

Illinois State University

Disability Concerns Comprehensive Program Review

Division of Student Affairs
April 10-12, 2005

Comprehensive Program Review: The most important purpose of the review is to improve departments and programs and to identify opportunities for future development. CPR is a systematic review; it is both descriptive and evaluative. CPR assesses what an office does and how well it performs to that end. CPR is forward looking and is linked to priorities and strategic planning. Additionally, CPR provides a means to show accountability to multiple constituencies. CPR provides a systematic mechanism to monitor the status, effectiveness, efficiency, and progress of programs and services in the Division of Student Affairs. It yields information that allows the Division to:

- Identify future directions, needs, and priorities.
- Recognize and respond to strengths and weaknesses of programs and services.
- Assist in assessing a department's relationships with and contributions to other programs within the University.
- Strengthen and improve its programs and services to students.

(Source: Division of Student Affairs, Assessment/Comprehensive Program Review
<http://www.studentaffairs.ilstu.edu/assessment/CPR.shtml>)

Disability Concerns Written Review

- I. Executive Summary
- II. Strengths
- III. Weaknesses
- IV. Opportunities

- V. Threats**
- VI. General Comments from SRT**
- VII. General Comments Heard from Staff and Students**
- VIII. Recommendations**
- IX. Site Review Team Members**
- X. SRT Schedule**

I. Executive Summary

The Disability Concerns (DC) program is a vibrant, professional, and proficient asset of the Student Affairs division at Illinois State University. DC provides a wide array of appropriate services in an efficient and cost effective manner. Staff is experienced and capable. The campus at large is mindful and responsive to the needs of students with disabilities. The institution is addressing the broader needs of accessibility for campus structures. The Division of Student Affairs has a strong commitment to ensuring students with disabilities have equal access to all educational opportunities.

Particular strengths of Disability Concerns are its professional staff, spacious facilities, state of the art technologies, efficient processes and practices, commitment to providing exceptional student service and innovative approaches to service delivery.

Through increased campus collaborations, which may include the eventual transfer of services to employees with disabilities to Human Resources, Disability Concerns can expand its circle of influence and perhaps even increase services to students. With reduced responsibilities for employee accommodations Disability Concerns can focus its energies and attention on students without increasing financial resources.

The potential loss of funding from the state Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) is a major obstacle threatening Disability Concern's future. DRS provides essentially all the funding for interpreting services for Deaf students, with expenses expected to exceed \$100,000 for FY 2004-05. *This is the singular most pressing issue facing Disability Concerns for the foreseeable future.*

II. Strengths:

- a. University commitment to Disability Concerns.
- b. The Disability Concerns program is purposeful.
- c. The Disability Concerns program is responsive to the needs of faculty, staff and students with disabilities.
- d. The Disability Concerns program has the support, understanding and respect of the campus community.
- e. The Disability Concerns program is well-organized.
- f. The Disability Concerns program is, generally, efficient.
- g. The Disability Concerns program is innovative.
- h. The Disability Concerns program makes optimal use of technologies.
- i. Using a “review committee” comprised of staff for disability determination is constructive and improves reliability.
- j. Document/Text conversion services are well resourced and equipped.
- k. There is an effort to involve staff in the development and administration of the program.
- l. The facilities are spacious and ample.
- m. At present levels, the Disability Concerns program is reasonably well-staffed for the number of students served.
- n. Two civil service positions provide excellent support to the program.
- o. The Disability Concerns program has strong collaborations with numerous units throughout the institution. There is broad awareness of campus accessibility issues among other administrators.
- p. The Disability Concerns program director is well connected throughout campus.
- q. The Disability Concerns program director is a good advocate for disability issues.
- r. Funding from the Division of Rehabilitation Services provides for a significant percentage of program revenues.

- s. Use of graduate assistants is extremely cost effective.
- t. Use of volunteers helps keep costs down.
- u. Long range (Master Plan) includes various projects improving accessibility, i.e. remodeling a current dorm to make it accessible. The relationship between Facilities Management and DC is very positive.
- v. Students are held “accountable” for their education and use of services.

