in this study, involvement in such activities provides physical and health benefits and can help reduce pain, stiffness or other physical aspects for those with a disability or health issue (Ashton-Shaeffer et al., 2001; Blinde & McLung, 1997; Blinde & Taub, 1999; Promis et al., 2001). It balances one's life by reducing stress and enhancing one's focus thereby assisting with academic achievements. It helps to create supportive social networks and it provides avenues for new opportunities and achievements. For example, James's experience on the Varsity Track Team enabled him to hone his skills in order to compete at the Paralympics. This opportunity would not have been an option had James not been involved and included as an integral member of the Varsity Team. Recreation and leisure opportunities are also vital in that they provide opportunities for persons of all backgrounds, abilities, races, sexual orientations, and ages to interact and build relationships with one another. This is a major component in helping citizens to unlearn many of the harmful stigmas and assumptions about certain individuals and relearn a new awareness of diversity and uniqueness. This is why opportunities for socialization among diverse individuals are critical. Socialization enables stereotypes to be worked through and new learning to take place.

What is concerning for many persons with disabilities, particularly persons with mobility disabilities, is that they are often unable to participate in many of the activities of life that provide physical activity. For example, Chantal, an undergraduate student who uses a wheelchair for mobility, explained how she does not have the option of taking the stairs instead of the

elevator in order to incorporate physical activity into her day. As she stated in a CSD newsletter article that she wrote on the issue, “Because physical activity is not integrated into my routine through any other means, neglecting to be physically active may cause me to miss out entirely on a very valuable aspect of a balanced lifestyle” (CSD Newsletter, 2007, para. 1). Sandra, an advisor for students with mental health issues registered with the CSD, added that students with anxiety disorders may not feel comfortable attending a fitness class alone or joining friends at the local pub and as a result they miss out on opportunities that their non-disabled peers are privy to. It is therefore essential that post-secondary institutions (and other communities as well) strive to ensure that all community members have access to a variety of recreation and leisure opportunities in a way that meets their needs and preferences in order for them to reap the myriad of benefits associated with such involvement. Program planners need to reconceptualise how programs and services are being offered in order to enable all persons to participate in the activities of their choice. Opportunities to participate in a variety of programs enable personal development and well-being to occur and it also provides opportunities to build social connections.

Offering targeted and inclusive programming

This section explores the various program options that can be provided within a compassionate campus community to ensure that persons with diverse backgrounds and abilities are able to access programs and benefit from them. There are benefits and drawbacks to the various options and so each should be considered carefully. Catering programs to the needs of all students is very complex since each individual will have unique needs and preferences. Therefore, programs and services need to be planned in consultation with the students who are targeted for such programs.

It is important to consider providing opportunities that are specifically designed to meet the needs and preferences of an individual or group. These can sometimes be considered ‘segregated’ or ‘targeted’ programs or services. Pamela indicated how facilities are mandated to respond to the needs and interests of individuals who have special requests. Although she believes in inclusivity and diversity, she realizes that offering programs or services that are specifically targeted to an individual or group is a way to enable access to those who may not otherwise participate. As Pamela stated, “we need to provide more of whatever people are

asking... I think we're obligated morally and legally obligated to try to help people with what they need."

Participants described several benefits of programs targeted at a specific population, the first being that such programs are more responsive to the specific needs and interests of a group. This enables participants to 'be themselves' in a supportive environment with others who share a similar situation. Alexis recalled how participating in activities created by the CSD for students with disabilities was helpful for her as it enabled her to meet people, feel less alone, and connect with those who share a similar experience. As Alexis stated:

I've always been one to definitely take advantage of those types of things because I know it's always a good thing to meet other people that have similar interests and that you know basically that you're not the only one on campus. 'Cause I know when I first got to University the one main thing that I realized was wow this place is huge compared to what I was used to anyway.

Targeted or specialized programming can help meet the unique needs that are not often met in general programming. Jessica provided an example of how a swimming program designed specifically for persons with disabilities can ensure equal access to the pool. She indicated that some people with disabilities avoid the pool during general swim times because they may not be able to fight the current in the pool created by other swimmers. Programs or services that meet a specific need for a specific group of individuals can be quite beneficial. The university, for example, provides aqua-therapy classes to those living with disabilities such as fibromyalgia, diabetes, arthritis, muscular dystrophy, hip replacements, or cerebral palsy. These specifically designed classes that are held in the therapeutically heated pool helps ease pain and stiffness often caused by various disabilities and provide an easily adaptable physical workout that does not require the use of lower body strength. The University also offers a Beyond Breast Cancer program for university and community members which includes a dragon boat racing team as well as other physical activity programs. Pamela explained:

The Beyond Breast Cancer, again, works in response to needs. And it was, again, driven by a Ph.D. student here... we were at a woman's wellness thing and she said 'alright, you are a trained coach and would you ever consider coaching a bunch of woman who are breast cancer survivors and doing dragon boating'? And I looked at her and I said 'what's dragon boating?' So that's how that started because she asked me and again I talked to my director and said what do you think about this and we'll house it in a program and it will be given a name Beyond Breast Cancer. So everybody that is a part of that Beyond Breast Cancer program doesn't have to

dragon boat so there are some women that come in and just do Aqua Fit. And again I set programs for them and they come in and do some training.

Pamela described how she was reluctant at first to offer a summer camp program specifically designed for girls but because it was requested on several occasions she decided to respond to the need. Upon completion of the camp she realized that the program was able to meet their specific needs and interests and it enabled them to be themselves and share similar experiences with others. As Pamela recalled:

And at the end of the week I said why have I never done that before? Like there are times when people need specific stuff and it has to be done outside of our general culture. And it's a matter of finding the time and making sure that time is as inclusive as possible and so the following year we offered a 'boys only' camp.

Programs and services that are targeted to a specific group provide options for those who are self-conscious participating in front of individuals who may not fully understand all aspects of their disability. Carla explained:

I'm conscious of how others perceive me. Not in the sense that I can recognize what I look like. 'Cause I don't know what my dancing looked like, you know. I got my thumbs out there and I, like, I don't realize that, you know, I'm not moving my feet and I'm, this is a totally different example I'm using but I'll get there. And so I don't know. I think I might be more conscious of like 'okay, if I'm gonna adapt this it could work out really cool for me but maybe it's gonna look odd'. So I think the segregated setting works well for, I don't have to be conscious of what it looks like because obviously it's gonna look weird.

Programs that are catered to the abilities of an individual will enable them to derive more satisfaction than participating in an inclusive activity that doesn't meet their needs. Carla explained how although she is involved in integrated activities in most areas of her life, recreation is one area where she appreciates programming that matches her capabilities. Carla elaborated:

Most of my friends are able-bodied. Most of my life doesn't involve my disability. I'm not conscious of it a lot of the time. But in sports and athletics, and more so than recreation in general, is something where I really realize that that is something in order for me to derive satisfaction out of it, it has to be geared to what I'm capable of so that I can reap the full benefits so to speak. And so in that scenario, like it's much as swimming is a social activity for example I don't really like, you know, swimming hardcore with able-bodied people because I know that they're gonna be really a lot faster than me or the pool's gonna be too wavy or whatnot. And so that's the kind of thing where I have to step back and say 'okay, my limitations are a reality and so because of that what's better for me? Is it better for me to be inclusive and not be conscious of my disability? Probably not. It's better for me to get as much out of this

particular activity based on my own abilities if I can. And in that, mostly able to work from where I am in the process of getting better and so that maybe, you know, more integration could happen eventually.

It can also enable people with similar ability levels to join together and collectively be engaged. This helps to ensure that there are opportunities for people to participate and compete with those with a similar ability level. This helps to even the level of play making it more enjoyable for those involved. James provided an example:

I would say there's merits to all of them. Right now in Ottawa here, we have blind people who play soccer every week. And you know, we're all blind, visually impaired so it's great. It's great with those people and the level is pretty, pretty similar. I think if there were some sighted people playing there it would be, you know they may dominate the game in some ways so that kind of speaks for segregated, segregation in a sense, you know. We can have a good game of soccer and like we all benefit from it and have a good, you know, experience.

Although segregated or targeted programming can help to ensure that people with different ability levels have access to programs and services that meet their needs, interests, and level of ability, there are also some concerns that were identified by participants that need to be taken into consideration. First, segregated or targeted programs can further seclude persons who are already marginalized in society. Natalie described how programs that meet the needs and interests of varying persons are great, but that the abilities of persons with disabilities should not be underestimated. As Natalie stated:

I would caution, say that strictly disability recreation programs, or strictly disability whatever programs, make the disability more like secluded to the rest of the community... Do not underestimate me, ever. Because you don't ever want to get that look with like recreation or with school or whatever that you're not as smart as the other ones or you can't do it. Like who are you to tell me that?

Second, many people do not feel comfortable being targeted or grouped with others who simply share a similar ability level. Many of the persons with disabilities indicated that they possess many other identity characteristics, so being grouped by ability level is not of interest to all of them and they would rather be included with everyone else. As Carla stated:

It's more important for me to have those other things in common and then if I have a disability in common well that's great too.... I'm able to have the same social interactions and the same kind of mentality as someone who has an able-body and so to sell myself short of that is to lose um just to lose, like something's missing if I do that.

Many students reported avoiding any programming specifically for persons with a disability because they do not like being grouped or labelled as a person who is 'disabled'. Natalie elaborated:

I avoid it [specialized disability events] like the plague. I'm not even kidding you. Any disability event, ones that are strictly disability, just because I don't like the label. Not that I avoid it 'cause I have it and whatever. I just, it bothers me and I don't, I guess 'cause I don't see myself like that, I don't think others should either.

Another concern with targeted activities is that there exist assumptions that programs catered to a specific disability (or to all persons with disabilities) will be able to accommodate all individual needs, which is likely not often the case. Colleen argued that many sports programs offered for persons with disabilities are not properly graded (organised by level of ability) so they are filled with people with varying skill and interest levels. As a competitive athlete with a disability, Colleen commented on her frustration with segregated programs that do not cater to her level of play:

I think the challenge is we definitely don't have any of the high end performance training programs. I don't know of anything that's even skill-based. So often if there is a program, it's probably for a wide spectrum of people with disabilities. It is much more around activity verses skill and I think it also includes people with intellectual disabilities. So like somebody would, there are a lot of people that don't know the difference between Special Olympics and Paralympics for example. And so, they would expect that when I play wheelchair tennis, I may very well be playing wheelchair tennis with people who are intellectual disabilities and that's not the case at all. So I think that's the other challenge is that often people who are designing programs, they might not actually know, sort of who the targeted audience is. And if they just blatantly, you know, if it's just sort of a blanket statement of anyone with a disability, there's going to be obviously some pretty diverse needs and whether they can be met, I don't know.

On a similar note, Carla believes that the danger with targeted programming is that "you run the risk of tailoring things too much to the abilities, the skill or not challenging people." Andrea echoed that concern by stating how she is often reluctant to join segregated programming because she enjoys being active and feels that there is a lot she can do so programs specifically targeted to persons with disabilities do not challenge her in the way integrated programs do.

Participants also identified challenges associated with planning targeted programs. Such programs typically do not yield a large turnout which makes it difficult to schedule these programs during prime times. In addition, the facilities need to be accessible enough to enable accessible and targeted programs to be offered. Leslie indicated that although she would love to

offer specialized weight-training programs catered to the needs of persons with disabilities, the weight room is not accessible which limits programming options. Finally, students with disabilities need to show an interest in helping to plan and organise these events or programs and it is sometimes difficult to find individuals willing to do this. Brian, CSD advisor, recalled how they had wheelchair basketball games organized on several occasions in the past but this required that students were willing to help in the planning. As Brian stated: “We have had, actually, wheelchair basketball here, maybe twice in three or four years where a student has organized it. You come and play the game. It’s been well attended. It’s just someone has to organize it”.

Targeted programs have many benefits for some but these challenges and concerns need to be taken into account. It appears that the best way a campus community can determine whether targeted activities are preferred is to ask those who would be using the program directly and then cater it to fit their preferences. It is important to realize that what works for one individual or group may not work for others so program planners need to continually re-evaluate their programs to ensure they continue to meet changing needs.

Participants defined integrated or inclusive programming as that which allows for the broadest range of needs to be met. In terms of disability, this occurs when programs are designed to include all individuals, which reduces the “stigma of one person just being there” (Ava). One concern with offering inclusive programming is that it is difficult to coordinate a program that will meet everyone’s needs. As Ava stated, “I don’t think that any sport is truly inclusive ‘cause you always find someone that’s on the peripheral that can’t participate for whatever reason”. Although challenging, James explained how the benefits can far exceed the difficulty of figuring out the logistics of making it work:

I think there’s huge value in integration. And I know as far as running, and where I’ve been able to really develop in running you know, just to train with the University of Guelph team and then be here with a good club in Ottawa. And it has, it definitely has it’s challenges and it probably wouldn’t be for everyone and but I think it can be really encouraged you know through coaches.

Program planners can also consider providing opportunities for ‘reverse integration’ which occurs when persons without disabilities are incorporated into activities traditionally participated in by persons with disabilities, such as wheelchair basketball, rugby, or hockey. In formal sporting events, a classification system is typically enacted based on the ability level of the entire team. Benefits can include increasing the challenge for all players, creating awareness of

different abilities, building social networks and friendships, and enhancing the credibility of the sport. As Brian, Student Advisor from the CSD, recalled: “we had wheelchair basketball. We’ve had sledge hockey on the odd occasion when we could obtain the sledges and the rink for the afternoon. That’s always fun because able-bodied individuals can use the sledges too just to see how difficult it is. It’s a fun time”. It is important, however, to ensure that those without disabilities do not overshadow those with disabilities (Hamamoto Dore & Milum, 2001). There are also a number of logistical concerns with reverse integration that Ava elaborated on:

I have a friend who’s like an inclusion coordinator role for the city of Reno in Nevada. And she runs all kinds of rec programs for people of disabilities. And the majority of them are [quadriplegic], and if there are not enough people or if she’s just freakin’ interested, she’ll get in a chair and play with them. And in some cases I’m okay with that. If it’s just for fun and you’re just hanging out, messing around, doing whatever, that’s fine. If it’s like competitive and you don’t have enough and you can sub anyone, obviously the person that is most able-bodied, despite the fact that they might be seated in the chair is gonna have way more advantages than that. That just is really icky to me and there are lots of integrated teams like I can think of a few sledge hockey teams in London that do that, they have like an integrated team. Well guess what? When you advance past a certain level, it’s no longer integrated and those people who are more able-bodied that can actually walk and don’t have a disability that play can’t go on to tournaments and stuff. So all of a sudden the reliance on them as being a team member disappears. But, well it’s still there but they’re at a disadvantage. They’ve trained with someone that is capable and very skillful in a lot of ways and all of a sudden that member of the team is gone. So difficult.

Many of the participants were unfamiliar with actual opportunities that involved reverse integration although they thought it could work with some sports. Integrated and reverse integrated opportunities have been identified as having many benefits for all of those involved, but they certainly have their challenges. Successful programs require collaboration between service providers and users in order to develop integrated programs that are as inclusive as possible.

Offering a variety of ways to be meaningfully engaged

It is important to offer a variety of activities and events that those within the campus community may be interested in participating. Too often there is a focus on providing formal athletic opportunities as the importance of informal or more leisurely activities is underestimated. This sub-section will examine the various types of activities that university campuses should consider when planning extra-curricular campus activities.

It is important to provide a range of activities for those who like to get involved. Sports and physical involvement, while popular, are not the only ways to be engaged. Some people may prefer more spectator or passive styles of engagement. Carla is a student who loves to be active through swimming and working out in the gym, however, as she stated: “I also enjoy the non-participatory roles like watching basketball games and going to baseball and doing things that are not necessarily direct involvement but getting excited about sports”. It is, therefore, just as important to ensure that all areas are accessible, including spaces where people participate directly in the activity and the cheering and spectator areas. Chantal noted that the bleachers for the stadium are not accessible for people with mobility devices. She provided a photo (Image 6) which reveals how persons with mobility devices do not have access to the bleachers. Rather, they are expected to watch from the ground level which often blocks access to the stairwells and provides poor views of the games.

Image 6: Ground Level Accessible Spectator Area Blocks Stairwell



Brian further noted that the University’s outside sports stadium does not have an accessible washroom, which is inconvenient for persons with disabilities and can limit their participation.

As he stated: “Presently our stadium doesn’t have an accessible washroom so everybody in a chair that has to use the washroom has to go to the athletics center or the arena which is a fair way away. It takes you away from your friends or part of the game” (Brian).

Campus community members should be able to participate in a variety of social and solitary campus opportunities. Social activities and events are a great way for people to get involved, meet others, and build connections. Opportunities to build social connections are important. Several students with disabilities commented on how they felt socially isolated when they began university and how this lack of connection was a reason why they did not want to participate in campus life. As Natalie stated:

I think especially in the University setting... it’s more difficult to make friends. Not like difficult in a hard sense but like difficult in like there’s so many people and no one to ever really to get along long enough to make friends, does that make sense? So I think that is part of the reason I probably haven’t looked into recreation as much as I could ‘cause I’m like, you know what I mean, it’s not there yet.

Many participants stated that they were more likely to be involved in campus life once they built social connections. James’s quote illustrates how essential it is that universities provide opportunities for people to interact and build connections with one another through residence or other programs, as this helps to keep people connected to the community:

I would say my second year especially was a year where I kind of got more involved. And it’s just sort of through the people I was living with. And I locked in with a good group of people. There were a couple of exchange students living there so it was a pretty social suite I was living in. So you know we, yeah, we would go out a lot together as a group you know.

Although opportunities to build social supports are important, one should also consider that some people may not feel as comfortable in a group setting and prefer solitary activities. For example, staff members of the CSD recalled how they unsuccessfully tried to offer programs which connected persons with disabilities with each other, particularly those with social or anxiety disabilities. Understanding the needs and interests of the community is therefore critical when planning such activities. It would also be important to examine how to increase the comfort level in social activities for those who might resist these types of activities.

Not all recreational and wellness initiatives need to be program based or traditional in style. Participants encouraged campus communities to think outside of the traditional sports and recreation programming and try new ways of engaging persons for life. Colleen explained:

When I got out of the hospital and I'm in a wheelchair, I actually coached a running clinic at the running room. We don't, I don't think we offer anything even like that on campus where it doesn't have to be facility based, where we say 'okay, let's gather our group of people who all use wheelchairs and, or who use scooters, and you know, whether it be scooters, power wheelchairs or manual wheelchairs and we encourage people to go out and just even navigate, you know, the University as a form of exercise' We'd probably have to start thinking outside the fitness center model, right? Because a lot of the programming that has happened in athletics is either gaining rec programming, so the sort of recreational competitive environment or it's been fitness, sort of classes, la-la-la. We probably have to start thinking a little bit more creatively because the facilities are not plain accessible....So, I think we probably have to be a bit more creative and not think about just simply basketball and tennis.

Colleen encourages program planners to connect with stakeholders, such as in a focus group, to collectively brainstorm creative ways to engage people in recreation and leisure. She believes that through listening to the success stories of those who are active, and through creative thinking, it is possible to develop new and innovative ways for the community to be actively engaged.

Both formal and informal opportunities play a role in the lives of community members. Many participants spoke of the informal activities that they took part in such as going to bars and pubs on campus. James, for example, spoke of playing guitar at open-mic nights at the campus pub. Other informal activities included going to campus coffee shops or walks around the campus with friends. Other participants spoke of activities outside of the university that they were involved in, such as choir, or playing at the local tennis courts. This speaks to the importance of having all aspects of the community accessible since campus life does not only include formal spaces like the classroom or the campus fitness centre.

It is also important to provide a variety of accessible formal university programs or services such as campus recreation or athletic opportunities. Students saw these opportunities as a great way to try something new that they likely wouldn't be able to do once they left university. As Mark stated "I was really interested in learning ballet as well as highland and that's why I'm doing it...May as well try something at the University because after University you don't really get a chance to do anything." The programs offered by the University's Department's of Athletics, along with the support provided by the staff, enabled the students with a disability to access programs that they may otherwise not have been able to participate in.

Formal varsity sports teams and intramural teams were other ways that the students were involved. These teams help build social networks and integrate people with various abilities and backgrounds. James in particular spoke of how being engaged in the Varsity sports team provided opportunities for him to build relationships with team mates in other social settings, such as through having potlucks or parties.

Another formal program offered by the university, that helps build social connections and personal development, is Orientation week (O-week). This event is designed by full-time University of Guelph staff and requires the help of student volunteers. Participants commented on how Orientation week provided a variety of programs and services that helped meet student needs. Gareth explained:

There's tons of freedom. You, basically there is an O-week guide that all the students and residents get and they get to pick and choose whatever happens to be the activities they want to go to. A lot of them are residence-oriented. A lot of them are you know academic specific and there's just tons that are random activities that you can do organized by the student association or wellness centre or anything like that and they're usually all in the guide and you look it up and see if it interests you.

It would be ideal if all orientation events were entirely accessible to all students; however, a commitment is made to ensure that the majority of the events are physically accessible. The planners of O-week work collectively with the CSD to ensure that there are a variety of activities that cater to the various abilities and needs of students. For example, the 2007 Orientation Guide revealed 210 of the 300 events were wheelchair accessible (Student Life, 2007) and there is a wide variety of activities which are clearly indicated as being either a loud event, a large event, an event that costs money, and so forth. Alexis, a student with a disability, who is also involved with planning orientation week, explained:

What they've recently started to do now too is instead of the pep rally that we have, they've offered an alternative like low-key event for those people who don't enjoy going to the pep rally because it can get really crowded and really noisy but not everybody is into those types of events. So now they have like I believe it's just a sit down and you listen to like jazz music and like low-key, quiet, like coffee time events ...I remember when I went to my orientation week, they all, they made sure that a lot of the events were accessible and those sorts of things.

Participants revealed that a priority is also made to ensure that students are provided with all the supports and resources necessary to participate so people are not excluded. As Andrea stated:

During orientation week, I had looked through the guide of all the different activities happening and I picked which ones I wanted to go to and I let them know. And there

was a peer helper that would come to my door, pick me up, walk with me to whatever event I wanted to do, hang out with me while I was there so I kind of knew someone then and then would take me back to my townhouse 'cause I lived on campus initially...So that was a really helpful thing as well, um just for orientation to the campus.

Pre-Flight is another formal program offered by the CSD that supports persons with learning disabilities in their transition to university. These students are invited to come to the campus in the summer prior to the commencement of their first year at university in order to become acclimatized to the university community. This program enables them to explore the housing options, check out the class rooms, start making connections with the CSD staff and others, and feel comfortable within the environment. Sidney explained:

Pre-flight is, it has specifically been through students with learning disabilities and it's an opportunity for those students that are coming, you know, from high school to the University environment to actually come live in residence, attend some classes, learn the library, learn about adaptive technology and do that prior to coming during orientation week when there's you know five thousand other first year students trying to figure out their way into the world as well. So this here was specifically for the students with learning disabilities and some with other cognitive difficulties. However, we're looking at trying to expand that and to include mental health issues.

The CSD is another formal service that helps to build personal development and social connections. Most post-secondary institutions have a program or service similar to the CSD designed to support students and meet accessible standards mandated by law. The CSD staff commented on the necessity for students to be in contact with the office as soon as possible in order to be provided assistance with finding an accessible residence, assistance with transportation, or academic support. At the University of Guelph's CSD, students are matched with an advisor who specializes in their disability area who will be assigned to them throughout their tenure at University. The CSD has three advisors for students with learning disabilities or ADHD; one for sensory, mobility, and temporary disabilities; one for psychological and mental health disabilities; one specifically for hearing disabilities; and another for assistance with essay writing. This enables the staff to become specialized in the specific challenges faced by persons with that type of disability which makes them better able to understand the students' experiences. Staff and students believed that the specialized approach seems to work and as James stated: "I think there's just a really diverse group of people that can really help a range of sort of interests".

One of the strengths of the office is its ability to support students in matters not just concerning academics. They understand that academic support is the main impetus for the office but they also realize that a student's success is not only dependent on academic success, but rather a cohesion and accomplishment in all areas of a student's life. As Sidney, a staff member of the CSD, explained:

It's a resource thing, right? So when I have more time and more resources in that way, I can spend more time with the student and go beyond, 'okay what's happening in your chemistry class, what's happening in your other classes?' You know. So you get through that, there might be time at the end at the appointment to talk about other stuff...we talk about, you know, 'what you do outside your academics'? You know, 'how do you balance your life'? 'What, what other things are involved in your life'? So you know we talk about housing to some degree because you know that's often an issue for students living with other people, 'what that's like'? How the mental issue may factor in there, may provide a barrier to connecting with roommates, and yeah recreation around, you know, 'what do you do'? What places do you access here on campus in order to connect with recreational groups or activities'?

As Carla stated, the CSD is the major contributor to everything she does:

I love the CSD and a major major contributor to my everything and everyone else's. The fact that we are the second best setup in all of Canada and it is a thriving place and it has so many resources and it is possible to survive here and just rely on the CSD all by itself so it's really cool. And like that they are very helpful with not only concerned about academic but concerned about social things and recreational things and physical things and all that stuff as well.

Like Carla, James has been highly involved with the CSD, not only in terms of using their services, but also in terms of being involved on committees, being a peer helper, and building social networks with other CSD participants. As James stated, "I think having the center for students with disabilities there it's a good center, it's a good place, good people that work there, they can really, really help encourage students for involvement."

The Recreation Equity on Campus Club (REC Club) is a joint initiative between the CSD and the Department of Athletics which provides support and resource to students, staff, and community members who would otherwise not be able to access fitness or recreation on their own. The support is provided by creating partnerships between the person with a disability and a student volunteer who is often a part-time staff member from the fitness centre. The volunteers provide physical support, such as assisting a person with a mobility disability to enter and exit the pool; social support, such as motivating a person with depression to maintain involvement; and recreational support such as a personal trainer working with a student with a disability on

their personal fitness goals. What is unique about the program is that it was initiated by a student who acquired a disability and experienced difficulty accessing the equipment in the fitness centre. She worked with Pat Richards, the Coordinator of the Lifestyle and Fitness Programs, to develop the REC Club which also provides fee assistance to those who need it. New participants meet with Pat who helps them determine their fitness needs and goals and identify challenges. Pat then connects the participant with an appropriate partner (based on availability, skill level, interest, and sometimes gender) and they collectively create solutions to overcome any barriers that the individual may face. It's an intricate process of recruiting volunteers; generating interests with the community to participate; matching up skills, availability, and interests of the volunteers and participants; and monitoring by Pat to ensure that the needs and expectations of participants and volunteers are met. REC Club participants and volunteers all agreed that this is a fantastic, low cost program that can easily be implemented within every post-secondary institution. Jessica elaborated:

I think any school that would accept disability students needs to have some sort of Rec Program, some sort of option for them to maintain a fitness first off. Once they have that, they need to create the framework within it that allows them to have a volunteer coordinator who knows what's going on with the students, who knows what's going on with the volunteers, who can match them up based on you know knowledge of a certain area, lifting experience and stuff like that. And if they don't have any experience, someone who can take them and be like 'okay, well here's what you need to do' and go with them into the gym...And then from there have someone coordinating not necessarily that person but have someone else maybe coordinating volunteers and doing the actual recruiting of volunteers and then have somebody talking to the actual CSD students. Like you can have an entire network of people or you can have one person do it all as a full-time job. It kind of depends. If it's students running it obviously you're going to have different students with different aspects. I think maybe the problem right now with our CSD REC Program might be that there's not enough people on the higher end of the volunteer scale where they're the ones coordinating everything.

As indicated by Jessica, any post-secondary institution can develop a similar REC Club. Such a program simply requires good communication and partnering between the Department of Athletics and the CSD, a committed organizer or facilitator, and students who are willing to volunteer and participate in the program.

The main strength of the REC Club is that it makes the seemingly impossible become possible. As Melissa explained, the volunteers with the REC Club made it possible for her to participate in recreation activities that she once thought were not possible for her:

I've used peer helpers from the Centre for Students with Disabilities and those have been remarkably rather significantly helpful. If I hadn't had peer helpers, I would not have been able to do the physical activities....If I don't have a peer helper, I can't engage in physical activity. So whether it's skating or swimming or whatever it is I want to do, I need to have a peer helper available to help me out....But that's the neat thing about peer helpers, they give you that independence because you can't, if I didn't have peer helpers then I wouldn't, I wouldn't even consider doing these activities because they are outside of my realm of possibilities. They make activities possible. Just the idea is the most amazing thing. I don't know who came up with them, of the whole notion of the peer helper, but it makes ideas by physical activity at Guelph a reality for me.

The fact that the program is volunteer-based is a blessing and a curse. The strength is that it builds connections between various individuals and contributes to the building of reciprocal relationships. The concern is that it becomes difficult to coordinate the schedules of busy individuals. Melissa described the difficulty of being dependent on a student volunteer but she was willing to experience that challenge in order to reap the benefits of being physically engaged once again:

It took a little while to get us hooked up. That was difficult. And the anticipation that one goes through during that period of waiting is difficult. That's true. And trying to hook up times that are okay, because schedules are so different and that can be awkward. But it's worthwhile, you know, it's for your wellness. You have to be able to accommodate that. That's two people with diverse academic schedules; you just try and put it together. You have to be willing to make that sacrifice. It's for both your, I mean that's your goal and that's another person willing to sacrifice their time for you. They're not paid for it so you have to bend, it's very simple.

The University also offers a Peer Helper program, which is "One of the largest and most successful Peer Helper programs in Canada" (University of Guelph, 2009, para. 1). The Peer Helper program is an important support service for a variety of students across campus. Kaitlin, the coordinator for the CSD's Peer Helpers explained:

There's about 20 units of peer helpers all over the whole campus that work for different departments....we have 17 [peer helpers] in our [CSD] department but every department has some, some have 4, some have 10, some have 30 and they are, they are sort of an elite volunteer group. But they, they have a lot of training, they have a lot of, it's a very structured kind of program and in fact they get a mark on their transcripts for having been a peer helper because it's, it's pretty you know pretty intensive and there's a lot of performance reviews and it's not, it's not just there, it's quite structured. And then, then there are people that, and they have to put in certain hours, like there's either a five hour role or a ten hour role.

