

Running Head: ACCESSIBILITY/INCLUSION IN CAMPUS RECREATION

Accessibility and Inclusion in Campus Recreation:

A Review of Five Canadian Universities

Package Assignment

RECL 3P45

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Accessibility and Inclusion in Campus Recreation: A Review of Five Canadian Universities

The area of disability and accessibility is a major issue that has been on the horizon for many years. It is a matter that needs to be understood to generate a greater outcome that is beneficial for everyone. Becoming knowledgeable and educated is the most important for people to overcome the barriers that are present. About 1.85 million people in Ontario have a disability, which is one in seven people and that population is continually growing. The number of people with disabilities continually growing also increases the number of people with disabilities attending schools, universities, and/or recreation and leisure services that are or should be provided. This means that inclusion and accessibility is becoming more necessary than in previous years and is going to continually be required as a service that is essential.

To begin understanding disabilities one needs to be aware of the many different kinds and types of disabilities that are present. Each disability does differ according to each person, someone being deaf is very different then someone who is hard of hearing, which therefore needs to be accommodated in separate ways. The different types of disabilities that need to be understood include vision, hearing, physical, intellectual, learning, developmental, mental health, speech or language and deaf-blind. Becoming aware and knowledgeable of all these types of disabilities is essential to accommodating the disabled population appropriately.

There are barriers and challenges that people with disabilities are faced with on an everyday basis. Barriers that affect inclusiveness for people with disabilities include architectural and physical, information and communication, attitudinal, technology, and organizational barriers. These challenges have been developing and improving for many years but there are still many ways to become more inclusive, making people with disabilities feel more comfortable,

participate more often, and create a better community based atmosphere for everyone to benefit from.

Looking further into detail within individual universities shows that schools have adapted and accommodated people with disabilities. Like all other public institutions, universities must abide by the Disability Act and the Accessibility for Ontarians Act. In completing a class assignment designed to review the public documents available regarding ‘accessibility and inclusiveness in campus recreation’, we examined the websites of five different Canadian universities: Queens University, University of Toronto, University of Regina, MacMaster University, and Nipissing University. On the websites of these five universities, we were unable to find any documents that specifically addressed the inclusive practices of campus recreation. Rather, what we were able to review were documents assuring commitments to accessibility to academia. There were outlined accommodations for building accessibility, study practices, teaching methods and equipment use. There were no outlined accommodations for participation in campus recreation. The following summarizes the commitments each university has made publicly via their website regarding accessibility and inclusion on campus.

Queens University’s accessibility plan is to identify barriers, develop a concrete action plan for removing those barriers, and while removing those barriers make alternative services available to people with disabilities. Further, Queens University concerns itself with having inclusive employment practices by hiring individuals with disabilities, maintaining appropriate etiquette, being flexible to different abilities, and ensuring equitable employment practices. Queens University has made a commitment to accommodate the educational needs of their students, but does not appear concerned with the recreational needs of their students with

disabilities. Queens University has outlined ways they assist students with disabilities for assignments, examinations, study tips, resources, time management, and lectures, but have failed to outline how they will help students to be involved recreationally in campus life.

The University of Toronto is another university that accommodates students with disabilities, but doesn't specifically offer any recreational services to students with disabilities. The accommodation focus at the University of Toronto is on providing access to equitable education. Interestingly, the University of Toronto offers a link to SFBA (Students for Barrier-free Access) to comment or voice concerns, thus developing a way for the University of Toronto to make changes that are necessary to improve inclusiveness on campus. Like Queens University, the University of Toronto offers many services geared towards accommodating the educational needs of students with disabilities. They offer help in the areas of note taking, examinations, learning groups, and employment opportunities. On their website, they even have a chart, which shows the increasing number of students with disabilities who attend the University of Toronto. This chart reflects the enrolment of students between the years of 2003 to 2008. The number of students with disabilities attending the University of Toronto has risen from 1123 in 2003 to 1786 in 2008. This is an example that illustrates the growing population of people with disabilities attending universities. It is important to note that universities must remember to provide appropriate accommodations in every service that is offered, giving students with disabilities the same opportunities as everyone else.

