

# ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023



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## Section 1 Executive Summary

The Center for Disability & Access (CDA) is a division of Student Affairs at the University of Utah.

CDA follows the Student Affairs Vision “For students to discover their passion, people, and purpose.

CDA follows the Student Affairs Guiding Values of: Belonging, Care, Integrity, Lifelong Learning, Self-Discovery, and Student Centeredness

The mission of CDA is to ensure student access to educational programs and the campus while promoting inclusion in the campus environment and overall wellness.

The Center for Disability & Access (CDA) is dedicated to students with disabilities by providing the opportunity for success and equal access at the University of Utah. We are committed to providing reasonable accommodation as outlined by Federal and State law. We also strive to create an inclusive, safe, and respectful environment. By promoting awareness, knowledge and equity, we aspire to impact positive change within individuals and the campus community.

First and foremost, the Center for Disability and Access supports the mission of Students Affairs in creating a center of belonging on the University of Utah campus. The University of Utah demonstrates a commitment to students with disabilities when providing students with equal access through reasonable and appropriate accommodations. Students who have their accommodation needs met have an opportunity to engage in academic coursework, programs, and campus life. This is the heart of belonging on campus and subsequently student feelings of inclusion and care is more likely achieved when accommodations are provided. The development of a sense of belonging is key to academic success and student persistence in academic achievement including self-advocacy, and student discovery (Vaccaro, Daly-Cano, & Newman, 2015).

Equal access is achieved by:

- Providing reasonable and appropriate accommodations in programs and courses
- Removing barriers providing students the opportunity to be successful in pursuing their educational goals
- Supporting civil rights and promoting equity and awareness of disability that fosters a campus climate of collaboration

Further the provision of services through the Center for Disability and Access supports the mission of Student Affairs for students to find their passion, people, and purpose. Accommodations provide the opportunity for students to engage in self-discovery and lifelong learning that likely would not occur if students with disabilities had limited access to the campus experience.

The Student Affairs values are supported by providing:

#### Classroom and Exam Accommodations

Students who are provided classroom accommodations engage with professors and other students when barriers are removed. Students gain a sense of safety and belonging which promotes achievement in academic coursework.

#### Assistive Technology and Alternative Format Services

Students have access to the curriculum when provided in a format that supports the students' ability and learning style. Offering information in alternative formats places the focus on the individual needs of the student thus fostering a supportive nurturing environment.

#### Interpreting Services

Interpreting Services ensure that all students can fully engage in academic, social, and supplemental student experiences thus fostering a sense of inclusion and belonging.

#### Student Scholarships

Providing students with financial assistance can alleviate some of the burdens and stress that students encounter thus allowing students to focus on academic pursuits and personal growth.

#### Outreach & Consultation

Actively reaching out to students in order to inform about the services provided by the Center for Disability and Access demonstrates care and commitment to students. Often students may feel nervous about self-identifying as a person with a disability. This creates a barrier and reduces the use of accommodations and directly impacts the student's learning. In addition, providing consultation to departments regarding when to refer students to CDA, the types of accommodations available, and the support from CDA to implement these accommodations helps create a more inclusive and supportive campus environment.

By offering personalized accommodations, CDA affirms the commitment to student success and well-being. In addition, CDA has identified specific goals to support the Student Affairs values: 1) creating a sense of belonging and care by 2) providing exceptional customer service to support the student experience, 3) creating connection within the campus and surrounding community to increase access to available services and supports, and 4) creating opportunities for the professional development of staff in keeping apprised of current practices and interventions for students with disabilities.

## CDA GOALS



### Section 2 Status of Strategic Initiatives

The Center for Disability and Access set goals in the previous academic year to complete strategic initiatives. These goals were intended to be the foundation in meeting the Student Affairs initiatives for creating a place of belonging for students with specific focus on an Anti-Racism Action Plan. In addition a review of policies and updating the department website was identified as another method for ensuring that the value of integrity would be supported by identifying accessibility needs on the department website and equity and consistency in services provided to students. However, shortly after the start of the fiscal year the director of CDA left the Center and assumed responsibility in another division of Student Affairs. The strategic initiatives were commenced and then paused and during the absence of a director the initiatives were not completed.

A search for a new CDA director was completed in December 2022 and the new director started with CDA in January 2023. Specific priorities of the new director include reviewing critical issues and priorities to support the mission of CDA within Student Affairs. The priorities and plan are addressed in *Section 5: New Strategic Initiatives*.

Despite the significant change to leadership in CDA, interim leadership with the CDA began a review of policies and procedures. Although not completed, the review identified that several policies and

procedures need to be updated to reflect the work processes due to the implementation of ClockWork 5 software program. Priorities for the upcoming fiscal year include revising work processes, reviewing documentation guidelines, creating a standard eligibility/qualification letter, and revising the student appeal process.

### Section 3 Major Accomplishments

The new CDA Director started in January of 2023. During this first six months the director reviewed the CDA processes and initiatives and focused on specific actions to support the Student Affairs values of belonging, care, integrity, lifelong learning, self-discovery, and student connectedness.