Melissa liked how the Peer Helper program is truly based on a foundation of helping others because it is the right thing to do. As she said, “it encourages enriching the soul, enriching the person and so that’s good because that’s what you want. It’s not just you know this is good for your resume. It’s being a better person.” Many participants described how the peer helper program served as a life-line and they were utilized for many different purposes. Although the peer helpers and other volunteers are critical in providing support to persons who need their assistance, these relationships were never seen as patronizing or one sided. Communities that value universal responsibility help to avoid assumptions that those receiving support are takers while others are givers, and it recognizes that a community that supports one another will create outcomes that exceed the initial support that is provided. For example, several of the participants described how the relationships they had with their volunteer partners had developed into genuine friendships, which speaks to the reciprocity that can be experienced with universal responsibility. Melissa, who utilized peer helpers herself, spoke of how being a tutor for persons with learning disabilities provided her a great opportunity to ‘give back’. It also opened the door to other opportunities that she was not expecting:

Tutoring has saved my life...’Cause I have challenges as well. I find when you’re a tutor you’re giving back, right? But I’m giving back in a special way. I’m giving back to those that have special needs and I’m a person who has certain special needs and I’m giving back to those of the same population which is wonderful, absolutely wonderful. And I know that I can have, that I have more patience because I have the same kind of concerns. I require patience etc. etc. While my challenges are different I understand the need for patience and understanding and compassion and so I can give that while others may not be able to, other tutors may not understand those things especially for people who have learning disabilities. And so that’s been particularly helpful for me and extremely rewarding... it started a whole whack of opportunities that I never would’ve thought but then having any open mind and rising to the challenge grabbing for opportunities when they present themselves have served me quite well and that’s just part of my philosophy.

In order to foster a culture of volunteerism and compassion, the university frequently holds volunteer fairs which recruit a host of volunteers for a variety of programs. Students commented on seeing posters or other promotional materials around campus encouraging people to get involved through volunteerism which helps create a culture where social responsibility is common and viewed as an integral part of the community.

This section revealed how critical it is to have a campus community that is both physically and socially supportive to community members. A campus community that is

supportive enables all campus members to be engaged in campus life. The experiences of participants revealed how inaccessible or unwelcoming environments directly resulted in their exclusion. Thus, post-secondary institutions need to consider the ways that they are contributing towards this oppression. Participants acknowledged that much of the oppression they face is not a result of people's deliberate intentions. However, ignorance is not a viable excuse. A failure to understand and then address the barriers faced by community members is still offensive. Post-secondary institutions should actively move towards meeting and exceeding legally mandated accessibility standards and commit to creating a campus culture that is supportive, enabling, and compassionate towards all individuals.

The next section will review the third and final characteristic of a compassionate community: Compassionate Campus Communities are Informed. Specifically, it will reveal the role that an 'informed campus community' plays in creating a campus culture of compassion.

Characteristic #3: An Informed Campus Community

The attainment of knowledge has been described as the key to power and emancipation because it provides individuals with the necessary skills to critically reflect upon themselves, their situations, and their surroundings (Allman, 1999; Freire, 2000). This enables individuals to become self-aware and socially conscious which leads to personal development and social change. Therefore, gaining knowledge and awareness of one's self and becoming informed on the issues that are important within ones community is a key component to being engaged in community life.

Dialogue is a critical component of learning and social action and so it is important to foster and develop strategies for ongoing open communication between all community members. This is particularly important when power dynamics are present, for example, between a student and a faculty member. Those in positions of power within post-secondary institutions, such as senior administrators and decision-makers, will benefit both themselves and the greater community if they become informed on the issues facing their community and ensure that their community members' needs and interests are met. It is also mutually beneficial for service providers and program planners to ensure that the community is informed on available programs or services. It is further essential that individuals, be it students, staff, or community members, have access to information and resources that will help them lead healthy and meaningful lives.

All individuals need to feel safe, comfortable, valued, and feel that their opinions are valued and welcomed.

This section examines how it is essential for all community members to be informed and highlights the importance of informed community members to the facilitation of inclusion. An informed community:

- a) continually learns about the needs and preferences of community members,
- b) ensures all community members are informed about programs and services,
- c) provides learning opportunities for the greater community, and
- d) is comprised of informed, trained, and qualified service providers.

Continually Learning About the Community's Needs and Preferences

According to Soriano (1995) service providers, particularly those in the human or social services, are “increasingly confronted with the need to prove that their services are indeed needed” and that they “demonstrate a clear awareness of their target population” (p. xiii). Understanding the needs and preferences of a community can help justify funding, determine programming, allocate resources, evaluate services, and assess the needs of underserved and overlooked groups (Soriano, 1995). This information is also critical to ensure that social services and programs continually evolve to meet the diverse and changing needs of individuals (Soriano, 1995). Compassionate campus communities will therefore need to continually seek out and gather information concerning the needs and preferences of community members in order to provide appropriate services and programs that truly reflect their needs and aspirations. Once programs, services, and policies are in place, it is then essential for communities to provide various channels to solicit feedback on programs and services and the degree to which they are meeting expectations. In order to obtain this information, community members must be well informed on the feedback mechanisms that are in place in order to ensure that they are able to voice concerns easily and effectively.

Seeking Out Information on the Needs and Preferences of the Community

This section examines how decision makers, policy makers, program planners, and others in positions of power, must continually seek out and gather information on the changing needs

and preferences of community members in order to provide appropriate programs and services. This can be achieved through a variety of ways.

The first strategy is to ask community members, directly, what they want and need. It is beneficial for programmers and service providers to continually check in with people and ask them how they would like the services and programs within a community to run. This opens up lines of communication and ensures that the ever changing perspectives of people are considered and understood. For example, Natalie, a student with a disability, encouraged campus program planners to speak directly and frankly with persons with disabilities in order to create programs that meet their actual preferences. This approach will help to reduce assumptions and enhance the opportunities for collective problem solving. This is important since programs or services will not be successful if they are based on assumptions or stereotypes of what people need and not based on their genuine needs and interests. As Natalie stated:

See what they like, what they don't like and make suggestions, because nothing can hurt from asking, because you're just asking. I think for me with recreation, with whatever, if somebody asked me my true opinion I would respect them so much more for it because if they guess that I decide not to go to the pool because of this, this and this, most of the time they're wrong because they're not in my head. So it's better just to ask it and not beat around it because if you beat around it, it makes it worse, right?...Some students are vocal and some are not. [The CSD] uses the ones who are vocal to the point that you can figure out what's going on and then approach it as to the less vocal ones. 'We have this perspective, what do you think?'

The strategy of asking people directly is particularly important when planners or policy makers are not familiar with the community or population for whom they are planning or when they are reaching out to diverse populations. As Colleen indicated, a program, service, or event can easily fail if it is not created by those who truly have an understanding of the lives of those involved:

I think the best challenge is often you've got people who have really not very much knowledge about a disability or a group of people, say for example paraplegics and wanting to target a group of paraplegics to play basketball or play tennis or something like that. They don't have a lot of knowledge or they don't necessarily even have the connections and so, when they start to try to get something running, it looks like there's nobody that's interested in it.

Mark echoed Colleen's remarks and suggested that decision makers or planners should contact a variety of persons with disabilities to determine whether or not an initiative or policy works for them. This is crucial since each disability is different:

If you're thinking of doing something, to run it by someone who's in that type of situation, who has that type of disability and let them know whether or not it can work. Or to get into contact with someone who works with people who have those types of disabilities because it's very hard to understand all types of disabilities, especially if you're not around them.

Participants identified needs assessments as another strategy to determine whether or not the needs and preferences of a community are being met. These assessments can consist of questionnaires or focus groups, for example. Needs assessments can determine whether physical spaces are accessible to various individuals or they can determine which programs or services would be of interest to community members. Colleen is involved with the University's Wellness Advisory Committee which organizes recreation and health activities for staff members on campus. She realized that a needs assessment would enable her committee to determine the interest of staff members as well as the barriers that they experience, which would ultimately help them plan programs that are relevant to them:

We have no idea what our community, um, our staff community does in terms of recreation and physical activity. We have no idea if they're meeting the recommendations, if they're so far off the recommendations, we don't have any of that data and we're trying to actually address that with maybe a future survey research study...I think it would be worthwhile to even survey the people that are on the campus and do that needs assessment and say like, you know, 'if you had access to programs, you know, what would they be and how would you like us to be involved?' And it would be at least a starting point to gathering some information.

Implementing various channels for the community to provide feedback

In addition to learning about the needs and preferences of community members, there is also the need for various ways community members can feed information back to programs and service providers. Campus community members, including students, staff, and even greater community members who use campus programs or services, must be made aware of the various mechanisms that are in place for them to voice their concerns and perspectives to service providers or decision makers. These mechanisms, or feedback channels, can be systematic and formal, such as the use of advisory committees or councils that provide opportunities for community members to provide feedback. Informal channels for providing feedback are also effective and can include the development and maintenance of strong working relationships and open dialogue between community members and service providers. Before providing some

suggestions on ways that campus communities can solicit feedback from community members, it may be beneficial to first explore factors which inhibit this process.

Many community members do not voice their concerns about a policy, program, service, or challenge because they are unsure of the mechanisms in place to provide such feedback. James explained how when he first joined the varsity track team, the negative attitudes of his team mates made it difficult for him to feel like an included member of the team. When asked if he voiced his concerns with anyone, he commented that he did not say anything to anyone because he was unsure of the complaint mechanisms in place. As James stated: “I guess outside of talking to the coach and some of the other people on the team, at the time I wouldn’t of really of known sort of how to complain and what the mechanism would have been to offer feedback really”. Community members may also feel that providing constructive feedback will negatively affect their relationship with others and so they believe that they should just ‘stick it out’ or ‘make it work’. James elaborated:

It’s difficult when you’re with a team ‘cause you spend a lot of time with that team and so to be complaining, you know, it would have to be done in such a way that it’s not gonna sort of effect your relationship with people and you start to be friends with people too. ...Part of it is confidence, really. When you’re in your first year and you’re just trying to make things work really, and you sort of want to make the best of what you have I guess in a way, it’s just sort of you know look at the glass being sort of half full instead of half empty maybe? I think now I can definitely see that there were aspects that could have been better.

As alluded to in the above quote, people may lack the confidence or trust to approach someone to voice their concerns, particularly when there is a power differential or if they have not been in the community for a long period of time. As Alexis, a student with a disability, stated:

But then it also depends on how long you’re there too ‘cause like I have been there for five and a half years so I felt pretty comfortable being able to go and talk to people. So if you’re a first year student you may not be as comfortable going up and talking to people that you may not know as well yet.

Another factor inhibiting open dialogue is that community members may not have developed strong working relationships with the service providers or with other support staff who could be of assistance. For example, Ava recalled an experience where she attended a yoga class with an attendant at another Ontario University. She was very disappointed to find that the fitness instructor did not make any effort to adapt the class to meet her needs. She knew that she could contact a staff member within the University’s Centre for Students with Disabilities to

voice her displeasure with the class, but the lack of a strong working relationship with those within the Centre prevented her from voicing her concerns. As Ava stated:

I know there is a staff person there [at the CSD] that acts like as the liaison between the office where students with disabilities or whatever it's called now but I really didn't feel like I had any connection to that person where I could just go and be like 'okay to be completely honest, this was ridiculous' ...I kind of felt that I was definitely on my own.

Finally, people may not voice their concerns if they feel that their suggestions are not being taken seriously or into account. Joshua discussed how the Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee (APDAC) is highly dependent on the feedback of university members so he understands the importance of listening to the concerns of students and staff and then responding in an appropriate way. Joshua believes doing so will encourage people to voice their concerns:

I think we've made some progress along the lines of change in the culture if people really felt that all those communication channels were open and that when they did communicate, something was done, that they weren't just talking and someone said thanks very much and nothing happens. I think when someone brings an issue forward, you need to provide some viable evidence that you've responded. They may not always agree with you, they may not always think it's enough, but they know they were listened and they weren't just talking to the wall.

It is therefore essential that post-secondary institutions inform community members on the various channels that are available to them to voice their concerns. These channels must be advertised to the public, they must be easy to access, and they must be responsive. These feedback channels can be either formal or informal and will be discussed further in the following segments.

Advisory committees are a great way for service providers to unite relevant and interested stakeholders, such as service providers, program users, and other relevant individuals, to solicit feedback and voice concerns. These committees enable all members to learn and share with each other in order to collectively problem solve and understand each other's perspectives. The University of Guelph offers a variety of advisory councils such as the Student Health Advisory group, the Wellness Advisory Committee, Crisis Committee, the CSD Advisory Council, and the Athletic Advisory Committee. These committees are made up of relevant stakeholders, including students and staff, and are a place to generate dialogue, collectively problem solve, and share information on the major issues facing the campus relative to the committee's objectives. These

meetings should be held frequently and advertised widely in order to give all persons an opportunity to be involved. They may also need to actively solicit participation of persons with disabilities on these committees. As Alexis, a student with a disability who was active on the CSD's Advisory Committee, indicated:

I was part of that as well...They had a meeting once each semester where you would basically go and voice your concerns as to what needed to be improved, accessibility wise around the campus...only thing is because they only have those meeting once each semester ...But I would like to see them have it more than once a semester just because I think the students will have issues more than that one time and if it's only at that one time, they might forget certain things that they wanted to mention...because they only have those meetings once each semester, I recommended to Barry that I didn't even know it existed until my I think third year and then I got on the committee.

One great example of a university wide advisory committee, which solicits feedback on physical accessibility within the university is the Accessibility Committee. The committee displays posters on the walls of the University's main student centre encouraging people to report any physical barriers on campus and to attend the committee's meetings. This sends a message that issues of accessibility are important to the University and that the committee wants to become more informed on how to remove unnecessary barriers. As Deborah, a CSD staff member recalled, "they always advertise for suggestions to the physical campus grounds... a call for ideas...they want to know how we're doing campus wide". Of course strategies to reach out to persons who may not be able to view the posters, such as persons with visual impairments, should also be considered.

Another strategy to solicit feedback when planning a new project, event, or program is through a steering committee, which involves various stakeholders providing guidance on the direction of a strategy or initiative. The University of Guelph, for example, formed a steering committee which included administrators, staff members, and students in order to plan for the development of the new athletics facility. Jessica, a student and part-time staff member of the athletics department, described her involvement on the steering committee and the role that she played representing the perspectives of persons with disabilities:

There's a lot of issues with our athletic facility hence the applications and stuff for a new building. And I'm on the steering committee... I've been involved in every single meeting that they've had so far. It was just open to all students. We could just go and check it out. I've gone to all the meetings and I was like 'okay well is it accessible? Where's the lift? Where's the this? Where's the that?' And they're

constantly telling me 'it's accessible' ...And now that I'm on the actual committee for it... I get to see more definite plans ... And that's part of the reason they actually asked me is because I've been involved with the disabilities as well as the fitness centre so I'm kind of representing both sides of thingsSo they're very very keen on that which is good. I'm excited...They're making this facility worth it. Not making any mistakes and stuff so just excited it'll be accessible.

Soliciting the community's feedback through steering committees not only helps planners to better understand the needs and interests of community members, but it also sends the message that they are actively working to improve the current situation which is encouraging to community members. Gareth, a student and volunteer for the REC Club, elaborated:

I received an e-mail from the Coordinator of the REC program who was asking for any input about accessibility to the fitness centre itself. And so she sought feedback from the volunteers, you know, 'how can things be improved?' So the impression I had was that both the administration of the fitness centre and the REC program were working to actively improve things, which I thought was encouraging.

Many people prefer to voice their concerns to someone with whom they feel comfortable or trust. For example, many students with disabilities felt most comfortable voicing their concerns privately to their CSD advisors because of their strong working relationships and because they would rather not publically voice concerns. As Andrea stated:

I would feel more comfortable [voicing concerns] on a like one to one person rather than in a big group... I think as I said before I would probably initially go to Barry and say 'hey, who should I talk to if I wanted to, you know, had some suggestions about whatever'. I think he would probably be my first connection.

They also felt comfortable with their CSD advisors because they had been effective at helping them in the past and they have a history of collectively problem solving to overcome challenges. The CSD is responsive to their feedback which helps students feel that their opinions matter and will be taken seriously. Moreover, the fact that the CSD advisors are so connected to others on campus ensures that they can direct a student's concern through the appropriate channels. As Andrea stated, "I talked to Barry all the time and if he, and if there was a problem that Barry couldn't solve, he would just tell me who to go and talk to". The strong working relationships that many students have with their CSD advisors meant that they trusted them to speak on their behalf at larger campus committees so they could remain anonymous. Joshua explained:

They can go to someone like Barry, the Center for Students with Disabilities. Anybody they work with on campus with respect to dealing with the challenges they face regarding their disability could pass along the suggestion or request from a student as a second source sort of thing. Or they can simply direct a student to me or

to anybody on their committee as well. So, they come in a variety of ad-hoc ways...The most common way is through whatever person or office is the primary point of access for the student or staff member with a disability who they deal with on an on-going basis for any of their issues. And those first point contact persons are often the ones who pass things along to my committee or the accessibility committee and often that's people like Barry [CSD Advisor]. He's always got requests or suggestions from students and staff about access issues.

The above sections discussed how mechanisms must be in place in order for community members to voice concerns and opinions. It is also important that program planners or decision makers solicit feedback from community members through formal and informal evaluations. Evaluations are a great way to determine the effectiveness of a program, service, policy, or marketing strategies, and it also provides an opportunity to understand the issues some people may have with a service or why some individuals do not use programs or services to their full extent.

One strategy for soliciting feedback through evaluations is by conducting focus groups with selected client groups. Leslie explained how staff from the fitness centre conducted focus groups with students living in campus residences to see how they could make recreation and athletic opportunities more convenient to them in order to increase participation. As Leslie stated:

We've done focus groups in residence and talked about, 'cause we used to have classes in residence and now we don't have classes in residence anymore. So we've kind of gone 'Okay, well this was such a great thing that we did, why did we stop doing it?'

Liam indicated that the weight room area houses a suggestion box and rewards are provided to those who fill out the comment cards. Jessica, a student and part-time fitness staff member, indicated that evaluation forms are also provided to the participants at the end of fitness classes but she felt that the form could be enhanced by providing space for participants to comment on the instructor:

I teach a Women-on-Weights program and at the end of that there's this little evaluation, 'what did you think of this course?' 'Would you take it again?' 'Did you enjoy it?' 'Did you learn lots?' 'Any comments?' It's very simple, brief, nothing really that personal about you know if you'd like to comment on the instructor feel free.

Another strategy is to conduct a campus wide survey to solicit the feedback of those who are and are not using current services or programs. Deborah, a staff member with the CSD, indicated that

a survey was sent to all students registered with the CSD to get an understanding of how the services and programs were being used and perceived. As Deborah indicated:

We have student surveys every now and again. I think it's somewhat just sort of a general, Q & A for, for students to provide some feedback on our services and our systems and our processes. And I think it's been a couple of years since we did one. We sort of make those available and we email them out as well. We might have had like a hard copy and then offered some sort of incentive like a draw or something to try to figure out you know if people had needs or we talk about how we operate here.

Supervisors can also conduct formal evaluations on their staff to provide feedback on how to strengthen their abilities and performance. Kimberley, a student and part-time fitness staff member, indicated that her supervisor set up 'shadow sessions' which helped facilitate professional development:

She set up meetings with all of her trainers and is gonna shadow them on a session to see stuff that, areas that they might need to work on for professional development or that kind of stuff and just to keep tabs on how people are doing. So she's starting that.

Pamela indicated that the fitness centre also uses self-evaluations so staff members can reflect on their strengths and how they can improve.

Generating feedback can also be informal. Leslie described how the staff members within her fitness centre are encouraged to simply talk with participants as they are using the services to determine whether their needs and preferences are met. As Kimberley indicated, fitness staff members are encouraged to solicit feedback from participants after class:

And I know most fitness instructors are really good at saying 'do you have', you know at the end of class, it's always 'if you have questions or comments or concerns, please feel free to talk to me'.

Informal 'word of mouth' evaluations were also conducted from programs such as the REC Club. Strong personal relationships between the REC Club program planners, volunteers, and participants enabled informal dialogue and evaluations to occur. Melissa, a participant of the REC Club, described how she evaluated her REC Club volunteer:

They get feedback from us as well...If I'm having problems with my individual I know that I would liaise with Pat and I would give her feedback...and they, the peer helper, gives feedback on us...So there's mutual feedback. And so that's what makes the system work. Feedback on both sides. And so they wanna know from us 'is your peer helper reliable?' 'What sort of issues if any do you have with them?' and so 'What can we do if there are issues?' 'What do we need to do to mitigate those?' And so that's one way. And then if there are issues they don't resolve then (makes

cutting sound) they don't allow them to come back. If they do have a good peer helper they reward them usually by of course positive feedback it's verbal etc. but there are always thank you notes.

This section examined the need for program planners or decision makers within a post-secondary institution to seek out and understand the needs and preferences of campus community members in order to provide programs and services and ensure policies meet the specific needs and preferences of community members. It also discussed the need to implement mechanisms for soliciting feedback to ensure programs, services, and policies are meeting intended goals. The next section explores how these programs or services need to be effectively advertised and marketed in a way that all individuals can access.

Effectively Informing the Community of Programs and Services

An informed campus community ensures that all community members are informed of potential programs and services through the use of effective and easy to access promotional strategies. This involves ensuring that potential participants, as well as staff members, are well informed of the availability and accessibility of programs and services and that this information is provided in a way that persons of all abilities or backgrounds can access.

Informing the community of available programs and services

Any program or service, regardless of how well intended, will not be effective if community members are not informed about it. A strategic and well developed marketing plan is essential to sustain those who are using the service and to attract those who are not. For example, students and staff at the university indicated that not many persons with disabilities visited the athletic facilities or utilized their programs and services. Upon talking with the staff and students with disabilities it became apparent that this was because they felt that the process of finding out information on available programs would be too much of a hassle. It is important for post-secondary institutions to recognize that the lives of persons with a disability can be very hectic and challenging and so accessing information on the availability of programs and services needs to be easy to access and made very clear. Alexis, a student with a disability, explained how the lack of information on available programs can prove to be the biggest barrier to participation:

I think the main portion of it is just to get the information out there 'cause in terms of being inclusive, Guelph was great, I have no problems there. It was just making sure that everybody knew what was available to them and actually making it possible that they can get to do a lot of what they wanted to do. So it's mainly the physical barriers

not so much, the social or cultural I think...The social and cultural ones aren't as big of a barrier as, from what I saw, just being able to physically get there and know what's available and those sorts of things. 'Cause they were really inclusive once you got there, it's just getting there that's the problem.

In order to combat this, Jessica suggested that initiatives be taken to ensure that staff and students are made aware of the programs and services that are available to them:

Just to let the students know we're here like literally shout out loud '**Hello, we're here come see us**' 'Cause I feel like that almost it just doesn't seem to be done and that's kind of my main goal at this point. To think beyond that is almost difficult 'cause I'm just like students don't even know we're there. Like some of them like they do but they don't really know or they're scared to ask. I don't know, it's just getting them involved.

Special marketing strategies targeted to those who do not frequent the facilities, such as persons with disabilities, may be necessary in order to attract those who may not believe that the facilities or programs are capable of meeting their needs. Leslie explained:

Looking at our membership in the gym, we don't have a lot of disabled people as members that are not CSD or not in her special aqua program. So, why is that? Is it accessibility? Is it because maybe we've never marketed to that group specifically? A lot of people don't even know that our facilities are open to anybody other than students...So maybe it's just that we need to outreach a little bit more and let people know.

It is just as important for all staff members to be informed about programs and services that their department within the facility offers in order to ensure consistent information is being shared with participants and potential participants. At the University of Guelph, one concern was that not all staff members of the athletics department were aware of the REC Club program even though it is a joint initiative between their department and the CSD. Kimberley, a student and part-time staff member of the fitness centre, explained how supervisors need to ensure that all staff are informed on existing programs and services in order to better inform others of potential services:

I think that there are probably so many things going on in the gym that not everyone knows about every program that's going on. But I think that [REC Club] would be an important one and I think it just depends on what the passions and priorities of the people in charge, of what their passions and priorities are. I know that all the fitness staff are really familiar with the In-Motion campaign because that's Pat's project and so she wants to make sure that her staff knows about it and gets it out there. I'm not sure who's in charge of the recreation program [REC Club] but it would be nice, I feel, like in order to make it more accessible, that kind of stuff needs to be promoted more to the staff. The staff can promote it more to the people using the gym. So I

don't want to say that we definitely, absolutely should have been told about it but at the same time, yes, I think it would be good for us to know because that would help them expand our services.

Any promotion or advertisement strategy needs to be available in a variety of formats. It must be easy for students, staff, or others to access information on programs and services in order for them to be involved. A variety of promotional strategies and accessible formats, including online, in print, or through word-of-mouth techniques need to be considered. Service providers should also be prepared to offer information in alternative formats, such as in braille, large fonts, or in different languages. The sources that provide information to community members also need to be intuitive, easy to navigate, and readily available. Melissa, a student with a disability, explained how providing information in a format that is easily accessible would reduce barriers thereby enabling her, and others, to participate:

That's the thing, we're busy so if it [information on campus recreation opportunities] was readily more available then you wouldn't have to take the time to scout. If it was readily available, that's, you know, you're less likely to make that an obstacle then you don't have to jump over that obstacle, the more likely to do it. Right?...It's just right there a little seed. If you don't have to you know go to the next lawn to plant and can just plant here well then it's gonna grow much more quickly. So if it's everywhere you're just gonna go 'oh hey yeah I can look at that'... It needs to be more readily available.

Mark, a student with a visual impairment, found the athletic department's website difficult to navigate because it contained many links and intricate components which is not always compatible with assistive technology. As he stated: "The athletic center website. It's a little bit of a difficulty navigating around it because you have to go through a couple of links and sometimes you get lost". Sidney, CSD advisor for students with mental health issues, believes that the movement towards online information sharing can pose challenges to individuals, particularly those with mental health issues, who would rather receive information in person or by phone. Sidney suggested that a variety of options be made available in order to better meet people's needs but she also understands that it is difficult to account for everyone's specific needs:

I think there's so much more being done online and I think for people who are proficient and okay with that environment, that's great. But I think we also need to recognize that there's a lot of students who aren't able to, for one reason or another, able to navigate that environment and be aware of that so that there is that kind of personal connection that can be made with students who are needing that...It's hard because with each person it's gonna be different right?...It would take a long time to think about all those barriers and a lot of focus groups, a lot of people coming

together and someone's gonna see things from their own perspective before it changes. Like you know all the stuff we're doing on line now, which again it's seen I think as progressive and as much as we're trying to break down barriers, making it easier for students, we're actually putting up barriers for others.

Promoting the accessibility of programs and services

The accessibility of an event, and the facility in which a program or service is offered, must also be made known to participants and potential participants in a variety of accessible formats. Students and staff with disabilities indicated how frustrating it is to attend an event only to find out that it is not accessible. Taking out the guess work by indicating the accessibility of an event (including information on different accessibility options) is essential. Natalie, a student with a disability, explained how an ideal community would allow her to participate in activities with her friends without having to fear whether or not she will be able to access the facilities:

It will mean that I can go to the basketball game with my friends and not worry about what I might face when I get there because those [automatic] doors will be on and that thing will be on but maybe it's just for kicks, the bleachers will still be difficult because something's always gonna be difficult because you can never prevent the inevitable.

Beth indicated that the University of Guelph seeks to address this barrier by making it mandatory for all persons who are planning campus events to submit a form to the administrators on how it is inclusive to all students. This forces campus event planners to consider accessibility and inclusion upfront. They are then expected to provide information on the accessibility of the event on promotional materials. This is a great strategy to ensure that all departments and individuals are considering accessibility and inclusiveness and that it is not just the responsibility of the CSD. When the University of Guelph is planning their Orientation Week activities, for example, the Orientation committee works with the CSD to ensure that the physical, psychological, and emotional needs of all students are considered. The University then provides new students with a booklet that contains information on all Orientation activities and events. For each activity or event, symbols are displayed beside the description which indicates whether the event is physically accessible, whether it involves a small or large groups (helpful for students with social anxieties), whether it is a loud event (helpful for students with a sensory disability), whether it costs money, and so forth. Deborah, a staff member of the CSD, explained:

According to accessibility, like we expect a wheelchair symbol... Our psychological emotional advisor I think works with the planning team to ensure that there are events like you know leisurely events [that] work in smaller groups for students who

have those concerns who kind of get lost in a crowd or some sort of social anxiety issues. So, you know smaller groups to kind of help address that....It would indicate clearly in the [Orientation] guide I guess that this is a smaller kind of quieter event and so trying to reach people early.

An online version of the guide should be also be available to enable persons with visual impairments to access such information through the use of assistive technology. Although these strategies may not entirely ensure that all activities and events are accessible to meet everyone's needs, it does seek to inform people ahead of time of what to expect. As Natalie stated, such information is quite helpful and appreciated:

What I learned the most about Guelph specifically is that they always have some kind of event but at the bottom of the form or whatever it says 'disability accessible' or 'not disability accessible', which is so nice because you're never guessing 'can I do this?' 'Can I not do this?' And for me it doesn't matter as much as others I would assume because if I can't scooter, I can walk it but for some that's not really an option right?...Taking away the guesswork...I think the less you have to prepare the better because I already have to prepare to leave the house. So for me to think I need two pairs of socks and this and this and this or like 'okay sure I'll think about it' but it's just another thing on a list...So like the less complicated the better.

In a truly compassionate setting, there would not be a need to indicate whether a place or event is accessible since everything would be inclusive and accessible. However, until this day comes, students need to know ahead of time whether or not an event or space is accessible. Service providers must therefore inform the campus community on the accessibility of an event and also the accessibility of a facility.

