

## Reaching Shared Goals in Higher Education: A Collaboration of the Library and Disability Support Services

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*How do departments in higher education partner and collaborate to support student academic success? Is collaboration a result of only intentional work or can unintentional conversations, interactions, and dialogue produce significant impact? Collaborative work between the Library and Disability Support Services emerged when common goals and shared vision became evident. The collaboration produced impactful and successful outcomes for students, and created a new ethos of collaborative culture in the academic community.*

### Introduction

Within the college systems, there has been a rise in collaboration between faculty, staff and research areas. Briggs (2007) suggests faculty must collaborate more now than in the past to achieve significant academic improvements. It is imperative all departments work together to stay within ever declining budgets, while continuing to work toward an increase in academic success. This can also be applied to additional departments trying to improve the quality of support being offered to students. Collaboration among departments has become vital in achieving shared goals.

Collaboration provides an opportunity for departments to share their specialized knowledge and expertise and learn from one another. Briggs (2007) reinforces this by stating teamwork can bring “together the right mix of knowledge and skills so that collaborators have enough in common to serve as a foundation.” Wenger (1998) adds that collaboration spurs and gives greater credibility to the cause. Even in collegiate research, scientific breakthroughs are the result of a combined effort of scientists with diverse backgrounds (Gunawardena, Weber, & Agosto, 2010). They go on to say that interdisciplinary collaboration is necessary to achieve many goals. Berg-Weger (1998) also agrees that collaboration strengthens the goals because more resources can be combined to achieve those goals.

The Library and Disability Support Services (DSS) forged a collaboration resulting in acceptance of a grant for the acquisition of software to support student academic success. Additional benefits that emerged from the collaboration include an enhanced awareness of shared goals by both departments which support and augment services to support student success. Innovation was produced because of collaboration. Leaders in the collaboration included: the Director of the Library and the Campus Librarian at Sanford/Lake Mary campus; the Director of DSS and the DSS Adaptive Technology Specialist. This team of partners worked to bring substantive collaborative work to achieve the shared goal of supporting student academic work by improving access.

Within Seminole State College of Florida (SSC), DSS serves in the Student Services division of Student Affairs. The Library serves in the Academic Services division of Academic Affairs. This configuration and structure sometimes makes collaboration challenging. Disability

Support Services and the Library overcame this barrier. These departments uncovered opportunities for working together to reach common goals primarily revolving around access to software to support student success. The significance of this type of partnership may be characterized in the following descriptive by Colwell (2006), "The ultimate expression of a significant academic and student affairs partnership may be in the creation of structures that reside between and are equally a part of, each division" (p.61).

DSS provides accommodations, as requested by students with disabilities, to support access to required academic curricula and related materials for coursework. The library provides resources to support the curricula and access to these resources in various formats and in various modalities. The common thread in our work is *access*.

The Library and DSS began discussions on collaborating while hosting tables at student outreach events. During these discussions they discovered shared interests centered on access to information and resources to support students' achievements in the areas of reading, writing, and information literacy. These shared interests emerged repeatedly as Library and DSS conversations continued to develop while attending campus meetings, venues, events, and informal interactions.

## Collaboration

The word *collaboration* or the idea of collaboration may take on different connotations based on type of work, industry, department, academic discipline, and the task at hand. The working relationship between The Library and DSS is an example of the definition of collaboration; two equal participants that trust each other and share common thinking for improving the educational experience and accessibility to resources for all students. To this end, Love & Edwards (2009) suggest that the steps to partnerships/collaborations are to find a partner and then cultivate a relationship - turning a personal relationship into an organizational relationship (p.24). This collaboration became possible due to the unintentional experience that spiraled from initial casual communication into collective planning, idea generation, and participation of other designed activities (King 2010).

## Literature Review

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has reported that 11.2 percent of all students enrolled in postsecondary educational institutions are students with disabilities (2013). It is imperative when addressing the needs of these students that many departments and different college units engage in collaborative efforts (Korbel, et al 2011). It is only with inter-departmental collaboration that colleges can foster opportunities that will meet the needs of students with disabilities and inadvertently all students more efficiently and effectively.

