

A. DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

Student Services

1. Describe the program's purpose and mission. Limit 250 words.

The mission of the **Center for Students with Disability (CSD; also known as DSPS)** is to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to all programs and activities on campus. Our goal is to encourage and promote independence in students so they may achieve their full potential. We continuously strive to provide the highest quality programs and services to our students with disabilities. We offer an array of services to support our students' success in their classes and other campus programs and activities. These services include, but are not limited to, academic and personal counseling, support classes, assistive technologies, learning disability and acquired brain injury assessments, learning disabilities tutoring services, alternate media, interpreting and captioning, testing accommodations, and note-taking. To effectively provide these services, CSD is divided into six different areas: Counseling, High Tech, Alt Media, Learning Disability, Acquired Brain Injury/Pathfinders, and Deaf and Hard of Hearing services.

To be eligible for services, a CSD student must be enrolled at SMC, have a verifiable disability, be unable to benefit from the regular programs and services offered by the college due to the current functional limitations of a disability, and need accommodations to mitigate these disability-related educational limitations.

The Center was established in 1975 with 65 students and today, it serves over 2,000 students in the following categories of disabilities per Title 5: Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Autism Spectrum, Learning Disability, Blind and low vision, Acquired Brain Injury, Mental Health, Other Health and Disability, Physical Disability, Intellectual Disability, Speech, and ADHD.

2. Which of the following Institutional Learning Outcomes does the program support? Select at least one.

ILOs

- #1 - Acquire the self-confidence and self-discipline to pursue their intellectual curiosities with integrity in both their personal and professional lives
- #2 - Obtain the knowledge and skills necessary to access, evaluate, and interpret ideas, images, and information critically in order to communicate effectively, reach conclusions, and solve problems
- #3 - Respect the inter-relatedness of the global human environment, engage with diverse peoples, acknowledge the significance of their daily actions relative to broader issues and events
- #4 - Assume responsibility for their own impact on the earth by living a sustainable and ethical life style
- #5 - Demonstrate a level of engagement in the subject matter that enables and motivates the integration of acquired knowledge and skills beyond the classroom

B. STUDENTS SERVED

3. Describe 1-3 salient demographic composition of students served by the program and include an analysis of how it aligns with the students your program is intended to serve. (500 words)

The Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at Santa Monica College serves a diverse population of students whose demographic makeup reflects the program's mission to ensure equal access, promote independence, and provide comprehensive support services.

1. Disability Type

About 90-95% of students registered with CSD have "invisible" disabilities, with diagnoses such as acquired brain injury, ADHD, autism spectrum, and mental health. Providing service for these students aligns with our mission to provide equal access by addressing the evolving and complex needs of students who require accommodations beyond physical accessibility. Our services—ranging from academic and personal counseling to testing accommodations and assistive technologies—are designed to foster independence and support academic success for these students. Our highest population of students are part of our Learning

Disabilities program where we support students with classes, workshops and tutoring to foster their educational goals and learning trajectory.

2. Racial and Ethnic Diversity

Students of color represent about 50% of those served by CSD, mirroring Santa Monica College's diverse student body. These students face the intersectionality of disability and cultural barriers, which can affect their access to resources and learning outcomes. CSD actively promotes inclusion by offering culturally responsive services, referrals and warm hand offs to other campus resources such as EOPS, Adelante, and Black Collegians. These efforts ensure students' unique identities are acknowledged and that services are accessible, contributing to their independence and full engagement with campus programs and activities.

3. First-Generation and Low-Income Students

Approximately 17% of CSD students are first-generation college attendees or come from low-income backgrounds. These socio-economic factors often compound the challenges faced by students with disabilities in navigating campus resources and advocating for themselves. CSD's individualized counseling, support classes, computer lab support, and referrals to other campus resources help address these barriers directly. This focus supports the center's mission to encourage student independence and promote success by providing tailored support that recognizes the full context of each student's experience.

Conclusion

The demographic composition of students served by the Center for Students with Disabilities at Santa Monica College demonstrates clear alignment with the program's mission. By focusing on students with a broad range of disabilities—particularly non-apparent disabilities—along with a commitment to racial, ethnic, and socio-economic diversity, CSD ensures equal access and promotes independence. Our comprehensive suite of services is designed to empower students to achieve their full potential across academic and campus life. Continued analysis of demographic trends and evolving student needs will enable CSD to maintain this alignment and enhance its impact in supporting equitable student success.

4. Describe how the program does outreach to, and provides access for, the intended student population. (250 words)

CSD engages in a variety of outreach initiatives to ensure students are aware of our services and feel welcomed into the academic community. Faculty and staff are actively involved in presenting at community events, high school college fairs, and during campus tours for visiting high school groups. In addition, CSD participates in campus events including VIP Welcome Day, SMC Start Up, and the Student Services Celebration to name a few.

These efforts are designed to increase visibility of our program and affirm the rights of students with disabilities to equitable educational access. By fostering awareness, we work to dismantle stigma, normalize the experiences of students with disabilities, and encourage a culture of inclusion across the college community.

Students begin by registering with CSD, providing verifiable documentation of their disability, and acknowledging their rights and responsibilities within the program. Once submitted, our staff reviews the application and contacts the student to schedule an initial intake with a CSD counselor.

During this appointment, the counselor engages the student in a collaborative process, discussing functional limitations, academic challenges, and appropriate accommodations. Together, they develop an Academic Accommodation Plan (AAP) tailored to the student's needs and designed to mitigate barriers to learning. Students request approved accommodations on a semester-by-semester basis, with the flexibility to revisit or modify plans as course requirements and needs evolve.

Through intentional outreach, structured access processes, and a commitment to equity, CSD upholds compliance with disability law and fosters an inclusive learning environment where all students can thrive.

