

## **Office of Student Disability Services 2009-2010 Blueprint**

**SDS Mission Statement:** The mission of the Office of Student Disability Services is to promote the personal growth and professional development of students with disabilities by facilitating the provision of reasonable accommodations, serving as consultants to students, faculty, and staff, as well as educating the greater Carolina Community.

**SDS Vision Statement:** The Office of Student Disability Services shares responsibility with students and the greater Carolina Community to promote inclusion, provide access, and encourage mutual respect.

The Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS) is the department charged with assuring legal compliance and equal access to education for all students with disabilities at the University of South Carolina Columbia campus. In addition to compliance OSDS also coordinates reasonable and appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities and provide technical assistance and support to faculty and staff who are working with students registered with our office. OSDS is currently serving 580 students, which is a 36% increase over the previous academic year. Involved in this increase is the individual staff time that is required to process and support the increased student numbers. As part of the process to become recognized as a student with a disability, documentation must be submitted which verifies the extent to which the student's education is impacted by the diagnosed disability. Over the past two academic years, OSDS has seen a 41% increase each year in the number of students who became registered with this office.

As a function of disability classification, certain students require more time than others. With this in mind, students identified as having a learning disability make up 53% of the population and require an average of 921 man hours of support over the course of the year. Students identified as having psychiatric disabilities make up 13% of the population and require 156 man hours, which is an increase of 50% from the previous academic year. Students identified as having physical disabilities make up 23% of the population and require 660 man hours, which is an increase of 36% from the previous academic year. Students identified as having audio/visual disabilities make up 7% of the population and require 1,240 man hours, which is an increase of 6% over the previous academic year. It should also be noted that the length of time spent on each student is highly variable with some students requiring more time than others based on the severity of the presenting issue.

*Goal No. 1: Teaching and Learning – Enhance the richness of the student experience in and beyond the classroom so that the teaching and learning environment equals or surpasses that of comprehensive university systems that are deemed peer aspirants.*

### **Division Initiatives / Departmental Goals:**

**The Office of Student Disability Services (SDS) will provide students, faculty, and staff with the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to enhance the overall learning environment as well as the Carolina experience.**

#### **Analysis of Goal Achievement**

While staffing limitations prevented large-scale implementation of the provision of the skills necessary to enhance the learning environment for students with disabilities, specific instances of one-on-one interactions provided case-specific development opportunities for faculty. More specifically, the three COP meetings planned and workshops regarding universal design were not able to be held due primarily to the increase in students seeking services and the resultant staff time required to process and support the increased enrollment. Research on historically difficult classes for students with disabilities is ongoing with results to be reported by the end of AY09-10. Specific activities related to the matching of new students with peer mentors also were a negative impact of reduced staff. However, favorable outcomes were still realized in that a number of students were able to self-identify other students to provide the needed support.

SDS perceives this goal as integral to the full-inclusion of students with disabilities and will determine appropriate steps to implement these initiatives in the upcoming year. In doing so, SDS will begin engaging ACE, the Student Success Center, and Campus Life in making students with disabilities more visible in the Carolina Community.

- A. Provide and/or support essential programs, services, and educational activities
  - a. SDS will continue to involve selected faculty whose students require the use of assistive technology in its Community of Practice (COP).
  - b. SDS will conduct workshops on inclusion and universal design in instruction.
- B. Engage students in educationally purposeful activities.
  - a. SDS will invite student organization leaders to actively recruit students with disabilities.
- C. Engage and collaborate with faculty on educationally purposeful activities.
  - a. SDS will contact the Deans and Department Chairs of programs with historically difficult classes for students with disabilities. SDS staff will then offer to attend the faculty meetings of these departments to discuss the creation of the appropriate environment for student success.
- D. Provide facilities, programs and services that meet the needs and expectations of students and other constituents.
  - a. SDS will identify successful upperclassmen in an effort to engage them in peer mentoring for newly registered freshmen.
- E. Improve policies, procedures, and practices to assure safety and security of students and demonstrate compliance with federal, state and other regulatory requirements

**KPI's:**

1.A.a. > COP will have three meetings over the course of the semester. Faculty attendance will be monitored with relevant feedback incorporated into future meetings as well as a faculty newsletter.  
\* Staffing limitations coupled with increased student population prevented the implementation and measurement of this objective. Due to the increase, information and assistance was provided to faculty by the Assistive Technology staff on a case-by-case or individual basis.

