MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

CO-CURRICULAR PROGRAM REVIEW
SELF-STUDY
FOR
DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES
2012-2013

Program Review Committee:

Susan Woods, Associate Dean, Student Support Services
Barbara Ahern, Coordinator, Disability Support Services (Bedford)
Jeanne O'Connor, Coordinator, Disability Support Services (Lowell)

Assistance from:
Dawn Gross, Asst. Coordinator, Student Support Services
Disability Support Staff – Korinne Ritchey, Lauren Seeley, Leslie Stafford, Joanne Goretski, Cecilia
Hidalgo-Salcedo

External Consultant:
Laura Patey, Associate Dean for Student Academic Resources, Wesleyan, University, Middletown, CT
(formerly Director, Access Services for Students with Disabilities, Lesley University, Cambridge, MA)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I: SUMMARY DSS PROGRAM REVIEW FALL, 2013

DSS Strengths

From self-study:

- Developed and disseminated policy handbooks for students and Disability Support Staff.
- Developed and updated comprehensive information through the college's website https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/DisabilitySupport/ which directs prospective and current students, families, and faculty and staff to the array of DSS services, protocols and resources.
- Piloted and expanded Disability Support Services 'role as Advisors to new students who may be "at risk" or require comprehensive and supportive initial advising.
- Developed a system to outreach to students with disabilities who receive mid-semester deficiency warnings.
- Through targeted support, outreach and collaboration initiatives with faculty and leadership, provided enhanced support and services to students with disabilities enrolled in Health Careers programs.
- Utilized institutional data and tracking systems (Banner, Degreeworks, SARS-Grid) to improve student tracking, outreach and reporting.
- Cultivated and sustained a robust connection to our colleagues in Academic and Student Affairs and Enrollment Services, as well as a strong partnership with the MCC TRiO Programs (Student Success and Student Achievement), Personal Counseling and Consultation, Multicultural Affairs, Academic Support and Student Leadership.
- Initiated outreach and programming and collaboration with other Departments in the institution to support newly emerging special populations, such as Veterans, Adult learners and HS students enrolled through the Dual enrollment and Early College initiatives.

From External evaluator report:

- Broad involvement in Academic, co-curricular, policy, professional development and institutional shared governance
- View from faculty "partners' and stake holders: "DSS staff are problem solvers; not position takers"
- Philosophy of Department: A conservative approach to determining reasonableness of accommodations, honesty to students and assisting them to build skills to live an work in the world
- Implementation of innovative approaches and best practices, including campus wide access to assistive technology tools ("Read and Write Gold"), metacognitive approach to tutoring and support, scaffolded learning strategies
- Partnerships and collaboration w student affairs and academic areas to support student growth and personal and professional development (Trio programs, personal counseling, FYE, Academic advising and professional development).

DSS Challenges/Recommendations:

Self-study identified:

- The need for a coordinated institutional approach to technology which provides students with the tools for personal and professional development. Specifically, integrating new technologies (e.g: tablets, smart phones) and better utilizing existing technologies into the student's experience utilizing a universal design for instruction.
- The importance of being current in the rapidly changing technology environment underscores the need to expand the working knowledge of Disability providers with respect to new and emerging technologies, accessibility innovations and strategies to promote independence.
- The need for a coordinated and intentional institutional approach to preparing students to move on to the next step – whether it is 4 year transfer or employment - through the development of increased and improved personal and professional self-advocacy, responsibility and skills.

External evaluation identified:

1. Formalize ongoing training and support for DSS staff on the adaptive technology which is already available at MCC. This includes "ZoomText", "JAWS", "Dragon Dictate", "Kurzweil 3000" and "Read and Write Gold".
2. Expand the initiative to network assistive technology software. This should include supplemental training for academic support, faculty and library staff in the use of assistive technology by all students.
3. Institute a loaner program using LiveScribe SmartPens for note taking. The SmartPen allows students to record everything that they hear and write so they never miss a word. It lets students capture words, diagrams, scribbles, symbols and audio - syncing everything they hear to what they have written.
4. Develop a comprehensive peer advising/peer mentoring program. A cadre of students who utilize services through the DSS program could be recruited to serve in this advising/mentoring role. These student mentors can provide 1:1 support that focuses on the development of time management, organization and note taking skills. A benefit of the model of peer tutoring support that is currently offered to student students that was noted during the campus visit was a reduction in the stigma around seeking tutoring. These peer leaders can also provide some training and technical support for students interested is using other available adaptive and assistive technology.
5. Expand students' access to course material via resources such as Access Text Network & Bookshare. In addition, develop a formalized plan to introduce students to the myriad supplemental learning materials and resources available from textbook publishers. Peer advisors/mentors can be assigned to work with particular courses and provide workshops for students illustrating the range of resources provided by publishers to supplement classroom instruction.
6. Consider a philosophical shift from a rehabilitation model of disability within Disability Support Services to a social model. A social model sees disability as a result of the interaction between the individuals who have disabilities and their environment. Where there are few barriers, there

are a few limitations. This approach is supported by the efforts to move toward universal design that Middlesex Community College has already begun.

7. Create a specific orientation program for students who have registered with DSS. This orientation should include information to help students understand the significant differences between high school and college.

8. Continue to provide faculty support as they work with students with varying abilities and challenges. The focus of this training may include assisting faculty with differentiating between the student in distress and the distressing student, incorporating techniques of universal designing course development, creating universal access to course materials, and other topics the focus on the removal of barriers and increase in access.

9. Consider changing the process for arranging accommodations for testing. Since this is one of the most utilized resources available through DSS, the process should be carefully evaluated to determine if they create an unnecessary burden for students with disabilities. Perhaps a more streamlined process for testing accommodations that would incorporate an online process would be less cumbersome for students and faculty.

10. Review and revise the online versions of DSS handbooks for students and faculty. Use MCC faculty examples to highlight exemplary practices. Incorporate information about updated laws and practices as well as the implementation of universal design practices embedded within courses.

11. Develop a staffing plan that includes the expansion of staff coverage to better serve students attending evening and weekend courses. Consider a model that will provide the appropriate support for students taking online courses.

12. Develop and implement a college wide procurement policy which would require vendors who are dealing with MCC to follow all applicable accessibility guidelines including Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Americans with Disabilities Act as of 1990, as amended, and other related local state and federal laws.

13. Strengthen the already established connections with community based resources, specifically including the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, for diagnostic testing and supplemental funding for access to technology for students.

DSS Action Plan Priorities:

1. Partnering and collaborating with colleagues in Academic Affairs, Academic Support and IT to examine the potential for better institutionalizing assistive technologies, as well as researching the applicability of cutting edge software, "apps," and hardware/devices and AT technology embedded in existing platforms. The goals are to: expand the institution's Assistive Technology network; increase AT access to better support student achievement and learning independence; and provide AT training and support that is aimed toward enhanced personal and professional outcomes for students. This action item will include:
   - Developing more formalized institutional training and support for current and expanded adaptive and assistive technology (AT), to include supplemental training for staff in DSS, Academic Center for Enrichment, and libraries, as well as for faculty;
   - Assessing current access/usage of existing Assistive Technology options embedded in PC and Mac platforms;
   - Working with current and new students with disabilities (SWD) to assess their awareness and use of Assistive Technology options already embedded in PC and Mac platforms;
   - Building a library of available free and low-cost technology options for student use;
   - Developing systemized training for SWD's in the available AT tools that could support their specific disability-related needs; and
   - Disseminating regularly-updated information to faculty and staff on the application of new technologies toward improving students' metacognitive and learning skills.

