

The AHEAD Program Domains, Standards, and Performance Indicators: What's New and Useful for the DRO?

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Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Evolution of the Program Standards
- Key Steps in Revising and Updating the Standards
- Highlights of New and Important Features
- Practical Strategies and Tips for Using the Program Standards in the DRO
- Questions

Housekeeping

- Please enter your questions in the Q&A.
- We have allowed time for Q&A response and discussion at the end of the session.
- The session will be recorded.

Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability

Special Issue:

Ethics, Standards, and Competencies in Services for Disabled
Students: Reflections and Progress

Evolution of the Program Standards

Evolution of the Field (and the Program Standards)

- Columbia Institution for Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb and Blind
 - Authorized by Congress in 1864 to confer college degrees
 - First commencement ceremony in 1869
 - Now known as Gallaudet University
- Limited examples of disability and HE until the mid-1940's

Evolution of the Field (and the Program Standards)

- Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, aka The GI Bill of Rights
 - \$500/year plus living costs to attend federally approved institutions
 - Over one million veterans in college by 1946
 - “sizable number” were disabled (Strom, 1950)
 - Focus on physical disabilities and access to buildings
- Notable programs in the literature and popular press
 - UCLA
 - City College New York
 - University of Illinois (First wheelchair accessible bus routes, disability fraternity, adaptive sports program in the country)

Evolution of the Field (and the Program Standards)

- Growth in programs through the 1950's and 1960's, BUT....
 - No legal mandates related to access, so disability discrimination common
- Disabled students could be:
 - Not accepted
 - Not allowed to take certain courses
 - Not allowed to be in certain majors
 - Accommodations determined on a “makeshift basis” (Rusalem, 1962)
- Beginning of the disability rights movement, including in HE:
 - Increasing numbers of students with polio; other disabilities
 - Veterans

Evolution of the Field (and the Program Standards)

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
 - Regulations not signed until April 1977 after nationwide protests
- Led to the development of programs across the United States
- A group of professionals met at Wayne State University in 1977
 - Association on Handicapped Student Services in Postsecondary Education
 - Renamed Association On Higher Education And Disability in 1992
- Attempts to curtail 504 coverage and restrictive court rulings in the 1980's
 - Nationwide protests and lobbying
 - Led to passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

Evolution of the Field (and the Program Standards)

- Rapid growth of programs and professionals post-ADA
- Need to identify the knowledge and skills necessary to establish personnel as professionals within higher education (Jarrow, 1987, 1997)
- AHEAD convened three major projects in the late 1990s:
 - AHEAD Code of Ethics (Price, 1997)
 - AHEAD Professional Standards (Shaw, McGuire, & Madaus, 1997)
 - AHEAD Program Standards and Performance Indicators (Dukes & Shaw, 1999, updated in 2004)

Evolution of the Field (and the Program Standards)

- Focus on legal compliance in the 1990's and 2000's
- Changes in the field from 2000 to 2022:
 - The ADAAA of 2008
 - Increased use of Universal Design
 - Increases in technology and digital accessibility
 - Rapid increases in numbers of students accessing HE; DSS professionals
 - Rapid changes in the demographics of students
 - Increased numbers of disabled veterans
 - Social justice movements (e.g., disability, BLM, Me Too Movement)
 - A global pandemic
- Need to update these core professional documents

Revising and Updating the Standards

Revising and Updating the Program Standards

Assignment of 5-person task force by AHEAD Board of Directors

- Charge to update and create Program Standards that are ***aspirational*** in nature

Review of existing Standards and alignment with

- AHEAD's current strategic plan (2021)
- Interactionist Model of Disability (Evans et al, 2017)
- Use of identity-first language (AHEAD, 2019)
- Advances in DRO since previous version of the Standards (e.g., technology, perspectives on student development, new contexts such as greatly expanded online learning)

Major Reorganization, Editing, and Additional Content

Consultation with the AHEAD Membership

- Purposeful Community Feedback from content experts in targeted areas:
 - Technology and access tools
 - DRO management practices
 - Universal design
 - Disability culture and identity
 - Blended and online instruction
 - Social justice

*Content experts also reflected different campus contexts (2- and 4-year; public-private, etc), geographic areas, and DRO structures and sizes

Consultation with the AHEAD Membership (continued)

Open Community Feedback

- Draft Standards were posted to the AHEAD website for public comment
- Members were invited to participate through multiple outreach efforts via direct email, community lists, and website postings
- Feedback was used to further refine and improve the document

AHEAD Board of Directors

- Final draft submitted to Board and approved

New and Important Features of the Domains, Standards, and Performance Indicators

Domains, Standards, & Indicators: Philosophical Tenets

- The updated Domains, Standards, and Indicators are *aspirational*
- They are grounded in a diversity, equity, and inclusion philosophy
- They reflect an *equity-based* framework
 - Beyond educational access to instead mitigate barriers to equity
- Direct service provision remains the ‘bread and butter’ of DRO, even so, there is no “menu or flowchart” (Kraus, 2023)
- DRO personnel are strongly encouraged to seek out professional development opportunities!