\* AT Assistant has spent a sum total of 130 hours captioning 34 videos for a student enrolled in the TSTM program in the Fall semester alone.

1.A.b. > Two workshops will be offered over the course of each semester. Attendees will be surveyed to gauge overall effectiveness.

\* Staffing limitations and increased student population prevented the implementation and measurement of this objective.

1.B.a. > Student involvement in campus organizations will increase and have a positive impact on student satisfaction and perception of campus accessibility. Satisfaction will be gauged with a survey conducted at the end of the academic year.

\* Survey will be administered at the end of AY09-10.

\* While a limited number of students responded, they indicated participation in a wide range of activities to include: Gamma Phi Beta, SC Student Legislature, Delta Alpha Pi, Garnet & Black Magazine, Pi Mu Epsilon, USC College Republicans, National Society of Collegiate Scholars, Discovery Research Program, TRIO, and the Club Management Association of America.

\* In addition to participation, our students have also indicated occupying leadership roles in the organizations in which they participate.

\* All of the students who responded to the survey were students whose disabilities were not physically limiting. Conversely, students who have disabilities which are physically limiting have expressed to staff members that their participation is limited due to accessibility-related concerns that create barriers to inclusion.

1.C.a. > Historically difficult classes for students with disabilities will be identified. Six Deans and Department Chairs will be contacted each semester with at least two faculty meetings being attended.

\* Met with Institutional Assessment to determine appropriate method of assessing historically difficult classes. End of year transcript analysis will yield data on classes in which students registered with SDS did not perform satisfactorily.

\* An independent assessment to be completed by HESA students will yield performance data based on college/major to determine performance relative to general campus population.

\* Due to limitations in data collection across departments, the HESA students were limited in their level of analysis. The students were able to report the following from the random sample of transcripts provided: average GPA 3.02, average time to degree 10 semesters, 14.1% of students took a reduced course load, 40.9% of students made an Honors list, 18.3% of students withdrew from at least one class.

\* Of particular note was the average GPA of students enrolled in the Business School which was found to be below the GPA required to continue in that program. Considering that progress in the Business School is contingent upon success in classes such as Economics, Statistics, and Accounting, SDS is now aware that a closer relationship with the Business School is necessary to ensure academic success.

\* Because of time constraints, specific classes in which students with disabilities are unsuccessful were not identified in this analysis.

1.D.a > Student satisfaction, based on survey and anecdotal comments, as well as participation in campus-wide activities will increase as a result of the mentoring relationship.

\* Peer mentoring occurred on a case-by-case basis. Students self-identified and selected peers with whom they could best work. Anecdotal information collected from students indicated a positive result of the interaction.

*Goal No. 2: Quality of Life – Create a rich and rewarding learning and working environment where civility, ethics, and collaboration create an inclusive culture of fairness and respect, facilitating for all Carolinians the highest levels of intellectual and personal achievement. Hire, retain and advance highly qualified staff and provide professional development resources and opportunities. Create supportive student-centered environment.*

## **Division Initiatives / Departmental Goals:**

**The Office of Student Disability Services (SDS) will make a concerted effort to improve the quality of life for the students who are registered with our office as well as all Carolinians who engage with the office.**

### **Analysis of Goal Achievement**

University staff from: the Visitor's Center, Institutional Assessment and Compliance, and the USC Police Department have directly engaged our office by invitation in an effort to begin a conversation on how to fully collaborate in the interest of students with disabilities. In addition to these offices Dennis Pruitt and Gene Luna have also been guests of the office in order to further the conversation of inclusion of students with disabilities. The faculty from the College of Social Work and the School of Nursing have requested staff from our office be present at faculty meetings in which disability-specific knowledge was sought. Initial feedback from our encounters with faculty and staff has been favorable with the intended result of these individuals and offices becoming more aware of how they can impact the educational experience of students with disabilities.

