Comprehensive Program Review Report

Program Review - Access and Ability Center

Program Summary

2022-2023

Prepared by: Lyndsi Litten, AAC Director

What are the strengths of your area?: The Access and Ability Center (AAC) advocates for equal access to opportunities for student success. We envision a college experience that is supportive, engaging, and barrier free. College of the Sequoias (COS)'s Access and Ability Center's commitment and dedication to students with physical, communication, psychological, and learning disabilities is evidenced by its growth since its inception in 1975.

We facilitate innovative systems and service provision to ensure students have an accessible experience in their pursuit of excellence here at the College of the Sequoias. We assist eligible students in making smooth transitions into our institution, as well as from our college to universities or work settings. Additionally, we continually strive to address existing barriers encountered both within our institution and in the community at large.

The strengths of our department include:
- highly trained, qualified and committed professionals, with extensive experience in the disability field;
- a wide range of available services that address the needs of our students;
- flexibility in meeting the shifting landscape of postsecondary disability service provision (including changes to the Title 5 regulations and the shift to distance learning);
- a shared desire to provide ongoing sensitivity training to our campus community, and
- a commitment to working as a team to address students' needs.

The Success Dashboard in Tableau Public in 2021-2022 revealed the following data regarding success rates (including EWs) of all COS courses across all departments:

Student Group	Success Rates of Students Receiving AAC Services	Success Rates of Students NOT Receiving AAC Services
Veteran Students	90.5%	77.5%
Puente Students	71.5%	56.9%

Clearly, our veteran and Puente students have greater success when connected with our program.

Furthermore, when comparing those who received AAC services with those who did not across race/ethnicity, students who were either African-American, Asian, White, and/or of Unknown race/ethnicity experienced higher success rates when connected with AAC. These results could indicate that students of these races/ethnicities are more willing to seek assistance and connect with AAC or perhaps they are more active in utilizing our services offered. Lastly, when observing data from all COS locations, there was an increase in the success rates of AAC students at the Visalia, Hanford, and "Other" locations across the last three years. This may be a result of our increased outreach efforts ensuring COS students know our program is available to them. Additionally, it could also be a result of our increased communication practices to all AAC students on these campuses providing individualized support over the last 1-2 years.

What improvements are needed?: Strengthening efficiency within our AAC department is a needed improvement. We have identified the following two areas in need of improvement:

1) Increasing effectiveness of our Testing Center is crucial for the following reasons: (1) testing services are a need faced by both AAC and non-AAC students, 2) we are mandated to provide services in the most integrated setting possible, 3) our operating hours are more limited than in our library, and 4) we have limited staff to serve our population. Therefore, we need to hire an

additional Test Proctor and it is recommended that we explore the possibility of providing this service in the more integrated Library/Lodgepole (or Educational Support building) setting while continuing to share the cost with the district. Offering testing in an area with more staff with extended business hours would assure fiscal responsibility as well as greater accessibility in operating hours. Given that nearly half (and even more than half of students last semester) who consistently use AAC Testing Services are general (non-AAC) students who are doing make-up exams, it would be appropriate for this additional staff be paid using College Effort. It is crucial that our students be assisted by staff familiar with their unique challenges and familiarity with assistive technology. Therefore, we need to hire another full-time Test Proctor (but this one would have a 10am to 7pm schedule). This will cover the staffing needs mid-day while also providing equitable testing hours for all COS students.

2) AAC serves students who are requiring a multitude of accommodations every semester. To better support our students, we are transitioning to a new data management system. After researching several data management systems, AIM (Accessible Information Management) was selected and purchased in June of 2018 to improve and streamline our data collection and reporting. IT approved the purchase of this system and agreed to support it. As of the last program review, AAC staff was in the infancy stage of implementation. Unfortunately, due in part to our recent move to online services, we continue to be at about the same stage of development. The anticipated time for full implementation was to be about 18-24 months – and the extension to that is difficult to ascertain at this juncture. Because it will take some time to implement, we continue to be challenged with the amount of documentation required to ensure that students' contacts, appointments, and utilized services are being documented correctly for reporting purposes. IT support will be necessary to ensure the applications and everything within the system are in place, connected, and working properly. Until AIM is fully implemented and operational, AAC staff will continue to utilize systems currently in place.