5. When considering student outcomes, SMC produces the largest equity gaps for Black and Latinx students. How does the program address equity gaps within the scope of work that it performs? (500 words)

At the core of our work is the belief/practice of treating every student as an individual with multiple intersectional identities. In doing so, we provide holistic support extending beyond accommodations—helping students feel valued and capable of achieving their goals.

It only takes one person to believe in a student to positively influence their persistence and success. For many, CSD becomes that “person.” Our diverse faculty/staff mirror the student populations we serve and cultivate relationships built on authenticity, trust, and care. Students frequently visit our office, sometimes daily, because they perceive CSD as a safe space. For example, one recent graduate, a Black student who was part of our program, frequently came into the office shouting with joy that she loves DSPS. She took a picture with staff, emailing later in the evening that she was still smiling because of her interaction at CSD that day. These are the types of experiences we want for more students. This sense of belonging reduces isolation, affirms identity, and fosters persistence.

Equity work also requires us to critically examine policies and practices. Guided by equity scholars such as Dr. Frank Harris III, we understand that “equity talk and equity walk” must align. In this spirit, CSD streamlined its accommodations process through AIM, a data management system that reduces administrative barriers, ensures timely access to accommodations, and increases transparency. After a year of development, we launched Phase I, enabling faculty/staff and students to engage with the system.

We embed equity practices through partnerships ensuring holistic, wraparound support. Through warm handoffs/referrals, we work closely with Black Collegians, EOPS, Adelante, NextUp, and the Veterans Resource Center (VRC). Our ABI Specialist visits the VRC weekly to strengthen relationships with disproportionately impacted students. We also participate in events such as the College KickOff for first-time Black/Latinx students.

Data from our 2025 Biennial Student Survey shows 71% of students feel welcomed and valued. We aim to increase this by expanding opportunities for students to connect with their CSD community.

We cultivate trust-based relationships that encourage persistence. For example, a Black student made a connection with one of our Black staff members outside of the office. This student now comes in regularly to chat with our staff. He recently shared personal information that he said he doesn't tell most people because of the preconceived judgements he receives. However, he said he felt comfortable sharing with our staff because he's never felt judged in our office. This student isn't even a DSPS student, but the impact our staff had on this individual has made a difference in their academic journey.

To operationalize this work, CSD has collectively identified core departmental values that align with the College's equity vision. Displayed in our office, some of these values include treating every student with dignity, meeting students where they are, protecting and advocating for their rights, and creating a welcoming community. By embedding these values into practice, we work to close equity gaps and ensure that all students—particularly Black and Latinx students—have the resources, support, and community they need to succeed.

6. If applicable, describe any instructional partnerships or collaborations that impact the students served by the program. (500 words)

Faculty play a critical role in carrying out the accommodations approved by our office, and our ability to work together directly impacts students' access to instruction and their overall educational experience.

While DSPS is responsible for determining and authorizing reasonable accommodations, it is the faculty who implement many of these accommodations in their classrooms, labs, and online learning environments. This

requires a collaborative relationship built on mutual understanding of the instructional context, as well as the legal and ethical responsibility to ensure access.

In many cases, accommodations are straightforward to implement. However, we also regularly encounter more complex situations where identifying an appropriate and reasonable accommodation requires close consultation with faculty. In these situations, DSPS staff work directly with instructors to understand the essential requirements of the course, brainstorm alternatives, and ensure that accommodations uphold both accessibility and academic integrity.

For example, in the recent past, we've supported several Deaf students enrolled in foreign language courses. These courses often rely heavily on oral assessments, which are not accessible to Deaf students due to the nature of their diagnosis. We collaborated closely with the instructor to determine appropriate alternatives that provided the student with equal access and opportunity to learn, while preserving the fundamental objectives of the course.

Faculty are encouraged to consult with DSPS if they have questions about approved accommodations or need guidance in navigating behaviors that may be related to a student's disability. For instance, the number of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder has increased in recent years. The behaviors associated with autism can sometimes present challenges for instructors trying to maintain classroom management and instructional pace. In these cases, we coach faculty on strategies they can use to minimize disruption while supporting the student's needs with compassion and respect.

As part of our commitment to faculty support and professional development, we hosted Russell Lehmann—a nationally recognized speaker and advocate associated with the UCLA Tarjan Center—who shared his lived experience with autism and other co-occurring conditions. His workshop focused on practical, inclusive strategies for engaging students who present with challenging behaviors. The event was extremely well received, and we look forward to offering more opportunities like this in the future.

DSPS also provides technical guidance to faculty on how to interpret and implement accommodations, as well as how to build inclusive learning environments using universal design principles. Our Alternate Media Specialist works directly with faculty to ensure instructional materials are compliant with accessibility standards. This includes extensive support with media captioning for use in both in-person and online courses.

In addition, DSPS regularly participates in professional development activities across campus. In recent years, we have presented at the Online Winter Teaching Institute, introduced the new PopeTech accessibility feature in Canvas, and offered workshops during Professional Development Days on topics such as test proctoring and neurodivergence in the classroom.

DSPS and instructional faculty work together to uphold the principles of access, equity, and academic excellence to ensure students with disabilities are not only accommodated, but truly supported in reaching their full potential within the academic environment.

C. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

7. Describe any changes that have been implemented as a result of the recommendations of the last program review. (500 words)

1. To adopt a new filing management system such as FileCenter:

The transition to a digital data management system has been a complex but crucial process for DSPS. At the onset of COVID, we still used paper files, requiring an intensive file scanning project to digitize records with minimal disruption to student services. Initially, we selected FileCenter as our digital filing system; however, it ultimately did not meet our specific needs, prompting us to seek alternatives.

