

Learning Accommodations Task Force Report to the University Senate

Purpose

- Increase in the number of accommodation requests from students
- Need for better support & strategies for faculty to manage and respond to accommodation requests
- Awareness of neurodiversity and different modes of learning continue to increase.
- UDL can help reduce the need for individualized accommodations, leading to a decrease in the burden on students, faculty and CSD.
- Need to increase awareness of existing resources and services to support students and train faculty/staff in disability support resources while also promoting a disability-inclusive campus climate

Task Force Members

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- Vicki Magley (Professor and Director of Industrial & Organizational Psychology)

Background & Context for Recommendations

Increase in Accommodation Requests

- 15% increase in the number of students registered with CSD across all campuses (2021-2024).
- 6,100+ students registered for CSD services in 2024-25
- Disability Service Professional (DSP) caseloads now average 629 students in Storrs and 556 students across the system (122.4% higher than national recommended levels of 1 DSP for every 250 students).
- 86% increase in the total number of assessments coordinated in Storrs (Spring 2022 – Spring 2024).

Confusion on Accommodations Support

- Existing information on accommodations is not easily communicated and in a format that is readily understandable.
- 20% of instructors were less certain about the University's obligation in accommodations for students with disabilities and their responsibilities in implementing accommodations.
- Nearly 33% of instructors indicated they had been presented with an accommodation they felt uncomfortable providing, with deadline extensions being the most frequently cited reason for this discomfort.
- Almost 33% of instructors indicated a level of uncertainty regarding resources to support struggling students.
- 40% of students with disabilities were not at least knowledgeable of the University's obligation to accommodate students with disabilities and did not know their responsibilities related to their accommodations.
- About 25% of students "reported needing to push instructors to implement accommodations most of the time or always"
- Approximately 20% of students needed to get their DSP involved for faculty to implement accommodations most of the time or always.

Existing Resources to Support Students, Faculty/Staff, & Campus Culture

Center for Students with Disabilities

Student Accommodations Provided by CSD	
Academic Accommodations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Adjustments • Alternate Assignments • Alternate Media • Assistive Technology • Deadline Extensions • Exam Accommodations • Lab/Discussion Assistants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-Production Captioning • Notetaking Assistance • Participation Modification • Priority Registration • Reduced Courseload • Service Animals
Residential Accommodations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Accommodations • Emergency Evacuation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional Support Animals • Meal Plan Modification
Campus Access Accommodations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking Accommodations • Referral for Accessible Van Service 	
Temporary Injuries/Conditions Accommodations*	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notetaking assistance • A scribe for assessments • Assistance with taking exams and/or quizzes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral to the Accessible Van Service • Referral for personal assistants • Referral to campus and/or community resources <p><i>*Not an exhaustive list</i></p>

Existing Resources for Students with Disabilities

- Neurodiversity in Engineering
- Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning (CETL)
- Office of Institutional Equity
- IT Accessibility
- Accessibility/Universal Design for Learning Summit
- The Neuroinclusive Teaching Spring 2025 Learning Community
- Neuroinclusive Teaching Summer Institute (NTSI)
- CLAS Accessibility Fellows (2023)
- Neurovariability Level 1 Training (UConn Waterbury, Spring 2025)
- Neurodiverse Affinity Community (Center for Career Readiness and Life Skills)
- Disability Accommodations & Culture Assessments (CSD, CLAS, HR, SERU)

Task Force Recommendations

- Organized by three themes
 1. Expanding Disability Support Resources,
 2. Collecting and Using Disability-Specific Data, and
 3. Providing Professional Development
- Each theme includes recommendations focused on students, faculty, and/or campus climate.

Recommendations: Expanding Disability Support Resources

In Support of Students with Disabilities

- Provide information on new and existing disability support resources in different formats (i.e., videos, infographics).
- Create a student handbook that incorporates search and keyword lookup functions; include a separate Graduate Student section to help them navigate their unique experiences.
- Create a quick tip sheet for students highlighting reasonableness of requests/response time, expectations, rights and responsibilities, and resources available.
- Establish a Foundation account to pay for learning disability testing for students and make Beyond Access more affordable and accessible for students.

In Support of Faculty/Staff

- Create an accommodations faculty handbook, which includes FAQs and relevant accommodations information.
- Create a University Testing Facility, open to all students, to support faculty in meeting alternative testing accommodations for CSD-connected students and other students with extenuating circumstances.
- Incentivize course accessibility design and interdependence in the classroom through the promotion and review process for faculty.

To Enhance Campus Climate

- Coordinate and integrate existing disability and neurodiversity-related initiatives (i.e., Disability and Neurodiversity Alliance, Diversability, Beyond Access, the SHaW neurodiversity support group, CEE INCLUDE) across all campuses.
- Incentivize and develop a process to support the inclusion of disability studies topics in existing and new UConn courses.
- Establish a Disability Cultural Center that includes operations on all campuses.

Recommendations: Collecting & Using Disability-Specific Data

In Support of Students with Disabilities

- Assess how UConn can better support undergraduate and graduate students through focus groups or open-ended response surveys.
- Utilize data from focus groups, surveys, and other assessments to create a “quick guide” and tip sheets to help students with disabilities more effectively communicate with faculty regarding accommodations.

In Support of Faculty/Staff

- Inventory existing accommodation and faculty/staff development resources and develop an accessible, university-wide clearinghouse.

To Enhance Campus Climate

- Improve existing data collection processes to better incorporate faculty/staff and student attitudes and beliefs about disability accommodations for future evaluations of campus climate and culture.

Recommendations: Enhancing Professional Development

In Support of Students with Disabilities

- Host trainings and continue developing “How To” guides for students to assist them in navigating the MyAccess database.
- Create workshops for specific student populations to proactively address issues related to accommodations, access, and resources.

In Support of Faculty/Staff

- Provide additional and more comprehensive professional development opportunities and training related to accessibility and UDL, including specific trainings for disabled faculty and staff about topics specific to their unique needs and interests.
- Increase and improve marketing of existing UConn training and professional development opportunities related to student accommodations and universal design utilizing the Provost Office communications network.

To Enhance Campus Climate

- Host the UConn Accessibility Summit in 2025

Suggestions for additional trainings: CETL Workshops, school/college and/or discipline-specific faculty online learning communities (in-person and online), GA/TA-specific trainings, CAST videos, Options for Captioning, and UDL-IRN/Universal Design for Learning training.

Conclusion

- UConn has made great strides in supporting students with disabilities through trainings, enhancing existing and developing new resources, and promoting a more inclusive campus environment. But...
 - Students need more help in knowing how to request, access, and communicate their accommodations.
 - Faculty and staff need additional support in knowing how to meet students' accommodation requests and knowing what resources are available to supplement students' learning.
 - The campus culture can be enhanced through greater intentional and visible programming and increased awareness of the work already being done.
- Additional (or reallocation of existing) resources are needed to effectively and successfully implement Task Force recommendations.
- A review of current institutional practices and policies, and/or the contributions of current HR processes to meet employee accommodations could further create a campus characterized by a greater embrace of disability inclusion.
- Continued conversation, evaluation, and review of systems that incorporate the voices of our students with disabilities and faculty and staff who work to create an inclusive environment are needed.
- Our collective work in disability support services will continue to help us foster a more inclusive, equitable, and supportive educational environment for all students.