



# Research Brief #79

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## Disabled Student Programs & Services Identifying Barriers Survey

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At the request of Disabled Student Program & Services (DSPS), the Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness surveyed students actively using the DSPS during the fall 2015 semester. Specifically, this research intended to identify obstacles that may impede students with disabilities from transferring. The following research questions were examined:

- What are the patterns of DSPS students' use and awareness of DSPS office, and accommodations?
- What challenges are faced by DSPS students in succeeding in college?

Paper surveys were administered and collected at the DSPS office where staff members tracked survey completers to avoid duplication. A total of 1,245 students were identified as DSPS students in the fall 2015 semester and 196 DSPS students completed the surveys. This was a response rate of 16%.

### DSPS Student Profile

Table 1. Length of time with DSPS

	Frequency (%)
0-1 year	47 (24%)
More than 1, less than 2 years	43 (22%)
More than 2, less than 3 years	39 (20%)
3 years or more	65 (34%)
Total	194

DSPS students indicated a range of time periods for receiving disabled student services. All time periods were similarly represented among the survey respondents with the highest group (34%) indicating that they had been receiving services for 3 or more years.

Most respondents also reported that they come to the DSPS office/center once a semester (53%), followed by those who come monthly (26%), weekly (12%) and once a year (9%).

With regard to their educational goal, most indicated that their goal was to transfer to a 4-year institution (which included the goal of attaining a Bachelor's degree).

Slightly over a quarter of the survey respondents (29%) indicated that they had been tested for learning disabilities at COC (General Studies 050).

The most common type of disability reported by the survey respondents was a learning disability (n=99) and the least common was visual impairment (n=3). Of the 194 respondents, most students reported one disability, 23% reported two disabilities and 5% reported 3 disabilities.

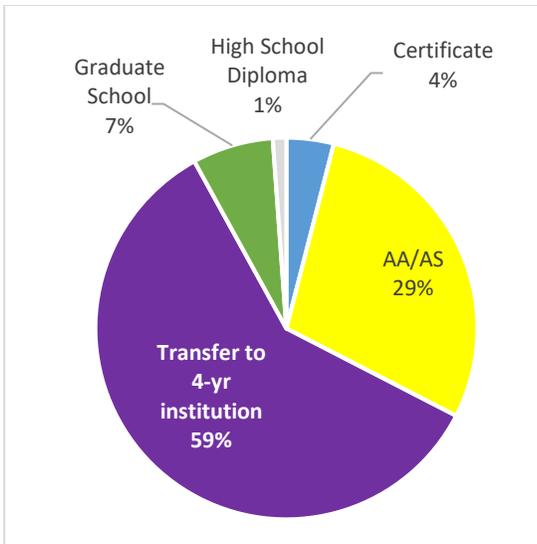


Figure 1. Highest Educational Goal

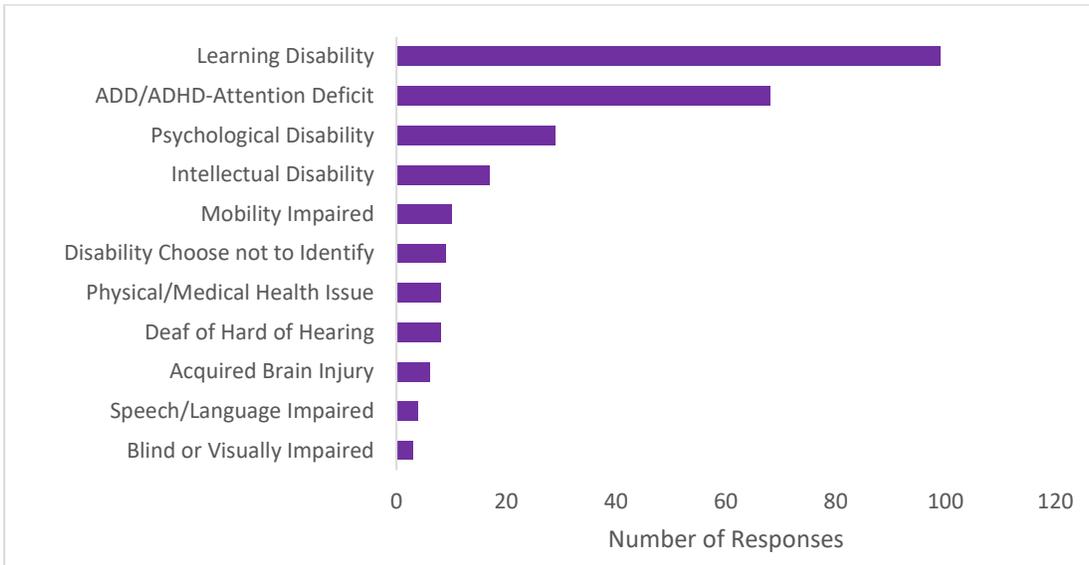


Figure 2. Types of Disabilities Reported (check all that apply)