Describe any external opportunities or challenges.: The first challenge is being short-staffed in the Testing Center and having students and faculty who need extended hours. Overall, now that we are back fully in-person after the pandemic, our student count is steadily increasing. The new pending data management system will improve our efficiency for every service we provide once it's ready for use. Moreover, having another Test Proctor will enable students to be served most efficiently. We will continue to strive to increase active students' use of their AAC services. These services include: counseling (disability-related and academic), alternate media (audio books, Braille, large print), technology training, testing services (distraction-reduced, extended time, reader/scribe assistance), learning assessments (to determine eligibility for LD services), a (currently virtual) access lab, equipment loans, on- and off-campus liaison and sign language interpreting. In order to assist students with employment preparation, AAC's Workability III program partners with the local Department of Rehabilitation to serve students entering the workforce.

Overall SAO Achievement: The Access and Ability Center's SAOs are to: (1) strive to ensure that each student's college experience is supportive, engaging, and barrier-free, and (2) advocate for equal access to opportunities for student success. In the academic year of 2021-22, AAC provided services to 1,629 students; out of 1,927 active students, 85% of our students used their AAC services. Compared to the previous academic year (2020-21), 1,422 (only 76%) used their AAC services (out of 1,879 active students). This is a 9% increase of students using our services since the previous academic year. These results reveal that our increased communication and in-reach efforts, including intrusive counseling, has been effective. When we started these efforts in AY21, we experienced a 14.6% increase from the previous academic year. This is an astounding 23.6% increase across the past two academic years. We have increased the following: incorporating student-retention strategies such as calling/texting/emailing our active students who are currently enrolled to (1) ensuring students are familiar with their accommodations and services and procedures related to them, (2) offering assistive technologies that are now available to them, (3) offering support/referrals for any barriers identified, and (4) referring appropriate students to our Workability III (WA III) program. WA III has experienced a 7% increase in students from AY21 (60 students) to AY22 (64 students) with 18 of those successfully placed in employment in either volunteer/internship or permanent work in AY22. Moreover, we now regularly (1) send out email announcements of upcoming events/success strategies for college, (2) offer workshops on math success, study/learning strategies, and job development, (3) provide important dates reminders, such as priority registration, and (4) have the Access Lab (and/or virtual link) available every workday for all AAC students.

Lastly, this data reflects a 2.5% increase in active students this past academic year, which shows that our outreach efforts have also been effective. Last year AAC staff focused on continuing to advertise AAC services by: (1) leading in-class presentations, (2) familiarizing faculty during pre-convocation and flex activities about referrals, (3) collaborating with general counselors and Mental Health about the soft hand-off, (4) presenting (or representing a table booth) at student service events for general students, (5) developing closer connections with special programs, such as Veterans, Foster youth, EOPS, Athletes, and probation students, and (6) reaching out to former AAC students who are currently enrolled. Additionally, our Support Services Coordinator has continued collaboration with all high schools within Tulare/Kings County to increase awareness of our AAC program for those planning on attending COS. Each year, he coordinates individual class presentations and arranges intakes with our office. In AY22 there were 164 students who connected with AAC with 148 or 90% of those opening files, which is a 57% increase from AY21 with 106 students connecting and 94 opening their files.

Changes Based on SAO Achievement: We plan to continue the current in-reach and outreach practices of our AAC staff since

they are proving to be effective. Unfortunately, we still only have 7% of active students requesting alternate media from the 2021-2022 academic year, so we are planning to increase communications as well as offering AT (Assistive Technology) Open Houses each semester, workshops and trainings for students to have more opportunities to gain more knowledge on how AT can support their learning.

Outcome cycle evaluation: The AAC staff has analyzed each area's SAOs and has made adjustments based on the data and outcomes. This Unit will continue to review data in relation to SAOs during monthly team meetings, area meetings, and individual staff folder meetings as well as staff evaluations. We will continue to gather and reflect upon data, correlations, and outcomes to determine if adjustments are needed.

Action: 2022-2023 Full-Time Test Proctor

Classified full-time, 12-mo Test Proctor (additional position) for Access and Ability Center, paid thru General Fund. The work hours will be from 10am to 7pm.

