

University of Wisconsin Stevens Point
Office of Disability Services
May 21, 2009
Assessment Written Report for Spring 2009

The Disability Services (DS) Mission is to ensure that qualified students with disabilities are provided equal access and accommodations appropriate to their disability in all UWSP programs and academic pursuits (Inherent in the mission statement is the commitment to abide not only to the letter but the spirit of the law; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act-1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act-1990).

Program goals of the Office of Disability Services include:

- To inform students with disabilities that accommodations and/or academic adjustments are available as appropriate to their disabling condition;
- To collect essential documentation from students with disabilities to determine the appropriate accommodations that will allow equal access in the most integrated setting;
- To inform students with disabilities of their rights under the law as well as promote self advocacy;
- To sensitize and inform the staff and faculty about the law as well as disability related issues;
- To provide not only accommodations but to address the psycho-social, advising and career needs of students with disabilities (Goals from UWSP *Disability & Accommodations Handbook*).

Currently, the DS staff consists of a full-time coordinator, a 90% program associate and 25% academic advisor on loan from another program. Space for DS includes the coordinator's office, one testing room, a shared testing room and a shared reception area.

This staff and program provided services in 2007-08 to 347 students as well as having met with 51 additional prospective students that did not qualify for services. Student numbers served by DS have increased over the years (see appendix D). Significant increases are projected for 2008 through 2010.

In 2007-08, DS spent \$15,152 on test proctors, \$51,944 for sign-language interpreters, and \$8,521 for student support staff responsible for scheduling test accommodations. Sign language interpreting expenses vary each year depending on the number of students needing the service. For example in 2005-06 the University spent \$156,092 for sign-language interpreting for five students. The Office operations budget has been \$5,000 annually for many years. In recent years, the cost for operating the DS office has tripled that amount annually.

The DS office staff prides itself in providing quality services for students by developing equal access opportunities to their education, and in making appropriate referrals to many other service programs on campus to help maximize success for students with disabilities.

Intended Outcomes

Based on the premise of this mission, the goals set forth by the DS, and the assessment results from 2007-08, the following program and service related intended outcomes were identified as important factors needing to be addressed.

1. Students with disabilities, faculty and staff will have improved access to information about DS, its program, services and policies/procedures
2. Students satisfaction will increase as it relates to improved understanding about test accommodation procedures and service
3. The DS program will improve test-taking management, improve standards of testing space, and increase the amount of adequate test-taking space needed to meet the growing demand for proctored exams

Current Experiences, Programs, Services or Interventions

The information below corresponds to the above intended outcomes (by number).

1. A new DS website was to be completed; the DS faculty/staff manual was to be revised; a student manual was to be completed; outreach opportunities created
2. DS staff was to provide training to students with disabilities on test accommodation procedures; to provide improved training of test proctors; and to revise the online test accommodation request form
3. DS staff was to create better methods of scheduling and managing increased test accommodation requests; to evaluate test taking space to assure quality standards; and seek additional testing space.

Assessment Methods

The following assessment tools from the *DS Assessment Report for 2007-08* were used to assess the Disability Services program and services (see appendixes B, C, and D for description and data).

- Student Satisfaction Survey:
An annual questionnaire surveying student satisfaction provided measurable information relative to the stated outcomes; and longitudinal comparisons over a four-year period contributed to assessment validity
- Faculty Satisfaction Survey:
A questionnaire surveying faculty satisfaction of test accommodation services

provided information relative to stated outcomes

- Program Data Collection:
Program data from the DS computer data system and information tracking Systems provided valuable information in assessing outcomes. Also, longitudinal comparisons over a four-year period helped to make assessment results more valid

There were several other assessment tools and resources utilized in the 2007-08 assessment process that are not referenced in this report or used to support the intended outcomes. A “DS Assessment Flowchart” (see appendix E) provides a comprehensive picture of all assessment input.

Results

The following results are taken from the *DS Assessment Report for 2007-08* as they relate to the intended outcomes stated in this report (by number). These results were initially reported to the Office of Student Affairs. The results revealed the following:

- 1.) The *student satisfaction survey* identified some lack of familiarity with accommodations available to them, indicating a need for improved access to information about DS services.

Question: Rating student’s familiarity with accommodations available to them: 68% very familiar; 28% familiar; 4% somewhat familiar; 0% not familiar; 0% no opinion (very familiar in 06-07 55%, 05-06 42%, 04-05 24%; somewhat familiar in 06-07 42%, 05-06 49%, 04-05 41%). This data reveals some improvement over time relative to familiarity of services (Appendix B). Higher ratings of “very familiar” are expected.

- 2.) The *student satisfaction survey* identified a need for improvements in test taking accommodation procedures by students using this accommodation and student test proctors.

Question: Rating the degree of satisfaction of DS test taking procedures by students using test taking arrangements: 65% very satisfied; 22% satisfied; 2% somewhat satisfied; 0% not satisfied; 11% no opinion (very satisfied in 06-07 43%, 05-06 45%, 04-05 15%; satisfied in 06-07 40%, 05-06 45%, 04-05 15%). This data shows some improvement of satisfaction over time (Appendix B). Higher ratings of “very satisfied” are expected.

The *faculty satisfaction survey* revealed the following assessment results.

Question: The approach used by most students to communicate test accommodation needs to them (to faculty): 67% very satisfactory; 7% somewhat satisfactory; 19% satisfactory; 7% not satisfactory (Appendix C). Higher

satisfaction ratings are expected.

Question: (Faculty) interaction with student test proctors: 70% very satisfactory; 11% somewhat satisfactory; 7.5% satisfactory; 4% not satisfactory; 7.5% no response (Appendix C). Higher satisfaction ratings are expected.