2. The development of an Institutional LiveScribe Smart Pen Loaner Program to support maximum utilization by students with disabilities (SWD). This action item will include:
   - Assessment of skills needed by students to maximize Livescribe pen usage;
   - Beta testing of technology with a cohort of SWD; and
   - Training of DSS staff as well as Academic Support, Faculty and Library staff.

3. Working in collaboration with DSS Coordinators, Academic Support Peer Tutors and Student Activities and Leadership Development colleagues, assist in the pilot and development of a Peer Mentoring program to support SWD in their use of Assistive Technology. This action item will include:
   - Identification of SWD who would benefit from peer mentors to support their use of Assistive Technology, and
   - Recruitment and training of student mentors to provide 1:1 support to SWD that focuses on the development of time management, organizational, and self-advocacy skills.

Financial Needs and Timelines

Two initiatives are informing our identification of Financial Needs and the timelines to achieve the goals identified in our priorities.

- The first is the work that Barbara Ahern, Disability Support Coordinator, has begun as part of her Leadership Management Institute (LMI) project for 2013-2014. This project is based on the recognition that Disability Support Services needs to be efficient in our deployment of resources while continuing to support a growing number of students in becoming independent and successful learners. While there are myriad technological resources available to assist students with disabilities, and assist us in supporting them, we find that we struggle to stay current on available software tools that would marry with our goals of providing strategic academic support. This project is aimed at improving staff expertise, further developing institutional collaborations and providing enhanced tools for disability accommodation and academic support. This project will address these goals through the identified action items above.
- The 2nd initiative is Jonathan Crockett's recent request to work in Disability Support Services to fulfill his Practicum requirements for his Graduate work at Salem State University in Student Affairs. Based on his interests, his expertise in positively impacting student's personal and professional outcomes, his extensive experience supporting student success at the college and the needs identified in our Program Review report, we are crafting his practicum experience to involve the work outlined in our Program Review priorities. The goal of his work will be:

  working with our team to utilize Assistive Technology to enhance opportunities for students with disabilities to achieve their highest level of academic success, promote personal and professional development, and improve their self-advocacy and independence.

  Jonathan, as a collaborative partner within the Student Affairs Division at Middlesex Community College, has been a longstanding support to students with disabilities. As part of his Orientation, Jonathan will participate in Disability Support Services staff meetings and strategy and planning meetings to operationalize the recommendations from our recent Program Review. His presence on both campuses at MCC, where we provide accommodations and support to approximately 1000 students with documented disabilities will orient him to our operations, policies and best practices. Jonathan will become a part of our team and further benefit by access to listserves, current literature and national research and best practices. As Jonathan is well known by the MCC community, especially in his current role with Student Activities and the Health and Wellness center, his involvement within Disability Support Services will both expand his knowledge base and experience as well as provide a multitude of benefits to our student body.

  It is our goal to utilize this work over the 2014 Spring semester for needs assessment and data collection to support a budget request for a part-time Assistive Technology (AT) Coordinator to continue the work that Barbara and Jonathan initiate.

SECTION II: INTRODUCTION

Since the last Program Review of Disability Support Services, during the 1999-2000 academic year, the Department, as well as the Institution, has undergone significant changes, growth and evolutions. In the past decade, along with significant increases in the number of students who register w DSS – (**680** in 2000-01, **952** in 2012-2013 – a **40%** increase), increases have also been notable in the type and complexities of disabilities students disclose. Specifically increases are noted in students presenting with psychiatric disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, as well as students presenting with multiple and low incidence mobility, health and sensory disabilities. This results in increased demand for specific services and a need for ongoing assessment of resources and budget allocation. As a result of these increases and trends, the Department is responding with increased and more customized accommodations, creative approaches to service delivery, more comprehensive support and interventions, and responsive outreach and training to faculty and staff.

The Department has also participated in the Academic and Student Affairs Division redesign and reorganization, to include significant changes within the management structure in student affairs and reexamination of co-curricular priorities to be aligned with the 2011-2012 Strategic Directions. A number of initiatives of the past decade have been instituted to respond to this rapidly changing landscape and to align our service delivery with the priorities and institutional student learning outcomes. Among these have been:

- Providing students with disabilities with support to utilize metacognitive strategies. The goal of the support to students is to improve organizational and study skills, the development of self-advocacy skills and full integration in the college community. We have looked to re-design intervention and support services to focus more on delivering strategies for improving study and time management skills with the over-arching goal of increasing independence and supporting student success.

- Focusing on the ISLO of Personal and Professional Development, and recognizing the unique challenges facing individuals with disabilities, we intentionally emphasize the development of self-advocacy skills and the identification of strategies which will support their academic and professional success.

- Providing targeted outreach to insure that Faculty, Staff and students at MCC have a comprehensive understanding of the support and accommodations provided to eligible disabled students. Included among these have been: professional development sessions, classroom presentations, 1:1 consultations, and presentations and targeted training to new and current faculty on principles of Universal Design for Instruction and emerging assistive technologies. Audiences for this outreach have included: MCC new and adjunct faculty, and staff in Academic Support and Tutoring, Enrollment Services, Advising, Admissions, as well as in contracted support areas, such as Campus Safety and Security.

- Utilizing cutting edge research and best practices to initiate the following: targeted orientation and support for students on the Autism Spectrum, improved training and access for students who may benefit from assistive technology and expanded partnerships in the community.

Since the last Program Review in 2001, the Department has instituted a number of the recommendations identified in that report, as well as in response to new institutional priorities:

- Developed and disseminated policy handbooks for students and Disability Support Staff.
- Developed and updated comprehensive information through the college's website https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/DisabilitySupport/ which directs prospective and current students, families, and faculty and staff to the array of DSS services, protocols and resources.
- Piloted and expanded Disability Support Services' role as Advisors to new students who may be "at risk" or require comprehensive and supportive initial advising.
- Developed a system to outreach to students with disabilities who receive mid-semester deficiency warnings.
- Through targeted support, outreach and collaboration initiatives with faculty and leadership, provided enhanced support and services to students with disabilities enrolled in Health Careers programs.
- Utilized institutional data and tracking systems (Banner, Degreeworks, SARS-Grid) to improve student tracking, outreach and reporting.
- Cultivated and sustained a robust connection to our colleagues in Academic and Student Affairs and Enrollment Services, as well as a strong partnership with the MCC TRiO Programs (Student Success and Student Achievement), Personal Counseling and Consultation, Multicultural Affairs, Academic Support and Student Leadership.
- Initiated outreach and programming and collaboration with other Departments in the institution to support newly emerging special populations, such as Veterans, Adult learners and HS students enrolled through the Dual enrollment and Early College initiatives.