Specific themes were identified within CDA that will impact the student experience: 1) creating a sense of belonging and care by 2) providing exceptional customer service to support the student experience, 3) creating connection within the campus and surrounding community to increase access to available services and supports, and 4) creating opportunities for the professional development of staff in keeping apprised of current practices and interventions for students with disabilities.

Pursuant to these themes the following major accomplishments have been achieved:



Have provided trainings to Colleges & Departments on CDA & Accommodations



Disability advisors to have regularly scheduled in-service trainings



Collaborating with ASUU for Universal Design and Access project



Establish community partnerships for students to receive psychological assessments



All Disability advisors joined Association on Higher Education And Disability (AHEAD)



Worked with HRE to allow students living with disabilities to have early move-in.

## Students Served

During the 2022-2023 academic year, CDA served 2,800 students, an increase of 17.4% from the previous year and the number of students continues to break records for the most students served in a year.

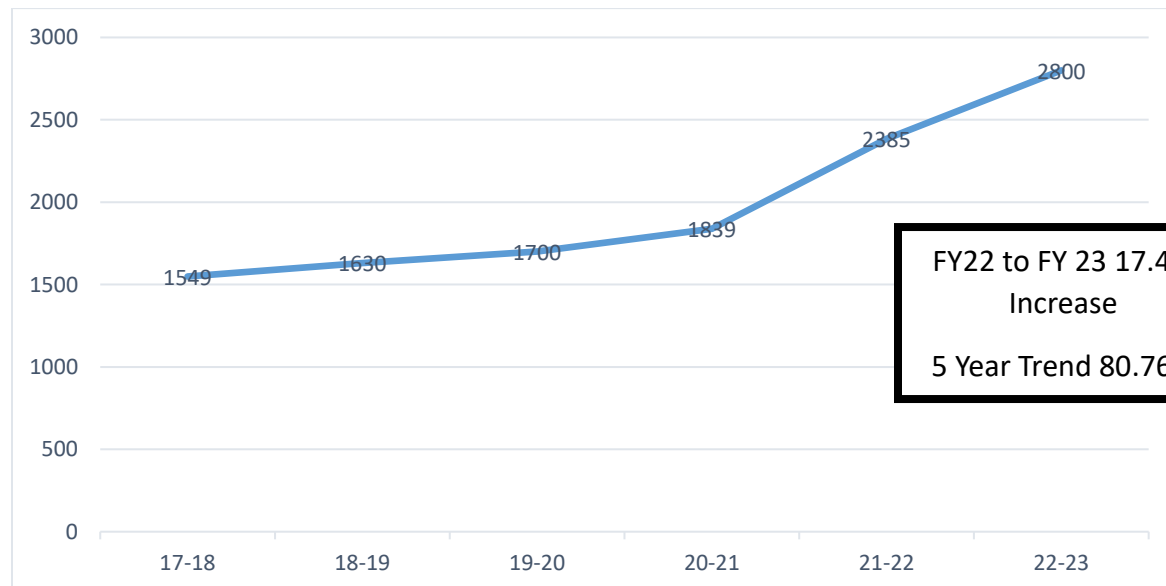
| Demographic    | Number | Percentage |
|----------------|--------|------------|
| Total Students | 2800   | 100%       |
| Graduates      | 261    | 14%        |
| Undergraduates | 1505   | 78%        |

|                     |     |        |
|---------------------|-----|--------|
| International       | 56  | 2%     |
| TRiO                | 75  | 0.03%  |
| Veteran             | 39  | 1.40%  |
| Athlete             | 43  | 1.54%  |
| Honors              | 230 | 8.21%  |
| HRE Resident        | 352 | 12.57% |
| UofU Employee       | 572 | 20.42% |
| Fraternity/Sorority | 117 | 4.18%  |

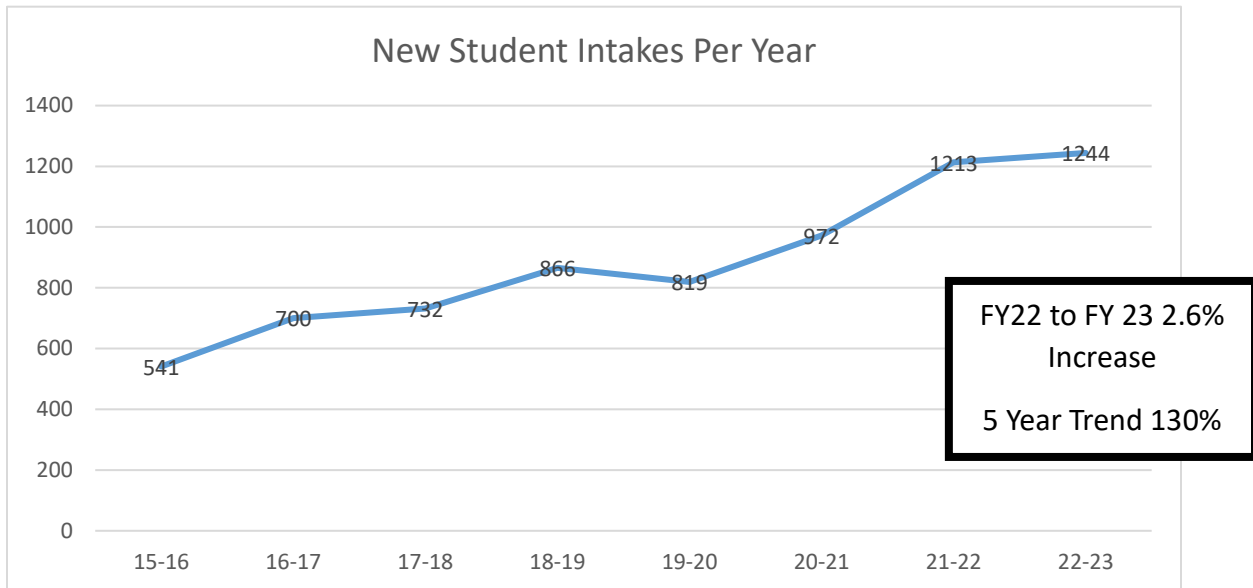
Comparing the number of students registered with CDA (2800) to the student enrollment (34,464) indicates CDA serves approximately 8.12% of the student population.

