



DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER PROGRAM REVIEW RESPONSE

INTRODUCTION

The Disability Resource Center (DRC) program review, conducted as part of the Student Affairs commitment to ongoing assessment was completed by Janice Brown, Director of Services for Students with Disabilities at California State University, Fresno and Mary Shojai, Director of Student Disability Services at San Diego State University on April 2-3, 2012. The DRC is indebted to these program reviewers for their invaluable service and systematic feedback.

The DRC program review report provided a comprehensive evaluation of key areas: the department's mission, programs, and services; organizational structure; resources; assessment and evaluation; University-wide physical and virtual accessibility and compliance; and current practices, initiatives, and objectives in

relation to the Student Affairs Division's strategic plan and values. In their final report, the review team identified program strengths and provided suggestions for improvement, including specific budget recommendations. The following response summarizes and comments on their findings and recommendations, including the department's action plan and initiatives for the post-review period.

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS & DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSES

DRC MISSION, PROGRAMS, AND SERVICES

FINDINGS:

- A. **Program Strengths.** Reviewers note that the DRC is well known and recognized by the campus community for advocating for the rights of students with disabilities to equal access to instruction, the web, and university buildings and grounds. Students are highly satisfied with the DRC's efforts to collaborate and coordinate support services across the institution and its commitment to prioritize student needs on a stretched budget and limited human resources.
- B. **Non-Funded Services.** Program reviewers note two areas in which the DRC has been providing accommodations that instead might be more appropriately fulfilled by another campus entity: (1) accessible and adjustable classroom furniture; and (2) sign-language interpreting and real-time captioning for non-classroom-related activities (e.g., student clubs and organizations).
- C. **Mobility and Transportation Assistance** The campus currently only has one accessible cart available for assistance with transportation services for students with terrain challenges. As with many other campuses, parking is concentrated at the periphery of the campus, with fewer parking options in the campus core. This provides particular challenges for students with mobility (whether temporary or permanent) challenges to access their classes without undue burden.
- D. **Basic Computer Skills Training.** There has been an increase in returning students with disabilities with limited basic computer skills and knowledge of assistive technology. There appear to be limited resources on campus to provide basic computer training.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

A1: As it is the responsibility of the entire university to create and sustain access for individuals with disabilities, the program reviewers recommend that departments and constituencies across the campus provide accommodations as routine needs arise for students, faculty, staff, and community members; for

example, creating accessible documents and web sites, or assisting with a scribe/reader to complete a form.

B1: Reviewers recommend the inclusion of accessible and adjustable tables and chairs as standard components of classroom furniture configurations, rather than reliance on the DRC to place, track, and retain the furniture.

B2: Reviewers recommend the articulation a clear protocol by student clubs and organizations for arranging accommodations for their sponsored activities. Additional financial resources may be identified, such as a reserve fund established by Associated Students, Inc., to provide accommodations/support services for students with disabilities who participate in these non-classroom-related activities.

C1: The campus should purchase an additional cart so that there is a back-up plan if the current cart fails and so that it can be deployed during peak ridership periods. The campus should also discuss resources for providing mobility cart service to staff and faculty, as there are regular requests for DRC for transporting services, which tax DRC's already limited human and fiscal resources.

D1: The organization of a volunteer student-to-student program could assist re-entry students with disabilities in gaining needed computer skills.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:

A1a: The DRC is grateful for the reviewers' positive assessment of our service on campus. The department has worked hard over the years to develop relationships and improve how we are perceived on campus. However, greater effort must be made to increase and improve the outreach to faculty and other departments on how to make their instructional materials more accessible. While modest efforts have been made, the need for this education far exceeds the training provided. To this end, the DRC director will work with the ATI and ACT committees to develop a staffing and training strategy to improve our campus effort.

B1a: The Director of the Disability Resource Center will continue to work with colleagues from Facilities and Academic Affairs to ensure our classrooms are accessible and welcoming to all students. Historically, the DRC Director is consulted when any new facility or renovation project is undertaken. Discussions about the selection and placement of accessible furnishings should occur at this stage of the projects. A greater effort will be made to ensure this practice continues during the transition of departmental management.

B2a: We agree with the recommendation to move to an alternative source of funding for sign-language interpreting and real-time captioning services for students participating in non-classroom campus activities. We believe that a group composed of representatives from the DRC, ASI, and the Office of Student Life & Cultural Centers should convene to further explore the program reviewers' recommendations.

C1a: In response to student feedback, staff input, and the program reviewers' recommendations, the DRC purchased a new golf cart for use beginning in the Fall 2013 term. Nevertheless, this does not adequately address the large and ever-increasing student demand for mobility and transportation assistance, which require staff time in order to drive the cart. We are currently exploring the option that mobility assistance for students, faculty and staff with disabilities be provided through the university's Parking and Transportation Services. Additionally, the old cart will serve as a backup vehicle to meet the ever growing requests for mobility assistance.