In addition, we have undertaken targeted internal and external community outreach efforts. The goal of this outreach has been to improve the information and resources to high school personnel, prospective student and families and human service professionals. The venues for these efforts include Special Education Parent Advisory Committees, College Fairs for Students with Learning Differences, MCC Open House and Admissions events, presentations to private and public school students who have disabilities, as well as partnerships and consultation with public and private human service agencies.

In order to provide a context for the responsibilities and activities of the Disability Support Services office, it's important to understand the students we serve, the nature of their disabilities, and the types of needs for which they seek support.

In the three semesters between June 1, 2012 and May 31, 2013, **952** registered students had requested consideration for disability services at Middlesex. Disabilities for which students sought accommodations fell into learning, psychiatric, or physical/ sensory categories. Each category covers a range of diagnostic possibilities. For instance, specific learning disabilities having an adverse effect on

learning may include language-based, non-verbal, processing, attention, and/or broad cognitive deficiencies. Physical disabilities may include sensory deficits such as vision or hearing impairment, mobility limitations, or health conditions. Psychiatric conditions span a scope of disabling conditions – some common, many others not – and include students with autism spectrum disorders.

A number of trends have been observed and tracked over the last several years. A notable trend is the steady increase of students who request disability accommodations at MCC. DSS has seen an increase of 40% in students requesting disability accommodations and support services since 2001. This significantly exceeds the increase of 27% in overall enrollment at the college during that same period. (Source – MCC Fact Book)

One trend that has a direct impact on the service model employed by Disability Support Services is that of students with multiple diagnoses entering Middlesex. Such students, who sometimes have complex medical issues, as well as significant academic and access challenges, requiring a multi-pronged approach to support services.

- The number of students with multiple disabilities during the most recent academic year was 254, or 27% of the total number of students registered with DSS.

- Of this number, 12% were claiming more than 2 disabling conditions.

- A similar trend has emerged with students with physical and sensory disabilities since 2010-2011. Data is representing a 34% increase in the last 3 yrs.

SECTION III: MISSION AND STRATEGIC PLAN SUPPORT

The collegiate experience at Middlesex, on the campus and in the classroom, is open to students of varying abilities and levels of adaptive skills. The Disability Support Services (DSS) office provides services and resources to empower each student to attain his/her highest level of academic success and learning independence.

The DSS Office provides services and/or accommodations to eligible students with documented physical, psychiatric and learning disabilities. Pre-registration advising, tutoring, testing accommodations, and self-advocacy training can augment equal access to those who are otherwise qualified for a post-secondary education. Individualized accommodation plans are developed with disability support specialists.

ACCOMMODATIONS:

Per ADAAA and Section 504 of the Rehab Act, Middlesex Community College:

- Does not discriminate on the basis of disability
- Provides equal access for all qualified applicants to all programs and activities
- Provides auxiliary aids and services to afford equal access

Typical Accommodations, based on specific disability documentation, may include:

- Extended time for tests and exams
- Distraction reduced area for testing
- Note-takers, scribes
- Preferential seating, assisted listening devises, sign language interpreters
- Accessible facilities and equipment
- Access to Assistive Technologies

SUPPORT SERVICES:

The Disability Support Services Office provides support services which are designed to help the student become an independent, successful learner at Middlesex and support their opportunities for success at the institution. Depending upon the student's disability and needs, the following services may be accessed:

For Students:

- Academic Support , Tutoring and Metacognitive Strategies: assistance with study skills, organization, test taking strategies and time management,
- Assistance with course selection, communication with faculty, and fostering the development of self-advocacy skills.
- Referrals to outside agencies for testing, counseling or other issues
- Advising on academic and non-academic issues

For Faculty/Staff:

- Individual Student Consultation, advocacy, assistance w approaches and teaching strategies
- Professional Development – New Faculty Orientation, Classroom visits and information "Infomercials", Professional Development Trainings and Workshops
- Training, Consultation and resources to promote access and Universal Design for Instruction.

Strategic Directions:

The Strategic directions supported by this Department's mission and work that are best reflected within the context of Personal and Professional Development include:

- Improve access and advance student success by strengthening evidence-based practices and resource allocation.
- Transform learning by integrating academic, workplace and global experiences to meet personal, professional and community needs.

We see it as our shared responsibility to provide students with the best possible learning experience, one that aligns with the Institutional Student Learning Outcome of personal and professional growth. Such growth demands a level of independence in managing academic demands. We have adopted an approach to supporting students which is geared toward improved metacognition and strategies and independence in learning. We see a greater opportunity for students to become self-directed learners when they have access to technological tools that are an integral part of (not replacement for) our personalized support.

SECTION IV: OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT
Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLO's)

Personal and Professional Development

MCC's Institutional Student Learning Outcome (ISLO) of **Personal and Professional Development** is the outcome we are choosing to assess in our 2012-2013 Program Review. We are examining whether there is increased and improved responsibility on the part of the students for personal and professional development as a result of their involvement with Disability Support Services (DSS). (**See APPENDIX A: Personal and Professional Development ISLO Rubric**)

One assessment tool we used was a student survey. Our objective in surveying students was to find evidence of a positive impact on students' performance in the area of Personal and Professional Development as a result of their use of disability services. We chose as our survey sample, students who were utilizing their test taking accommodations during final exam week in May, 2012. Because we were looking at the impact of accommodations on student's development of personal and professional attributes, the sample included only students who used accommodations. 37 students, representing 4% of DSS's total population, completed the survey. We focused on indicators in the master rubric for Personal and Professional Development that evidenced improvements in self-advocacy, self-assessment and accountability. As such the questions were designed to capture the elements in the student's experience which support that growth. (see **APPENDIX B**).

Another method to assess the impact of accommodations and support was to compare change in the decade since the last Program Review. Along with significant growth in numbers of students requesting accommodations, as stated earlier, we have tracked significant changes in the types and complexities of disabilities. This impacts student readiness or preparedness for higher education, need and services requested. As such, this suggests that student's now have greater need for support to develop their skills to self-assess, self-advocate, and hold themselves accountable. This data/evidence is also reflected in the chart below.

It has been our experience that students should possess, as a manner of a pre-requisite, the capabilities identified above. We have identified 5 performance indicators that we believe support the success of college students with disabilities. The evidence from our data collection is represented in the following grid.

Performance Indicators	Evidence (or Data)
• Recognizing and articulating a need for assistance and seeking information to receive this assistance. • Collecting the necessary documentation and information for appropriate services to be developed. • Determining options and developing a plan with DSS (intake interview and Accommodation plan)	40% increase in students requesting support services since the 2001 Program Review*
• Implementing their accommodations and accessing support services as designed. • Effectively communicating the need for modifications as they arise.	65% of survey respondents regularly access test-taking accommodations; 43% accessed assistance with metacognitive strategies and content area support 35% accessed academic and non-academic advising 24% learned self-advocacy strategies 16% used note-taking accommodations 5% used assistive technologies

*This increase can be attributed to greater outreach by DSS to incoming students and transparency of process, as well as the general increase in the number of students with disabilities accessing higher education.