Accessibility and legal requirements have assisted in the increase of students with disabilities entering colleges and universities to pursue college degrees or participate in the college experience (Raue, & Lewis, 2011). Colleges are required by law to provide equal access to students with disabilities in the form of academic accommodations and access to programs and services. Usually these services are supervised and managed by the disability support services department at the institution. All departments in the college, however, are mandated to provide equal access to students, including the library. Public community libraries make great efforts to ensure their facilities are accessible and they have equipment and technology to

accommodate their patrons. Libraries may have specific programs to increase their availability of accessible materials and services to individuals with disabilities (Mates, 2003.) However, these efforts may not be that prevalent at college and university libraries. There is little research and literature that shows or confirms otherwise.

In a recent study at eight academic libraries (Samson, 2011), it was discovered that only two libraries had a collection policy in place to address alternate formats for accessibility. Colleges are mandated to accommodate students so with that premise college libraries must provide access and have accessible materials when requested. It is unclear if collaboration amongst the department that manages accommodations for the college and the library engage in purposeful collaboration and dialogue to create a culture of accessible collaboration. In the same study by Samson (2011) five (62.5%) academic libraries reported having a specific library representative who collaborate with student services or the area serving students with disabilities, and only one (12.5%) library had outreach activities directed specifically for the needs of students with disabilities. Titles of the library representatives collaborating with DSS include: "Liaison to Disability Services, Government Information Librarian, and Outreach to Special Populations Librarian (Samson, 2011, p. 267).

The literature reveals that some libraries engage in planned collaboration but states that these efforts are difficult due to tension between departments' self-interest, resource sharing and budgets. (Gashurov & Kendrick, 2013). Successful collaboration happens when the right partners are found. Collaboration for libraries is needed in order to keep up with the users' increasing expectations of immediate access and services. Libraries then collaborate with other libraries, publishers, governments and foundations (Gashurov & Kendrick, 2013). The collaboration is more about how to function faster, merging or sharing catalogs (Oder, 2008), and making sure academic departments have content specific resources. What it is not clear is if these resources are also accessible. It is expected that any material must meet accessibility requirements but it also is usually the condition that is most forgotten until there is a need for it or if the library has a conscious collaborative partnership with the disability department. Love & Edwards (2011) suggest that the library and specifically academic librarians, collaborate with many student services on campus and produce a wide range of opportunities for students. These may include students developing critical thinking skills beyond the typical information literacy modality. These types of collaborations have the potential to position the library as being innovative, providing value added services and benefits to the college community, and as being an integral asset to the academic community.

A recent study (Farmer 2009) examined a variety of studies and methodologies to review and identify factors for effective collaboration between school library specialists and special education personnel. Although this review is not specific to higher education, the factors uncovered may provide some guidance for other relational work in educational environments. Factors for effective collaboration included "shared knowledge about:

- learners and learning
- relevant resources in a variety of formats
- positive safe learning environments
- formative assessment and its analysis an application
- appropriate accommodations and interventions for specific students" (p. 51).

These factors as well as effective communication and management skills were identified for meaningful collaboration. King (2010) suggests that implementing effective collaboration between the library and DSS may have been perceived, initially, to be a daunting task due to

time constraints, scheduling, and willingness of others to work together. We found, however, the collaborative work between the SSC Library and DSS to be effective and inspiring - producing innovative action.

Gaetz (2012) suggests that collaboration does happen with some educational departments and the library and in many cases these collaborations are driven by practicality or even necessity. Samson (2011) outlines the literature over the last ten years addressing library and disability services in the following areas: advocacy for universal access and design, library services for student with disability in small and large academic library settings, specific services such as instruction, web access, staff training, services for specific impairments, and communities in diversity outreach. Sometimes money saving factors play a role in initiating collaborative efforts; but this may be less to do with collaboration and driven more by economics and mandated regulations or survival.