| Ethnicity                        | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| American Indian/Alaska Native    | 2%         |
| Asian-American                   | 8%         |
| Black                            | 3%         |
| White                            | 71%        |
| Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander | 1%         |
| Latina/o Hispanic                | 12%        |
| Other                            | 3%         |

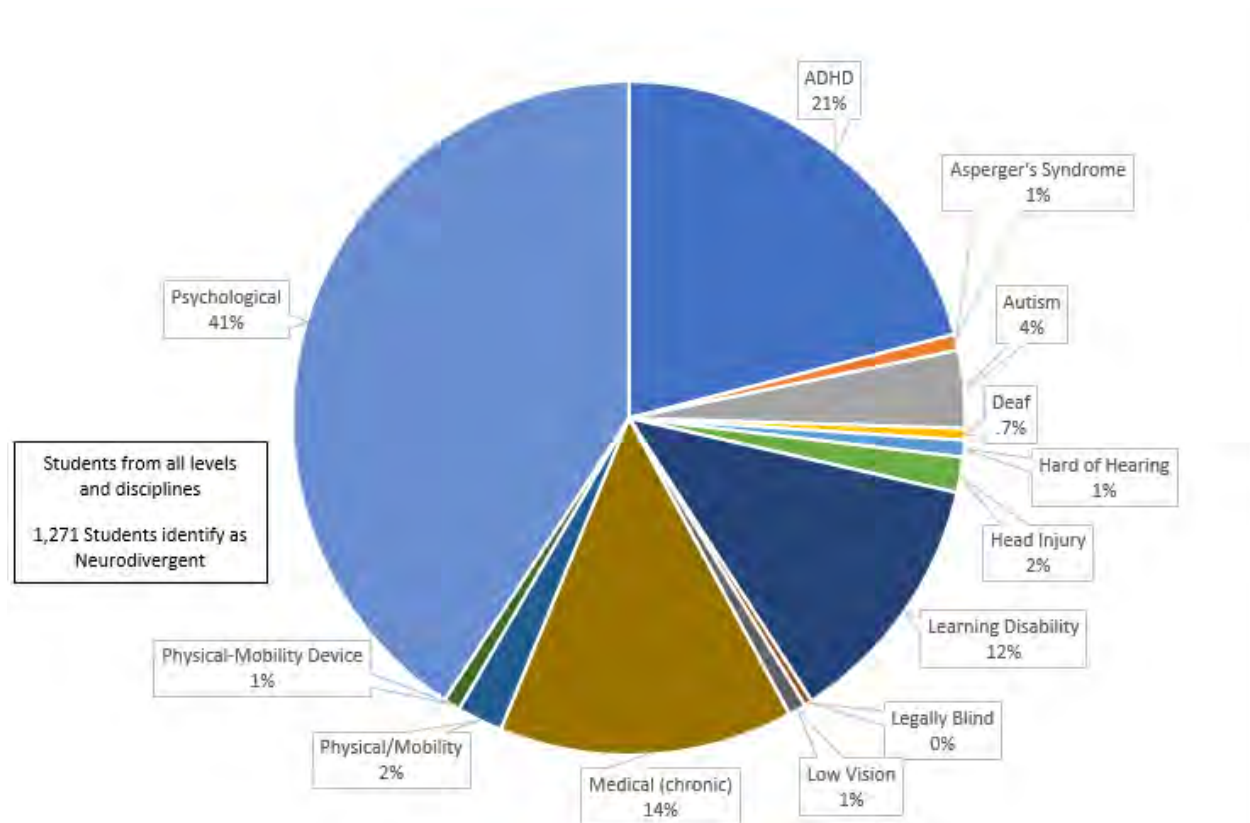
**Total Students – 5 Year Trend**



## New Student Intakes



## Percentage of Disabilities, Academic Year 2022-2023



The number of students with psychological disabilities continues to be the largest population of students registered with the CDA.