The indicators identified above become the artifacts which support the growth and acquisition of self-advocacy, self-assessment and accountability skills. A student's process of: self-disclosure, documentation, participation in the development of individual accommodations, implementing their accommodations and accessing support services all require demonstration of many of the personal and professional elements imbedded in the Master rubric.

The list of Personal and Professional Development indicators, as outlined in this particular ISLO, all require a high degree of independence, an understanding of academic and social norms and expectations, and a clear sense of one's learning strengths and weaknesses. Many students with disabilities (SWD), for one reason or another, lag behind their peers in these areas. DSS has recently adopted an approach to supporting students with disabilities that focuses on an individual student's needs within these areas. What used to be a largely content-driven model – direct tutoring – has been shifted to one in which the emphasis is on assisting students with the metacognitive and independent learning skills that will lead them to greater success in meeting the Personal & Professional Development indicators.

As our survey data revealed, the number of students sampled who use Assistive technologies is minimal. With our experience up to this point in helping students utilize assistive technologies, we know well the potential they hold in giving students greater control of their overall learning experience. We believe that assistive technologies are, for many students, one important tool available to help in meeting their academic challenges and supporting their independence in learning. This data leads us to conclude that

this minimal use may be a consequence of both the student's limited experience in using assistive technologies coming into the college environment and our department's limited expertise.

The last few years have brought a rapidly expanding repertoire of assistive tools embedded in such products as personal mobile devices with advanced – and advancing – capabilities, computer-based programs providing greater enhancements for learning, and new hand-held devices, such as digital pens. DSS finds that we are now challenged to keep abreast of the flood of new and, in some cases, free or low-cost AT options on the market, so that we can steer students toward utilizing those applications that best support their independence in learning.

We view greater implementation of assistive and learning technologies to be a strategic complement to the Academic Support models currently being piloted across the college (SI, peer tutors, FYE courses, and emphasis on metacognitive strategies). We believe that, while all students can benefit from technology advancements, SWDs in particular have a greater opportunity to narrow gaps in their learning, social, and/or professional/employment endeavors and progress more quickly toward achievement of academic goals, career readiness, and improved responsibility for learning and enhanced personal development. In the face of shrinking human resources (Disability Support Specialist funding cuts due to decreases in Federal support monies), it is incumbent on the institution to develop alternate ways to support our students' personal and professional growth and academic success. Assistive technologies can provide that support.

Survey Results

Specific categories for which we sought feedback included types of services they accessed, and whether those services were helpful in improving their performance in a number of academic and student skills areas. We were most interested to learn from students whether the overall impact on their performance was a factor in their success at Middlesex. In addition, questions about the inclusion of syllabus statements, disability resources information, and delivery of classroom accommodations were designed specifically to determine whether DSS's training, consultation, and support strategies delivered to faculty were having an impact in the classroom.

The survey sample was identified by students using their test-taking accommodations for final exams in May, 2012. The survey was completed by 37 students, which represents 4% of the total number of students registered with DSS. This is not a statistically significant sample, but, based on the nature of the responses, we feel that it can inform our analysis.

Analysis of survey responses pointed to a number of results which substantiated our observations.

- For example, the majority of respondents (**65%**) regularly accessed test-taking accommodations through DSS. This reflects the needs of our largest cohort of students with disabilities; those with attention and learning disabilities.
- Other accommodations – including note takers/copies of class notes, tape-recording of lectures, textbooks in alternate format, access to adaptive equipment or ASL interpreters, or building access were accessed at a consistent but less frequent basis.

- Support services identified by survey respondents were:
    - assistance with metacognitive strategies and content area support: **43%**
    - academic and non-academic advising: **35%**
    - self-advocacy strategies: **24%**
    - note-taking accommodations: **16%**
    - use of assistive technologies: **5%**
- In terms of students' perceptions of the impact of disability support services on improving their academic performance in a number of discrete areas, survey results were fairly consistent.
- A majority of students rated their performance in the areas of assignment completion, time management, self-advocacy, and academic confidence as having improved or greatly improved as a result of their involvement with DSS.
- Similar results were found in students' responses to their performance in such student skills as understanding course requirements and assignments, use of test-taking strategies, and overall course completion rate.

The student survey was followed with a faculty and staff survey, disseminated at the monthly Faculty-Staff Association meeting in February, 2013. (see **APPENDIX C**).

- The purpose of this instrument was to determine whether our colleagues perceived the services of this department to be useful in supporting the success of students with disabilities.
- Our intention was to assess whether these services, and the partnering with faculty and staff, positively impacted their ability to foster growth in students' personal and professional development.
- As such, the survey included questions about the effectiveness of DSS's dissemination of information about services, policies, and protocols; implementation of accommodations for SWD's in the classroom; consultation services; assistance with managing environmental modifications; and delivery of training and professional development.
- Faculty and staff respondents reported using the following disability support services:
    - assistance with providing test taking accommodations: **94%**
    - consultation regarding accommodations, student needs and behavior: **66%**
    - arranging for note-taking accommodations: **33%**
    - consulting on instructional strategies for students with disabilities: **29%**
    - consulting on environmental access and assistive technology: **25%**
    - participating in professional development workshops: **22%**
    - developing alternate format materials and tests: **15%**
    - classroom visits by disability staff to introduce support services/"infomercials": **15%**

In addition to asking respondents to report on services used, we also asked them to rate the services most useful in supporting students with disabilities. Interestingly, of all the services and support available to them, survey results indicate that our responsiveness to faculty and staff through regular communication and consultation was most valued. This underscores the importance of the partnership between faculty and staff and DSS in our efforts to empower each student to attain his/her highest level

of academic success and learning independence. This also reflects our Department's philosophy and priority to collaborate within the college community toward meeting the Institutional Student Learning Outcomes.

SECTION V: PROGRAM DESCRIPTION WITH A LOOK TOWARDS BEST PRACTICE
LOCAL AND NATIONAL BEST PRACTICES:

In identifying our interest in the Individual Student Learning Outcome labeled "Personal and Professional Development" we are recognizing the unique challenges facing individuals with disabilities finding meaningful and financially stable careers. As noted by Paula Barber in her 2012 research report on Disability and Work, "individuals with disabilities complete college at statistically significant lower rates than people without disabilities and those who do complete college have a persistently lower rate of employment irrespective of the level of degree attainment (associate's, bachelor's, and higher) from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012. As a result people with disabilities more frequently live in poverty than those without disabilities" (p.1). She also finds that individuals with a wide range of disabilities have significantly increased their enrollment in postsecondary educational institutions with an increase of more than 20% from 2003 to 2009. This particular study looks specifically at students who self-identified as people with disabilities and who went on to successfully complete their academic programs and focuses on (a) how they learned about resources available to them; (b) types of accommodations provided and used; (c) the individual observable personal qualities that facilitated their success; (d) factors in the Disability Services offices that students identified as being most helpful and (e) challenges remaining in the setting of higher education (Barber, 2012, p.14-15).

A result which particularly resonated with our group and is consistent with our anecdotal observations regarding self-advocacy is the statement – "Participants agreed that encouraging self-advocacy while students with disabilities are enrolled increases the opportunity to become more competitive in seeking employment. The transition from college to employment is an important time where the mastery of self-advocacy skills is critical to obtaining gainful employment" (Barber, 2012, p.9).

