



Mo' Money, Mo' Problems: How System Investments Go a Long Way

AHEAD 2025



State University of New York (SUNY) System Administration: Funding to Support Students with Disabilities

Lauren P. Rodriguez, Psy.D., Director of Resources for Students with Disabilities



What is SUNY?

- State University of New York (SUNY) is the **largest comprehensive university system in the United States**
- **64 institutions**; research universities, academic medical centers, liberal arts colleges, community colleges, colleges of technology and an online learning network
- [Mission Statement](#)
 - “...to provide the people of NY educational services of the highest quality, with the broadest possible access, fully representative of all segments of the population...” (New York State Education Law § 351)



Chancellor John B. King Jr.



- 15th Chancellor of the State University of New York
- Chancellor King and the SUNY Board of Trustees have established four pillars to guide SUNY's progress:
 - student success;
 - research and scholarship;
 - diversity, equity, and inclusion; and
 - economic development and upward mobility.
- Before being appointed SUNY Chancellor in January 2023:
 - President of The Education Trust, a national civil rights nonprofit
 - Served in President Barack Obama's cabinet as the 10th U.S. Secretary of Education
 - NY State's first African American and first Puerto Rican Education Commissioner



Historic Increase in State Operating Aid

- \$10 Million dedicated to support students with disabilities annually
- 2022-23: 19,276 (56%) students with disabilities enrolled at state-operated campuses
- Allowable uses
 - Staffing
 - Accessibility software and assistive technology
 - Professional development
 - Transition initiatives
 - Physical space upgrades
 - Programming, events, and marketing
- Other requirements
 - Supplement current activities, not supplant
 - Annual reporting
- All 29 campus plans reviewed and approved



Campus Feedback (after year 1)

- Lessons learned
 - Finding new partners on campus who are interested in collaborating
 - Difficult to keep up with changes in assistive technology without dedicated staff
- Ongoing needs
 - Barriers to hiring new staff with sufficient expertise
 - Increase in complexity of student access needs
 - Increase in students in graduate and professional schools requiring a high level of support
 - Neurodiverse students and how the campus community can best support this population

