

Peer Review Team Report:
Disabled Student Services

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After reviewing the Disabled Student Services (DSS) self study document, the peer review team interviewed employees of DSS, including the dean, faculty and staff. The employees generally indicated that there was full-participation, though varying degrees, in writing the self study report. All employees believed the self study report to be thorough, accurate and balanced with very little, if any, information left out. The general consensus was that DSS is a comprehensive program and is successfully serving the needs of many students; however, the program needs to continue to grow with the student population. Future staffing, access to equipment and the availability of funding seemed to be the primary concerns.

Area 1. Curriculum

Findings:

Though DSS does not directly offer any curriculum, its involvement with faculty teaching PE 101, as well as the Learning Center, and any other faculty who interact with student with disabilities in their classes is significant. The self study and interviews indicated that DSS has developed a positive working relationship with the other programs in Student Services. Additionally, the Program Mission Statement and Student Learning Outcomes are consistent with and support the college's ILOs as well as the Educational Master Plan.

Recommendations:

There are no recommendations for Area 1.

Area 2. Student Support and Development

Findings:

DSS provides adequate support and information to the students that they serve. Information to the general population is available and students are encouraged to apply for services. Data provided in the self study report indicates that DSS serves a diverse student population, and notably a growing population. The DSS employees themselves are a diverse group and make efforts to embrace such diversity by modeling behavior of acceptance and making students feel welcomed. While DSS seems to be currently meeting the needs of the students, the program will need to continue to grow with the student body, and particularly at the Palmdale campus. While DSS lacks physical presence at the Palmdale campus, the DSS staff has

worked hard to accommodate students at the location with cooperation from ITS, and the faculty and staff present in Palmdale to create solutions.

Recommendations:

- Continue striving to provide workable solutions for students at the Palmdale campus and work toward increasing the physical presence of DSS there to meet the students' needs.
- Make SLOs, assessments and surveys an ongoing process to help evaluate and improve the program to ensure that students' needs are being met continually.

Area 3. Program and Student Learning Outcomes

Findings:

DSS has specific PLOs and SLOs that are being assessed. The DSS staff utilized its Mission Statement in developing their SLOs and identified two important outcomes for DSS students:

1. Students should be able to describe their disability and how it affects them in an educational setting
2. Student should understand the need for the services/accommodations that were recommended to them in order to be successful students

DSS staff then developed a Disability Awareness Checklist that was used to assess the degree to which DSS students understood their disability and the accommodations that were recommended. Data indicates that students seem to understand what their disability is, and to a lesser degree, how their resulting limitations affect them in an educational setting. However, a notable portion (38%) of students surveyed were not fully aware of all the possible support services/accommodations that were available to them. DSS also conducted student and faculty surveys over the past four years, enabling them to gather information to be utilized in improving services to students. Data from the survey indicates that students have been satisfied with their overall experience with DSS. The survey offers a lot of positive feedback, but also highlights a few areas where improvements can be made.

Recommendations:

- DSS faculty and staff should strive to ensure that students fully understand the support services and accommodations available to them based on their needs.
- DSS should continue use the results from the survey as a guide in improving services to students as outlined in the self study report.

Area 4. Personnel and Support Services

Findings:

Though DSS has benefited from the addition of a full-time Counselor who is trained to complete Student Education Plans, the self study report and interviews indicate that the program still has additional staffing needs, as identified on page 19 of the self study report. DSS struggles to serve approximately 900 students each academic year, and as the workload continues to grow, additional faculty, staff and clerical support are needed. DSS believes that more could be accomplished in the area of student interventions and follow up with additional staff, especially Counselors, Educational Advisors and Learning Disability Specialist. The need for staffing at the Palmdale campus will also need to be addressed in the near future. The self study report includes recommendations of DSS regarding faculty and staffing for the next 10 years, in chronological order, to address the growing number of students needing services. In an interview, one DSS employee commented that DSS at AVC is understaffed in comparison to other California Community College DSS offices of the same size. Funding is a major concern that will impact the ability of DSS to hire employees as outlined in the self study report.

Recommendations:

- Hire additional faculty and staff as outlined in self study report (as funding allows).
- Plan for staffing needs at Palmdale campus.

Area 5. Facilities, Equipment, and Technology

Findings:

DSS and the students it serves are generally very pleased with the new facility, T100 modular. The move to this new facility meets the needs of DSS as stated in the Educational Master Plan. According to DSS employees interviewed, a few physical limitations exist with the current ramp configuration, proximity of the DSS office to the parking lot, wheelchair access, and the need for an electric door. The director has requested that Facilities place a priority on completion of these details for the T100 modular. The demand for DSS services is growing rapidly. As a result, additional equipment is needed. Technology plays a major role in assisting disabled students in higher education. Appropriate equipment, hardware and software are vital to serving the students best, and the self study report suggests that the college should regularly include such items in its budget. During interviews, DSS employees specifically noted the following needs:

1. Accessible computer in the lobby of the DSS office
2. Additional Korzwell 3000 language devices (walking dictionaries)
3. Additional books on tape or CD
4. Additional portable players available for student check-out
5. Additional CCTV's available in the Library or IMC

Additionally, one employee noted that the self study report does not mention that there is DSS equipment housed in the Library that is available for students to use. Overall, DSS is thrilled to be in its new facility, but staying current with technology and having equipment available for a growing number of students will be ongoing needs.

Recommendations:

- Provide an allowance in the general budget for access technology needed on computers throughout the campus.
- Place an accessible computer in the DSS lobby for student use.
- Plan for equipment and facilities at the Palmdale campus.

Area 6. Fiscal Support

Findings:

At the time the self study report was written, it was stated that DSS is providing the best possible services at the current level of funding, however that level of funding would not be adequate to meet the needs of the growing student population. It will be necessary to hire faculty and staff and purchase additional technology and equipment to prevent the quality of service to students from diminishing. In an interview with a DSS employee, it was noted that “current budgetary restraints and anticipated mid-year cuts are of grave concern to DSS. ADA/504 mandates cannot be compromised.” DSS has outlined its need for additional employees and equipment in the self study report, but funding in the near future is likely to be problematic and inadequate.

Recommendations:

- Refer to faculty and staffing needs in Area 4.
- Refer to equipment and technology needs in Area 5.

Area 7. Community Outreach and Program Awareness

Findings:

DSS works closely with community organizations and has a strong presence in the community. DSS seems to have a good working relationship with many local agencies and organizations, allowing for exchange of information and cross-referrals, which can be helpful in providing quality service to students. DSS tries to educate and inform students about organizations in the community that may be beneficial to them. There is a DSS Advisory Committee that meets annually and works toward improving and fostering relationships between students with disabilities, local organizations and the DSS Program. The Committee is made up of a variety of representatives from throughout the Antelope Valley and Los Angeles County as noted in the self study report. DSS has also indicated that efforts will be made to have more students participate in the DSS Advisory Committee. In an interview, one

employee suggested that DSS should try to increase the number of high schools who are invited to come on campus to participate in special orientations to pre-determine eligibility and accommodations.

Recommendations:

-Continue to build relationships with organizations in the community in order to deliver the best service possible.

Area 8. State and Federal Compliance

Findings:

DSS is in compliance with all state and federal regulations and adheres to all college policies and procedures related to DSS, according to its self study report. The peer review team did not find any information to the contrary in its interviews and review. DSS has outlined a few updates that are needed in the Educational Master Plan to bring the information current.

Recommendations:

-Update the Educational Master Plan as suggested in the self study report.
-Continue to be aware of and in compliance with state, federal and college regulations.