

Committee: **Accessibility Advisory Committee**

Organization/Sector represented: **Post-Secondary Rep position**

Name: **Kathleen Walsh**

Address:

430 Biener Drive

Occupation: **student**

Work experience: - **Residence Advisor/ Residence Don and Acting Manager (Western University, 2013-14/ 2015-present): Addressed community and individual needs of students, including academic, social and mental health, through active and passive programming. - Private Tutor (Port Elgin, 2013 and 2015): Tutored student with moderate and severe learning disabilities using individualized methods resulting in the improved communication and mathematic abilities of children. - Coordinator of PRANCE Therapeutic Riding Summer Camp (Port Elgin, 2013): Organized games and activities involving horses, theory and crafts for children with a range of disabilities. - Head lifeguard and swimming instructor (Port Elgin, 2008 – 2013): Instructed children and adult swimming lessons, and promoted a safe environment for swimmers. - Student Trustee (2011 – 2012, Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board): Represented all primary and secondary students in the school board and advocated on their behalf at monthly school board, parent council and student council meetings. - Co-founder and VP External of Western Student Research Conference – volunteer (Western University, 2014- present): I organized the first undergraduate research conference at UWO which showcased undergraduate research and allowed undergraduates to interact with researchers in a variety of fields. - VP Internal of Tidal Waves and Making Waves swimming instructor – volunteer (Western University, 2013- present): organized and supported instructors teaching swimming lessons for adults with disabilities, and helped promote the club to the wider London community - Western Heads East Intern and Researcher – volunteer (Kenya, Feb-Aug 2015): Worked with Kenyan students and researchers to set up probiotic food programs in underserviced areas of Kenya to create a sustainable source of nutrition and income for disadvantaged people**

Education: **I am currently enrolled in my third year of medical sciences and health management. Through these majors I have learned about the research processes in the medical and health sciences, and gained a greater understanding of the human body and the Canadian healthcare system. Through my role as a residence don I received training on equity and mental health. I have also attended Accessibility Standards Training through as a lifeguard.**

Skills: **My roles as an executive for the Tidal Waves swimming program, a tutor for children with disabilities, a camp coordinator at a therapeutic horse riding centre, residence staff member and most recently, a volunteer at the Independent Living Centre, I have gained a wealth of knowledge about physical and mental disabilities in a variety of settings. Additionally, through the research projects I have worked on I learned how to gather, synthesize and present information which would be beneficial when this committee is making recommendations to council. Through the combination of my knowledge about disabilities and my research skills I can provide valuable input and solutions to the committee, and assist in making recommendations to council.**

Interest reason: **Although I do not have any disability, through my numerous roles I have learned of the challenges people with disabilities face on a daily basis, and I have seen how anyone can succeed when given the right resources and opportunities. I have recently learned of an inspiring social enterprise, called Kanchi. Kanchi works to change mindsets and behaviors about disabilities and aims to “unleash the abilities of people with disabilities.” I want to be a part of something that works towards this vision, and I think the Accessibility Advisory Committee would be a good place for me to start.**

Contributions: **My experiences in conference planning, researching and addressing needs in creative ways would make me an asset to this committee particularly for raising awareness and making recommendations to council.**

Past contributions: **Through my role as a student trustee I advocated on behalf of students. During my term I coordinated a board wide campaign to raise awareness of the harms of**

disposable water bottles, and ended the campaign with a conference to inspire students to make a change. The campaign resulted in the installation of water bottle refill stations at each school in the board. Although, this is not related to disabilities, the process of identifying an issue, raising awareness and creating change, I would intend to apply this process to issues the committee is trying to address.

Interpersonal: I have engaged in a range of roles that involved sharing experiences and respecting the views of others, but my most relevant experiences have been through my roles as residence staff member and an intern in Kenya. Firstly, as a residence staff member I work in a team with staff with diverse backgrounds and skills to address the needs of first year students. As a team we celebrate the differences among us and use our unique perspectives to solve issues so as to help students in the most effective manner. Additionally, the students in the building come from a variety of backgrounds and for the first time must learn to live with people who may be very different than them. I not only exchange views with and respect students I live with, but I also create an inclusive environment and teach students how to appreciate differences. Secondly, completed a 5 month internship in Kenya – a place that had unfamiliar practices and cultures to me. During the internship I made a conscious effort to refrain from providing input on how I thought things should be done from a Canadian perspective. Instead I listened, learned and took leadership from the Kenyan people (aka the experts), until I gained a better understanding of why they did things the way they did. This taught me that although I could never inherently understand the challenges the people of Kenya face, I could still learn and support their efforts with my talents.

Interview interest: **Yes**