

Student Accessibility Services
Supplemental documentation for the
President's Advisory Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Student Accessibility Services was given the following charge as a part of the President's Proclamation to Enhance Campus Climate at UNI: *Student Accessibility Services will conduct a needs assessment for enhancing accessible academic resources for students with accommodations.* This document is intended to fulfill that request.

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) continues to grow its partnerships on campus toward the common thread of Universal Design. Universal Design refers to the design and composition of an environment so it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people. According to *The American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2016* report from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program at the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles, 21.9% of incoming freshmen identified as having at least one disability/disorder. Similarly, 21% of incoming first year students at UNI for Fall 2017 reported they were interested in learning more about SAS via the Connection Survey. However, under 10% of all UNI students actually connect with SAS. This could indicate accessibility needs are being met without accommodations or could indicate a needs gap. SAS relies upon strong commitments by the university community to ensure accommodations are effective and ensure each student seeking them is able to reach their academic, professional, and personal goals.

We are proud to support the University's call for systemic change, and to join the President's Office in continuing to take actions that demonstrate our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in our living, learning, and working environment. We offer an overview of recent accomplishments in supporting access, and honoring the partnerships we hold with the entire university community to continue building on our rich tradition of student success.

I. Increased Demand in Technology Utilization

Accomplishments:

- Collaborated with IT to streamline the process of providing closed captioning in post-production.
- Continued collaboration on integration of live captioning across campus.
- Created a service indicator to enable key partners across campus to have the necessary information to implement accommodations across campus, including technology-supported accommodations for students.
- Developed automated reports sent directly to the Department of Residence (DOR), Exam Services, Dining Services, and UNI Parking in support of meeting students' needs across campus.
- Developed a COVID-19 resource page which provides additional information for distance-based supports for faculty and students to ensure access to accommodations.

Areas of Further Growth:

- Collaborative development with IT and Academic Affairs of a best practices guide for providing technology-based accommodations ensuring that current technologies utilized by faculty can be supported by the university in the delivery of classroom and testing accommodations.

- Identify technologies and practices for providing accommodations that have lower administrative and technical support needs from either SAS or IT, or further develop and identify resources that provide the enhanced and individualized technical support certain students and their accommodations require.
- Examine the current processes utilized for the review and selection of technologies (new or renewed contracts) to ensure perspective from IT, SAS, Academic Affairs, and students is taken into account in our efforts to best serve the university community.
- UNI has a responsibility for providing accommodations to all students, including online learners. Increased demand for online course offerings, coupled with the need to respond to COVID-19, has further highlighted the need to identify ways our institution can enhance support for distance learning students, while ensuring accommodations are met. Areas of further exploration include:
 - The utilization of technology to remove the gap in the University's ability to remotely proctor and provide readers for exams.
 - Identify and implement strategies for ensuring distance-learning students with disabilities have access to online resources (e.g., Rod Library, The Learning Center, other tutoring services available on campus, etc.).
 - Enhancing the use of technologies that are most familiar to all users (e.g., Zoom), with the integration of live captioning and virtual interpreting.

II. Increase in Quality and Availability of Services for Interpreting

Accomplishments:

- Regularly meet with students who utilize this service to garner feedback.
- Utilized feedback to make changes to the interpreting RFP which will go out in June 2020.
- Explored third-party vendors' ability to provide remote interpreting when in-person is not available and/or appropriate for the learning environment.

Areas of Growth:

- Centralized coordination of requesting an interpreter, campus-wide understanding of how to engage in this process including payment.

III. How is SAS assessing academic success of students?

Accomplishments:

- Collaborate with the Office of the Registrar to identify graduation rates for students connected with SAS.
- Accommodate, our new case management system, enables us to identify other important demographics to inform our work.
- Provide service delivery experience surveys during our busiest times of year.
- Regularly meet with students to obtain their feedback on what is working well and areas which need improvement through in-person meetings and formal surveys.
- SAS has a service philosophy training which all team members must attend and encourages going above and beyond to meet students' needs.