A more specific look at best practices from the standpoint of the institutions is found in the "First Look Summary – Students with Disabilities at Degree Granting Postsecondary Institutions" (National Center for Education, 2011). This is a survey conducted during the 2009 – 10 academic year and involved 1,600 Title IV eligible, degree granting postsecondary institutions in the 50 states and District of Columbia (response rate was 91%).

Findings:

This report provides national data collected from degree-granting postsecondary institutions conducted during the 2009-10 year" (National Center for Educational Statistics p 1). Some of their findings include the following:

• Distribution of disabilities include: Specific Learning Disabilities – 86%; ADD or ADHD – 79%; Mobility limitations or orthopedic impairments – 76%; Mental illness/psychological or psychiatric conditions – 76%.

• About 1/3 of disabilities reported by institutions were specific learning disabilities

• Accommodations: Additional time – 93%; Classroom note takers – 77%; Faculty provided written course notes or assignments – 72%; help with learning strategies or study skills – 72%; Alternate exam formats – 71%; and adaptive equipment and technology – 70%

• Types of documentation accepted/required

• Accessibility of institutions website to students with sensory disabilities. Note: 93% of institutions surveyed reported using a main website to post information about the institution and of those 93%, (only) 24% reported that the institution's main website follows established accessibility guidelines.

Staff in Disability Support Services recently conducted informal surveys of local and national community colleges. One of our queries was: how Community Colleges identify themselves and whether they are avoiding the use of the term "disability". This is an often debated topic among post-secondary institution disability providers (particularly via DSSHE – Disabled Student Services in Higher Education listserve) because of the perceived stigma associated to the word "disability". We surveyed 53 community colleges – one from each state and two from some of the larger states (ex. California). The overwhelming majority still are using the word "Disability" in the title of their program. Of the colleges surveyed, three schools reported that they opted not to use the term "disability" and substituted phrases such as "Special Populations Counselors" or "Special Services."

We also conducted a survey of selected 2 and 4 year institutions which included reviewing each school's disability website and a brief questionnaire directed to the contact person at each site which covered the following areas: (1) types of Assistive Technology provided; (2) how is the decision made to purchase specific technologies; (3) AT Training of students; (4) how are Assistive Technology programs distributed throughout a campus; (5) Do students arrive prepared and trained in the use of particular technologies. (see **APPENDIX D**)

In total, we looked at 28 Community Colleges with overall student populations ranging from less than 2,500 (Washington State Community College) to over 35,000 students (Northampton Community College in Pennsylvania). We received responses to our survey from six of these schools and it became apparent that the needs that we have focused on are of concern across the country. In particular, how do we provide students with the tools they can use to most effectively become successful independent learners given the multitude of technological information that they (and we) are grappling with? We found that many of our colleagues are also dealing with students who are both adjusting to the demands of higher education faced by ALL students, but also must quickly learn how to identify and master the particular hard and software that is most suitable. And how do we foster the self- awareness coupled with communication skills necessary to self-advocate in the higher education setting?

Results:

Our local and national research of best practices focused on access and use of Assistive technologies as a tool and strategy to support an increase in student personal and professional competencies. The literature cited above focused on the mechanisms that lead to successful "completers" among ALL college students based on information from both students with disabilities and the professionals who

provided them with support. Personal qualities and characteristics that impacted success included "self-awareness, perseverance, focus, and interpersonal skills that allowed them to pursue, develop and maintain positive, long term relationships with mentors…" (Barber, 2012, p. 5). Another study by Michael Skinner identified eight common themes mentioned by successful students with disabilities, among them being "the importance of knowledge of one's disability and concomitant accommodations; …. The importance of self-advocacy; …. The significance of accommodations and course alternatives; … the importance of support systems" (2004, p.92-93).

While research did not point to specific exemplary best practices, there are common themes identified which inform our direction.

1.   The need for a coordinated institutional approach to technology which provides students with the tools for personal and professional development. Specifically, integrating new technologies (e.g.: tablets, smart phones) and better utilizing existing technologies into the student's experience utilizing a universal design for instruction.

2.   The importance of being current in the rapidly changing technology environment underscores the need to expand the working knowledge of Disability providers with respect to new and emerging technologies, accessibility innovations and strategies to promote independence.

3.   The need for a coordinated and intentional institutional approach to preparing students to move on to the next step – whether it is 4 year transfer or employment - through the development of increased and improved personal and professional self-advocacy, responsibility and skills.

INNOVATION AND SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES:

We can refer to a number of innovative strategies which have improved our direction over the past decade:

- The Transition Program, as a model for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental challenges, is an alternative program for students who would not be successful in a traditional academic program. At the program's core is the curriculum and experience which prepares students for careers through a focus on personal development, communication skills, professional and workplace strategies and hands-on training.
- Networking of Assistive Technology software (TEXTHELP product – "Read and Write Gold") throughout the institution. This initiative has involved collaborating on training and uses with Academic Support and Tutoring, faculty and Library staff and is an example of utilizing specific Assistive Technologies to foster independent use and Universal Design for Learning. We have also championed the use of peer tutors to introduce and teach students about assistive technology
- The 2 TRiO Grants - Program for Student Achievement and Student Success provide for a close relationship and sharing of resources, technology, expertise and professional development to support student's growth and personal and professional development. Among these services are: academic and financial aid advising, career and transfer counseling, and individualized tutoring. The program sponsors a variety of informational and educational workshops as well as cultural events as well as access to state of the art assistive technologies.

EQUITY:

We strive to insure that all students have equal access to our services and make appropriate modifications to schedules and staffing to address the accommodation needs of evening, weekend and on-line students with disabilities. However, many of the support services and practices are available only to day students due to staff schedules and budget restrictions.

ABILITY TO ACHIEVE PROGRAM GOALS:

In discussing our ability to better meet our goals for student learning and program effectiveness within the context of improving outcomes for Student Personal and Professional development, we recognize areas needing improvement. These are characterized in an overarching goal of broadening the available toolbox of assistive technologies to better support SWDs in their learning; thus leading to greater independence.

Students with disabilities may require an "enhanced" experience in meeting their academic challenges. Providing information and access to the best available metacognitive strategies, as well as utilizing technological tools, can help them navigate around their barriers to access and learning. Additionally this supports a higher level of engagement to employ strategies – metacognitive and otherwise – that support them as confident and competent learners.

Based on this review and our surveys within the institution, locally and nationally, it is our belief that this direction is necessary for our students to increase their learning outcomes within the realm of Personal and Professional competencies.

SECTION VI: PROGRAM EVALUATION SUMMARY AND ACTION PLAN

Program Strengths

As detailed in the Introduction, since the Department's last Program Review, a number of new initiatives and response to institutional priorities have been instituted:

• Developed and disseminated policy handbooks for students and Disability Support Staff.

• Developed and updated comprehensive information through the college's website https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/DisabilitySupport/ which directs prospective and current students, families, and faculty and staff to the array of DSS services, protocols and resources.

• Piloted and expanded Disability Support Services 'role as Advisors to new students who may be "at risk" or require comprehensive and supportive initial advising.

