

ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024



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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 participation 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 a safe and respectful environment. By promoting awareness and knowledge, 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. 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).

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 awareness of disability that fosters a campus climate 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.

ASL Interpreting and Captioning Services

Interpreting and Captioning Services ensure that all students can fully engage in academic, social, and supplemental student experiences.

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 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 place for student belonging and care, 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 to complete strategic initiatives. The policies for CDA were reviewed and updated procedures were updated to reflect the work processes due to the implementation of ClockWork 5 software program. Priorities for this year included revising work processes, reviewing documentation guidelines, and revising the student appeal process.

Pursuant to addressing the needs of students in support of the Student Affairs vision and values. The Center for Disability and Access identified five key initiatives as part of the strategic plan. In addition to the identified initiatives, CDA recognized 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.

Customer Service – A specific focus on exceptional customer service was implemented in support of the values of Student Affairs. This was accomplished by providing an increased sense of belonging and care for a student situation. The process included 1) identifying the specific student need, 2) providing students with information for the CDA process, 3) supporting students with interventions that included advocacy with faculty and campus partners, implementing provisional accommodations when sufficient

initial documentation was submitted, 4) continued communication and follow through with students throughout the CDA process.

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 were 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 identified 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.

To assist in student communication and address growing caseloads, the CDA hired three additional advisors. This provided the opportunity for seasoned staff to focus on outreach efforts to students in order to develop a supportive relationship and address student concerns.

Develop Natural Supports Developing a Peer Mentor Program - 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). The program was implemented in Summer 2023 with a small pilot program impacting 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.).

The summer program was successful and additional students and additional students were recruited to participate for the Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 semesters.

UReach – Peer Mentoring



UReach Pilot program Summer 2023 with 4 student enrolled and engaged with weekly mentoring sessions
Fall 23 – Spring 24 with 34 students participating



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

Hiring – Additional Mentors to assist students



Growth – Expanding UReach
– programming and workshops
- Living Learning Community

Information from student feedback included more programs to assist with 1) social interaction, 2) accessing services and accommodations, and 3) increasing skills in independent living. CDA will continue to provide support for executive functioning and study skill development with an increased emphasis on social programming, independent living skills, and student engagement opportunities.

Section 3 Major Accomplishments

Specific themes were identified within CDA that will impact the student experience: 1) conduct faculty and department training including graduate student instructors on the accommodation process, 2) providing exceptional customer service to support the student experience, 3) create connection within the campus and surrounding community to increase access to available services 4) increase opportunities for the professional development of staff in keeping apprised of current practices and interventions for students with disabilities, 5) Develop an assessment scholarship to assist students in obtaining documentation.

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

Accomplishments & Outreach



Department training for accommodations
Graduate Assistant Accommodation Training

Monthly Staff Training for professional development
Content Specific Training for students



Updated Policy & Procedures to assist students and faculty with accommodations

Advisor Training Manual created for support and resources



UReach Peer Mentor Expansion Continue to develop program and planning to assist Neurodivergent students



Assessment Scholarship created to assist students in obtaining disability documentation