Perhaps digging deep into a theoretical perspective of collaboration might determine why libraries collaborate and why not. These collaborations can be described as thin and thick and may be rooted singularly or in combination to drive collaborations. In some instances moral commitment and discourse (thin) are the impetus for collaboration. In some instances social concern (thick) can play a role for libraries to collaborate in a way that surpasses the common collaboration tendencies of survival and more into the belief that it is the right thing to do regardless of the sacrifices and cost. This is what can be called *thick collaboration* (Gaetz, 2012). This social concern drove the renaissance that represents the notion that “barriers create disability, not an individual’s impairment” (Samson, 2011, p. 260). This renaissance of perspective occurred twenty years after the 1990 ADA (US Statutes at Large, 1990) and 2008 ADA Amendments Act (US Congress, 2008) were in place. The literature seems to corroborate efforts in collaboration amongst other libraries and academic departments but little is known about *thick* collaboration between libraries and disability offices, specifically in higher education.

The partnership between Seminole State College Library and the Disability Support Services Department marked the consolidation of a moral social concern collaboration and the desire to look outside the barriers of common practice and establish and reinforce a collaborative culture or ethos, creating ripple effects that reach many other college departments and divisions.

## Who We Are

Seminole State College of Florida is one of the nation's fastest growing colleges with six sites spanning Seminole County and enrollment exceeding 32,000. We are an institution in transition, adapting to the ever-changing needs of constituents and community for over 50 years. From 1965 until 1975 Seminole State operated as Seminole Junior College and then became Seminole Community College serving over 14,000 students. In 2009 the College received approval to offer its first four year degree and was renamed Seminole State College of Florida. Currently we offer six bachelor's degrees; two-year college-credit degrees (A.A., A.S., and A.A.S.); specialized career certificates; continuing professional education; and adult education programs (Seminole State College of Florida 2014a). We are ranked at number 15 of the top 100 community colleges in the U.S. for associate degrees awarded in liberal arts and sciences and are the eighth largest institution of 28 colleges in the public Florida College System accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) (Seminole State College 2014b).

## Library

SSC Library has four campus locations with a staff of six full time and three part time instructional librarians, one technical services librarian, one administrative librarian and approximately 20 full-time and part-time support staff. The library collection has approximately 130,000 print and multimedia items and access to over 46,000 eBooks and 120 databases provided through statewide funding and administered through the Florida Academic Library Services Cooperative (FALSC). The Cooperative provides support to the libraries of Florida's 28 state colleges and 12 state universities. Participating libraries share in a representative process to select various tools that will best meet the growing needs and demands for library automation and research. FALSC services include operation of an integrated library system (ILS) and a statewide union catalog for discovery of information. The statewide union catalog is used to locate resources and perform research. It contains the books, eBooks, databases, and full-text articles held by all Florida public colleges and universities.

## Disability Support Services

SSC Disability Support Services (DSS) is a department with four campus locations. Students are served by a director, one assistant director that also serves as specialist, two disability specialists, an assistive technology specialist that serves all campuses, one full time lead sign language interpreter, and one part time paraprofessional that assists with alternative format books and other office tasks. Due to the number of students requiring interpreting services, DSS also hires about fourteen part time sign language interpreters per term. In the recent past, DSS has been performing in-house conversions of an average of 30 printed books to audio or alternative format for students with print disabilities per term. DSS is an active member of the Florida Association on Higher Education and Disabilities. DSS provides extra tutoring services to students with disabilities on a weekly basis and assists testing by proctoring exams for students with more severe disabilities. The department is an active member of the local Orlando community and participates in interagency collaborations with the local public school system, the Florida Division of Blind Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, Veterans Affairs and many other state agencies.

## Library and Disability Support Services Collaboration

As Disability Awareness Month approached in 2013, the Library and DSS began to engage in conversations surrounding this topic. The library had participated in Disabilities Awareness Month since 2012 by creating book and specialty equipment displays in the campus libraries. These displays included signage that promoted Disability Awareness Month and described the equipment, which is available to students with disabilities that request accommodations.

New in 2013 as a way to promote Disability Awareness Month, DSS would also host a Technology Expo, highlighting various technologies used to assist learning. The library was asked to host a table at the Expo, highlighting library resources and technologies for students with disabilities.