Leave Blank:
Implementation Timeline: 2019 - 2020, 2022 - 2023
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Identify related course/program outcomes: To effectively run the Testing Center, an additional hire of a 12-mo full-time Testing Proctor is required to meet the growing demand of testing accommodations, provide staffing for extended business hours, and maintain testing integrity. This allows for students to have access to this accommodation/service at the time that is needed. This Test Proctor is needed to cover breaks/lunches for current Test Proctor since testing cannot be stopped mid-way, and this would enable the testing center to be open later (with a 10am-7pm shift) to serve students who attend later college classes and/or work full-time. Furthermore, we have concluded that in order to best serve students, the Testing Center should be in a more generalized setting, especially since it also provides testing services to general students who need to take make-up exams, etc. We propose moving to the Library (Lodgepole building) or the new Educational Support building.
Person(s) Responsible (Name and Position): Lyndsi Litten, AAC Director
Rationale (With supporting data): Besides the fact that more help has proven to be needed to meet demands, our current Test Proctor is only a 10-month employee and this new position would enable us to cover the summer months without the extra cost on the AAC program. In the past, we used student workers to extend working hours, and although student workers have been vital in helping perform the duties of the testing center, there were concerns from Faculty that the testing integrity may be impacted. So this past year, we hired a Seasonal position which has been challenging with the work limitations with the nature of this position with work-time limits annually as well as the reliability due to short-term positions not staying filled. Overall, the two Test Proctors would be ideal, and it would be more equitable to be able to offer extended hours.

Priority: High
Safety Issue: No
External Mandate: No
Safety/Mandate Explanation:

Update on Action

Updates

Update Year: 2022 - 2023   09/30/2022
Status: Continue Action Next Year
After in-depth analysis, it has been determined that the steady use of the Testing Center cannot be fulfilled by one staff member alone. A part-time staff will be needed to assist at least 4 hours per day (and more hours may be required on some days). Last year, 49% and 61% of students utilizing Testing Center were general (nonAAC) students in FA21 and SP22, respectively; therefore, it seems appropriate to rely on College Effort (college's general fund revenues allocated to serve students with disabilities) in order to maintain the prompt, high level, and variable demands of service delivery to all students including those with disabilities, as well as complying with Title 5 regulations. Lastly, we have concluded that in order to best serve students, the Testing Center should be in a more generalized setting, especially since it also provides testing services to general students who need to take

make-up exams, etc. We propose moving to the Library (Lodgepole building) or the new Educational Support building.
Impact on District Objectives/Unit Outcomes (Not Required):

Resources Description

Personnel - Classified/Confidential - Another Full-time Test Proctor, paid by General Fund is needed to cover current Test Proctor's breaks/lunches since we can't stop students in the middle of their tests, to help since most days are steadily busy (and two eyes are not enough even with cameras), and to be able to offer extended testing hours. In the event that someone is out, we need another trained staff present (i.e., familiar with assistive technology). (Active)

Why is this resource required for this action?: Given that nearly half (and even more than half of students last semester) who use consistently use AAC Testing Services are general (non-AAC) students who are doing make-up exams, it would be appropriate for this additional staff be paid using College Effort. Data from Spring 2022 semester revealed that 247 (61%) students who used our Testing Center were not AAC students (out of 927 tests proctored). Furthermore, throughout the Fall 2021 semester, there were 137 (49%) students who utilized our Testing Center were not AAC students (out of 973 tests proctored). Moreover, due to the nature of the environment, we cannot stop proctoring exams while students are in the middle of testing; therefore, we need another Test Proctor to cover when our current Test Proctor must take daily breaks/lunch. We tried having other AAC staff cover while staggering lunches, but then we ran into coverage problems in our main office and lab. Then staff were forced to take lunch at an unreasonable hour, etc. Overall, this constant movement within the department caused too much stress. This Fall 2022 semester we have experienced such an increase in usage that one person cannot effectively complete duties alone. Currently, there is a Seasonal helping right now 6 hrs per day which has proven that two staff are needed to meet the demand. They are extremely busy! As it is crucial that our students be assisted by those familiar with their unique challenges, including such staff and student workers who have received necessary training provided by our certificated faculty.

Notes (optional): Salary Range is 28 step 2 ($50,440); Benefits are ($17,971.52 plus health cost $19,138.20)
We also recommend that we explore moving the Testing Center in order to provide this service in the more integrated Library/Lodgepole (or Educational Support building) setting that has more equitable extended hours to serve the working student and those enrolled in evening classes while be near other COS staff with same hours. Offering testing in a setting with more staff and extended business hours would assure fiscal responsibility as well as greater accessibility in operating hours.

Cost of Request (Nothing will be funded over the amount listed.): 87549.72

Link Actions to District Objectives

District Objectives: 2018-2021

District Objective 2.1 - Increase the percentage of students who earn an associate degree or certificate (CTE and Non-CTE) by 5 percentage points over three years

District Objective 2.4 - By 2021, Increase the percentage of CTE students who achieve their employment objectives by 5 percentage points

District Objective 3.2 - By 2021, increase the percentage of students in targeted groups who complete transfer-level English (by 10 percentage points) and transfer-level math (by 5 percentage points) within their first year

District Objective 4.2 - Improve organizational effectiveness by strengthening operations of and communication between District departments, divisions, and constituents

District Objectives: 2021-2025

District Objective 1.1 - The District will increase FTES 2% from 2021 to 2025.