IV. Faculty Support and Engagement

Accomplishments:

Through our work, SAS has been very intentional with our involvement of faculty in how our office can best support both students and engage faculty in the interactive accommodation process. One example of this focus includes:

At the end of November 2019, SAS met with the Office of the Provost and United Faculty in support of open communication regarding what our office can do to strengthen our partnership with faculty. From the feedback of this conversation, the following updates were implemented at the beginning of the Spring 2020 semester:

- **Reasonable Accommodation Deliberation Process:** In addition to continually encouraging instructors to connect with SAS staff if they have questions or concerns regarding a student's approved accommodations in their courses, SAS outlined on our website the "Reasonable Accommodation Deliberation Process." SAS staff and faculty will utilize this outline to engage in the interactive process and come to a resolution together.
- **Additional Information to Support Implementing Accommodations:** SAS announced clarification on accommodations with additional descriptions within students' Course Accessibility Letters. SAS also created additional letters for faculty to further clarify accommodations which require more coordination or often raise questions.
- **Interactive Process:** SAS confirmed with University Counsel a procedural change - students being required to meet with their instructors to receive accommodations. If a student did not meet with their instructor to discuss their accommodation(s) in the course, the instructor is not required to provide the approved accommodation(s) until that conversation occurs.
- **Outlining of the Student's Responsibility in Implementation of Accommodations:** SAS updated the Course Accessibility Letter to further explain the student's responsibility in the implementation of their accommodation(s) in their courses each semester. We also sent additional emails to students to remind them of their required next steps in the accommodation process following approval through SAS, including meeting with each of their instructors at a mutually agreed upon time to discuss the logistics of their accommodation(s) in the instructors' courses.
- **Faculty Feedback Form:** SAS is currently working on developing a Faculty Feedback Form, which will be linked within a student's Course Accessibility Letter, for faculty to provide information to SAS regarding any comments, questions, or concerns they have with a student's access plan. In the future, SAS will be able to more easily follow up with instructors to provide necessary support with ensuring equal access for students in their courses.

Areas of Growth:

- With two professional staff within the SAS department, it can be difficult balancing outreach with accommodations management.

V. Supporting Disability as Diversity and an Identity

Accomplishments:

- Development and coordination of a disability identity and leadership training (previously scheduled for April 2020, tentatively scheduled for October 2020) with Nicole Kelly, keynote speaker at the 2018 Disability Summit and well-known disability advocate, and Sarah Tuberty, the creators and hosts of the *Disarming Disability* podcast, for students with disabilities.
- Coordination of a University-wide event to enable current students with disabilities to share their stories and voices regarding accessibility on campus (previously scheduled for April 2020, tentatively scheduled for October 2020).
- Support the creation of a future student-led campus organization to encourage community building and advocacy as requested by current and former students.
- Partnership with University Relations to film testimonial videos for students on their experience as a student with a disability at UNI.
- Development of an Orientation Welcome video for incoming first year and transfer students to further inform them of their rights as a student with a disability and the resources available through and process of connecting with SAS.
- Ongoing development of a disability social justice-focused web page with resources for the University community (e.g., podcasts, student testimonials, Disability Summit videos, disability identity content, etc.).

Areas for Further University Support:

- Create additional outreach and professional development opportunities focused on the rights of individuals with disabilities, the understanding of University responsibilities to comply with disability federal and state laws, understanding disability etiquette, and the different types of disabilities which exist, both visible and not visible, for departments and units to further support our campus community.
- Administrative support outside of SAS and the Division of Student Affairs for large-scale events which highlight disability as an aspect of diversity. These types of events have been very well received in the past, including the 2018 Disability Summit which focused on disability identity.
- SAS recommends the University consider having a mechanism to hold people accountable for the shared vision of the University pillars through yearly departmental appraisals.