

Disability Support Services

Program Improvement Activities FY18-19

Disability Support Services engages in strategic program planning and looks for opportunities to integrate and collaborate with other campus departments. Through peer program review and professional standards research, DSS has identified areas for program improvement. Several opportunities for DSS to improve through integration and planning with other departments were identified and implemented.

Program improvement identified through peer program and professional standards review

A peer program review was conducted by DSS staff in September 2017. Staff reviewed twelve disability services programs at peer and aspirational institutions from around the country. Staff looked at mission statements, staffing structure, student facing technology, and website ease of use. As well, peer reviewed program standards from the [Association on Higher Education and Disability](#) were identified to guide staff discussion in the peer review process.

Staff recognized a need to offer more streamlined, efficient, and confidential services to students. A need to refresh the new student intake processes was also identified. In reviewing the SIU mission statement, staff recognized a need for streamlined referral procedures and strategies for students who need academic and non-academic support. Accessible technology support which is implemented campus-wide to ensure a more accessible student experience was also recognized.

Action Taken:

- **DSS offices moved to Student Health Services:** The location of DSS at Woody Hall was not conducive to quiet test proctoring. A confidential reception space was also not available in the former location. The new space in the Student Health Services building has an accessible and confidential reception space with a quiet test proctoring wing.

Integrating with Student Health Services also offers more seamless referral to helpful programs at Counseling and Psychological Services, Wellness Services, and programming offered at the Student Recreation Center.

The institutional commitment to our partnership with the Illinois Department of Rehabilitation Services was also renewed. This State agency now has a full-time counselor located at SHS and sponsors tuition for many disabled students at SIU.

- **Student Information System purchased:** With DSS program growth, the paper and scanning system in place is no longer sustainable. DSS staff researched other electronic student record systems being used throughout campus. Due to the the critical services offered, such as testing accommodations, a specialized system developed specifically for disability programs was needed. The new system, which has a student-facing user dashboard, has been purchased and is being implimented.

- **Staff development and restructuring:** Staff reviewed the [Association on Higher Education and Disability](#) (AHEAD) Program Standards and Performance Indicators, as well as the Guidance on Documentation Practices. The disability service profession is informed by ever-evolving case law evolving from student complaints to the Office for Civil Rights, causing a critical need for continuing personnel development.

Staff have attended webinars and seminars and a digital reading room was developed. Through training opportunities the staff will become more skilled at conducting the new student interview and will be able to engage in a comprehensive process which could enhance student retention and persistence. As well, the staff at DSS are developing a new student intake protocol to ensure consistency among staff interactions with students. The DSS Student Learning Outcome Assessment Plan assesses student understanding and their use of the knowledge gained from these interactions.

DSS has updated position descriptions for all staff which align with program operational needs and the University mission. A DSS strategic improvement plan has been developed with project teams for key areas within DSS. This will allow staff a process to identify and propose action plans which align with the mission and will improve program operations.

One new staff position was created to meet the demand for new student meetings. The addition of a new Senior Interpreter position allows the Accommodations Manager to focus on growing student needs by shifting interpreter scheduling and oversight duties to that new position. Additional vacant staff positions have also been filled.

- **Center for Learning Support Services collaboration:** Recognizing a need to align with the concepts in the SIU mission statement, DSS has partnered with the Center for Learning Support Services to offer enhanced tutoring and academic coaching services for students with disabilities. DSS students are now eligible for additional tutoring and academic coaching hours as needed. Staff from DSS provide training to the CLSS tutors each year. The training includes specialized tutoring techniques and methods for accommodating diverse learners in the CLSS. As well, a DSS staff member serves on the CLSS Advisory Board.
- **Center for Teaching Excellence collaboration:** During the peer program review, staff recognized that many campuses have a department dedicated to accessible instructional content. The Center for Teaching Excellence now partners with DSS to train faculty in accessible materials and captioning for their courses. Sessions are held to show faculty how to create accessible materials and where to go for help in remediating any existing materials they have which may not be accessible to students with disabilities. CTE now has specialized content on their website, showing faculty how to create and find accessible instructional content. <https://cte.siu.edu/convert-materials/index.php>