Students Served

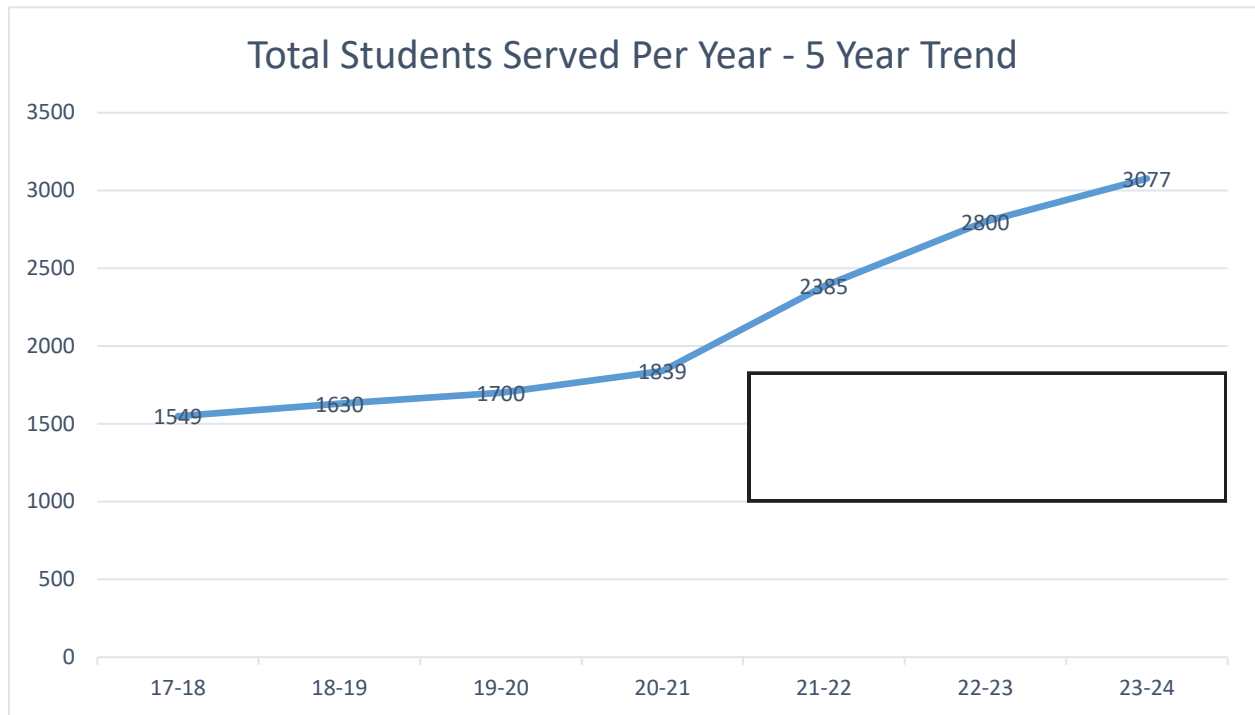
During the 2023-2024 academic year, CDA served 3,077 students, an increase of 9.9% from the previous year and the number of students continues to break records for the most students served in a year.

Comparing the number of students registered with CDA (3,077) to the student enrollment (35,310 F23) indicates CDA serves approximately 8.71% of the student

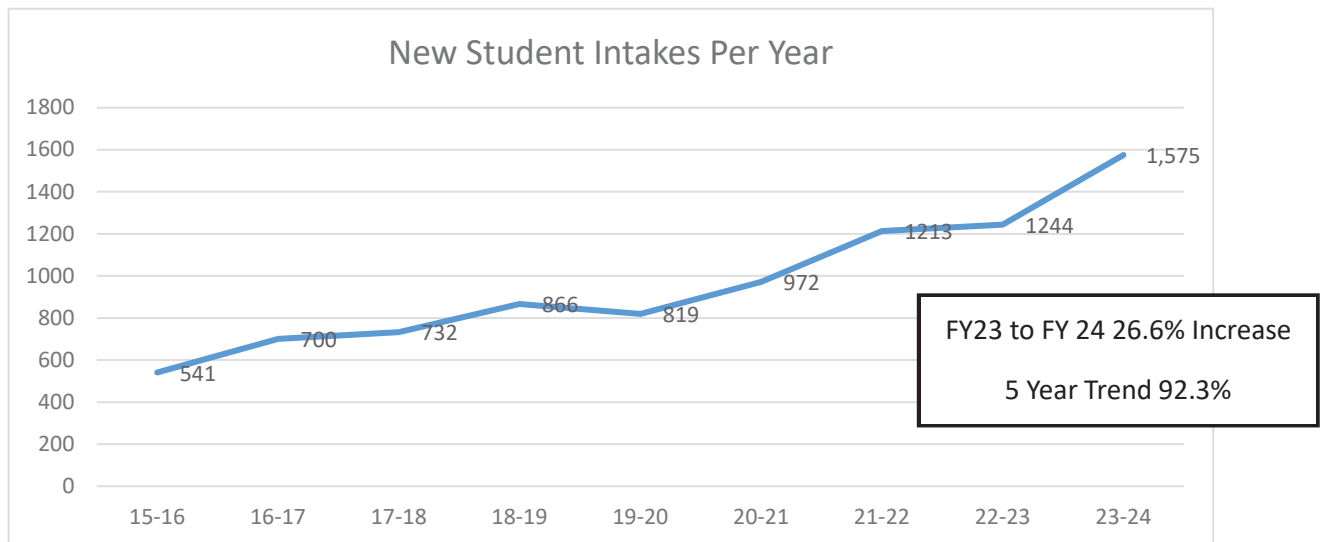
Demographic	Number	Percentage
Total Students	3,077	100%
Graduates	543	
Undergraduates	2,534	
International	46	2%
TRiO	60	3.00%
Veteran	36	3.00%
Athlete	35	1.00%
Honors	227	10.00%
HRE Resident	352	12.57%
UofU Employee	760	32.00%
Fraternity/Sorority	145	5.00%