Planning sessions and dialogue continued between the two departments. A library brochure was created to share at the Expo highlighting library resources available and the platforms on which the resources are hosted for students with disabilities. (Appendix A) This

had not been created or considered up to this point, but was an outcome of simple collaboration, interactions, and dialogue that produced this innovation. This value-added library brochure had the potential to raise student awareness and provide an opportunity to increase their knowledge and improve information literacy skills for students. The new library brochure could impact retention and completion rates for students with disabilities (Hosseini-Ara and Jones 2013).

Another collaboration space discussed by DSS and the Library was on the creation of video tutorials for faculty and student use. It was determined that a review of the current online library tutorials should be conducted to identify videos not captioned. An effort was made to review and update the tutorials making them accessible to all students/faculty. This process helped identify new best practices for library video tutorial creation. This awareness may not have happened without incidental collaboration. At this point, interactions between DSS and the Library became more focused and intentional. As a result, future initiatives emerged.

One emerging idea arose about software, stemming from an unintentional access conversation. As a result of these collaborations, Disability Support Services shared some information with the library about a software product, ClaroRead Pro®, and suggested the departments co-write a grant to acquire the software. Submitting the grant as a collaboration between the Library and DSS was thought to add credibility to the grant application (Wenger 1998).

This cloud-based software product, ClaroRead Pro®, could provide improved text to speech accommodations in multiple platforms, including Word documents, PDFs, images, and web sources. The software was being offered with a single license price, which would enable students to access this accommodation in a ubiquitous manner using any mobile device including phones and tablets, as well as computers and provide 24/7 accesses to assistive technology for students on or off campus.

## Grant Opportunity

Acting on this idea, and expanding the collaboration, the Library and DSS applied for an institutional mini-grant offered by The Foundation for Seminole State College to purchase the software, ClaroRead Pro®, for the College. The maximum award for an individual grant is \$2,000. A committee composed of members of the Foundation Board of Directors awards these grants.

To prepare the Grant, approval by the library director and the director of DSS were required. The library director gave full support for the grant proposal and the collaboration. The director of DSS was part of the early collaboration discussions and provided full support as well. These administrative support structures were important for the grant application, but became more important as the initiative unfolded and the partnership expanded. What happened rather unexpectedly, as the initiative unfolded, was a ripple effect that expanded collaborations across the college community.

The Library and DSS were pleased to be awarded the grant and planned to have the license and technology support in place to launch ClaroRead Pro® in January 2015. Students with and without disabilities utilizing library resources while studying or researching would be able to take advantage of this technology for their educational benefits and access. Seminole State students could benefit from improved access to instructional materials including integrated

class materials that support student learning for those with cognitive disabilities, second language learners, language development needs, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and students who struggle with writing. Faculty and staff would have access and could be trained to use this software for workplace needs.

## **Collaboration across College Departments**

DSS researched the licensing specifics and cost specifics of ClaroRead Pro® with the vendor to determine feasibility for a possible grant proposal. As a result of investigation, we learned that a site license includes unlimited downloads for students of the college. DSS reached out to the college Computer and Telecommunications System (CTS) department to get information on server costs. CTS agreed to house the software for a reasonable cost. The CTS department is the College's IT department and controls all computer hardware and software for the college.

The server cost had been written into the original grant as a line item cost. However, after purchasing the software we learned that it did not need to be housed on a server. Coming in under budget for a grant proposal was a nice surprise. In this phase of the journey, collaboration expanded to eLearning, CTS, and Foundation - all departments which were needed to collaborate, dialogue, listen, share ideas, see new opportunities, and take action to acquire and implement ClaroRead Pro®.

At this stage of the project, the support of the Library director and DSS director was paramount for the ensuing agreements to be reached. Each college department that was contacted was an essential component for the software to be made accessible to students. The awareness of the project, support of the initiative, and the ability for the directors to communicate about the project to other stakeholders in the college community was essential.

## **Collaboration: Technology and Licensing**

DSS Adaptive Technology Specialist, Marshall Bryant, went to speak to the Assistant Director of CTS for the hardware division and explained how the software could be used to help students. To enhance access for students, a request to add the image to all the open lab computers was discussed. After a few weeks of testing to ensure that the software did not interfere with any applications or college testing software, ClaroRead Pro® was installed on the new images on all computer labs at each of the four campuses.

