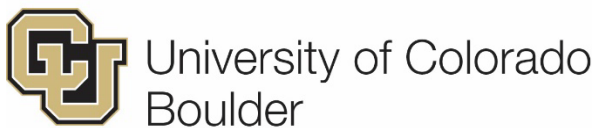


The Social Model of Disability at CU Boulder

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February 2017



Disability Services

Office of Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement (ODECE)

University of Colorado Boulder

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1 INTRODUCTION

Disability Services at the University of Colorado Boulder is a department within the Office of Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement. Since 1973, Disability Services has served the campus community by providing a base of expertise in the provision of academic accommodations to students with disabilities. In line with its peer institutions, CU Boulder's Disability Services office has traditionally operated within the framework of the medical model of disability (Appendix A).

In response to the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA) the field of Disability Services has greatly evolved in the last decade (Appendix B). Part of this evolution involves approaching students with disabilities in a holistic manner, which requires a change of the traditional operating model, toward a social model of disability. The social model engages students in the interactive process, encourages self-advocacy, and promotes a collaborative campus approach to supporting students with disabilities. The goal of this paper is to present the reader with an introduction to the social model and its implementation at the University of Colorado Boulder.

2 HISTORY OF DISABILITY SERVICES

Prior to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Disability Services at CU Boulder primarily worked with students with physical disabilities on the removal of campus barriers to ensure equal access. The ADA and subsequent Amendments Act, expanded the definition of disability to include those with conditions that substantially limit one or more major life activities. As a result, additional individuals with significant cognitive or psychological impairments are now protected under the law.

With the ADA's updated definition of disability, CU Boulder expanded its available services in the early 90s to better meet the needs of students with "invisible" disabilities (e.g., ADHD, learning, psychological, etc.). These student services included screening, diagnosing, and providing individual academic support (Appendix C). Over time, individuals with invisible disabilities outnumbered those with physical disabilities, and the institution saw an influx of students seeking services (Appendix D). This increased demand ultimately led to a department that was under-resourced to adequately provide student support and meet legal obligations.

Disability Services began reducing services in 2007, due to the increased volume of students requesting accommodations and budgetary constraints. The department eliminated all academic support and services beyond compliance obligations by 2014. This resulted in the office exclusively operating in a compliance framework utilizing the medical model. The medicalization of disability frames persons with disabilities as problematic, calling for their cure or adaptation rather than environmental modifications. Amidst these internal changes, the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) began to encourage affiliated institutions to transition from the medical model approach to one that resembles the social model (Appendix E). This remains an ongoing transition in the field of disability within higher education.

In response to AHEAD's guidance and evolving best practices, Disability Services adopted an accommodation request form for students to complete during their registration with the office. This request form provides students an opportunity to voice their experience with a disability—a change from staff determining eligibility for accommodations strictly based on medical documentation. The department also changed rigid

documentation requirements to guidelines, which helped clarify what documentation is essential in determining accommodation eligibility. Finally, the department changed staff titles from Disability Specialists to Access Coordinators to encourage the notion that staff are engaging students in the interactive process.

In February 2014, the Department of Justice (DOJ) opened an investigation regarding digital accessibility of campus resources at CU Boulder (Appendix F). To address this investigation, the university's administration organized a comprehensive taskforce, which developed strategic plans for accessibility policy, remediation, and communications (Appendix G and H). Upon seeing significant progress in addressing items identified in the investigation, the DOJ closed its investigation after 18 months. The university's progress towards an accessible campus remains a sustained effort supported by accountable measures such as a Chief Digital Accessibility Officer (CDAO), the Information and Communication Technology Accessibility Review Board (ICTARB), and CU Boulder's Digital Accessibility Policy. Although the DOJ investigation served as a catalyst for improvements in digital accessibility at CU Boulder, continued collaboration amongst all campus units will be essential in further enhancing accessibility at the institution.