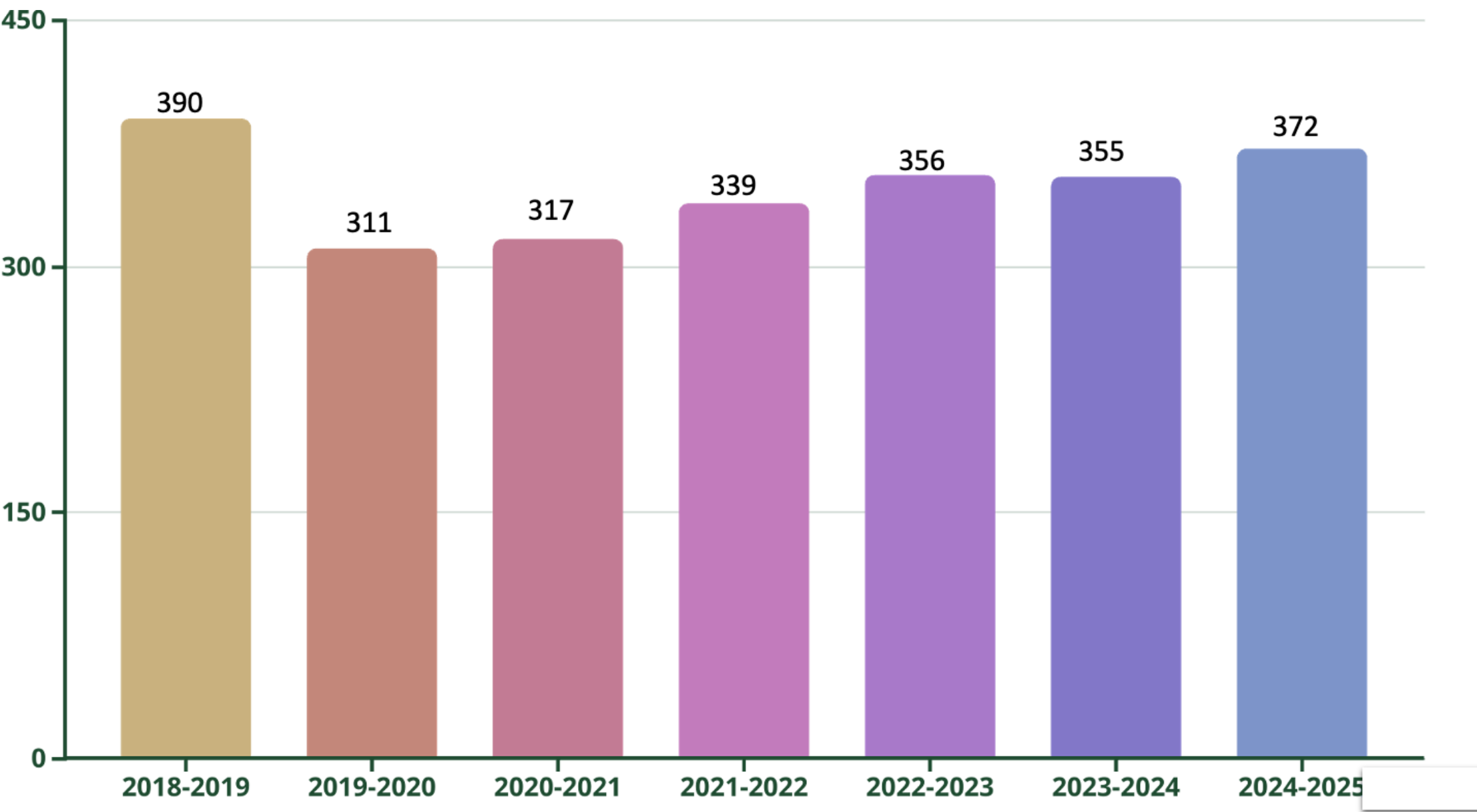


SUNY Canton

Supporting Neurodiverse Students

Megan Riedl, Director of Student Accessibility Services

Students with Disabilities by Year



The Challenge for SAS

Spending the new funds: prioritizing needs

Space Constraints

SAS needed dedicated testing areas to accommodate growing needs of neurodivergent students.

Classroom Renovation

Transformed traditional classroom into specialized testing center with adaptive technologies.

Staff Expansion

Hired Assistant Director and full-time Testing Coordinator to manage increased demand.

P3 Program Launch

Director now focused on developing P3 Program for comprehensive student support.

P3: Supporting Neurodivergent Students

P3 is a comprehensive support program for autistic and neurodivergent students at SUNY Canton. It focuses on social and emotional support through three core components.

Our mission is to help students who live and learn differently experience everything college has to offer.





Parents • Peers • Professionals

Program Overview



Parents

Support for families in transition to appropriate college-level involvement



Peers

Evidence-based social skills development with peer mentors



Professionals

Dedicated staff providing guidance throughout the college journey



Parent Partnership



Transitional Support

Helping families find developmentally appropriate involvement levels



Initial Meeting

Parent/Guardian orientation in August before semester begins



Open Communication

FERPA-authorized contact between families and staff when needed

The Challenge for Families

Over-involvement Impact

Studies show students with overly involved parents report lower satisfaction with family life.

These students often experience reduced psychological well-being.

Finding Balance

Some neurodivergent students arrive fully prepared for self-advocacy.

Others still depend heavily on parent support systems from high school.

PEERS[®] Program

Evidence-Based Curriculum

World-renowned program for relationship skill development

Social Support

Mentors provide "social cushion" in new environments



Weekly Classes

Regular sessions focused on friendship-building skills

Peer Mentorship

Dedicated mentors help practice skills in real settings



Professional Support

Weekly Check-ins

Regular meetings ensure academic progress is maintained.

Targeted Support

Help with course registration, housing, and financial aid.

Building Belonging

Intentional relationships foster campus connection.

Join the P3 Community

For Students

Gain valuable skills and support to navigate college successfully.

Build lasting friendships and connections.

For Parents

Learn effective ways to support your student's independence.

Stay connected appropriately during this transition.

For Faculty & Staff

Connect students with comprehensive support resources.

Help create an inclusive campus environment.



Lessons Learned

- **Program Success:** Students reported strong connections to peers and SUNY Canton community
- **Timing Adjustment:** PEERS program must span both fall and spring semesters for maximum effectiveness
- **Growing Interest:** Word-of-mouth referrals indicate expanding demand from prospective students
- **Community Impact:** Pilot created visible support system that attracted attention across campus
- **Future Direction:** Program adjustments underway based on initial feedback from participants