District Objective 2.1 - Increase the number of students who earn an associate degree or certificate (CTE and non-CTE) by 5% from 2021-2025.

District Objective 2.2 - Increase the number of students who are transfer-ready by 15% and students who transfer to four-year institutions by 10% from 2021-2025.

District Objective 2.4 - Increase the percentage of CTE students who achieve their employment objectives by five percentage points (job closely related to field of study and

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attainment of a livable wage) and the number of CTE students who successfully complete 9+ CTE units in a single year by 10% from 2021-2025.

District Objective 3.1 - Reduce equity gaps in course success rates across all departments by 40% from 2021-2025.

Action: 2022-2023 Complete Implementation of AIM, AAC Data Management System (with the initialization and support of IT)

AAC purchased AIM, a Data Management system, to record students enrolled, services, booking testing appointments, equipment checkout, appointment management. This will centralize and keep information in one location to ensure accurate and up to date on student and misc information. The implementation process has been very challenging and has taken 3 years already.

Leave Blank: Essential for Operation
Implementation Timeline: 2019 - 2020, 2020 - 2021, 2021 - 2022, 2022 - 2023
Leave Blank:
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Identify related course/program outcomes: Having a data management system will allow AAC staff to maintain up to date information on student services and progress. This type of system will allow services to be managed by students, be managed online and to replace paper, keep registered students informed. Also this system will be 508-compliant and fully accessible by all students, faculty and staff. AAC is dedicated to maintaining and continually enhancing the overall accessibility of the system for all users.
Person(s) Responsible (Name and Position): Lyndsi Litten, AAC Director
Rationale (With supporting data): Now that AIM is set up for single-sign-on, the mapping of our student records database to AIM is needed to be completed, as well as verification that it's connected fully to Banner. Since AAC doesn't have an IT specialist, we need COS IT to assist with this process. If they cannot make time for this, hiring an IT applications specialist will be necessary.
Priority: High
Safety Issue: No
External Mandate: No
Safety/Mandate Explanation:

Update on Action

Updates

Update Year: 2022 - 2023   09/30/2022
Status: Continue Action Next Year
We are within our current contract with AIM (our data management system) and we still trying to transition to it and get it ready for implementation; therefore, if IT personnel cannot dedicate time to finish this project for us, we will need to hire a short-term contracted person to assist.
Impact on District Objectives/Unit Outcomes (Not Required):

Resources Description

Adjustment to Base Budget - Assistance to purchase a data management system specifically designed with the unique services and documentation required for Disabled student services Departments. (Active)

Why is this resource required for this action?: AAC is currently serving 1600 students and AIM (Accessible Information Management) was purchased June 2019, a data management system that will document, store, and process the variety of services offered to students. This system will help with minimizing the man hours currently needed to complete the majority of these tasks and it links to the several IT systems in operation in COS . It will also greatly assist in obtaining up to the minute information needed for reports and research. AAC requires assistance with partial payment of system. The amount needed is $16,000.

Notes (optional): This system has already been purchased, but we are still waiting for IT to prioritize finishing up the initialization and communication with Banner 9.

Cost of Request (Nothing will be funded over the amount listed.): 16000

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Link Actions to District Objectives

District Objectives: 2018-2021
District Objective 2.1 - Increase the percentage of students who earn an associate degree or certificate (CTE and Non-CTE) by 5 percentage points over three years
District Objective 2.4 - By 2021, Increase the percentage of CTE students who achieve their employment objectives by 5 percentage points
District Objective 3.2 - By 2021, increase the percentage of students in targeted groups who complete transfer-level English (by 10 percentage points) and transfer-level math (by 5 percentage points) within their first year
District Objective 4.1 - Increase the use of data for decision-making at the District and department/unit level
District Objective 4.2 - Improve organizational effectiveness by strengthening operations of and communication between District departments, divisions, and constituents
District Objective 4.3 - College of the Sequoias Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, and staff will engage in best practices and staff development to sustain effective operational systems for institutional assessment and continuous improvement.