Ethnicity	Percentage
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%
Asian-American	8%
Black	2%
White	64%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1%
Latina/o Hispanic	13%
Other	11%

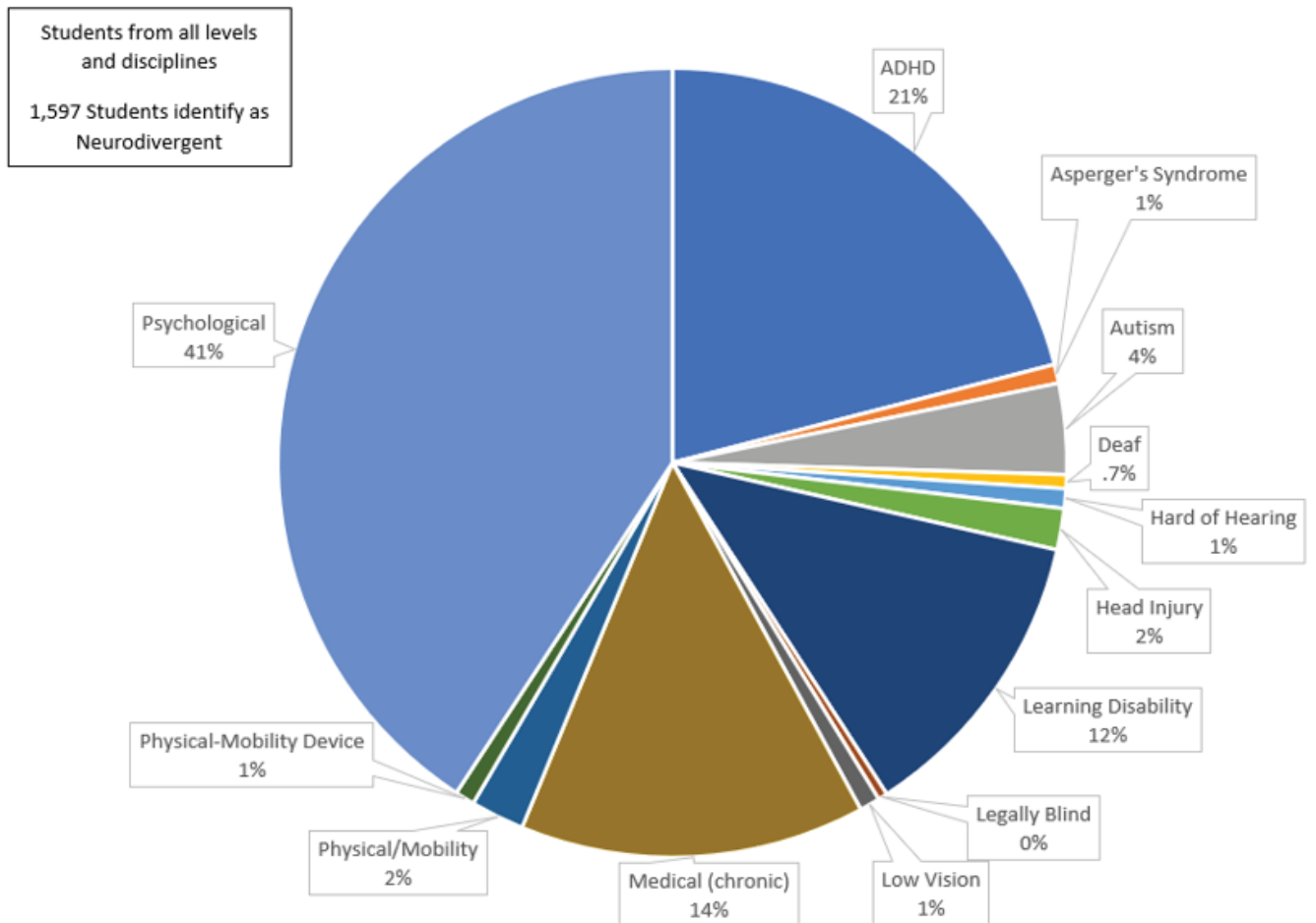
Total Students



New Student Intakes



Percentage of Disabilities, Academic Year 2024



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	2023-24	% chg last year	years
ADHD	313	324	393	571	706	902	27.76%	178.40%
Asperger's Syndrome	21	25	20	26	26	22	-15%	-12.00%
Autism	55	60	66	90	125	169	35.20%	181.67%
Deaf	5	7	5	14	19	10	-47.37%	43%
Hard of Hearing	22	16	16	34	27	26	-3.70%	62.50%
Head Injury	51	45	56	51	57	56	-1.75%	24.44%
Learning Disability	238	244	248	328	414	504	21.74%	106.56%
Legally Blind	17	13	13	15	13	28	115.39%	115.39%
Low Vision	21	26	20	32	28	20	-28.58%	-23.08%
Medical (chronic)	300	300	318	411	476	523	9.87%	74.33%
Physical/Mobility	62	61	44	52	74	84	13.51%	37.70%
Physical-Mobility Device	10	10	9	22	27	84	211.11%	740%
Psychological	676	699	776	845	1371	2093	52.66%	199.43%
Total # of disabilities	1791	1830	1984	2491	3363	4521		
Total # of students served	1630	1700	1839	2385	2800	3077		

*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	99	3.00%
Architecture	47	2.00%
Business	281	10%
Cultural & Social	7	0.00%