III. Challenges/Weaknesses:

- a. Serving employees when:
 - i. Program is housed in Student Affairs and university departments view Disability Concerns as a “student services” program.
 - ii. There is increased demand from students for disability-related services.
 - iii. There is an increased demand from employees for greater disability-related services.
 - iv. Director’s time is needed to do more training with faculty. Approximately 25 - 33% of her time is dedicated to employees (Note: at this time employee accommodations seem to be happening effectively and collaboratively).
- b. Coping with decentralization and “campus silos of control” makes implementing change difficult.
- c. Limited staff development and training opportunities.
- d. Limited on-going feedback from students during the semester.
- e. Limited mechanisms for students to provide on-going feedback in a manner that is satisfactory to them.
- f. Informal processes that work well but might benefit from greater formality (improvised agreements with university personnel that are not in writing)
- g. Morale is not completely strong among all staff, possibly due to impending loss of funding and recent history of budgetary stress and hiring freezes.
- h. Splintered accommodation services (Civil service staff position does parking, environmental accommodations, housing; Coordinator of Accommodation Services does interpreting/CART; Accommodations Coordinator does notetaking, alternative testing, etc.; and

Coordinator of Text Conversion Lab manages document conversion services) may cause some inefficiencies.

- i. Developing adequate policy for responding to situations when students request services, such as interpreting, and then do not show up for class.
- j. More time is needed to dedicate to increasing assistive technology resources around campus and to focusing more on web accessibility.
- k. Wait time for students is sometimes up to 10 days (for intakes?). Need to find means to shorten this time.

IV. Opportunities:

- a. By transferring “employee services” from the Disability Concerns program to Human Resources there can be greater emphasis and resources dedicated to student needs.
- b. Increased collaborations throughout campus:
 - i. Student Support Services/TRIO
 - ii. Psychological Services, University Student Health Service or faculty/staff with expertise to provide second opinions on documentation when there is a question of eligibility.
 - iii. Dean of Students Office
 - iv. Division of Rehabilitation Services (increased work related collaborations)
 - v. SEAT Center: creation, marketing and distribution of collaborative products.
 - vi. University Testing Services
- c. Increased training:
 - i. Staff in-service (internal to Disability Concerns)
 - ii. Faculty training on disability issues (universal design, web access, adaptive technologies, etc.)
 - iii. Volunteers (e.g., notetaker training)
- d. Marketing and distribution of Nexus eAccommodations and Sahayak. Tremendous opportunity for generating revenue. Very marketable products.
- e. Collaboration with Dean of Students Office on diversity initiatives.
- f. Internship placement development for students in Social Work, Psychology, College Student Personnel Master's Program, etc.

- g. Inclusion in campus “capital campaign”. Collaboration with Student Affairs development director for acquiring new sources of revenue, including submission of federal grants.
- h. Increase responsibilities for graduate assistants, particularly those in non-technical positions (e.g., Accommodations Office GA’s). Allow GA’s access to student records, when appropriate; let GA’s work directly with students (same for interns see IV. f).
- i. Greater connections with K-12 system for improving transition of students from high school to college.
- j. Possible reorganization of Disability Concerns to centralize many, if not all, accommodation activities (interpreting/CART; notetaking, testing, document conversion, etc.).
- k. Increased availability of e-text from publishers and implementation of NIMAS (National Instructional Materials Access Standards) may ease demand on text conversion services. [Note: As noted by the American Foundation for the Blind, “the 2004 amendments (to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, emphasis added) require states to adopt the newly established National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standards (NIMAS) for the provision of textbooks. The amendments also establish a federally funded repository for the maintenance and distribution of the electronic copies of textbooks in the NIMAS format. States are given the option of either using the repository, or providing the textbooks through another means as long as they can assure the Secretary of Education that they will provide students with textbooks in accessible formats on time. See <http://nimas.cast.org/center/index.html> for further information. These provisions are unclear and will need to be clarified in the Department of Education's implementing regulations.”¹
- l. Developing adequate policy for responding to situations when students request services, such as interpreting, and then do not show up for class.