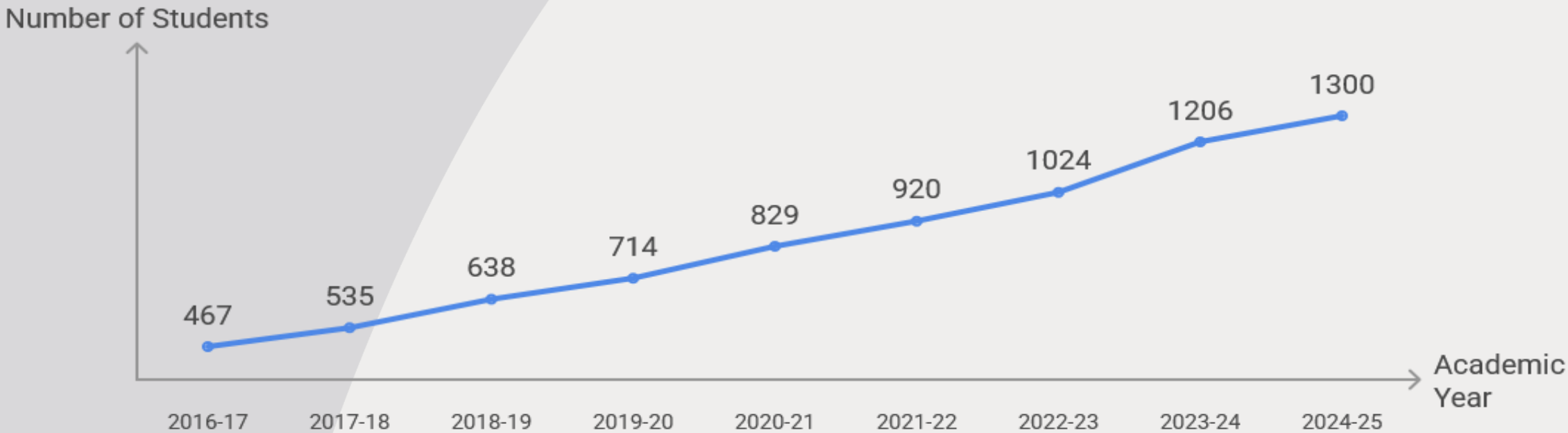
Disability Resources Incremental Funds

Coaching Students to Use Optimal Strategies for Learning

*Suzanne Sprague Director
Amber Pakkala Learning Strategist
Disability Resources*



Growth of Affiliating Students over 9 Years



Enrollment of Students with Disabilities at SUNY Cortland

Overall Key Initiatives

- Re-Initiation of the Center for Teaching and Learning
- Assistive Listening Devices in 14 classrooms
- Recreational Sports- Wheelchair Basketball
- Accessible Classroom Furniture
- Learning Strategist
- Technology Accessibility Coordinator
- Accessibility Associate

Proposal for Funds

- Using Insight and Imagination
- Hiring Learning Strategist
- Assessment Data Re: Referrals to TLC
- Requests for Executive Function Help
- Providing Additional Resources for Students with Disabilities

Learning Strategist

- Who do I work with?
- How do I coach?
- What have been the outcomes of this new position?