C2a: Requests for mobility and transportation assistance by faculty or staff with disabilities will be appropriately redirected to the Office of Diversity and Compliance. While we would like to provide these services, a formal procedure for requesting them and a charge back system should be developed

C3a: We are currently improving our cart utilization policies and developing a cart service route to make sure the provision of this service is more efficient and safe..

D1a: The DRC has begun referring students to the CA Department of Rehabilitation, community centers, and senior centers for free classes or workshops on basic computer skills. We have also begun conversations with the College of the Extended University, to offer such classes to assist all students, with or without disabilities, who lack basic computer proficiency.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

FINDINGS:

- A. **Department Leadership.** The Director of the DRC is personally involved in all aspects of campus collaboration with the DRC. A concern was raised over the sustainability of the DRC program should the Director not be available for any length of time. There is no succession plan in place, and the Director is the sole Management Personnel Plan (MPP) employee within the program.
- B. **Unit 3 Psychologist/Learning Disability Specialist.** The review team was asked to consider the placement of the Unit 3 Psychologist/Learning Disability and Mental Health Specialist within

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) rather than in the DRC. In spite of the strong communication process in place between departments, CAPS counselors feel that the workload of Dr. Ang is overloaded, which limits her availability for consultation.

- C. **Student Assistants.** Student assistant training is conducted “on the job” due to both the nature of operations and budget constraints.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

A1: Formulation of a sustainability plan that eventually includes the addition of a second MPP staff member to provide increased opportunities for outreach to the campus and community along with increased ability to support and coach the DRC staff. It might also make possible the provision of extended hours for test accommodations and cart service.

B1: The program reviewers recommend maintaining within the DRC the placement of a Psychologist/Learning Disability and Mental Health Specialist who reviews learning disability, ADHD, and mental health documentation for service eligibility – rather than functioning primarily as a therapist – as this is consistent with CSU policy with regards to the defined functions and mission of the DRC program. The reviewers also point out that it would be aligned with common practice in most DRC programs across CSU campuses to have a Psychologist and/or Learning Disability Specialist. This configuration prioritizes the provision of disability accommodations and services within the DRC function.

B2: Also recommended is an evaluation of the duties of the Learning Disability and Mental Health Specialist for reassignment to another staff member in order to provide additional support, particularly for initial learning disability screenings and referrals.

C1: Develop simple yet specific training outlines to ensure consistency and effectively communicate issues related to working with students with disabilities.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:

A1a: The DRC Director and staff are in agreement that there should be an Assistant Director to support current department operations and allow for expansion of programs and services. While it is recognized that the hiring of an additional HEERA manager would allow the DRC to expand its operational hours to provide testing accommodations for evening classes, this issue remains unresolved. In lieu of a resolution, further discussion with other campus MPPs is needed.

A2a: In 2010, the Access and Compliance Team (ACT) formed an Evening Testing Services Exploration Subcommittee that examined the demand, cost, and options of evening testing accommodations. This group found that of several options considered, the creation of an on-call proctor pool would be most efficient and cost-effective. Under this plan, proctors would be hired under the Casual Worker classification, which is designed to cover workers who are hired on a part-time, temporary, and intermittent basis. Still, however, this plan would not be viable without the availability of a HEERA manager to be present in the DRC after normal operational hours.

B1a: We concur that the placement of the Unit 3 Psychologist/LD Specialist position should reside within the DRC in order to avoid a potential conflict of interest, as well as to avoid adding to the position's already overloaded job responsibilities. It will be important for both CAPS and DRC psychologists to maintain a clear understanding of their distinct roles and functions, particularly as CAPS continues to fill open counselor positions. While it would be indeed beneficial to provide CAPS counselors with training and knowledge to increase understanding and enhance their work with DRC students, there are ways to achieve this while maintaining the placement of the LD Specialist position within the DRC. Opportunities for clinical consultation with CAPS counselors in the form of in-service trainings can be regularly scheduled, such as when Dr. Ang provided two in-service training seminars to CAPS counselors in February and March 2012. In May 2012 CAPS sponsored a 6-hour continuing education webinar that was attended jointly by both CAPS counselors and the DRC Psychologist/LD Specialist. Through such professional development opportunities, CAPS counselors have improved their clinical screening process to facilitate DRC referrals to off-campus psychoeducational or neuropsychological evaluations of students with learning disabilities and/or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

B2a: There has been general consensus among DRC staff that the work functions of the LD Specialist position require additional support. Prior to 2007, the counseling, administrative, and outreach responsibilities of the position within the DRC required 2.5 FTE psychologists. The process of screening and referring students for clinical evaluations in order to assist with acquiring disability documentation, as well as coordinating on-campus support services for students once diagnoses and limitations have been identified, is a protracted process, and only one aspect of the counseling duties of the LD Specialist. Other essential responsibilities of the position entail providing leadership for the overall case management of the DRC, providing systematic review of disability documentation and conducting student intakes to determine program eligibility and identify accommodations, providing consultation to faculty about students' accommodation needs, conducting in-service training for staff and psychoeducational workshops for students, providing disability-related counseling for students, and serving as the primary DRC liaison for coordination with other campus Student Affairs departments (e.g., the offices of Admissions and Outreach, University Housing Services, Financial Aid, Judicial Affairs, Student Health Services, and Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)).