### DSPS Accommodation Usage

The survey also examined the types of accommodations DSPS students are aware of, or use. These include: Priority Registration, Test-taking accommodations (e.g. time extensions), Note-taking services (e.g. shared notes, recorded lectures), General Studies Tutoring, Alternate Media (e.g. e-text, Braille), and Assistive Technology (e.g. computers, live scribe pens). For most accommodations, respondents indicated being aware of but not necessarily using the service. However, priority registration was the only accommodation where the number of respondents indicating use was higher than the number of respondents being aware of the accommodation.

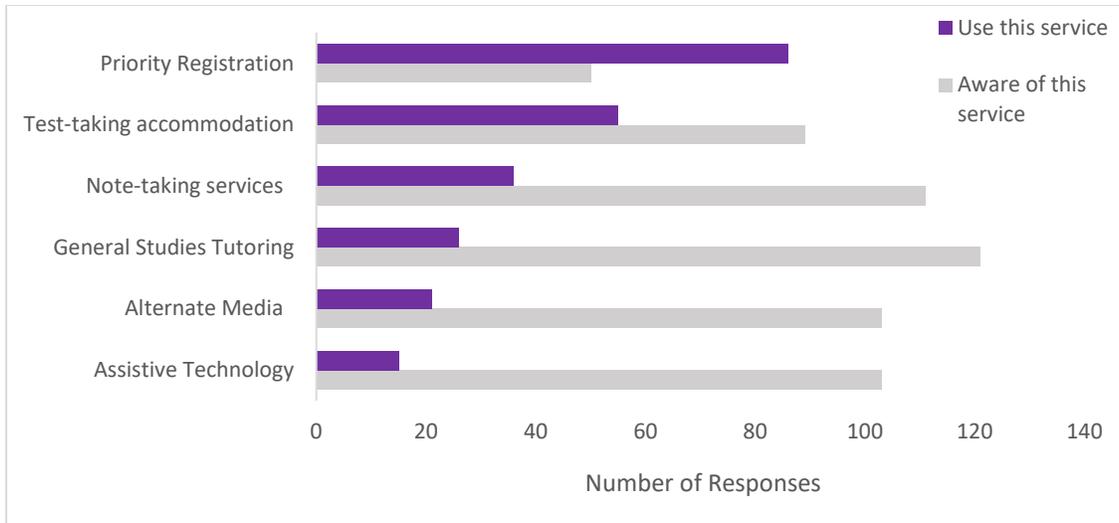


Figure 3. DSPS Accommodations Use vs. Awareness

### Challenges Faced by DSPS Students

Students were asked to identify subject areas and/or skills that are particularly challenging for them. The most frequent response was Math followed by Writing, English and Reading. Additionally, as part of their responses to an open-ended question, 144 students provided information on the challenges they face in succeeding in college courses. The following section provides information on the themes that the comments corresponded to and sample quotes for the most common themes. The most common challenges highlighted in the open-ended responses were time-management, Math & English skills, tests/test-taking, Attention/focus, difficult coursework and faculty-related challenges. Other open-ended responses that did not fit the common themes are provided in Appendix A.

Table 2. Challenging Subject Areas and/or Skills

Subject Area/ Skill	Frequency
Math	110
Writing	71
English	63
Reading	48
Chemistry	3
Retention/Memory	3
History	2
Science	2
Testing/Exams	2
Biology	1
Nursing	1
Psychology	1

Table 3. Open-Ended Most Common Themes for Challenges

Theme	Frequency
Time management/organization	23
Math	22
Tests/Test-taking	17
English/Reading/Writing	14
Attention/focus	11
Difficult coursework	11
Faculty/Professors	11
Memory/Information Retention	10

#### Time-Management/ Organization

- Keeping up with the pace that everyone's moving at can be especially challenging. I also need to keep an agenda to consistently keep me ahead of what is going on.

#### Tests/Test-taking Pace

- Test taking, fast pace

- The challenges I face at college are the short amount of time required to complete an exam.
- Some tests I need more time in.
- Anxiety during testing

#### Attention/Focus

- The challenges that I face in succeeding in college course it testing taking a paying attention in classes
- Mostly my ADD and my short term focus/concentration.