Staff members who can help guide people to accessible features within a facility are also helpful. Moreover, signage that is clear and appropriate for persons of different heights and visual abilities can also help members locate features that promote accessibility, such as elevators or push buttons for automatic doors. As Alexis stated, a lack of information on the accessibility of events or facilities can cause a person to avoid them all together:

I knew about it [the athletic facilities] but I didn't know a lot about it. Like I didn't know a lot of the classes that they had or like how accessible their gym was. Like I knew you could get there but I didn't know for the longest time how because there's not an elevator in the main building and it's just a large staircase.

Staff members need to be well informed of accessible features within a facility or at an event, and individuals should also be able to receive an inventory of accessible routes and facilities on campus, including accessible entrances, washrooms, and elevators. It is important to consider,

however, that such information can be subjective in that what is considered accessible to one person may not be accessible to another. As Colleen stated:

An inventory of accessible facilities...One of the issues is...when you talk about accessibility, do you mean getting in the front door? Do you mean getting beyond the front door and getting into a change room? Do you mean getting from the washroom then, into a program? Do you mean, you know, getting into a program that is indeed tailored to people with physical disabilities? And it's interesting; everybody has a different perception of accessibility. So in many people's mind, just getting through the front door is the critical piece. And it is, obviously, a critical piece, but I mean, not having the right program is equally critical. What good is it to get through the front door if you then can't go to the washroom and because you're gonna be there for a couple of hours exercising, you need to go to the washroom? So suddenly now the program fails because the infrastructure's not there. So, I think that's one of the challenges too, is that, you know, the facility is only the start, if you can't get through the front door, problem one, but the list of problems can be, you know, so long.

Each person is unique, as are disabilities, and so it is understandable that not all accommodations can be considered ahead of time. It is, therefore, helpful for program or service providers to make it known to community members that accommodations can be made available upon request. For example, a statement is clearly provided in the University of Guelph's Orientation guide that individuals with special requests should contact their office to request specific accommodations. As stated in the Student Life Orientation Guide (2007):

We work hard to make Orientation Week events as accessible as possible for wheelchairs and differently-abled persons. This includes meals, trips and all of our main events. Special arrangements may be made, so please ask your OV, Hall Council, College rep., Off Campus University Students (OCUS) rep. Or the OVs at the O-Zone for more information regarding any events described in this guide (p. 2).

When offering a program or service targeted at persons with disabilities, it may be beneficial to advertise that it is also open to people with temporary disabilities, medical conditions, or illnesses because many people may not identify as being disabled and may therefore not access the service or program. Avery, a student and resident advisor, explained how he believed students may not access available services even though they could benefit from them because of stigma or because they do not identify as having a disability:

One of my students was on crutches for like two months...[and I said] 'cause you can go to the Center for Students with Disabilities and they can show you scooters'. Which I've seen other students have, they break a leg or something and they get a scooter but she insisted on not [using a scooter], just using crutches. She was really, really slow so it would take her like ten, fifteen, twenty minutes to get to class every

day...I'm not sure what reason she had for not going, maybe she felt she didn't have a disability or did not identify that this was hampering her more than in a significant way... I think maybe they think of like the Center for Students with Disabilities they think physical or mental or being in a wheelchair or having a severe vision deficiency or something like that and so maybe that's why students don't go there regularly...Like I was in first year and I probably wouldn't of known to go. I don't think it would have been a stigma, I think I just wouldn't have known that that was open to, I shouldn't say not permanent disabilities...And so maybe people just don't know or they don't want to go looking for help. I only knew you could do that and I thought it was for permanent disabilities before my RA training started in the fall.

Stigma may pose a major challenge for people to feel comfortable seeking support from an office for persons with disabilities. Stigma is a larger social issue that would need to be addressed as simply advertising that programs are accessible to those with temporary disabilities may not be sole solution.

Sidney also noted that the physical location of where information is provided also has to take into account the varied needs and preferences of students. For example, the university holds 'club days' in the middle of the main student centre where each club representative has a display booth advertising their recreational groups or club. While this format is effective in that it allows students to obtain information on various clubs in one location, such a crowded space may not be accessible to those with mobility impairments or social anxiety disorders. She suggested that service providers within post-secondary institutions consider the environment in which information is shared and ensure alternative options are available:

Signing up for recreation, recreational groups and clubs...Apparently it happens here at the University Center which is kind of the busiest building on campus...It's kind of a high-energy kind of a charged place when the clubs and groups and stuff are available and not everybody's okay with that. It doesn't work for everyone, I'm sure. I have more than one student in this situation but it came though one student recently where due to her anxiety and everything that she experiences around that, this building is really, really hard for her to access. It's just there's too much stimulation. There's too many people here at a time and so especially when the UC becomes this maze of different groups ...for this student in particular, really difficult to do, in fact impossible to do. So she hasn't connected with resources on campus as a result to that because she's just, she's not able to make it in here to the building to be able to navigate...I think it's also something that they need to be aware of that's you know it's not an accessible environment for everybody.

Information that is being provided to campus community members needs to be regularly updated to ensure it is current and accurate. Jessica, a student and part-time fitness staff member

and REC Club coordinator, realized that the information about the REC Club on the CSD's website was not updated and it did not provide the correct contact information:

I casually mentioned it to them [the CSD] I'm like 'you doing something with that website?' Actually when I checked it back in oh the end of September I think was the last time I looked, the name of the contact wasn't even right. It wasn't the person that they're supposed to contact. I was like, 'okay' (saying it hesitantly).

These types of omissions can pose a barrier to participation.

Providing Learning Opportunities for the Campus Community

This section discusses the information that campus community members must have in order to be a compassionate and informed campus community. Specifically, it discusses how post-secondary institutions must provide staff and students with access to information which promotes health and wellness. It also reveals the importance of providing opportunities for campus community members to learn self awareness and advocacy skills. Lastly, it discusses the need for all community members to become more aware and informed about issues pertaining to diversity and inclusion through learning opportunities which help break down stigmas associated with differences.

Ensuring access to information which promotes health and wellness

The prevalence of the medical model of disability within society has resulted in much emphasis and attention being directed towards eliminating or preventing disability rather than providing persons with disabilities with the knowledge and information they need to maintain a healthy and active life (Rimmer, 1999). The assumption is that persons with disabilities are incapable of leading active and healthy lives and there still exists a belief that disabilities can be all together eliminated or avoided with appropriate medical interventions. Such an assumption has resulted in persons with disabilities being denied access to vital information that can help them remain healthy and actively engaged in life (Rimmer, 1999). This study has clearly indicated that people with disabilities can live very active and healthy lives when provided with the supports and resources they need to do so. It is essential for all citizens, particularly those who are marginalized in society, to have access to information that can help them be informed and make choices and decisions that will positively impact their life.

Participants agreed that persons with disabilities are often at a disadvantage in terms of receiving the information they need to be healthy and active. Many students, particularly those with disabilities, expressed how they have been led to believe that having a well rounded life that

fosters emotional well-being and health is a privilege, not a right. As previously mentioned, many students with disabilities report that it takes them significantly longer to complete tasks than it would for non-disabled persons, therefore, these students typically spend the majority of their time on school related work thereby neglecting other aspects of life (such as extracurricular engagement) that may benefit their overall well-being. Many of the students indicated that they do not feel entitled to recreation or leisure when they are already struggling to keep up with school work. As a result, other important aspects of life are neglected. Deborah, an advisor with the CSD, witnessed this on many occasions and stated:

You see a lot of students from all disability areas, but maybe more so from psychological emotional, who are, you know, neglecting those aspects because it's about school. They put this pressure on themselves. They're struggling with various aspects of it and, you know, they don't get enough sleep, let alone take a day off a week.

Students with disabilities indicated that it would have been helpful to have been told by those they trust (such as advisors, parents, teachers) that taking time to develop as a whole person is a priority too and that they have the right to take time for themselves. As Carla stated:

I don't know who would do this but somebody coming in and letting people with disabilities know that it's okay that you don't have to spend 24 hours a day on schoolwork just because it takes you longer. Like, you're entitled to the breaks that other people are entitled to too. And to, to not be concerned with measuring up to the academic standards. And enjoying life while you're here and getting all that you can out of it because school is not just school. School is four years of life that preferably would be you know enjoyable and conducive to personality development as well as academic success...Getting to university, it was a huge, huge thing for me. To say 'okay, life is busy, is recreation important?', you know what...getting out and doing social things, doing athletic things, is a really crucial component of who I am and how healthy I feel and etc. etc. I feel as though a lot of students with disabilities are willing to forego these things and maybe don't even know whether those facets of themselves...Just the fact that school is often times more time consuming and medical problems can be more time consuming and so things like recreation aren't even emphasized by the health care persons and whatnot. Whereas as like physical therapy is, and medical teams will be top notch but it's not always the holistic approach which is kind of unfortunate...Approaching that balance where you know that you can incorporate all different aspects of life is always tricky but it's important to remember that and there's good results that come from it.

Many persons with disabilities are not exposed to recreation and leisure opportunities as a child, particularly those from small towns with limited programs and opportunities. As a result, these individuals are less likely to view being active and engaged as an integral component of

their life, they lack awareness of how to fit recreation and leisure into their daily routines, and they are less likely to realize the many benefits that recreation and leisure can have on them. As Colleen, a staff member with a disability, stated:

I think particularly, too, if they come from a small community where there hasn't been an organization like the CPA or, you know, Ontario Wheelchair Sports hasn't had a big, you know, presence. I think a lot of small communities, people really end up being less and less active because the decisions from the facilities, there's the programming, there aren't the resources and people with knowledge and so they either have to have an incredible amount of self determination or again, a role model or somebody that's kind of dragging them out, you know, saying 'this will be good for you, you need to do this'...There should be no reason why we don't approach people with physical disabilities and say 'being active is good for you and it's good for you for all these reasons and there's the obvious health benefits, there's psychological, mental, emotional, la-la-la-la-la'. But I don't know, I think when you see that somebody has an impairment, we often back away from anything that would be perceived as challenging them physically, because I think often we think they're already physically challenged, why do we want to make them be more challenged, kind of thing. But again, some of this education has to happen at the level of the individual because they might not even have ever considered the fact, especially if they're young, if you're talking about students who might be, you know, eighteen, nineteen, twenty years old, they might not have even really thought about the value of physical activity and their long term health.

Colleen stated that another reason why persons with disabilities may not be aware of the role activity can play in their lives is because Canada's Physical Activity Guide does not provide recommendations or fitness standards for persons with disabilities. Colleen is concerned about the low activity levels of persons with disabilities and feels that this can be avoided if persons with disabilities are advised on how much activity should be included in their lives. They also need information on how they can go about getting involved. As she stated:

There are no recommendations for physical activity currently available for people with spinal cord injuries. So, we have a Canada's Physical Activity Guide, we have the Canada's Physical Activity Guide geared towards children and youth, we have one for older adults, but we have none, we have nothing that, you know, outlines what the appropriate level of physical activity is for people with mobility disabilities or specifically what we're talking about is spinal cord injuries. So this is the next challenge is that how do you get that information out to people?

A strategy to overcome these challenges may be for the university to connect students or staff with an individual, such as a recreation therapist, who can: a) assist individuals in identifying ways to incorporate activity into their lives, b) support them in trying out new activities and equipment, and c) help those who have acquired a disability to determine strategies

to adapt previously enjoyed activities. Andrea, a student who acquired a disability, utilized a recreation therapist to help her work recreation and leisure back into her life. As Andrea stated, this experience was invaluable:

I've had a recreational therapist, which has been a great help. Him and I have been working together for a few months now... He'll teach me how to golf and cross-country ski. And so now I have those things where I have all the proper supports set in place. So that was really good for me to have that...It was just neat to be able to work with him one on one and meet with him and then you know the initial meeting was just going over like 'okay what do I want to do? Ideally what sports would I want to play?' And we took it kind of season by season. So alright it's winter right now, what can I do in the winter? Alright well cross-country skiing...it worked out really well and it was neat because he went with me then to do these and was actually kind of, 'cause he has low vision himself, so I knew that he would understand the struggles that I was going through. Yeah it was a really good experience...What he was able to do for me is just provide me with confidence to do these sports. Because I do have the before and the after injury, sometimes I would feel, depending on what the sport was, like I was a nuisance. If I went with my friends, like if we wanted to go for a bike ride for example, like well we can't because we need to go to a trail and you know it's all that extra work and stuff like that or if we went golfing and I needed a few accommodations like help finding the golf ball for example and stuff like that, he did a really good job of just, yeah, giving me confidence and I'm not being a nuisance, that they probably don't mind helping me out. And that you can turn what may seem like challenges into something fun. Like he goes winter golfing for example because the contrast; he paints the golf balls black and the contrast of black on white works great and so his friends have a great time (laughs) when they go winter golfing together. And it doesn't always have to be taken in a negative way like that.

Post-secondary institutions could also promote healthy living for all individuals through educational series, networking sessions, mentorships, or support groups that can demonstrate to persons with disabilities the possibilities of being active and the associated benefits. Colleen elaborated:

Just pull together as many people as possible to talk about how to build activity into their day and whether that be using on campus facilities, whether it's using community facilities, whether, that's using, you know, at home with some free weights in front of the TV. We probably need to have those conversations ...I don't know how many students would know that the athletic club has a elevator so you can get to the second floor of that building ...Maybe we host a little education session where we invite a panel of people to come out and talk about how we stay active and things like that, 'cause I think a lot of, again, I don't think there's really anything specifically unique about people with mobility disabilities and that their approach to activity is different than the general community. I just think everything's amplified, it's just a harder, a harder sell. So I think if you know we've got Chantal, we got me,

we got Barry, we got a group of people who would be willing to come and talk about the real life, you know, how do we do it and maybe that's the struggling point for some discussion at least. At the very least, what it might do, is it might bring together a community that can then be networked ...But I think if we can network a group of people where we can just begin to talk about what we do and how we do it.

A specific strategy to help inform persons with disabilities about the ways to incorporate recreation or physical activity into their lives is to connect persons with disabilities seeking to be active with a dedicated group of athletically engaged champions or mentors who can act as role models or community leaders. They can help inform others on what options are available and accessible within the campus and greater community and provide strategies to work activity into their hectic lives. This may be helpful since many people with disabilities have not had role models or images on how to become involved so these mentors have a great role to play. Colleen elaborated:

What we haven't done which we could probably do is try identify some champions within the community. So whether it be, you know, someone like me, like, you know, who plays wheelchair tennis and nobody knows anything about wheelchair tennis and, you know, maybe we host a little education session where we invite a panel of people to come out and talk about how we stay active and things like that...So we need a combination of people who have a genuine interest, who have may not be disabled at all and then we need some leaders and ambassadors who can just, you know at the very least they can tell their story and hopefully encourage people to come out and just watch, just to see what tennis looks like, let alone get out there and play and then, have enough of the support system in place to really encourage it to happen.

Jessica indicated the role that university departments, like the athletics department, can play in connecting persons with champions on campus and within the community:

Let them know we're here. 'What do you want to do? We wanna try and help you do it. If we can't, maybe we can help you find something new, something different, something you never thought you could do before'. And again the problem comes if somebody comes to me and says I want to play tennis and I'm like I don't even know how to play tennis. But then okay, well let's see if we can find someone who knows. I know Colleen plays, let's find Colleen. 'I want to play basketball'. Okay let's find somebody who knows how... There's a couple of Olympic sledge hockey players, apparently they live in Guelph. I was going to see if I could track them down, contact them, see if they wanted to come in and talk... I feel like it would be something that would be good and non-disabled students would be invited too... let's get everybody active. Let's make it so we can do that.

One caution in utilizing community champions or mentors is that you do not want to rely too heavily on a few individuals as they will easily become burnt out. As Colleen

indicated, it would be beneficial to create a network of potential champions based on their desired level of involvement:

I think part of the challenge too, truthfully, is that we often tend to burn out a lot of our, kind of, leaders in a disabled world and I'm finding that's what is happening with me. As I'm often the token female and I'm also the token chair and, and there's just, everybody wants to have, you know, the woman who's, you know, professional woman with a Masters Degree who's got a disability, who plays tennis on their committee or they want me to be the one that organizes the tennis program in Guelph and I can't, I don't have the time.

Campus communities may want to explore new and innovative awareness campaigns to promote active living for life. Colleen questioned the effectiveness of current strategies that attempt to use fear tactics to encourage participation versus informing people on how to work activity into their regular life:

I think as a sort of group of leaders in health and fitness, we've done a really poor job. Because I think we would try to appeal to people's brains and said "if you exercise this many hours or this many minutes a day, you'll see a decrease in cholesterol or, you know, heart disease, cancer, whatever the case may be" and yet you say that to people and they know that exercise is good for them, yet they still are inactive....So I don't think we've done a very good job in promoting physical activity to begin with, let alone now we have to deal with this special population. I think we need to come at it from a totally different perspective. We need to really understand how people change their minds, how people become ready in embarking on a lifestyle change. We need to understand those things and we need to incorporate it into our programs and if we don't, we'll get them out for one session maybe, but we won't get them to commit...But I think at this point we just try to appeal to their brains and it's not simple. I mean, you can go to anybody in the world and they will probably say physical activity is good for you. And then if you ask how many are regularly active at a level to promote health benefits, it would be like less than probably, what thirty five percent? So, I mean, we know obesity is increasing, we know that, that has been directly linked to lack of physical activity and yet, we keep coming at it in exactly the same way...I think in the perfect world, we would be introducing people to things that they could do for life long.

This section discussed the need for all campus community members, particularly those with a disability, to have access to information that can enhance their health and well-being. This next section expands on this and discusses how marginalized or oppressed groups need to have access to information on how to become self-aware in order to become strong personal advocates.

Providing opportunities for developing self-awareness and advocacy skills

Self advocacy has been defined as the practice used by persons with disabilities “to ‘speak up’ and contest the terrain of their lives” (Dowse, 2001, p. 130). It involves “pursuing their own interests, being aware of their rights and taking responsibility for tackling infringements on those rights” (Williams & Shoultz as cited in Dowse, 2001, p. 130). The development of self advocacy skills is essential to those who have been relegated to the “margins of social life” because of the myriad of barriers that they may experience in their daily life, including attitudinal, physical/environmental, and systemic/organisational (Dowse, 2001, p. 130). Colleen used her experience in the hospital after acquiring a spinal cord injury to discuss the need for persons with disabilities to acquire self advocacy skills in order receive the supports and services that they need:

But what happens to that student, individual, that isn't ready to advocate on their own behalf because ... they're really intimidated by the process. That student I think ends up really out of luck. I mean, and I say that only through my actual comparison point is just even being in the hospital. If you can't advocate, self advocate, oh my god, the care you get is dramatically different then the care, you know, that you get if you can advocate. You can, you know, say what you need and how you need it and then how it needs to be delivered. That's a totally different situation.

An important aspect of developing self advocacy skills is becoming self-aware. One must be able to recognize their own abilities and limitations, likes and dislikes, and strengths and weaknesses in order to effectively communicate their needs and preferences to others. Sidney, a CSD advisor, discussed how the CSD plays a role in informing students on the need to become self aware and strong self-advocates in order to receive the support they need. Sidney indicated how the CSD also supports students in developing these skills:

I encourage students to learn about themselves, to know what works for them so that they can, if people are struggling with how to accommodate them, that they're actually able to give them tangible ideas and some tangible resources about what might be helpful.

Melissa, a student with a disability, believes self awareness and advocacy skills are critical to well-being. When asked what advice she would give to other students with disabilities, she encouraged them to learn about themselves so they can help others help them. Melissa revealed how this process is absolutely critical because her health and well-being are dependent on her being able to inform others on how they can help her if a situation arises. Melissa provided an

example of needing to know the warning signs of when a seizure will surface and how it should be managed so she can inform the lifeguards when she is swimming on how to best support her:

Look at your resources. Find the people you need to engage. Do it. Quit wallowing and fix it. Learn the signs early. Know yourself well. Take the steps you need to and do something about it...I need to see the early signs. I need to identify the things that are the obstacles. I need to find the early warning signs, recognize them ...As hard as that is, it's necessary...I don't have an option because it's a very serious thing and so I have to take responsibility for me. I would have to stop and move to the side of the pool and just wait and if I do something like that I know I'm in trouble and so the instructor has to be able to rely on me to be responsible and that's what she would say to me, 'you know yourself better than I do, take responsibility'. And so that's what people will say to me 'okay, if this is the scenario that's going on, you know yourself better than I do, just move to the side of the pool and wait and I'll know that you're having trouble and if you need my help let me know'.

In this regard, it is essential that service providers and other community members are receptive and responsive to those who are advocating for themselves or informing others on what they need.

Participants also discussed the need for persons with disabilities to develop skills regarding how to be more self-reliant. Carla, a student registered with the CSD, discussed how students can easily become overly reliant on the CSD and other support services, which will not assist them in the long term upon graduation. She encouraged students with disabilities to build self-advocacy and self-reliance skills in order to ensure that they are prepared to be accommodated and supported once they leave the university. According to Carla, support services need to provide individuals with the support and encouragement necessary to develop such skills:

I feel like a lot of students with the CSD, including myself on many occasions, use the advisors as a liaison. For example, 'oh I don't need to e-mail the prof and tell them that, you know, I'm really struggling and going to have a nervous breakdown about an assignment, Barry will do it and maybe it'll sound good'. Or 'I don't need to go and investigate whether I can go into the gym and use the machines I'll ask Barry to do it'. And so I think a large part of the growth process and possibly self-advocacy component as well would be, to some extent, somehow reaching the students directly... Like Barry and the CSD they are a very valuable resource and I think to some extent they exist to help but not provide and I hope that that gets put out somehow. Like, they're a resource and not a crutch. 'Cause I know some people, they just, they rely on CSD only and fail to venture out and see what else is out there for their own ... We are the second best setup in all of Canada and it is a thriving place and it has so many resources and it is possible to survive here and just rely on the CSD all by itself... It's kind of another way of, another way of saying 'okay, so I don't need to realize my limitations I will go up to the CSD and fix them' instead of

‘okay, I don’t want to have limitations and so I’m just going to’, the CSD is often the middleman where, and it’s put that way by students and it’s put that way by different systems of the school and so on so I think the CSD does what it can to advocate for like speaking for oneself.

As indicated by Carla, when people are encouraged to become self-aware and vocalize to others what it is that they need and want, it forces the community to respond to their needs and to consider ways to better include persons with varying abilities within the community. This helps to take issues of accommodation and disability out of the CSD ‘closet’ by forcing these issues to become main-stream. This helps to create an environment where all individuals are responsible for ensuring that efforts are made to support and include others within the community.

Informing students and staff on the role that self-advocacy skills can play in their lives is important, but not enough. The next section discusses the information that the rest of the post-secondary community must have in order to break the stigma of disability and ‘otherness’ and increase awareness of diversity and inclusion.

Creating opportunities for learning and sharing to break stigma and increase awareness

A campus culture of compassion is created when community members are provided opportunities to become informed about the lives of those who make up the community. This helps to unite a community through a greater awareness of each other’s perspectives. As such, opportunities to learn about issues such as diversity, accessibility, and inclusion must be available to the community.

Individuals within a post-secondary environment who are visible minorities or whose identity is based on difference can experience oppression, exclusion, and prejudice. James described the changes he experienced when he moved from his high school, which was specifically designed for students who are blind, to the integrated university community. This transition forced him to experience his disability in a new way since blindness no longer was the ‘norm’. The environment was no longer specifically catering to his needs and his peers were not as familiar with him and his experiences. He recalled having to realize that he was now considered an ‘exception’ in this environment and that in order to build relationships with others he would have to make a conscience effort to help others feel comfortable with him. As James stated:

Going to a high school for the blind where blindness is the norm instead of going to University where you're really the exception, well not the exception but you do stick out in a way and I had to sort of learn to realize that you know I am different and people aren't gonna necessarily embrace that right away... But just being really in a minority around a lot of sighted people it took a little while to sort of feel more comfortable and that and to help other people I think maybe feel comfortable with it too.

His quote revealed how many individuals are unaware or unsure of the real lives of persons with disabilities or other marginalized groups which can foster fear, uncertainty, and ultimately exclusion. James was quick to assert that the exclusion he felt at University or on his Varsity track team was not necessarily the result of malicious actions; rather, he believed that many people simply lacked the experience of being around others who are different from them which made them uncomfortable, causing them to withdraw. He believes this cycle of fear and exclusion can be overcome by providing opportunities for individuals to build relationships, which will help break down the stigma and prejudices that have been systemically built.

When speaking with participants without disabilities, it became apparent that most of them had assumptions on the capabilities of persons with disabilities. As Liam stated, "I mean we do have prejudices. We do have doubts about what people can perform". Although students without disabilities wanted to be open to issues of inclusivity, for instance in recreational settings, they were simply unsure of what that would look like. For example, many persons without disabilities were unsure as to what level of competition a person with a disability would want if playing on an inclusive recreation team and that made them unsure as to how intensely they should play against a person with a disability. As Avery indicated:

If there was some, a game like a team sport like soccer or inner-tube water polo or something like that. I could see that if someone's maybe movement impaired that the other team might be a little conflicted over whether or not to play completely strong against them....I think the common reaction is being, not pitted against, the opponent of someone with a disability, then you're not sure whether or not you're suppose to play your full abilities or go easy on them? So that's a conflict that might come to mind... I don't know if you would want someone to go easy on you and sort of play to your ability or if that would be something like give it your all so I can enjoy, like having a real competition here.

Carla explained how she is affected by the assumptions others have about her level of ability. She prefers working with those who do not have preconceived notions as to what her abilities are as these assumptions can inhibit her participation:

I'd also had the experience where people who have worked with people with disabilities who automatically assume that I'm that person and that's my capabilities level. And for me I would much rather work with someone who doesn't have preconceived notions about what I can do... I used to work out with a varsity athlete who was 'no pain no gain' and just like 'go go go' and very much into 'you can get better, you can improve', and I didn't realize how much that mentality affected me until I worked out with someone who, you know, came from a compassionate standpoint and was very encouraging and thought it was lovely that I wanted to go the gym all the time and admired my enthusiasm and wanted to encourage me and whatever and she just thought it was so great that I could be in a gym but it wasn't challenging in the sense that I would struggle and she would say 'are you okay' instead of 'can we make this more productive for you?'.... So in terms of a work out partner, for me it helps me when they are aware of my capabilities and they are aware of how to help me ... it takes experience... you know, telling people exactly what I need and exactly what I'm capable of.

There is also a perception that persons with a disability would bring down the level of play for a sport. James explained the uncertainty that his coach and teammates had when he first joined the varsity running team:

I would say that the first year especially had some ups and downs for sure for me I think there was a bit of scepticism maybe from [the coach] and also from the team as well just as far as having a blind, someone's who's blind, 'how can they take part in the program?' And it was a really pretty elite program. It was one of the top programs of the country for running. And so I, you know, but I really wanted to kind of prove that I felt that I deserved to be there and, you know, so I really worked hard ... I think after a while I kind of started to earn the respect of some of the people on the team 'cause they realized that I was serious.

James's quote revealed how the campus community needs to be provided opportunities for open communication, experiential learning, and awareness in order to become informed on the real lives of persons within their community, and to help inform them on issues of accessibility, inclusion, and diversity. The next sections will explore this in greater detail.

Opportunities for learning and sharing through open communication

All members within a community should have opportunities to openly communicate with persons outside of their demographic or those with whom they do not typically interact in order to better understand each other's perspectives and combat stereotypes. Persons with disabilities in this study recognized that much of the prejudices that they encountered were not at the hands of malevolent individuals; rather, it was a result of people lacking opportunities to truly engage

and talk with persons with disabilities about their life and about how they would like to be treated.

James, a former varsity track athlete with a visual impairment, provided an example of when he was being excluded within his varsity track team by the other team mates. Although their actions toward him were sometimes negative, he believed that their actions were simply a result of them not being informed about his capabilities as a person with a disability. His team mates were hesitant to assist him with his running at first because they did not know what 'guide running' entailed or how it would affect their own training. They were reluctant to accept him as a legitimate member of the team because they questioned his commitment and ability to be an equally contributing teammate. He came to realize the importance of learning how to openly communicate with his team mates about what he needed and how they could provide him with assistance on the team, which then made the team members more comfortable openly communicating with him. Once his team mates understood exactly what he needed from them and how they could include him, the team mates were less fearful of how to treat him, were better able to see him as an equal member of the team, and were able to build genuine friendships. James elaborated:

I think it mainly came down to just people not being sure and not really knowing as oppose to not, like not wanting to help me, adamantly against helping me. Just a lack of information or education doesn't really help. And partly from my point of view because as a first year student, you know, it took a while for me to really learn to ask for what I needed and to ask for help, I think, and that was sort of part of it too. But once I learned that then, you know, that helped in the process of making things better for sure....I understood the situation too. Like I understood that the people weren't sure and you know it wasn't a lack of willingness to have me part of the team so it wasn't, yeah. It wasn't like I felt like I was being screwed over type thing.

Beth explained how a lack of experience engaging in dialogue with persons with disabilities can make people uncomfortable and unsure of how to approach and talk with persons with disabilities. This fear of communicating with persons with disabilities is harmful because it leads to assumptions and ultimately exclusion:

I do think too that people haven't learned easily how sometimes to talk to a person, particularly a physical disability, in terms of, you know, to say 'can you do that?' or 'how would this be?' because they don't want to appear as though they're patronizing them or you know, some people will, they may have experiences where they talked to someone and said 'don't open that door for me!' or you know 'I can do anything you can do'. So it's like 'okay, cool'. So they don't engage that discussion

very well. And we spend a lot of time in residence about, particularly if you've got someone with a physical disability in that community, having that person talk to the residence about what's cool and what's not cool and you know, feel free. And so I think sometimes they get left out just because people are afraid to ask them what works so it is easier just to say 'oh I'll go to the bar oh she didn't come, too bad, guess she didn't want to come' versus 'why not?' right? So think they do miss out. They don't have the same life. But I think we try.

