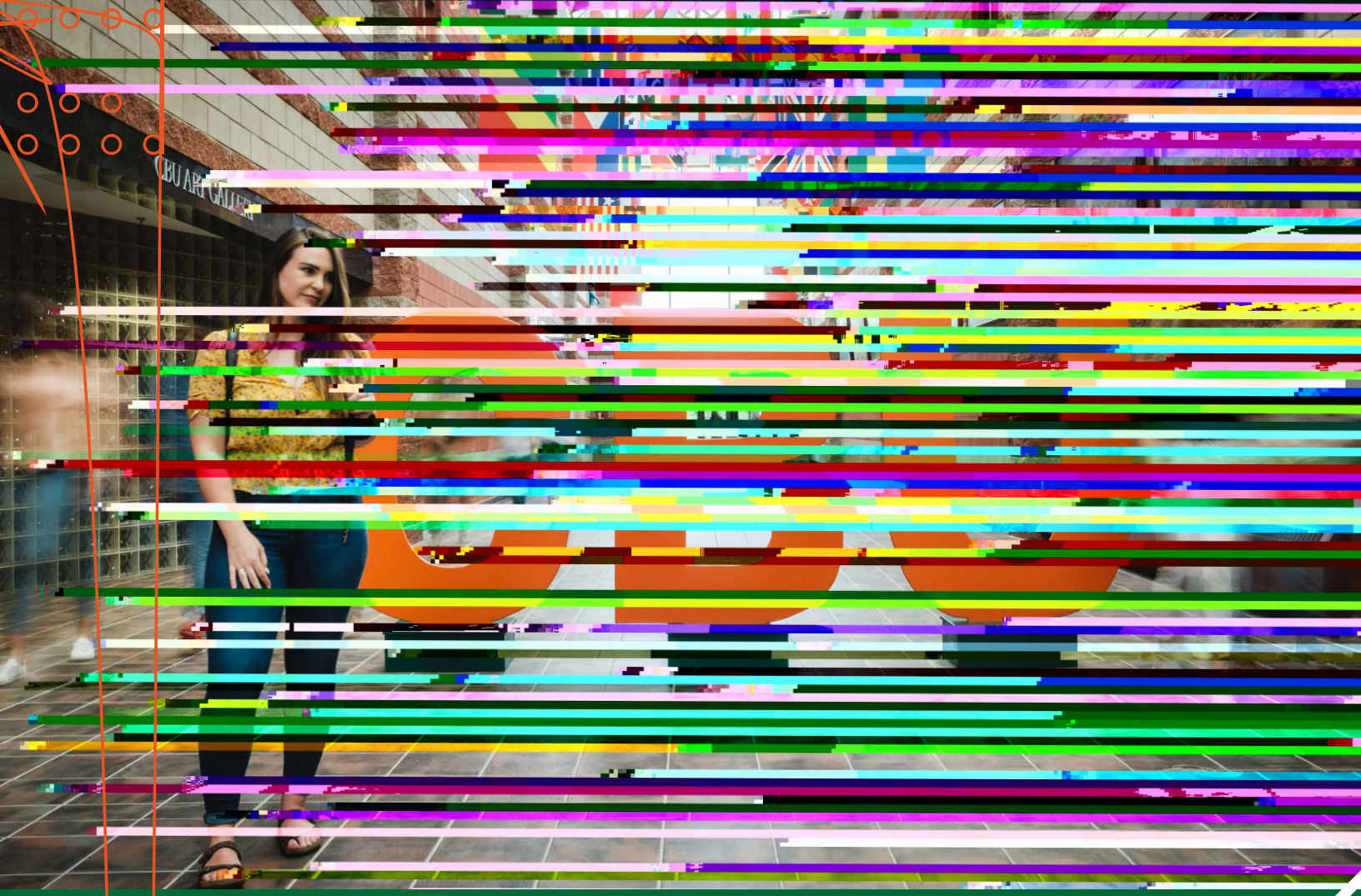

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Multi-Year Accessibility Action Plan

2022-2025

Ca v ersity

Glossary 2

Introduction 6

Advisory Committee and Contributors 10

Where We Are - Research Summary and Findings 11

Key Takeaways from the Research 14

Priority Recommendations 19

Establishing a Governing Body and Steward 19

Moving to an Action-Oriented and Active Response 20

Resources, Relationships and In-House Experts 25

Areas of Commitment and Action Plans 27

Awareness and Capacity Building 29

Education: Teaching, Learning, and Research 33

Built Environment 38

Information and Communications 44

Delivery of Goods and Services 48

Employment 52

Transportation 56

References 58

A - The practices, attitudes, systems, and structures in a society that prioritize normalcy and stigmatize, devalue, or limit the participation, inclusion, and potential of people with disabilities, and Deaf and neurodivergent people. Audism is the practices, attitudes, systems, and structures in a society that prioritize hearing individuals and stigmatize, devalue or limit the participation, inclusion, and potential of Deaf and hard of hearing people. Such practices discriminate against and devalue people with disabilities, and Deaf and neurodivergent persons. They o□en rest on the assumption that they need to be “fixed” in order to be included or to be considered successful. Ableism and audism are prevalent in our society and systems and can be subtle or obvious, unintended or intentional.

A - The prevention and removal of barriers (physical, attitudinal, technological,

A - Reducing and preventing barriers in hiring, retaining, career development and advancement for employees, and addressing employee needs with individualized, flexible accommodations.

A - Current, quality print, electronic, audio, or visual material that is formatted so that people with disabilities, Deaf, and neurodivergent people can equitably access the information presented. This may include (but is not limited to) ensuring compatibility with appropriate assistive technology, closed captioning, described video, large print, plain language, easy read, and video transcripts.

A **A** - Any device, so□ware, service or product system, including service animals, that reduces individual barriers to accessing and engaging in all aspects of a learning community including social, emotional, academic, and daily living activities and experiences. Assistive technology matches the specific functional skill needs, strengths, and challenges of the individual with a disability, and is, as much as possible, current and up-to-date technology.

- Anything that hinders or challenges the full and e□ective participation in society. Barriers can be physical, attitudinal, technological, or systemic (policy or practice). Accessibility barriers may be related to areas such as employment, education, the built environment, transportation, the delivery and receipt of goods and services, or information and communications.

