A History of the Office of Student Support Services

The Office of Student Support Services, originally known as The Learning Center, was founded during the 1990-91 academic year by Dr. Cecelia Steppe-Jones, the former Director of the Special Education Department and Coordinator of Graduate Studies at North Carolina Central University (NCCU). Dr. Steppe-Jones is the current Dean of the School of Education. Inspired by a conference she attended, Dr. Steppe-Jones returned to NCCU motivated to establish a disabilities department on campus. This department was developed under the leadership of Dr. Donna Benson, who served as interim Chancellor from January 1992 - December 1992.

Dr. Steppe-Jones sought the assistance of Dr. Roland Buchannan, the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs. After an assessment of the current resources on campus, Dr. Buchannan agreed to hire tutors to support the needs of students with disabilities. He agreed also to provide equipment to serve students with visual impairments, mobility challenges, and learning disabilities. From the advocacy of Dr. Steppe-Jones and the full support of Dr. Buchannan, the Learning Center began.

The Learning Center was located in Room 214 of the Taylor Education Building. The mission of The Learning Center was to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities as identified under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The Learning Center Staff included Dr. Steppe-Jones and two graduate students in the Special Education Department. The graduate students were hired as tutors for students with learning disabilities, as the prevalence of this disability area was increasing on campus.

In 1993 Dr. Angela Terry was appointed as Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, under the leadership of Chancellor Julius Chambers. It was through Dr. Terry’s advocacy and support the position of Director of The Learning Center was created. In 1994 Dr. James Fuller was hired as its first director.

After moving from Taylor Education to Room 207 of the Hoey Administration Building, the department moved in 1997 to its current home, Suite G20 of the Student Services Building. In 1998, the department’s name was changed to The Office of Student Support Services.

Dr. Fuller continued Dr. Steppe-Jones’ original vision for the office, providing support and services to students with documented disabilities. The services that were available included reader and attendant services, interpreter services, campus orientation, mobility and accessibility services, adaptive transportation, parking, tutoring, and counseling. The Office of Student Support Services also provided consultation to students, resources and training to faculty and determined the appropriate modifications and accommodations to make NCCU classes, programs, and activities accessible to all. These services continue to be available today.

Dr. Fuller was the director for 14 years until he retired in May 2008. A new search committee was formed shortly thereafter, and Kesha T. Lee was hired as the second director of Student Support Services in September 2008.

Students with documented disabilities are entitled to receive appropriate modifications under the provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Ms. Lee’s goals are to build on the department’s strong foundation by increasing the awareness of services available through the office, advocating for additional resources and equipment, consulting with the Special Education, Student Health and Counseling Departments and planning workshops for faculty at NCCU.

The mission of the Office of Student Support Services is to make opportunities for educational, cultural, social, and other modes of development at North Carolina Central University (NCCU) accessible to students with documented disabilities. The mission will be carried out by provision of reasonable and appropriate accommodations to meet each eligible student’s needs, whether they be academic, personal, legal, health, financial, safety, transportation, or other needs. Services will be coordinated by the Director of Student Support Services, who will also guide program and policy development.

The goals for the Office of Student Support Services are to make NCCU classes, programs, and activities accessible to all students and to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities; to coordinate the delivery of services to accommodate students with documented disabilities, including the provision of academic support services, reader, transcription, interpreter, and other services and classroom/testing accommodations; to reach successful resolution of
complaints from students with disabilities, the Office of Civil Rights, and UNC General Administration, including those expressed through attorneys; to increase knowledge and understanding of the needs of persons with disabilities among constituents of the university community; and, to enable students with disabilities to navigate the NCCU campus, by providing mobility orientation for students with visual and mobility impairments.

NCCU supports students with disAbilities and believes ALL Eagles can soar!

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