As an interim solution, we utilized SharePoint within the Microsoft 365 suite. However, SharePoint proved to be inadequate for the volume and specificity of our data due to inconsistent naming conventions and limited

search functionality. It served solely as a storage platform, without workflow or automation features, which resulted in inefficiencies.

After careful evaluation, we adopted AIM, a software system designed specifically for DSPS programs. Implementation required a significant build-out period, involving close collaboration among Alternate Media, High Tech, and IT staff over more than a year. Our Phase I rollout began in Summer 2025.

AIM has already demonstrated its value by streamlining processes and organizing student files more effectively. Students can now apply directly online using their SMC credentials. For any student needing assistance, we have a computer in our front office where they can fill out the application with the help of DSPS staff. Additionally, faculty notification letters regarding student accommodations are now auto-generated and populated with accurate class details from WebSIS, greatly reducing manual workload. This efficiency allows counselors and students to focus on more meaningful issues.

2. Increase department in service training about DSPS services and technology compliance:

To improve campus-wide understanding of DSPS services and ensure compliance with technological and legal standards, the department has expanded its training offerings. From Fall 2023 through Winter 2025, DSPS coordinated and delivered numerous workshops and presentations, including:

- **Fall 2023**
 - *DSPS & Your Success* — VIP Welcome Day (8/17/23)
 - *DSPS Parent Workshops: Supporting Your College Student* — VIP Welcome Day (8/18/23)
 - *Universal Design: Captioning Requirements and Best Practices* — Distance Education Design and Learn Workshop (10/17/23)
 - Presentation at Communications Department Meeting
- **Winter 2024**
 - *Service & Emotional Support Animals and Assisting Students with Disabilities* — Manager's Association Meeting (1/26/24), attended by approximately 60 managers
- **Spring 2024**
 - *Invisible Disabilities: Understanding and Accepting What We Can't See* — Workshop by Russell Lehmann at Spring 2024 Professional Development Day (148 attendees)
 - *Tech-ing for Accessibility: AI and Universal Design for Learning in Action* — Online Teaching Winter Institute 2025
 - Accessibility and Universal Design presentations to SMC Interaction Design (IXD) Bachelor's program (2024 & 2025 cohorts)
 - *Pope Tech Dashboard: Improving Course Accessibility* — Faculty-focused workshops on Canvas content accessibility
 - Presentations to the Board of Trustees (10/1/24), Career Services Faculty Orientation, and New Department Chairs Orientation

3. Faculty Hiring:

DSPS successfully recruited an adjunct counselor to fill a vacancy; a necessary hiring as student appointment demand often surpasses counselor appointment availability. The department filled a full-time faculty position in the High-Tech Training Center (HTTC), enhancing program stability and service consistency while reducing liability concerns related to our capacity to meet complex accommodation needs.

8a. Identify and describe one or two outcomes students are expected to experience after receiving services from, or participating in, the program. (200 words)

After receiving services from the DSPS program, students are expected to experience increased access, engagement, and success in their academic pursuits. One key outcome is that students will gain equitable access to educational programs and services through individualized accommodations, such as assistive technology, alternative testing arrangements, note-taking support, and accessible course materials. These

accommodations are designed to remove barriers, allowing students to fully participate in their classes and demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

A second outcome is the development of student self-advocacy skills. Through personalized counseling and support, students learn to understand their rights and responsibilities, communicate their needs, and navigate campus resources more effectively. This empowerment fosters greater independence and confidence, both in the classroom and beyond.

Together, these outcomes support the overarching goal of the DSPS program: to create an inclusive learning environment where students with disabilities have the tools and support they need to achieve their educational goals. By reducing barriers and increasing student independence, DSPS helps ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed academically and prepare for their future careers or continued education.

8b. Describe how the identified student outcomes are assessed. (e.g., a survey of program participants is administered at week 12 of each semester) (200 words)

The DSPS program assesses student outcomes using several methods to evaluate the impact of its services. One key method is a student satisfaction survey administered every two years. This survey is designed to assess whether students feel their academic accommodations are helping them achieve their educational goals. It also evaluates if students feel their instructors understand their role in providing accommodations, and if students feel a sense of belonging at SMC as a student with a disability. Questions focus on students' experiences with academic accommodations and their overall satisfaction with DSPS support. This feedback helps determine whether the program is effectively meeting its goals of reducing barriers and empowering students.

In addition to the survey, the program uses data from the Office of Institutional Research to assess academic outcomes for DSPS students, including matriculation, course completion, and success rates. These outcomes are compared to those of the general student population to identify trends and disparities. This quantitative data provides valuable insight into whether DSPS students are achieving their academic goals at comparable rates, helping the program evaluate long-term effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

Together, these assessment methods ensure continuous program development and accountability in supporting student access and success.

8c. What is the "effectiveness" target goal for each of the expected student outcomes identified? (e.g., 90% or more of students attending the FAFSA workshops successfully complete the financial aid application within four weeks) (200 words)

For the first outcome—increasing equitable access through individualized accommodations—the effectiveness goal is that at least 80% of students receiving DSPS services will report agreement (combining "somewhat agree," "agree," and "strongly agree") that their accommodations effectively reduced barriers to learning and supported progress toward their educational goals. In addition, we aim for DSPS students to achieve course completion rates comparable to their non-DSPS peers, demonstrating that accommodations foster equitable academic success.

For the second outcome—developing student self-advocacy skills—the effectiveness target is that 80% or more of students will indicate agreement on survey items measuring growth in independence, advocacy, and sense of belonging. This reflects their ability to understand their rights and responsibilities, communicate needs effectively, and utilize campus resources with confidence.

Together, these benchmarks represent both academic success and personal empowerment, aligning with DSPS's overarching mission to foster inclusion, independence, and equal opportunity.