It is essential to continue the dialogue between CAPS and DRC to explore further collaboration and coordination of clinical services, such as intake and referral screenings, to reduce redundancy and provide additional support to the LD Specialist. An area in which coordination efforts could be improved is that of gathering and sharing important information obtained through each department's intake process. A potential collaboration is to offer CAPS clinical interns a training rotation within the DRC, which would provide not only specialized clinical training and supervision hours for the CAPS trainees, but also much needed support to the DRC LD Specialist. The process of evaluating job descriptions for all DRC staff has been initiated by the Interim Director of the DRC. An initial review of job descriptions indicates that some shifting of responsibilities away from the LD Specialist to other staff is likely. This shift should aid in balancing workloads and improve overall service to students.

C1a: Unit leads within each of the service areas are being charged with developing and improving our student assistant training materials. We are striving for better cross training of student staff and a more consistent message of our work expectations and leading outcomes.

RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

A. DRC Budget. The DRC base budget allocated at the start of an academic year does not cover projected mandated accommodation and service delivery needs. The report acknowledges major funding challenges in the provision of the following accommodations and services: 1) Real-time captioning and sign-language interpreting services for students who are deaf/hard-of-hearing; 2) Alternate media for students with print-related disabilities; 3) Testing accommodations for students with disabilities; and 4) Golf cart service for students with mobility impairments.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

A1: Human Resource Needs. The program reviewers recommend an evaluation of the duties of the Physical and Sensory Support Services Specialist for reassignment to another staff member in keeping with the appropriate classification.

A2: Facility Needs. The program review report recommends expanding campus facilities in order to address cramped quarters for the ARCHES program and the limited test accommodation facilities in the DRC. Additionally, the report recommends modified signage at Building 9 to direct student navigation to the DRC as well as accessible parking and travel paths via the second floor entrance to Building 9.

A3: Technology Needs. A database system to facilitate, track, and monitor DRC and ARCHES services and produce meaningful and timely data and reports with minimal support necessary from the Student Affairs Information & Technology Services (SAITS) staff.

A4: Access and Equity. Direct IT access is recommended for the DRC in order to provide a timely response to students' technology needs, to effectively manage the multiple technical aspects of the department's large network and existing database, and to keep the campus in compliance with legal mandates.

A5: Professional Development Needs. Professional development training, including participation in professional conferences, is recommended to manage changing needs related to Section 504, Section 508, and the ADA Amendments, as well as the increasing populations of students on our campus representing specific disability groups.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:

A1a: Human Resource Needs. The duties of the Physical and Sensory Support Services Specialist, whereas previously inclusive of coordinating, scheduling, and hiring of sign-language interpreters and real-time captionists, have been reassigned to a permanent academic year (10-month) Interpreting and Real Time Captioning Services Coordinator. Accordingly, the Physical and Sensory Support Services Specialist, classified as a Student Service Professional position, has been freed up to provide much needed support to the department's Testing Services area.

A2a: Facility Needs. The department has been in discussions regarding the space needs of the ARCHES Program with appropriate university offices. Most recently we are working to expand the tutoring spaces provided to the SSEP/EOP tutoring program and have them allow ARCHES tutors to share the space when needed.

A3a: Technology Needs. After extensive consultation among department staff and SAITS, the DRC proceeded during Spring 2013 with the purchase of the Student Accommodation Manager (SAM), a web-based database application designed to help postsecondary disability service providers manage student data, disabilities, accommodations, case notes, accommodation notification letters, and data reporting functions.

A4a: Access and Equity. The DRC was successful in discussions with the SAITS department to provide the DRC Director and the DRC Assistive Technology Coordinator full administrative access in order to provide in-house back-up support for minor internal maintenance. Further discussion is needed to discuss any technical support the DRC can expect to receive from central I&IT in support of this new database system.

A5a: Professional Development Needs. With the recent positive changes in the budget, additional resources have been allocated to departments for much needed professional development and training. The campus have invested in webinars and other low cost measure, but a renewed effort will be made to ensure that the staff are provided the opportunity to attend regional and national conferences and training programs to increase their knowledge and update them on the ever changing legal and compliance issues.