Beth provides an example of how a lack of creative problem solving skills, along with a failure to partake in open dialogue between persons with disabilities and decision makers, can have severe consequences on the lives of those who are being excluded:

We've had to fight a little bit. Ongoing fight in the Sciences, particularly around labs... Our old ones weren't completely accessible and so...a student might be able to get in with a [wheel] chair, but they were very concerned about if a student spilled something we wouldn't be able to get it off and so they'd burn themselves. And so they just had a, you know, across the board blanked regulations that anyone in a [wheel] chair can't do a lab...And I understood where they were coming from. They were worried about liability and safety and risk and I said 'but you haven't thought creatively about how we can manage this. So how about a buddy and an attendant can come and do some of the stuff that is really quite, you're very concerned about, but still be in the lab'. And [they would respond] 'yeah, what if there is a fire? Who's going to get them out? It's on the second floor'. Like that kind of thinking. And never has that thinking, in my mind, been 'I want to discriminate against someone with a disability', it's always been 'I haven't sat down and thought creatively around how to deal with it', right? And so we still have some of that on campus.

In order to help raise awareness of the real lives and abilities of persons with disabilities, and overcome these assumptions and miscommunications, there is a need for the campus community to develop strategies on how to communicate with others in situations that may feel uncomfortable. Beth believes that a community can deliberately open up these lines of communication through initiatives such as professional development opportunities, forums, and sessions which provide practical solutions to challenges that people may experience when communicating and interacting with others:

It comes back to us getting people to understand. I think your teaching support services, your human resources, etc, have to be having a lot of professional development opportunities on this, right? You know, whether it's going to the departments and talking and explaining or whether it's you know, big university forums, etc. There just has to be constant education. I think a lot of what's happened over the last 10-15 years is not because we're doing a phenomenal job but we spent a lot of time educating people about things. So just start to spend time and so sessions aren't around 'let me tell you what it is like to be a person with a disability' or whatever, it's 'let me tell you some creative ways in which you can respond, like

universal design for you know, the curriculum', etcetera. So it's around, 'yeah, I know I've been really struggling with this student with this student with a disability but I don't really know how to manage it', you know, let's have some open sessions. I just think that would move it a great deal.

James echoed Beth's remarks in that he believed that information on how to work with persons with disabilities should be made easily available to those who have the power to shape a culture, such as coaches, through sessions and workshops. However, James realized that the community must first be open to issues of disability:

I think it comes down to just being sort of really open about some of the, some of the issues for different disabilities and you know talking about, talking about having workshops, awareness, you know, training courses or make that information easily accessible to coaches because coaches are the, they're the um, they are the people that sort of makes a, make different sports programs work and they you know, they over see them in the facility so um and they have the ability to, to help sort of in terms of bringing that to their, to their able-bodied athletes I think, you know?

Liam, who is a part-time staff member in the department of athletics, discussed how his supervisor provides opportunities to develop positive communication strategies at their staff training. These skills are necessary in order to help them approach people in the weight room and correct behaviour:

Every year at staff training we talk about breaking the ice and like because it is the hardest thing. And especially, and I'll go back to the weight room again, there's an ego in there and there's a lot of guys, I say guys because they're the majority of the people in the weight room who really don't know how to do the exercises they're doing properly. However approaching them is also very, very difficult because they think they're doing it properly and there's a competitive nature in that. And so when you go up to them and approach them, it is all about icebreakers and getting in there...It's essential to go up, introduce yourself, give them a positive feedback first and then go to the negative because if you just go up and say 'hey you're doing that wrong', they're gonna really close up and be defensive right? And then you're not gonna get through (Liam).

Developing skills on how to approach and communicate with people, particularly those with whom they do not typically interact, can help create an environment that is welcoming and supportive.

Joshua added that these education and awareness initiatives must ensure that they are not simply 'preaching to the choir' but that they seek to reach all people, including those in positions of power who may not initially think to be involved in such an awareness sessions. Joshua felt this information can better reach a broader audience if they bring forward these issues in situations where people are already gathering for another issue that is important to them:

I think I need to find a way to go speak to groups who are already coming together for another reason that's important to them and get myself on the agenda without asking them to come out to a disability awareness day. Because only those who already care about the issues are going to show up. So maybe it means going to, every college has a dean's council which is a group of dean plus the chairs, maybe getting myself in the agenda for dean's council or maybe getting myself in the agenda for department meetings on campus or graduate students association meeting, again organizations that already have people coming to them for reasons that makes sense to them and make myself heard that way. That's part of what I think in terms of my speaking tour. Trying to spread the word to places that might not otherwise hear about it... I think we'll reach a lot more people that way, and maybe we'll get to the point where they want to come and spend time with us and, or the, the choir we're already converting will get bigger.

Opportunities for learning and sharing through experiences

In speaking with students without disabilities, it became apparent that they were often nervous or anxious about working with students with disabilities because it was a new experience for them and they were uncertain about the capabilities and limitations of persons with disabilities. It is therefore important to provide opportunities for the community to engage in experiential learning in order for such barriers to be broken down. Liam, a student volunteer with the REC Club, recalled his initial discomfort and nervousness when he began working with persons with disabilities. As described in the quote below, gaining experience working with persons with disabilities was the key to helping to break down assumptions and increase the comfort around others who were once unfamiliar to him. Liam elaborated:

Well I think there's always a bit of tension there just because of the interaction and that moment of interaction would be new, right? If you don't have experience working with people with disabilities, it is hard. Like for example when I started working with the Special Olympics... I was like so nervous because I had no idea. I didn't know if these people were really fragile and if I touched them they would break or you know, like you just don't know? So I was really nervous and I think that that is an example that I'm sure a lot of people would have that anxiety. You know without an education about the individuals or the individual's issues or like what are the limitations?... How far can they push themselves? And probably they can push themselves a lot farther than we think and I say we as in people without disabilities. But you don't know that, right? So and with training Mark, I wouldn't push him very hard at first. Now I really push him, I'm like 'Mark no come on, give me more', you know? Because I know he can do it but I had to find that out right? And it was that learning, learning curve and going into it. It's definitely nerve racking so I think that there is a perception and it's just a lack of education and a lack of experience.

Liam's quote reveals how positive experiences with persons different than one's self can be beneficial. He learned to feel comfortable working with people with disabilities through his coaching experience at the Special Olympics which then enabled him to feel more comfortable working with a student with a disability in his job as a personal trainer on campus. Essentially, opportunities for persons with varying backgrounds to come together in a social setting was instrumental in breaking down barriers and building relationships based on mutual respect and understanding. People therefore need opportunities to interact with those who have different abilities, experiences, and backgrounds than themselves. A community that is diverse and exposes community members to a range of individuals with different backgrounds and abilities will assist with familiarity and comfort. Avery provided an example of how joining the University of Guelph community was initially a culture shock because he came from an all male boarding school to the diverse University community. The experience of being around persons of different demographics, either informally or through programs offered on campus, helped him to learn about different cultures and backgrounds which consequently made him feel more comfortable around others:

At the very least in gender distribution, I think it works to about two thirds girls, one-third guys [in the university]....For me that was like sort of, not like a culture shock but a change because I came from an all guys' boarding school to being surrounded by women all the time...And to have that, like, the queer community, and such a strong proponents over campus and things like that was just, wasn't something, I wasn't use to. So it was nothing like that in my high school...In my first year before I was an R.A. on campus, I might have had a slightly different experience than other people in terms of different cultures and race and things like that because I was in the Watson International House and so we had just did more programming than the average resident just in terms of like different cultures and sort of global issues...We ran an event once a year where everybody cooks like sort of a dish that they're familiar with and can cook from their heritage and everyone gets to experience all the different uh cuisines. And things like that, like sharing music from different parts of the world. That's sort of like an international microcosm on campus but I'm sure that occurs on other places too.

Opportunities for learning and sharing through awareness initiatives

It is also essential that campus communities provide opportunities for social learning through awareness initiatives in order to ensure that all community members are informed on issues of diversity, accessibility, and compassion. This is essential because people who do not experience many barriers in their life (be it physical, financial, or attitudinal) may lack an

awareness of how others are excluded or oppressed, thus these issues are not a part of their daily conscience. In this study, two participants who acquired a disability later in life recalled how issues of accessibility were not something that they thought about pre-injury because they could not fully understand the challenges that others faced. As Andrea stated:

I think it's great to make people aware 'cause it's something that you don't think of unless you're directly affected by it....I never really thought about it much before the accident. I never really knew what was available to people and stuff like that...I mean I was seventeen when the accident happened so most teenagers don't necessarily think of that, again unless they're directly affected by it.

People without disabilities may not know what it is like because they are not personally experiencing challenges. Participants also explained how sometimes well intended individuals neglect to consider issues of accessibility simply because they do not see their friend or family as a person with a disability. They become so familiar with the individual and view them as 'just like me' and so do not remember to consider issues of accessibility when planning events or outings. As Ava stated:

I don't think it's something that everybody thinks about for sure. And even in an everyday situation there are lots of my friends that definitely believe in the world of 'normalcy' and they don't, they don't see me as a person in a chair so it's not always top of mind that when we're going somewhere they need to ask if there's a step to get in or if there, you know, like they don't think like that 'cause they don't do it every day right?

Therefore, opportunities for learning and sharing through awareness initiatives must take place in order to help increase open dialogue and understanding of the perspectives of others and to bring to the forefront issues of diversity, accessibility, and inclusion. This learning can happen in a variety of ways.

One way that the University of Guelph helped increase awareness of disability and accessibility is by hosting an Accessibility Awareness Day which is a joint initiative between the CSD and other student services and committees. The campaign serves many purposes: it helps raise awareness to the general community about issues of diversity and accessibility, it serves as an opportunity to recruit student volunteers for programs and services, it acts as a social event for involved participants, it provides a forum for persons with disabilities to voice their concerns to the Accessibility Committee on what can be improved upon on campus, it serves as a fundraiser, it fosters a network between interested university stakeholders, it offers information sessions, and

it provides information on resources and supports that are available to persons with a disability.

Alexis elaborated:

They have a lot of events in certain places around campus where they'll, like the one main one that [the University President] was in was basically they rented a certain amount of wheelchairs and had people go in them for the entire week and they weren't allowed to get up and push a button if they couldn't reach it, like they had to figure out a way to do it while staying in their chair and those sorts of things. Or they would have like, I think another one was they rented a lecture hall during the week and had someone go and speak about the different types of disabilities that are out there and how you can be more inclusive...Basically increasing student awareness and making them more aware of what's going on around campus for those students and the types of things that they can help out in and get more involved with and those sorts of things. 'Cause another part of the CSD is that they have a peer helper group with the center for students with disabilities so they have like the REC program is part of that so they have volunteers that can sign up to be with the REC program or helping with note taking and guiding and those sorts of things. So that was another big part. It was a way for the CSD to basically recruit people to help them out and let them know what was available.

This awareness campaign not only helps to increase awareness on accessibility challenges faced by students but it also helps to inform the community on the programs, services, and committees that are available on campus. Joshua explained:

It's hosting displays and workshops where we talk about the services that are there, the work that's being done so that people who have had no connection to disability issues can be better aware of what we're doing and what the issues are. Sometimes they use this fundraiser days, or at least advertise a fundraising effort. So I think that's largely their function. It's really to bring a kind of work that my committee does, that the Accessibility Committee does, that CSD does and so on, bring their work out into the open for people who don't have it in their every day thinking, and raise awareness generally of those issues. And that's a good thing.

A great strategy to attract the community and get them involved is to make these awareness campaigns interesting, social and fun. Providing a range of activities, from story sharing, to simulated activities, to obstacle courses is a great way to appeal to a variety of individuals.

Alexis elaborated:

At one point they had the Rick Hanson run and part of that they had like wheelchair races ...or there was like an obstacle course where you would have to go and drive a wheelchair through certain poles...and then they would have to stop it at certain stations and like load a bag or put on a sweatshirt and just do certain things like with mittens or things like that so that you could see what students with disabilities experience in terms of the things that could be more difficult for them and that kind of stuff.

Another strategy to help raise awareness of issues of diversity and accessibility is through various media outlets. For example, the university's student newspaper organizes its volumes around various social issues, such as the 'accessibility issue', the 'gender issue', the 'queer issue' and so on. This helps to spotlight issues that are important to the students which help raise awareness. Avery discussed how the paper helped him become more informed:

If you're not familiar with [the school's student newspaper] it's like a magazine... there was a queer issue, there's a sort of like a disability issue and I think the current one is the disability issue actually...I was reading an article about schizophrenia and... I thought that was really interesting.

When promoting accessibility and disability awareness, it is important to ensure that the perspectives of persons with mental health issues and invisible disabilities are also included as the general public typically addresses the barriers faced by persons with physical disabilities. Sidney indicated that although the university has been increasing efforts to promote awareness on mental health issues, this perspective is still not as well known because of the stigma associated with mental health and because the challenges they experience are invisible. Sidney stated:

I think the University has done very well with accommodating a variety of barriers but again I think mental health issues seem to be kind of the last kind of piece of disability related barriers that people are starting to look at....It's a little bit further behind about you know, what are those barriers? What do students experience? How do we help overcome those barriers? How do we work together with students? And you know there's still a lot of stigma right and there's health issues and there's a good group over at the Wellness Center that's related specifically to mental health issues and awareness about mental health issues on campus and so that's great, they're getting out there. They have some great activities to raise awareness...But yeah I think it's just a little bit slower....I think it's a bit of you know knowledge awareness, the fact that it's invisible.

Not all awareness initiatives need to be formal and organized by the greater university. Education and awareness can happen informally through communication. Melissa explained how all interactions with individuals can provide opportunities for learning and she encourages people to take responsibility to use conversations as ways of educating others about oppression and discrimination:

Just educating people. And by your own personal self-education and educating others by the way you respond to people, especially when you get into a situation when you're dealing with somebody who has a challenge and you're with other people, it's how you respond. That's really crucial. I find that often if I'm with somebody that

has a challenge and you end up in a group environment and they're not being treated, the person who has the challenge is not being treated properly. I get so angry and I will say something...I think if you don't say something, that's unjust and that's important for the other people to be made aware of proper behaviour. The best learning opportunity. And so again it's your opportunity to teach others. Your opportunity to provide education to others. So individual self education and education of others.

This section provided strategies to help campus communities become informed on the needs and interests of others within the community through personal and social awareness. It is anticipated that with experience, open dialogue, and learning opportunities, community members will become more understanding of the lives of others, which will help reduce the stigmas often attached to disability. Melissa discussed the negative affect that stereotypes and prejudices can have on an individual with a disability and the importance of actively working towards eliminating this unnecessary suffering:

Having an invisible disability is very difficult because you look fine but you're not fine and it's the most difficult scenario to deal with. Most people think that I'm fairly intelligent until I open my mouth. On a day when I'm having a lot of pain I have word finding problems and it's so difficult especially if I'm teaching or if I'm tutoring to provide an intelligent session, suggesting that I'm intelligent. I'm tutoring. I'm supposed to be providing help and expertise. That's my credibility and then I can't speak properly and it goes to my credibility and I feel like an idiot ...It got so bad that I stopped speaking entirely for over a year 'cause I was just too afraid. That's pretty sad. That's what an invisible disability does. People laugh at you....I want them to know that I'm here and I'm doing my best and that's it. And if they want to talk to me that's great. If they don't want to talk to me fine. Just don't judge me. Just give me a chance.

The following section will explore how those working within a campus community, such as staff and volunteers, can become informed on issues pertaining to diversity.

Ensuring Service Providers are Informed, Trained, and Qualified

A campus culture of compassion is possible when all staff members and volunteers (particularly those who work in social services) are informed and trained on issues of accessibility and inclusion and relevant staff members are certified and qualified to work with persons of diverse backgrounds and abilities. Moreover, persons in positions of power (such as managers or directors) will possess characteristics that encourage dialogue and learning with staff which facilitate continual learning and growth. This helps create an environment where all

service providers offer consistent and effective support that meet the needs and interests of those with whom they work.

Training and informing service providers about issues of diversity and inclusion

It became apparent when speaking to the various participants that they felt that issues of diversity and inclusiveness were the responsibility of the entire community, not just the CSD or the person with the disability. They thought it important to ensure that all on-campus staff members, faculty, coaches, or service providers be trained in diversity awareness. It was suggested that they be provided with basic information and training on diversity awareness and sensitivity, as well as the policies and procedures that are in place to support persons with disabilities or alternative needs. They also provided specific tips and strategies on how to work with diverse populations to ensure their needs and interests are met. Participants specifically highlighted two main groups of individuals, faculty members and staff members (particularly recreation staff and service providers) who should be provided with such information.

The students with disabilities in this study attended university because it was of interest to them and they enjoyed being in a stimulating learning environment. Although most of the students with disabilities commented on enjoying their courses, they also noted that their enjoyment in class was greatly reduced when they were faced with a faculty member who did not understand, or seek to understand, what the student needed from the classroom environment in order to succeed in the class. It became apparent that not all faculty members are informed on issues concerning disabilities and how they, as faculty, can help facilitate an accessible and welcoming environment. Several students provided examples of situations where they experienced unhelpful faculty members, but Melissa's quote will be used to highlight the stigma that students with disabilities feel when approaching unwelcoming faculty members who are not informed:

Some professors are great. Some are not. It's still split. And the same with the students. I still hide it...I still struggle with every single time I have to talk to a professor, I still struggle with my accommodations. I feel like I'm cheating almost. The stigma that's attached is the most amazing thing and yet we're in a learned environment...Other professors you know are of the mind that you shouldn't be working beyond your cognitive means and you should be doing the things that you're capable of because you're gonna get a real surprise when you get out into the real world.

Students with disabilities were also concerned when faculty members expected them to communicate their needs solely through the CSD instead of working collectively to develop strategies to accommodate a disability. As Carla stated:

If I'm having struggles with an assignment then a professor will say 'well have you spoken to the CSD, what are they doing for you?' And I say 'well no, I'm in your class I'm your responsibility how can we work together instead of me just going back to my mother ship so to speak and be like 'hey fix this for me'.

Faculty members must therefore be provided with opportunities to become informed about issues of disability and what that means for students within the classroom. Many misunderstandings, assumptions or stigmas surrounding disabilities, such as learning disabilities or mental health issues, can be averted with proper information and experience. Faculty members also need to become more informed on the role that the CSD plays on campus. Specifically, they should become informed about what disability accommodations mean and how they can work collectively with students and the CSD to overcome obstacles to learning. Natalie recalled an experience where she was invited to an information session with faculty members in order to share her perspective with them. This enabled professors to become more informed on the realities of life with a disability and it helped them to put a face to the label of disability. Natalie explained:

What we did at my old school...they made us come to a meeting with all the faculty, like they had a huge faculty meeting and they brought us in. And like a couple of months later I went to go meet a prof because I never met them and the prof was like 'I know you' and I was like, 'okay'. And so it kind of puts a face to it and makes it a little less, 'oh my God we have to accommodate them because this school says we have to accommodate them'. Does that make sense?

Educational opportunities provided to faculty members will help break down the stigma of disabilities and help them understand how to adapt and accommodate the environment to better meet the learning needs of all students. This is becoming even more essential since the Canadian Government is insisting that universities have a duty to accommodate students with disabilities.

Beth explained this culture shift that occurred throughout the years at the university:

We had accessibility stuff long before the Government mandate came down...I remember because I was Secretary of Senate way back when we brought through the first draft of the accessibility document for students with learning disabilities. Back then it was like 'oh my goodness', you know, 'I don't know, we're giving them preferential treatment, and what are we doing here?' And partly you can see the differences because back then that was still not part of the kind of fabric, right, it was

coming from the Centre for Students with Disabilities and the Provost and it kinda pushed down whereas last year we finally said you know ‘this is nuts, students shouldn’t be asking for some of this stuff it should happen automatically’ and we went to Senate and said ‘look, we’re just now going to do all this our self’ and not a peep. It was like ‘oh yeah, you should have been doing that a long time ago’. Like ‘why, why is this even an issue?’...It’s been a huge shift is awareness and understanding, particularly around learning disabilities. Physical disabilities was never an issue but learning disabilities you can’t see it, right. So, there’s been a huge shift.

Engagement in extra-curricular activities, including fitness, recreation, and sports, is a major contributor to the overall well-being of a student. However, staff members, instructors, facilitators, or coaches who lack an awareness or understanding of how to effectively meet the needs of persons with disabilities pose significant barriers to involvement. Training sessions are therefore necessary for all staff members and volunteers within these areas of extra-curricular campus life to ensure they all are informed of the processes in place for inclusion and accommodation and that all have a basic understanding of, and sensitivity towards, the diversity that exists within the community.

One major barrier that students experienced when seeking to participate in recreation or fitness was that instructors or fitness staff sometimes lacked an awareness of how to help and accommodate an individual who has a difference in ability. Brian, CSD advisor, encouraged all staff members with the athletics department to receive a basic disability orientation training session. As Brian stated:

Everyone in that department, it should be mandatory that they take accessibility workshops whether it be our department or an accessibility consultation, or advisory council, an outside agency, it doesn’t matter to me. Teach these individuals about disability issues and disability supports, and how I can help this person with a disability, or how I can include a person with a disability in my session, whether your working one to one, personal trainers, teaching dance classes, fitness instructors, really everyone should have this knowledge... They should be contacting us and having us for a generic workshop on working with people with disabilities, proper language, etiquette, just common sense things.

The barrier of uninformed staff members was compounded when a person with a disability attended a program, such as a fitness class, and the instructor did not expect that a participant would need accommodations and as such was not prepared. A quote from Ava revealed the barriers that can be experienced when there are no formal policies in place to facilitate inclusion:

And I actually registered [for yoga] in person and the person at the desk wouldn't say anything to me about making it adaptive or anything and I just assumed since I was gonna take someone with me that we'd just figure it out when I got there. And the teacher was a little bit, um (**pause**) out there. He didn't really do anything to like say 'well if you can't do this you might want to try this', he just carried on the class and my friend did what she could with me and if I couldn't participate in the different elements at which she would do her thing and I would just you know do breathing and stuff like that. So that's interesting. There definitely wasn't any provision in place for making it be accessible.

Service providers and programmers within post-secondary institutions need to develop a straightforward system that helps facilitate inclusion and accessibility. This can be in the form of policies, procedures, or protocols which are shared with all involved persons including staff and community members. This ensures a base level consistency of services and awareness by staff members on the necessary processes that are in place to meet needs.

One way to avoid this situation is to ensure that there are opportunities for persons with a disability to indicate any supports or assistance that they may require when participating in recreation ahead of time. This enables the instructor to be prepared so the experience is beneficial for both the participant and the instructor. Kimberley elaborated:

I think it would be a good idea just in the sense that then people can be better prepared to accommodate them because I think it does put the instructor at a bit of a disadvantage if the very first class someone shows up and they have no knowledge of how to accommodate them. It's not gonna be a positive thing on either side because then the student with the disability is not gonna be able to get the experience they wanted and the instructors not gonna know how to provide it. So just in the interest of both sides in order to be better prepared I think that it's something that would affect their ability to perform.

Brian from the CSD suggested that those enrolling in fitness classes or programs be asked upfront "is there something you would like us to know to better serve your needs?" either on registration forms or during the information gathering phase. If an individual is not provided opportunities to indicate specific things that they may need in order to make the experience more beneficial, such as an attendant or volunteer, then the staff will not be informed on how they can better meet individual needs. Melissa provided an example of how critical it was that she was provided opportunities to inform both her professors and her REC Club volunteers about her disability and how it might present itself. She asserted that this information was critical because her health and well-being are dependent on it:

Well for me it's good because Pat does aqua fit so she already knows. But if not, I would have a peer helper and she would know...I would talk to her and let her know, 'I might have this problem and if I do I'll do something about it, this is what you'd have to do if I have an issue'... I've had to do that with my instructors 'cause I had a migraine in class and they had to call First Response. I asked them to call First Response while I could still speak 'cause my speech goes too.

Asking all participants about what can be provided to enable them to fully participate takes the pressure off students to disclose a disability as they only have to inform others on what they need to enhance their experience in the program. Sidney explained:

That doesn't necessarily mean the students need to disclose what their health issue is. It just means that you know in this environment, this is what will be helpful to me. You know yoga class; 'yeah I'd like to be at the back closer to the door, that would be really helpful for me because then I know that I can leave when I need to. You know if I begin to have a panic attack then I'm out the door and to a place of what might feel more safe, whether in a different room', or you know, those sorts of things. It doesn't mean they need to disclose.

It is also important to have clear mechanisms and procedures in place to ensure important information about a student with a disability is passed on from the registration staff members to the instructor or staff members working directly with the participant, ensuring confidentiality is maintained. Mark described how he was surprised that those who registered him for the fitness class did not pass on to the instructor that he was blind:

Well I thought that my disability, because when I enrolled it's right at the front desk where they take your name and i.d. and everything and I thought they would have passed it on to the instructor but they didn't, so when I first came to the class, my disability was very much disclosed already.

Staff members should use additional methods of communicating with program participants throughout the duration of the program which can provide them with opportunities to voice concerns or ask for suggestions on how to adapt an exercise. Staff indicated that they would start the class asking if anyone has any injuries, health issues, or disabilities which require the exercises to be modified. However, staff recognized that some people may not feel comfortable disclosing this information in front of the class. In this regard, participants who are fitness staff members also discussed being available both before and after class to field questions and support those who need extra instruction. Leslie, who leads fitness classes, described how she hands out business cards to participants with her email address on it so people who may not feel uncomfortable talking to her directly can email her.

In instances where the needs and preferences of a person with a disability who attends a fitness class are not known ahead of time, it is crucial that all staff members are informed of the process in place to accommodate and assist persons with varying abilities. For example, all fitness staff members should know that if they are uncertain on how to properly adapt a fitness class to meet the needs of a person with a disability, they should work with the person with a disability in conjunction with a staff supervisor qualified to work with persons with special needs to determine strategies for enhanced participation.

James's experience on the varsity track team provided great insight into the awareness that coaches need to have in order to fully integrate a person with a disability on a team. James went to a high school for the blind and so being involved in sports teams was an integral part of his life prior to university. He understands that coaches within an integrated university setting likely do not have much experience with athletes with a disability. However, the increasing popularity of sporting opportunities for persons with a disability, such as the Paralympics, has resulted in many varsity sport teams including athletes with disabilities. James suggested that all coaches, particularly ones who are aware that a team-mate has a disability, should be provided opportunities to learn tips and strategies on how to accommodate and include students with various abilities on a team:

Maybe you can sort of do that through you know workshops that just train courses, maybe even you know mandatory training courses? And not so in depth either. I mean just fairly general in the case of blind running. Just an understanding of how guide running works, with how you know people tend to share that responsibility so it doesn't come down to one or two people, it can be a range of people so it could be worked out really easily....Just being aware of what's possible and how to facilitate the experience for people with disabilities so I think there's definitely, definitely huge pro's for sure. But it's hard to expect it to sort of happen automatically on its own. You need that initial, you know, level of understanding from the coach to make it possible.

The importance of adequately training staff and faculty members on issues pertaining to diversity and the processes in place for accommodations have been clearly identified by participants. These participants have also provided insights as to what they consider to be effective training strategies. Participants emphasized that experience is typically the best teacher, so it was recommended that staff members be provided with opportunities to experience a challenge first hand (such as using a wheelchair for the day to identify physical barriers) and work with persons of different abilities directly. Providing opportunities for staff members to

communicate and work with persons with disabilities, such as during interactive training sessions, can help inform staff on the barriers and challenges that others experience while providing opportunities to collectively develop practical skills and solutions. A training session will not be able to teach staff members or volunteers exactly how to address every specific situation and concern faced by a person with a disability since each individual has unique abilities, challenges, and expectations and blanket accommodations or solutions will not meet everyone's needs. That is why it is critical that service providers actively engage their participants to find the right solution or accommodations for their specific needs. Pamela indicated that training sessions can help staff members become more aware of, and open to, issues of diversity and inclusion which will help them be more sensitive to those who may need assistance:

All of our fitness personnel are trained around openness and inclusiveness and that's around, they also have training around eating disorders and what do to if this happens. So and if somebody blind shows up to their class, they get training enough philosophically to say you're there for them too and then they know that they need to come down and talk to me. And if that's the case, we get them a volunteer. So we have somebody, a blind person, find his way and it's not easy to get to our fitness center, he has to go upstairs and, and kind of stand in the fitness center. The staff knew enough to go over and say 'is there something I can help you with?'

These training sessions can also provide the staff and volunteers with opportunities to develop communication skills that will make them more comfortable approaching people, asking questions, and collectively problem solving to develop accommodations. Kimberley, a student fitness instructor, asserted that fitness staff members should be exposed to persons with different abilities during their training sessions so they can enhance both their communication skills (how to talk with people about their preferences) and their practical skills (how to better respond to diverse needs):

I think mainly it's just experience and exposure to it and I think putting things in place where you have a policy but even just facilitating opportunities for the instructors to get that experience. So having part of the training program be that people with various disabilities will come in and, like you, talking about having them try different exercises and talking about 'well this is what I'm able to do' and just getting instructors more comfortable with learning how to communicate with those individuals. And you obviously always, I mean you're not gonna know how to train every individual that has a particular disability but knowing how to communicate with them and be dynamic and be able to respond appropriately in any given situation. You can't really have in your head, 'oh I have a student in a wheelchair,

I'm gonna need to do this'. It's all gonna be different. So just getting the instructors in that process of here's kind of what you need to explore to what information you need to get from them and then how do you process that to understand what to provide for them. So there's definitely a lack of that but it'd be a good thing to improve on... I think added it in as a more prominent component in training all of the staff, just so that it's something that is at the forefront would be helpful. So maybe having those sessions where you bring in people with disabilities to you know chat with them and try and find different ways to look at them. Maybe having a session on preparing the staff in terms of how to facilitate that dialogue.