| Frequency of Disabilities 5 Year Trend |             |             |             |             |             | % chg 5         |         |
|----------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|---------|
| Disability                             | 2018-19     | 2019-20     | 2020-21     | 2021-22     | 2022-23     | % chg last year | years   |
| ADHD                                   | 313         | 324         | 393         | 571         | 706         | 23.64%          | 125.56% |
| Asperger's Syndrome                    | 21          | 25          | 20          | 26          | 26          | 0%              | 23.80%  |
| Autism                                 | 55          | 60          | 66          | 90          | 125         | 38.88%          | 127.27% |
| Deaf                                   | 5           | 7           | 5           | 14          | 19          | 35.71%          | 280%    |
| Hard of Hearing                        | 22          | 16          | 16          | 34          | 27          | -20.58%         | 22.72%  |
| Head Injury                            | 51          | 45          | 56          | 51          | 57          | 11.76%          | 11.76%  |
| Learning Disability                    | 238         | 244         | 248         | 328         | 414         | 26.12%          | 73.94%  |
| Legally Blind                          | 17          | 13          | 13          | 15          | 13          | -13.33%         | -23.53% |
| Low Vision                             | 21          | 26          | 20          | 32          | 28          | -12.50%         | 33.33%  |
| Medical (chronic)                      | 300         | 300         | 318         | 411         | 476         | 15.81%          | 58.66%  |
| Physical/Mobility                      | 62          | 61          | 44          | 52          | 74          | 42.30%          | 19.35%  |
| Physical-Mobility Device               | 10          | 10          | 9           | 22          | 27          | 22.72%          | 17%     |
| Psychological                          | 676         | 699         | 776         | 845         | 1371        | 62.25%          | 102.81% |
| <b>Total # of disabilities</b>         | <b>1791</b> | <b>1830</b> | <b>1984</b> | <b>2491</b> | <b>3363</b> |                 |         |
| <b>Total # of students served</b>      | <b>1630</b> | <b>1700</b> | <b>1839</b> | <b>2385</b> | <b>2800</b> |                 |         |

\*DSM-V removed the classification of Asperger's and combined the diagnosis with Autism. Newer students with what would have been classified as Asperger's are now classified with Autism.

| College and Academic Level of Students |             |            |
|----------------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| College                                | Number      | Percentage |
| Academic Advising                      | 115         | 6.90%      |
| Architecture                           | 35          | 1.70%      |
| Business                               | 225         | 11%        |
| Cultural & Social                      | 6           | 0.30%      |
| Dentistry                              | 11          | 1%         |
| Education                              | 42          | 2.10%      |
| Engineering                            | 341         | 16.70%     |
| Fine Arts                              | 120         | 5.90%      |
| Health                                 | 110         | 5.40%      |
| Humanities                             | 141         | 6.90%      |
| Law                                    | 63          | 3%         |
| Medicine                               | 66          | 3%         |
| Mines & Earth                          | 0           | 0%         |
| Nursing                                | 65          | 3.20%      |
| Pharmacy                               | 16          | 0.80%      |
| Science                                | 185         | 9.10%      |
| Social Behavioral                      | 309         | 15.10%     |
| Social Work                            | 77          | 3.80%      |
| University College                     | 1           | 0%         |
| Utah Global Nondegree                  | 1           | 0%         |
| Academic Level                         |             |            |
| Freshman                               | 375         | 25%        |
| Sophomore                              | 274         | 18%        |
| Junior                                 | 325         | 22%        |
| Senior                                 | 495         | 33%        |
| Dental                                 | 11          | 1%         |
| Graduate                               | 261         | 14%        |
| Law                                    | 63          | 3%         |
| MD                                     | 11          | 1%         |
| 2nd Bachelors                          | 36          | 2%         |
| <b>Total</b>                           | <b>1851</b> |            |

| Approved Accommodations     |        |
|-----------------------------|--------|
| Accommodation               | Number |
| Accessible Transportation   | 106    |
| Adaptive Equipment          | 1      |
| ASL Interpreting Services   | 13     |
| Accessible Course Materials | 18     |
| Alternative Format          | 326    |
| Assistive Listening System  | 9      |
| Chair                       | 25     |
| Classroom Hold/Change       | 104    |
| Emotional Support Animal    | 144    |
| Flexible Attendance         | 383    |
| Flexible Deadline           | 868    |
| Housing Accommodation       | 207    |
| Interpreter Services        | 19     |
| Language Substitution       | 6      |
| Math Substitution           | 12     |
| Notetaking Smart Pen        | 210    |
| Notetaking Peer             | 156    |
| Priority Registration       | 235    |
| RTC (Captioning)            | 12     |
| Reduced Courseload          | 96     |
| Table                       | 27     |
| Tests, Calculator           | 48     |
| Tests Extended Time         | 1,540  |
| Tests, Private Room         | 51     |
| Tests, Quiet Room           | 812    |
| Tests, Reader               | 23     |
| Tests, Scribe               | 18     |
| Tests, Speech to Text       | 12     |
| Tests, Text to Speech       | 25     |

The Center for Disability and Access continues to support the values of Student Affairs by providing academic accommodations that supports the goal of creating a campus of belonging and lifelong learning. Additional major accomplishments include the following:

### Classroom Accommodations

CDA provides classroom accommodations for students with disabilities at the University of Utah in support of students' equal access to programs, classroom instruction, and to assist students in meeting their academic goals. Accommodations are provided based on the individual needs of the student. Accommodations are categorized by Exam Accommodations, Notetaking Services, Classroom Holds/Changes, Priority Registration, and Accessible Furniture.

