

DSPS Advisory/ADA Compliance Committee

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Co-Chairs: Larry Resendez, DSPS Director and Danny Villanueva, VP of Administrative Services

March 4, 2014

In attendance: Danny Villanueva, Joe Ramirez, David Jordan, Jaime Trout, Gricelda Gonzalez, Martha Rios, Robert Crossley, Mardell Kuntzleman, Angela B. Aghajanian, Michael Moore, bibe Begzadeh, Michael Griggs, Terry Carter, Dennis Schroeder, Victor Renolds, Paul McKenna, Larry Resendez, Adrian Gonzalez

Meeting began with introductions and a brief discussion about the format/purpose of the committee.

The goal of the committee is to “identify key issues impacting students with disabilities and to come up with ideas as to how to support students in ways that lead to their success.”

Last DSPS Advisory Committee took place several years ago. It is important to meet consistently in order to identify and respond to key issues that are impacting students with disabilities.

DSPS Director, Larry Resendez, shared the definition of “advisor” which is “having the position/power to make suggestions as to what can be done. He stated that all of those in attendance are uniquely qualified to participate as advisors on the committee and that the input they can provide is invaluable.

Larry provided an overview of DSPS noting that the office is responsible for supporting students with disabilities through accommodations and services that address the educational limitations students are facing as a result of the disability(ies). He also provided information on what determines whether a student is eligible for the program, the types of services that can be provided and how to make a referral (handouts were also distributed). He also reported that DSPS is not able at this time to provide learning disability assessment. Angela Aghajanian asked where students are going for LD assessment. Larry mentioned that they are being referred to other colleges (e.g., LAVC or LAPC) or outside entities for the assessment. He also mentioned that a plan is in the works for DSPS at Mission to resume LD assessment but that funding needs to be secured prior to doing so.

Larry shared the legal mandates that dictate much of what DSPS does; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act prevents discrimination against persons with disabilities; the ADA-Americans with Disabilities Act states that federally funded institutions are charged with preventing discrimination against individuals with disabilities; Title V-determines how things are done in the DSPS office (e.g., how to document eligibility; educational limitations; types of services; MIS reporting).

Paul McKenna asked about the number of students seen at DSPS; Larry shared that DSPS will serve approximately 450 students this fiscal year which amounts to a little under 5% of the student population. He estimates that there may be between 1000-1500 students with disabilities many of whom do not seek services either because they are doing well enough without assistance from DSPS; they are uncomfortable to seek out support because of stigma or they simply do not know about the program (this is probably less likely a factor as the program is a fairly well known entity of campus).

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Terry Carter had some comments/questions related to IT (e.g., what is the college's responsibility in insuring that classrooms are properly set up to afford students with disabilities equal access to education?). Mardy Kuntzelman, LACCD ADA Compliance Officer, shared some of the state guidelines regarding procurement policy and expectations for ADA compliance. Although in an ideal world all college facilities would be ADA compliant, this is not the case. In the future, it will be important to make sure that the college administration works with the architects/contractors to insure that the building infrastructure (including IT) is set up to meet ADA requirements. VP of Administrative Services, Danny Villanueva noted that this is the goal moving forward and he and Mardy shared that part of the mission of the committee is to have discussions about these vary issues.

Discussed the need for closed captioning of videos for students with hearing loss; facilities issues have surfaced in that many of the buildings do not have IT capable of supporting closed captioning. This, as it turns out, is not an easy fix given that there is a no-tampering clause in the contract that prevents the college from modifying technology to allow for closed captioning (i.e., warrantee violations occur when there is tampering with equipment that has already been put in place). For that reason, the college is charged with the responsibility of making sure that students with hearing loss are able to access the information they need. Adrian Gonzalez acknowledged Victor Reynolds (Plant Facilities) and Terry Carter (IT) for their help in addressing this on-going challenge. Recommendation: set up an ad hoc committee that focuses on campus infrastructure/facilities and accessibility issues.