UNIVERSITY-WIDE ACCESSIBILITY AND COMPLIANCE

FINDINGS:

A Physical and Virtual Accessibility. The program review found that transportation assistance for students, faculty and staff with mobility-related disabilities was limited and created physical barriers given the topography of the campus. In addition, reviewers noted the lack of consistently accessible work stations and software applications at open computer labs.

B. Accessible Technology Initiative (ATI) Compliance. While the Accessible Technology Initiative (ATI) resides within the Division of Academic Affairs' Information & Instructional Technology (I&IT), which is responsible for the oversight of system-wide information technology programs and services, the application of the ATI does not appear to be reinforced in all information technology areas campus-wide. Program reviewers acknowledged the strong level of collaboration between the DRC and most campus areas to provide accessible student services; however, concerns were raised regarding the University's timely delivery of instructional and test materials in electronic formats. The lack of timely communication from faculty with the campus bookstore to request course textbooks and supplemental materials delays the ability of the DRC to begin the work of providing students the necessary alternate formats.

C. ADA/EO 926 Compliance. As required by Executive Order 926, the California State University's Policy on Disability Support and Accommodations, the campus has worked with its American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance Officer/Coordinator to put in place a standing committee, known as the Access and Compliance Team (ACT), to address discrimination claims.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

A1: Access and Compliance Team (ACT) review of facilities projects during their planning process and prior to finalization of any project plans in order to provide input and guidance regarding usability by persons with disabilities;

A1a: Expansion of campus transportation services as part of the University Transition Plan to identify, renovate, and create accessible parking spaces and paths of travel;

A1b: Full evaluation of accessible workstations and software applications on all open labs on campus to identify required improvements and build an implementation plan;

B1: Review of the implementation of the Assistive Technology Initiative (ATI) across campus.

B1a: Compliance with the federal mandate under the 2008 Higher Education Opportunities Act to disclose on the campus internet course schedule the required and recommended college textbooks and supplemental materials for each course;

B1b: Timely identification of required textbooks and supplemental course materials to allow for alternate format production;

B1c: Increased efficiency of timeline conversion for tests on Blackboard.

C1: Increasing discussion of the needs of DRC students with Student Affairs staff and faculty members by the DRC Director;

C1a: Increasing campus staff resources in order to conduct timely processing of ADA discrimination claims;

C1b: Develop a written policy of application for EO 1045 (Nondiscrimination Policy) to outline the process for resolving discrimination claims for the purpose of informing faculty.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:

A1: The co-chairs of the Access and Compliance Team (ACT) have agreed to make "Facilities Projects and Planning" a standing agenda item as part of their quarterly meetings to ensure that all construction plans have been reviewed and input provided regarding access for persons with disabilities.

A1a: The campus is currently working to improve safe paths of travel on campus and has completed a comprehensive study of all disabled parking spaces as part of their transition planning. Funding has not however been allocated to make all of the necessary changes recommended in that study.

A1b: The newly appointed Interim Director for the Disability Resource Center will meet with Dr. Carol Heins Gonzales to evaluate the accessible workstations and software on campus and develop recommendations.

B1: Meetings have occurred between the DRC staff, Bookstore representatives and the Faculty Development Center to continue to improve our compliance with the Higher Education Opportunities Act. An effort will be

made to work with the Academic Senate to create an educational campaign to increase faculty awareness of this responsibility and improve overall campus compliance.

B1a/b/c: Both the DRC and ACT have and will continue to address the issue of textbook ordering to improve timeliness of alternative format production and materials produced and posted to instructional BlackBoard sites.

C1: In the 2012-2013 academic year, the Associate Vice President for Student Services filled the role of Acting Director of the Disability Resource Center. In this capacity he was given insight into the day to day operational needs and challenges of this unity. He has served as a strong advocate for the department allocating part of his own department's resources to support the efforts of the DRC. His advocacy along with the forethought of the Vice President for Student Affairs has resulted in an additional \$50,000.00 allocation to be put on reserve within the division to meet the unanticipated accommodation needs of students or to bring our offices and services into greater compliance with regard to accessibility issues.

C1a: Carmen Munoz Silva will be made aware of this finding and the DRC will support her efforts to increase resources allocated for the resolution of disability claims.

C1b: While it is clear on the DRC website how a student initiates a grievance with regard to their services or treatment at the DRC, it is less clear how a student proceeds with a claim of discrimination against a faculty or staff member outside of the DRC. To remedy this, the Interim Director of the DRC will meet with Anita Jessup from the Faculty Affairs Office to clarify the process and update the DRC website to reflect these procedures.

SUMMATIVE REMARKS

The Division of Student Affairs and the Disability Resource Center are deeply indebted to the reviewers for their time and thoughtful recommendations. Every effort is being made to move forward on these findings and continue to excel in our service to the students who rely on our department to assist them in achieving their educational and professional goals. This review is part of our on-going commitment to continuous improvement through assessment and review.