V. Threats:

- a. Loss of funding from Division of Rehabilitation Services could cause deficits in excess of \$100,000 annually.
- b. Turnover of staff within the Accommodations Offices presents an immediate challenge for maintaining consistency and continuity of service.

¹ [American Federation for the Blind. \(2005\). ALERT: Opportunity for public comment to aid development of IDEA regulations. Words from Washington, 109\(2\). Retrieved April 29, 2005, from http://www.afb.org/Section.asp?SectionID=&DocumentID=2688](http://www.afb.org/Section.asp?SectionID=&DocumentID=2688)

- c. Institution's ability to continue its commitment to services for people with disabilities in light of the Illinois economy and decreasing funding for higher education.
- d. New U. S. Department of Education regulations under the revised Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)²; particularly as they relate to the definition and assessment of individuals with learning disabilities presents new challenges.
- e. Dissatisfaction of some current students with services and staff, particularly as it relates to text conversion services. (Timeliness of delivery of materials).
- f. Ability of the campus to make all learning opportunities and administrative functions presented on the web accessible.

VI. General Comments from SRT:

- a. Documents presented made it difficult to determine the total budget allocations and the number/type of students being served, as well as cost per student. (Most data was not available until the end of the site visit; account info provided on site had #'s but no indication as to the actual source of revenue. Outside reviewers unable to decipher accounts #'s without explanation, adding the source of the revenue would have helped; unable to identify specific costs for auxiliary aids and services, for example how much was spent on interpreting, text conversion, notetaking, alternative testing.)
- b. A strong working partnership between the DC Director and the ADA Coordinator is commendable.
- c. The Department of Rehabilitation Services counselor considers his presence on campus an asset to himself and to the students.

VII. General Comments Heard from Staff and Students:

The following information was gathered from discussions with a limited number of University staff and students and may not be representative of the University community.

² [Council for Exceptional Children. \(2005\). Final comments on regulations for the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act 2004. Retrieved April 29, 2005, from http://www.cec.sped.org/cec_bn/cec_comments.html](http://www.cec.sped.org/cec_bn/cec_comments.html)

- a. Comments from the Facilities and Human Resources area of campus: there is good, positive communication between their areas and DC (not always so in the past). Want to see some review of utilization of accessible parking and transportation. There is danger involved in allowing campus vehicles to drive on walkways, especially in the Quad area – should limit or eliminate. The Equal Access Committee is a good working group for identifying and addressing campus problems.
- b. Mixed comments were received about the elevator in Fell Hall: some saying it experiences frequent breakdowns and others saying it is okay.
- c. Student: Overall, things have gone pretty good. I was able to get a single room and the services I use (notetaking, alternative testing and text conversion) have been good.
- d. Student: Mostly I haven't had any problems; however, the text materials I need converted are not always ready on time. They do a good job but once it took until mid-terms to receive my materials. I would like to get an update on the status of my requests (document conversion).
- e. Student: Have had to wait a long time to get documents converted. Professors have had to tape my exams. Some staff don't seem to know much about "blindness". Was not allowed to post a flier in the DC offices trying to recruit students for a support group. There's no way to make suggestions. No collaboration with the TRIO program.
- f. Student: Took a while to get my books (document conversion); went 2-3 weeks without anything. A volunteer proctor didn't know how to use the calculator during a math exam. They could improve e-text if they had a full time coordinator.
- g. Student: I had bad experiences at community college. I'm very impressed with the DC staff and services. I can be as independent as I need to be. I've had very positive experiences. I am concerned about evacuation in the event of an emergency.
- h. Student: E-Text could be improved. Sometimes there is a lack of communication with the staff and there is no one around over the weekend. Other than E-Text accommodations go very well.
- i. Student: Was living in Housing and I had some trouble and DC wasn't willing to help me. I don't go to DC often. There are access problems on campus.