Domains, Standards, & Indicators: Background

- The Domains, Standards and Indicators were developed in concert with the *AHEAD* Code and Professional Competencies
 - They reflect the use of key terms and phrasing
 - They reflect core themes (Lalor & Scott, 2023)
 - Social Justice
 - Disability Identity & Intersectionality
 - Reflexivity / Willingness to Evolve
 - Campus-wide Responsibility for Access, Equity, & Inclusion
- The Standards and Indicators have been ‘cross walked’ with the Competencies

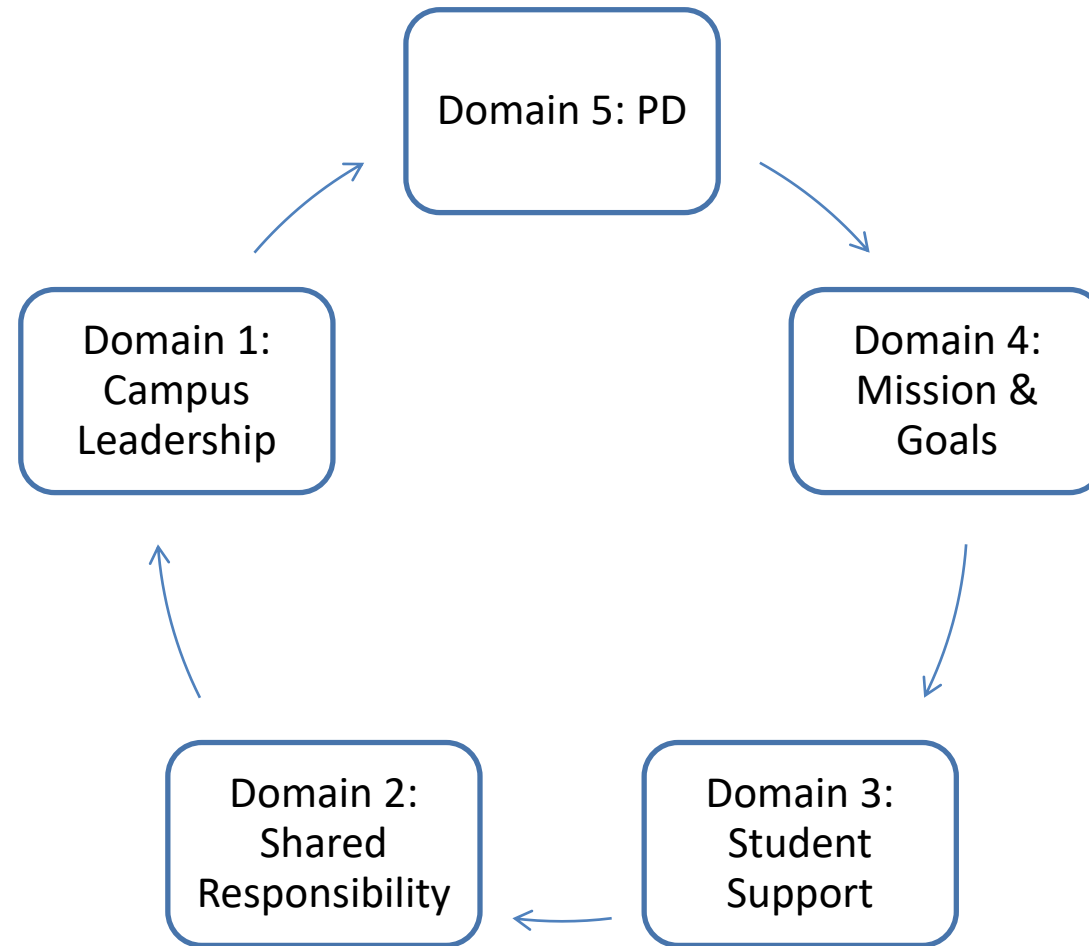
Domains, Standards, & Indicators: Data & Purpose

- The Changes: By the Numbers
 - From Eight to Five Domains
 - From 28 Program Standards to 17
 - From 90 Performance Indicators to 99
- The What
 - Educate Campus Administrators
 - DRO Evaluation
 - Improve Professional Preparation
 - Educate the Larger Community

An Evolving Profession

- The Domains, Standards, & Indicators reflect an evolving profession
 - Domain One
 - A focus on Leadership as well as Collaboration
 - Domain Two
 - Pairing Consultation and Information Dissemination
 - Domain Three
 - Access and Equity (novel Domain)
 - Domain Four
 - Office Administration and Operations *not* Procedures and Administration
 - Domain Five
 - Professional Development remains

Domains, Standards, & Indicators: A Relationship!