8d. Analyze the program's performance on the data collected to assess the program's student outcomes. Is the program meeting the target goals? What context is needed to understand the results? (500 words)

Outcome 1: Equitable Access

Survey results indicate that DSPS accommodations are largely effective. In the 2021 Biennial Survey, 93% of students agreed their academic accommodations helped them reach their educational goals. In 2023 that number was 94%. However, in 2025, the number dropped to 79%. One reason this drop may have occurred could be an increase in instructors proactively ensuring course access and employing Universal Design principles post-pandemic.

Students report their most valued DSPS service is timeliness of receiving accommodations. In 2023, 69.4% of students listed this as their most valued service, and 70% in 2025. Qualitative feedback praised extended testing time, counseling, and registration support, but also noted inconsistent faculty implementation and delays. These results show that while accommodations reduce barriers, continued faculty training and service delivery improvements are needed.

Outcome 2: Self-Advocacy Skills

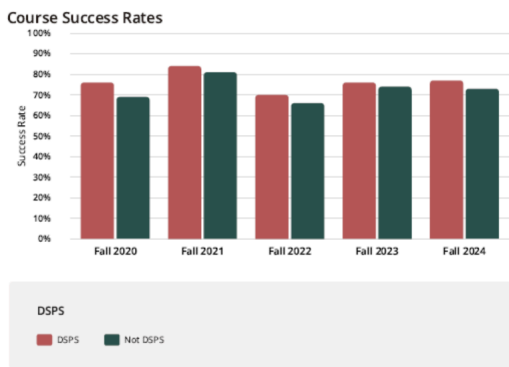
Students reported strong gains in self-advocacy, and while feelings of belonging are still above the target goal, they did experience a decrease. In 2025, 93% agreed they understand how their disability affects their academics, an increase from 2023, where 81% agreed. In 2025, 81.7% felt welcomed and valued as members of the campus community which was a decline from 89% in 2023. One possible explanation for the decrease is the changing socio-political climate. Additionally, in 2025, only 77.8% agreed they fully understand their rights and responsibilities as students with disabilities, compared to 93% in 2021, and 89% in 2023. This signals a need for clearer communication about students' rights and responsibilities within our program.

Course Success Rates

Academic outcomes confirm that DSPS students are performing at comparable rates, and actually exceeding their non-DSPS peers in terms of course success. Between 2020 and 2024, overall DSPS course success rates ranged from 70–84%, closely aligning with non-DSPS students (69–81%). DSPS course success rates in English ranged from 59–81%, with non-DSPS students between 57-73%, and in Math, DSPS course success rates were between 39- 72% and non-DSPS students were between 37-68%. These results demonstrate that accommodations not only reduce barriers but also promote equitable academic outcomes. This data is also a testament to the perseverance and grit of our DSPS students.

Context and Conclusion

The strong outcomes in 2020–2021, amid pandemic disruptions, highlight the program's adaptability. Overall, DSPS is meeting or exceeding most targets. Areas for growth include reinforcing understanding of rights and responsibilities and ensuring consistent and timely faculty implementation of accommodations. These findings affirm DSPS's mission to foster inclusion, independence, and equal opportunity.



Outcome	Indicator	Target Goal	2025 Result	Met?
Equitable Access	Students agree accommodations help reach goals (Q8)	≥ 80%	79%	Nearly met
Equitable Access	Timeliness of accommodations (Q9)	≥ 80%	70%	Below target
Self-Advocacy	Understand disability impact (Q2)	≥ 80%	93%	Exceeded
Self-Advocacy	Understand rights/responsibilities (Q6)	≥ 80%	77.8%	Slightly below target
Self-Advocacy	Feel welcomed/valued (Q3)	≥ 80%	81.7%	Met

9. Based upon the outcomes assessment, satisfaction evaluation and/or other data, provide two notable examples of how the program serves students effectively and briefly explain why they are successful. (500 words)

Two Notable Examples of Effective Student Support

The outcomes assessment and satisfaction data point to two notable areas in which DSPS services are especially effective in supporting student success; individualized accommodations and development of self-advocacy and belonging.

1. Accommodations as a Catalyst for Academic Success

The most current survey results show that 79% of students agreed DSPS accommodations helped them reach their educational goals, nearly meeting the 80% benchmark. Timeliness of services was also identified as the most valued feature, with 70% of students citing it as critical to their success. While a minority of students noted faculty implementation inconsistencies, overall, accommodations such as extended testing time, priority registration, and academic counseling were consistently praised. These services have a direct, measurable impact on equitable access: DSPS students' course success rates not only align with, but in all years, surpassed, those of non-DSPS peers. For example, in Fall 2023, DSPS students achieved a 75% course success rate compared to 67% among the general student population.

This achievement is notable given that DSPS students often face multiple, intersecting challenges along with their disability, such as financial insecurity, technology barriers, and healthcare issues. The fact that students with disabilities are succeeding at comparable or higher rates underscores the effectiveness of accommodations in leveling the academic playing field. The program's responsiveness during the pandemic further demonstrates this point—despite rapid transitions to remote learning, DSPS students continued to perform strongly. The success of accommodations can be attributed to their alignment with universal design principles, their adaptability to diverse needs, and the supportive counseling structure that helps students integrate them effectively into their academic pathways.

2. Promoting Self-Advocacy and a Sense of Belonging

Beyond immediate academic outcomes, DSPS services cultivate skills and mindsets that sustain long-term student independence. In the 2025 survey, 93% of students reported understanding how their disability impacts their academics, far exceeding the 80% target. Similarly, 81.7% felt welcomed and valued as

members of the campus community, meeting the benchmark for campus belonging, despite being a decrease from previous years. These findings reflect the success of DSPS in not only providing accommodations but also empowering students to navigate higher education with greater confidence and self-awareness.