• Developed a system to outreach to students with disabilities who receive mid-semester deficiency warnings.

• Through targeted support, outreach and collaboration initiatives with faculty and leadership, provided enhanced support and services to students with disabilities enrolled in Health Careers programs.

• Utilized institutional data and tracking systems (Banner, Degreeworks, SARS-Grid) to improve student tracking, outreach and reporting.

• Cultivated and sustained a robust connection to our colleagues in Academic and Student Affairs and Enrollment Services, as well as a strong partnership with the MCC TRiO Programs (Student Success and Student Achievement), Personal Counseling and Consultation, Multicultural Affairs, Academic Support and Student Leadership.

• Initiated outreach and programming and collaboration with other Departments in the institution to support newly emerging special populations, such as Veterans, Adult learners and HS students enrolled through the Dual enrollment and Early College initiatives.

Action Items:

- Collaborating with colleagues in Academic Support and researching cutting edge software, apps, and hardware/devices to include: (best practices research, DSSHE archives, AHEAD resources, iPad self-study, etc.)
- Building a library of available free and low-cost technology options for student use
- Training disability staff and students, as well as dissemination this information to the college community, on the application of new technologies toward improving students' metacognitive and learning skills.
- Partnering with IT to examine the potential for institutionalizing assistive technologies

New Initiatives in Support of Action Items:

Disability Support Coordinator, Barbara Ahern's Leadership Management Institute (LMI) project for 2013-2014 has been developed and approved. This project is based on the recognition that Disability Support Services needs to be efficient in our deployment of resources while continuing to support a growing number of students in becoming independent and successful learners. While there are myriad technological resources available to assist students with disabilities, and assist us in supporting them, we find that we struggle to stay current on available software tools that would marry with our goals of providing strategic academic support. This project is aimed at improving staff expertise, further developing institutional collaborations and providing enhanced tools for disability accommodation and academic support. This project will address these goals through the identified action items above.

We view this initiative as a first step and will look to the results of this comprehensive review and input from our external consultant, Laura Patey, to further inform direction and our improvement plan. Additional action items and goals will be through this program review process.

SECTION VII: APPENDICES

Appendix A

<div align="center">

Personal and Professional Development Master Rubric

</div>

The MCC graduate will demonstrate Personal and Professional Development within the college community by:

I. **Setting and Achieving Personal, Academic, and Career Goals**

Student demonstrates Initiative & Resourcefulness

Possible Performance Indicators:	YES	NO	N/A
Coming to advising session with program requirements and a tentative course schedule			
Self-advocating for academic, personal, social, financial, career support and following up			
Using online resources for support (academic, career, advising, etc.)			
Attending job fairs & meeting with on-campus recruiters			
Working independently, utilizing appropriate resources, to secure employment and/or internships			
Suggesting a new activity or club to the Student Activity office			
Attending optional review sessions for courses where offered			
Completing financial aid application in timely fashion			
Registering during Advising period of semester			
Utilizing faculty office hours for assistance			
Attending collegewide events and presentations			
Attending Enrichment period activities			
Other:			

Student persists to completion of goal

Possible Performance Indicators:	YES	NO	N/A
Remaining engaged in the career decision-making process			
Maintaining and completing a portfolio over time			
Starting something and seeing it through as appropriate (see below):			
personal counseling			
tutoring			
Honors' coursework			
Leadership Institute			
Other:			

Student self-assesses realistically

Possible Performance Indicators:	YES	NO	N/A
Accurately articulating one's performance within courses and aware of grades that one is earning			
Using rubrics to self assess one's work/performance			
Using self assessment information to determine where extra effort is needed			
Articulating one's strengths and weaknesses			
Creating and modifying academic and career goals as one learns more about one's academic, personal and career strengths			
Using career assessment tools to confirm areas of interest, skills and values			
Researching career requirements and cross-matching between requirements and one's current skill set. credentials			
Other:			

II.   **Engaging Actively in Their Learning and Development**

Student commits to inquiry and continued learning within academic and community settings

Possible Performance Indicators:	YES	NO	N/A
Joining a club or co-curricular activity			
Completing Service Learning projects			
Applying for college (transfer)			
Participating in a student activity, workshop, or program			
Attending informational sessions to help with program and career decisions			
Collaborating actively in course-related groupwork			
Assessing the work of peers			
Striving for excellence by demonstrating above-average effort			
Striving for excellence by submitting written work that is professional in appearance			
Utilizing personal counseling or support services to address any identified personal, academic or social needs			
Articulating instructor name, if asked, outside of classroom			
Other:			

III. **Demonstrating Accountability**

Student assumes responsibility for his/her actions and outcomes

Possible Performance Indicators:	YES	NO	N/A
Referring to course, program, college policies, procedures and requirements as appropriate			
Coming to appointments on time or calling in advance to notify			
Turning in course assignments on time or accepting the consequences			
Attending class according to course policy (absences, tardies, dress, behavior, etc.) or accepting the consequences			
Meeting professional expectations of internship, clinical, field placement and Service Learning commitments			
Completing necessary paperwork for class withdrawals, change of program, graduation preparation, etc.			
Getting missed notes, assignments, etc. resulting from an absence from classmates, rather than expecting the instructor to "reteach" the missed class			
Identifying obstacles and challenges to action plan, connecting to resources			
Other:			

IV. **Demonstrating Professionalism**

Student collaborates with a diverse population

Possible Performance Indicators:	YES	NO	N/A
Working successfully as part of a group to complete a project/task			
Completing a Service Learning project			
Participating in a cultural event at MCC			
Working with a diverse population in a health-careers clinical setting			
Other:			

Student demonstrates civility

Possible Performance Indicators:	YES	NO	N/A
Respecting the Student Code of Conduct			
Helping fellow students and faculty/staff as needed			
Showing interest in and respect for others' ideas			
Other:			

Student demonstrates active and personal integrity

Possible Performance Indicators:	YES	NO	N/A
Respecting the Student Code of Conduct			
Not cheating			
Not plagiarizing			
Inserting only honest and accurate information on application forms			
Fulfilling pre-requisites – not knowingly trying to circumvent them			
Fulfilling Financial Aid rules and regs – not trying to circumvent them			
Admitting to being wrong rather than denying it			
Other:			

Student responds appropriately in formal and informal settings

Possible Performance Indicators:	YES	NO	N/A
Using appropriate academic language in both written and oral formats in academic and professional situations – including electronic communication			
Conducting oneself professionally in internship, clinical, field placement and Service Learning situations			
Presenting oneself professionally as appropriate, including appearance			
Using more sophisticated, professional behaviors as appropriate			
Using appropriate conversational tone and non-verbal communication techniques, depending on the audience			
Complying with classroom policy regarding clothing and behavior			
Other:			

2012 Disability Support Services Program Review – Student Survey

When did you start classes at Middlesex?

Fall of _____ (year)

Spring of _____ (year)

Summer of _____ (year)

When did you start using your disability accommodations and support services at Middlesex? (check one)

_____My very first semester at MCC

_____My second semester at MCC

_____After the second semester

What accommodations or services have you used at Middlesex?