( ) - A teaching method that acknowledges the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and frames of reference of students and uses it to make learning more relevant and e□ective. It ensures that students from diverse cultures have equitable opportunities and support for success within school systems and that design is reflected in pedagogy, not just additional targeted services.

- Expectations of learning through objectives and outcomes that are aligned to principles, competencies, skills, and concepts. Curricula is relevant for all learners across curricular areas and grounded in e□ective, evidence-based instruction and assessment practices. It is inclusive, culturally responsive, and developed using principles of universal design for learning. Curricula take into consideration and cater to the diverse needs, previous experiences, interests, and personal characteristics of all learners. It attempts to ensure that all students are part of the shared learning experiences of the classroom and that equal opportunities are provided regardless of learner di□erences.

- Resources and tools used by educators to support learning, such as syllabi, articles, videos, online resources, teacher guides, textbooks, and all materials and resources distributed to students and employees for virtual learning and those uploaded to and used on virtual learning spaces.

A - When referring to the built environment, meaningful access is the intent to meet the needs of all users of a site (a building or outdoor space) regardless of their ability. It means that not only individual features of a site, such as an entrance or washroom, must be accessible, but the entire experience throughout.

“Cape Breton University is strongly committed to fostering diversity within our community. We welcome those who would contribute to the further diversification of our sta, our faculty and its scholarship including, but not limited to, women, visible minorities, Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, and persons of any sexual orientation or gender identity.”

The purpose of this document is to guide the decision-making and actions of the sta, faculty, executive, board members, and internal stakeholders, as well as other community members associated with the implementation of a multi-year accessibility action plan at Cape Breton University (CBU). Throughout this document, information will be presented in a clear, outcome- based fashion, making it easier for anyone who picks up this document to find what they need to guide the next action in the implementation plan to help make CBU a fully accessible campus, as mandated by the Government of Nova Scotia and outlined in the Nova Scotia Post- Secondary Accessibility Framework document.

Under the Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Accessibility Framework, six key areas of commitment have been identified. Cape Breton University has also identified the need for an additional area of commitment under the awareness and capacity building category.

The seven key areas that CBU will focus on changing throughout the implementation of this multi-year accessibility plan include:

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Each key area picks up this 3h5 Information and Communiceceiyeness FpcL, (ceiyese who pic(ceiych (e)-10 ET

A **#2:** The second key action item related to the implementation of this plan is

Human Rights	We understand that accessibility is a fundamental human right and model this in our work. We will work to prioritize the social	

		A
Inclusion	We are committed to creating equitable, inclusive learning and working environments, where students and employees are treated with respect and dignity.	Research was conducted in a variety of ways to be inclusive and considerate of the needs of participants including verbal, audio, video, written, descriptive, multichoice, and anonymous collection of data.
Collaboration	We share information and promote collaboration and coordination within and among our institutions, and among sectors, stakeholders, communities and initiatives. Students, employees and external service providers work collaboratively to foster learning environments, experiences, and services that create opportunities for success for students with disabilities or others who experience barriers to accessibility.	The Accessibility Advisory Committee has identified numerous community stakeholders and partnership opportunities, detailed in later sections of this plan. Throughout the research phase, information was collected from not only sta, students, faculty,

Across various platforms and using various collection methods, participants shared information that indicated a widespread lack of awareness, education and training related to disability, accessibility, and how to support these issues on campus. In addition, the research revealed concern about the lack of motivation and intention of some faculty, staff and students to participate in awareness and capacity-building training, support or activities as a result of their perceived lack of understanding of these topics. There appears to be a generalized fear of "getting this wrong" as well as stigma associated with offering help, or, a fear of offering the wrong kind of help to employees or students who may present as needing support.

Another key area of concern for those interviewed and polled was the planned remediation of certain areas of the campus that would make accessibility easier for employees and students. Employees and students were able to acutely identify areas of the campus that have not been updated or upgraded in order to be accessible, as well as accessible options in disrepair with no effective system for how to address these issues. Other areas of concern include a lack of consistency and congruence of language used across campus (both online and in-person), as well as other areas identified in the following pages. The key takeaways from the research tools include:

Lack of Awareness

- There is agreement amongst plan participants that there is a fundamental lack of education for staff and faculty surrounding key topics such as disability, accessibility, barriers and how to support students; there is opportunity to work with other universities and organizations in the region to help remedy these issues and they should be explored
- There is confusion and uncertainty related to the importance and responsibility to help others to the point that some staff and faculty have questioned or disputed requests for help
- There is widespread misunderstanding of the modern inclusive definition of disability, as well as how prevalent and common it is within society
- Disability is seen as a burden in some cases, especially where confusion is present and is considered a bureaucratic process for someone else to deal with; however, the majority of staff and faculty seem eager to learn to help in an effective manner
- There is hesitancy to change and reform which is acceptable under the current landscape and also an underlying sense that the changes coming may be optional or "will not apply" to all
- There seems to be very little understanding of HOW to help even when staff and faculty want to
-

Lack of Motivation and Intention

- Lack of coordinated communication encouraging sta, faculty or students to help others or improve their understanding of accessibility; Missed opportunities in celebrating accessibility wins, hosting accessible events, or sharing and growing accessibility support networks
- Accessibility is currently addressed ad hoc and systems are not being developed throughout the process; sta and faculty are unsure of how to properly support students, or how to gain training to improve in these areas
- Accessibility is addressed ad hoc for employees as well, leaving managers unsure of how to properly support employees.
- From student perspective, little to no conversation is being generated on the university's part about a topic that a ects a large, growing percentage of the student body

Website and Online Platforms

- Sta and faculty share a belief that the websites of the university are inaccessible on

Students Use Di□erent Language than Sta□ and Faculty

- Student's understanding, exposure, language, perspective seem to be vastly di□erent than faculty and sta□; there are terms and resources listed in the First Year Advising Book for students and it should be listed in resources
- How students speak about these issues is di□erent, and there is diversity within the student body that is not present in employees which needs to be respected
- Student-led e□orts have high potential (peer-to-peer 4th year to 1st year supports, international to international, neurodivergent society, mental health peer support groups, etc.)