### Exam Accommodations

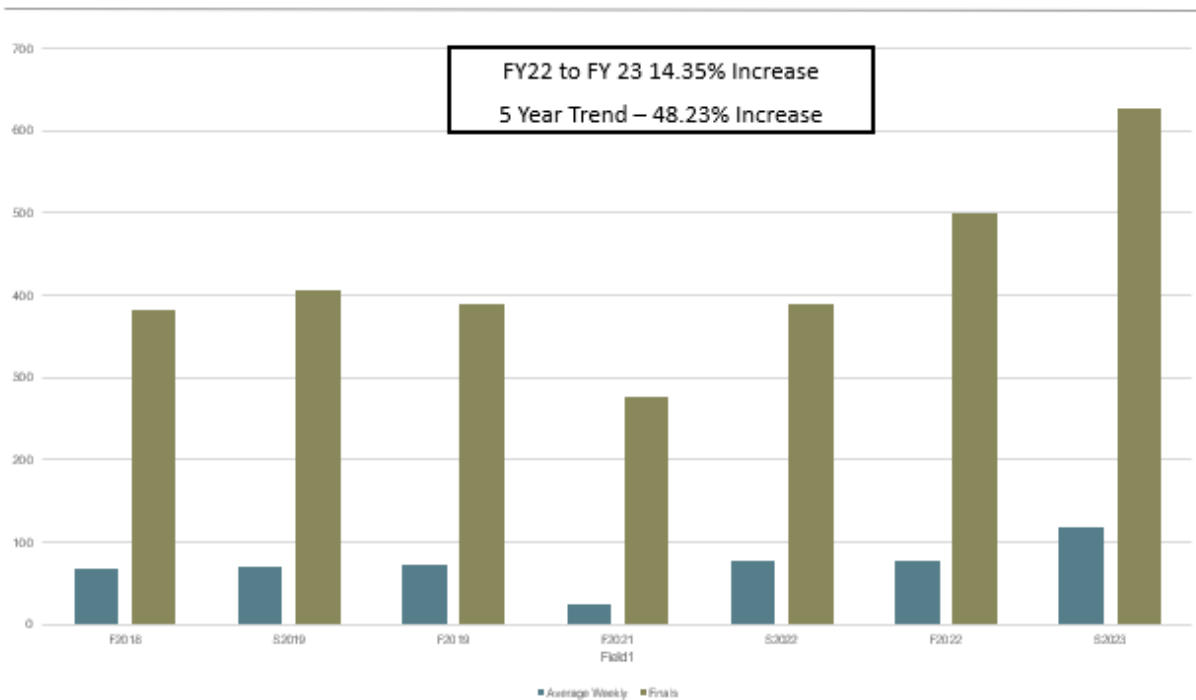
Providing exam accommodations is a major undertaking of CDA. During the 2022-2023 fiscal year, CDA proctored 4,242 exams.

This is an increase of 3.9% compared to the last fiscal year of 4,079. This is likely due to the increasing number of students returning to campus after the pandemic and classes and instruction and assessment returning to traditional in-person delivery.



Of note is a continued demand for CDA proctored examinations. The number of weekly exams has increased with a significant increase in the number of exams proctored. The CDA proctored the largest number of final exams for Spring 2023 with a total number of 626 final exams.

## Exam Accommodations: Weekly Exams & Finals



### Classroom Holds and Changes, Priority Registration, and Accessible Furniture

The physical accessibility of classroom buildings and rooms has improved with new campus construction and renovated buildings. However, physical accessibility of classrooms and buildings continues to remain an issue. Students are provided accommodations to address the physical accessibility challenges on campus. Each semester the student needs are evaluated in consideration of the classroom building assignments and physical accessibility as well as the student's path of travel in accessing the campus. The Associate Director for Advising coordinates with the Scheduling Division of the Registrar's Office to coordinate any classroom changes or holds. Classroom assignments may be changed or moved to another classroom or building that meets the accessibility requirements or the class may be on hold to prevent other departments from moving the class location without prior CDA approval. Accessible furniture such as chairs or tables are also added to the classroom depending on the student's individual needs.

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Students who require this type of accommodation are granted priority registration to proactively plan for adjustments.



## Assistive Technology and Alternative Format Services

Assistive Technology is an important accommodation provided to students. This accommodation ensures access to the university curriculum. CDA provides technology training and CDA completes the registration for students. Several software programs assist students in accessing the curriculum among the software programs. One such program is Kurzweil 3000. This software converts scanned textbooks to a digital MP3 format “voice audio file” that provides the audio version of the textbook. Students also have access to other adaptive technology software including Otter, Glean, Dragon Naturally Speaking, Zoomtext, and screen reading technology JAWS (Job Access with Speech).