Students' ability to articulate their needs and recognize their rights is critical for persistence, both within community college and as they transition to universities or the workforce. While results indicate room for improvement in fully understanding rights and responsibilities (77.8%, slightly below the target), the strong scores in self-knowledge and belonging in difficult socio-political landscapes suggest DSPS has built a solid foundation. Strategies such as one-on-one counseling, skill building support classes, and inclusive campus programming have proven successful in helping students develop self-advocacy skills. The sense of being valued on campus also reduces isolation and stigma, further enhancing student resilience and persistence.

Conclusion

Together, these two areas—effective accommodations and the cultivation of self-advocacy—illustrate how DSPS not only removes barriers but also builds capacity. By meeting students' immediate academic needs while fostering independence and belonging, DSPS ensures equitable access and prepares students for success beyond community college.

10. Based upon the overall assessment and evaluation of the program, describe 2-5 areas that require attention or improvement. (500 words)

Program data reveals several areas where improvements can be made to progress and strengthen student outcomes. Three areas stand out: reinforcing students' understanding of rights and responsibilities, expanding access to timely counseling appointments, and ensuring smoother faculty implementation of accommodations.

1. Reinforcing Student Understanding of Rights and Responsibilities

Survey results show that while 93% of DSPS students report understanding how their disability affects their academics, only 77.8% indicate they fully understand their rights and responsibilities as students with disabilities, which is just shy of our 80% target goal. This also marks a notable decline from 93% in 2021 and 89% in 2023, suggesting an emerging gap in student preparedness to navigate the accommodation process effectively. Without clarity in this area, students may experience delays in accessing support or feel hesitant to advocate for themselves. Improvement in the orientation process that reinforces advocacy skills and procedures will help ensure that all students feel empowered to exercise their rights and meet their responsibilities with confidence.

2. Expanding Timely Access to Counseling Services

Another area of concern is access to DSPS counseling. Students rely on specialized counseling not only for accommodations but also for academic planning, transfer preparation, and resource navigation. Survey data shows students consistently listing access to counselors in a timely manner as one of the services that is most important to them. Current appointment availability does not consistently meet demand, creating barriers to timely accommodations and academic planning. Ensuring that counseling support is readily accessible is key to student retention and long-term goal achievement.

3. Supporting Faculty in Timely Implementation of Accommodations

While accommodations remain a cornerstone of DSPS effectiveness, student feedback points to challenges in the timely and consistent implementation of accommodations by instructors. In 2025, 76% of students agreed their instructors understand disability related resources and procedures, which falls below the target benchmark. Qualitatively, students reported delays with instructors implementing approved accommodations. These issues not only undermine equity but also increase student stress and frustration. Addressing this challenge requires strengthening the partnership between DSPS and faculty to ensure that accommodations are integrated more seamlessly into the classroom environment.

Conclusion

While DSPS students are meeting or exceeding their peers academically and benefiting from individualized accommodations and self-advocacy supports, reinforcing student knowledge, expanding counseling access, and improving faculty implementation are essential next steps. By addressing these challenges, DSPS can further its mission of reducing barriers, promoting independence, and ensuring that all students with disabilities thrive at the college and beyond.

D. THE FUTURE OF THE PROGRAM

11. Based on the findings from your assessment/evaluation, describe the goals/priorities and accompanying action plan(s) you will pursue to improve your program. (500 words)

1. Reinforcing Student Understanding of Rights and Responsibilities

To address the decline in students' understanding of rights and responsibilities, DSPS plans to engage in proactive communication and outreach efforts to ensure students are consistently informed throughout their academic journey. DSPS participates at numerous SMC outreach events such as VIP Day and SMC Start Up to name a couple. Information and awareness may start there for some students. The initial intake with a DSPS counselor is also a critical time for students to become informed about the program and their rights and responsibilities as participating students. Ideas to further improve student awareness include DSPS open houses, where students can meet staff and learn about services and policies in an accessible setting, as well as regular DSPS updates, reminders, and strategies for navigating the accommodation process. Workshops on self-advocacy, effective communication with faculty, and use of assistive technologies will further reinforce key skills. Together, these strategies will help ensure students are empowered to take ownership of their educational experience.

2. Expanding Timely Access to Counseling Services

Students rely on DSPS counseling for both accommodations and broader educational planning, yet demand often outpaces availability, resulting in delays that affect timely course registration and adjustment of services. To address this challenge, in Summer 2025, DSPS began implementation of AIM (Accessible Information Management), a specialized file management system designed for disability services programs. Phase 1 consisted of transferring student files and data from Sharepoint to AIM, with new students strictly utilizing AIM for onboarding. Phase 2 is planned to be rolled out in Winter 2026, which will allow students to request previously authorized accommodations online, in hopes that it will reduce the need for routine counseling appointments. This innovation will free counselors to focus on higher-impact services such as transfer planning, disability management, and crisis support.

3. Supporting Faculty in Timely Implementation of Accommodations

Students consistently report that timeliness of accommodations is their most valued service, yet satisfaction in this area can be improved upon. To improve consistency, DSPS will use AIM to generate standardized Faculty Notification Letters, ensuring that communication with instructors is clear, uniform, and timely regardless of which counselor initiates the process. Additionally, Phase 3 of AIM implementation will consist of faculty access, where they will be able to utilize AIM to upload exam materials, hopefully reducing delays in testing accommodations and access to test materials for students. DSPS will also continue working with department chairs to provide presentations on program policies, services, and best practices. By strengthening communication and training, DSPS can support faculty in implementing accommodations more smoothly and reliably.