Transit Issues

CBU works with the Cape Breton Regional Municipality to try to reduce issues for students. The following issues with CBRM transit that a□ect CBU students and employees have been identified:

- Students who have intellectual or "invisible" disabilities are denied access to "handi- trans" buses because they don't have physical disabilities.
- Not enough accessible buses, or buses in general. One bus per hour results in students being unable to attend campus for studies, events, etc. or they may have to wait hours for a bus
- Transit routes don't provide services to many rural regions so transit is inaccessible for many students
- Many bus stops are not accessible according to employees and students

Organizations for Specific Supports Not Being Utilized

- Nova Scotia Deaf and Hard of Hearing Society can be of support
- Community organizations are not being utilized
- There is an opportunity to provide free resources while funding is sourced
- There seems to be confusion around terminology and inclusive language
- There is a perception that first voice is not being showcased

Federal Policies Dictating Perspectives

- The formal definitions of "disability" and what is covered under that definition limits the support and funding available for some people living with disabilities; it's important to remember that "disability" is an umbrella term and covers many people with many conditions, issues, and abilities.

As part of the research undertaken to prepare this accessibility plan, and in communicating with stakeholders, community members, sta, faculty and students, it is clear that a key component related to implementing any action on behalf of the university and the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act is to support the Accessibility Advisory Committee as stewards of this plan, overseeing the review and implementation. The AAC will inform decisions through collaboration with the necessary governing bodies of the university to ensure all commitments have been met as mentioned in the introduction of this document.

Based on the findings, which have been confirmed in the literature, and identified in the resources, this accessibility plan focuses on the following priority action items.

Throughout the research and development phase, several departments and survey respondents questioned what governing body or person would be responsible for ownership and implementation of the accessibility plan, including budget approval and distribution of resources and authorizing mandates to enact change. As a result, the first action items in this accessibility plan are related to the establishment of a project steward.

Action 1.0 -

Action 1.1 -

The AAC will consider next steps for the committee and move to implement the accessibility plan and execute the action items according to the approved plan.

Action 1.2 -
Using the Accessibility Plan, the AAC will establish measures of success against all proposed plans to meet the provincial standards for accessibility on campus. Determining these measures of success will allow the ACC to identify starting and finishing points on each action item in this plan to determine if all standards have been met.

Action 1.3 -
Using the Accessibility Plan, the AAC will choose a priority item to be implemented,

Changing Minds from the Top

Overcoming hesitations, oppositions, or a lack of motivation in some individuals will require a unified top-down approach. Once a well-researched and accepted training plan is developed, training and education can begin. Conversations, information sharing, and peer-to-peer support will be essential in moving the accessibility plan forward. The university should coordinate with the various bargaining units to determine potential collective agreement implications involving mandating accessibility training and education.

Improving Motivation

Accessibility requires understanding, compassion, a willingness to participate and a motivation to contribute. Developing a strategy centered around awareness building, compassion, relatability, personal responsibility, storytelling and first voice focus will be needed. Training should include “bite-sized” material to easily contribute to helping improve accessibility on campus. The strategy could also include marketing on campus to promote a change in perspective.

Advocating for Student len approp

Encouraging Interdepartmental Collaboration

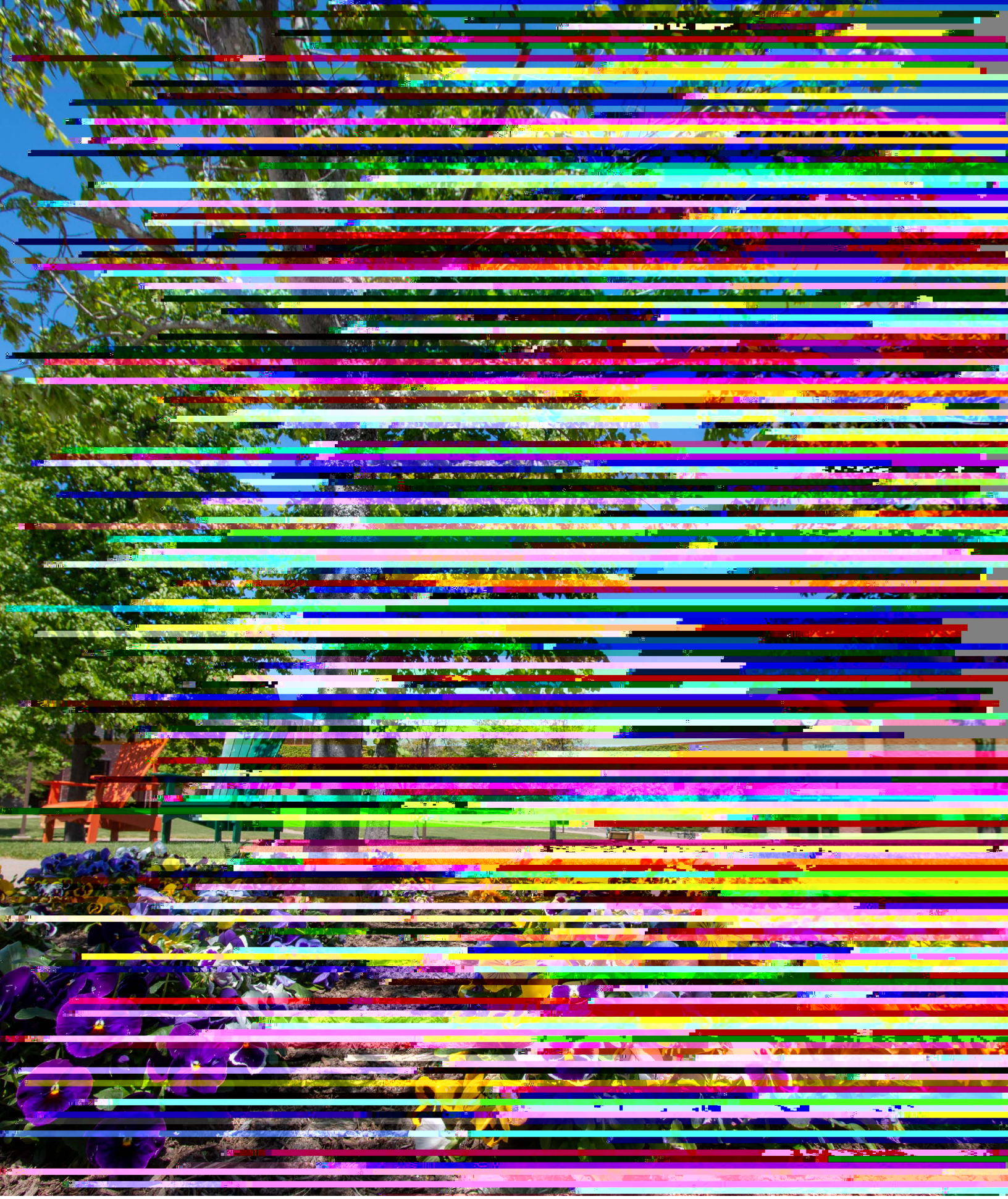
Unifying the campus should be central to the approach to achieve the consistency that seems to be lacking. To update websites, signage, marketing materials, course materials, etc., the plan will need to consider the fragmented nature of some of the departments (students' union, libraries, core websites, etc.) This will require cooperation between departments; for instance, the marketing department and the teams who build the websites.