The first technology hurdle was completed. The next major technology hurdle was to find a way to allow students to download the software onto their devices at home without making the college liable for mishandling the software.

Many ideas were passed around, shared, and discussed. DSS and the Library met with eLearning to see if there was a way to get a link to the download site in our learning management platform. eLearning was excited about the venture but wanted to see if there could be either a gateway to the ClaroRead Pro® site or if CTS might house the download capability.

CTS suggested a gateway be created to ClaroRead Pro® for a download username and password with the password changing each semester. Discussions unfolded with the

ClaroRead Pro® representative from the parent company in England. We asked about the possibility of creating a password that could be changed periodically. In the meantime, rising concerns about the license agreement and liability of a download for students from CTS led to a meeting with the vice president of CTS. The site license stated “unlimited on campus as well as off campus access to download” ClaroRead Pro® for students. The next step was a meeting with Seminole State legal department to discuss any legal ramifications of the current license.

After reviewing the license, SSC legal department determined the language to be acceptable, but suggested a specialized End User License Agreement (EULA) be obtained from ClaroRead Pro® stating the exactness of the license. A EULA is “...is a legal contract between a software application author or publisher and the user of that application” (Rouse, 2005). A EULA was requested, outlining the specifics of the license with Seminole State College of Florida, and stating specifically the college would not be liable for students sharing the software illegally. A new EULA from ClaroRead Pro® was received within a month. The EULA was reviewed and approved by the Seminole State College legal department and the assistant director of CTS.

With the technology and licensing hurdles successfully scaled, it was time to work on collaborations for marketing and promoting ClaroRead Pro® to the campus community constituents.

### **Collaboration: Marketing and Promotion**

It was now imperative that other key departments join the effort and intentionally collaborate with this project in order to reach as many students as possible - students with and without disabilities. The ripple effect of the grant collaboration between the Library and DSS for ClaroRead Pro® was expanding. Promoting access was now the priority.

Online curriculum, online content, and DSS accommodation platforms are coordinated by eLearning. eLearning supports the learning management system and provides support, training, and instructional design service to faculty and departments.

eLearning was contacted to affirm the technology and licensing pieces were in place and the software was ready for the students to access ClaroRead Pro® on and off campus. eLearning put a link to the software in the learning management system and created an advertisement banner. Learning management users - students and faculty - could now see that ClaroRead Pro® was available and information was provided as to who to contact to get the download information. The banner also included links to additional information about ClaroRead Pro®. (Appendix B)

ClaroRead Pro® image icons were used as buttons to enhance recognition and access for students. These image icons were used in the eLearning learning management system banner announcement and placed on the computer images in all on campus open computer labs. Students could view these icons in the computer labs in the Library, Academic Success Center, ELS computer labs, and in the DSS office computer labs.



The next marketing opportunity came during the annual fall term Faculty Welcome Back in August 2015. Faculty Welcome Back is a daylong professional development and departmental meeting day where faculty gather on one campus to prepare for the fall term. DSS and the Library offered an information session as one of the professional development sessions at this event. ClaroRead Pro® software was demonstrated and ways in which the software might be used for a variety of student learning experiences were discussed. A Tech Bazaar was part of the faculty welcome back agenda, and ClaroRead Pro® information and marketing materials were offered during this session. This provided a conversational venue to interact with faculty and share the potential benefits of the software for student support and academic success.

Specific departments were then targeted for promoting ClaroRead Pro®. The purpose of this marketing effort was to communicate that the software was now available to students and faculty and share more about the software and how it might support learners in various classes, disciplines, and learning spaces at the college.

The coordinator for the adjunct English faculty, agreed to introduce ClaroRead Pro® during the English departmental fall term meeting hosted specifically for the adjunct faculty.

The English Language Studies (ESL) department situated in the English Language Institute was contacted to make them aware of the software functions and how the software might help the English Language learners. They were excited about the proposition and many faculty attended the information session.

We visited the Academic Success Center to demo the software. The visit produced dialogue and an open forum to share ideas, and identified opportunities and functionality that could be beneficial to students and highlight access. Software functions especially appreciated by the Academic Success Center staff included the concept maps- a visual association of concepts, and the “read back” feature that allows a student to have their paper read back to them to providing a way for students to check for their own errors.