Additionally, the program will partner in compliance with AB 2821, which requires community college districts to establish a Disability Access and Compliance Training Program for personnel beginning in the 2026–2027 academic year. DSPS will work with Human Resources to integrate this training into the onboarding process for all new employees. By ensuring that all personnel receive standardized training on

disability access, accommodations, and compliance, the college will foster a culture of inclusion while meeting legal requirements.

Conclusion

DSPS's goals and action plan focus on empowering students through improved communication and engagement, modernizing counseling processes to ensure timely access, supporting faculty in delivering accommodations consistently, and implementing the statewide mandate for employee disability training. Together, these initiatives will address the challenges identified in the program assessment while reinforcing the program's core mission of reducing barriers, fostering independence, and promoting equitable student success.

E. EMPLOYEES/PROGRAM STAFF AND DEPARTMENTAL CULTURE

12. List and describe program staffing, including FTE, faculty, classified professionals, managers, and student/intern support. (250 words)

The Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD/DSPS) is overseen by the DSPS Manager and Faculty Coordinator (2.0 FTE). CSD has three full-time counselors (3.0 FTE), and four adjunct counselors (2.0 FTE). There are two full-time Learning Disabilities (LD) Specialists (2.0 FTE) and currently one adjunct LD Specialist (.5 FTE), with a vacancy to be filled for a second adjunct LD Specialist (.5 FTE). There is one full-time Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Specialist (1.0 FTE) along with one adjunct ABI Specialist and three adjunct Faculty providing ABI class instruction, one of which also provides part-time support in the High-Tech Training Center (HTTC). Additionally, in the HTTC there is one full-time HTTC Specialist (1.0 FTE) and one other adjunct HTTC Specialist (.5 FTE), with a vacancy for a second full-time HTTC Specialist. Additionally, there is one adjunct LMFT counselor who provides personal counseling support for students in the program.

Classified professionals form the backbone of daily operations and include three full-time DSPS Specialists, four full-time DSPS Assistants, with one of those being an 11-month employee, one full-time Alternate Media Specialist, two full-time Sign Language Interpreters, one part-time Sign Language Interpreter, one full-time, 11-month LD Tutoring Coordinator, one full-time, 11-month LD Instructional Assistant, and one part-time, 11-month LD Instructional Assistant. Student workers provide additional support in the Learning Disabilities program as tutors, and as note takers in the classroom for students with approved, note taker accommodations. The number of student workers varies by semester and in the past six years has ranged from two to six.

13. Analyze staffing levels in the context of the program's mission and purpose. Are there any gaps or needs to be addressed? (250 words)

The Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) is staffed by a combination of faculty, classified professionals, managers, and student workers, all of whom are essential to advancing the program's mission of ensuring equal access and promoting independence for students with disabilities. Current staffing levels allow CSD to deliver a wide range of services and accommodations, including counseling, assistive technologies, test proctoring, scheduling appointments, LD and ABI assessments, alternate media, interpreting, and note-taking.

CSD has a strong staffing foundation, but several gaps impact the program's ability to fully meet its mission. Learning Disabilities (LD) Specialists are particularly critical, as students with LD represent approximately one-quarter of the program's population—over 500 students annually. With a vacancy in adjunct LD support, staffing is strained, and timely assessments and services are at risk. Similarly, the vacancy for the second full-time High Tech Training Center (HTTC) Specialist limits assistance during lab hours, and assistance with HTTC specific student accommodations. For students who are blind or have low vision (15–20 per year) for

example, preparing course materials in accessible formats is resource-intensive, and reliance on adjunct staffing does not provide consistency and can reduce efficiency.

Counseling capacity is another area of need. With three full-time and four adjunct counselors, demand consistently exceeds availability. Appointments are often fully booked, causing extended wait times for access to an appointment. This limits student access to vital academic and accommodation specific counseling. Finally, student workers and DSPS staff note-takers, are essential, yet remain insufficient to meet the volume of requests each semester.

14. Describe how the program provides ongoing professional development opportunities for staff. (500 words)

Continuous professional development is an important component of serving students effectively due to rapidly changing laws and mandates. Recognizing the evolving legal, procedural, and pedagogical landscape in disability services, the program ensures that counselors, staff, and faculty have multiple ongoing opportunities to expand their knowledge, share best practices, and remain current on both compliance requirements and student-centered approaches.

DSPS counselors meet on a weekly basis to engage in professional dialogue around new processes, procedures, and mandates that affect service delivery. These meetings provide a structured space to discuss legislative changes, statewide guidance, and campus-level initiatives. They also serve as a forum for collaborative problem-solving, where counselors can bring forward complex or challenging student cases and work together to identify effective strategies. This consistent engagement ensures that counseling staff remain up to date while also strengthening a culture of collaboration.

For classified staff, professional development is embedded into departmental practice as well. Staff gather at least once per semester to review procedures, reflect on their experiences, and address emerging issues. These meetings not only ensure alignment across roles but also allow staff to provide feedback on how processes impact students and to propose adjustments that improve service delivery. Recognizing the value of greater cross-departmental dialogue, DSPS is currently working to increase the frequency of staff engagement by including staff participation in two counselor meetings each semester. This initiative allows the entire department—counselors, classified staff, and leadership—to meet together more frequently, strengthening communication and reinforcing a shared commitment to student success.

The department also actively brings in external experts to provide targeted professional development. Recent examples include hosting nationally recognized speaker Paul Grossman, who addressed current disability law and best practices; presenters from the Office of Civil Rights, who shared insights through case examples; and SMC's own legal counsel, who provided guidance on compliance and institutional responsibilities. In Spring 2024, the department sponsored a Flex Day session with keynote speaker Russell Lehmann, who presented *Invisible Disabilities: Understanding and Accepting What We Can't See*. This event helped broaden campus-wide awareness and provided faculty and staff with concrete strategies for creating inclusive environments.