Student Accessibility Services Incremental Funds

Nicole Mucica, Ed.D.
Director of Student Accessibility Services



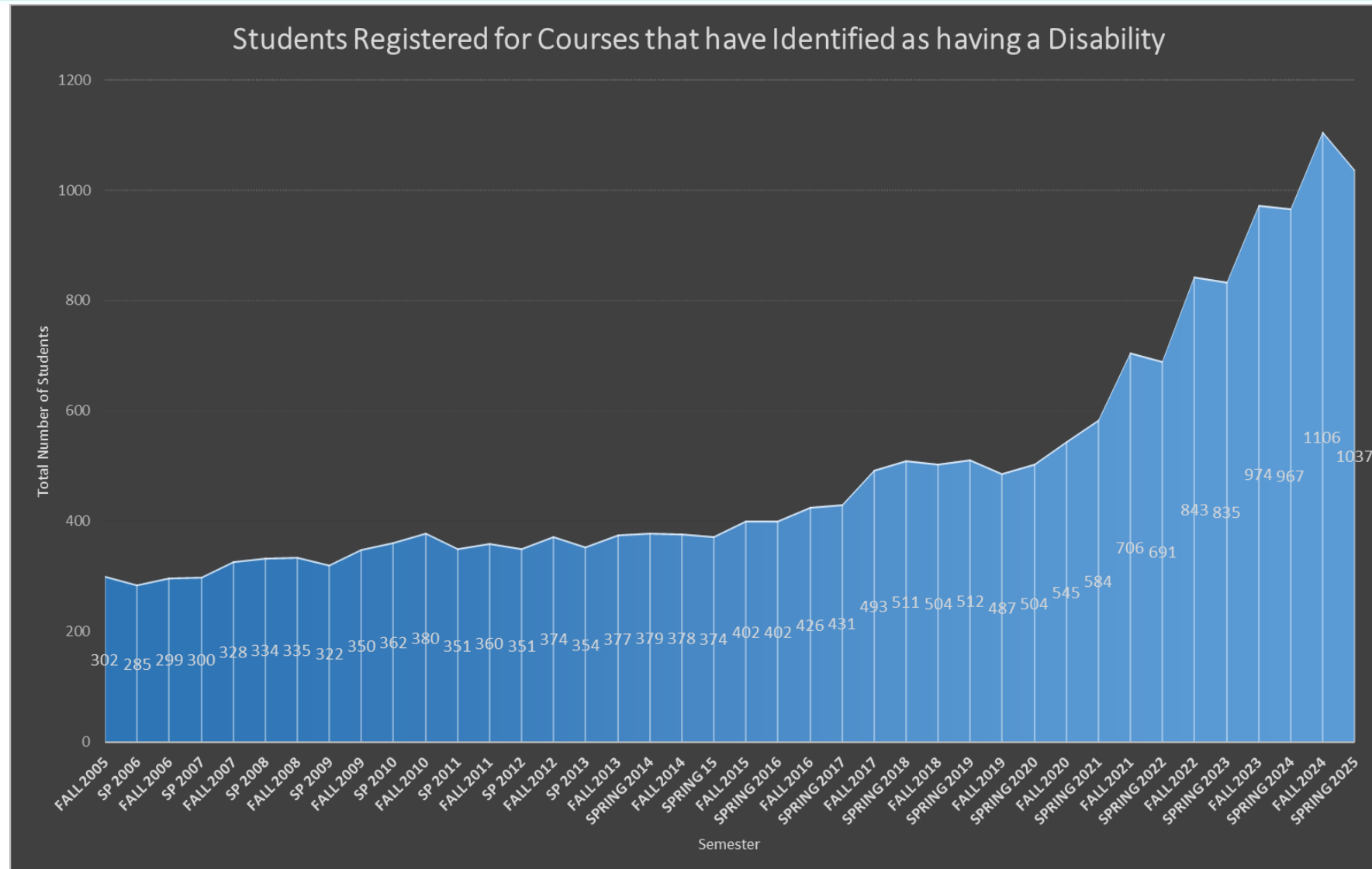
Strategic Goals of SAS Office

- Funds were used to support the goals of the SAS Office
 - Provide materials, training, and workshops to faculty and staff to increase knowledge about accessibility and UDL in higher education.
 - Increase the number of students using SAS services, with a focus on students of diverse background and ways to eliminate barriers to receive services.
 - Increase the use of AT resources to expand educational opportunities/access for students.



Figure 4 Diagram of goals with images to represent each goal.

SAS Growth



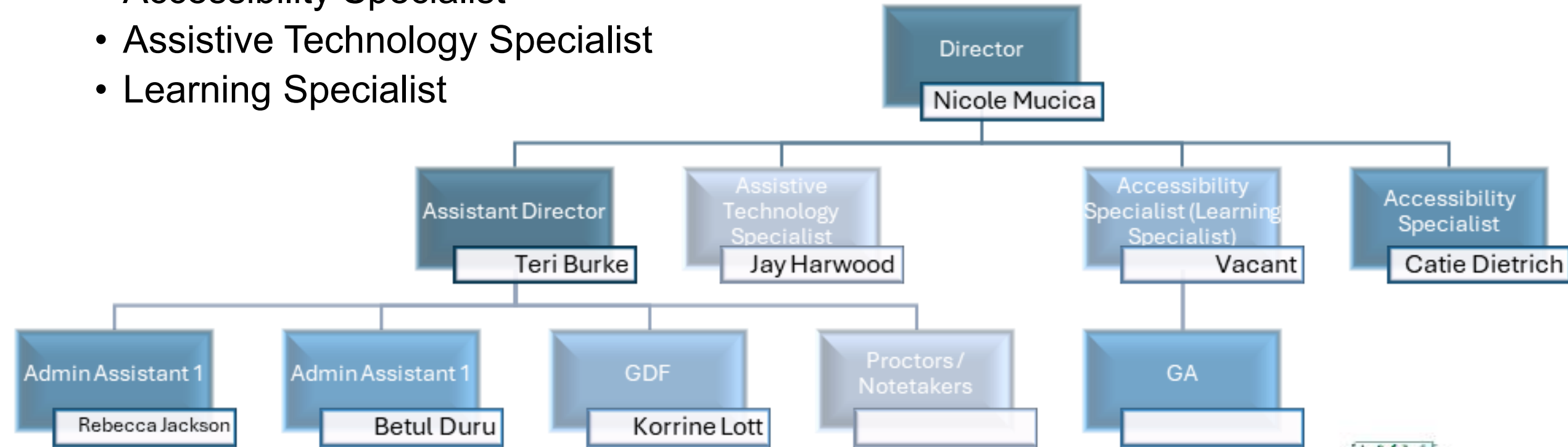
Requested Use of Funds

- 1) Staffing - A restructuring of our current staff organization chart and titles to include an Accessibility Specialist and a dedicated Assistive Technologist.
- 2) Sensory Friendly Space— Furniture for waiting area, coaching rooms and additional offices
- 3) Technology – Purchase new hardware and software to support student accessibility including iPads that can be loaned out to students
- 4) Campus Training Funds – Increase campus awareness and ability to support students with Accessibility needs through CELT sponsored training programs and external speakers.