Practical Strategies and Tips for Using the Standards in the DRO

Practical Strategies and Tips for Using the Program Standards

The Program Standards and Domains help us respond to two common challenges:

1. A lack of continuity in the provision of services across our institutions, and
2. A lack of a common data set specific to the work we do.

Domain 1:

Provide Leadership and Collaboration in Framing a Commitment to Disability Access and Equity as an Integral Aspect of their Institution's Culture

The importance of identifying allies & moments to champion access in decision-making processes & settings we are not in.

Questions to consider when applying this domain:

- How does the mission of the DRO intertwine with the mission of the institution?
- What are current or forthcoming institutional initiatives that should clearly incorporate access?
- Which meetings are DRO professionals included across campus? And in which ones are we not?
- Who are the disability access allies on campus? Who should be an ally?

Examples of Domain 1

- Institutions used COVID as motive for passing long-awaited captioning policies.
- Highlight words like “welcoming”, “inclusive” and “diversity” in the institutional mission statement – use this to advance “access” as an institutional responsibility.
- Make sure that access is included in all diversity, equity, inclusion and justice conversations and efforts.
- Partner and educate students about access through helping them fulfill their goals.

Domain 2:

Advise and Educate the Campus Community About Disability and Inclusive Practices

DRO are access advisors, not sole implementors. We must educate the campus community to consider access in all aspects of their roles.

Questions to consider when applying this domain:

Students:

- What is important to the current generation of students?
- How can we get to students?

Faculty:

- What responsibilities are faculty navigating on a day-to-day basis?
- What is the best way to educate faculty?

Staff:

- What are the top priorities for various offices?
- How can we partner with staff to infuse access into their overarching responsibilities?

Examples of Domain 2

Students:

- Begin by gathering information on how students access campus information.
- Partner with student groups both with a disability focus and those without around a conversation about inclusivity.
- Join another office on campus to co-promote activities addressing diversity, equity, inclusion, justice and access.
- Ask students to promote the DRO through various projects and student social media (the art fair, book club, student podcasts).

Faculty:

- Join faculty when they naturally gather (e.g., department or college specific meetings). Learn what is important to them in the moment, work to infuse access into those things.
- Consider how faculty receive information. Offer multiple channels of information that demonstrate access.
- Partner with the faculty development office to offer a workshop, create an Access and Inclusion affinity group, or a UDL teaching group.

Staff:

- Work to understand our colleagues' responsibilities and priorities. Find easy ways to infuse inclusive efforts into their day-to-day work.
- Offer support around inclusive processes (online forms, ticket reservation systems, brochures and websites are all accessible).
- Create guidance on inclusive gathering, share it with those offices who host events.

Domain 3:

Provide Services, Strategies, and Accommodations to Mitigate the Barriers Faced by Individual Disabled People.

Domain 3 outlines the day-to-day responsibilities of a DRO. It may also be the work that is least understood by institutional administrators. Data showcasing the wide array of day-to-day activities can be powerful.

Questions to consider when applying this domain:

- What data should be collected?
- Who needs to see the data?
- How can you effectively use data to drive strategic development or resource acquisition?

Examples of Domain 3

- New and current students, families and secondary educators:
 - Information on the registration and documentation process and timeline.
 - An understanding of how to use the different accommodations.
 - Information on what types of accommodations *may be* available and are not available*.
 - Data on who the DRO supports (how many students, typed of disabilities).
- Faculty:
 - Information on who you support (both in description and in numbers – dispel those myths).
 - Quick glance charts on their responsibilities and roles with the accommodation process.
 - A DRO overview (use to introduce personnel, but also to demonstrate limits) encouraging advocacy for additional resources.
 - Access information generally – to help create access allies.
- Administrators:
 - Same information as faculty and...
 - Projected trends based on the last 3 to 5 years.
 - Details on the increasing complexity of disability support needed.
 - Budgetary restrictions and potential legal ramifications (ask counsel for assistance here).
 - Best practices in the field (This is where you all come in). 😊

Examples of Domain 3 (continued)

It is also important is how you share this information:

- Websites, social media, accessible handouts, peer mentoring groups,
- Prospective fairs, orientations (students and faculty),
- With student leaders and DEIJA groups (Club leaders, RAs, TAs, Orientation leaders, Senators, etc.),
- Through short introductory video clips (Welcome to the office, What to expect from an intake, Here's how to book an exam),
- Charts, graphs with historical trends demonstrating growth, while resources remain stagnant,
- Examples of what our colleagues at other institutions (especially those we benchmark against) have done.