Engagement will continue into the future as SDS seeks to expand the knowledge of the University at-large. Surveys will be distributed at the conclusion of AY09-10 to assess what could further be done to raise awareness of students with disabilities.

- A. Increase/improve students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes about ethical issues.
- B. Increase/improve knowledge, skills and attitudes about diversity, among students, faculty and staff.

C. Improve university policies, procedures, and communications affecting students' experiences.

- a. SDS will continue to invite selected faculty and staff, on a monthly basis, to its staff meetings in an effort to: promote collaboration on issues of inclusion and ensuring the success of students with disabilities.
- b. SDS will conduct quantitative and qualitative analysis of demographic statistics for students with disabilities who are currently registered in preparation for publication regarding implications.

**KPI's –**

2.C.a. > The number of faculty members and staff who are knowledgeable and comfortable with providing inclusive environments for students with disabilities will increase. Student perception of need fulfillment by faculty and staff will also increase. Student satisfaction will be gauged with a survey conducted at the end of the academic year.

\* Staff from OSDS met with faculty from College of Social Work and School Nursing to discuss student matriculation and performance.

\* Faculty from the College of Social Work requested an informational meeting to discuss appropriate accommodations for students enrolled in their programs. Eight faculty members attended the meeting and topics including physical accessibility of classrooms, use of assistive technology in the social work lab, and student responsibility in requesting accommodations. Faculty response after the meeting was very positive with faculty stating they had a better understanding of the role of OSDS in providing accommodations and there has been an increase in communication between faculty and OSDS staff.

\* Sixteen faculty members from the School of Nursing met with OSDS staff to discuss specific information pertaining to: test proctoring, provision of accommodations, and registration eligibility for nursing students. Faculty attending this meeting stated they received a great deal of in-depth information on working with students who have disabilities.

\* Coordination of accommodations for visiting students and/or family members with disabilities was the main outcome of our interaction with the Visitors Center. As the Visitors Center is more aware of what provisions are necessary to accommodate a wide-range of individuals with disabilities.

\* As a result of our meetings with Institutional Assessment and Compliance staff, problems with the collection of data from IMS were identified. Additional meetings were held with UTS and the Registrar's Office to resolve data collection issues. Although progress has been made, issues with the functionality of IMS still present a barrier to accurate data collection.

\* Meeting with the USC Police Department yielded the identification of specific training required for OSDS and an increase in awareness for USCPD along with contingency planning for emergency situations involving students with disabilities.

\* A second meeting with the College of Social Work was held to determine the accessibility and use of the Alumni House for class and faculty/student interaction. As a result of this meeting the faculty and Dean are aware of changes they can make such as: rearranging furniture, reassigning rooms, and strategic scheduling of appointment locations to offset but not correct accessibility issues. Facilities management is working with the Dean and faculty to install automatic door openers in the rear of the building, up-fit restrooms, removing carpeting, and updating kitchen facilities.

\* Staff from Student Disability Services conducted 114 one-on-one consultations with faculty by phone or in person, which resulted in positive student outcomes, increased faculty knowledge of policies and procedures, and enhanced awareness of needs of students with hidden disabilities.

\* Surveys will be administered to faculty and students at the end of AY09-10.

\* Faculty were not surveyed this year.