_____Assistance with time management, study skills, compensatory strategies and organizational skills
_____Assistance with course selection
_____Arranging for note takers or arranging for copies of class notes
_____Textbooks in alternate format
_____Accessing alternate forms of exams and test taking accommodations
_____Assistance with tape recording lectures
_____Referrals to outside agencies for testing, counseling or other issues
_____Advising on academic and non-academic issues
_____Advocacy with your professor
_____Access to adaptive equipment/American Sign Language interpreters
_____Access to assistive technology
_____Access to building/classroom

As a result of your involvement with Disability Support Services, how would you rate your performance in the following areas: (circle one choice for each)

	No Change		Somewhat Improved		Greatly Improved
Completing homework and other assignments	1	2	3	4	5
Managing your time	1	2	3	4	5
Advocating for your needs	1	2	3	4	5
Confidence in doing coursework	1	2	3	4	5

As a result of your involvement with Disability Support Services, how would you rate your performance in the following areas: (circle one choice for each)

	No Change		Somewhat Improved		Greatly Improved
Understanding a syllabus	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding assignments	1	2	3	4	5
Use of test-taking strategies	1	2	3	4	5
Course completion rate	1	2	3	4	5

(Continued...)

In your experience, have your teachers done the following:

	No Faculty has done this		Some Faculty have done this		All Faculty have done this
Included a syllabus statement about disability accommodations	1	2	3	4	5
Invited guest presenters from Disability Services	1	2	3	4	5
Explained how to use your accommodations in their course	1	2	3	4	5

In your experience, have you found faculty to be responsive and helpful in accessing the following:

	Never		Sometimes		Always	Not applicable
Copies of class notes	1	2	3	4	5	____
Extended time for tests	1	2	3	4	5	____
Use of computer for essays	1	2	3	4	5	____
Preferential seating	1	2	3	4	5	____
Maintaining confidentiality	1	2	3	4	5	____

How can we improve Disability Support Services to better support your success?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Student ID# *(optional)*: _____

Thank you! Have a great summer!

Disability Support Services Program Review – Faculty & Staff Survey

Do you know where the Disability Services office is located on your campus? Yes ___ No ___

Do you know how to contact personnel in the Disability Services office? Yes ___ No ___

What is your role? (*check all that apply*): Faculty___ Staff___ Admin.___ Other:_____

<div align="right">*please identify*</div>

With which of the following services or activities delivered or provided by Disability Support Services have you had experience:

___Testing accommodations for students

___Notetaker arrangements for students

___Development of alternate formats for tests and exams

___Consultation regarding student needs or behavior

___Consultation regarding teaching strategies for disabled students

___Consultation regarding physical space adaptations (including room change) or use of assistive technologies (to enlarge print, enhance sound, etc.) in classroom

___Class visit by Disability Services provider to introduce services of this department

___Seminars or workshops on topics such as DSS services, ADA compliance, Universal Design for Instruction, Classroom Management, Creating an Inclusive Environment, and others

How helpful have your interactions with DSS been with regard to the following:

	Not at all		Somewhat		Very
Consultations on creating an inclusive environment	1	2	3	4	5
Communication about general DSS processes and procedures	1	2	3	4	5
Arrangement of classroom accommodations or space adaptions	1	2	3	4	5
Consultation on a student's needs, performance, or status	1	2	3	4	5
Response to your questions regarding a student	1	2	3	4	5
Support and reinforcement of your rules and expectations, as outlined in your syllabus	1	2	3	4	5

Participation in DSS-run workshop or seminar	1	2	3	4	5
Collaboration around aspects of a student's co-curricular experiences (*e.g., Advising, Financial aid, Student support, Service learning, Student engagement, Career exploration, Admissions, Fellowships, etc.*)	1	2	3	4	5

Your comments or suggestions are welcome! _____

_____

Appendix D

AT survey of 28 Community Colleges/6 replies

1. Which AT does your college provide:

   See Excel spreadsheet

2. How do you determine in which technologies to invest?
   - Keep in close contact with local University (Temple University, PA)
   - On Listservs
   - Listen to as many free webinars as I can (sometimes 1/day) (http://www.atnet.org, http://atcoalition.org)
   - Search the web for solutions based on student disabilities/difficulties with a course.
   - Search for any free tools that might help
   - Consider what IT can support
   - Staff experience with new tech
   - Products with best tech. support
   - Conferences
   - Consortium (what do others use, is it working for them)
   - Get 1 or 2 and pilot first
   - DSS staff reviews tech and consult with other campuses
   - Agreement to be consistent with other local colleges for students that enroll at multiple colleges

3. Does your college take on the responsibility for orienting and training students to use particular technologies? If so, which ones, and how?
   - I assess for tech needs and train one-on-one as needed Livescribe Pens, all software, how to access alt. format books (PDF format to Kurzweil easiest path for our students)   (p.s. AccessText and BookShare are amazing; also subscribe to Learning Ally)
   - Mainly train Kurzweil 3000
   - ZoomText, Dragon, screen reader (Kurzweil, balabolka, natural reader)
   - Pens, audio recorder, Dragon (sit with and also copy instructions for them).
   - One-on-one and a class which teaches an overview of many AT programs. Developing a livescribe pen notetaking training.

4. Are AT computer programs housed in a specific Lab? Networked? On student computers?
   - Multiple locations (ADA stations) around campus with some tech; goal to have 6 in lab with everything; can install Kurzweil on personal computers (1,500 licences) as long as they are a student. Has login. Goal to have Kurzweil more avail on campus

- Kurzweil on all campus computers (and can be installed by students on home computers with internet access).
- Most tech in DSS office.
- Our computers, laptop for Dragon so we can move rooms.
- Dragon in writing room, Natural reader in testing room, ELMO in library. Eno boards in classrooms.
- Most on many campus computers (except Dragon – needs a quiet space).

5. Are you seeing any students come with their own solutions?
   - Not much personal equipment. Not all have computers. Some have iPhones, and we will help with app selection (provide list and help), Bookshare – mp3 for some iPhones. Dragon is more recognized, but still not approachable for many students. (learning curve. Not so easy for papers).
   - So low vision students with Kurzweil 3000 and Dragon already.
   - Personal low hearing technologies for the classroom.
   - Some come with Kurzweil
   - Some use their iPads, (lots of built-ins and apps), Kindles, Nooks, audio recorders
   - Learning Ally membership
   - Laptops, audio recorders, pens, Dragon (purchased through Costco).

Appendix E

Middlesex Community College

Disability Support Service Program Review

Laura Patey

10/1/2013

MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE
DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAM REVIEW
2012 – 2013

INTRODUCTION

The following report is based on the Middlesex Community College Co-Curricular Program Review Self-Study for Disability Support Services and a campus visit which took place on Tuesday, September 24, 2013. During the site visit, this evaluator had an opportunity to meet with administrators, staff, faculty and students on both the Bedford and Lowell campuses.

A previous program review of Disability Support Services (DSS) was completed during the 1999 – 2000 academic year. There were a number of recommendations as a result of that review and based on this recent self-study, it is quite apparent that many of the recommended changes which were subsequently implemented further strengthened the program and services available to students with disabilities at Middlesex Community College (MCC).