In 2022-2023, CDA was awarded \$39,030.15 from the Learning Spaces funding process. This funding sources allocates student computing fees in a competitive grant process. CDA has been awarded funding to use for software upgrades, licensing renewal, and the purchase of new assistive technology.

### TECH GRANT

The Center for Disability and Access was awarded the Learning Spaces grant to provide assistive technology to students.



## 5 Assistive Technology STUDENT RESOURCES

### 1 Kurzweil :

Text to speech software for creating written documents and reading assistance including audio textbooks.

315 students using license  
8,027 log in for access  
2,283 files accessed



### 2 Otter & Glean :

Otter software: Real time transcription, recorded audio, and automated meeting summaries.

47/50 licenses used  
155,986 minutes transcribed

Glean: Audio recording software.  
53 students accessing software

### 3 Notetaking Services

Provides students with access to information presented in lectures or other course information by technology or classroom notetakers.

156 Smart Pens to students  
206 Total notetaker requests  
112 Notetakers  
\$9,825.00 Total Cost

### 4 Captioning Services

Converting audio content into text and displaying text onscreen, monitor, or other visual display.

1,703 Captioning Projects

### 5 Alternative Format Projects:

Materials as an alternative to traditional print ie, Audio, Braille, large print & electronic formats.  
193 Student Technology Meetings  
1,037 Alternative Projects  
1,703 Captioning Projects

## Interpreting Services

The Center for Disability and Access is responsible for providing interpreting services for students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. The goal in this area is to provide services that allow for effective communication access as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). To meet this goal, the center employs highly qualified staff and strives to provide timely access to captioned video material.

The Center employs an in-house, part-time staff of American Sign Language Interpreters (ASL) and Real-Time Captionists (RTC). Interpreting standards include using “team” of two interpreters for most interpreting assignments. A total of eleven unique students received interpreting services for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. Throughout the entire year, CDA provided 4,111.50 hours of interpreting at an estimated cost of \$298,732.89. The total number of hours decreased by -7.93% and the overall cost increased by 7.55%. The average cost per hour increased by 26.81% to \$72.32. The permanent Staff Interpreters (2.0 FTE) provided a total of 1,395 service hours. All in-house ASL Interpreters provided 3,328 hours.

Most assignments were delivered with a team of interpreters and the average cost per class hour was \$144.64. ASL interpretation made up 91% or 4,130.5 hours of services provided while RTC represented 782.75 hours or 19%. A total of 298.50 academic credit credits were served with an average cost of \$1,000.78. Cost per credit decreased by 9.92%.

| Interpreting Services Utilized              |                      |             |               |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|---------------|
|                                             | July/Aug & Fall 2022 | Spring 2023 | May/June 2023 |
| Students Using Services                     |                      |             |               |
| Undergraduate                               | 2                    | 0           | 0             |
| Graduate                                    | 9                    | 8           | 3             |
| Total                                       | 11                   | 8           | 3             |
| Credits served                              | 64                   | 116.5       | 27            |
| Services Utilized                           |                      |             |               |
| ASL Interpretation                          | 5                    | 7           | 3             |
| Real-Time Caption                           | 7                    | 3           | 1             |
| Hours per semester                          | 1,667                | 1,389       |               |
| ASL Hours: 4,130.50 (-7.93%)                |                      |             |               |
| RTC Hours: 782.75 (102.98% increase)        |                      |             |               |
| Total Hours: 4,111.50 (-15.57 decrease)     |                      |             |               |
| In-house Cost: \$214,354.98 (-3.99%)        |                      |             |               |
| Agency Cost: \$84,377.91 (54.89%)           |                      |             |               |
| Total Cost: \$298,732.89                    |                      |             |               |
| Average overall cost per hour: \$72.32      |                      |             |               |
| Average ASL In-house cost per hour: \$64.40 |                      |             |               |
| Average ASL Agency cost per hour: \$105.24  |                      |             |               |
| Average RTC Agency cost per hour: \$121.68  |                      |             |               |
| Total Credits Served: 298.50                |                      |             |               |
| Average Cost per Credit: \$1,000.78         |                      |             |               |

## Outreach and Consultation

To assist in developing an inclusive, accessible campus environment CDA conducts outreach and provides consultation to the campus community. Activities include information tabling, faculty and graduate teaching assistant training, consultation on universal design and curriculum updates, and counseling with faculty regarding options for appropriate accommodations.

CDA also serves as a resource to the campus community regarding physical accessibility including buildings and new construction projects, resources for faculty completing grants that require information on campus accessibility, consultation regarding interventions for addressing student needs, and consultation regarding campus events. CDA also meets with students who are engaging in classroom projects that involve disability issues. In addition, the Director of CDA participates in the university wide Universal Design & Access committee.