Dentistry	8	0%
Education	52	2.00%
Engineering	411	14.00%
Fine Arts	133	5.00%
Health	157	5.00%
Humanities	155	5.00%
Law	54	2%
Medicine	116	4%
Mines & Earth	5	0%
Nursing	92	3.00%
Pharmacy	23	1.00%
Science	214	7.00%
Social Behavioral	337	12.00%
Social Work	77	3.00%
University College	5	0%
Unknown	538	19%
Academic Level		
Freshman	280	10%
Sophomore	385	13%
Junior	445	15%
Senior	981	34%
Dental	8	0%
Graduate	435	16%
Law	75	3%
MD	26	1%
2nd Bachelors	47	2%
Total	2682	

Approved Accommodations	
Accommodation	Number
Accessible Transportation	126
Adaptive Equipment	5
ASL Interpreting Services	10
Accessible Course Materials	17
Alternative Format	331
Assistive Listening System	12
Chair	16
Classroom Hold/Change	115
Emotional Support Animal	135
Flexible Attendance	493
Flexible Deadline	1,017
Housing Accommodation	250
Language Substitution	7
Math Substitution	14
Notetaking Smart Pen	140
Notetaking Peer	148
Priority Registration	272
RTC (Captioning)	13
Reduced Courseload	116
Table	27
Tests, Calculator	78
Tests Extended Time	1,815
Tests, Private Room	91
Tests, Quiet Room	1,008
Tests, Reader	17
Tests, Scribe	21
Tests, Speech to Text	17
Tests, Text to Speech	52

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 2023-2024 fiscal year, CDA proctored 4,387 exams.

