The Learning Development and Evaluation Center (LDEC) at Florida A&M University, provides supportive services to students with disabilities to enhance theirs skills for personal, academic and professional growth.

In collaboration with local, state and federal agencies, as well as the university community, the LDEC provides enriching academic support programs and services, individual counseling, prescriptive plans of study, innovative technology, and accommodating mobility services.

It is the intent of the Learning Development and Evaluation Center staff to assist students in maintaining dignity and respect in a caring, supportive, and nurturing environment.

**PREFACE**

Transitioning from the secondary to the postsecondary environment poses some challenges for all students, however, students with disabilities experience more difficulty with the transition process and the duration may be lengthened (students are not prepared for the rigors of college and they fail to utilize the supportive services that are available).

Given that the process for disclosing and requesting accommodations are different at the postsecondary level, many students do not request and receive accommodations until after they experience failure in their courses.

Often times, making the transition from one postsecondary institution to another includes restarting the process of requesting and receiving accommodations, acclimating to the new environment, establishing friendships, etc.

Indicators that impact academic performance:
- Ninety-five percent of incoming LDEC students’ are required to enroll in at least two C-Prep courses
- LDEC students’ academic failures/repeats
- LDEC students’ poor attendance at meetings, classes, tutorials, labs

**Accommodations and Supportive Services:**

Tutoring is available as a tool for students' academic self-improvement. Many students do not attend class, read the material, and/or complete all assignments, resulting in poor performance or failures. Students fail to understand the emphasis placed on attendance and consistency for the greatest benefit to be derived from the tutorial sessions. The combination of constant training/meetings with the tutors to ascertain problems/concerns, the use of assistive technologies to remediate deficits, and to identify and implement effective methodologies/strategies to diminish learning barriers during the tutorials are key elements for successes to be realized. While there are some noticeable improvements and outcomes, the statistical representation is minimal.
Research indicates that the use of assistive technology will help students to remediate deficient skill areas and to diminish learning barriers. The student must recognize the importance of: seeking assistance early, tutorial attendance, the application of strategies for learning and being consistent in the process of the application. While supportive services are provided, historically less than fifty percent of the participants are regular attendees.

Working with faculty members who understand the dilemma and struggles for learning disabled students and structuring their presentation/instruction to incorporate accessible and effective strategies that promote learning for all students continues to be worked towards. The LDEC staff is available to make presentations and have actively pursued opportunities to present; to support and promote outreach and disability awareness training and workshops. Additionally, other media is used to inform and educate the FAMU community in the area of disabilities.

The LDEC staff continually evaluates data concerning the successes and failures of the students. Structural and/or procedural guidelines are reviewed to make the necessary changes to improve program components such as reasonable accommodations based on current law and offerings that may yield academic gains for the benefit of LDEC participants.

The LDEC also supports the University by providing campus-wide transportation to students with physical disabilities and/or challenges. This includes access to University Buildings and/or gated areas, for student drop-off/pick-ups.

All of these components of the supportive services are critical and should affect positive outcomes on the progression, retention and graduation rates. The success rates continue to be below fifty percent respectively.

**Accommodations Provided During AY 2007-2008:**

- The number of students requesting accommodations increased in the areas of testing, tutoring/note-taking services and mobility services
- Specifically, a 300% increase in the number of students requesting accommodations at FAMU College of Law
Open House Celebration

On Wednesday, October 24, 2007, the LDEC showcased its facility and presented information on disabilities and the supportive services that are offered. The open house was held to educate the FAMU community and to commemorate Disability Awareness Month.

OFF TO COLLEGE

Ms. Shell was requested to submit an article for inclusion in the 2008 edition of OFF TO COLLEGE. This publication defines itself as a collaboration of distinguished administrators and educators that have combined their expertise to provide insight for a successful college career and beyond.

“STRAIGHT TALK”

Three male students attended the first session that was held during January 2008. A subsequent session was held during March 2008 with three attendees to discuss topics of enrichment for their personal, academic and professional development and growth. The plans are to continue to offer these sessions in AY 2008 -2009.

Partners in Transition Summit, Orlando, FL

Ms. Shell attended and participated in the annual “Partners in Transition” Summit which prides itself in bringing together local level leadership teams who will work toward strengthening their capacity to provide services in improving transition for Florida’s youth with disabilities.

Time Management Seminar

On Wednesday, April 2, 2008, the Administrative Assistant, Ms. Solange Charles, held a Time Management Seminar, for the participants of the Learning Development and Evaluation Center. The seminar focused on such items as, time management skills, study habits, end of semester advice and examination preparation. One of the counselors from FAMU’s Office of Counseling Services gave a small presentation about the services that their office offers as well as invaluable time management tips.

Workforce Recruitment

Annually, a recruiter visits the campus to recruit students with disabilities, to intern with the Department of Defense Agencies. There was a 12% increase in the number of students participating. Students that were selected will be notified individually.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

The Center coordinated with Vocational Rehabilitation in Tallahassee, FL, for a counselor to schedule monthly visits to increase the number of students receiving the Vocational Rehabilitation services. However, due to budget shortfalls this initiative will be adversely affected during the upcoming academic year. There
were three (3) students that benefited financially from the services during the Spring 2008 semester.

**Ninth Annual Conference: Narrowing the Gulf**

The Assistant Director presented, through the collaborative effort between FAMU, TCC and FSU, at the 9th Annual Conference - "Narrowing the Gulf". The topic of the presentation was "Building capacity for Accommodating People with Disabilities"; which highlighted the topic of Communities of Practice and Capacity Building Institutes; addressing stakeholders collaborating to identify problems and solutions.