In addition to structured in-house training, DSPS supports faculty and staff in pursuing external professional development opportunities, including conferences, workshops, webinars, and specialized training sessions. Staff have engaged in a wide array of offerings that reflect the diversity of their roles and responsibilities, ranging from accessibility workshops, counseling institutes, and CAPED conventions to trainings on workplace safety, equity, and inclusive practices. Participation has included specialized sessions on learning disabilities, de-escalation and crisis response, legal compliance (such as Title IX and mandated reporting), equity-centered counseling, and accessibility in digital environments. Others have pursued certification programs, wellness seminars, and leadership development opportunities that enhance both professional skills and personal growth. Collectively, these examples demonstrate that DSPS staff are not only supported in ongoing development but also actively seek out learning that strengthens their ability to serve students holistically and effectively.

15. What equity-centered practices and training have been implemented in the program? If applicable, provide examples and discuss strengths and areas for growth. How can the institution better support the program and staff in developing an equity minded work culture? (500 words)

Equity is at the core of the DSPS department, both in philosophy and in daily practice. Because DSPS serves students whose needs are highly individualized, equity-centered approaches are not an add-on but rather an intrinsic part of how the program functions.

A central requirement of DSPS is the *interactive process*, in which each student works directly with a counselor to develop an Academic Accommodation Plan. This process ensures that decisions are never made through a one-size-fits-all lens. Instead, staff engage in meaningful dialogue with students to understand their specific barriers and goals, tailoring accommodations to meet individual circumstances. By design, this case-by-case model affirms each student's unique lived experience and advances equitable access to education.

Beyond mandated practices, the DSPS team has made a deliberate effort to articulate and live out equity-centered values. Staff collaborated in a dedicated meeting to identify and establish shared office norms and values that guide interactions with students. These values, posted in the office as a visible reminder, reinforce the department's commitment to respect, empathy, and inclusion. This intentional grounding in values ensures that staff interactions are consistent, welcoming, and centered on equity.

The impact of these practices is evident both in measurable outcomes and in the lived experiences of students. Quantitatively, DSPS students at SMC consistently demonstrate no equity gap in course completion compared to their non-DSPS peers, as described in previous sections of this program review. This outcome reflects the department's success in removing systemic barriers and ensuring that disability is not a predictor of academic disadvantage. Qualitatively, students affirm the department's culture of equity and belonging. Many frequently visit the office, sometimes simply to connect with staff in a space where they feel safe, respected, and valued. It is not uncommon for alumni to return after graduation to thank the faculty and staff who supported them throughout their educational journey—an enduring testament to the trust and sense of community DSPS fosters.

At the same time, the department acknowledges that equity work is ongoing and evolving. One area for growth is expanding professional development focused on intersectionality—understanding how disability interacts with other identities such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status. While DSPS staff are highly skilled in disability-specific equity practices, additional training and resources would deepen their capacity to support students whose experiences of marginalization are multifaceted. Another opportunity is to continue collaboration with faculty across the college to increase and sustain awareness of equity-minded approaches to disability in the classroom.

The institution can support DSPS in this work by providing ongoing access to equity-focused training opportunities, sponsoring guest speakers, and ensuring that DSPS has a voice in college-wide equity planning efforts.

16. If applicable, describe if the program has a succession plan to ensure that it is minimally impacted by staffing transfers, departures, and/or retirements? (250 words)

Succession planning is important in maintaining continuity of services for students. Most recently, DSPS successfully navigated a leadership transition when the program's long-time Faculty Coordinator retired. To prepare for this transition, a full-time High Tech Training Center Specialist was appointed to the Coordinator role and engaged in approximately six months of training and mentorship with the outgoing Coordinator. This process ensured a smoother handoff of responsibilities and minimized disruption to program operations.

In general, the program benefits from having multiple staff members within most job classifications, which allows for peer-to-peer training and knowledge sharing when a vacancy occurs. This structure helps new employees learn from experienced colleagues and supports consistency in student services. However, in certain specialized roles where there is only one position, the College's hiring processes limit the ability to overlap training between outgoing and incoming employees. In these cases, the new staff member must rely on colleagues outside of their classification for orientation and support until they develop full proficiency. While this approach is not ideal, it reflects the structural and procedural realities outside of the program's direct control.

Despite these challenges, the DSPS program remains committed to supporting staff through cross-training where possible, and collaborative teamwork. These practices help ensure that transitions are managed as smoothly as possible and that the impact on student services remains minimal.

17. Describe the program's workplace culture, climate, and morale, and discuss how it impacts the program's ability and capacity to effectively serve students. Describe how the college can support and improve the environment and/or morale in your department. (500 words)

DSPS is united by a shared commitment to serving students with disabilities and ensuring equitable access to education. Faculty and staff consistently demonstrate dedication, compassion, and professionalism in supporting nearly 2,000 students, many of whom present complex and high-need cases. This shared belief fosters a sense of purpose and collaboration within the department. At the same time, the nature of the work can be emotionally and administratively demanding. Staff and faculty regularly support students in crisis, those experiencing homelessness, and individuals with significant behavioral and mental health challenges—all while balancing high compliance standards and extensive administrative responsibilities. These factors can lead to fatigue, burnout, and feelings of being overwhelmed, despite the morale that comes from a shared mission.

A particular challenge is the ongoing shortage of counseling appointments. Demand often exceeds availability. Counselors face the strain of back-to-back appointments with little time to regroup, while staff must repeatedly inform frustrated students that no appointments are available. While additional staffing would be the most effective solution, this is unlikely given the college's current financial climate. To help address the issue, the department is implementing a new database management system (AIM) designed to streamline processes and potentially free up counseling time. While it is too early to assess its impact, the department is hopeful that AIM will ease some of the burden.