District Objectives: 2021-2025
District Objective 3.1 - Reduce equity gaps in course success rates across all departments by 40% from 2021-2025.
District Objective 4.2 - Improve communication practices needed to support organizational effectiveness and continuous improvement across all District units and constituents from 2021-2025.
District Objective 4.3 - Improve professional development practices District-wide for all District employees to support equity and operational effectiveness from 2021-2025.

Action: 2021-2022 Students' awareness of AT and AM

Strengthen students' awareness of Alternate Media and Assistive Technology by continuing introducing students during Intakes with faculty, advertising weekly workshops, and in-reach efforts by Alt Media and Technology Specialist.

Leave Blank:
Implementation Timeline: 2021 - 2022
Leave Blank:
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Identify related course/program outcomes:
Person(s) Responsible (Name and Position): Lyndsi Litten, Director of Access and Ability Center
Rationale (With supporting data): To ensure students know of ...(why)
The purpose of Alternate Media is to assist students in achieving academic success as well as aiding universal design for learning and equal access. This is important as students with various conditions with impacted learning who require their books be in accessible format so they can utilize the different software programs that assist them with processing, comprehension, and memory retention.
Priority: High
Safety Issue: No
External Mandate: No
Safety/Mandate Explanation:

Update on Action

Updates

Update Year: 2021-2022   09/30/2022
Status: Action Completed
Compared to the 2020-2021 academic year, in AY22, there has been a 5% increase in students using alternate media. Over the last academic year, there also was a 57% increase in alternate media requests fulfilled (139 to 218). Students have increased awareness with our on-going AT Open Houses, workshops, and communication from our new Alt Media and Technology Specialist.

Impact on District Objectives/Unit Outcomes (Not Required):

Action: 2021-2022 Outreach and In-Reach

1.	High School Outreach: our Support Services Coordinator will collaborate with all high schools within Tulare/Kings County to increase awareness of our AAC program for those planning on attending COS. He coordinates individual class presentations and arranges intakes with our office. We also offer a public "Transition to COS" virtual event each semester for HS students, families, staff who are interested in learning how IEPs/504 plans transition to AAC and demystifying COS procedures/processes/expectations.

2.	Outreach at COS: AAC staff will continue advertising AAC services by: (1) leading in-class presentations, (2) familiarizing faculty during pre-convocation and flex activities about referrals, (3) collaborating with general counselors and Mental Health about the soft hand-off, (4) presenting (or representing a table booth) at student service events for general students, (5) developing closer connections with special programs, such as Veterans, Foster youth, EOPS, Student Success, and probation students, and (6) reaching out to former AAC students who are currently enrolled.

3.	Individual In-reach within AAC: We will incorporate student-retention strategies such as calling/texting/emailing our active students who are currently enrolled to (1) make sure they are familiar with their accommodations and services and procedures related to them, (2) offering assistive technologies that are now available to them, (3) offering support/referrals for any barriers identified, and (4) referring applicable students to our Workability III program.

4.	Group In-reach within AAC: We will offer support strategies including: (1) regularly sending out email announcements of upcoming events/success strategies for college, (2) distributing instructional videos for performing various tasks or utilizing accommodations, (3) offering workshops on math success, study/learning strategies, and job development, (4) providing important dates reminders, such as priority registration, and (5) opening the Access Lab to students M-F face-to-face or the Virtual Access Lab via Zoom for drop-ins.

Leave Blank:
Implementation Timeline: 2021 - 2022
Leave Blank:
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Identify related course/program outcomes:
Person(s) Responsible (Name and Position): Lyndsi Litten, AAC Director
Rationale (With supporting data): Outreach efforts have been successful. For graduating seniors in 2020, we had 106 who submitted AAC applications with verification with 94 (89%) of these students completing their AAC intake and enrolling in COS courses. Delaying our matriculation process last year led to a 4% increase of intentions who followed through with their STEPS. We also offer a public "Transition to COS" event each semester for HS students, families, staff who are interested in learning how IEPs/504 plans transition to AAC and demystifying COS procedures/ processes/expectations. When we crossed over to offering this virtually, our attendance rates increased by 200-400% with registration numbers of 60 for Feb 2021 and 37 for Sept 2020 and as opposed to only 12 in person in Oct 2019. For outreach throughout COS students, we continue to open new student files everyday.
Priority: High
Safety Issue: No
External Mandate: No
Safety/Mandate Explanation:

Update on Action

Updates

Update Year: 2021-2022   09/30/2022
Status: Action Completed
This is steadily improving each academic year since we have been strong with our outreach and in-reach efforts. Our student count and retention of active students has been increasing.
Impact on District Objectives/Unit Outcomes (Not Required):