

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Program Review
Student Disability Services

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

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CAMPUS VISIT:

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Introduction

Prior to the site visit the review team was provided with reference information related to the University of San Francisco and **Student Disability Services** including:

- USF's Vision, Mission, and Values, and strategic goals.
- USF facts and information
- A comprehensive self-study written by **Student Disability Services** and supporting information and data related to services, programs, staff, and resources.

During their site visit, the reviewers met with a variety of community stakeholders (staff, faculty, administrators, and students) who collaborate with or are served by **Student Disability Services**. They were also able to tour campus spaces relevant to the programs and services of **Student Disability Services**.

Overall Quality of Program

Very Good with the potential to be excellent with proper support, staffing, and resources. SDS has exceptional staff who work well as a team, and a well-respected director.

In addition, external reviewers commented that, "USF exceeds most national programs in the continuity of experience for learners and informed, respected leadership."

"Indeed, it would not be surprising to learn that students with disabilities select USF over other options for the national reputation of excellence in disability services."

Important Issues Identified

1. Issues related to office location

Several stakeholders noted the covert messaging that exists given the office's location, including: "being situated next to a dumpster," "hidden," "cramped," and "lack of privacy."

2. Issues related to interaction with the office.

Students felt that their privacy was compromised because of the "crammed" nature of the office. There is little space to navigate the office, and student

workers remain in the office, causing discomfort for some students.

3. Issues related to messaging and confusion over roles.

While students were clear on the roles of all stakeholders, faculty repeatedly reported confusion between CASA's role with students and the disability office's role. Multiple faculty report that CASA counselors frequently ask for 'considerations' that are similar in scope to disability accommodations but that there is no directive. In other words, this "ask" places faculty in the position of being the "bad guy" and having to decide whether to offer an exemption to a student. This also places the faculty in the position of having to go against their classroom policies since they are being asked to provide an exception. While the intention of CASA was to reduce workload and burden for faculty and to support students, it seems to have created additional conflict, confusion, and pressure for faculty to provide considerations over and above their course policies.

4. Issues related to space/time/caseload.

There continues to be difficulty with high caseload, space, and time constraints. This poses the potential for attrition in a profession already suffering from a shortage of qualified applicants to fill positions. Across the country, schools are struggling to fill entry-level and senior positions in disability services. Retaining your highly qualified, well-respected, and dedicated office staff will require an immediate response to the concerns outlined in this report.

Support of Strategic Initiatives

There exists a wonderful opportunity for growth in disability inclusion at USF. Leadership within the disability office and a strong sense of trust and mutual goals; moreover, the shared commitment to student service and support is evident. A long history at USF and strong relationships with stakeholders across the institution ultimately facilitate student access and help to remove barriers efficiently and effectively. Overall, students with disabilities feel well supported and expressed a deep trust in the system.

SDS is effectively advancing the following university and division strategic initiatives, goals and commitments through their programs and services:

- A destination for emerging lifelong learning opportunities.
- A global and diverse university where all community members are supported to thrive holistically.
- An ethical and engaged partner with our local, national, and global communities and our alumni.
- A dynamic institution that can respond rapidly and transparently to a changing world.

Standards and Best Practices

SDS is in compliance with professionally accepted standards, although the reviewers noted that the accommodation appeal/grievance process needs to be reviewed and

revised. In addition, understaffing has led to larger caseloads, less ability to proactively train faculty, and to develop new and innovative approaches to disability inclusion, including adopting more instances of universal design on campus. In the absence of proper staffing, the office may stay in a cycle of "putting out fires" without the benefit of growing the office in meaningful, strategic ways.

Resources

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Learning Outcomes

SDS identified the following student learning outcomes and accompanying assessment strategies for each:

1. **SLO:** Students will be able to complete the process for requesting and receiving reasonable accommodations at USF.

Assessment: Gather accommodation request/usage data from online services database, Student & Faculty surveys, GPA monitoring, retention & graduation rates.

2. **SLO:** Students will be able to clearly articulate their accommodation needs to others.

Assessment: Student & faculty surveys, gather data from online services database; student check-ins.

Recommendations for Improvement:

- Immediately hire an additional 1.0 FTE staff, building the staff at 1.0 FTE per year for 3 years.
- Immediately address testing. Three options exist: A redesign of testing within a classroom period for a universal design of assessment, creating a testing center, or allowing for remote testing.
- Relocate the SDS office.
- Once a decision is made to move the office, curate a committee of stakeholders, including students, to address the name of the office and any desired changes. Be cognizant that the term disability is a source of pride and attempts to remove

- it completely from the name will likely result in some backlash.
- Create a universal design committee that consists of members of all schools to oversee a plan to introduce and embed UDI and UDA concepts to the campus.
 - Only use professional staff in the SDS office.
 - Develop a visual (figure) that outlines the roles/responsibilities of each office (CASA, SDS, Title IX) with differences and similarities stated, as well as legal obligation for compliance rather than a general request.
 - Faculty Adherence to Letters of Accommodation. All faculty must be required to maintain the SAME ADA/SDS statement in the syllabus. The faculty handbook should also contain a statement about the need to accommodate learners and that faculty must work with SDS to develop reasonable accommodations.
 - Revise Appeals Process.
 - Quick, Easy-to-Access Asynchronous Training on website.

Response to Recommendations

A five-year action plan will be developed to address recommendations, opportunities, and needs identified in the program review process.

Additional Context or Information

Please see the full External Review report for more detail if needed.