Faculty-related challenges included difficulty in understanding faculty (e.g. accents) (n=4), and difficulty working with DSPS accommodations (n=3).

- Some teachers don't like the DSPS resources especially testing in TLC for extra time.
- Some teachers make it more difficult than others to take test @ TLC (by typed/not written) I have had to delay test taking 1/2 the time because it wasn't prepared properly.
- Some of my accommodations are challenged by professors.

### Assessment of Services

Most of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they were aware of the available resources to help them succeed at COC (92%), and were using these resources (90%). Most also agreed or strongly agreed (89%) that faculty were supportive of their use of accommodations from the DSPS office.

Table 4. Assessments

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am aware of available resources that can help me succeed in college at COC.	14 (7.9%)	0 (0.0%)	70 (39.5%)	<b>93 (52.5%)</b>
I use the available resources that can help me succeed in college at COC.	13 (7.4%)	4 (2.3%)	<b>90 (51.1%)</b>	69 (39.2%)
Faculty are supportive of me in the use of my accommodations.	14 (8.0%)	5 (2.9%)	62 (35.6%)	<b>93 (53.4%)</b>

### Suggestions

Open-ended responses with regard to what would be helpful for DSPS students to succeed in college were examined. The most common theme in the suggestions was tutoring/help with coursework. The following section provides themes and their frequency of occurrence as well as sample quotes for some of the common themes. Other open-ended responses that did not fit the common themes are provided in Appendix B.

Table 5. Themes for what helpful in succeeding in college

Tutoring/Extra help with coursework	41
Exam Time Extensions	15
Note-taking/Recordings (e.g. lectures)	10
More Understanding	8
Skill-building	7
DSPS-related	9
Utilizing resources	5
Counselor	2

### *Tutors/Extra Help*

- Study, and get a tutor to help on courses that are challenging.
- Having free tutoring available to COC, which it does. It's very helpful.
- Being able to have someone keep an eye on me for when I'm doing my homework.
- Private tutors instead of the TLC setting
- A tutoring for basics such as spelling and grammar.

### *Exam Time Extensions*

- More time on test, quizzes, papers or assignments. And testing in smaller location, tutoring.

### *More Understanding*

- The understanding that we have other struggles than most. I feel sometimes I may be a bother, but overall everyone is helpful.
- Teachers being more understanding of accommodations.
- Understanding having a disability is NOT easy!
- An understanding of accommodations between professor and student.

### *Skill-Building*

- More resources to help out of class like, time management skill and how to handle pressure.
- Learning ways to keep information I learn about, better ways I can know if a source is reliable.
- For me to learn how to use my time efficiently, while still having a bit of fun to keep me interested in my work.

### *What has been helpful?*

Eight respondents referred to the helpfulness of the current services provided by the DSPTS office.

- I think the most helpful thing in college is going to the DSPTS Resource office.
- The most helpful thing provided to me @ college of the Canyons has been extended time given on exams in order for me to complete the exam fully, otherwise I would be turning in exams only 1/2 completed and my grade wouldn't be an accurate reflection of my knowledge. So thank you so much for the extra-time. :)
- Accommodations provided are suffice.
- I have everything I need to be successful! :) General studies tutoring is very, very helpful! Love everyone in DSPTS.

## **Recommendations**

- Consider providing additional professional development opportunities for faculty on understanding students with disabilities and responsibilities related to accommodations.
- Consider providing workshops or additional resources to help students develop overall study skills (e.g. time-management).
- Consider disseminating information on available resources more widely.
- Given that learning disabilities is the most common type of disability reported, and only a quarter of the respondents reported having been tested, consider providing more learning disability testing and/or promoting testing services more widely.

## **Action Implications**

- To decrease time spent at COC (65% of students spend 3 years or more receiving services through DSPTS), and to increase student/counselor contact, the DSPTS counselors completed SEP's for all DSPTS students who did not have a plan. By completing this plan it is the intent to focus the student on their

goals or re-direct and update the student's plans. The SEP provides a clear pathway what the student needs to do and identify barriers along the way. For instance, if a student is having difficulty with a math track, the counselor could provide guidance on what would be the best sequence to follow to achieve their particular goal.