VIII. Recommendations:

- a. By transferring “employee services” from the Disability Concerns program to Human Resources there can be greater emphasis on services to students without increasing human or financial resources within the Disability Concerns program. This transfer could occur slowly over time with guidance from the Disability Concerns director. (The H.R. Director indicated that he could possibly identify current staff to assist with these responsibilities.)
- b. Increase responsibilities for graduate assistants, particularly those in non-technical positions (e.g., Accommodations Office GA’s). Allow GA’s access to student records, when appropriate, and let GA’s work directly with students (same for interns see IV. f). SRT team felt that GA’s could do more programming such as collaborative efforts with Dean of Students on diversity initiatives.
- c. Increase methods and frequency of receiving feedback from students. Ensure students have ample opportunity to communicate their concerns/complaints. Examples: A suggestion box in the main office. Create a generic email “suggestion box” address. Hold “listening sessions”. Ensure feedback from students reaches ears beyond Disability Concerns.
- d. Whenever possible, formalize processes with other units by describing how students are accommodated within those units. For example, how a student can obtain signage for a certain building; how a student can request a foreign language substitution; or how facilities issues are resolved with collaboration between DC and Facilities.
- e. Consider ways to consolidate “accommodation” functions. Possibly reorganize Disability Concerns to centralize many, if not all, accommodation activities (interpreting/CART; notetaking, testing, document conversion, etc.). Currently, coordination of accommodations occurs within 4 separate components of Disability Concerns. This will be easier to accomplish if employee services no longer resides in Disability Concerns.
- f. Increase collaborations wherever and whenever possible. Much collaboration already exists; however, there are additional opportunities. (See IV. b)
- g. Consider partnering with the University Testing Services office (346 Fell Hall). Alternative Testing services is a primary service provided by Disability Concerns. UTS’s only function is testing. Partnering seems natural since UTS is located in contiguous space on the same floor as DC. Testing Offices tend to be instructional support units specializing in the administration of examinations. They often have the expertise and credibility needed to effectively collaborate with faculty. At some colleges, faculty are skeptical of an arrangement whereby the office that approves and advocates for testing accommodations also administers the exams. They see it as a conflict of interest. One way to avoid such perceptions is to have the campus experts on testing administer exams rather than the staff who serve, among other things, as advocates for the students taking these exams.

- h. Increase in-service training for university faculty and staff on working with students having disabilities. However, people tend to only want information when they need it, not necessarily when we offer it to them. Merely organizing workshops probably won't attract a critical mass. Consider innovative ways to engage faculty and staff. (e.g., early secondary intervention: When an issue (concern/problem) arises within a department, use that as an opportunity to have an in-service.
- i. Collaborate with Dean of Students Office (DSO) on diversity initiatives. (DSO indicated they are developing a spirited diversity effort.)
- j. With changes to the federal disability education law (IDEA), increased collaboration with local K-12 school districts could help with transition of students to Illinois State.
- k. Developing a close relationship with Director of Development within Student Affairs (Amy Margaret Sajko) could lead to a vibrant philanthropic funding stream. Additionally, seeking out partners in academic departments to collaborate on federal grants may bear fruit as well.
- l. Seek outside opinions from an ADA Technical Assistance Center or Office of Civil Rights as to the appropriateness of asking students to pay for their own notetaking paper.
- m. Review the processes and practices of the Electronic Text (E-Text) services. While the resources and staffing are superb, the demand is high and student satisfaction was less than outstanding. Increased access to materials from publishers may ultimately lessen the burden.
- n. Review policy for responding to students who requests interpreters for classes or events but do not show up for them.