3 THE SOCIAL MODEL AT CU BOULDER

Disability Services envisions a fully accessible, integrated, and universally designed campus community at CU Boulder. The social model emphasizes students as an owner of their experience and how they engage with their academic pursuits. Although the department will retain some degree of the medical model when determining accommodations, the social model will play an integral role in fulfilling the mission of Disability Services (Appendix I). The department will continue to advocate for universal access in CU's learning environment while doing its part to promote inclusive excellence in the campus community.

In order for the university to achieve its goal of becoming "a leader in addressing the humanitarian, social and technological challenges of the 21st Century," the institution needs to prioritize universal access within an inclusive excellence framework (Appendix J and K). Successfully fostering an inclusive campus community may be manifested by the university adopting a proactive approach to identifying and removing access barriers. With sustained commitment, partnership, and resources from campus stakeholders and institutional leadership, CU Boulder can build upon its brand as a progressive leader in the field of disability, universal access, and inclusive excellence.

4 APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Disability Services Models, Facilitated Discussion and Next Steps – Disability Services Staff Workshop – March 1, 2016

A presentation of the history of the disability movement and the models of disability currently used in higher education:

[hyperlink](#)

Next steps determined at the end of the facilitated discussion:

- Discuss the social model in working groups
- Review the university climate surveys
- Assess the climate of disability inclusion on campus (not included in the university climate study data/information)
- Review the Disability Services student survey and add questions related to campus climate of disability inclusion
- Dr. Alphonse Keasley to recommend a contact skilled in assisting with climate/survey questions
- Review Mission, Vision, and Core Value statements and consider updates
- Consider conducting social model focus groups with campus community stakeholders, such as students, faculty, Deans/Chairs, and the Provost
- John Meister to take the lead on developing a concept paper to share with stakeholders and build support for the new direction of Disability Services
- Begin strategic planning after drafting the concept paper and vetting ideas with stakeholders

APPENDIX B

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, As Amended

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits discrimination and ensures equal opportunity for persons with disabilities in employment, state and local government services, public accommodations, commercial facilities, and transportation. It also mandates the establishment of TDD/telephone relay services. The ADA was revised by the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-325), which became effective on January 1, 2009. The ADA is codified at 42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.

Full policy text: [hyperlink](#)

Americans with Disabilities Act Title II Regulations

This final rule revises the regulation of the Department of Justice that implements Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), relating to nondiscrimination on the basis of disability in state and local government services.

Full text of the Title II Regulations Supplementary Information:

[hyperlink](#)

APPENDIX C

Learning Disabilities Program

Description from 1986 Learning Disabilities Program:

“The Learning Disabilities (LD) Program at the University of Colorado, Boulder, a component of the Office of Services to Disabled Students, was developed in 1979 to advocate and support the needs of the learning-disabled student in a college environment. The Program centers around an interactive diagnostic-prescriptive process that utilizes “self-acknowledgment” of learning disability as a means to assist academic and personal growth. A profile of individual strengths and weaknesses is developed between the student and the diagnostician. This diagnostic information enables the student to understand how learning occurs and how strategies may be developed to ensure academic success. The student learns the importance of communicating and networking with faculty and staff, thus taking ownership and responsibility for learning.”