## Accommodations for Transportation and Housing

CDA also provides authorization for accommodations that benefit the student regarding transportation and residential living. Depending on the unique needs of a student, CDA may authorize the use of the Commuter Services Lift Van which is a point – to -point shuttle to assist students with transportation needs when the regular campus shuttle is not able to provide access to a particular campus area. In addition, CDA consults with the department of Housing and Residential Education (HRE) to review student requests for Emotional Support Animals (ESA), housing accommodation requests. CDA will also begin consultation with Sunnyside Apartments which is a University housing program for families and graduate students.

## Scholarships

The Center for Disability and Access is pleased to award scholarships to students with disabilities. The contributions from donors and other entities promotes the retention of students with disabilities by providing financial assistance for tuition, fees and in some cases housing and campus living. For the 2022-2023 academic year CDA disbursed \$251,167 in scholarships to twenty-five students with an additional \$248,800 in scholarships to be disbursed to 30 students during the 2023-2024 academic year.

## SCHOLARSHIPS

2022-2023 \$251,167 in  
scholarships to students  
An additional \$248,800 in  
scholarships for the 2023-2024



The following is a list of the scholarships available through CDA:

The Craig H. Neilsen Foundation Scholarship

The Craig H. Neilsen Foundation was established in 2003 and the scholarship was instituted in 2006. The foundation has funded programs supporting individuals with Spinal Cord Injury who attend or plan to attend the University of Utah in undergraduate and graduate programs. The scholarship is designed to cover the total cost of tuition, fees, and books for the entire academic program until graduation. The total disbursement for 2022-2023 was \$106,400 to seven students. CDA has awarded \$212,800 in scholarships to twelve students for the 2023-2024 academic year.

The Louise J Snow Scholarship

The Louise J Snow Scholarship for students with disabilities was first established in 1985 and is the longest running scholarship offered through the Center for Disability and Access. For the 2022-2023 academic year, four students received a scholarship of \$2,000 each. Two students will each receive \$2,000 for the 2023-2024 academic year.

The Keaton Walker Scholarship

The Keaton K. Walker Scholarship was established in 2002 to benefit students who are Blind, low vision, or have a physical disability. For 2022-2023 academic year, two scholarships were given. For the 2023-2024 academic year, two students each will receive \$2,000.

The Poulson Family Endowed Scholarship

In 2018, CDA was fortunate to receive a generous contribution from Dr. Ernest Poulson for \$100,000 to establish the Poulson Family Endowed Scholarship. This scholarship provides support to students who may be Blind, low vision, or have a physical disability. The scholarship was awarded to two students for the 2022-2023 academic year. For the 2023-2024 academic year, two students will each receive the scholarship.

The CDA Alumni Partner Scholarship

In collaboration with the University of Utah Alumni Association, the CDA Alumni Partner Scholarship was created to provide funding for Junior and Senior undergraduate students. For 2022-2023 scholarships were awarded to two students with an award of \$2,000 each. For the 2023-2024 academic year twelve students will receive the scholarship.

## Section 4 Major Challenges

Over the last five years CDA has experienced significant growth in the number of students accessing services and requesting accommodations. The continued growth presents challenges for Disabilities Advisors assisting students with disabilities. Advisor caseloads average 400-500 students. The nature of the work is demanding and complex as advisors consult with students, maintain confidentiality and professionalism while negotiating with faculty and departments in order to provide required accommodations for students. The high academic demand, requirements of professional programs, and the complexities of securing accommodations creates significant demands on not only advisors but support staff as well. Concern for advisor capacity and wellness continues to be an issue along with the need for additional staff. At the conclusion of the fiscal year, CDA received approval to hire an additional Disabilities Advisor. The staff addition is greatly appreciated as the increased number of students accessing services continues to grow and the advisor will assist in meeting the needs of the increasing student population at CDA. It is anticipated that the trend for more students registering with CDA will continue along with the need of 4-5 additional advisors.

In addition to the need for more advisors, the accessible media team will need to be monitored to determine the need for additional staff members.

### STAFF

The trend for more students registering with CDA will continue along with the need of 4-5 additional advisors.



### Testing Space

An ongoing challenge is available space for exam accommodations. The need for exam services has continued to increase. The University does not have adequate dedicated testing space and as a result providing testing accommodations continues to be challenging. Although testing services slowed during the pandemic, the testing accommodations have doubled this past year with no expectation of a reduction in the request for this accommodation. Testing services is a critical need.

### EXAM SPACE

An ongoing challenge is available space for exam accommodations.



### Increasing Demand for Alternative Formats and Assistive Technology

Along with the increase in students registered with the CDA is the increased demand for alternative format and assistive technology services. This division of CDA is staffed by an Associate Director and two Accessible Media Specialists. The increase in hybrid classes has resulted in a greater need for these services. It is anticipated that the demand for this support will increase and require collaboration with faculty and departments.

## Section 5 New and Continuing Strategic Initiatives

Pursuant to addressing the needs of students in support of the Student Affairs vision and values. The Center for Disability and Access has identified five key initiatives as part of the strategic plan. In addition to the identified initiatives, CDA also recognizes the need to complete a review of policies with a specific focus on removing or updating policies that may create barriers to students accessing services.