IX. Site Review Team Members

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X. SRT Schedule

APRIL 10-12, 2005

Day 1 – Sunday, April 10, 2005

- 5:30 – 7:00 Dinner for Trey Duffy and Tom Thompson with Ann Caldwell, Director
- 7:00 – 8:30 Site review team (SRT) Preparation Meeting – Review agenda, Discussion, Questions and assignments
Disability Concerns Conference Room, Fell Hall 350

Day 2 – Monday, April 11, 2005

- 8:00 – 8:30 Continental Breakfast for Site Review Team
Disability Concerns Conference Room, Fell Hall 350
- 8:30 – 9:15 SRT meets with the Director, *Disability Concerns Conference Room, Fell Hall 350*
- 9:15 – 9:45 Tour of Department Fell Hall 350 and Fell Hall 202
- 9:45-10:15 Break/SRT Team Leader travel to Hovey Hall
- 10:15 – 11:00 SRT Team Leader meets with Dr. Brent Paterson, Associate Vice President
Hovey Hall 301
- 10:15 - 11:00 SRT – A/B meet with DHS/DRS representative *Fell Hall 396*
- 11:00- 11:45 SRT Team Leader meets with Dr. Helen Mamarchev, Vice President *Hovey Hall 301*
- 11:00-11:45 SRT – A/B meets with Support Staff *Fell Hall 396*

- 11:45 – 1:15 Lunch
- 1:15 – 2:15 SRT - A meets with Coordinator for Visual, Physical, Psychiatric,
Medical Disabilities *Disability Concerns Conference Room, Fell Hall 350*
- 1:15 – 2:15 SRT – B meets with ADA Coordinator Shane McCreery *Fell Hall 350*
- 2:15 – 3:15 SRT - A meets with Text Conversion staff *Disability Concerns Conference
Room, Fell Hall 350*
- 2:30 – 3:15 SRT – B meets with employee clients *Fell Hall 396*
- 3:15 - 3:30 Break/SRT - B Travel
- 3:30 – 4:30 SRT - A meets with Accommodations Office staff *Fell Hall 396*
- 3:30 – 4:30 SRT – B meets with Facilities Management; Chuck Scott and Mike
O’Grady

Facilities Management Conference Room, Carter Harris Physical Plant

- 4:30-4:45 SRT – B travel
- 4:30 – 6:00 SRT meets to discuss information for the day *Fell Hall 396*
- 6:00 – Dinner SRT – Sandy Colbs – Hostess. Location to be announced.

Day 3 – Tuesday, April 12, 2005

- 8:00 – 8:30 Continental Breakfast for SRT
Disability Concerns Conference Room, Fell Hall 350
- 8:15 – 8:30 Travel time for SRT - B
- 8:30 - 9:30 SRT- A meets with Coordinator for Learning Disabilities, Attention Deficit
Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury
Disability Concerns Conference Room, Fell Hall 350
- 8:30 – 9:30 SRT – B meets with Ira Schoenwald, Associate Vice President of Human
Resources, *Nelson Smith Building 101*
- 10:00 – 10:30 Break/Travel
- 10:30 – 11:15 SRT A & B meets with SAC Team, *Fell Hall 212*
- 11:15 – 11:30 SRT A & B Break
- 11:30 – 12:30 SRT- A meets with student clients *Fell Hall 212*
- 11:30 – 12:30 SRT – B meets with University Housing Service Facilities Staff; Steve
Pydnowski, Steve Lancaster, Larry Uphoff, *Fell Hall 396*
- .
- 12:30 – 1:45 Lunch
- 1:45 – 2:45 SRT A & B meets to review findings and finalize report assignments

Fell Hall 396

- 2:45 – 3:00 Break
- 3:00 – 4:00 SRT Exit Interview
SRT, VPSA, AVPSA, Department Director, *Fell Hall 396*
- 4:00 – 5:00 Break/Last minute details
Fell Hall 396
- 5:00 Dinner for SRT, Ann Caldwell, Director. Location to be announced.

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