The review of the data included in the National Center for Educational Statistics, Postsecondary Education Quick Information System from June 2011, details the recent trends in the numbers of students with disabilities on college campuses. The data reveals significant growth in the numbers and complexity of student disability issues on campus across the country. This trend is well documented at Middlesex Community College. The increase in the number of students who have requested accommodations has increased at a rate of 40% as compared to an overall enrollment increase of 27% during the same time period. In addition to this increased rate, the complexity of disability issues is also on showing significant growth. More students are arriving on college campuses with multiple, complex disability issues which add to the requisite complexity of response required by post-secondary institutions.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

Disability Support Services at MCC has well documented strengths that were readily apparent during the on-campus visit completed during this program review. The DSS staff members serve on a variety of campus wide committees which continue to provide opportunities for a broad presence on campus. The staff in DSS is well regarded by faculty and has embraced a collaborative approach to the work of providing access to programs and services for students with disabilities. One faculty member described the DSS staff as, "problem solvers rather than position takers." The DSS staff members believe that they best serve students by, "embracing a conservative approach to determining reasonableness of accommodations, being honest with students, and helping them to build skills to live and work in the world."

Several of the initiatives which have been implemented since the last program review, including the implementation of campus wide access to "Read and Write Gold", and the new approach to the development of metacognitive strategy development via peer tutoring, have proven successful. In addition, the shift from content area tutoring to metacognitive approaches, which scaffold learning and provide skill building, leads to increasing independence and student success. While both of these initiatives can be seen as program strengths, their further development and broader implementation are warranted.

The two TRIO Grants on campus (Program for Student Achievement and Student Success) offer unique opportunities for collaboration in support of student growth and personal and professional development.

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

There are myriad challenges that have been identified or further clarified through the self-study process. Some of these challenges can be viewed in the frame of unique opportunities for further development. Many are universal challenges faced by community colleges across the country include:

> ➢ Open enrollment – this translates into students who are coming to the college with a broad range of skills, interests and abilities. Source

> ➢ Increased reliance on adjunct faculty, which has implications for continuity in service delivery. Source

> ➢ Changes in ADA Amendments Act – which call for greater emphasis on students self-report of impact of disability and resulting functional limitations and less emphasis on documentation as a determining factor in eligibility. Source

> ➢ Students with invisible disabilities comprise the largest growing population of students with disabilities on campuses. Source

> ➢ Changes in program delivery, including online course options which will require a change in service delivery approaches and access to DSS for students and faculty. Source

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations emerged from review of the completed self-study and subsequent campus visit including discussions with staff, faculty and students:

1. Formalize ongoing training and support for DSS staff on the adaptive technology which is already available at MCC. This includes "ZoomText", "JAWS", "Dragon Dictate", "Kurzweil 3000" and "Read and Write Gold". In addition, DSS staff should also be familiar with the assistive technology embedded in the PC and Mac platforms. These tools are available to students who currently own laptops. Many students are not aware of these resources or how best to use them. As reported in the self-study, only 5% of students surveyed made use of adaptive technology.

2. Expand the initiative to network assistive technology software. This should include supplemental training for academic support, faculty and library staff in the use of assistive technology by all students. Currently "Read and Write Gold" is available throughout the institution. This should be expanded to include other text-to-speech and speech to text options as well as note taking support for students. Consideration should be given to providing network access to "Dragon Dictate" and "Kurzweil 3000".

3. Institute a loaner program using LiveScribe SmartPens for note taking. The SmartPen allows students to record everything that they hear and write so they never miss a word. It lets students capture words, diagrams, scribbles, symbols and audio - syncing everything they hear to what they have written. The use of SmartPen technology has been well documented on campuses across the country. This cost-effective technology-based intervention provides students with the tools that they need to have full access to course content and fosters the development of greater independence. The following white paper case studies outline the benefits of SmartPen loaner programs at Wright State and UC Berkeley: Wright State Case Study & UCB Case Study

4. Develop a comprehensive peer advising/peer mentoring program. A cadre of students who utilize services through the DSS program could be recruited to serve in this advising/mentoring role. These student mentors can provide 1:1 support that focuses on the development of time management, organization and note taking skills. A benefit of the model of peer tutoring support that is currently offered to student students that was noted during the campus visit was a reduction in the stigma around seeking tutoring.

These peer leaders can also provide some training and technical support for students interested is using other available adaptive and assistive technology. The use of adaptive and assistive technology can foster greater independence. [Source from UNH](#)

5. Expand students' access to course material via resources such as Access Text Network & Bookshare. In addition, develop a formalized plan to introduce students to the myriad supplemental learning materials and resources available from textbook publishers. Peer advisors/mentors can be assigned to work with particular courses and provide workshops for students illustrating the range of resources provided by publishers to supplement classroom instruction.

6. Consider a philosophical shift from a rehabilitation model of disability within Disability Support Services to a social model. A social model sees disability as a result of the interaction between the individuals who have disabilities and their environment. Where there are few barriers, there are a few limitations.
    A social model looks beyond disability, acknowledging that there are individual differences, and examines all of the factors that affect an individual's ability to interact fully and be an equal participant in society. These individual differences become part of the diversity that individuals with disabilities bring to a college campus. This perspective challenges the college community to work collaboratively with students who are the experts regarding their disability, design options which provide sustainable and inclusive access for all students to fully participate in the learning environment. This approach is supported by the efforts to move toward universal design that Middlesex Community College has already begun.

7. Create a specific orientation program for students who have registered with DSS. This orientation should include information to help students understand the significant differences between high school and college. One significant difference is the shift in focus on ensuring success at the K – 12 level, to a focus on ensuring access at the postsecondary level. This is critical for students who are making this transition to understand. In addition, this orientation would allow the DSS staff to work with students on the further development of self-advocacy skills as they prepare to meet with their faculty and the challenges that curriculum at the college level may pose.

8. Continue to provide faculty support as they work with students with varying abilities and challenges. The focus of this training may include assisting faculty with differentiating between the student in distress and the distressing student, incorporating techniques of universal design

in course development, creating universal access to course materials, and other topics the focus on the removal of barriers and increase in access.

9. Consider changing the process for arranging accommodations for testing. Since this is one of the most utilized resources available through DSS, the process should be carefully evaluated to determine if they create an unnecessary burden for students with disabilities. Perhaps a more streamlined process for testing accommodations that would incorporate an online process would be less cumbersome for students and faculty.

10. Review and revise the online versions of DSS handbooks for students and faculty. Use MCC faculty examples to highlight exemplary practices. Incorporate information about updated laws and practices as well as the implementation of universal design practices embedded within courses.

11. Develop a staffing plan that includes the expansion of staff coverage to better serve students attending evening and weekend courses. Consider a model that will provide the appropriate support for students taking online courses.

12. Develop and implement a college wide procurement policy which would require vendors who are dealing with MCC to follow all applicable accessibility guidelines including Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Americans with Disabilities Act as of 1990, as amended, and other related local state and federal laws.

13. Strengthen the already established connections with community based resources, specifically including the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, for diagnostic testing and supplemental funding for access to technology for students.

These recommendations are intended to enhance service provision for MCC students with disabilities as they strive to achieve their highest level of academic success and learning independence.