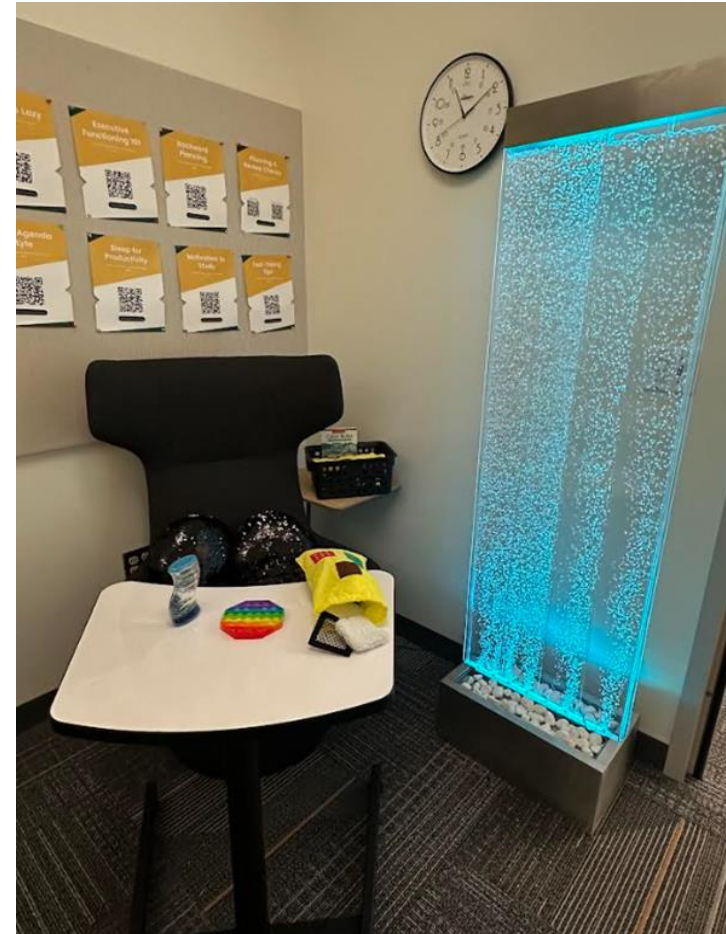
Staffing

- New Positions
 - Accessibility Specialist
 - Assistive Technology Specialist
 - Learning Specialist



Sensory Friendly Space

- New Offices
- New waiting area
- Sensory friendly furniture and items



Technology

- Testing technology – cameras
- FM system
- C-Pens
- SensusAccess
- Equatio
- Dragon
- Add ons to Glean
- iPad and Apple Pencils

Campus Training

- AHEAD
 - 2024 – 2 staff and 2 faculty
 - 2025 – 3 staff and 3 faculty
- Partnership with Residential Life
 - Resiliency Coaching
 - Mental Health First Aid
- Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT)
 - Disability Credential