Kimberley's quote also touched on the need for all relevant staff members and volunteers to be informed on processes in place that allow for accommodations or inclusion. This ensures that there is consistent and reliable information being given to those who inquire and it ensures that people are able to access services and programs with ease and relative independence. Liam provided an example of how his REC Club partner, who has a visual impairment, used to rely on him to be present in the weight room while he was working out because he needed him to lead him through the inaccessible gym and assist him with equipment. Liam realized that this limited his partner's ability to go to the gym on his own so he ensured that a system was in place to assist his partner when he arrived at the gym alone and he ensured that all staff members were informed on this process:

What I've done with Mark is to set up a program where he can come in on his own and ride the bike, the stationary bike. So before he was just getting a work out whenever he'd meet with his personal trainer and now he can come in and just go to the front desk, they'll call up whoever is working on shift, like a supervisor will come down, grab Mark, bring him upstairs, he can get changed up there and then sit him down on the bike. And they'll actually like see him every three, four, five minutes to increase the resistance on the bike. And I've set it up where he knows what levels he should be getting to. I've put a program up so that the staff can see what levels he should be....Originally he was just going to come in on two days at a set time and so I knew who would be working on those times and I got in touch with them and told them 'okay Mark's coming in today, can you guys look out for him at eight forty-five? Okay great' and then, but that's kind of inconvenient for him 'cause then what if he doesn't want to go in at that time or you know. So then I'm like, I started to, he would show up at different times and people kind of had to adapt and now it's to the point where the people at the front desk, there's two full-time staff, they know him and they're like 'oh hey Mark' and they'll call up and tell the person and it's kind of happened just by kind of trial by fire where he's come in at a random time and the people who don't know him and he'll let them know okay my program's on the wall, check it out and they'll just have to adapt and go along with it...I think that there needs to be better kind of a bigger understanding on part of the

staff in the weight room to know that there are people with disabilities that they should know who they are and what they need to do to help them right?

Leslie, the Fitness Centre Coordinator, also used this same example to demonstrate how such an informal solution enabled a student with a disability to access the gym with less reliance on others:

I've got that case with a gentleman that's blind that uses the Fitness Centre. My staff actually go down and get him and walk him up stairs and get him set up on the bike and so it's just part of what they do on their shift they just look after him and he does his own thing pretty much on his own but they just help him get around a little bit. So I mean we have done that for sure so we arrange that for when [the student] is coming in, what are the staff working those days and then we sort of assign that staff member to that person and if they're not going to work their shift that day they've got to make sure the person filling in for them is gonna be able to look after [him]... Is it a written policy? Not really but it's you know my staff know that that's the way we sort of look after things.

Liam and Leslie's example illustrates the role that simple solutions and modifications can play in enhancing the well-being of persons with disabilities. His low-tech solution of posting Mark's workout schedule on the wall for all staff members to refer to is a simple modification that enabled Mark to work out without additional assistance. There is often an assumption that accommodations are expensive and difficult when sometimes ingenuity and a willingness to try new strategies is all that is required. This example also demonstrates how policies or procedures that facilitate inclusion should be established and worked into the fabric of the community. In this regard, an inclusive environment that supports people as just a part of 'business as usual' reduces the stigmas associated with accommodations and it facilitates a consistently welcoming environment. It is necessary to have consistent processes in place for accommodations and all staff members need to be aware of such accommodations. Information sessions should be provided which ensure that staff members and volunteers are made aware of the programs, services, or support that they offer. Kimberley described:

I remember when I was doing staff training for another role that I have on campus which is kind of like a residence assistant type position um and so a lot of the training in that involves like anti-oppressive type training and like inclusive environments and all that kind of stuff. And there was a little activity we had to do, we went through like 'do you know where there would be on campus, can you name where there are washrooms that are accessible for wheelchairs? Are there washrooms that are accessible for you know people like single use washrooms or something if people are uncomfortable going into a public like men's washroom or woman's washroom because they don't identify with a particular gender?' ...It just went through all these lists of questions, and like 'do you know where there's resources on

campus?' ...This is what they do so there's a ways to go for sure. At least people are starting to think about it.

Natalie revealed how she switched universities to attend the University of Guelph because the systems that they have in place help make life a lot easier for students with disabilities:

In terms of the disability, it's one hundred more straightforward here. I think because for them [another university], I was kind of the test project so to speak. Just because I applied there not really sure what I wanted to do with myself and they hadn't a lot of physically [disabled] people... I was kind of their test project...They're definitely a smaller school so I don't think they have anything comparable to Guelph's recreational program... And I think not having to constantly be questioned about what works and what doesn't work. Because there everything was new so they were kind of testing things on me, right? Whereas here you just walk in and it kind of just works, as weird as that sounds. But so that's definitely a different dynamic and that was how come I picked Guelph originally was because they won recognition. **(J: oh I didn't know that?)** Yeah and so looking at schools, I like messaged lots of them because I could of gone like anywhere really and I messaged like everyone across the whole country pretty much. And I narrowed it to here and U. B.C. and U. B.C. would have been the straight forward choice because all my family and friends are out there but, but every time I messaged Barry, it was like "no, you have to come here, we're so good, we're so good" right? And so then I just totally got suckered into it so to speak but like suckered in a good way and so now I'm here and I completely love it.

Natalie illustrated that an inclusive and welcoming community will attract people to it while an inaccessible community will make an individual retreat.

It is understandable that a staff or community member cannot be trained or prepared to handle every situation or accommodation request that arises. Each person is unique and therefore needs and requests will be just as varied. However, what is important is that people are made aware of the general procedure for inclusion and that all members follow the guiding principles on how to be inclusive and compassionate while being creative problem solvers. Denise elaborated:

I don't think you can expect everybody to know but you, you should expect them to be able to, you know, conduct themselves in a manner that's respectful to them and the student and to be able to, you know, ask questions and the student should be prepared to answer that in a way, you know, where they know that people are trying to assist them. So I think maybe it's more like attitudinal as opposed to, you know, anybody providing service should have this huge body of knowledge in terms of how to accommodate people with disabilities, 'cause that's not necessarily the rules to play, like we all come from different backgrounds and such so, but just the approach. Yeah, the how-to accommodate if should something happen, like, yeah the steps to find out what you need to do.

Ensuring some service providers have specialized training and are qualified to work with diverse populations

It is essential that staff members are qualified and certified (when necessary) to provide programs and services that are accessible to all and that meet the needs of diverse populations. In the department of athletics, for example, it is essential that all staff members are qualified to do their job (such as personal training or fitness instruction) but it is also essential that there are specialized staff members who are certified to work with individuals who have specific needs since there are specific liability and insurance considerations that need to be made. Leslie elaborated:

My fitness centre staff that just monitor the floor, it's a general [certification], 'cause again for fitness, I don't know if you're aware, but you know in fitness when we need professional liability insurance to work with people. Obviously working with people with special disabilities is a certification beyond your basic certification. So most certifications that are out there for personal training are an introductory level certification, would be you know, your scope of practice is now to deal with people that are generally healthy, maybe not fit but healthy and don't have any special conditions. And then if you want, and you pay a certain baseline for insurance for that. To work with special conditions you obviously need certification and you need more insurance coverage to be able to do that. So for my weight room supervisors they have a baseline... My staff are all qualified personal trainers so their scope of practice is to work with general public.

Unfortunately someone qualified as a personal trainer may not have the knowledge-base and training needed to work with students with specific health issues or disabilities. Therefore, there is a need for at least one qualified staff member who is specifically trained and certified to cater to the special needs of community members. In the university, the Fitness Coordinator was the certified staff member who would oversee most clients with specific needs looking to work out in the weight room or fitness centre. Pat served as the Lifestyle and Fitness Coordinator responsible for providing specialized programs for persons with a disability, such as aqua-therapy or Dragon Boat Racing. Certified staff members who are informed on issues pertaining to persons with a disability or other health issues can serve as an excellent resource. For example, Pat is involved with the Personal Training certification course by providing a basic overview on disability issues. She also oversees the REC Club partnerships to ensure that volunteers are qualified to work effectively with their partners with a disability. Jessica, the student REC Club coordinator elaborated:

Pat would be the one, 'cause she runs all the fitness centre staff or the REC Program and instructors. She coordinates all them so it would be kind of her to contact. She's also the one who does the disabilities kind of thing. Like she passed them on now to me but overall she was the one who would deal with any kind of person who came in with a disability. She would go and help them in the pool, help the volunteer with them. She always comes in. We have a recent like new volunteer that works with a community member and like she just popped in to watch them in the pool...So it was just a matter of comfort level, making sure they were okay doing what they were doing...And Pat checks in on things just to see, gives a few tips and 'cause she obviously has more knowledge than I do in certain areas. She would just kind of say 'oh try this' or 'do that'. That kind of thing 'cause she's water certified.

A certified and informed staff member can also support the staff by researching the various disabilities of the clients and by offering suggestions on how to best meet their needs. As Jessica indicated:

They should be responsible for actually researching specific diseases... I have trained a client with a slipped disk. I research it. I look it up. I find out information about it, what's beneficial for them. So like it would be somebody willing to do that research, to do that background information.

An open door policy with qualified staff encourages informal dialogue and learning. A good management style that incorporates ongoing learning and more effective programs and services. As Gareth stated:

I rely a lot on Pat for just getting ideas and my training as a staff member at the athletic centre so I couldn't really imagine how people who don't have that training and experience would be able to do things as safe or as effective or be as helpful to people...She's always in her office and always has an open door so you can just walk in and say we're having trouble with this or do you have any ideas to try on this problem, anything like that.

Staff members appreciated having qualified and knowledgeable supervisors who are on hand to support them when needed. Such an environment not only enables the staff members to grow and develop as individuals, but they are then better able help others. Kimberley elaborated:

I feel as though with the management that we have at the gym at Guelph, it is really supported and I know that if I ever had a situation like that, I can just walk into Leslie or Pat's office and they would give me suggestions or tell me where I can go to find what I needed or who can better accommodate the student or the participants. So I feel like our management is really good and that's what would be there...this isn't how training happens everywhere obviously but Leslie is really phenomenal in terms of her knowledge as a trainer as well as her management style just because she's really, I feel that she's really altruistic in terms of her priority is making sure that people are healthy and happy and she wants to see her trainers growing as trainers and doing a good job. So um she's just got an open door policy, any time if

you have a question about something you want to try with a client or how to best meet the needs of a client, she's always willing to help you out with that so she's really good in that way. And that it's not about like train as much as you can, make the money, it's like I don't care how much time you need to take of mine to do it right but we want to make sure that we're meeting the needs of the people who get training from us.

Qualified staff not only ensure that persons with diverse backgrounds, needs, and abilities are able to participate in programs that meet their needs and interest, but qualified staff also help to educate and support the rest of the staff members, which creates a culture of compassion.

This final section of Part 2- Characteristics of a Campus Culture of Compassion explored how critical it is for all members within a campus community to become informed. Not only do service providers and program planners need to become informed about the needs and interests of their community, but community members themselves need access to information that can enhance their health and well-being. This is important since persons with disabilities are often denied access to information either because information is provided in a format that does not meet their needs and preferences or because of systemic oppression. Therefore, post-secondary institutions need to consider, and cater to, the variety of ways that people access and receive information. They also need to provide opportunities for people to learn and share with each other in a variety of ways. As identified by participants, experiential learning played a major role in breaking down the stigmas and prejudices that often exist around diversity. Working in partnership with persons with disabilities in decision making is one important way diverse community members can learn and share together. All these strategies are necessary in helping to shape a culture that is compassionate and supportive to all community members.

Part 2 Summary

Part 2 of the Framework identified the three main characteristics for developing campus culture of compassion. Essentially, the individuals within a community, and the community environment itself, need to be interconnected, supportive and enabling, as well as informed. These three characteristics of a campus culture of compassion are all interdependent and share many similarities. One cannot exist without the other. In terms of the metaphor of a bird's nest, these three characteristics mesh and intertwine in order to provide a structure that supports community members.

The next section, Part 3 of the Framework for a Campus Culture of Compassion, outlines the six process pieces that fuel and sustain a campus culture of compassion over time.

Part 3 - Process Pieces that Foster a Campus Culture of Compassion:

Creating a campus culture of compassion may not be an easy endeavour, as several participants cautioned that social change within a university is complex and can take much time and resources. Sidney elaborated:

Change takes time...some changes might be able to do overnight but don't expect that everything's gonna happen the next day. Sometimes it takes a while to make change...It's hard to make change sometimes when they've been doing things the way that they've been doing for a long time right? So it's all part of community development, right? Building those relationships so that you can affect the change based on the relationship that you have.

Leslie echoes Sidney's comments by stating, "I'm sure you know what it's like in a university environment, right? So things don't just change overnight. But it's sort of the awareness is there and the conversations are happening."

As indicated by Sidney and Leslie, culture change within a university context requires time and patience, but it also requires a willingness to bring people together for collective learning and sharing. This will help community members better understand the complexity of problems facing the community which aids in creative problem solving. It also involves learning from others, from successes, and from challenges or mistakes. As Brian, student advisor of the CSD, stated: "There is some challenges at times, but we're usually brain storming and working it out with the student". Creating a campus culture of compassion requires an open mind to create a vision for the community. It involves critical thinking and problem solving skills in order to develop a plan to make positive social change happen. It also requires a commitment to achieve a goal. A student with a disability said it best: "Obstacles are only obstacles when there are no other options. And there's always other options, some are just not developed yet" (Carla).

This section discuss the process pieces that that have been identified as important for fuelling and sustaining a campus culture of compassion over time. While the six principles of this framework served as the foundation of the bird's nest and the three characteristics served as the main structure, these process pieces are essentially the glue (or mud) that binds the bird's

nest together. This section provides the ‘how to’ piece by offering practical strategies on how a campus culture of compassion can be developed by collectively:

- creating a vision for the future,
- constructing a plan to achieve the vision,
- securing funds to put the plan in place,
- thinking critically and measuring actions against the vision,
- being proactive to make change happen, and
- reaching beyond compliance.

Creating a Vision for the Future

Post-secondary institutions committed to establishing a campus culture of compassion need to create a mission or vision for how they would like their community to develop that is based on the insights and perspectives of the community members. This vision, along with the campus’ guiding principles, should then be used to guide all decision making and actions. Beth, the University of Guelph’s Associate Vice President of Student Affairs, revealed how the University established a vision for the future, which was outlined in a document called ‘The Integrated Plan’. This document was then used to help set priorities and guide decision making:

The Integrative Plan is the driving document. It sets the priorities. It sets where we are. And so the way we do budgeting is all of us will go to the table with our recommendations and our priorities based on the Integrative Plan...And then we assess it based on that Integrative Plan...I honestly think it does come from a really clear constant sense of your mission...And if you go back and look for the past 25-30 years this institution’s mission has always talked about, you know, service to society, always talked about supporting those who need support, and even though our tag line has changed over time, it talks about the development of the whole student. It doesn’t talk about the academic piece of the student it talks about the academic development of the whole student. Like it’s just those mission pieces that weave through and we’ve had Presidents who’ve lived it, right? You know, that this is what we want to do and this is what we’re trying to achieve...Every 5 to 10 years you look at your mission again and every 5 to 10 years they reaffirm that.

An excerpt from the University of Guelph’s 2008 President’s report echoes Beth’s remarks in that the University’s vision of “Changing Lives. Improving Life” guides scholarship, research and service:

Changing Lives. Improving Life. The key word here is "improve." Our vision is to improve life, whether it be introducing a new crop variety that will increase farm

revenue, publishing poetry that helps us understand what it means to live in poverty, discovering the gene responsible for a debilitating disease, finding ways to reduce schoolyard bullying or challenging our criminal justice system. Improving life means directing University of Guelph scholarship, research and service toward the pursuit of truth - our core value as an educational institution (University of Guelph, 2008, p. 2).

This vision, although not directly connected to creating a university culture of compassion, is a vision about caring about others, social responsibility, and positive social change, which are essential components of creating a compassionate campus community. As indicated in the photo below (Image 8), this vision not only guides decision making but it is clearly displayed for each individual who enters the university's main building, the University Centre, which helps promote the vision to the entire community.

Involving community members in the development of the vision will help to shape a culture as a vision will always work best when community members are directly involved in its development. A vision has to be owned by the community and this will only be achieved when members feel they contributed to it, and that it reflects their perspectives and values. Sharing the vision with the broader community will also shape a culture as it will attract individuals who align themselves with similar values, thereby strengthening the culture. As Beth stated it helps to attract people who share similar values:

If you take a look at the University of Guelph flow badge, I don't know if you ever seen them, but it's all around Life Matters. You know, community matters, people matter, like it's all about matters, right. So it's all part of that kinda tag line. It's creating a vision. And what happens with that is that then who wants to come to Guelph? What kind of students want to come to Guelph? Do you read all that literature, 'I want to come to Guelph because I care about community'... So that's who you attract. Who wants to come to teach here, right? People who are attracted to that and they can go anywhere well how do you pick a university? You look at, 'okay, what are they doing, what are they teaching, oh that resonates with me'... it has to start with visioning. It has to start with messaging. It has to be external messaging, internal walking the walk, right, and that's going to take a while... It just perpetuates because you get known, I mean why do people come to Guelph? Well it's a supportive community, like you know. We sell it everywhere we go. You look at our University fair - supportive community, that's what we're all about, right. Who comes to Guelph? Those who want to be part of a supportive community, right? So no big surprise we have a supportive community year after year.

Image 7: University Tagline Clearly Presented to Public



Creating and promoting a clear vision helps to send a message to what the community's priorities are. This will help to weed out those who do not agree with the vision or it will serve to modify people's behaviours to better fit with the guiding vision or mission. As Beth stated:

I think it's about how you assess your staff, how you motivate your staff, how you sort of vision the institution because people will become what the vision is and you'll find that if you have a very strong vision in an institution, people will either grow with that vision and adopt it or become, if it's a vision that's a living vision, they'll leave because the fits wrong...And we're not perfect, like there are some departments that are like 'blah, blah, blah, I'm not doing it, it's stupid, no one tells me what I have to do'. But the more you put out in your mission statements...if you start to put all your missions and your planning documents around that, and then you start to see your priority investment funds, like people are getting their enrichment money also around those types of things, right, eventually even the blah, blah, blahs' go 'okay, well this is kind of important, right, because if I don't play the game I'm in trouble'... It starts with visioning and it starts with getting people to agree with where you want to go and starting to move that.

A student, Avery, echoed Beth's notion that a post-secondary institution that is consistently guided by a strong vision will attract those who share similar values:

I don't know if it's sort of the reputation of inclusivity...if it's the reputation of like having such a large group and positive campus that attracts more the individuals or something?...I think just all these people with all their different strengths sort of come

to it and bring this whole inclusive atmosphere and I don't know if people go home and say like it's a great place, it's really open and everyone's like 'yay!' and so that attracts people of like minds.

Constructing a Plan to Achieve the Vision

The culture of compassion that was present within the University of Guelph did not develop on its own accord. It involved the construction of a plan to systematically and deliberately weave their vision, mission, and values into the fabric of the campus community. As Kimberley stated, "I think just trying to make it more of a priority and something that's at the forefront and everything else will follow from that". Beth revealed how the University of Guelph constructed a plan to weave the campus' values and goals for the future through every facet of the campus community, including curriculum development, program planning, and the development of support services. Their plan was to create leaders of tomorrow who possess the characteristics and values that they deem important. Beth explained:

I think that if you think clearly about who you want to be the leaders of tomorrow, right, there's a couple things you want in my mind. You want leaders of tomorrow to be creative thinkers. There's a lot of problems coming down the pipe so they have to be creative thinkers. You want the leaders to be able to work with others because none of those things are going to be solved in silos, right, and so that is critical. So they have to be critical thinkers they have to be able to work in teams and in my mind, the third one is, and it's whether you believe it or not, you want them to be compassionate because you know, for me, I want a leader who wants to make these changes but for the betterment of all, not for the betterment of some, right. But that's a philosophical issue and there may be lot of people who don't agree with that. But for us, those are the three pillars and the third one's huge. And if that's who you want, that's gotta be part of your education. That's gotta be part of everything you do from day one...Because cultures are, sometimes it's how do we create that and how don't we create that and I think that, and at this University, we've always had since, probably the last decade now a very strong commitment to students. I mean if you look at our mission statement, if you look at a lot of our strategic documents they always talk about, Inclusion is a word in almost everything we talk about. Diversity is a word in almost everything we talk about. Anything with Changing Lives, Improving Life is kind of, it comes from a position of community... The president's annual report, he'll talk about, always, the importance of community, right? So, he does, he does some things that are quite deliberate.

The university made it a priority to be inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of their community members. Therefore, they developed processes to understand the needs and preferences of community members in order to proactively address them through programs and services. As Beth stated:

We have a policy that all of our programs that are put on by the University...all of their programs have to be inclusive...If you look at our orientation planning forms it says, you know, “is this inclusive, have you made it inclusive etc?” And not just for students with disabilities ...but for everybody ...They have to do what we call a Student Risk Management Approval process and those forms talk about ‘Is your event accessible? How are you going to make it accessible? What unique steps, what particular steps are you taking to make it inclusive for all?’ You know, so we have those kind of really strong requirements in the program. And you know even around CSD it wouldn’t be around disabilities, but around policies, around fraternities and sororities, not inclusive, don’t accept them, right. You know, you have to be thinking about inclusivity for all students, right, disabled, gender, you know, like visible minorities. So we do that around the programming stuff right. Around facilities, and certainly all of us in Student Affairs just it’s understood that everything we do has to be accessible to all... So, we spend a lot of time thinking about that. Are we completely accessible to everything? I would never say that. But I think we respond whenever we realize we’re not. I think we always respond.

The students recognized that the development of a compassionate and sensitive campus community was deliberately built into the fabric of the university from their first year on campus. They noted how this culture was set as a priority by those in positions of power and then systematically filtered through the community. Since the students helped inform the vision, and have bought into the vision, they also pass this vision on to other students. Avery elaborated:

I think a lot of students can come to Guelph and be sort of have their perspective changed a bit, maybe change themselves a bit...Like for instance, like some guys might come in who are sort of, you know, jocks and have trouble adjusting to like such a female dominated environment. And they might not sort of adjust and they might sort of keep their mentality. Like occasionally I come across someone who just seems kind of chauvinistic, I think. And I’m sort of surprised because I find it hard that someone with that sort of orientation, outward like disposition, can cope and like continue having that in this environment ... But I think most people come in and like do adopt like the sort of principals that they’re introduced to here. So most people would become more aware, like being inclusive and open to all sorts of different things...The first year population on campus continues to grow so that’s sort of interesting because we have this tremendous community of people who’ve never been like at a university before. And in the past there’s been more upper year students on campus and so that might of helped people indoctrinate, introduce people to like this sort of, to the Guelph way of life - like our principles and what we hold as important. And maybe we’ll see that change a bit and people are more, not like we brain washed them when they come here but people keep continuing it. And like the upper years could carry more of what they brought with them into it with them. So I don’t know if that’s going to be beneficial or detrimental to the whole atmosphere of inclusiveness.

As Beth previously indicated, the campus culture of compassion was deliberately and systematically built into the fabric of the community by applying the vision to all aspects of decision making and program planning and by weaving the message through all aspects of university life, including academic and extra-curricular engagement. It's a holistic approach to creating citizens who are not only educated but also reflect the university's values of compassion and sensitivity. Beth believes that the students come to adopt the university's values by witnessing them in action and by being engaged in social issues that relate to them. She explained:

The way it builds is to engage them through social issues. So you start to talk about community as part of your learning...It's about being educated, but for what purpose and what are we trying to achieve? And then you start to talk about communities, right? So anytime you're dealing with an issue, 'okay, we got a community that's starving over in Africa or we we've got a community with AIDS, we got a community, how do we adjust that community?' You start to instil it in your students, educate them around those community issues so then they start to bring it back. So what we do here is we start building the community in residence...90% of our first year students live in residence...You have first year seminars which are trying to link and share that kind of theme through around building communities, respect for communities, supportive communities, sustainable communities. You start to sort of build that culture so you hope that by the end of the first year a student has gone through a kind of an educational process in the class room supported by what you are doing in Residence. So all of our varsity athletes we say that we want you to be involved with something in the community - to make a difference and changing lives, improving life. You know, getting them out into the community and seeing other people whether it is someone with a disability, whether it is someone who is poor, whether it is someone with mental health issues, etcetera. They start to recognize there are issues that they need to be thinking about, right? Sometimes they'll come and have never thought about it. So I think if first year, if I was going to say how you build [a culture of compassion], you start with your first year. What are you doing in residences? What are you doing in programming? What are you doing in orientation, right, like themes? We always say our themes always have something to do about communities... Because you get them in their first year and then put in the curriculum, then it just builds on its own. So that's what we do intentionally (Beth).

Securing Funds to Carry Out the Plan

Reaching a vision for an accessible and inclusive community will take financial and human resources. However, participants offered many solutions.

Budgeting and allocating funds can be complicated and confusing, particularly when finances are tight and people are competing for limited resources. The University of Guelph have

moved away from the 'silo effect' of funding where different departments, groups, or issues are provided a fixed budget towards a system where resources are allocated based on the university's overall strategic plan and vision for the university. They felt it was better to consider how life can be enhanced for those within and beyond the university community and then determine what areas need what resources in order to accomplish that vision. Beth elaborated:

I don't have a formula for you on how we allocate the funds. But we look at our integrated plan and we look at what's important and what we're trying to achieve and then the funding that is necessary... I think that where you can make mistakes is to silo stuff. And I see this right now. And no disrespect to the Government, but that's what they're doing right now. So they'll have a pot of money for Aboriginal students, they'll have a pot of money for First Generation students, and a pot of money for disabilities, a pot of money for learning disabilities. They've got it in pots. It's kinda an approach that 'we need to worry about these communities', right? And I don't think that's the way to do it, personally, because I think what happens is that you get resentment building, you know, 'we'll they got a special pot of money, you know, and we're all starving and you know, and you're the group of the day' versus spending more on talking about how do you think about engaging students.

It may also be helpful to allocate a person or group to be responsible for seeking out grant monies or funds which can help increase accessibility within the community. Ava, a former University of Waterloo student, stated:

There needs to be involvement of the community. Like whether it's only the cities that link in and you know you can join this program and we'll figure out the supports with this program or whatever. It's bigger picture and I think it's possible but there has to be someone behind doing the work and the planning...Even if they went after grant money from Trillium or something where they can get like a couple of hundred thousand dollars, pay someone, figure out ...But there needs to be like, it needs to be part of the plan. They're really good at doing campaign Waterloo and having all kind of you know, bursary for this academic piece, but school is not just academic. It's the whole well rounded person that thrives, you know on campus.

It was suggested by participants that post-secondary communities systematically work physical and social accessibility improvements into the yearly budgets in order to ensure consistent funding. As Ava asserted:

Money and people. Like there needs to be more money. There's all kinds of money put into mainstream athletics like football. They seem to be able to have money to go to all kind of meets and games and it's mostly because that's well established right? And it's put into the budget every year, consistency. So it's getting someone to be that advocate that puts the money in and the consistency behind the whole thing. It's a big job but there's gotta be someone that's capable of doing that because they're passionate about it and that's you know, they want to see change which

would be fantastic...Can you imagine if every faculty or every facility on campus had accessibility money? And it had to be spent every year because if it didn't get spent, I mean there'd be SO many fewer problems with accessibility on campus.

They also suggested that post-secondary institutions, and city planners as a whole, be more proactive when planning the environment to ensure that accessibility features are considered upfront instead of being retroactive which is more costly. As Brian stated:

You got to consult the major stakeholders, you know, before you dig that first shovel in the ground... I think we kept doing so much ad-hoc you know and it gets expensive, when you build a building that has no automatic doors then you put in automatic doors...that's expensive because you already built it, now you're adding an automatic door so you're adding another \$10,000 to the building so you just put it place in the first place.

Joshua explained how the Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee (APDAC) is working with the university to be more proactive in terms of working accessibility into new building plans and into the annual budget in order to reduce costs:

Accommodations require time effort and sometimes money and even though we all have a duty to accommodate, and that duty to accommodate is reflected on the University budget which means it's practically impossible to say we can't afford to accommodate, it still takes time effort and work and somebody's energy to make it happen.... the accessibility for example right now is in the process of trying to be a little more systematic about how they deal with physical accessibility issues for example, so, if somebody can't get into a building, then they might raise the issue that they need an automatic door opener there, an automatic door opener is about five grand, so, there's always a money issue, always, always, always a money issue. And, the accessibility committee I think is doing the right thing in trying to be more systematic about identifying these issues early on so they can better build it into annual budget and not be worried about going over budget.

Post-secondary institutions also need to ensure that community members have access to the resources they need to be fully engaged in campus life. Persons with disabilities are often marginalized because they lack access to resources. This occurs for a number of reasons. Firstly, many persons with disabilities, particularly students, are unable to find employment or part time jobs that suit their skills and abilities. Carla explained:

Other parts of my body doesn't work so my brain works better...It's gonna be a job that requires a lot of cognitive skills ... you don't have a minimum wage cognitive job but it's funny because the little jobs that other people can get now as part time jobsbut I wouldn't just go to like Tim Horton's and be like how may I help you 'cause I would have coffee spilling everywhere and so in that sense like it's a different kind of perspective on like school and university life 'cause I'm not gonna

do a lot of the stupid little miscellaneous experiences and jobs that other people might get into.

Second, students with disabilities often attend school for a longer period of time in order to complete degree requirements. As a result, they are out of the workforce for a longer period of time and consequently incur more debt than the average student without a disability. As Deborah stated:

It typically takes a student with a disability longer to complete a University degree, there's always the issue of cost because there is much less time that they would be in the work force making, making money and paying off student loans, that sort of thing, so it might take them six to eight years to finish an undergrad. So just being able to, you know, afford to take a trip or afford a gym membership might be something that's just out of reach.

Third, students with disabilities often experience difficulties navigating the systems which provide students with necessary funds, such as OSAP or ODSP. Sidney elaborated:

The financial resources they need in order to be here...because when you're living on O.D.S.P or living on O.W. you know when you have to find around your financial resources in order to even get here, to be able to do a degree in order to move on with your life, it's just way too overwhelming, yeah. And then there's, you know there's resources, the Ontario special bursary plans specifically for students that are on a financial, some sort of income support program. Um but then you have to navigate that system, you have to fill out those forms, you have to figure out where to take those forms and it's just, yeah lots of barriers. I was on the ODS, the Ontario Disability Support website this morning trying to figure out information for a student that I'm working with this semester who you know isn't able to be here full time financially and not able to be supported by his family any more, or very limited, and you know I've worked in the system for a long time and then going through this, you know what is the current information on how to apply and we set up such complicated systems for people. And, and you know it's just a huge barrier for people getting what they need right?