### Strategic Plan:

|    |                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 01 | <b>Customer Service</b>              | Provide exceptional customer service to students and the campus community by: 1) conducting assessment of student experiences with CDA, and 2) and providing staff with annual customer service training. |
| 02 | <b>Communicate with Advisor</b>      | Encourage students to develop a supportive relationship with their Disabilities Advisor to address access concerns and resources needed.                                                                  |
| 03 | <b>Develop Natural Supports</b>      | Provide opportunities for student interaction and developing of campus natural supports.                                                                                                                  |
| 04 | <b>Awareness of Campus Resources</b> | Provide education to students on the knowledge of campus resources.                                                                                                                                       |
| 05 | <b>Policies &amp; Procedures</b>     | Provide education to students on policies and procedures within CDA and within the University (i.e., OEO) if they would like to file a grievance or report an issue.                                      |

Customer Service - The focus on exceptional customer service will support the values of Student Affairs by providing an increased sense of belonging and care when student concerns and needs are addressed in a positive, responsive approach. The CDA will assess the student experience with the Center through a student survey. Areas needing improvement will be identified as well as the areas where the CDA is excelling. Staff will be provided with customer service training to address concerns and help improve the student's experience of fostering belonging.

Communicate with the Advisor - The number of students accessing services through the CDA continues to increase. As a result, specific and intentional outreach to students particularly in the first year at the

University is limited by the high caseloads for advisors. During the initial intake appointment students will be encouraged to communicate frequently with advisors to identify needs. Advisors will also reach out to new students in the first semester to develop rapport with students and develop a supportive relationship. The goal is that the student will have an increased sense of belonging and care from the CDA. The improved outreach will also identify the needs and concerns of students and provide proactive interventions rather than reactive and restorative services to address student concerns and difficulties they may be experiencing.

Develop Natural Supports – Students engaging in the campus community may not have the social capital to interact with other students and seek out needed information that builds success on the campus. This social interaction is critical to the feeling of belonging and care interacting with the campus community. Examples of natural supports include individuals who can provide information on resources such as where to go in the library to study, the best shuttle to take, what food service has the best food, as well as the CDA student study rooms, and accessing alternative format of classroom materials independently. Students with disabilities often need encouragement to develop natural supports. In order to assist in this endeavor CDA will implement the Peer Mentoring program UREACH. (U Reinforcing Educational Assets for Human Diversity). This program will impact students who identify as neurodivergent. Neurodiversity is a broad term that means brains are different ways in which they operate and provide a spectrum in the method of the way information is stored, functions and operations are deployed and acted upon in daily lives (Landmark College, n.d.). Divergence and variation in neurological function are a biological fact and at times many of societal systems and environments are not designed with diversity in mind including postsecondary educational institutions.

The CDA at the University of Utah endeavors to combine the efforts of social connectedness, connection to campus and community resources, and coaching around executive function skills, for a unique benefit to neurodivergent students. The peer mentor is an effort to assist students towards success in degree attainment, personal growth, and career preparation.

### How Peer Mentorship Programs Can Help

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 • 2017 Study: Coaching-focused programs, specifically on executive function skills, revealed increases in a student's GPA for every 10 hours they engaged in coaching (DuPaul, et al., 2017).
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 • 2018 Study: Colleges could support the improvement of the student experience for those with Autism Spectrum Disorder by providing peer mentor programs (Jackson, et al.).
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 • 2020 Study: Participants self-reported that peer mentors provide an important social connection to the campus community for students with intellectual disabilities (Wilt & Morningstar, 2020).

## Neurodivergent Students Served



CDA served **1,271** students in the 22-23 Academic Year who identified with one or more neurodivergent identities.



Disabled college students (as a whole) represent one of the fastest-growing marginalized student populations in terms of enrollment in recent decades (HERI, 2011).



## Challenges Faced by Neurodivergent College Students

- Neurodivergent students report lower levels of connection to campus communities (pre-COVID).
- Study participants indicated rates of loneliness, isolation, and also anxiety, depression, and stress; at times, at higher rates than neurotypical peers (Jackson, et al., 2018).
- More likely to have negative academic outcomes including lower graduation rates and GPAs than neurotypical peers.



Between the years 2004 and 2012, only 38% of study participants identifying with a Learning Disability (Showers & Kinsman, 2017) attained a bachelor's degree – well below that of the national average of 59% of all full-time, first-time undergraduate students in the same beginning cohort year (U.S. Department of Education & National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).



Many executive functions influence students' experiences in college, including **memory**, **activation**, and **inhibition**.

## Ureach – Peer Mentoring



UReach Pilot program Summer 2023 with 4 student enrolled and engaged with weekly mentoring sessions



Recruitment- 10 students who are interested in being paired with a mentor and continue to receive referrals

Hiring – Additional Mentors to assist students

The Center for Disability and Access is in a unique position to provide essential services to students on campus in accessing the university curriculum, programs, and experiences. The CDA also has a specific purpose in fostering an environment of belonging and care while supporting faculty and the greater campus community. The upcoming 2023-2024 academic year presents challenges and opportunities for the Center for Disability and Access yet, the people, passion, and purpose of the CDA is meeting the challenges and contributing to positive outcomes for the University.

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