The University of Regina recommends that students inquire through the Disability Resource Office about whether the university will be able to meet their specific needs for accommodation; they recommend that this be done prior to submitting their application for

admission. This process is meant to address course accommodations. Further, students are advised that not all areas of the campus are accessible by wheelchair. For academic purposes, the Disability Resource Office offers the use of various communication devices, such as cassette recorders, audio calculators, and computer programs which convert text to speech, and speech to text. The Disability Resource Office also liaisons with other departments to increase accessibility to classrooms, exam rooms, and the library (no liaison with the recreation services department is mentioned). This university seems only concerned with how students' disabilities impact their learning environment. The Disability Resource Office has six working objectives, none of which address campus recreation.

The Centre for Student Development at MacMaster University advocates for students regarding issues of diversity, educational equity and academic achievement. They are concerned with providing accommodations, accessibility, counselling, and support to all students. They are committed to facilitating academic success and personal growth of students. However, they do not address supporting efforts towards participation in campus recreation.

Nipissing has the most comprehensive documents regarding accessibility. By accessing their website, individuals are able to read through specific accessibility improvement priorities as outlined in their '2009-2010 Accessibility Plan'. It outlines items of interest, the action to be taken, and which departments are responsible. It addresses such areas as customer service, accessible transportation, information and communication, physical accessibility, and the built environment. As detailed as this document is, it focuses only on issues of accessibility. It is commendable for this institution to have such a framework; however, this institution fails to address how it will be inclusive to its students, and fails to address how it will be inclusive in campus recreation.

To begin understanding how to become inclusive within universities and within campus recreation it is important that administrators and staff recognize students with disabilities as persons first. Having a disability is secondary to being a person. This realization is the first important step towards providing inclusive programming. All people with disabilities are capable of participating in campus recreation, and want to have the same equitable access to services; sometimes they need support towards making this a reality. They do not want to be treated differently; they wish to have the same opportunities as everyone else. In accommodating their needs, they do not wish to be a burden to the system, nor do they wish to be disruptive to the participation of other students. For this reason, effort should be made to accommodate students with disabilities to participate in the least intrusive way possible. The first step towards this is through the accessibility planning that universities do. Providing means for individuals to be independent within their environment is key (i.e. having a ramped entrance along one edge of a pool so that students can wheel into the pool independently without disrupting the service of others, as opposed to having to summon a staff attendant over to start up the motorized chair lift into the pool). Making it a priority to have students with disabilities feel comfortable while using recreation services is essential to promoting an inclusive environment; they should feel welcome and encouraged in their participation.

A recommendation to universities is to consider holistically how they can serve the needs of all their students. This approach includes academic life, as well as campus life outside of academia. All universities offer extracurricular activities and venues, including sport and exercise programs. To fully meet their commitment to ensuring accessibility and to creating an inclusive environment, all departments on campus need to make an explicit commitment – one that can be accessed by students via their websites. By reviewing the websites of these five

universities, we have come to believe that each university is willing to accommodate the physical needs and learning styles of students with disabilities so that they may succeed in the classroom, but they have not made a commitment to including these students in another important area of university life: campus recreation. We recommend that universities realize the balance that having a social and recreational life can provide to enhancing academic life while at school. If there is a commitment to providing recreation services to students on campus, then there needs to be a broader commitment towards ensuring that these recreation services are reasonably available to all students. Sometimes, this involves scrutinizing how information regarding recreation services and accommodations is disseminated, how physically accessible facilities and equipment are, and how welcoming programs appear to be to students with disabilities.

Appendix A: Literature Review

Running Head: RECREATIONAL SPORT AND INCLUSION

Literature Review:

Recreational Sport and Inclusion

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Literature Review: Recreational Sport and Inclusion

The articles and books have presented common themes towards recreational activities supporting inclusion for all types of people. They maintain a positive view on how physical activity or involvement enriches the lives of people. “Involvement in out-of-class activities has been identified as a critical element in contributing positively to students outcomes, persistence, cognitive and intellectual development, interpersonal and intrapersonal competence, practical competence, and subsequent post grad success” (Johnson, 2000). All of these positive elements can be even further developed to show additional growth among individuals. These positive attributes are as effective for people with disabilities, creating opportunities rather than limiting their options.