\* Results from the student survey revealed the following:

\* 78% of respondents used early registration with 100% indicating that it was moderately to extremely effective (*"I was able to register for smaller classes. It also reduced anxiety and forced me to plan out my schedule."* *"It is wonderful, I appreciate disability services providing this so much."* *"Critical to me so that I can arrange classes..."*)

\* More than 84% of students used the office on a monthly basis with some students reporting nine or more visits. In AY08-09 a 47% increase in telephone communication was noted, a 596% increase in walk-in traffic was recorded, and 680% increase in email interaction was documented over the previous year. AY09-10 saw a 41% decrease in telephone communication, a 18% increase in walk-in traffic, and a 76% increase in email communication.

\* Of the accommodations provided the most frequently used was test proctoring with over 55% of respondents indicating their use of this accommodation with 100% reporting its effectiveness and 55%

stating it's extremely effective. AY08-09 saw a 74% increase in usage over the previous year with 307 total tests administered. AY09-10 saw a 157% increase over the year before with 790 total tests administered. (*"I would not be as successful as I have been without the opportunity to take my tests away from all the distractions."* *"It was nice to sit in another place besides the class room so I wouldn't be stressed out."*)

\* The second most frequently used accommodation was that of note takers in classes. Of the 26% of students who indicated they used this accommodation, 87% found it to be at least slightly effective. The lack of funds available to pay note takers has reduced its effectiveness as well as the availability of students to cover classes which has reduced the level of legal compliance. (*"Hard to find them once the pay was cut."* *"I am signed up for note-takers each semester, and yet more and more it seems like an exercise in futility. This is because I rarely get a student who is willing to do this formally. I recently became aware that note-takers are being solicited on a voluntary basis, and unless I'm mistaken, this has not always been the case. In my opinion, this change in policy is a mistake. I am aware that every department has budgetary concerns, but this is not the way to scale back. If you take away the monetary stipend, then you are forced to depend on the kindness of strangers. In my experience, this strategy is not very effective. A small monetary stipend however, insures that the note taker gets something for his/her time, and therefore is more likely to volunteer At least, that is my opinion."*) Additionally, faculty have stated that they have difficulty recruiting note takers due to the lack of funds available to pay them.

\* Since its opening in the Fall of 2008, usage of the Assistive Technology Lab has increased with students indicating that it's a very useful component of the office. AY08-09 saw 163 student visits with AY09-10 seeing 398 visits. In addition to being a resource for students, it is also where the conversion of textbooks and the provision of alternative media takes place.

2.C.b. > The demographic information of students registered during the 2008-2009 academic year will be gathered and compared with the demographic make-up of USC-Columbia. Trends will then be analyzed for use in program planning, determining accessibility, and increasing program diversity.

\* Data collection in progress. Currently there are 580 students registered with SDS. The number of newly registered students, as compared with this same time last year, represents a 37% increase with estimates to surpass the increase realized in AY08-09. Of the currently registered students 18% represent ethnic minorities.

\* The ethnicity indicator provided through IMS has been removed and we are therefore unable to collect and report information pertaining to ethnic minorities.

\* This is an ongoing goal and will continue in the upcoming year.

*Goal No. 3: Research, Scholarship and Creative Achievement - Contribute to the discovery, application, and dissemination of knowledge and excellence in creative achievement, particularly regarding the scholarship of teaching and learning. Improve delivery of programs and services, and increase student success and satisfaction, guided by research and assessment results.*

## **Division Initiatives / Departmental Goals:**

**The Office of Student Disability Services (SDS) will commit itself to the dissemination of knowledge relevant to increasing overall accessibility and diversity.**

### **Analysis of Goal Achievement**

Student Disability Services continues to work collaboratively with the registrar's office and institutional assessment and compliance to accurately and effectively manage information on IMS regarding students with disabilities while maintaining students' rights to privacy and confidentiality. While progress has been made in achieving this goal, limitations of the current IMS system make it difficult to obtain all the necessary information through IMS. Effective strategies for working with IMS have been identified and the SDS staff is analyzing initial data and comparing data to admissions data at this time to determine if students registered with SDS are representative of the university student body.