Without adequate financial resources, students with disabilities are often excluded from participating in extra-curricular activities or sports because of the high cost of equipment.

Colleen provided an example:

A lot of the challenges with people with disabilities is that the equipment is so expensive that, and you don't get to trial anything. I'll give you an example, I'm eyeing some equipment... And, I would love to get that, that's like two grand. ... where do you find a grand to go out and buy a piece of equipment that you don't even know you're gonna like it?

Lastly, students also experience challenges associated with rigid attendant care policies. As Beth indicated:

I still think there's a problem around funding, particularly for the [student who is] fairly physically disabled who needs an attendant, attendant care, because the university doesn't provide, we provide space for attendant care but don't provide the funding and the funding is very difficult and I don't know particularly physical disabilities is that the funding, and they're trying to change that now but they haven't yet, but the funding is by county right, so if someone moves into Guelph who had attendant care in say Toronto, instead of that funding and attendant care coming with them they now have to get it from here and if there's not enough money then you're on a waiting list. Well that's a huge barrier for someone who wants to go to university and live, right, so, I worry a bit about that one I think we have seen cases where, um, we usually resolve it, but I've seen one where we had to pay it for a year because we just couldn't work out all the funding pieces, right, so I mean that was a struggle.

Beth's quote speaks not only to the financial barriers experienced by students but also about the role that post-secondary institutions ought to play in ensuring that students are able to secure the resources they need to meaningfully participate in university life. It also raises questions regarding the government's responsibility to support students who require an attendant in receiving necessary supports. Both the government and post-secondary institutions need to develop and implement policies or procedures which ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to resources as their non-disabled counterparts.

Bursaries, scholarships or other financial supports can be offered to students with disabilities to help provide access to resources. There should also be various payment plans and options for such things as fitness or recreation programs which help cater to different needs.

Pamela provided an example:

We have a limited access membership that community members can get to access these special programs because they're only gonna be here twice a year or three times a year so we find a membership fee that kind of works for them as well.

Pamela provided an additional example of how her department and the CSD work together to help ensure that students are able to access necessary resources to participate in campus life:

The center for students with disabilities has funding. They have some dollars and in the past they have found some ways to access some funds to help if they needed a personal trainer to really work one on one with somebody. So we've found a way to connect some dollars and make that happen in extreme cases. We don't charge volunteers, the athletic center doesn't, doesn't charge volunteers to come and help a person with a disability. So if a volunteer doesn't have to pay membership fees if they're helping them in the weight room, unless they just want to be in the weight room themselves, you know. So we try to, to not have those fees.

As indicated by Pamela, post-secondary institutions can adopt policies where attendants accompany a person with a disability in programs for free. It is important that the process of bringing an attendant to a program free of charge is easy and hassle free where the individual is not required to “jump through hoops” (Ava).

Colleen believed that a program that enabled students with disabilities to share and try out equipment would be a great way to help persons gain access to equipment and other resources in order to be active:

I’m thinking as creatively as possible...and maybe it’s a, you know, it’s the “come on out and try it club” or something, you know, where every week they introduce a different, slightly different idea and get people thinking about this, ‘how can we be more active’ ... A lot of the challenges with people with disabilities is that the equipment is so expensive, that and you don’t get to trial anything... Even if we could start to collect equipment, like I’ve got two hand bikes and I’ve got a tennis chair and you know, I can start, you know, letting people try it or at least see it and see if it’s something that they might want to do.

Jessica, a student and part-time staff member in the fitness centre, explained how she used her connections with the University of Guelph’s physiotherapy clinic to start an equipment sharing program within the University:

I volunteer in the physio clinic and I just happened to see Colleen one day and I started chatting with her about it and I asked her ‘well what do you think of this, using this, using some of the equipment up here in the physio department. We can’t use like what we don’t have in the gym like an arm agro meter?’ and she’s like “yeah just check with me. We have to check liability and all that other stuff, like who’s liable if they get hurt, is it you, is it us, is it covered that type of thing and it’s all stuff I’ve looked into already”.

Thinking Critically and Measuring Actions Against the Vision

It is important for program planners and decision makers to develop critical thinking and reflection skills which will help them make appropriate decisions, solve problems creatively, evaluate current programs or services, and better plan for the future. It is useful to routinely question the ways things are, how they got to be that way, who benefits from the way things are, who is excluded or oppressed, and how things can be improved. Critical thinking skills can be difficult to develop, but a good place to start is to measure the outcome of actions against the goal or vision that was initially designed to guide decision making. Beth indicated how the

university officials bring guiding documents to meetings to determine whether they are in fact doing what they set out to do:

[The Provost] initiated five years ago now a report on improving accessibility to universities in general. And it had recommendations for this University, for the government, for whatever, and talked a lot about, you know, 'how do we ensure that everybody has a right to come to university whether they're from you know a poor background or they are first generation or whether there is disability, physical or learning, etc?'. And that document continues to be brought to Senate to see 'how are we doing on it?' and 'where are we moving on that?'. And we actually saw, out of that document, some more focus around particularly facility barriers because that document identified a lot of problems on this campus, just physical barriers for physical disabilities, so I mean that helped as well, right. So there's some grounding pieces that we use a lot.

Joshua, a faculty member and chair of APDAC described how the group continually conducts critical self appraisals to reflect on how things can be improved in order to better meet their objectives:

This APDAC committee has done a pretty good job in the past, and just continue and improve on making sure we hear what people are telling us, that we need a poll on awareness day, that issues are raised, that we don't just file them, we do something with them, and that we be critically reflective on how we're doing our job and say alright we did this last year, we met objectives ABC. We do regular periodic appraisals of ourselves but then ask ourselves, 'alright are there things that we didn't do and if we didn't do them, why didn't we do them, what's missing, what can we do more', things like that so I think critical self appraisal and being open to the constructive criticism of others is also part of what we need to do to get to where we want to be.

Critical reflection can also include measuring the outcomes of actions against the successes and challenges of others. This can help provide a stronger understanding of how things can be enhanced or how successes can be celebrated. Leslie provided an example:

We're discussing the building and what needs to change to be better. We've also been around to other facilities, university facilities to sort of look at what have they done well, what have they not done so well so that when we go to do our planning we don't make the mistakes they've made. So we've certainly looked at stuff in that regard.

It is crucial that programmers and service providers continually look for ways to improve or enhance current programs, services, or events to ensure they meet the community's evolving and ever-changing needs. Complacency can be detrimental to an organization or program because it can result in outcomes that do not meet the original objective. Joshua elaborated:

I think Human Rights and Equity Offices (HREO) committees like APDAC are important, but I think we also have to always be careful that we don't get complaisant. There is a book that was popular in the sixties...it was called the Comfortable Pew and it was really a critique of organized religion in terms of its caring for the vulnerable populations and suggested that they had become complaisant and they were patting themselves on the back far too readily and I think any group like the APDAC committee or the HREO or any of those offices has to be careful that they don't get complaisant because there, if you do that then you, it means you've sort of stepped away from the grass roots. So you have to make sure you've always got those lines of communication open because the issues change, the people change, the circumstances change, and so I don't think we can ever be complaisant.

A component of avoiding complacency is recognizing when objectives have been accomplished and then developing new goals to enhance the program or service even further. As Jessica, a student leader of the university's REC Club, stated: "I'm sure once we hit all of those goals it would be like 'Okay, now we need to do?'" Another component of not becoming complacent is by regularly revisiting goals or objectives to determine whether they are still relevant to the current situation. As Ava stated, "And just because it's set up one way for one year, doesn't mean they can't be revisited". Pamela echoed this comment and added that it is important for program planners to be flexible and open to change in order to best respond to changing needs: "And it's going to change over time and it has to be flexible and it has to change. It can't be set in stone; we have to be up for change."

Being Proactive to Make Change Happen

It is understandable that programs, implementations, or structural or attitudinal changes will take time, but it is not enough to just wait for solutions to happen or for action to occur. Compassionate campus communities are committed and proactive in making change happen.

One way to be proactive is to become aware of current issues or challenges being faced by community members. According to Colleen, this can be accomplished through needs assessments, focus groups, or through open discussions with community members:

It's often difficult to just sort of pull something out of thin air. It's hard to come up with an idea and often it's not until we encounter something that we then can challenge it and sort of come up with a working plan. So I think in the disabled world, my experience has been that everything is very retrospective. It's very, very odd for things to be prospective and it would be nice if that weren't the case - if we could actually be thinking ahead of things instead of, you know, thinking about after the fact 'oh, it's too bad you didn't do this' or 'if you'd only done that'...I think it

would be worthwhile to even survey the people that are on the campus and do that needs assessment and say like, you know, 'if you had access to programs, you know, what would they be? And, how would you like us to be involved?' And it would be at least a starting point to gathering some information.

Identifying current and potential challenges enables barriers to be removed before people experience them or before an accommodation is requested. This is important because it is unjust to put the onus on those who are already marginalized to continually fight for equality. Joshua explained how the APDAC group is becoming more systematic with their needs assessments in order to determine areas on campus that are posing barriers to persons so they can address them before they pose a barrier to the university community:

We're in the process of doing a survey on that committee right now where we'll survey Directors and Deans and Chairs around campus to say 'Are you aware of any issues in the area you're responsible for? Laboratories that aren't accessible? Classroom that aren't accessible? Bathrooms that aren't accessible?' Any of those sorts of accessibility issues. And, in that way get a hopefully a more systematic picture on how we're doing at the moment and what needs to be done and not just wait until somebody can't get their wheelchair into a washroom stall ...That's the kinds of communication I think is little more systematic than we've done in the past... I think we do try to take a broader prevention, health promotion, focus and not just address individual inequities. That's the function of the APDAC, is to think broadly, to advise the University and what it can be doing as a University as a whole.

Those responsible for program planning or spatial design need to plan programs, services, and spaces according to the diverse needs and abilities of the campus community. Proactively considering the needs of the community will help save costs in the long run and will help create an atmosphere that is welcoming and inclusive. Kimberley elaborated:

It needs to be something that becomes a priority...They do have to really start to consider the different demographics that are out there. So I think it is generally a bit one dimensional in terms of when thinking of setting up different programs and such you generally just think about people who are able-bodied.

Joshua echoed Kimberley's comments regarding the need for program planners and service providers to consider the diverse needs and preferences of the community and that these considerations must be a part of the everyday culture. Joshua further explained:

And then philosophically trying to address this culture issue which I think is important by becoming part of that every day consciousness, so that when people take the perspective of the other, part of that other, they're taking into account the host of disability issues. That's both philosophically and concretely what I think needs to happen. And they need to happen together. Maybe one of the things that

would suggest we're doing our job well is that everybody on campus knew we existed, and knew what we did 'cause I'm quite sure they don't at the moment. And if we were able to do that it would mean that we were part of everyday consciences. And I think while the frontline people have to deal with individual issues, maybe our job is to be part of everyday consciences for everybody. And that would suggest that they're thinking about those issues and what they might do about them in advance of being confronted by the individual who says I can't do something because you haven't designed it right.

Being proactive requires anticipating challenges or barriers before they are experienced, but it also involves the commitment to 'making changes happen'. Ava argues that it is not enough for a post-secondary institution to just sit on ideas without stepping up and making positive change happen:

Why reinvent the wheel? Why every time that you need to put an accessible button somewhere, do you have to do an analysis? Do one bloody analysis of the whole campus decide what the priorities are and do them. Don't sit on it...figure it out...There needs to be emphasis put on it to make it happen...I mean that's what the University is known for in a lot of ways. Why can't they step up? They could step up.

A component of 'making change happen' is informing the community that accommodations are available and that an effort will be made to support community members in achieving whatever it is they wish to accomplish. Jessica articulated:

Just emphasizing individual programs for different people and emphasizing that and saying 'look we're gonna do individual programs for you guys. Whatever you want to do we will find a way to try and help you do it. If you think you're able to do it, we'll help you do it'...And to a certain degree. Again to emphasize the, we might say we'll make it happen but then you come to me and say well I want to walk again someday. If you're paralyzed you know that's not something we can necessarily do. BUT we can get you access to something like a standing frame where it does help you maintain a certain level of bone structure and bone density and putting the weight on to your feet helps. So we're like 'okay we might not be able to help you walk but maybe we can help you with this'.

Pamela echoed Jessica's comments:

We just send in a letter to who we know maybe needs some special programming and it's just having them know that we're open to it...'We're here for you. If there's anything that you need that we're not doing, come and let's see if we can make it happen'...Well I think the students need to ask for it and the University has to respond ...We have to find a way to respond to it. Can we make it happen? Can we make programming happen that's going to respond to what the students are asking for?

Sending a message to the campus community that an effort will be made to meet their needs and that supports and programs are in place to help them achieve their goals will create a compassionate and welcoming environment that will attract people to a program or to the community. Natalie, a student with a disability, indicated she chose the University of Guelph because the great services and programs make every opportunity a possibility for her:

I would never be fearful here to go and say ‘look, I want to play wheelchair basketball. Can we figure this out?’...That would never be an issue of concern. Where as Malaspina or Montreal, I would never of said that out there...I think the University [of Guelph] specifically, I think they do really well with what they’ve got...Like, I’ve never felt really here, ever, [and] this is probably the first time I can ever say this, [that there is] something that I couldn’t do it here. Which I think is a really neat thing because like I said I’ve never been able to say that. But like, if I really wanted to go to the pool right now, I’m sure I could go or whatever it is, skating or whatever you’re gonna do. And so I think like Guelph deserves some props for that because like I said, I went to school in B.C. but I also took a summer semester in Quebec.

It is understandable that program planners are challenged with balancing the priorities of the ‘many’ for the priorities of a ‘few’. However, there are ways to overcome these challenges by thinking creatively and by realizing that “people are not numbers” (Ava). A component of ‘making it happen’ is realizing that it is just as important to offer ‘specialized’ programs or services that may not generate as much revenue or attendance as other ‘generalized’ programs or services, because these programs or services are necessary and can greatly impact those involved. As Pamela pointed out, it is hard to measure numbers against the outcomes that one can achieve from being included:

The Universities would probably look and say ‘why would we give up an hour of our space for two or three people?’ but for those two or three people, that means more to them than it does to another two or three people ‘cause they don’t get the time...I’ve always thought if you can take someone with a disability and you can give them a little time and give them something small to do it has very big, large results in terms of that person having more quality in life. That is significant. Sometimes they deserve the time...That’s what these kind of programs are about. They’re not about number crunching and they’re not about financially demanding you make fifty percent profit. They’re about quality and you have to sell that. And can quality then be measured? Yeah, you can measure it.

As Ava stated, “It’s not about numbers... people need to get the bigger picture”.

Reaching Beyond Compliance

Disability is a human rights issue and so it is essential that post-secondary institutions are aware of, and adhere to, the various laws, policies, and regulations that govern accessibility standards. A post-secondary institution that denies a student access to programs or services based on a personal characteristic, such as disability, can be in violation of a student's rights. Natalie provided an example of how being excluded from opportunities to participate in campus recreation because she has a disability is inequitable since she pays the same tuition as non-disabled students:

The soccer fields are really not accessible. They're really hard to get to and there's no seating...It has stopped me a couple of times...My friends were playing basketball in the gym and we tried to go one day and I gave up. I was like, beaten out. Like there comes a point where it's like it doesn't matter as much...And for me it's like I pay tuition just like the next guy, so like if I'm paying to be out here, I'm paying to be out here and if my friends can go watch a basketball game for free, how come I can't? So like it gets a little bit frustrating.

Brian agreed students with disabilities who pay tuition should be provided the same opportunities as their non-disabled peers and a failure to do so is a violation of human rights:

If they are taking that student's money from tuition for those kind of things, everything has to be just as available to her as it does to her peers... Because that student paid her \$50 same as the other students and she should have had the rights just as the other students did or it should have been posted that this is not an accessible event which would not be allowed, a human rights bill on that.

It is essential for post-secondary institutions to act in accordance with current legislations and to recognize that a community is enhanced when people are treated fairly and equitably. Considerations should be made to ensure that all community members have the opportunity to meaningfully participate in all aspects of community life and not just because it is mandated by law but because they truly believe that all people matter. An environment is more welcoming, warm, and strengthened when a community goes beyond compliance and moves towards building a culture of genuine compassion. Joshua elaborated on this point:

I think there's more to be done around creating a culture that says 'we want to do more than simply be compliant with provincial and federal legislation'. We want to be ahead of the curve and create a culture where people are not sort of saying 'what do we have to do to make Joe Blow happy here?' But rather, 'what can we do to make our department, our office, our program, our facility, accessible in every way we can think of' in a way that doesn't make people have to stand up and say 'hey I'm disabled and I need help', but rather that the rest of the group who are not disabled

think about it on their own and try to address it in a way they set the place up in the first place. So that the program or the web site or the building looks for ways to make themselves accessible in every way they can as part of the initial design. And, to some extent that happens now, especially around physical access, and in part they're responding to building code issues again in some ways they're simply being compliant in doing that. And so it's not that I think we're doing a bad job, but I think we can do more. And that's where I get back to my invisible disabilities. I don't think we do nearly as well a job of thinking ahead about people with invisible disabilities and making our places welcoming to those groups of people as well. And I think we can do more so that those people feel more comfortable about either declaring their disability or not needing to because it's already been envisioned in how the program is set up and, and that's particularly around people with psychiatric disabilities and things like that.

Joshua further believes that this culture of compassion, which goes beyond compliance, can only be achieved by changing people's attitudes and understandings:

I think it's a fairly tricky job actually to sort of convert a culture so that it is part of their built in thinking without wearing them out by telling or preaching to them, it has to be something that they accept as valuable and not something they have just been told they have to accept as valuable, so then I think the difference is between attitude and behaviour. So really what I'm talking about is working to create an atmosphere or a culture where the attitudes change or certain attitudes are rewarded more than other attitudes, and less focus on the behaviour. 'Cause if the attitudes are changed, the behaviour will follow, it can change behaviour without ever changing attitudes and because people think they'll, they'll do what they're told because it's not worth the aggravation not to but it doesn't change the thinking, so I'd like to work on creating avenues to change thinking and if we do that, then the behaviour won't be an issue. Whether its disability issues, whether it's violence against women or whether it's racism, same applies to all of those issues.

A campus community seeking to move beyond compliance toward a culture of compassion should include the philosophy of caring about people within their mandate. Several people at the university noted how creating a compassionate atmosphere is a critical part of their job and acting in such a way reflects the university's greater vision of improving lives. The Department of Athletics was one area in particular where the students and staff all felt that compassion was what was driving the service. As one student with a disability stated, "when it comes to physical wellness I know that Pat cares a great deal. She is just tremendously caring...Whenever I'm in the Athletic Centre I don't have a problem. So yes there is a culture of care" (Melissa). Another staff member elaborated:

I think that they perhaps promote that kind of a culture whether they're saying it outright or not or just in the way they go about doing their jobs and their actions. I

think it's apparent that they would really encourage, they want everyone to be healthy and active so regardless whether you have a disability or not. So I think the mindset and the culture is there. (Kimberley)

Leslie, the Fitness Coordinator, stated it best:

I mean it's a business, you always have to run it like a business but it's not, it's the benefit to the student and the benefit to our members that we think it's not always **just** about bottom line. Bottom line's important don't get me wrong but ... it's more wellness orientated and what can we do for the students to make their life better and our members better whereas in a club environment usually it's bottom line more ...Everybody in Athletics is here because it's what we believe in, it's what we do, it's not it's not just a job that we come to.

Part 3 Summary

This section explored the process pieces that can ignite, and sustain the momentum, of creating a campus culture of compassion. Post-secondary institutions are encouraged to take part in critical thinking, reflection, and dialogue which will lead communities on the path towards becoming more compassionate, accessible and inclusive. Some issues require a lot of attention, collaboration, and efforts that will be both unsuccessful and successful. It is important to celebrate successes, identify when things did not work, be open to thinking of things differently, and give issues the time and consideration they deserve. It is also important to recognize this process will involve 'learning as you go' and 'trial and error' strategies. As Colleen stated:

These things, I think, often are trial and error, right? And, the good thing I guess is when you have students, or any person who's had enough chances to explore, you know, and do the trial and error that they can guide the process.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Working together with my co-researchers, the components necessary to create a campus culture of compassion were identified. I use this final chapter to critically reflect back on the findings and draw some conclusions from those reflections. More specifically, this section discusses how stigma and assumptions influence the well-being and identity of persons with disabilities. A discussion of the implications of this study, and areas of future practice and research, is also provided. In this section, I also reflect on my experience with the PAR process throughout this project.

The Influence of Stigma and Assumptions on the Well-Being and Identity of Persons with Disabilities

The University of Guelph implemented a variety of strategies to create an inclusive campus community that reduced the constraints faced by those who study, live, work, visit, and recreate on campus. Although these strategies for inclusion have proven successful in many areas, I was struck by the attitudinal constraints that continued to afflict persons with disabilities within this University. Although participants within this study described the University of Guelph as an inclusive and welcoming environment, students with disabilities continued to experience oppression and exclusion on campus, particularly when seeking to participate in extra-curricular campus activities. The stigma of disability, and the lack of awareness about the realities of living with a disability, led many people to make assumptions about the capabilities and lives of persons with disabilities. These assumptions unfortunately impacted attitudes and actions, which then had far reaching implications for the well-being and identity of individuals with disabilities.

The Internalization of Stigma and its Impact on Well-Being

James, a former varsity track athlete with a visual impairment, provided numerous examples of how students without disabilities made assumptions about his running abilities, and his commitment to the varsity running team, simply based on his level of eye sight. Other students with disabilities, such as Carla, Natalie, and Melissa, echoed James' experiences and discussed how they felt that non-disabled students made assumptions about their abilities and on their lives in general. Participants without disabilities acknowledged their assumptions about the

lives of persons with disabilities and they spoke freely about what these assumptions were. Generally, they viewed people with disabilities as fragile, insecure, and incapable, as though their experiences and abilities were homogenized. According to Mason, Pratt, Patel, Greydanus, and Yahya (2004), the homogenization of disability emerges because:

...members of the majority or “ingroup” tend to recognize and appreciate their own ingroup diversity but do not recognize or appreciate differences within or among the outgroup members...sadly, one implication of this process is that people tend to perceive a person with disabilities as just another anonymous group member rather than perceiving him or her as individual (p. 73).

McDougall (2006) further articulates that disability “is commonly understood (and portrayed) as homogenous. For instance, the whole spectrum of disability is often signified by the wheelchair user” (p. 396).

The concept of ‘othering’ and the homogeneity of disability were quite apparent in the interviews with persons without disabilities. People with disabilities were often referred to as ‘them’, as though the experiences of each individual with a unique disability can be categorized into one group and labelled as ‘other’. The homogenization of disability also lead people to presume that disabilities are all visible, namely physical. An example of this occurred when I interviewed a member of the fitness centre. When I asked her if there was a process in place where students could request accommodations prior to attending a fitness class, she indicated that such a process was not in place. However, she felt this process might be unnecessary because “we don’t really have any of *those people* [meaning people with physical disabilities] participating”. She assumed that all disabilities are physical, and since the fitness centre is not entirely physically accessible, students with disabilities would not be participating. This not only emphasizes the assumptions that disabilities are all visible and physical, but also the homogenization of disability that often occurs.

Students with disabilities discussed the hardships they experienced because of the stigma and misunderstandings surrounding their disability. For example, Melissa discussed how difficult and demeaning it was for her to be perceived as ‘stupid’ by others because she had challenges with her speech and word finding skills as a result of a head injury sustained in a car accident. She discussed how these assumptions countered her sense of self, and impacted her self-esteem, since she took satisfaction in being viewed as an intelligent person. This is another example of

how assumptions and stigma of disability can directly affect the well-being of students. What becomes problematic is that students with disabilities begin to internalize this stigma.

The internalization of stigma was apparent in the interview with Jason. He essentially had to undergo a process of dehumanization in order to make sense of the exclusion he experienced. He described how he had to “realize” that he was “different” and as such would not easily be accepted by his non-disabled peers. It became his responsibility to make others feel comfortable around him. To reiterate a quote from Jason:

Going to a high school for the blind where blindness is the norm instead of going to University where you're really the exception, well not the exception but you do stick out in a way and I had to sort of learn to realize that, you know, I am different and people aren't gonna necessarily gonna embrace that right away... But just being really in a minority around a lot of sighted people it took a little while to sort of feel more comfortable and that and to help other people I think maybe feel comfortable with it too.

It is concerning that students with disabilities are expected to take on the role of ‘educator’ – having to inform persons without disabilities about their life, their disability, their needs, and preferences - in order to reduce stigma and become accepted by their non-disabled peers. It becomes the responsibility of the person with the disability to ensure that *others* are comfortable around *them*. As Lezzoni (1998) wrote:

For those of us with disabilities, silence is often the default position. We ourselves are uncomfortable talking about our disability, concerned about breaching that invisible barrier circumscribing socially acceptable discourse. We think, generally erroneously, that silence protects our precious privacy.

But silence carries consequences. As Mrs. Jones said, "In some ways, it's your obligation to kind of educate them and make them more comfortable." Silence reinforces the stigmatization of disability, the sense of shame and guilt, and the idea that disability is something to hide (p. 66).

As indicated in the above quote, failure to discuss disability can imply that it is something that is shameful and should therefore remain silenced or concealed. This silence would therefore perpetuate the internalization of the stigma associated with disability. As such, students with disabilities explained how educating others on the realities of their disability helped to break down the stigma and misunderstandings, thereby increasing their overall comfort and inclusion within the environment. What is unfortunate is that this type of education is still required, and more importantly, an essential act that must be undertaken by the person with a disability. A larger effort from the broader community is needed in order to initiate community conversations about issues of acceptance, diversity, inclusion, and disability in order to facilitate positive action

and change. All community members share a responsibility to become informed, compassionate, and accepting of others, which will make the community more welcoming and inclusive.

The internalization of stigma also led people with disabilities to expect and accept substandard treatment. They often felt that their mistreatment was justified and that they were not entitled to the supports, accommodations, and rights that serve to protect their equality of well-being. This relates to the human rights approach to disability which criticises how rights are frequently removed from people with disabilities and are then given back as privileges, for which they are to be thankful (Rioux & Prince, 2002). For example, students with disabilities in this study felt it was justifiable to be excluded from some orientation week activities because the university cannot be expected to make all locations accessible. They were then grateful that some alternative accessible activities were provided. In this instance, the fact that students with disabilities were denied access to events that were offered to the whole student body was considered justifiable and they were expected to be thankful for the privilege of participating in alternative events.

The fear of stigma, and the lacking of a sense of entitlement to supports and accommodations, prevented persons with disabilities, as well as persons with temporary disabilities, from seeking support and obtaining necessary on-campus support and assistance. This is quite serious because a failure to obtain necessary supports can negatively affect one's overall health and well-being. As Lezzoni (1998) wrote:

Admittedly, many people with disabilities hesitate to ask for help. We are often proudly self-sufficient, and requesting assistance is hard. Sometimes we are stopped by implicitly being on the lower rung of that inevitable hierarchy of human relationships (p. 662).

Students with disabilities often described how they felt like a burden, or that it was not proper to receive accommodations or support, and this lack of entitlement can have severe impacts on their health, academic success, and overall well-being.

This lack of entitlement and the internalization of stigma did not only exist within the realm of campus life. Students with disabilities came to expect and accept constraints within the broader community as well. For example, Mark commented that he wanted to participate in as many recreational activities on campus as possible since he may not have the opportunity to do so upon graduation. This speaks to the physical and attitudinal constraints that Mark anticipates experiencing when seeking to participate in activities within the greater community. He may be

fearful that he will not have access to supports and services within the community, such as the REC Club, which enable him to participate in a way that meets his needs. His comment not only illustrates the hardships that students may face upon graduation when seeking to be involved in community life, but it also speaks to the implications that may result from gaining interest in a new activity, or learning a new skill, but not having an opportunity to participate in it once they leave university. It also reiterates how many students with disabilities lack a sense of entitlement to services and supports both within and outside of the campus community.

The Influence of Stigma and Inaccessibility on the Development of Identity

Stigma and assumptions can not only affect the well-being of persons with disabilities, but can also affect their identity development. This study revealed that a university campus, which is enveloped by a greater community typically of similar values and infrastructure, is a dynamic place that has a profound impact on how one experiences the world and therefore, how one experiences the ‘self’. As such, the university campus contributed towards the complex and paradoxical identity formation of university students with disabilities. Although place and space have large impacts on all individuals (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000), it becomes even more apparent for persons who have disabilities or other attributes that cause them to be directly impacted by the inclusivity and accessibility of a space (Shakespeare, 1996). This study revealed how the visibility and representation of diversity within the community, along with the accessibility of the environment, appear to influence and alter an individual’s perception of self and the formation of a positive disability identity. The experiences of one student with a disability in particular, Natalie, served to highlight the ‘identity paradox’ faced by students with disabilities and it illustrated how community has a profound impact on one’s identity.

During our interview, Natalie claimed that she felt more aware of her disability when she transferred to the University of Guelph than she did at her previous university, where she described herself as being one of the only persons with a physical disability. This statement went against my initial supposition that people would develop a greater sense of their disability if they were centred out as a person with a disability, or as Natalie stated, being seen as “the girl that rides the scooter”. Upon further reflection, I wondered if perhaps being the only person with a disability serves to conceal one’s disability thus an individual is unable to build a positive

disability identity. In this regard, the person with a disability is seen as being “just like everyone else” and thus the disability does not develop into a prominent aspect of one’s identity.

Several students commented on how their friends and family did not view them as a person with a disability. In this regard, the disability becomes virtually invisible and non-existent to others, while at the same time being very much present. A person with a disability who lives in an environment with others who are non-disabled, where they are considered ‘just like everyone else’, may feel ‘included’ and ‘accepted’ into mainstream culture. However, this may result in the individual being unable to develop a full identity which encompasses their individual uniqueness and lived experiences. The experience of their disability is then silenced. Removing the experience of disability from one’s identity may deprive individuals from developing a full identity and a positive disability identity. Moreover, Ava explained how being seen ‘as everyone else’ sometimes resulted in her needs and preferences being ignored because her experiences and abilities were not considered.