Additionally, the broader college climate has, at times, felt divided across constituent groups, with faculty, staff, and administration often working in silos rather than engaging in shared dialogue. Tragic events on campus, ongoing financial instability, and a socio-political climate marked by tension and uncertainty have also contributed to stress and insecurity. These external pressures inevitably affect the daily experience of DSPS personnel, even as they continue to serve students with dedication.

Despite these challenges, the department is working to strengthen workplace culture through improved communication, team-building efforts, and intentional collaboration. With new leadership, there is a renewed focus on building trust, fostering transparency, and creating opportunities for faculty and staff to support one another. This includes more recognition of work being done, spaces for open dialogue, and strategies that promote resilience and mutual support.

The college can further support workplace climate by investing in opportunities that bring all constituent groups together to address institutional challenges collectively rather than in silos. Increased transparency in decision-making, meaningful inclusion of all voices in planning processes, and structured opportunities for dialogue would help foster a stronger sense of unity. Expanded professional development and wellness initiatives tailoring the unique demands of working with challenging student situations would enhance morale and sustainability for employees who regularly navigate high-stakes, high-stress responsibilities. Recent opportunities in areas such as crisis response, having difficult conversations, and team building have been appreciated, and it is hoped these efforts will continue to grow.

While DSPS faculty and staff remain steadfast in their dedication to students, strengthening workplace climate and morale will ensure the department can continue to meet the needs of its large and diverse student population with excellence, compassion, and resilience.

F. BUDGET PLANNING

18. Describe how the current program budget aligns with the program's goals and outcomes over the next three years. If it doesn't align, what would be needed to supplement the current budget allocation? (250 words)

Over the past decade, the DSPS budget has remained largely static in terms of the college's contribution, while state allocations have fluctuated modestly under the new funding formula. During this period, employee costs have steadily increased due to COLA, longevity, range adjustments, and rising benefit expenses. For many years, the program managed these pressures and stayed within budget, even as the student population grew. However, in the last year, DSPS exceeded its budget.

Because roughly 90% of DSPS funding goes to salaries and benefits, meaningful reductions would require cutting adjunct counseling hours or leaving vacant positions unfilled. Either option would significantly compromise the program's ability to serve students and meet compliance mandates. As previously noted, DSPS already struggles to keep pace with the high demand for counseling, accommodations, and support services. Maintaining adequate staffing is essential to the program's mission, and additional resources are necessary to sustain current service levels.

The implementation of the AIM database system, while critical for efficiency and compliance, adds a substantial cost. Purchased in January 2024, the three-year contract totaled \$52,223.40. Renewal in 2027 is expected to cost \$16,000-\$21,000 annually. Although SEAP funds were originally intended to offset this expense, they are no longer available, requiring DSPS to absorb the full cost within an already strained budget.

While the program continues to pursue supplemental funding through Perkins, Lottery, and Foundation sources for targeted needs such as accessibility software, ongoing institutional support will be needed to stabilize the budget and ensure alignment with program goals in the coming years.

19. Are there any special projects or initiatives that will require additional budgeting or a reallocation of existing resources for the program? Consider the following: human resources, reducing racial equity gaps, student success and completion, community relations, professional development opportunities, and federal, state or district initiatives. (500 words)

The DSPS program's largest current initiative is the implementation of AIM, a comprehensive database management system designed to improve efficiency, accuracy, and compliance. While AIM is costly, it is essential for both operational sustainability and student success. The system supports counselors and staff by streamlining processes that have traditionally been time-consuming and labor-intensive, which in turn helps reduce overload and burnout. Most importantly, AIM provides the infrastructure needed to meet new state-mandated reporting requirements, such as Vision Aligned Reporting (VAR). VAR requires programs to track and submit data on student services the program provides, at a highly detailed level. AIM will enable DSPS to capture this data more accurately and efficiently, thereby ensuring compliance and aligning with statewide accountability initiatives.

Originally, AIM's implementation was to be funded through SEAP. However, with that funding no longer available, DSPS has had to redirect Foundation funds to cover the expense. DSPS is lucky to have Foundation funds available, but they are better used to directly enrich the student experience or to build community among DSPS students and staff. For example, funds could have supported initiatives such as department t-shirts to foster visibility, pride, and solidarity, or community-building events that strengthen student engagement and belonging. Instead, these opportunities must be deferred in order to cover AIM's cost, leaving the program with fewer options to enhance student success and departmental culture.

In addition to AIM, professional development represents a critical area of need. The landscape of disability services is rapidly evolving, particularly in relation to technology, artificial intelligence, and universal design for learning. Federal and state laws, mandates, and best practices surrounding accommodations change frequently, and often with little lead time. Faculty and staff must remain up to date to ensure the program remains compliant and that students receive equitable, legally mandated support. Without consistent access

to professional development opportunities—such as trainings, workshops, and conferences—faculty and staff risk falling behind on critical updates that directly impact compliance. This is not simply a matter of professional growth or networking; it is an operational necessity that directly affects the college's ability to serve students effectively and remain in compliance with state and federal regulations. Unfortunately, the program's current budget cannot support these opportunities, and employees are often left to seek alternative funding sources.

Taken together, AIM implementation, VAR programmatic reporting, and ongoing professional development represent the program's most urgent special initiatives. Both directly impact DSPS's ability to meet its mission of equitable access, to reduce barriers for disproportionately impacted students, and to ensure student success and completion. While the department has worked diligently to identify creative funding solutions, additional institutional support is necessary to fully realize these initiatives without sacrificing other important community-building and student-engagement efforts. Strategic investment in these areas will ensure that DSPS remains compliant, efficient, and student-centered, while sustaining the morale and capacity of the faculty and staff who carry out this critical work.

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