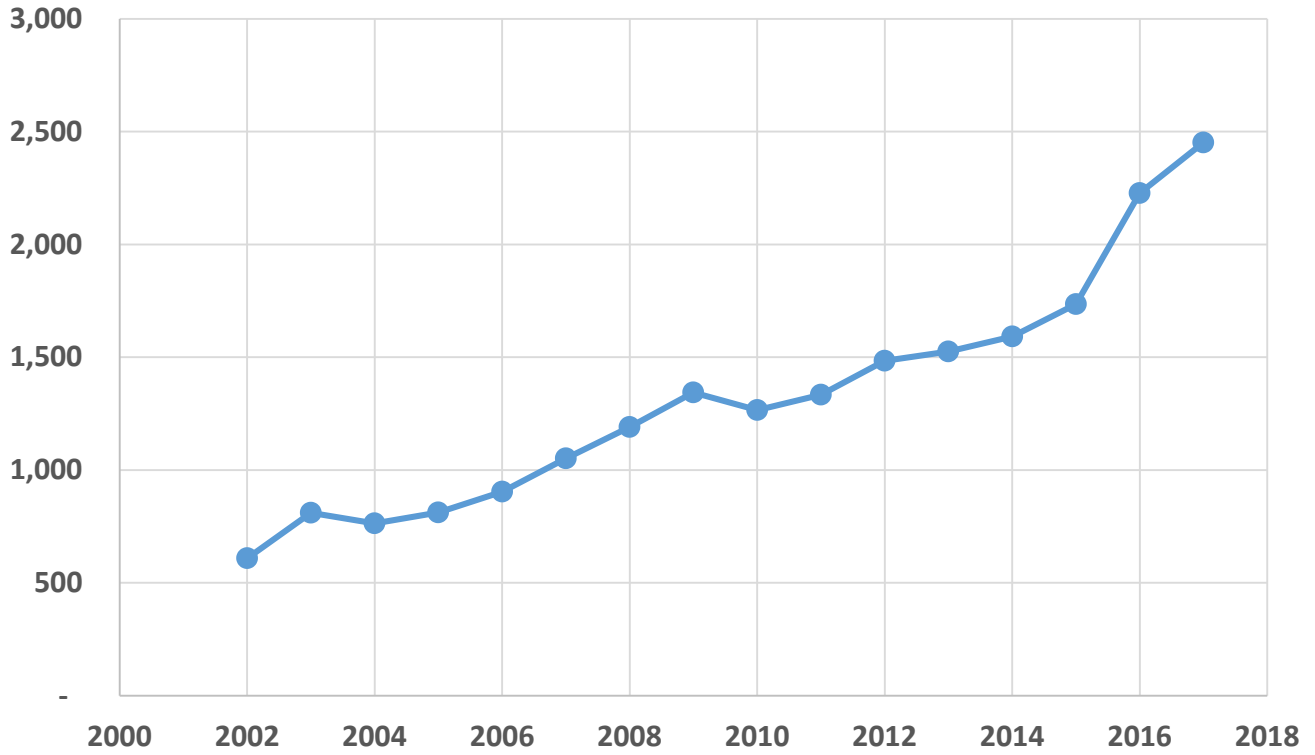
Digital version of the 1986 Learning Disabilities Program brochure:

[google drive hyperlink](#)