Relevant faculty comments included, “The student proctors I have dealt with seem ill-prepared;” “Sometimes, there has been miscommunication on when and where to pick up tests;” “It was never clear whether or not the DS staff had access to necessary support materials (e.g. blue books, scantrons, etc);” “Is it the policy of your office that, if we are willing to do this, that we can make the accommodations ourselves? It has been unclear to me if this is the case” (Appendix C). It appears there is a need for improving DS communications between students, proctors and faculty.

- 3.) The following results support the need for improved test management, test site improvement and increased test site locations.

DS Program Data shows that in 2004-05 through 2006-07 an average of about 800 exams were proctored annually. In 2007-08, 1,278 tests were proctored. Recent data shows that in the fall semester of 2008, about 1,100 exams were proctored. Significant increases in proctored tests are evident (Appendix D).

Comments from the *student satisfaction survey* included, “a series of small testing rooms in the DS center would cut down on the number of proctors needed;” “It would be nice if it was the same (test) room every time; “a set room for testing so it is guaranteed quiet” (Appendix B).

Implications for practice

As a result of the aforementioned assessment information, there is an apparent need for program and service changes. In reviewing the intended outcomes, the implications for programmatic practices segment of this report identifies both the changes that have been accomplished and changes that need to be considered. The information below corresponds to the above outcomes, experiences, methods of assessment and results (by number).

1. A new DS website was completed. Students, faculty and staff now have improved access to program and services information. Go online to view the new website at <http://www.uwsp.edu/special/disability/>. The DS faculty/staff manual was revised as planned, providing current DS program information to faculty and staff. A student manual was not completed, but is in progress. DS information tables were set up and manned for the Freshman Orientation, New Faculty Information Fair, and Residential Living Resource Fair.

Future practices should include annual monitoring of the DS website to assure updated information is available to students, faculty, staff and the public. The DS faculty/staff manual should be reviewed every two years for changes. And completion of a student policy and procedure manual should be completed and in place within the next academic year. It too should be reviewed every two years.

2. Students were provided one-on-one instruction and a procedure page on test accommodation procedures. Student test proctors were provided a formal training seminar and proctor-folders containing test information and materials. The online test accommodation form was revised allowing one form per course rather than one form per test as had been used in the past.

Future practices should include ongoing one-on-one instruction regarding test taking procedures and provision of a procedure page to new students. Test proctor training should take place annually for both new and former proctors.

3. DS improved the management system to account for the increased number of proctored test requests by adding two new part-time student office assistants (for a total of three student workers to assist the program associate in scheduling exams). Students with disabilities and student proctors were asked to report inappropriate testing sites, and an informal evaluation of several locations was made. Some changes in test sites followed. Test sites options in additional facilities across campus were identified to meet the increasing test demands, including the Library, Delzell Hall and the Student Services Center. In 2009, Nelson Hall space was utilized for the first time.

Future practices should include seeking a permanent testing center as part of the DS office that would include about 15 rooms specified for test-taking. These testing rooms should be designed with optimal standards in place, such as closed circuit cameras for monitoring some tests, computers with text-to-voice options for test takers needing computer use, appropriate space arrangement, comfortable seating, and a distraction free setting as monitored by DS staff.

Conclusions and Future Considerations

Student assessment data shows that the numbers of students served by DS continue to increase annually (see Appendix D), and prediction for the next reporting period is that numbers of students with disabilities served by DS will significantly increase again. Comparison data supports that today there is a greater demand for disability services than five years ago. And the increase in the number of students served impacts directly on the number of accommodation service requests, especially proctored testing services (the assessment data supports significant increases in test accommodations over time; see Appendix D).

Consequently DS program and services are changing to help meet the demands of growth. In response to this assessment, great strides in 2008-09 have been made, such as those identified by the three intended outcomes stated in this report.

But also, other strides have been made in response to a need for change, such as: collaborating with the Assistive Technology Program in creating an orientation and retention program for new students with disabilities called “Leading Edge;” creating a university Disability Advisory Council to the chancellor involving annual campus accessibility assessments and now planning for a month long disability awareness campaign for fall 2009; promoting inclusivity by representing disabilities on the Equity and Affirmative Action Committee to the chancellor; extending program outreach to increasing numbers of veteran students through the Veteran’s Affairs Office and participating in a new UWSP Veteran’s Affairs Council; and responding to student disability documentation needs by collaborating with the Counseling Center in providing learning disability assessments on campus. All of these are in response to student program and service needs as found through our assessment practices.

But as our implications for practice point out, there continues to be room for more program change and program growth. For example, it seems apparent that staff, space and budget all need to increase in size and number along with the increased numbers of students served and increased service demands. A specific example is that future considerations will need to be given to added space for DS operations, one that would include multiple testing rooms. A long-range goal could include creating a Disability Services Center, rather than having a Disability Services Office.

A final note is that ongoing assessment of program needs will continue to help to identify other specific outcomes that should be made in order to meet the demands of growth and change within our disability services unit each year. Although this reporting system is in place every two years, DS will continue to collect much of its assessment data annually in order to help make comparisons of change over time, and to contribute to identifying needed program and service modifications and changes annually.

DS staff have input in discussions relative to the assessment results and in making program and service changes. Other UWSP program and department staff involved in the assessment process, such as the Disability Advisory Council, A-Team, the student organization ABLE, and various campus referral sources (see Appendix E), will continue to provide input through the assessment process. Together, all involved can help make a difference in assessing and making changes that will contribute to providing ongoing quality services to our students with disabilities.

***Submitted by Jim Joque
Disability Services Coordinator and Assessment Coordinator***