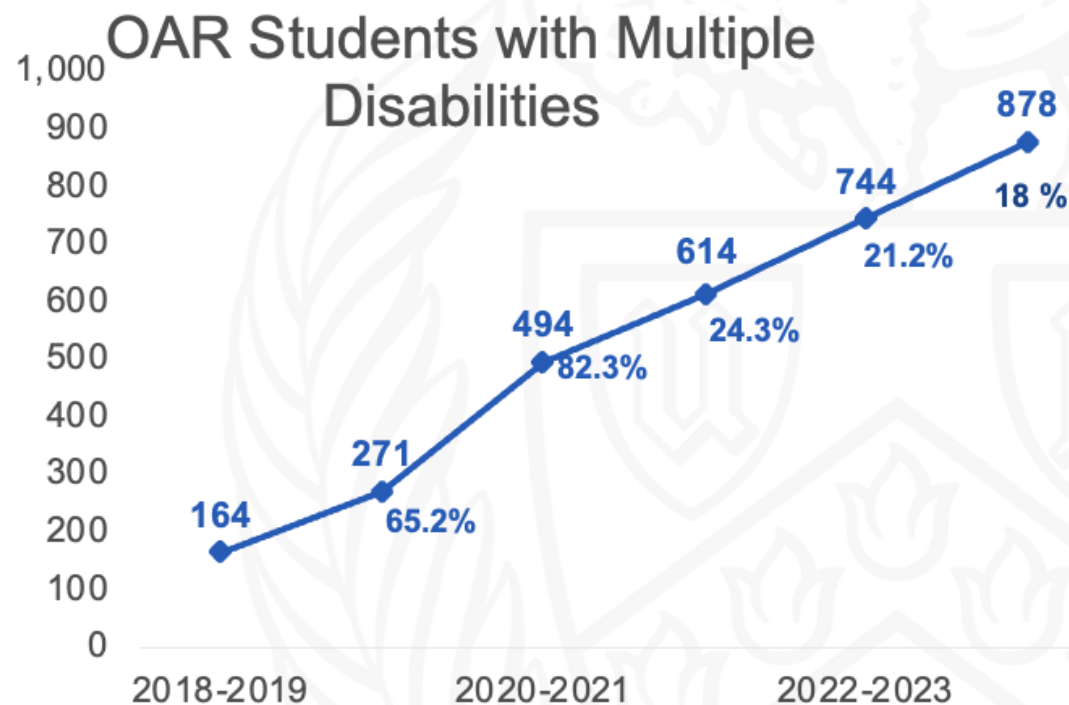
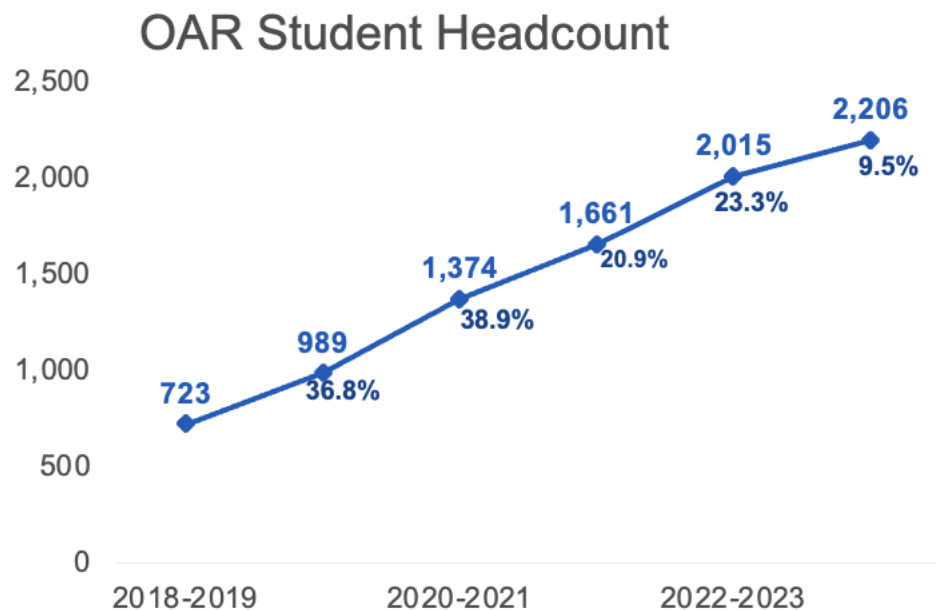
ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES

Kristy Harte

Director



Office of Accessibility Resources (AR): Enrollment



Identifying Our Needs

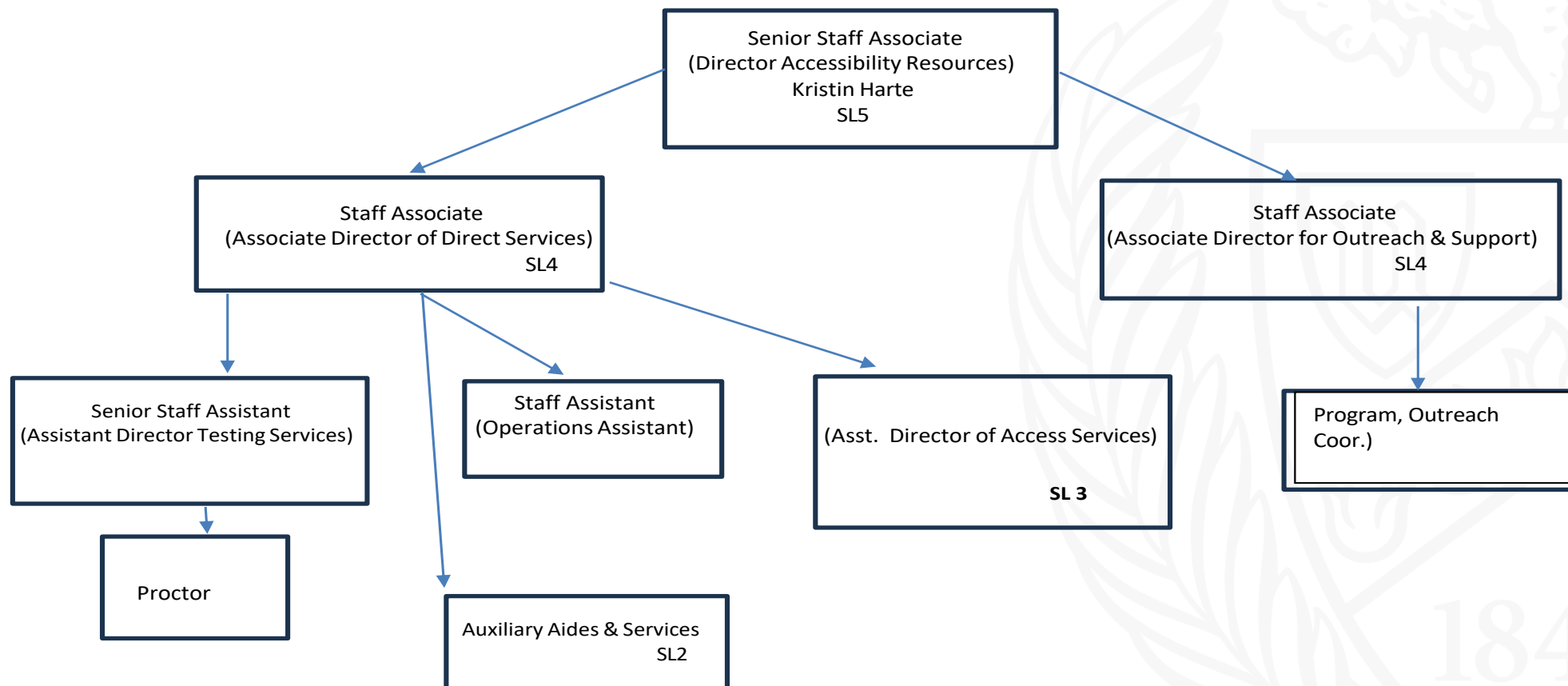
- In 2020, AR conducted an Internal and External Review of our program and campus accessibility using the CAS standards (at the time new AHEAD Standards were being revised)
- The results which contained feedback from students, faculty, staff and administration did not surprise our office with the work that needed to be done (although we were our own harshest critics)