Failure to recognize somebody’s disability relates to notions of being ‘colour blind’ to persons of colour as though historical oppression or one’s unique experiences are of no relevance and can be ignored or overlooked (Gotanda, 1999). Critics of the ‘colour blind’ notion argue that one’s difference should not be omitted from view, rather it should be acknowledged. As Gotanda (1999) articulated:

I argue that nonrecognition is self-contradictory... nonrecognition fosters the systematic denial of racial subordination, thereby allowing it to continue (p. 35)...To use the color-blind nonrecognition effectively in the private sphere, we would have to fail to recognize race in our everyday lives. This is impossible. One cannot literally follow a color-blind standard of conduct in ordinary social life. Moreover, the technique of nonrecognition ultimately supports the supremacy of white interests (p 36).

The argument is that true color blindness is a medical condition where someone is physically unable to see colours in the way that others do. Racial colour-blindness, or ‘disability-blindness’, is impossible because it assumes that individuals can “ignore what one has already noticed” (Gotanda, 1999, p. 36) and it fails to recognize the “complex social meaning” (Gotanda, 1999, p. 36) that accompanies race, or in this case disability. Failing to acknowledge one’s disability, and the role that it plays in people’s lives, ignores the embodied nature of disability and it continues to oppress people with disabilities by creating a normative standard of able-bodiedness to which the person with a disability is

expected to 'fit'. Recognizing disability and the role that it plays in one's life and in society as whole would compel people without disabilities to confront the able-bodied supremacy that serves to oppress those who differ from the alleged non-disabled norm. A 'disability-blindness' attitude serves to prevent persons without disabilities from having to confront their prejudices, assumptions, and misunderstandings about disabilities while enabling them to remain comfortable with their privileged non-disabled position.

Natalie commented on feeling 'more disabled' in Guelph because she saw other students in similar situations (such as riding scooters or using wheelchairs) which forced her to confront the image of her disability. It appeared as though viewing others in a similar situation reflected the image back onto her. This perhaps forced her to adjust her identity to include her disability. Although this can be challenging, it appeared that being part of a diverse campus community that acknowledges and celebrates individual uniqueness helped her to develop a more well-rounded identity and feel included as an individual. In essence, feeling 'more disabled' is not synonymous with 'feeling excluded'. For example, Natalie stated that she was fearful on her first day of class at the University of Guelph because she assumed that students would be looking at her as she rode her scooter into the class room. She was shocked and pleased when no one seemed surprised that she used a scooter and she was even more shocked when the student beside her started talking to her. As Natalie stated, "that would never have happened" at her previous university.

Viewing other students with mobility devices around campus compelled Natalie to confront her disability, but she also said that it helped others to better understand her situation. She raved about how she loved how Guelph was inclusive and supportive which implied that her initial struggles with her identity were outweighed by her feelings of genuine acceptance. In fact, she left her previous university to come to Guelph because of the support services that the University of Guelph provided students with disabilities. Most participants with disabilities commented on the benefit of having those in their lives, such as friends, staff members, or faculty, who just 'get it' – meaning they understood the experiences associated with their disability. They indicated that not always having to explain their situation of why they need certain accommodations was a welcomed respite.

These findings suggest that communities that are welcoming, inclusive, and offer access for all, can enable one's disability to become a positive component of their identity rather than a negative attribute which is cause for negative treatment, oppression, stigmatization, or marginalization. This enables individuals to incorporate one's disability as a component of their identity, which may be embraced and cherished. Unwelcoming environments that are inaccessible and void of representation of diversity result in an individual's unique characteristics to be the reason for negative treatment, oppression or marginalization. This can cause a person to experience their disability as a negative component of their identity. Moreover, they may also lack an opportunity to build an identity that encompasses their disability. Chantal believed that an ideal campus is one where she would not notice her disability, and as she stated, "Not in a sense that I'm not comfortable with it, but in the sense that I want to be so comfortable that it doesn't cause me any differences".

This section discussed how stigma and assumptions existed within the University of Guelph regardless of their efforts to create a campus culture of compassion. This indicates that improvements to infrastructure and the development of support systems is not enough. There is a strong need for community members to become informed on the oppression and marginalization that occurs because of the stigma of disability. A multi-pronged approach is therefore needed to reduce misunderstandings about disability, which will in turn alter attitudes and actions. A community that is successful at creating an inclusive, accessible, welcoming, and compassionate environment will help support the positive well-being and identity of all members. It will also help to foster collaboration and the development of reciprocal personal relationships, which, according to Westley, Zimmerman, & Patton (2006), do "not lead to quality of life; they [are] quality of life" (p. 74).

Implications for Future Practice and Research

I recently met with the Director of Campus Recreation for a South-Western University who is completing his M.A. in Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. He was completing a qualitative research course and was expected to analyze qualitative data for his final paper. His professor, who is my thesis advisor, suggested that he analyze five transcripts from this study since this topic aligned with his area of practice and research. We met after he read through the transcripts to discuss his initial thoughts. I was amazed by how novel this topic

was to him. He commented on how his University recently built a new recreation facility and he came to realize that many of the issues around accessibility and inclusion were not taken into account. Although the facility adheres to accessibility standards, there is currently no collaboration between his Athletic Department and the University's Accessibility Office. He also regretted that there are currently no specific recreation programs or services in place to support students and staff with disabilities. He came to realize the importance of this topic and became very interested in using this framework within his department of recreation and athletics in order to better meet the needs and preferences of students and staff.

This example serves to highlight how the failure to provide supportive services and accessible programs for persons with disabilities is rarely a deliberate action. It is typically a result of a lack of awareness of how to better understand and meet the needs and interests of persons with diverse abilities. One of the most rewarding components of this project was to witness the supportive, thoughtful, and collaborative nature of the individuals at the University of Guelph. There was a genuine willingness to learn how to make the university a better place for all members. This suggests that many individuals are willing to make positive social change within their community but, as previously mentioned, a framework for inclusion had not yet been developed. The framework that emerged from this study can help bridge this gap.

The intention of this research was not to generalize findings to other settings, as university communities are unique, complex and ever changing environments. However, the framework does offer insights into the perspectives of key stakeholders within a university which may be transferable to other communities. An article by Manning (1992), on the usefulness of qualitative research when studying student affairs, stated (1992):

Knowledge generated at one college cannot be simply applied to another college. Instead, the understanding and meaning discovered through the research builds a more informed and knowledgeable perspective on the part of the researcher and readers of the case (p. 134-135).

It is therefore expected that the perspectives of study participants, although unique to the project's context, may be able to shed light on the perspectives that exist within other universities. The components of this framework can ideally be used to encourage universities, and perhaps even other communities, to collaborate and create community conversations that raise awareness of each other's perspectives and work towards collective problem solving.

Content from this framework may be relevant to other community groups and within other community contexts as well. However, future research may need to explore the perspectives of other community groups, particularly those who are marginalized, in order to enhance the relevance and usability of the framework within a generalized setting. Such research would best be undertaken through a PAR approach involving those within the population group or community in order to ensure that it includes, and is sensitive to, their perspectives and specific needs.

The framework developed throughout this project may serve as a starting point for dialogue about these issues. For example, other universities could reflect on the principles and characteristics and use them to examine possibilities for change within their community. In order to use it as a tool for dialogue, it would be ideal to create ‘tool kit’ for creating community cultures of compassion based on main components of the framework. This ‘tool kit’ would support communities in developing strategies for creating a community culture of compassion in a way that fits their unique needs. A PAR approach benefited the development of this project as it enabled diverse university members to tackle the issue holistically and collectively in order to create positive social change. The ‘tool kit’ would encourage communities to adopt a similar PAR approach, as we found that it had many benefits which extended far beyond our original intentions. The ‘tool kit’ would draw upon the insights gained from the framework, and would follow a similar format of guiding principles, characteristics, and process pieces. In order to initiate dialogue between relevant stakeholders, the ‘tool kit’ would include reflective questions for each characteristic in order to spark internal reflection and group dialogue. It would also include examples and success stories to ground the framework in practical terms.

Future research could document the process by which a university, or other community, utilizes the framework or ‘tool kit’. Such a study would provide insight on the usefulness of the framework or ‘tool kit’ within another community context both in terms of its ability to create campus partnerships and conversations, as well as its ability to facilitate action or social change. It would also shed additional light on the process by which university stakeholders, or community members, can use a PAR approach to unite relevant individuals in order to achieve a shared outcome.

Future research could also examine the role that campus communities play in creating, shaping, or altering one's identity and how this identity is negotiated within different environmental contexts. This study shed some light on how the accessibility and inclusiveness of spaces influence one's identity, but this is a topic that would need to be explored in greater depth. Such a study would require interviewing students with a variety of disabilities and perhaps from a variety of university settings. The overall goal would be to better understand how the positive identity of students can be nurtured within university campuses, as well as in other community contexts.

Limitations

This study was presented in a way that reflects the evolutionary nature of PAR projects, which poses some limitations. Many concepts emerged through data analysis, such as community development, leadership, social capital, stigma, identity, which were not fully explored through a review of literature. This limitation was somewhat addressed by incorporating literature in to the discussion around the framework. This literature will also be further explored in publications stemming from this research.

Another limitation was the lack of representation of students with mental health issues. Although students with invisible disabilities were included, the unique perspectives of students with mental health issues would have been an asset to this framework. Efforts were made to specifically recruit students with mental health issues but these attempts were futile. I imagine that this speaks to the stigma that students with mental health issues may face and their unwillingness to come forward to take part in an interview. It may also be a result of their busy school schedules. In order to compensate for this limitation, I relied heavily on the insights provided by the staff member from the Centre for Students with Disabilities who had a specialization in mental health issues, as she was able to relay the issues that are often faced by her students. Future research needs to find more effective ways to illicit perspectives directly from persons with mental health issues and incorporate these perspectives' into the framework.

Reflections on the PAR Process

This dissertation marked my debut as a PAR researcher. I chose to use a PAR approach because I felt it was the best method to achieve the study's purpose. However, I also chose to use

a PAR approach because I was intrigued by the research method and wanted to gain firsthand experience using it. This section will offer my reflections and the insights that I gained throughout the PAR process. These insights may be valuable to others seeking to use a PAR approach within a university context.

Overcoming Uncertainties

I read several articles about PAR prior to commencing this project. However, I found that much of the literature discussed the outcomes of PAR while neglecting to describe the actual process by which PAR took place. As Reason (1994) articulated:

In reading the literature on PAR it is easier to discover the ideology of the approach than a detailed description of what actually takes place... A criticism from outside is that many of these lack the kind of detail which would enable a reader to fully comprehend and learn about the approach taken.

Articles that included a method sections were very vague, used a lot of academic terms and jargon, and did not provide practical tips on how PAR can be achieved. Each PAR process is different and thus a one-size-fits-all approach to PAR is neither possible nor desired; however, I was seeking insight that could address the many questions I had, such as:

- What topics might be discussed at team meetings?
- How can conflicts among the group be managed?
- How can we ensure that power is shared by all?
- How is the confidentiality of research participants maintained among the research team?
- How is momentum sustained amongst the group when a project takes years to come to completion?
- How does a PhD student relinquish control when this project is their dissertation?
- What does an authentic PAR project look like?
- How do you know when you are doing PAR correctly or well?
- How do you know when social change occurs?

Although I was very uncertain as to what this project would become, I decided to jump into the experience with both feet. I planned ahead as much as possible yet enabled aspects of the project to evolve naturally. When faced with an obstacle or set back, I would create a backup plan in order to move the project forward. I came to realize that this process is as much about the

ongoing learning as it is about the outcome. Essentially, the process becomes the ultimate outcome.

Throughout this process, I learned to embrace uncertainty and forego expectations that hindered our process. We created a research team, and plan, that best suited us. I also became comfortable with the fact that I will not, and cannot, know all the answers. The best part of being part of a research team is having others around who can contribute towards learning and growing. I drew from the expertise and knowledge bases of the other members of the research team which not only removed some of the pressure I was placing on myself to ‘know it all’ but it also created a cohesive group environment which enabled a truly PAR process to emerge.

Developing an Effective and Supportive Research Team

One of the main things I learned about PAR is that it is imperative to have the right people on the research team. Not only is it critical to have the key stakeholders as part of the research team in order to facilitate change, but it is just as critical to have people on the research team who have a sincere interest and investment in the project. There was one instance where Pat, one of the research team members from the Department of Athletics, was away for an extended period of time and so it was suggested that one of her staff members be involved in the project in her stead. I tried on several occasions to communicate and work with this other staff member but I found that this project was not her priority, particularly since she was already over worked from having to take on Pat’s work load in addition to her own.

This helped me to realize the importance of having dedicated, genuinely interested, and sincere individuals on the research team. All of the research team members were driven and focused throughout this project. Each of them had a sincere interest in improving the lives of persons with disabilities and it was made quite clear from the beginning that they were all committed to this project as they saw it as valuable. The dedication and commitment that the team demonstrated helped to create a very supportive and enabling environment where we all knew that we were working towards achieving a shared goal.

Defining, Communicating, and Curbing Expectations

Partnerships, particularly within a research context, can be quite tricky because there are various interpretations of what a partnership entails and people measure contributions and effort in different ways. Members of a research team should determine, up front, how they would like

to participate and what expectations they have for the project. These expectations need to be discussed as soon as possible in the process (Dupuis et al., 2008).

All research team members chose their level of involvement and their contributions were viewed as being of equal worth (Dupuis et al., 2008). This ensured that all members were comfortable with their level of involvement and not pressured to maintain a level of commitment that was uncomfortable for them. This also enabled each of us to be ourselves and participate in a way that suited our needs, skills, assets and interest. This is essential since partnerships are strengthened by the assets of each partner (Dupuis et al., 2008).

I also had to curb some expectations early in the process. It is easy to see PAR through rose coloured glasses when reading PAR articles. I started to doubt whether our project was truly PAR because our research did not reflect the partnerships or outcomes that were described in the articles. Wendy Frisby's work helped me to realize that the PAR process is neither consistent nor perfect. As Frisby and Millar (2002) stated:

... community development is discussed in an idealized fashion in the literature, and there are few published examples of the challenges of putting it into practice ...As a result, the complexities of doing this type of work are often under-estimated and serious problems and conflicts can arise, especially when collaborators have very different social locations, aims, allegiances, sources of power, and operating norms (p. 212).

This encouraged me to give myself permission to define the partnership, and the project as a whole, in a way that made sense to us as a team. Our project and process did not have to match that of others, nor should our outcomes be similar. This provided me with a great sense of freedom and ease that made the process much more enjoyable. Doing this also helped me to pay attention to the small scale changes and impacts of the study, which I believe are just as important as the more major impacts of social change.

Maintaining Motivation

Group members will have varying reasons for becoming involved and so maintaining momentum and motivation with all team members may pose a challenge. During the early stages of the project, partners were involved in the project as quickly as possible in order to initiate momentum (Dupuis et al., 2008). Motivation was also enhanced by sharing 'progress reports' with all members, particularly those who were not as involved in certain aspects of the project. Team members were also encouraged to partake in new phases of the project as they emerged.

Completing tasks in a timely manner and regularly sharing positive outcomes or successes with the group was also important to keeping momentum. Motivation was also maintained by taking time with the team to reflect on ways that the research can be practically applied in daily life and how it contributes towards new understandings. In this regard, the team discussed avenues for which the framework could be disseminated and utilized, such as through conferences, events, or through the creation of a more applicable tool kit. This helped the team to be motivated to continue our work as we knew that the research had practical outcomes and could potentially be used by others to create a more inclusive and compassionate campus and community.

Losing, Finding, and Making Time

PAR projects can take more time to complete than non-participatory projects because:

- a) decision making is a collective effort and it takes time to schedule meetings, discuss an issue, recognize and incorporate different view points, and reach a consensus;
- b) information has to be shared with all members of the research team at all stages of the project;
- c) these projects typically center around solving issues that are very complex; and
- d) some team members may be absent, out of contact, or prefer to be less involved in certain stages and so it takes more time to ensure their perspective is included.

The participatory nature of the project also entailed that I spent time traveling to and from Guelph to attend face-to-face meetings with members from the research team. I would then meet individually with those unable to attend group meetings. It required time to share information with each team member to ensure that every one was kept informed and ‘in the loop’. Time was also spent running ideas by the team members multiple times before an idea was finalized. Decision making was more time consuming as the perspectives of six people made for more intense and rich discussions.

Time management is an asset that I brought to the group so I learned to feel comfortable utilizing this skill to keep the project on track. I closely monitored our progress and managed time budgets in order to ensure the project ran smoothly. I moved the project along by suggesting meeting dates and times, and I sent reminder emails to team mates when waiting for a decision or response. I would also budget time for unpredictable events and delays. Although it was

important to adhere to time lines, we also remained flexible to allow the process to unfold naturally.

Although the process was time consuming, it was time well spent. I enjoyed taking the time to build relationships with the team members. These relationships enhanced the study since a group effort to decision making enabled the project to be much more thorough, comprehensive, meaningful, and relevant to those the research was hoping to serve. Conducting PAR is relative to taking the scenic route instead of the high way. The scenic route takes more time but is often more enjoyable and can have more to offer.

I also realized the importance of timing when doing a PAR project within a university context. There were certain months throughout the year that were extremely busy for staff and students which needed to be taken into account. Within this study, the university had two main semesters and students and staff members were extremely busy in the beginning and end of these terms. This left approximately a month or two in between the term when participation could occur. I respected the time constraints of the team, and participants, and ensured that I did not overburden anyone. This made it very challenging when recruiting students, and even staff, as participants for the study. Sometimes, there was only a small window in which to recruit participants, or ensure involvement of team members, so these time constraints needed to be considered. Some team members and participants left the city for lengthy periods of time either for vacation or to return home for summer break. This made it difficult when recruiting participants for the focus group because many students were not available.

Understanding these time constraints and managing time is particularly important for graduate students who are under pressure to complete their project within a specific time frame. They have additional pressures to ensure that the project is an original piece while also ensuring the PAR project is participatory.

Relinquishing and Maintaining Control

Researchers may be hesitant to adopt the PAR approach since they will have to relinquish control, distribute responsibilities amongst the team, and become reliant on others in order to be a genuine research team partner (Dupuis et al., 2008). I constantly reminded myself to share my ideas and drafts with the group, even if drafts were not complete or if ideas were in progress.

This did not come naturally to me because I typically do not like to share work that is not in its final form.

This approach necessitated that I remain fully open to the ideas of the group, which sometimes differed from mine, and use the process as an opportunity to gain insights which ultimately strengthened the project. Upon data analysis, I felt very connected to the data so it was crucial that I did not take it personally when team members had a differing interpretation or suggestion. Being able to work through these differences in an open and honest way was important to ensuring all perspectives were captured. This ultimately added richness to the analysis of the data as others saw things in the data that I did not see.

Knowing and Respecting the Environment in Which You are Working

I was not very familiar with the University of Guelph prior to conducting the study. I did not have any connections at Guelph, I did not know my way around the campus, and I lacked a full understanding of the University's policies and protocols. The programs and services at the University of Guelph were also very different than those of the University of Waterloo. For example, their Department of Athletics and their services for persons with disabilities have a remarkably different structure, as do their academic departments, social committees, services and so forth. It was like peeling away the layers of an onion. I had to continually research what was available at the university, get in contact with these individuals, and explore even further. I found it helpful to simply walk around the campus and get to know the places and spaces that were meaningful to the participants. I needed to understand what the campus was like in order to relate to their comments. I slowly felt more comfortable with the environment and felt less like an 'intruder'.

It was important for me to ensure that I was respecting the University's policies and practices and that I recruited participants through appropriate channels. I received additional ethics clearance from the University of Guelph to conduct research with their staff and students, and I followed their policies and regulations in terms of maintaining confidentiality and not breaching conflicts of interests. For example, it was my original intention to have the CSD send an email to students on their list-serve inviting them to participate in the study. The Director of the CSD felt that this was an invasion of their privacy so we were not allowed to go through with this plan. Although I was disappointed, I was glad that Barry (CSD advisor on the research team)

discussed this with his supervisor first as I would not feel comfortable recruiting participants in a manner that goes against their ethics. We developed an alternative plan to display the recruitment letters on the CSD's reception desk. I also respected the relationships that the staff members of the research team had with their students, who also served as research participants. I did not want them to take advantage of their relationships with students in order to recruit participants for this study.

Accommodating and Adapting To All

I needed to ensure that I was able to accommodate the individual needs and preferences of our team members. I had to ask each team member, up-front, how they preferred to communicate and receive information (Dupuis et al., 2008). In response to their preferences, all documents were read orally at meetings and during interviews involving partners with visual impairments. All locations for meetings and interviews were physically accessible and individual preferences and needs were identified and taken into account.

It was often difficult to coordinate meetings with the entire research team because of geographic and transportation challenges as well as scheduling conflicts. This challenge was overcome by including a teleconference option which enabled out-of-town team members to participate. I also met individually with team members unable to attend a meeting to ensure their perspectives were included. Minutes from meetings were shared with all partners for feedback.

Recognizing Benefits

It has been suggested that social change need not begin with a large-scale act. It can occur through a process of several tiny acts of empowerment (Sandercock, 1998). These micro-political acts of social change do not necessarily resemble the large scale movements of the past. Small scale acts of resistance or social change can simply involve the gathering of small groups to discuss issues, and through dialogue with others, education and awareness alone can play a significant role in social transformations (Kaufman, 2003). Teske (2000) described this movement as 'the butterfly effect' where small acts can eventually lead to large outcomes.

In this regard this PAR project not only increased awareness within the research group itself, but hopefully the shared knowledge will spread to other university community members and the community as a whole via informal discussions and the dissemination of the framework. This will help inform others of the goals and objectives of the group making them more aware of

oppression and discrimination against persons with disabilities. In essence, the educational component alone serves as a form of resistance and social change (Kaufman, 2003)

The purpose of the study was not only to identify oppression, but to help create positive societal change. Certainly, personal transformation and growth was experienced by those involved in the project. It is our hope that the framework will be utilized with other campus communities thereby triggering larger social change.

In terms of the benefits that I derived from this process, it enabled me to holistically view the issue at hand and determine innovative solutions through dialogue with others. I could never have fully understood the context of the participants' experience without the input from team members. It also ensured that I did not make assumptions about what was important and meaningful to this community group.

This approach also enabled me to become connected to the University of Guelph community which was helpful for gaining access to participants and for understanding the culture I was studying. As previously mentioned, this helped to ensure that I was following University protocol. The approach also connected me to a group of individuals that share similar interests. Having a research team to learn from and share with made this process much more informative and enjoyable.

Increasing the involvement of persons on a research team also helps to increase the avenues for which the research can be disseminated. Team members willing to share the results of the study through informal dialogue with others and through more formal channels will help disseminate the research findings. We have also kept each other abreast of upcoming conferences or workshops at which we can present our work.

There were also impacts that emerged from participating as a research team member. Of most importance was the increased communication and enhanced relationships that stemmed from involvement in the project. Team meetings provided time for members like Barry and Pat to touch base and discuss issues relevant to them and the project, such as discussions around the benefits and challenges of the REC Club. Our team meetings provided an opportunity for dialogue, which is the key for creating strong working relationships between people within different departments or areas of work/life. One example is how Jason, research team member and project coordinator for the Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability, invited

me to serve as a steering committee member for their newly developed All Abilities Welcome initiative, which is seeking to increase recreation and athletic opportunities for persons with a disability across Canada. Jason and I have identified many overlaps between his project and our framework and we are thinking of ways to collaborate. Our involvement in this project has clearly served as a spring board for collaboration and dialogue in other areas.

Involving university and community members within a PAR approach also enabled the research team members to develop the skills necessary to conduct such projects in future in order to sustain a culture of learning, sharing, and growth. The research team had an opportunity to learn about each others' perspectives and the perspectives of other stakeholders through the data analysis, which provided us with an enhanced understanding of the complexity of creating social change within a community. This strengthened our belief that such changes can only occur through dialogue and collaboration between all invested stakeholders. As such, it is expected that research team members will utilize such an approach in the future when seeking to address a social change effort on campus.

There were many benefits and outcomes of the study for research participants as well. Of most importance was that the participants were actively included in creating a social change effort that will directly involve their community and reflect their specific needs and perspectives. This is important because it enables the persons most affected by the issue to develop solutions *with* one another, as opposed to a researcher creating solutions *for* a community. This approach ensures that solutions are relevant to the specific needs and preferences of the group and setting. Interview participants also became more cognizant of the services and programs offered by the university which helped enhance communication and awareness on campus. Specific 'outcomes' or 'benefits' were described in Chapter Three.

Having Fun While Learning

The final aspect that I learned from this PAR process was to enjoy it. I often felt like a 'detective' in that I was continually following up on leads provided to me by research team members or participants. I would then dig deeper as the story kept unfolding. I enjoyed the process of 'following the trail' to gain a holistic picture of the issue at hand. I also enjoyed working with the research team members. We made connections that will likely last a long time. It was nice not feeling alone in the project as I had others to relate with and talk to. It was also

helpful and enjoyable to run my ideas by others and learn and share with them. It is not often that researchers have that luxury.

Conclusion

This study reported on a PAR project that sought to develop a planning framework for how universities can enhance the recreation and leisure opportunities for students with disabilities. What emerged from this study was a framework designed to assist post-secondary institutions in developing a campus community that is compassionate, welcoming and inclusive to all citizens. The framework centres around six core principles that help guide a post-secondary community toward becoming more compassionate towards all community members, particularly persons with disabilities. The six aspects that compassionate campus communities must value are:

- access for all,
- diversity and uniqueness,
- interdependence and social responsibility,
- diverse knowledge basis, voices, and perspectives,
- the power of learning and education as a tool for social change, and
- the whole person.

The framework is comprised of three fundamental characteristics that a campus culture of compassion must possess. Essentially, post-secondary institutions and their community members (including staff, faculty, and students) must be:

- interconnected,
- supportive and enabling, and
- informed.

Six process pieces were included in the framework which enables a campus culture of compassionate to be fuelled and sustained over time. Participants believed these process pieces were important factors for creating momentum and enabling a campus culture of compassion to thrive:

- creating a vision for the future,
- constructing a plan to achieve the vision,
- securing funds to put the plan in place,

- thinking critically and measuring actions against the vision,
- being proactive to make change happen, and
- reaching beyond compliance.

Essentially, this framework can help guide communities in creating a culture of compassion that enables each person to be included, accepted, and experience well-being. The framework identifies how this approach is best achieved through community collaborations and through fostering social responsibility.

The framework also suggests that communities uphold citizen rights not only because they are guided by *compliance*; but rather because they are guided by *compassion* and a genuine desire to value diversity and support each individual's life path. Communities need to proactively consider all citizens when developing or revitalizing a community since we are all of equal worth and value. The needs of persons with disabilities must especially be considered since most industrialized cities were originally built without their consideration (Oliver, 1991). Stigmas and assumptions about disabilities have compounded their exclusion in community life. Combating this oppression will require systemic changes. It requires reconceptualising what is important to community, and to society as a whole. Larger social change will require serious reflection about what we value as a society and how we can better consider the needs of all citizens.

Ladkin (2004) revealed that the success of PAR is measured by one's willingness to grapple with, and overcome, the messiness and complexity of PAR while remaining optimistic that it will contribute to the betterment of humanity. Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) further assert that the aim of action research is to "make a difference in these day-to-day lived realities—the ordinary settings in which people live and work, in which some thrive and some suffer...in order to confront and overcome irrationality, injustice, alienation, and suffering" (p. 592). The eternal optimist in me truly believes that this research could help transform post-secondary institutions towards becoming more inclusive and supportive of all campus community members. As mentioned earlier, I believed each person has the power to affect those around them and these small acts are how we make a difference not only in our own lives but also in the lives of others. I continue to enjoy the sense of agency that these thoughts provide. As Kaufman (2003) stated, "By working to transform the structures of the institutions we are part of, we make those institutions serve the needs of everyone, and we stop oppressive dynamics from being

reproduced” (p. 297).

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Appendix A:
Handout to Department Heads

**Supporting the Human Rights of Ontario University Students with Disabilities:
A Framework for Accessible Campus Recreation and Athletics**

The Issue at Hand:

Campus recreation and athletics is an important aspect of campus life for *all* students, including those with disabilities. Therefore, it is critical that universities find ways to ensure that all students have access to a variety of on campus recreational events and activities. However, there continues to be a lack of opportunities being provided to students with disabilities in most Ontario universities.

The Purpose of this Project:

The purpose of this project is to examine issues faced in providing and accessing campus recreation and athletic programs for persons with disabilities on university campuses from the perspectives of all key stakeholders. Using a participatory action research (PAR) approach, my goal is to unite various members of the university community as part of a research team that would work in partnership in the conduction of this project and, ultimately, in the development of a planning framework to enhance campus recreation and athletic opportunities for students with disabilities. It is anticipated that this project will help inform university policy regarding campus recreation and athletics, thus improve the quality of life for university students with disabilities.

What is Participatory Action Research (PAR)?

Participatory Action Research projects are practical, democratic, inclusive and emancipatory. They value the perspectives and knowledge of the group members who are most affected by the issue under study. PAR projects involve community members who work together to create positive social change.

Why a University of Guelph Partnership?

The University of Guelph's athletic programs appear to be at the forefront of meeting student needs. A research team comprised of key members from the University of Guelph will allow us to examine the experiences at the University of Guelph, particularly the issues faced in providing campus athletics for persons with disabilities and how those issues were addressed. The University of Guelph experience could provide key insights and inform the development of a framework focused on inclusivity and accessibility of athletic opportunities for students with disabilities.

Expectations of the Research Team:

Research team members can determine their level of involvement. However, it is expected that they will at least commit to attending as many team meetings as possible. All team meetings will be held at a time and location convenient to all members. These meetings will enable the team

members to design and implement the research project. Team members can also increase their involvement during the data collection and analysis phase if they so choose.

Benefits:

This project will provide your department with valuable information regarding its current athletic provisions. It will also help strengthen relationships between various university stakeholders and departments. It will give your department an opportunity to be a part of a research team responsible for supporting the rights of students with disabilities, which is a part of your university's and department's mandate. Ultimately, it is anticipated that this project will create positive social change by helping to increase recreation and athletic opportunities for students with disabilities across this Country.