Instructional Support and Training

There is an obvious need for training on how to support individuals with accessibility needs. On the whole, faculty is unsure of how to provide support or accommodation as there is little instruction being provided. This also applies to systems did falthe t p (videop10 e of ho)15.e is

Addressing Immediate Accessibility Issues

A list of identified accessibility issues has been provided at a high level in this accessibility plan. This list is not exhaustive, but an audit of the built environment has been conducted and a consulting



Resources, Relationships and In-House Experts

The following information has been collected from the Accessibility Action Committee to provide a list of resources, relationships and in-house experts that can potentially provide support for the implementation of this plan. Connecting with community partners, utilizing in-house expertise, and identifying nationally-recognized free resources will also provide a starting point for education, awareness and training to get underway as soon as possible.

Jennifer Keeping Centre for Accessible Learning	Jacqueline Côté (Manager)	jac eli e_c e@cb .ca
University Relations (in charge of Communications, Marketing and Recruitment)	Becky Chisholm (Associate Vice President)	beck _chi h l @cb .ca
CBU Education Department	Dr. Rob Power (teaches digital accessibility; can help CBU “walk the talk”)	b_ @cb .ca
SiteImprove (SaaS provider	with	

The Horizon Achievement Centre (local non-profit that helps provide meaningful employment to those with varying abilities, could help similarly to Breton Ability Centre above)	Contact Horizon	C ac H i
Independent Living Nova Scotia (accessibility resource local to Nova Scotia)	ilnsadmin@ilns.ca	il ad i @il .ca
Nova Scotia Government (Accessibility Resources)	accessibility@novascotia.ca	acce ibili @ a c ia.ca
Work Wellness Institute This organization provides DEI, accessibility training in online, on-demand workshops in accessible formats for employees		
Transit Cape Breton	Kathy Donovan / James Forsey	kad a @cb . .ca; f e @cb . .ca
CBU Students' Union	Dawn MacDougall / Alex MacNeil	da _ acd gall@cb .ca; ale _ ac eil@cb .ca
CBU Security	Sonya Spencer	a_ e c @cb .ca
CBU Facilities	Amy Campbell	a _ca bell@cb .ca
Chris Southwell	Student at CBU who contributed to research and shared senior research project	cb 17hkh@cb .ca
CBU Student A□airs	John Mayich	j h _ a ich@cb .ca

Goal

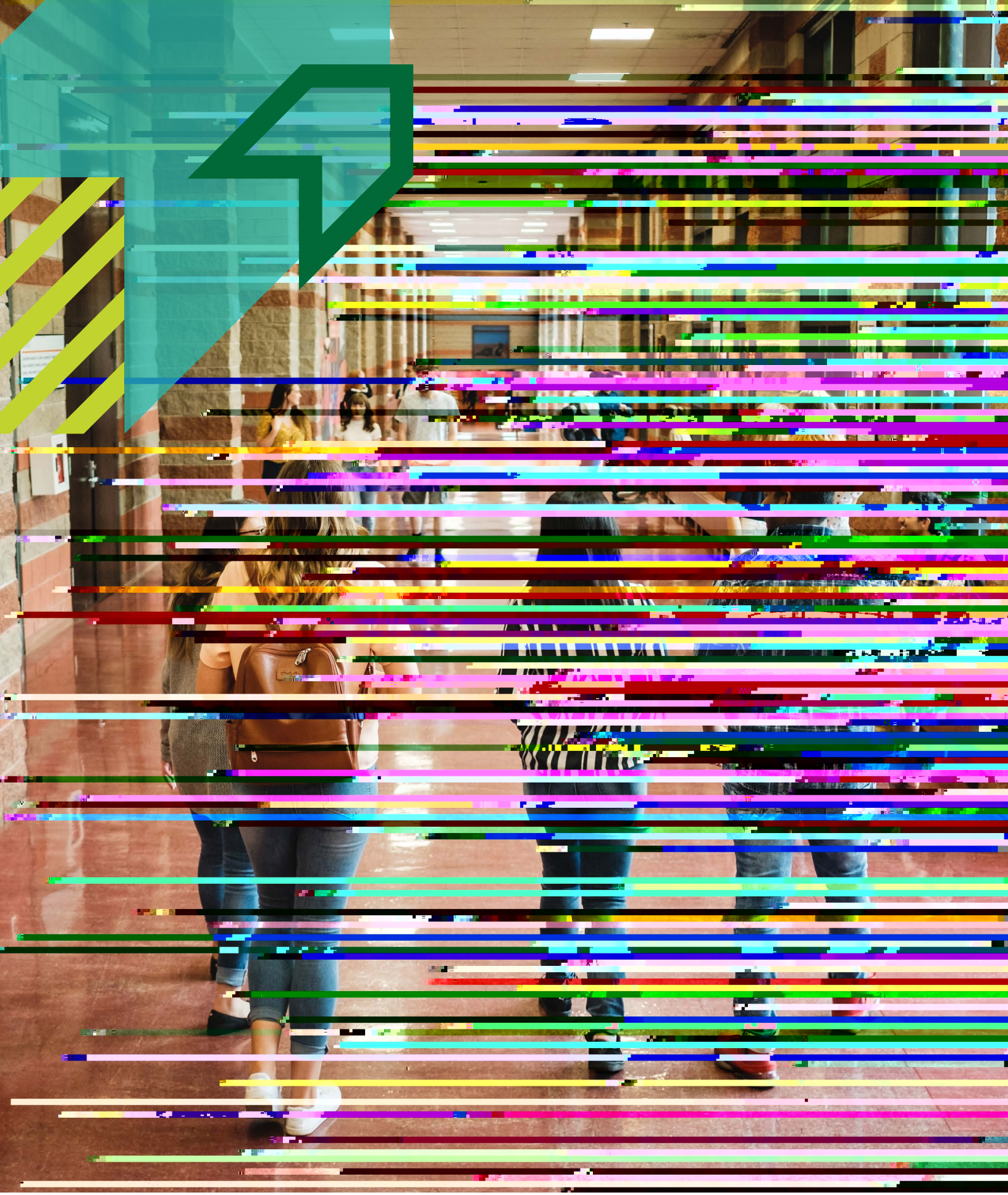
Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions foster a culture of accessibility and equity, encourage and facilitate the prevention and removal of barriers to participation, and build capacity in these areas among employees and students.