Providing people with disabilities with the same type of inclusion is very important to their personal growth, and now the law. Since the CCD came about they have illustrated “using the human rights and disability rights analysis, examined what a federal disability act could do for Canadians with disabilities” (Allison & Schneider, 2008). Narrowing this law to focus on campus recreation, “section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) require colleges and universities to provide access and reasonable academic accommodations, along with accommodations in out-of-class activities” (Johnson, 2000). The laws presented allow the necessary inclusions for the disabled to occur.

“Throughout history, and especially the 20th century, individuals with disabilities have experienced increasingly greater inclusion and acceptance within society and sports worldwide” (DePauw & Gavron, 2005). The increasing attention and inclusion needed requires understanding, patience, and knowledge to put together proper inclusive programs for

individuals with disabilities. “The process of developing an inclusive program will involve the many steps such as: obtaining information on the disability, determining safety concerns, and determining program modifications” (Health Canada, 1994) to list a few. Supplying the same activities to all persons “gives persons with disabilities the opportunity to exercise their personal freedom in their leisure life” (Allison & Schneider, 2008).

There are also many theories that can be adapted to advance the leisure activities or programs that are offered. Using theories such as “normalization, and self-determination theory” (Leiberman & Houston-Wilson, 2002), emphasizes the need for inclusions. “Including people with disabilities whenever possible” (Leiberman & Houston-Wilson, 2002), and not limiting their potential, gives others the opportunity to learn about the capabilities of persons with disabilities. Creating an outlet for improvement for leisure and recreational services “inclusion of individuals with a disability in sport means having choice and not being excluded solely because of a condition of one's physical being or body” (DePauw & Gavron, 2005), allowing endless opportunity for continual future growth.

Despite the improvements towards inclusion in sport itself, an area of recreational sport that is underdeveloped and requires future growth is that of inclusive volunteerism. This is concerning because recreational sports are favourable for offering leadership opportunities to participants (Mull, Bayless, & Jamieson, 2005, p. 18). Through leadership opportunities “individuals are able to assume roles where they can influence a group” (Mull et al, 2005, p. 18). Examples of such leadership roles include acting as team captain, team manager, team coach, sport official, league convenor, or serving on a league committee or council. There are few leadership opportunities for those with disabilities. In terms of volunteering, the individual with a

disability is usually a recipient of volunteer support, and has rarely been offered the opportunity to be the contributor by filling a volunteer role themselves (Miller, Schleien, Brooks, & Frisoli, 2005).

While strides have been made towards inclusive sport programming, volunteering is still perceived as a service that individuals with disabilities are recipients of, and not contributors to. The common presumption is that individuals with disabilities are users of a community-based system of support, and not contributors to such a system (Miller et al, 2005). As a result, little research has been conducted regarding the volunteerism of individuals with disabilities (Miller et al, 2005). In addition to supporting recreation efforts, volunteering can also be a planned recreation activity in and of itself (Henderson, 1981). Volunteering as a planned recreation activity can take on the form of a group program with a set number of sessions, or it can occur as a one-time special event (Miller et al, 2005).

It is important that we concern ourselves with inclusive volunteerism because the act of volunteering garners social and individual benefits. The individual is able to try new roles (Lysaght, Ouellette-Kuntz, & Morrison, 2009), express values (Lysaght et al, 2009; Miller et al, 2005) and gain transferrable skills (Roker, Player, & Coleman, 1998). Additionally, the individual who volunteers experiences physical health benefits (Lysaght et al, 2009; Miller et al, 2005), and psychological health benefits such as positive self esteem (Lysaght et al, 2009; Miller et al, 2005), and increases in self confidence (Roker et al, 1998). Pro-social outcomes of volunteerism include reduction in antisocial behaviour (Miller et al, 2005), improved social skills (Roker et al, 1998), increased social networks (Roker et al, 1998) and social contribution (Lysaght et al, 2009; Miller et al, 2005; Roker et al, 1998).

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Appendix B: Documents