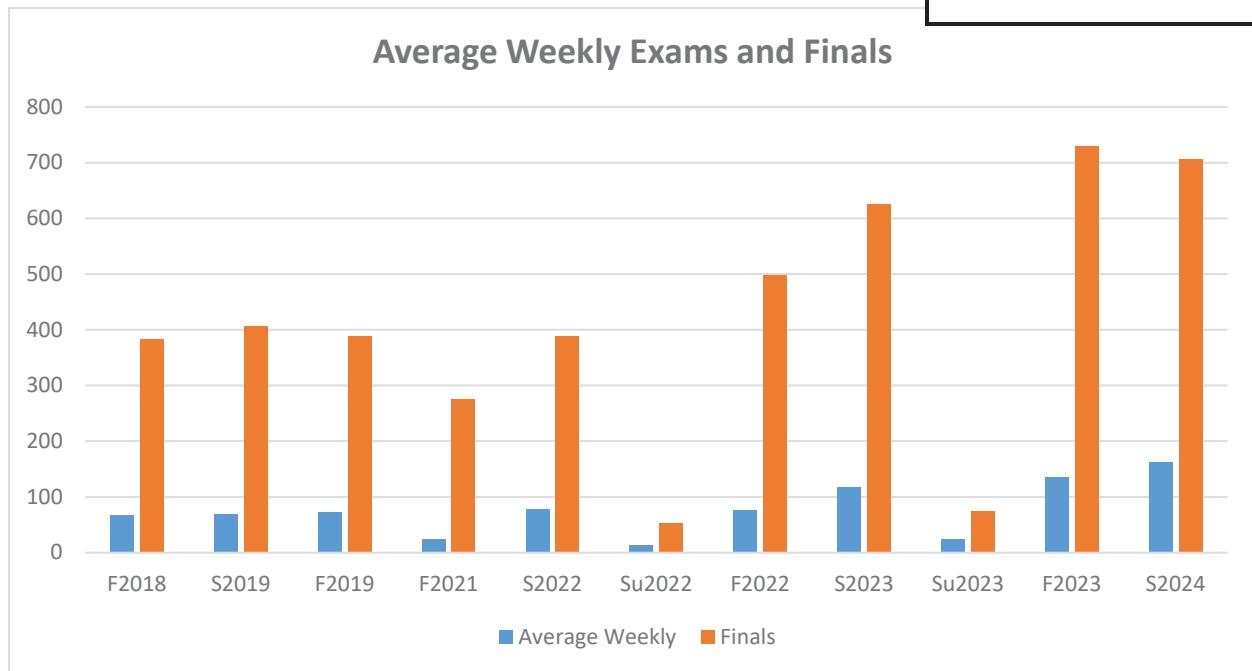
This is an increase of 3.4% compared to the last fiscal year of 4,242. This is likely due to the increasing number of students self-identifying with CDA and faculty requiring assistance from CDA to implement more complex accommodations for students.

4,387

Proctored Exams through the Center
for Disability and Access



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 Fall 2023 with a total number of 730 exams compared to the previous semester of 626 final exams.

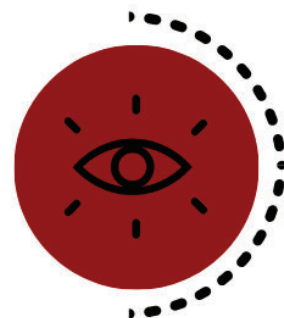


Classroom Holds and Changes, Priority Registration, and Accessible Furniture

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 2023-2024, CDA was awarded \$39,030 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.

85 students using license
6,588 log in for access
1,957 files accessed



2 Otter & Glean :

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

50/50 licenses used
88,519 minutes transcribed

Glean: Audio recording software.
45 students accessing software

3 Notetaking Services:

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

174 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.

1,105 Captioning Projects

5 Alternative Format Projects:

Materials other than traditional print: Audio, Braille, large print and electronic format

158 Student Technology
1,380 Alternative 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 contracts with Real-Time Captionists (RTC). Interpreting standards include using a “team” of two interpreters for most interpreting assignments. A total of twelve unique students received interpreting services for the 2023-2024 fiscal year. Throughout the entire year, CDA provided 2,024.25 hours of interpreting at an estimated cost of \$274,878.46. The total number of hours decreased by -50.76% and the overall cost decreased by -21.38%. The average cost per hour increased by 87.76% to \$135.79. The permanent Staff Interpreters (2.0 FTE) positions were not filled during this academic year. Part time staff with CDA provided a total of 820 service hours.