During the fall 2015, Skills Sessions, sponsored by Student Affairs, were offered to students. These sessions provided ClaroRead Pro® training and were offered on-campus and online via the Seminole State College learning management system.

## **Collaboration Impact**

### *Library Impact*

The Library hosts computer labs at each of the four campus locations and provides access to ClaroRead Pro® at each computer station. Training for library staff was offered during a professional development session to expand knowledge about the software to all library employees – full time and part time staff, librarians, and administrative personnel. Informational

materials were made available on the floor of the libraries to alert students to the availability of the software and provide instructions of how to access the software. The library brochure originally created in 2013 highlighting library resources for students with disabilities, was updated in 2016 to include information on ClaroRead Pro®.

As a collaborator on the grant, the Library was able to be another space and voice for promoting and developing awareness of the software program for student use on a more “as needed” or “in the moment” type of use. This opportunity to offer a timely tool to support student use of the software and support academic work was one type of impactful information space the library provided in this partnership. As such, the Library contributed to the *collective impact* (Miller 2014) of ClaroRead Pro® to the campus community in planning, innovating, partnering, training, technology access, and investing for student success.

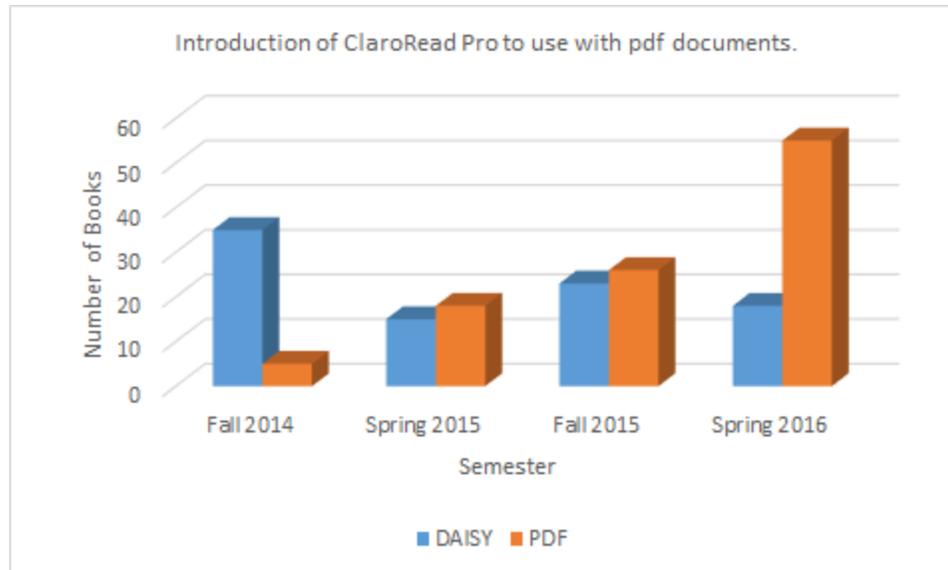
### *Disability Support Services Work Impact*

With ClaroRead Pro®, the DSS department has been able to offer books to students who qualify for alternate formats in the PDF format with a significant decrease in turnaround-time for books in alternate format. ClaroRead Pro® software provides immediate assistance available to students with significantly reduced staff time required to provide successful, intuitive, and student-centered accommodations. Students needing reading assistance are provided ClaroRead Pro® software with the publisher provided pdf, and have immediate access to assistance made available to them.

In the past, almost all of the books provided by DSS were in DAISY format or audio book format. DAISY is the digital audio talking book for students with print disabilities including visual impairments, learning disabilities, and dyslexia. Production of these books could take anywhere from one to three weeks depending on the type of book. This type of format requires that the alternate format mirror exactly what the original book contains. With ClaroRead Pro®, DSS is able to acquire the book in PDF format and provide this format to the students. This has cut the turnaround-time by many days, even weeks. DSS consistently produces between 30 and 50 different books in alternate format each semester and this software has provided a path to distribute the material in a very timely manner. Daisy books required hours of in-house work by staff and special equipment. Students would have to wait an average of fourteen days before access and training would be ready for DSS staff to deliver the needed resources. The positive impact on DSS department work efficiencies could not have happened without collaboration with the Library. Without pursuing and receiving the grant for ClaroRead Pro® as a joint proposal, DSS would still be producing more Daisy books rather than PDFs.