Adrian Gonzalez requested the assignment of a cart for DSPS use. He noted that it can be difficult to arrange for certain accommodations (e.g., equipment being moved to a location as an accommodation for a student). Though Plant Facilities is on top of these requests, for the most part, there are times when delays ensue that could be prevented if DSPS had access to a cart. Liability concerns were shared by Mardy and Danny that preclude such a request from being granted at this time.

A brief update was given re: the construction that is taking place on the ramp leading to the south entrance to Campus Center. Mardy has been in discussion with the contractor and there is some movement. She noted, however, that it is important for the college to provide clear signage that gives information that delineates alternate entrance/exit points. She also suggested that DSPS should alert students to construction that may impact access/egress from various locations on campus. Adrian said that this can be done on the DSPS website. Also, the college should be working with the contractor on obtaining updated timelines for completion of projects. Mardy suggested that the committee invite a contractor rep to attend future meetings.

Paul McKenna identified that there a faculty training needs when it comes to things like closed captioning; how to refer a student to DSPS or even how to approach a student who a faculty member suspects might have a disability. He pointed out that it would be a good idea to utilize flex workshops to get the word out to faculty.

David Jordan shared information about Distance Education (DE). He recommends that more collaboration needs to occur between DE, Student Services and DSPS to address accessibility issues. This recommendation was supported and there will be follow-up.

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VP of Student Services, Joe Ramirez asked whether the district is there to assist the colleges with ADA compliance (both in terms of financing and advising). Mardy and Danny shared that it is the responsibility of the college to be ADA compliant and the funding that supports the campus is through Project J. However, in the event that there are not bond funds, the college is still responsible for assuring that the campus is ADA compliant. Mardy reminded the group that it is up to the college to prioritize/recommend projects and that the committee could serve a role in helping with this process. An important example of this would be for the committee to work on getting language into the procurement policy that assures that buildings are ADA compliant.

Larry brought up concerns regarding the crisis intervention protocol. A discussion ensued around what happens when students are in crisis (e.g., suicidal/homicidal/emotionally unstable). Michael Moore (therapist at NEHVC) shared a successful intervention with a student who was imminently suicidal. Campus Police/LAPD Mental Evaluation Team can work together to mobilize and assist when students are in an imminent crisis. In the situation Michael shared, Campus Police and MET quickly responded and escorted the student to Olive View. Not all situations are so clear cut, however. Several committee members mentioned that they are not at all sure what to do when a crisis or possible crises surface. Recommendations include: clarification of roles for staff/faculty who may be faced with a student in crisis; faculty training via flex workshops or during mental health symposia one of which is scheduled in April; more clarity regarding the role of the Threat Assessment Team and how issues can/should be brought to the attention of the TAT; clarification between what DSPS does and what the Student Health Center does in terms of dealing with student's experiencing mental health crises. Larry clarified that DSPS does not provide mental health counseling while the Student Health Center (through Northeast Valley Health Corporation) does. Though DSPS can certainly assist students with referrals for mental health treatment, the Student Health Center actually can provide some of these services (AND referrals too if deemed appropriate). Joe Ramirez highlighted the importance of more training for faculty and staff in and around the issue of mental health. He noted that mental health problems are on the rise and staff/faculty need more support/training in terms of how they can/should intervene. Larry shared that the college should have access to a computer program called Kognito that can provide staff/faculty with training on how to intervene with students who are suicidal. He will look into how the program can be accessed and will discuss a potential training plan with Joe.

Jamie Trout, CATS and Gricelda Gonzalez, Tierra Del Sol/Nexus shared some information about their programs which serve students with intellectual disabilities; traumatic brain injury and autism. CATS students are 19-21 and Nexus students are 22 and up. Both programs are working with students to identify reasonable expectations for attending college. Many of the students are having success while many others are facing major challenges. DSPS is collaborating with both programs to determine what kinds of accommodations/services these students need and also to determine the paths by which students can achieve success.

Discussed plans for the next meeting. The group agreed that quarterly meetings would be reasonable. The next meeting was proposed to take place May 2014. Danny suggested that more community organizations be brought to the table to hopefully increase the enrollment of students with disabilities.

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Meeting was adjourned at 12:05pm.