**Disability Mentoring Day 2007**

Annually, on the third Wednesday of October, Disability Mentoring Day is observed in communities across the US. Six (6) LDEC students participated on Wednesday, October 17, 2007 and showed a professional in the Tallahassee community.

**Sports Ability**

This event is a multi-day event for people of all ages with any type of disability and their families or friends. It features a resource expo, indoor and outdoor sports, leisure activities and clinics. Activities include wheelchair and adaptive golf, tennis, power soccer, basketball, pontoon boat rides, sit water skiing, sailing, kayaking, personal water craft rides, fishing and many more! The event was held at Tallahassee Community College and was attended by the Coordinator of Disability Accommodations in collaboration with the ADA Coordinator.

**Pre-empted launch of LDEC website**

The LDEC website is being constructed under the auspices of Enterprise Information Technology. It highlights pertinent information regarding the services available through the LDEC, including mobility services, academic accommodations and assistive technology. In addition, links to other agencies and resources will be posted on the website.

**INITIATIVE 3:** Solidify FAMU’s position as a leader in producing African American baccalaureate degree holder, while setting new records for graduating students with terminal (PhD) degrees.

Alumnus, Mr. Kevin Williams completed his doctoral studies and was awarded a degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Social Foundations of Education, from The University of Georgia, May 2008.

**INITIATIVE 4:** Renovate residence halls; augment the wellness center and other amenities that ensure a student-oriented environment that will appeal to students and their families.

**Student Survey**
A student survey was administered to 10% of the LDEC participant population. The results indicated that the majority of the participants were moderately or very satisfied with the quality of services that were provided during the AY 2007 – 2008. Moreover, the students realized the importance of requesting accommodations early and being consistent in utilizing the supportive services offered by the LDEC for the benefit of their academic pursuits and successes.

**Time Management Seminar**

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**End of Semester Celebrations**

At the conclusion of the semester the LDEC rewards its participants with an end of semester soirée. This event provides not only a networking opportunity for the students to gain acquaintance with other students and staff at the center, but also serves a general stress reliever for those students preparing for final examinations.

**Visits from the Office of Student Counseling**

A collaborative effort with the Office of Counseling Services has been established to provide mental health and counseling to the students of the LDEC.

**Voter Registration**
Ms. Shell and Mr. Worthy attended the 2008 National Act Training Workshop for Voter Registration Agency. Primary Purposes:
1.) Increase the number of locations where eligible citizens can apply for voter registration.
2.) Requires the creation of a national mail-in voter registration application process.

**INITIATIVE 5:**
Monitor the enrollment increases across the colleges, schools and respective classes (undergraduates and graduates)

*College Study Skills Institute (CSSI) 2007*

The LDEC sponsors the College Study Skills Institute (CSSI), a five week summer program designed for prospective students with disabilities. During CSSI, student’s strengths and weaknesses are identified and their disability/disabilities and reasonable accommodations are discussed and broadened to enhance their academic foundation levels for learning and success.

*Academic Advisement*
Typically during their first two (2) years at the University, LDEC students are advised not to take more than 12-13 semester hours. Their lack of academic vigilance and disability (ies) may extend their completion time for degree requirements. Some students may be held to less than average class load, especially at the onset of their college experience. Key to the realization of success for LDEC participants is: making the transition, progressing through the course work with minimal failures/repeats.

*Academic Progress Reports*
Each semester, Progress Reports are requested for those students who have a Letter of Accommodations on file. Upon receipt of a completed progress report, a meeting is held with the student and the necessary adjustments are made to improve class performance. The transcripts of LDEC students are audited and the student is advised/counseled on progress and ways to enhance the possibility for achieving educational goals.

*Implementation of LDEC Database*
The LDEC is presently constructing and anticipates the successful launch of an in-house student information database. This database will service the Center by relieving the hassle of searching for students folders and constructing reports. The database will allow for easy generation of reports as well as other pertinent student information.

**INITIATIVE 6:**
Secure additional funds for scholarships to offer at various levels for as many students as possible (i.e. full, partial, book stipends) to assist students matriculating to the University.

*Johnson Scholarship*
The Johnson Scholarship is a competitively awarded program which is available to undergraduate students who are Florida residents with disabilities and who enroll in the State University System of Florida. There has been a 67% increase in the
number of students receiving the Theodore and Vivian Johnson Scholarship 2007-2008.

**Workforce Recruitment**
Annually, a recruiter visits the campus to recruit students with disabilities, to intern with the Department of Defense Agencies. There was a 12% increase in the number of students participating. Students that were selected will be notified individually.

**Donation of Brail Printer**
During the 2008 Spring Semester, the Division of Blind Services donated a Brail Printer for use within the Learning Development and Evaluation Center, as well as the surrounding FAMU Community.

**Florida Alliance of Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST)**
An ongoing partnership with this agency has facilitated the loan and trial usage of new assistive technologies before purchases and to support the needs of LDEC students.

**CONCLUSION**
Students with learning disabilities may not be able to conform consistently to the organized structure of college life early on, so patience and guidance are prerequisite to establishing a program accessible to the behavior of most of the students. The LDEC staff must remain steadfast in its commitment to encourage the students to remediate their skill deficits, come in for services and to be actively engaged in the learning process; to be accountable and responsible for their success. We are required to provide an environment that is friendly, caring, helpful and conducive to learning for students with a disability.