What's Going Well

CBU has already begun developing policies and processes and identifying opportunities for awareness and capacity building through the development of the EDI Action Plan. This plan has helped inform the accessibility plan and will continue to provide insight as the university undergoes changes to become fully accessible. The university is aware of and utilizing Equity and Anti-Racism Legislation and is practicing self-assessment of areas that can be improved to become more accessible.

What Needs Work

Across many departments of the university, it is agreed upon that addressing barriers to accessibility and building awareness and understanding will be instrumental in succeeding in the implementation of the accessibility plan. Motivating sta, faculty, and students to participate in the educational training opportunities may take



Goal

Nova Scotia’s post-secondary institutions are leaders in inclusive and accessible

The Action Plan - Education: Teaching, Learning and Research

Ensure access to and use of accessible technology in teaching and learning.

A

- Survey sta and faculty to determine the level of awareness and needs related to accessibility
- Identify and use free resources to o er interim support

(1-12)

- Collect internal knowledge and insight to develop a database of tools, training, and navigation support for sta and faculty

- A (12 +)

- Update and upgrade online teaching tools for accessibility and ensure internal training is available in a variety of methods

Build capacity and implement supports for faculty and other employees to remove barriers to learning through inclusive practices and equitable assessment, such as principles outlined in universal design for learning and culturally responsive teaching and learning.

A

- Invite campus departments to speak to faculty and sta about how they are being inclusive; provide opportunities for information sharing and story sharing; creating a more understanding view of accessibility, accommodation, and learning
- Identify, expand and adopt flexible learning outcomes for students who require support in learning
- Li stringent “outcome delivery” requirements for learning and focus on demonstration of learning in a variety of ways

(1-12)

- Develop internal training sessions to educate on inclusive practices in the classroom
- Adopt and utilize equitable assessment tools and research opportunities for such tools to be used in the campus

- A (12 +)

- Encourage the implementation of faculty- sharing and feedback systems and networks so faculty and sta are not individually responsible for progress and problem solving

Identify and adopt a common standard for ensuring students have access to resources, including accommodations, to support academic success, wellness, and transitions from high school and to employment, the community, or further study.

A

- Review onboarding and graduation process of students
-

(1-12)

- A (12 +)

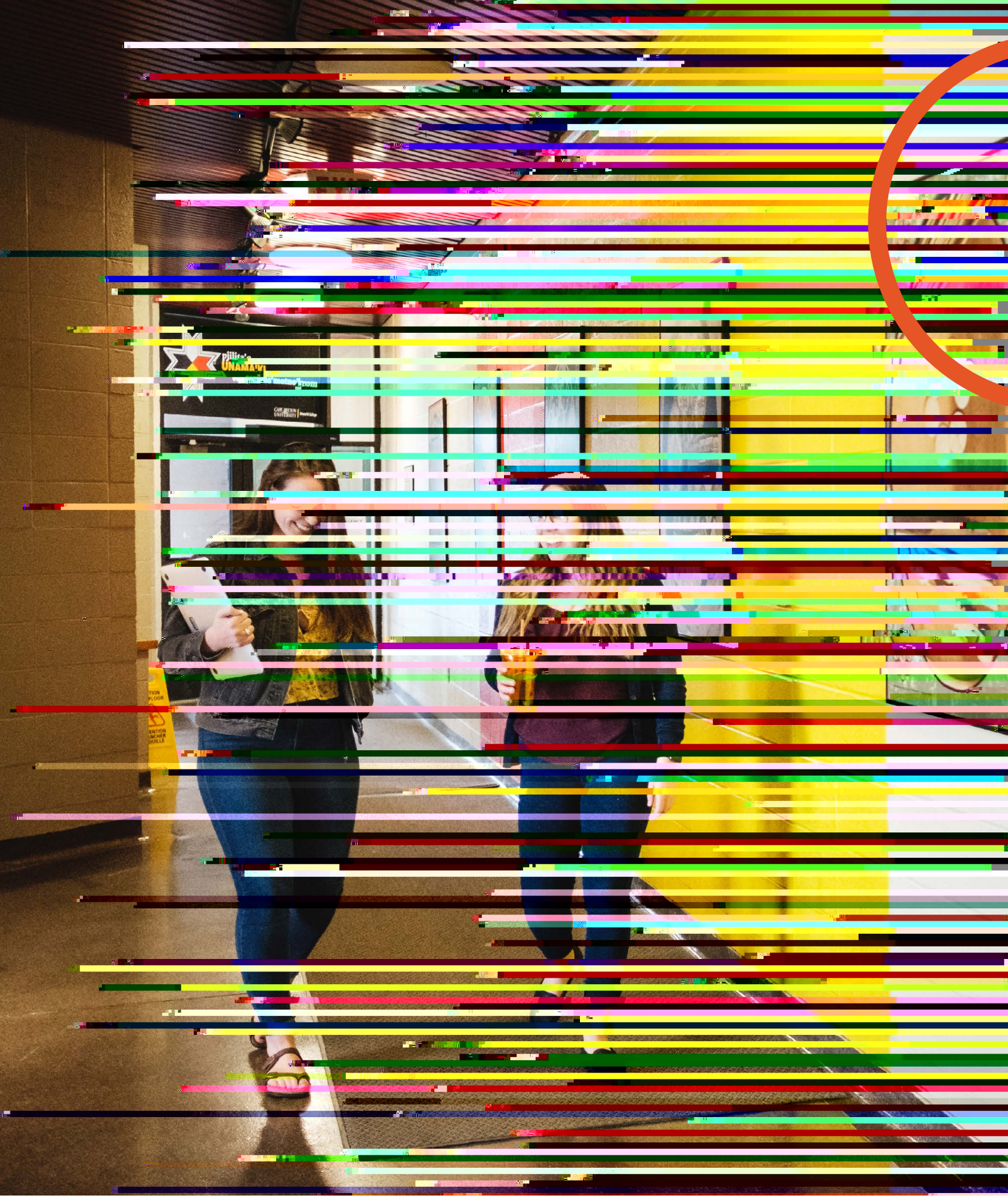
Expand and improve access to inclusive postsecondary education options for students with intellectual disabilities.