Appendix B:
Handout to Students/Community Members

**Supporting the Human Rights of Ontario University Students with Disabilities:
A Framework for Accessible Campus Recreation Athletics**

The Issue at Hand:

Campus recreation and athletics is an important aspect of campus life for *all* students, including those with disabilities. Therefore, it is critical that universities find ways to ensure that all students have access to a variety of on campus recreational events and activities. However, there continues to be a lack of opportunities being provided to students with disabilities in most Ontario universities.

The Purpose of this Project:

The purpose of this project is to examine issues faced in providing and accessing campus recreation and athletic programs for persons with disabilities on university campuses from the perspectives of all key stakeholders. Using a participatory action research (PAR) approach, my goal is to unite various members of the university community as part of a research team that would work in partnership in the conduction of this project and, ultimately, in the development of a planning framework to enhance campus recreation and athletic opportunities for students with disabilities. It is anticipated that this project will help inform university policy regarding campus athletics, thus improving the quality of life for university students with disabilities.

What is Participatory Action Research (PAR)?

Participatory Action Research projects are practical, democratic, inclusive and emancipatory. They value the perspectives and knowledge of the group members who are most affected by the issue under study. PAR projects involve community members who work together to create positive social change.

Why a University of Guelph Partnership?

The University of Guelph's athletic programs appear to be at the forefront of meeting student needs. A research team comprised of key members from the University of Guelph will allow us to examine the experiences at the University of Guelph, particularly the issues faced in providing campus athletics for persons with disabilities and how those issues were addressed. The University of Guelph experience could provide key insights and inform the development of a framework focused on inclusivity and accessibility of recreation and athletic opportunities for students with disabilities.

Expectations of the Research Team

Research team members can determine their level of involvement. However, it is expected that they will at least commit to attending as many team meetings as possible. All team meetings will be held at a time and location convenient to all members. These meetings will enable the team members to design and implement the research project. Team members can also increase their involvement during the data collection and analysis phase if they so choose.

Benefits:

This project will provide you're the university with valuable information regarding its current athletic provisions. It will also help strengthen relationships between various university stakeholders and departments. It provides an opportunity to be a part of a research team responsible for supporting the rights of students with disabilities, which is a part of your university's mandate. Ultimately, it is anticipated that this project will create positive social change by helping to increase recreation and athletic opportunities for students with disabilities across this country.

Appendix C:
Information Letter and Consent Form
(To interview staff and students affiliated with Centre for Students with Disabilities)

University of Waterloo

Date

Dear (*insert participant's name*):

The Centre for Students with Disabilities has sent you this letter on my behalf to invite you to participate in a study I am conducting as part of my PhD degree in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo under the supervision of Dr. Sherry Dupuis. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

Recreation and athletic opportunities have many benefits and can enhance students' experiences and quality of life at university. However, students with disabilities often experience various barriers to participation, including a lack of suitable opportunities provided by the university. In order to address this gap, this study will examine issues related to providing and accessing campus recreation and athletic programs for university students with disabilities, from the perspective of various university key stakeholders, such as students with and without disabilities, university administrators, and staff from the Department of Athletics and Services for Students with Disabilities. The ultimate goal is to generate solutions targeted at increasing the accessibility of campus recreation and athletic programs on university campuses in order to fully support the human rights of all students. It is believed that by hearing the voices of these stakeholders, we will be able to develop a planning framework, which will outline recommendations and solutions on how university administrators and students can work together to ensure the athletic rights and needs of students with disabilities are met.

Participation in this study is voluntary, thus a decision to not participate in an interview will not affect your relationship with the university or the services they provide. If you choose to participate, it will involve an interview of approximately one hour in length to take place at a mutually agreed upon time and location. You do not have to be actively involved in campus recreation or athletics to participate in this study. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the interview has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. An executive summary of the findings will be available upon completion of the study by contacting me. All information you provide is considered completely confidential and will only be shared with the research team. Although the Centre for Students with Disabilities has sent you this letter on my behalf, I will not disclose your identity to them, or any other member of our research team, should you choose to participate or not. Your name will not

appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained for the duration of this project in a locked office in my home where only I have access. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

With your permission, I may also contact you upon completion of the project to invite you to attend a focus group where I will present the findings of the study and elicit any additional feedback or comments. The focus group will last approximately 1.5 hours and will include fellow participants from the study. Participation in this focus group is entirely voluntary.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 519-888-4567, ext. 35040 or by email at jlgillie@ahsmaail.uwaterloo.ca. You can also contact my supervisor, Sherry Dupuis at 519-888-4567, ext. 36188 or email sldupuis@healthy.uwaterloo.ca.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo and the University of Guelph. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes of this office at 519-888-4567, ext. 36005.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will help generate solutions that will ultimately influence practices and policies related to university recreation and athletics. This will benefit students on campus, especially students with disabilities, the University of Guelph, universities as a whole, and the broader research community.

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Yours Sincerely,

Jennifer Gillies, PhD Candidate
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
University of Waterloo
jlgillie@ahsmaail.uwaterloo.ca
888-4567, ext. 35040

CONSENT FORM

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Jennifer Gillies of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.

I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the thesis and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, ext. 36005.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

YES NO

I agree to have my interview audio recorded.

YES NO

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

YES NO

I agree to be contacted upon completion of the project to be invited to attend a focus group .

YES NO

Participant Name: _____ (Please print)

Participant Signature: _____

Witness Name: _____ (Please print)

Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D:
Information Letter and Consent Form
(To interview staff and students affiliated with the Department of Athletics)

University of Waterloo

Date

Dear *(insert participant's name)*:

The Department of Athletics has sent you this letter on my behalf to invite you to participate in a study I am conducting as part of my PhD degree in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo under the supervision of Dr. Sherry Dupuis. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

Recreation and athletic opportunities have many benefits and can enhance students' experiences and quality of life at university. However, students with disabilities often experience various barriers to participation, including a lack of suitable opportunities provided by the university. In order to address this gap, this study will examine issues related to providing and accessing campus recreation and athletic programs for university students with disabilities, from the perspective of various university key stakeholders, such as students with and without disabilities, university administrators, and staff from the Department of Athletics and Services for Students with Disabilities. The ultimate goal is to generate solutions targeted at increasing the accessibility of campus recreation and athletic programs on university campuses in order to fully support the human rights of all students. It is believed that by hearing the voices of these stakeholders, we will be able to develop a planning framework, which will outline recommendations and solutions on how university administrators and students can work together to ensure the athletic rights and needs of students with disabilities are met.

Participation in this study is voluntary, thus a decision to not participate in an interview will not affect your relationship with the university or the services they provide. If you choose to participate, it will involve an interview of approximately one hour in length to take place at a mutually agreed upon time and location. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the interview has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. An executive summary of the findings will be available upon completion of the study by contacting me. All information you provide is considered completely confidential and will only be shared with the research team. Although the Department of Athletics has sent you this letter on my behalf, I will not disclose your identity to them, or any other member of our research team, should you choose to participate or not. Your name will not appear in any thesis

or report resulting from this study, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained for the duration of this project in a locked office in my home where only I have access. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

With your permission, I may also contact you upon completion of the project to invite you to attend a focus group where I will present the findings of the study and elicit any additional feedback or comments at that time. The focus group will last approximately 1.5 hours and will include fellow participants from the study. Participation in this focus group is entirely voluntary.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 519-888-4567, ext. 35040 or by email at jlgillie@ahsmail.uwaterloo.ca. You can also contact my supervisor, Sherry Dupuis at 519-888-4567, ext. 36188 or email sldupuis@healthy.uwaterloo.ca.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo and the University of Guelph. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes of this office at 519-888-4567, ext. 36005.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will help generate solutions that will ultimately influence practices and policies related to university recreation and athletics. This will benefit students on campus, especially students with disabilities, the University of Guelph, universities as a whole, and the broader research community.

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Yours Sincerely,

Jennifer Gillies, PhD Candidate
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
University of Waterloo
jlgillie@ahsmail.uwaterloo.ca
888-4567, ext. 35040

CONSENT FORM

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Jennifer Gillies of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.

I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the thesis and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, ext. 36005.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

YES NO

I agree to have my interview audio recorded.

YES NO

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

YES NO

I agree to be contacted upon completion of the project to be invited to attend a focus group .

YES NO

Participant Name: _____ (Please print)

Participant Signature: _____

Witness Name: _____ (Please print)

Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E:
Information Letter and Consent Form
(To interview members of the Research Team)

University of Waterloo

Date

Dear *(insert participant's name)*:

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my PhD degree in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo under the supervision of Dr. Sherry Dupuis. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

Recreation and athletic opportunities have many benefits and can enhance students' experiences and quality of life at university. However, students with disabilities often experience various barriers to participation, including a lack of suitable opportunities provided by the university. In order to address this gap, this study will examine issues related to providing and accessing campus recreation and athletic programs for university students with disabilities, from the perspective of various university key stakeholders, such as students with and without disabilities, university administrators, and staff from the Department of Athletics and Services for Students with Disabilities. The ultimate goal is to generate solutions targeted at increasing the accessibility of campus recreation and athletic programs on university campuses in order to fully support the human rights of all students. It is believed that by hearing the voices of these stakeholders, we will be able to develop a planning framework, which will outline recommendations and solutions on how university administrators and students can work together to ensure the athletic rights and needs of students with disabilities are met.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately one hour in length to take place at a mutually agreed upon time and location. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the interview has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. I will also like to document events and interactions of the research team and audio record the research team meetings in order to gain an understanding of the research process. An executive summary of findings will be available upon completion of the study by contacting me. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Information may be shared with the research team, but no direct quotes will be used. Rather, only themes from all of the research team's interviews will be shared with the team. You can also choose to not have direct quotes included in documents which will be shared with the university. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. Although these measures are in place

to protect your identity, there is a chance that fellow members of the research team, or others within the university environment, may be able to deduce your identity. Data collected during this study will be retained for the duration of this project in a locked office in my home where only I have access. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

With your permission, I may also contact you upon completion of the project to invite you to attend a focus group where I will present the findings of the study and elicit any additional feedback or comments at that time. The focus group will last approximately 1.5 hours and will include fellow participants from the study. Participation in this focus group is entirely voluntary.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 519-888-4567, ext. 35040 or by email at jlgillie@ahsmail.uwaterloo.ca. You can also contact my supervisor, Professor Sherry Dupuis at 519-888-4567, ext. 36188 or email sldupuis@healthy.uwaterloo.ca.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo and the University of Guelph. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes of this office at 519-888-4567, ext. 36005.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will help generate solutions that will ultimately influence practices and policies related to university recreation and athletics. This will benefit students on campus, especially students with disabilities, the University of Guelph, universities as a whole, and the broader research community.

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Yours Sincerely,

Jennifer Gillies, PhD Candidate
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
University of Waterloo
jlgillie@ahsmail.uwaterloo.ca
888-4567, ext. 35040

CONSENT FORM AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Jennifer Gillies of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.

I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the thesis and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, ext. 36005.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

YES NO

I agree to have my interview audio recorded.

YES NO

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

YES NO

I agree to have Jennifer Gillies log events and interactions.

YES NO

I agree to have team meetings audio recorded.

YES NO

I agree to respect the confidentiality and privacy of all persons involved in this study, including all students and staff recruited for the study, study participants, and members of the research

team by keeping their names, and other identifying characteristics, confidential. I also agree that information shared at our research team meetings and focus group will be treated with the utmost respect and confidentiality.

YES NO

Participant Name: _____ (Please print)

Participant Signature: _____

Witness Name: _____ (Please print)

Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F:
Recruitment Poster

Study Participants Needed!

Help make our universities more accessible

What is the study about?

Students with and without disabilities are invited to participate in a study that is examining issues related to accessing campus recreation and athletic opportunities. The goal is to generate solutions targeted at increasing the accessibility of recreation and athletic programs on university campuses. You do not need to be actively involved in campus recreation or athletics to participate.

What does it involve?

Participation is voluntary and will involve an interview, lasting approximately 1 hour, at a time and location of your choice.

If interested, or would like more information, please contact

Jennifer Gillies at jlgillie@ahsmail.uwaterloo.ca

This study has received ethics clearance from the
University of Guelph and the University of Waterloo

Campus Recreation Study						
jlgillie@ uwaterloo.ca						

**Appendix G:
Team Meeting and Update Schedule**

July 20, 2007	Team Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reviewed draft of ethics application - Discussed the need for letters of support for the ethics application - Discuss roles and expectations - Discussed agenda for next meeting (recruitment strategy) <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual meetings were held with each member prior to this meeting to discuss the project, how they would like to be involved, and what their expectations for the project were - Multiple emails were sent after this meeting regarding edits/suggestions to ethics application and regarding the letters of support that were provided by team members for the ethics application
Sept 28, 2007	Group Email Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Notified the team of receiving full ethics clearance - Clarified meeting in October to discuss recruitment strategy (asked the team for their availability) - Discussed potential CCDS grant and the need for letters of support <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multiple emails were sent after this meeting regarding the CCDS letter of support and the availability for next meeting.
October 19, 2007	Team Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reviewed participant recruitment letters - Reviewed participant recruitment email script - Discussed additional recruitment strategies (word of mouth, CDS newsletter, etc) - Research team members agreed to take part in interviews - Agreed that team meeting will be held after interviews were conducted <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multiple emails were sent regarding dates/times for team member interviews - Team members emailed me potential participants for interviews - The majority of the interviews were conducted from November 2008 – January 2008
February 2008	Group Email Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outlined the number and types of participants that were interviewed to date - Discussed need for additional interviews with students with disabilities - Provided an update on the transcription of interviews - Indicated data analysis will be conducted April-June 2008 - Indicated that Jason wanted to be involved in analysis - Asked if anyone else was interested in being involved - Indicated that a team meeting is needed in near future (based on their availability) <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Amy agreed to be involved in data analysis

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multiple emails were sent to Jason and Amy throughout this time regarding data analysis. - Barry (team member) takes a leave from December-February - Everyone indicated how busy they were this time of year so the meeting will have to wait until end of term -
February 2008	Group Email Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussed upcoming NEADS conference – ask if anyone is interested in being involved in the presentation should we be accepted
April 2008	Group Email Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reminder email of the need to meet to discuss preliminary findings
May 26	Team Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updated group on interviews conducted to date (number, type) - Discussed initial analysis (major themes) that emerged while conducting the interviews (notes from journal, initial thoughts, etc) - Discussed how next few months will be spent finalizing the data and working themes into an initial framework - Emails were sent to Jason and Amy regarding analysis
Sept 29, 2008	Group Email Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updated team on all completed interviews (number, types, etc) - Updated team on analysis from Jennifer, Jason and Amy (initial framework) - Explained how we should meet to work though the initial framework - Discussed need to plan the focus group - Asked if anyone was interested in participating in different aspects of the project (presentations, writing, etc) - Discussed how not accepted to NEADS conference <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team members were sent a draft of the framework and were asked to reflect on it, provide feedback, and provide suggestions, which would be discussed at our next meeting
October 24, 2008	Team Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reviewed the framework (made changes/additions/omissions) - Planned what would be covered at the focus group <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jason and Amy were not present for this meeting so I meet separately with them October 29, 2008
October 28, 2008	Focus Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reviewed the framework - Generated additional insight <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changes and revisions to the framework were sent to the team via email and were finalized

February 2009	Group Email Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussed potential to participate in a workshop for campus recreation and intramural providers and asked if the team was interested in this opportunity and who wanted to be involved <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All team members were interested in participating in the workshop - Multiple emails were sent to arrange a date and time to meet to finalize the framework and discuss the workshop
April 14, 2009	Team meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet to finalize the framework - Discussed the workshop (what should be included, who wanted to present each section, etc)
April 15, 2009	Group Email Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summarized the purpose of the workshop, what each person's roles would be, and provided any information that was needed. <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Email was sent to the group updating them on the success of the workshop - Email was sent to the group explaining that the summer/fall would be spent working on my thesis and we would reconvene after that time.

Appendix H:
List of Participants
(Pseudonyms have been used)

	Name	Position/title	Disability
1	Carla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undergraduate student - Sits on the Athletic Advisory Council - Peer Helper and participant - REC Club participant - 	Cerebral Palsy
2	James	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - University alumni - Former Varsity athlete - Paralympic Athlete - Peer Helper volunteer and participant - REC Club participant - 	Visual Impairment
3	Ava	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - University alumni - Member of local advisory committees - 	Muscular-skeletal disability
4	Mark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undergraduate student - REC Club participant - 	Visual impairment
5	Alexis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recently graduate undergraduate student 	Cerebral Palsy
6	Natalie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undergraduate student - Transferred to U of G - 	Cerebral Palsy
7	Andrea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undergraduate student 	Hearing, Acquired Brain Injury
8	Melissa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undergraduate student - Mature student - 	Fibro, Acquired Brain Injury, vertigo
9	Brian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advisor for Students with Disabilities for the CSD (specialization in physical disabilities and temporary disabilities) - Sits on the Athletics Advisory council - Committee member for the Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee 	Physical disability
10	Deborah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advisor for Students with Disabilities for the CSD - Chairs the Accessibility Awareness Day Planning 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Committee - Committee member for the Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee 	
11	Kaitlin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peer Helper Volunteer Coordinator - CSD Accommodation and Resources 	
12	Sidney	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advisor for Students with Disabilities for the CSD (Specialization in Mental Health) 	
13	Pamela	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinator of Lifestyle and Fitness programs - Coach for the Breast Cancer Survivor Dragon Boat Team 	
14	Jessica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undergraduate student - Student REC Club coordinator - Part-time staff Personal Trainer and weight room supervisor for the campus fitness Centre 	
15	Colleen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff member for the University's Health and Performance Centre 	Spinal cord injury
16	Gareth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undergraduate student - Part-time staff Personal Trainer and weight room supervisor for the campus fitness Centre - REC Club volunteer 	
17	Kimberley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undergraduate student - Part-time staff Personal Trainer for the campus fitness Centre 	
18	Leslie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff member for the Department of Athletics 	
19	Liam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Graduate student - Part-time staff Personal Trainer for the campus fitness Centre - REC Club volunteer - Coach for the Special Olympics 	
20	Lauren	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undergraduate student - Part-time staff Personal Trainer for the campus fitness Centre 	
21	Joshua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Faculty Member - Chair Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities 	

		Committee - Former Human Rights Advisor	
22	Avery	- Undergraduate Student - Resident Advisor	
23	Beth	- University's Associate Vice President of Student Affairs	

Appendix I:
Conversational Guide for Students with Disabilities

- 1) What role does recreation/athletics play in your life? What role does/did it play in your life as a student as a student?
- 2) Have you participated in any campus recreation/athletic programs/events?
If yes:
 - What types of programs did you participate in?
 - How did you experience these programs?
 - How did you find out about them and get involved?
 - Did you feel like your needs were met? If not, how could these (or other) programs better meet your needs? If yes, how did these programs meet your needs?
 - What barriers or challenges did/do you (or others you know) face?If no:
 - Why do you not participate?
 - What barriers/challenges did/do you face in participating in these types of programs?
 - How could campus recreation/athletic programs better meet your needs?
- 3) Do you participate in any programs outside of the university? If so, how do they compare to the programs offered by the university?
- 4) Are students with disabilities able to participate in the campus recreation and athletic opportunities of their choice? Please explain your answer.
- 5) From your perspective, what would a fully inclusive, equitable, and accessible university look like? What is your definition of inclusion, equality, and accessibility?
- 6) What types of campus athletic or recreation opportunities do you prefer (such as segregated, integrated, reversed integrated, special events, sports teams and so forth).
- 7) What recommendations or suggestions can you offer to help make campus athletics/recreation even more equitable, inclusive, or accessible? Do you feel you have someone to voice these suggestions to?
- 8) Do you feel that you have someone who they can offer suggestions to?
- 9) Do you feel your voice is being heard on campus in regard to such issues?
- 10) What do you picture the future of campus recreation/athletics looking like?

Appendix J:

Conversational Guide For Athletic/Recreation Service Providers

- 1) How did the University of Guelph come to develop its current athletic/recreation programs (specifically, those accessible for students with disabilities) and what was it like previously?
Specifically:
 - Who initiated the development of these current programs?
 - Who funds them?
 - How are your programs advertised? How do students become aware of them? Does this work?
 - How did you determine which programs you would offer and how they would be offered?
 - Have these programs been evaluated? If so, what have you learned from those evaluations?
 - What process is involved in modifying or changing current programming?
 - What was the level of involvement of various university stakeholders in regard to creating current programs (e.g., the office for students with disabilities, students with and without disabilities, the athletics department, or university administrators)?
 - What lessons have you learned along the way?
- 2) What barriers/challenges do you face in providing accessible, inclusive, or equitable programming? How can they be resolved?
- 3) How did/do members of the recreation/athletics office experience programming that involves students with disabilities?
 - How much involvement do they have with students with disabilities?
 - What is the experience like for your staff?
 - What challenges/barriers did they face in implementing these programs?
 - Did they acquire additional training and/or did you hire new staff members?
 - What supports are provided for staff to help them program for persons with disabilities?
- 4) How do you perceive that students with disabilities have experienced these programs?
Specifically:
 - What is the experience like for them?
 - What needs are served/met by the programs you provide?
 - Are students able to participate in the campus athletic and recreational opportunities of their choice? Please explain your answer.
 - What types of experiences do you think students with disabilities prefer (inclusive, segregated, reversed inclusive)?

- 5) What role do you think recreation/athletics play in the lives of students (both students with and without disabilities)?
- 6) From your perspective, what would a fully inclusive, equitable, and accessible university campus look like? What do you see is the role of athletics/campus recreation in making university campus' fully inclusive and accessible?
- 7) What do your picture the future of campus athletics and recreation looking like?
- 8) What recommendations do you have on how to improve current programming and make athletics/campus recreation even more inclusive and accessible? How can universities better include students with disabilities within their athletic programs?

Appendix K:

Conversational Guide for the Centre for Students with Disabilities

- 1) What are your perceptions of the athletic/recreational programs offered by the university for students with disabilities?
 - How do you perceive that students with disabilities have experienced the programs?
 - What role do you think athletics/recreation plays in the lives of students (both with and without disabilities)?
 - Are students able to participate in the campus athletic and recreational opportunities of their choice?
 - What types of experiences do you think students with disabilities prefer (inclusive, segregated, reversed segregated...)?
 - What barriers or challenges do you think are faced by students with disabilities in trying to access/participate in campus recreation and athletic programs?
- 2) What role have you played in the development of athletic and recreational programs for persons with disabilities? Secondly, Is there a process in place to allow you to make suggestions in regard to campus athletics and recreation? If so, what is that process?
- 3) What barriers or challenges has the university faced in providing a more inclusive and accessible campus for students with disabilities? In relation to campus recreation and athletic programming?
- 4) From your perspective, what would a fully inclusive, equitable, and accessible university campus look like? What would need to be in place to make a campus fully inclusive, accessible, and equitable?
- 5) What do you see is your role in making this happen?

Appendix L:
Conversational Guide for Students without Disabilities

- 1) What role do you think recreation and athletics play in the lives of students in general? What role do you think it plays in the lives of students with disabilities?
- 2) Have you participated in campus recreation or athletics and if so, what is the level of your involvement?
- 3) As a student, what barriers/challenges do you face in accessing campus athletics and recreation?
- 4) Have you ever participated in recreation or athletics with a person with a disability? What was that experience like?
- 5) In your opinion, what concerns would students without disabilities have about participating with students with disabilities in campus recreation or athletics? What concerns would persons with disabilities have about participating with persons without disabilities in campus recreation or athletics?
- 6) How accessible/inclusive do you perceive this university to be?
- 7) Are issues of accessibility or inclusion on campus a concern to you?
- 8) What types of campus athletic and recreation programs do you prefer (completely segregated, integrated, reversed integrated)? If more integrated programs were offered, do you think you would participate in them? Why, Why not?
- 9) How do you think campus recreation and athletics can be made more accessible or inclusive? What role do you think the student federation/union can or should play in making campus recreation and athletics more accessible and inclusive of all students?

**Appendix M:
Feedback Letter**

University of Waterloo

Date

Dear (*Insert Name of Participant*),

I would like to thank you for your participation in this study. As a reminder, the purpose of this study is to gain the perspectives of various universities key stakeholders in order examine issues related to providing and accessing campus recreation and athletics programs for university students with disabilities. The ultimate goal is to generate solutions targeted at increasing the accessibility of campus recreation and athletic programs on university campuses in order to fully support the human rights of all students.

The data collected during interviews will contribute to the development of a planning framework, which will outline recommendations and solutions on how university administrators and students can work together to ensure the athletic rights and needs of students with disabilities are met. This information, along with information from the focus group, will help initiate and expand the lines of communication between university stakeholders, enabling dialogue and an in-depth understanding of each other's perspectives and positions.

Please remember that any data pertaining to you as an individual participant will be kept confidential. Once all the data are collected and analyzed for this project, I plan on sharing this information with the research community through seminars, conferences, presentations, and journal articles. If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the results of this study, or if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at either the phone number or email address listed at the bottom of the page. If you would like a summary of the results, please let me know now by providing me with your email address. When the study is completed, I will send it to you. The study is expected to be completed by August 2009.

As with all University of Waterloo and University of Guelph projects involving human participants, this project was reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo and University of Guelph. Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes from the University of Waterloo's Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, Ext., 36005, or contact Sandy Auld from the University of Guelph's Office of Research at 824-4120 Ext., 56606.

Jennifer Gillies

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Appendix N:

Framework for Developing a Campus Culture of Compassion- An Overview

Six Guiding Principles	
Access for All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an environment that is physically and socially welcoming to all, regardless of physical attributes, background, or financial status • Support people in accessing programs, services, or spaces in different ways • Equality is not treating everybody exactly the same. It involves making sure that everyone has equal opportunities to achieve well-being through full participation in economic and social life
Diversity and Uniqueness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All individuals are unique and diverse and this diversity is what bind us and make us human • An individual's unique characteristics should not be reason for negative treatment or oppression • Seek out and draw from the unique perspectives and assets that all individuals have
Interdependence and Social Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humans are interdependent which make our lives, and our communities, stronger and more enriched • We benefit from taking responsibility for others and the environment in which we are part • Help, support, guide, and learn from one another and have genuine regard for each other
Diverse Knowledge Basis, Voices, and Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong partnerships develop when the knowledge bases, voices, opinions, and perspectives of all individuals are heard, valued, respected and included • Each person is the expert on their lives and their experiences
The Power of Learning and Education as a Tool for Social Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and learning are key components to self awareness, personal growth and social change. • Be open to new learning (and unlearning) and provide learning opportunities for community members
The Whole Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize that the lives of individuals are multi-faceted and that a well-rounded person thrives • Support individuals holistically by providing seamless services and programs that meet the complex needs of community members

Three Characteristics of a Compassionate Campus Community

An Interconnected Campus Community	A Supportive and Enabling Campus Community	An Informed Campus Community
<p>Foster Top-Down and Bottom Up Connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster top-down connections to make inclusion a priority • Foster bottom-up connections to provide insight on inclusion • Support the service providers who connect those at the 'top' with those the 'bottom' <p>Develop Synergistic Campus Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurture strong inter-departmental connections • Foster strong campus-community partnerships 	<p>Ensure the Campus is Physically Accessible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an accessible outside environment • Create an accessible inside environment <p>Build a Community that is Safe, Supportive and Welcoming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate a close-knit community feel • Ensure a safe and comfortable space • Foster supportive and welcoming staff and community members • Meet needs at the system and individual level • Promote a visibility and representation of diversity <p>Provide Opportunities to Build Social Connections and Personal Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer a variety of program options that meet specific needs • Offer a variety of ways for the community to be engaged 	<p>Continually Learn about the Needs and Preferences of Community Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek out information on the needs and preferences of the community • Implement a variety of channels for the community to provide feedback <p>Effectively Inform the Community of Programs and Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform the community of available programs and services in a variety of accessible ways • Promote the accessibility of programs and services <p>Provide Learning Opportunities for the Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure access to information which promotes health and wellness • Provide opportunities for developing self awareness and advocacy skills • Create opportunities for learning and sharing to break stigma and misunderstandings around disability <p>Ensure Service Providers are Informed, Trained and Qualified</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train and inform service providers about issues of diversity and inclusion • Ensure that some service providers have specialized training and are qualified to work with diverse populations

Six Process Pieces that Fuel and Sustain the Development of a Campus Culture of Compassion

Create a vision for the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a vision for how you would like the community to develop and use it to guide all decision making and actions • Develop the vision with the campus community, and share it widely to help shape the culture
Construct a plan to achieve the vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematically and deliberately weave your vision, mission, and values into the fabric of the community through curriculum development, program planning, the development of support services, and through academic and extra-curricular opportunities • Make inclusion a priority and filter this message through the campus community • Avoid trying to solve complex problems simplistically. Creating a plan in collaboration with others will help in understanding the complexity of the issue.
Secure funding to put the plan in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematically work physical and social accessibility improvements into the yearly budgets in order to ensure consistent funding • Work accessibility features into new building plans to reduce costs • Allocate resources based on your overall strategic plan or vision • Allocate a person or group responsible for seeking out grant monies or funds to increase accessibility • Ensure community members have access to the resources they need to be fully engaged in life
Think critically and measure actions against the vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical thinking and reflection will help communities make appropriate decisions, solve problems creatively, evaluate current programs or services, and better plan for the future • Measure the outcome of actions against the community's goals, vision, or the success of others to determine whether objectives are being met • Routinely question the way things are, who benefits, who is excluded, and how things can be improved. • Continually look for ways to improve or enhance current programs, services, or events to ensure they meet the community's ever-changing needs and the vision • Regularly revisit goals or objectives to determine whether they are still relevant
Be proactive to make change happen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get involved and make change happen • Remove barriers or address challenges before they are experienced • Plan programs, services, and spaces according the diverse needs and preferences of the community • Inform the community that accommodations are available and they will be supported in achieving their goals
Reach beyond compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move beyond simply complying with accessibility and human rights standards towards developing a culture that treats people fairly and equitably because they genuinely care about other's well-being