Early data analysis revealed approximately 50% fewer students with disabilities registered at USC than anticipated based on national data, other SEC institutions and SDS selected peer institutions. Based on the results of the current data analysis, SDS will provide targeted information regarding documentation, registration, and services and accommodations provided by our office to any groups that are under-represented in our current student population.

- A. Demonstrate effective planning, evaluation/assessment, and use of results for innovative improvement.
  - a. SDS will conduct quantitative and qualitative analysis of demographic statistics for students with disabilities who are currently registered in preparation for publication regarding implications.
  
- B. Provide professional development and education opportunities for the campus, state, national and international communities to promote student learning and transitions into and through higher education.

### **KPI's**

3.A.a. > The demographic information of students registered during the 2008-2009 academic year will be gathered and compared with the demographic make-up of USC-Columbia. Trends will then be analyzed for use in program planning, determining accessibility, and increasing program diversity.

\* Data collection in progress.

\* The ethnicity indicator provided through IMS has been removed and we are therefore unable to collect and report information pertaining to ethnic minorities

*Goal No. 4: Service Excellence – Demonstrate commitment to engagement of the expertise and capabilities of faculty, staff and students with state, national and global communities to advance educational attainment at all levels, guide economic development and promote quality of life.*

### **Division Initiatives / Departmental Goals:**

**The Office of Student Disability Services (SDS) will provide the opportunities critical to improving the delivery of services to students who have disabilities.**

#### **Analysis of Goal Achievement**

See goal 2.

- A. Provide professional development and education opportunities for the campus, state, national and international communities to promote student learning and transitions into and through higher education.
  - a. SDS will contact the Deans and Department Chairs of programs with historically difficult classes for students with disabilities. SDS staff will then offer to attend the faculty meetings of these departments to discuss the creation of the appropriate environment for student success.
  
- B. Develop and disseminate high-quality publications, professional development events, and resources on student transition, learning, and success to both internal and external constituents.
  
- C. Provide opportunities to collaborate with other entities and institutions of higher education to learn about services, products, and programs that assist higher educators in meeting the needs of students.

## **KPI's**

4.A.a. > Historically difficult classes for students with disabilities will be identified. Six Deans and Department Chairs will be contacted each semester with at least two faculty meetings being attended.

\* Data collection in process.

\* Because of time constraints, specific classes in which students with disabilities are unsuccessful were not identified in this analysis.

*Goal No. 5: Recognition and Visibility – Showcase and publicize accomplishments of students, faculty, staff and alumni who are recognized for excellence and leadership.*

## **Division Initiatives / Departmental Goals:**

**The Office of Student Disability Services (SDS) will increase its visibility on campus, among its peer aspirants, as well as in the community it serves.**

### **Analysis of Goal Achievement**

Students with disabilities have few role models that they can turn to for advice or encouragement as a student or future employee. A list of 15 current and former successful students has been compiled along with a list of questions to ask each student. These individuals will be contacted during the month of April and a web page will be created where one individual will be focused on each month. Beyond basic demographic information, major, and current employment or status, students will be asked about qualities they believe are important for successful students, which accommodations were most useful, advice for current students on being a successful student.

This activity has taken longer than planned because time and energy of staff have been focused on compliance for students who are currently registered and new students and parents seeking information in preparation for fall.

- A. Facilitate staff development toward campus and national expertise.
- B. Improve the skill level of operations and support staff.
- C. Increase the retention of staff members in the division.
- D. **Acknowledge excellence and best practices.**
  - a. SDS will identify successful current and former students in an effort to highlight the characteristics which contributed to their success as well as to provide role models to currently enrolled students.

## **KPI's**

5.D.a. > Twelve students will be identified with one highlighted monthly. Highlights will be promoted division-wide and to all visitors of the office's website.

\* Under construction.

\* Twelve students have been identified and are in the process of being interviewed.