A

- Prepare audit of current options for students
- Invite conversation in collaboration with Jennifer Keeping Centre to redefine pre-requisites and explore what needs to happen for that to be approved
- Host open houses at JKC for information and collaboration

(1-12)

- A (12 +)



Goal

Buildings and outdoor spaces on Nova Scotia's post-secondary campuses provide meaningful access for intended users.

What's Going Well

Work is well underway to improve the built environment of the university including an audit to identify the physical improvements needing to be completed in the coming years. An example of this is the linkway project between the MCIDy (y pr)53bog to 3eost-0.mof this is the linkwa

The Action Plan - Built Environment

A

(1-12)

- A (12 +)

Develop and utilize a common accessibility auditing tool to assess the accessibility of campus buildings and outdoor spaces. Integrate institutional accessibility audits within facilities management inventory and budgeting processes. Ensure the Accessibility Act's built environment standard can be integrated into this tool, when developed.

A

- Assign a working group or person to research options related to developing accessibility auditing tools
- Connect with facilities and management to review auditing options and agree on a system for moving information throughout the university

(1-12)

- Test drive auditing tools identified at the outside of the accessibility plan
- Determine individual departmental needs for e□ective use of auditing tools

- A (12 +)

- Implement system-wide auditing tools and adjust where necessary
- Meet and discuss opportunities in the short- term and long-term utilizing the system-wide auditing tools

Develop a common reporting tool for facilities management employees to track and report progress on improving accessibility as part of each institution's accessibility planning process. Ensure the Accessibility Act's built environment standard can be integrated into this tool, when developed.

A

- Research options and understand how tools can improve processes on campus for improving accessibility
- Identify stakeholders and liaisons at other institutions to provide resources and support
- Identify what employees and students can do in the interim while tools are being researched and developed
- Request demos of tools
- Review the Accessibility Act for recommendations of robust tools and use

(1-12)

- Further develop interim systems and begin planning to utilize auditing tools
- Develop and use measurement and assessment tools

- A (12 +)

- Implement system-wide auditing tools and adjust where necessary
- Meet and discuss opportunities in the short- term and long-term utilizing the system-wide auditing tools

Collaborate with local municipalities to integrate accessibility of municipal and post-secondary infrastructure.

A

- Assign working group or person to liaise with CBRM and act as support to identify opportunities for municipal support
- Determine what priorities exist for future projects that CBRM can support

(1-12)

- Provide ongoing transparency and conversation for employees and students regarding the building and environment and collaborate with CBRM for more support

- A (12 +)

- Create and utilize accountability standards and identify "who owns what" in relation to ensuring the campus is accessible from both public and private methods

Establish and implement processes to ensure accessibility during temporary disruptions with building infrastructure and outdoor spaces, such as construction or seasonal related elements (e.g. snow removal).

A

- Review current process and determine seasonal and historic barriers related to building, environment, transportation, and foot tra□c

(1-12)

- Develop a process or procedure for information sharing and fanning out important changes as they occur related to the building infrastructure

- A (12 +)

- Use processes and s6 (ason601BTT)9<Lang (en-US)/MCID 1349h0 0 10 79.dg (en-US)/MCID 1342 BDC BT10 0 0 1331 ≥1331 ≥133

Ensure all emergency evacuation systems, policies, procedures, communications and training enable the safe and

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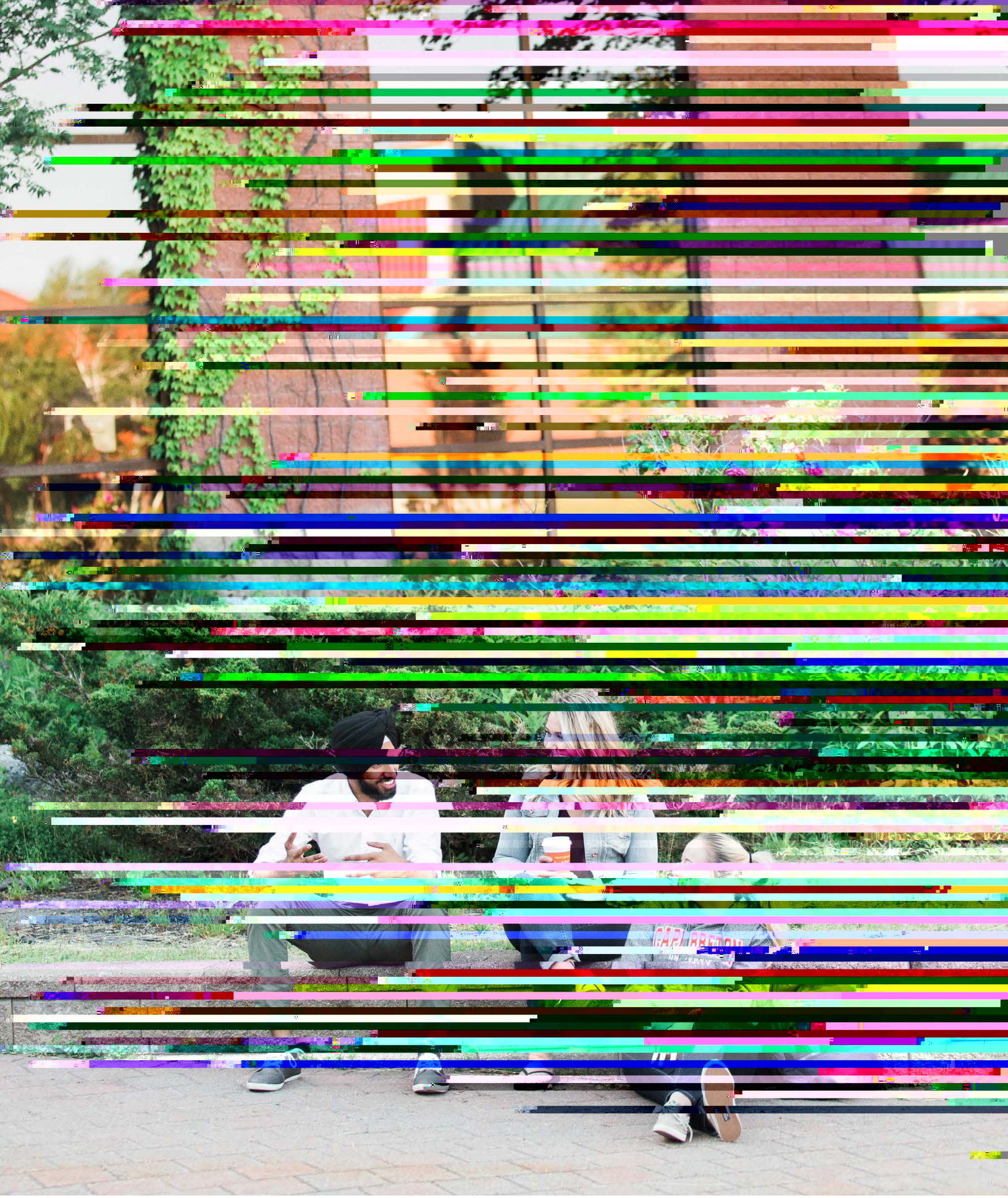