What We Found

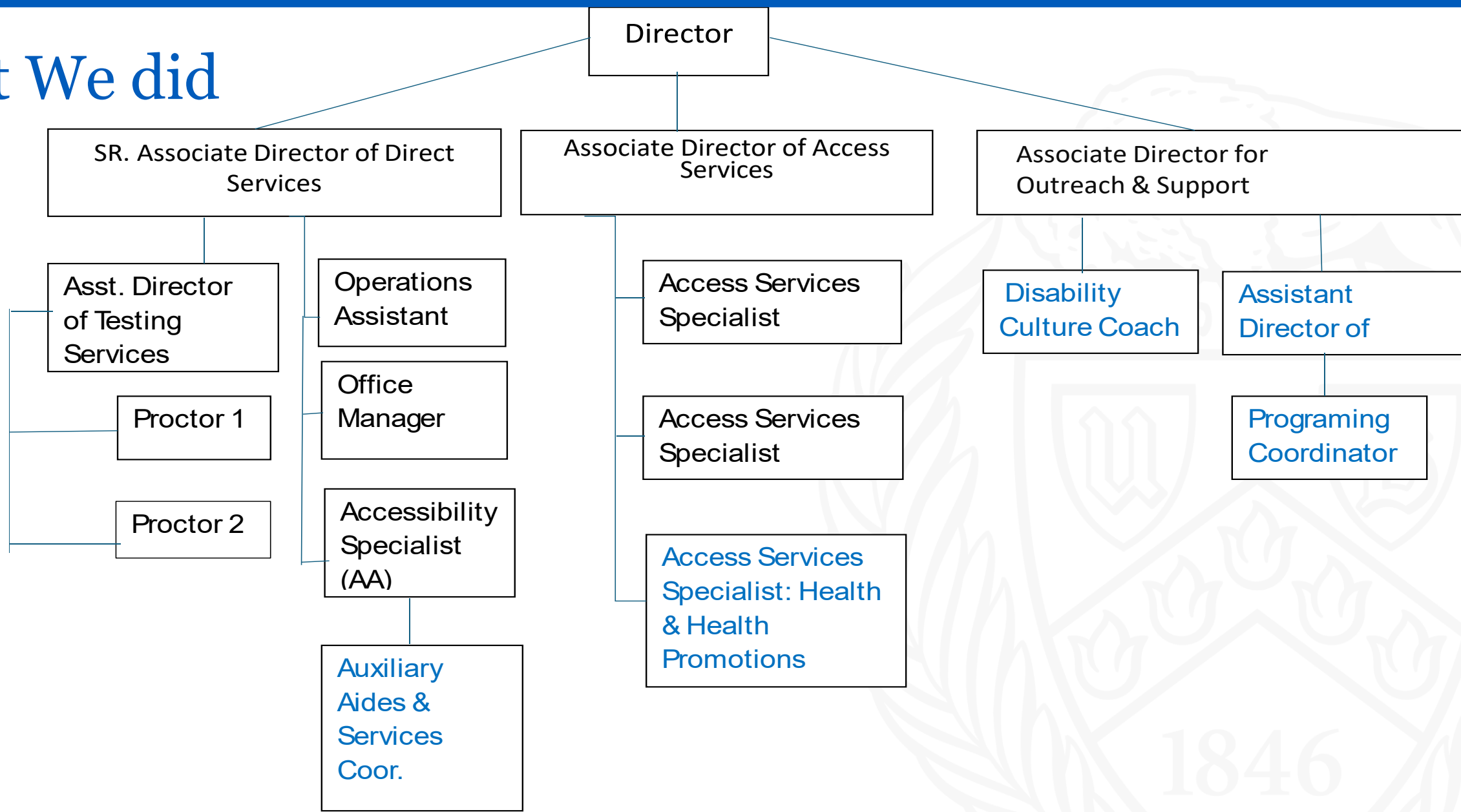
- Our students' profiles have become more complex (often 2 or more disabilities); intense accommodations are being requested (ex. remote access, recordings of lectures, flexible deadlines and attendance).
- More students with disabilities are requesting accommodations from professional schools (ex. Dental, Law, MD, Social Work). Growing population whose services are especially time intensive, requiring interface with various licensing bodies, clinical settings and wet labs.
- Lack of community that celebrated Disability
- Lack of support for Faculty on new course development and how to embedded UDL into new pedagogy.
- Lack of physical (both old and new construction) of inviting and accessible spaces
- Additional support needed in EIT, emphasis on testing all software and IT to make sure it was not only accessible but easy to use.