- According to Research Brief #79, Assistive Technology and Alternate Media are the accommodations with the lowest use by DSPTS students. Students do appear to be aware of the service, however, fail to use it. Only 39.2% of students state they “strongly agree”, they use the available resources that can help me succeed in college at COC. To increase the use of assistive technology and alternate media amongst students, DSPTS has purchased licenses for “Learning Ally” which is software to encourage students to access online books that can be used like e-text.
- DSPTS students indicated on the assessment of services that tutoring is helpful. We increased DSPTS lab hours to include being available to students’ during finals week. This gives students additional support during finals and the opportunity to succeed in college.
- Professional development activities for faculty have increased to include flex presentations for individual departments targeting specific issues that students with disabilities encounter in certain programs. This technique of customizing our presentations are well received by faculty who want to learn how to best help students with varying learning styles. Ongoing faculty opportunities will be available, in addition to regular contact with faculty as student issues present themselves.

For more detailed information on this research brief, stop by the Institutional Research office located in BONH-223, or call Preeta Saxena, Senior Research Analyst, Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness at 661.362.3072.

**APPENDIX A: Open Ended Responses On Challenges**

Attendance, I get sick often.
Group work and keeping up with my peers. Keeping up with notes and reading in groups.
Staying motivated
Not sure, I guess not understanding the material and/or lack of motivation to do the work.
Occasional lack of motivation
How long the courses go
Reviewing arithmetic in formulas and making relevant connections to associate the problem.
Understanding my course work and remembering my math
Just math
Some of the challenges I face are being able to understand math
Taking math classes.
I'm horrible at math and science, so staying focused and passing is hard for me
Math 70!
Math
Math classes
Math is the most challenging thing for me.
Completing math courses. Math support?
Speed of math classes
Math is the hardest
Anything math
Just understanding concepts or lessons during a math class, organizing writings for essays/editing.
English and math are very challenging for me
Homework in Math and English
Math (algebra and statistics) Tests (I learn a lot in my college courses but tests do not reflect this)
It is the math and English writing.
Memory
Dealing with short term memory loss caused by long term Ritalin use. Hard to maintain information for testing
Trying to remember and take in the lectures and information. With classes that has a paper or essay, writing things like these had always been a challenge especially if need to find accurate sources.
Being able to memorize/learn all the material needed to pass a course, but with all academic accommodations I am able to succeed.
Understanding and retaining the concept of the course
Remembering information, it takes a lot of time to study than the average young student.
I'm not aware of any besides difficulty in subject material memorization
Remembering material, focusing enough to learn in lecture, anxiety before and during exams, needing twice as much repetition while studying.
Note-taking, I was never good at taking notes
Not sitting upfront can be distracting sometimes taking notes during lecture is quite difficult.
Trying to take notes and listen to instructor w/o missing crucial info.
DSPS is the best, always able and willing to help,
To understand and follow the material I learn throughout my college courses.
If course work is not well specified or detailed examples are not provided.
Grasping the information

**APPENDIX A: Open Ended Responses On Challenges**

I freeze up speaking and need to write down what I want to say & then read it aloud. -When I'm on the spot, all words & ideas leave me.

Reading a lot.

Reading and speed of the courses.

Using all my resources fully.

Classes I cannot attend due to being unavailable at certain class times. The times that some classes are available may not be a good time for me to attend.

Scheduling can sometimes be a challenge. Also completing work at home is very challenging and takes a long time, even if I know exactly what to do and the fastest way to do it.

Reading & studying

Learning and understanding material in class. Would have to reread and relearn

Studying

Studying

Figuring out my classes I need to take.

Essays.

Essays are my challenge.

Having trouble writing down my thoughts

That it is not like high school.

**APPENDIX B: Other Open Ended Responses to What Would Be Helpful**

Studying
Study more.
Stay on track with my studies
Stay focused in class, study, eat a good breakfast, and get some extra sleep.
Save some time to study 2 hours a day. -Start doing assignments early.
Ongoing practice + study
I would be most helpful about in the education and study getting better.
Easier ways to study
Continuing, studying with other students in my Bio classes. The test-taking accommodation
Being given a private room, extra time to study, and extra time for exams.
A support group/network, ex. students w/ similar disabilities willing to share what helps them or works best for them
To do all work ahead of time.
Time extension, and managing my time
Put in the time I need to make to study for my classes
Help planning my time.
More time on big assignments
If there was more support for transferring, whether private small liberal arts, and CSU's.
If there would be less writing essays
No homework.
Multiple examples of what's requested. To be able to have real confidence in this
Just keep trying.
If I don't have too many stressors overall, and if I was able to retained all the information in all my math classes.
If I could do them at home or didn't need to come as much
Extra time to study what I want to do
A puppy or kitten room to relieve stress and anxiety.
Teachers provide more study guide -Get a lot of when there is a lot of need -Study group w/ friends