Goal

Information and communication at Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions are accessible.

What's Going Well

Projects that are underway related to the website to improve accessibility are exciting and that department is paving the way for online accessibility to be completed by 2023. What's more, several opportunities exist to utilize existing platforms, such as social media, upon the recommendation of students, because they already have accessibility features and functions. Sta and faculty have internal departmental systems for sharing information that could be reviewed and developed to become more accessible and wide-spread.

What Needs Work

The lack of understanding and information related to accessibility is a major theme in this accessibility plan; providing congruent information and communication in a timely manner will be a challenge for the university as it rolls out this plan. Asking and requiring participation and input are two di erent things: along with awareness and capacity building, obtaining "buy in" from sta and faculty to change the way they currently share - or don't share - information may be di cult and may need work to overcome. The lack of standardized reporting and addressing accessibility concerns is an issue for everyone who uses the campus. There is a strong sense that work is being completed in "silos" and departments are not sharing information for the benefit of everyone. Providing faculty with additional time to prepare accessible materials may need to be considered to support change. Conversations regarding mental health need to be

The Action Plan - Information and Communications

Ensure the communications policies, procedures, and practices at post-secondary institutions facilitate accessibility.

A

- Conduct information audit and determine how information is currently being used and disseminated throughout the campus

(1-12)

- Provide training on developing accessible policies and procedures
- Create timeline for improving policies and procedures

- A (12 +)

- Implement approved changes and develop ongoing audit process for policies and procedures with

Adopt a common standard to ensure the accessibility of post-secondary institution websites (e.g. WCAG 2.1 AA).

A

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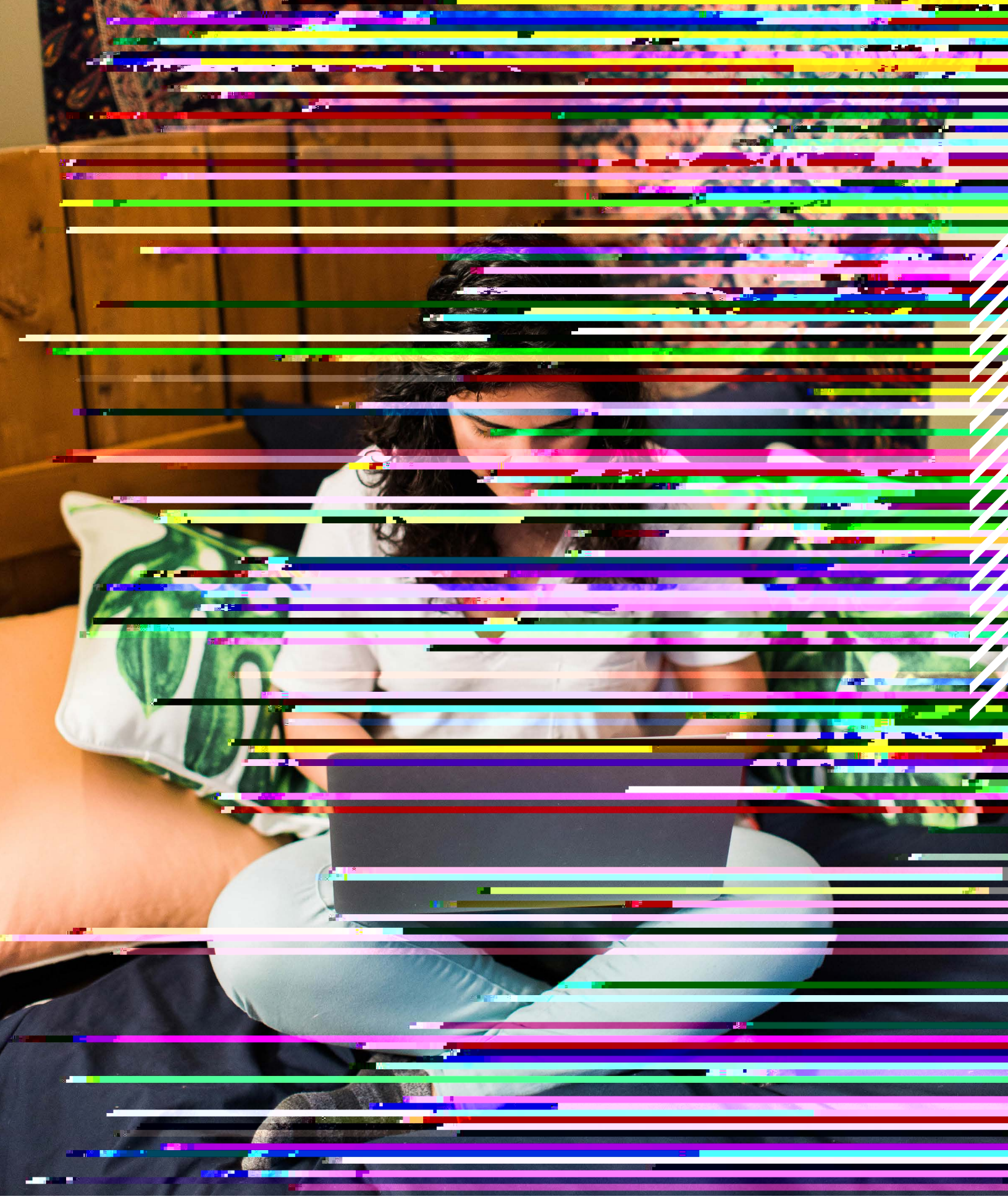
(1-12)

- A (12 +)



The Action Plan - Delivery of Goods and Services

Embed accessibility into procurement processes, including creating common accessibility language, accessibility requirements and criteria in tenders for goods and services purchased by Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions.