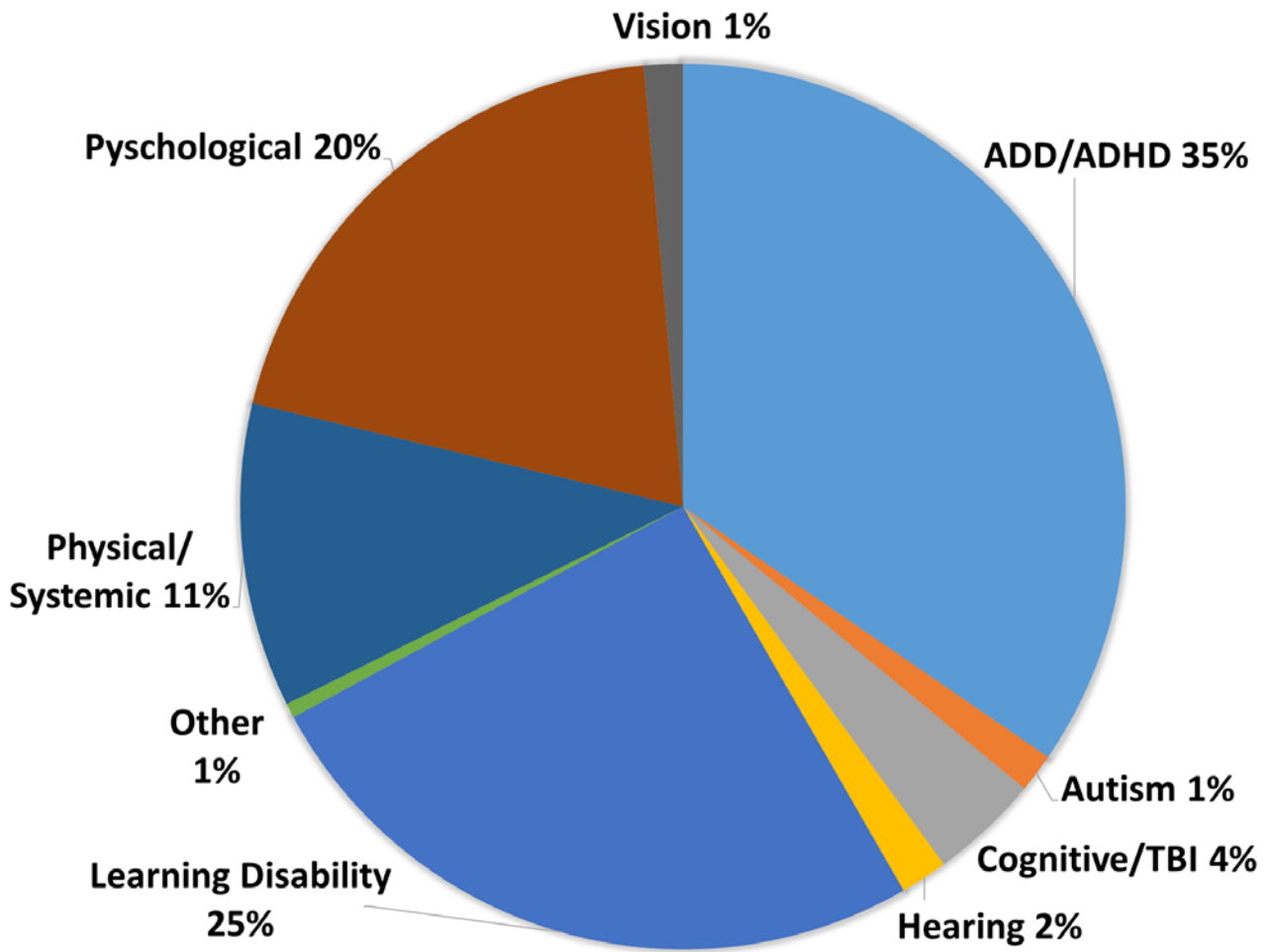
APPENDIX D

Historical Disability Services Student Registration

Disability Services - Registered Students by Year



Disability Services Registered Students by Disability Category – February 2017



APPENDIX E

Association of Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) Social Model Literature

Refocus: A Resource Partnership for Disability Services Professionals

“Disability resource professionals set the tone for how a campus frames and responds to disability. Refocus was created as a tool for examining the role the resource office can play in challenging stereotypes and creating truly equitable environments.”

More information on Project Refocus: [hyperlink](#)

Walking the Walk: Modeling Social Model and Universal Design in the Disabilities Office

Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, v23 n1 p72-78 2010

[google drive hyperlink](#)

Bridging the Gap Between Disability Studies and Disability Services in Higher Education: A Model Center on Disability

Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, Vol. 23, No. 1; 2010

[google drive hyperlink](#)

Disability Services' Standards and the Worldviews Guiding Their Implementation

Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, Vol. 23, No. 1; 2010

[google drive hyperlink](#)

APPENDIX F

Department of Justice (DOJ) Investigation Letter

Investigation letter received by CU Boulder, dated 2/18/14:

[hyperlink](#)

University's Initial Response to DOJ Investigation

Response letter addressed to DOJ by CU Boulder, dated 4/14/14:

[hyperlink](#)

Department of Justice (DOJ) Closing Letter

Closing letter received by CU Boulder from DOJ, dated 5/18/15:

[hyperlink](#)

APPENDIX G

CU Boulder Accessibility Roadmap Report - December 2014

The Paciello Group (TPG) was contracted by CU Boulder to assist the campus in defining what was needed to ensure digital accessibility became part of the campus culture moving forward. After nearly a year of collaborative work with TPG, CU Boulder campus leadership approved a final accessibility roadmap:

[hyperlink](#)

APPENDIX H

University of Colorado Boulder Accessibility Policy

Accessibility of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy

“The CU Boulder Accessibility of Information and Communication Technology policy was approved by Chancellor Phillip DiStefano on September 17, 2015. This policy has been created in order to maximize CU Boulder’s potential to achieve its legal, moral, and ethical commitments to establish a digital environment that allows for all individuals to achieve their academic and professional goals and aspirations. Priority for implementation of the policy and associated standards should be given programs, services, or activity that are either highly critical or which are broadly used by the campus, a school, or college. Full implementation of the policy is expected to take through fiscal year 2018.”

