

NEADS CampusNet Project Activity Report Submitted to the Community Learning Networks Initiative, Office of Learning Technologies (December 2001)

The National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) is a consumer organization, with a mandate to encourage the self-empowerment of post-secondary students with disabilities. To achieve this challenging goal, NEADS takes on many exciting projects all of which provide students with disabilities the tools they need to succeed in their post-secondary studies. The newest of these projects is CampusNet. NEADS is charged with providing an online information clearinghouse for students with disabilities. It is able to fulfill this challenge through its comprehensive Web site (www.neads.ca). The Association's Web site will be the platform for CampusNet.

The goal of CampusNet is to create a uniquely Canadian online collaborative community. It will bring together disability-related campus-based organizations, associations, committees, and groups. The objective is to create a virtual community of learning where information on campus-based issues, projects, and activities that affect students with disabilities can be shared and discussed across the country. In addition to providing a means of communicating between groups, CampusNet will help these groups create their own web page in the community. All of this information will be provided online and free to everyone.

The work on the CampusNet Project has progressed well since the project began on October 1, 2001. The project consultants (Chris Gaulin and Myrtis Fossey), under the direction of Jennison Asuncion, NEADS Web Site Manager, and in consultation with the project advisory committee (Joelle Arvisais, Catherine MacKinnon, Sanjeet Singh, Karl Tower, and Susan Vida) have been working to meet the project objectives and the checkpoints of the project's first phase.

Commencing in October, calls were made to all campus groups listed in the NEADS *Organizations of Students with Disabilities Guidebook*. Subsequently, calls were made to all current Disability Service Providers at Canadian colleges and universities in an attempt to identify new contact persons for the groups. These calls continued well into November and early December. The results and current status of these telephone calls are as follows:

Status (12/15/2001)	Colleges	Universities	Total
Identified Groups - Awaiting Contact Information	7	2	9
Identified Groups - Contact Information Obtained	6	13	19
Confirmed No Groups	18	7	25
Pending	49	25	74
Total Contacted	80	47	127

Concurrently with the initial contact attempts, an elaborate questionnaire was designed for interviewing representatives from student groups. The questionnaire consisted of several demographic questions in order to obtain detailed information about the group/association/committee. Many questions probed into the activities of the organizations, their involvement with employment initiatives, and their technology usage level.

The project consultants to date have interviewed a total of ten contacts. These contacts range in geographic location from as far east as Newfoundland to as far west as British Columbia. Seven of the ten interviewed groups were university-based.

In order for the storyboarding of CampusNet to begin, preliminary conclusions were required. The design and development of the online collaborative community that will comprise CampusNet was based on the following recommendations obtained from our interviewees:

- Provide an e-mail distribution list feature
- Provide a bulletin board system
- Provide a forum in which reports may be posted for public consultation
- Provide a private and confidential area solely for campus groups
- Provide a collection of useful links
- Provide detailed information and ideas for forming and maintaining campus groups
- Develop and maintain a contact list of all existing student groups

In the coming months, a functional prototype of the online community will take form. Incorporating the recommended features will be key to the success of the project and guaranteeing the desired knowledge transfer.

As we dive into phase two of this developmental project, we will be directly meeting the objectives set out in the project proposal. Direct contact with the grassroots level will aid us in developing a community that is both usable and beneficial to student leaders.