A

- Determine what accessibility processes exist for Tenders Nova Scotia and/or other tender service sites and identify opportunities for updating policies and processes over time

(1-12)

- Develop checklist/assessment form for the development of accessible procurement initiatives to ensure all outgoing projects are accessible
- Liaise with provincial government to determine supports for creating more inclusive materials

- A (12 +)

- Provide training to identified groups related to the procurement process for continuing to develop language, common requirements and delivery of tenders

Ensure services provided by Nova Scotia's post- secondary institutions are accessible to persons with disabilities or others who experience barriers to accessibility, including accessible communication, supporting the use of assistive technology, accessible digital content and technologies, and welcoming service animals and support persons

A

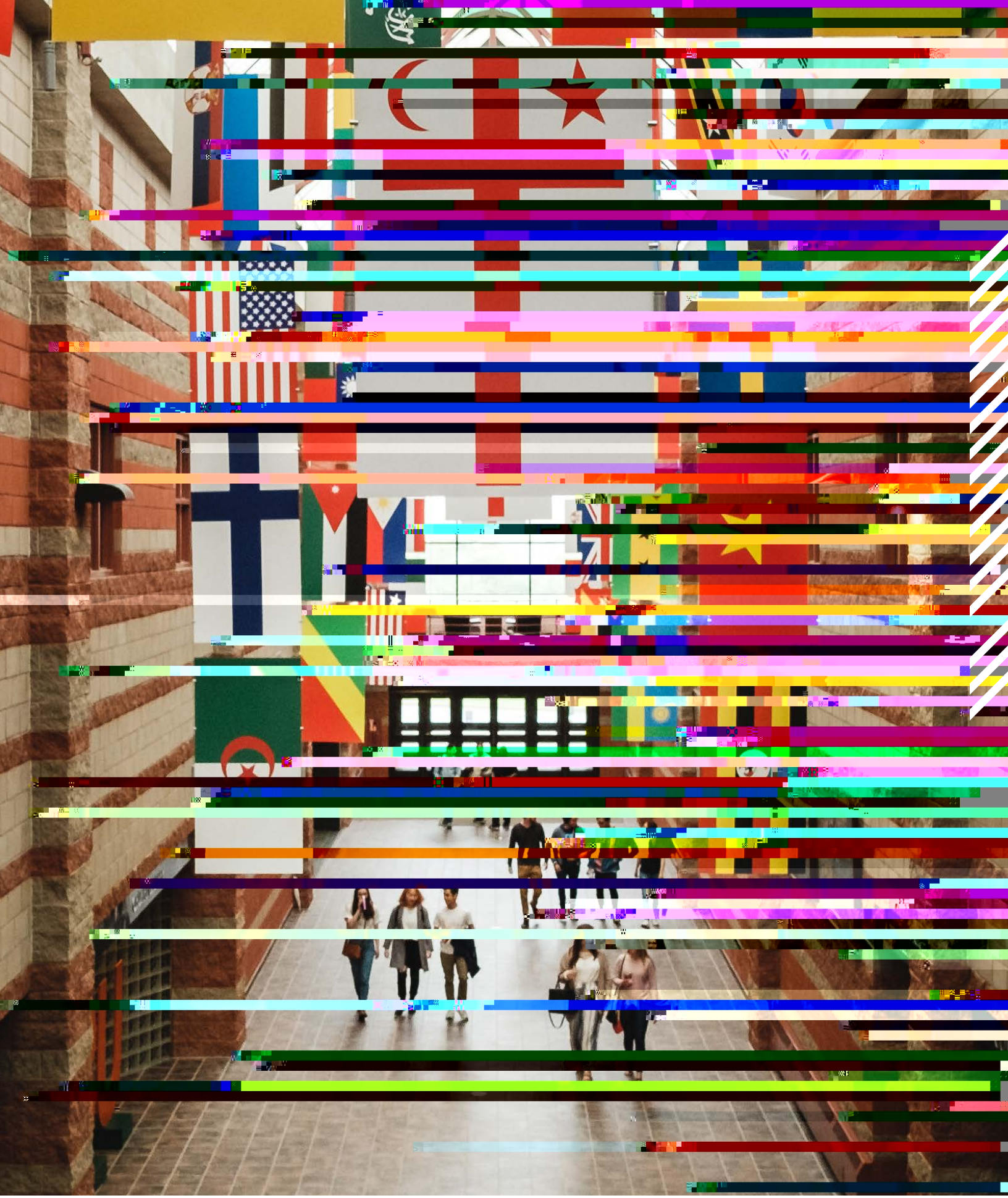
- Review current processes for providing customer service across all departments and prioritize a list of changes based on barriers, communication, assistive technologies, etc.
- Connect with community organizations for education and information on how to implement changes, particularly in managing digital technologies and identify in-house expertise for additional support

(1-12)

- Identify national or international initiatives in development of accessible communication, assistive technology, and working with service animals
- Determine what can be implemented immediately and in the future

- A (12 +)

- Research training options and develop programs that create inclusive language and develop a common language in the university
- Identify opportunities for national assistive technology training and awareness programs for sta and faculty
- Develop relationships with organizations regarding service animals and community support persons



Goal

Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions are accessible and equitable employers, support the careers of employees with disabilities or others who experience barriers to accessibility, and ensure their employees reflect the diversity of Nova Scotians.

What's Going Well

The sta, faculty, and students at CBU are willing and committed to creating an accessible workplace and learning environment. There have already been numerous improvements to accessibility addressed in the recruitment and hiring policies and all job postings encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds. Consulting with the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion, the university was able to identify areas for further improvement internally and are

The Action Plan - Delivery of Goods and Services

Ensure processes, policies and practices facilitate and encourage the recruitment, selection, transition, career growth and advancement of persons with disabilities or others who experience barriers to accessibility.

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(1-12)

- A (12 +)

The Action Plan - Delivery of Goods and Services

Collaborate with local municipalities, the Nova Scotia Community Transportation Network, and community transit service providers to ensure accessible, a□ordable public transportation to and from campuses, including bus stop

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