Most assignments were delivered with a team of interpreters and the average cost per class hour was \$197.19. ASL interpretation made of a decrease of -65.5% or 1,425 hours of services provided while RTC represented 599.25 hours or -22.45%. A total of 190.5 academic credit credits were served with an average cost of \$1,442.93. Cost per credit increased by 44.18%.

Interpreting Services Utilized

	July/Aug & Fall 2023	Spring 2024	May/June 2024
Students Using Services			
Undergraduate	2	4	4
Graduate	9	8	4
Total	11	12	8
Credits served	47	116.5	27
Services Utilized			
ASL Interpretation	9	8	4
Real-Time Caption	2	4	4
Hours per semester	571	823	
ASL Hours: 1,425 (-65.5% decrease) RTC Hours: 599.25 (-22.45% decrease) Total Hours: 2,024.25 (-50.76 decrease)			
In-house Cost: \$168,532.76 (-21.38% decrease) Agency Cost: \$106,345.70 (26.04% increase) Total Cost: \$274,878.46 (-7.99% decrease) Average overall cost per hour: \$135.79 Average ASL In-house cost per hour: \$74.62 Average ASL Agency cost per hour: \$118 Average RTC Agency cost per hour: \$121.68			
Total Credits Served: 190.5 Average Cost per Credit: \$1,442.93			

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 also consults with Sunnyside Apartments which is a university housing program for families and graduate students. With the new Epicenter and other housing programs on campus the consultation for housing will continue.

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 2023-2024 academic year CDA disbursed \$130,068.

SCHOLARSHIPS

2023-24 \$130,068.80 in
scholarships to students



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 2023-2024 was \$30,068 to seven students.

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. 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 2023-2024 academic year, two scholarships were given.

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 2023-2024 academic year.

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 2023-2024 scholarships were awarded to two students with an award of \$2,000 each.

Lewis A. Kingsley Foundation Scholarship

The CDA received support from the Lewis A. Kingsley foundation to provide a scholarship to a student experiencing Dyslexia and assist the student in obtaining a University of Utah degree.

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 in the previous year were average 400-500 students. With the hiring of 3 advisors the caseloads are now in the 350-400 range. 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. CDA hired 3 additional advisors in FY24 and the need for additional staff will increase. It is anticipated that the trend for more students registering with CDA will continue along with the need of 2-3 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 2-3 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 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	Customer Service	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	Communicate with Advisor	Encourage students to develop a supportive relationship with their Disabilities Advisor to address access concerns and resources needed.
03	Develop Natural Supports	Provide opportunities for student interaction and developing of campus natural supports.
04	Awareness of Campus Resources	Provide education to students on the knowledge of campus resources.
05	Policies & Procedures	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.

Assessment - The CDA will assess the student experience with the Center through a student survey. Customer service and the student experience will be assessed through the survey. The 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: UREACH Peer Mentoring – The opportunity for students to develop natural supports as well as academic support will continue. 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 continue to support 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.).

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.

The students participating in the peer mentoring program provided information. Suggestions for additional support include programming that includes academic support, independent living skills, and support for social engagement.

How Peer Mentorship Programs Can Help

-  • 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).
-  • 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.).
-  • 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).



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**.

Campus Resources and Programming - CDA will provide more programming for students to engage with CDA and participate in skill development. The CDA will also collaborate with other health and wellness offices including the Center for Campus Wellness, the Financial Wellness Center, and Campus Recreation.

Policies and Procedures- CDA will continue to review policies and processes to ensure that additional barriers are removed. CDA desires to follow the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) recommendations to move toward a Social Justice model for assisting students with disabilities by reviewing student information, history of accommodations, and providing resources to students in order to access the academic programs available at the university.

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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