Full ICT Policy text: [hyperlink](#)

Campus Standards for the Accessibility of ICT Policy

“The CU Boulder Campus Standards for the Accessibility of Information and Communication Technology Policy are intended to provide additional detail regarding how the ICT Accessibility Policy is implemented. The standards are approved and maintained by the ICT Accessibility Review Board.”

Detailed campus standards:

[hyperlink](#)

Digital Accessibility Program

“To maximize CU Boulder’s potential to achieve its legal, moral, and ethical commitments in the digital environment, the university has established an information and communication technology accessibility program.”

More information on CU Boulder’s Digital Accessibility Program:

[hyperlink](#)

APPENDIX I

Disability Services 5 year program plan supporting the social model and budget

The following is a listing of program initiatives Disability Services plans to implement by 2021:

- Eye to Eye - 2016
- Diverse Learners Awareness Week (DLAW) - 2016
- Disability Services Awards Program – 2017
- Smartpen Program -2018
- Transition Program - 2018
- Faculty Mentorship Program - 2019
- CU-Achieve Program - 2020

Detailed descriptions of each program:

[hyperlink](#)

Program Initiatives Budget

Disability Services - 5 Year Program Initiatives Plan						
Program Initiatives	FY Implementation	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
DS Student Awards Program	2016-2017		5,000	6,000	7,000	8,000
Eye to Eye Program	2016-2017	5,000	5,000	5,000	15,000	15,000
Diverse Learners Awareness Week	2015-2016	8,000	9,000	10,000	11,000	12,000
Transition - CU-Boulder Program	2017-2018			30,000	35,000	40,000
Faculty Mentorship Program	2018-2019			10,000	11,000	12,000
Smart Pen Program	2016-2017	10,000	10,000	11,000	12,000	13,000
CU Achieve Program	2020-2021				500,000	525,000
Total Operating Costs		23,000	29,000	72,000	591,000	625,000
Program Staffing Costs	FY Implementation	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Program Manager	2016-2017	30,000	60,000	62,500	65,000	67,500
Program Assistant	2016-2017			50,000	52,000	54,000
Labor Costs		30,000	60,000	112,500	117,000	121,500
Benefits Costs		7,500	15,000	28,125	29,250	30,375
Total Labor + Benefits		37,500	75,000	140,625	146,250	151,875
Total Operating + Staffing Costs		60,500	104,000	212,625	737,250	776,875
FY 2016-2017 Implementation						
FY 2017-2018 Implementation						
FY 2018-2019 Implementation						

APPENDIX J

University of Colorado Boulder Flagship 2030 Strategic Plan

“The University of Colorado Boulder created the Flagship 2030 Strategic Plan in 2007. In 2008, a number of faculty/staff committees developed strategies for implementing the Core and Flagship Initiatives contained in the plan. The university then focused on specific action items and in December 2012 provided a report regarding its progress to date.”

More information on the Flagship 2030 Strategic Plan:

[hyperlink](#)

APPENDIX K

University of Colorado Boulder Inclusive Excellence Initiative

In order to chart a successful course for the campus on diversity, inclusion, and institutional excellence, CU Boulder will develop the Diversity, Inclusion and Academic Excellence Plan. As a campus, the intent is to define inclusive excellence in each academic and administrative unit and to work across units with faculty, students, and staff to create a common understanding of CU Boulder's vision, mission and strategic goals regarding diversity and inclusive excellence.

More information on CU Boulder's commitment to Inclusive Excellence:

[hyperlink](#)

CU Boulder Disability Services Inclusive Excellence Plan – March 15, 2016

The Disability Services framework for defining Inclusive Excellence:

[hyperlink](#)