Domain 4:

Administer Office Operations Guided by a Mission & With Access to Appropriate Resources

An office mission, annual goals, resource utilization awareness, and an evaluation plan are foundational to our ability to operate.

Questions to consider when applying this domain:

- What drives this office?
- What are the office's goals for the year? How do they relate to each of your constituents?
- Did you have enough resources to meet the demand? If not, what do you need more of? How can you use your current resources creatively?
- How can we measure impact?

Examples of Domain 4

At Tufts we host three staff DRO retreats a year. At each we use data to drive our agenda for the day and for the time in between retreats.

- Data examples
 - Student numbers (in-takes, check-in's, appeals, average hours spent with each student),
 - Disability and accommodation types by the numbers,
 - Supporting experiences (workshops, presentations (in-person and virtual), which departments actively worked with us and how, etc.),
 - Student experiences (satisfaction surveys, student advisory board feedback),
 - Staff and faculty experiences (satisfaction surveys, Faculty Advisory Boards, informal feedback),
 - DRO staff feedback (thoughts on processes, work environment, DRO culture, PD opportunities, etc.),
 - Marketing efforts and responses (where did we market, social media efforts, who viewed our work),
 - Stakeholder involvement (both them with us and us within their departments).

Examples of Domain 4 (continued)

January retreat:

- What went well during the fall semester?
- What changes do we need to make? Is now the right time to make those changes?
- What do we need as professionals to do our jobs?

May retreat:

- What happened this year? Looking in detail at our numbers. Where were there gaps/ challenges?
- Is our DRO mission still accurate (according to us and within the institution)?
- What does the incoming class look like? What do we need to focus on this summer to meet the need?
- What individual summer project can I embark on that both meets the need of my office and fulfills a PD interest?

August retreat:

- Summer project educational report out.
- Strategies for minimizing DRO burnout moving into the academic year.
- Identify additional resources we may need to do our jobs.
- Goal setting – what are our goals for the year (no more than 4).

Domain 5:

Enhance Their Professional Knowledge and Skills

The amazing diversity that we, as individuals, bring to our careers necessitates professional development. It empowers us with range and uniformity as a field. PD should be a factor in annual budget requests and reports.

Questions to consider when applying this domain:

- What PD opportunities are available to DS professionals?
- How do we incorporate what we learned into our daily responsibilities?

Examples of Domain 5

Types of PD

- Disability focused conferences (AHEAD, Regional AHEAD meetings, PTI, Assistive Tech, etc.)
- Disability focused webinars
- Listserv memberships
- Secondary disability conferences
- Career disability fairs/ conferences
- Higher education conferences
- Student advocacy conferences
- Disability specific conferences, webinars, resources
- Book clubs (within your institution and across others)
- Facilitated movie nights, TED Talk reflections, DEIJA brown bag lunches, etc.

Strategies for Sharing Back

- Post conference summary presentations
- Implementing and teaching of one thing learned
- Shared conversation around lingering questions
- Attendee led brown bag discussions
- Facilitated share backs and thoughts on next steps with key stakeholders
- Guided next steps to take within your institution
- Student led, staff and faculty invited, panels on their experiences

The power of AHEAD's Domain, Standards and Performance Indicators

Creating a continuity in the provision of services we have across our institutions.

- Offers confidence to new students around questions to ask & processes to navigate for accommodation support.
- Offers guidance to faculty, especially adjuncts, as to how to support disabled students.
- Creates a language of best practices to refer to when making institutional change around access topics.

A common data set specific to the work we do will:

- Provide DROs with comparisons when advocating for more resources.
- Create opportunities for sharing best practices as we navigate increasing student numbers.
- Remind us that we are all in this together – reaching out with questions is the best form of PD available.

Questions?

Resources

- Dukes, L., & Madaus, J. (Eds)(2023). Ethics, Standards, and Competencies in Services for Disabled Students: Reflections and Progress [Special Issue]. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 36(4).

Contact Us!

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