Where We Started

Accessibility
Resources
2021



What We did



What We did: We Embedded!

Where: EDI

Title: 2nd EIT Accessibility Officer

- Reviewing websites, web-based applications, and digital materials for compliance with accessibility standards using various methodologies including automated testing tools, manual assessments and usability tools.
- Works collaboratively with Procurement and campus departments seeking to purchase high-impact EIT products, communicating with potential vendors to review accessibility of products under consideration.
- Keeping current with SUNY's EIT related efforts, evolving EIT trends, and applicable policies.

Where: CATT (Curriculum, Assessment, Teaching, Transformation)

Title: Accessible Course Designer

- Develop training and advocate for accessible pedagogy.
- Collaborate with campus partners in advocating for increased adoption of UDL guidelines.
- Serve on the classroom design and rehabilitation committee to advise on classroom accessibility feature

Where: Facilities

Title: UDL Facilities & Spaces Designer

- Review and/or approve plans prior to the issuance of a building permit. Coordination with and assistance to the Code Compliance Manager.
- Perform property maintenance inspections of existing buildings and structures with partner agencies to determine barriers to accessibility.
- Work with multiple project teams to support coordination and communication regarding a variety of projects including in-house design/build renovation work, critical maintenance projects, and capital-funded design/bid/build work.

PROGRAMS



A Sample of Our Programs

REOCCURRING EVENTS

- Accessibility Resources Hot Beverage Hour
- Body Doubling Sessions: Wednesdays
- Time Management Workshop
- Calendar Management
- Manage Your Executive Functioning: Memory and Focus
- Accessibility Resources Lunches and Dinners
- https://buffalo.campuslabs.com/engage/organization/accessibility_resources/events

STUDENT GROUPS

- Neurodivergent Affinity Group
- ADHD Workshop Series
- Why is My Lid Flipped?
 - Accessibility Resources and the Institute on Trauma and Trauma Informed Care delve deeper into proactive strategies to help us stay emotionally regulated
- Disability Book Club
- Calm Your Body, Calm Your Mind
- Self Advocacy Workshop
- Innovation Sprints

Disability as Diversity Live Events!

disability
as diversity



COMEDIAN

TINA FRIML

LIVE AT UB!

SATURDAY • APRIL 12 • 7:30 PM
CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Free for UB students and community
members. [Get tickets here.](#)



disability as diversity



recreation series

Saturday, September 28

12 – 2 p.m.

Alumni Arena Triple Gym

Goalball Clinic

Hosted in partnership with the
Western New York Association
of Blind Athletes.



All equipment will be provided,
attendees are encouraged to bring water bottles.



disability as diversity



recreation series

Saturday, October 19

12 - 2 p.m.

Alumni Arena Triple Gym

Adaptive Yoga

Hosted in partnership
with Health Promotion.

 **University at Buffalo**
Health Promotion

All equipment will be provided,
attendees are encouraged to bring water bottles.



For more information
and to register for these
events, scan here.

disability as diversity



recreation series

Saturday, November 23

12 - 2 p.m.

Alumni Arena Triple Gym

Blind and Wheelchair Tennis

Hosted in partnership with
Greater Buffalo Adaptive Sports.



All equipment will be provided,
attendees are encouraged to bring water bottles.



Where are going next!

- Areas on all campuses to have private zoom rooms to connect with practitioners.
- Sensory Rooms to decompress and reset.
- A place to connect with other students with disabilities.
- Increased support in using Brightspace with Assistive Technology.
- Overall inclusion being proactively requested in the design of programs, courses, buildings (reno and new construction), and events.
- Increase our work with disabled Vets on Campus



The end.



Questions? & Let's Connect!

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