Using ClaroRead Pro® has reduced preparation time significantly and reduced student wait time for resources in half; from approximately 3 months to 1.5 months. The positive impact of ClaroRead Pro® has resulted in:

- Immediate access to needed academic resources for students at the time of their request, versus a minimum 14 day wait
- Increased DSS staff efficiency
- Reduced opportunity for error in products produced for students, because conversions in house using Daisy books has been dramatically reduced



*Figure 3 Impact - DSS and Student Services*

### *Student Impact*

ClaroRead Pro® software is another facet of support for the College’s Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) - Read to Succeed. One factor of success identified for Disability Services in higher education, relates to the area of self-determination by students. This notion of self-determination is a recent shift in practice and is fostered by collaboration and support with faculty (Shaw and Dukes 2005). As this shift in practice unfolds, the role of the disability office also shifts from serving as an advocate for the student to serve as an advocate for issues relating to students with disabilities. ClaroRead Pro®, DSS technologies, and library resources that are ADA compliant, all support self-determination for student success. Field, S. et al (1998) describe self-determination as, “An understanding of one’s strengths and limitations together with a belief in oneself as capable and effective are essential to self-determination.” (p.2).

Having PDF on desktop and iPad devices using Adobe reader and ClaroRead Pro®, has resulted in reduced follow up student questions. The implication for students is improved access to needed resources. ClaroRead Pro® software provides students with a fairly intuitive platform. Access and assistance for all SSC students - including second language learners and students with disabilities, as well as any student needing online reading and writing assistance - is an added benefit.

The implementation and use of ClaroRead Pro® has made it possible for students that do not qualify for alternative format/accommodations to have access to printed materials and the ability to listen to the book being read to them. This is possible because many books are now available in electronic format by the publishers.

Students have expressed their personal experience with ClaroRead Pro® as impacting their success in completing reading assignments. This is reflected in students paying more attention to what is “heard” using the auto functions, hence increasing their comprehension of the material because they do not have to expend time decoding unfamiliar or difficult words. One student stated, “I can follow along and write important information at the same time I listen to the audio... it is easier for me.”

Collaboration took yet another turn. The English Language Studies (ELS) department was contacted to invite their students that are learning English to use the program. The ELS department was excited about the opportunity to use another tool to facilitate reading skills for Speakers of Other Languages students (ESOL). Students were introduced to ClaroRead Pro® and accessed it while working in the language lab. The ELS department reported the students expressed satisfaction and are actively accessing the program.

## Discussion

All students come to college with different skills sets, strengths, and weaknesses. In order to be successful they need support navigating the college transition and academic experiences; this is even more evident in students with disabilities. There are several emerging populations of students with disabilities including students with autism, veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury, students with chronic illness, and others that will require more guided service assistance (Korbel et al 2011). For this population, the support must provide equal access to all programs and services, and in order to accomplish such in all areas, collaboration is necessary (Perrault 2011).

Because the Library and DSS chose to collaborate, new ideas for collaboration, partnerships and discussions unfolded. This collaboration produced inspiring and mutual activities and innovations across departments (Huger 2011). For example, the mini-grant award has produced ripples across departments, requiring more discussions with new departments—specifically computer technology services and eLearning. In order to make ClaroRead Pro® software accessible, these departments were contacted to communicate about access points and connections. As a result, the eLearning department and DSS started talking about what other technology might be incorporated and utilized for distance learning platforms and online classes for students to have improved or enhanced access to material. This partnership inspired conversations, and collaboration with the Director of the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning in an effort to encourage faculty to incorporate the technology into their course activities making them more universally designed and discussing other applications the faculty might utilize to enhance courses and material access for all students.

Do these collaborations and discussions translate into improved academic outcomes for students? Perhaps, if the students have access to an improved product, or as communication between departments improves, outcomes then translate to improved student learning. How do these discussions among departments impact student success? Could they have better grades due to better communication among departments and faculty? Could it be that now they know of a better way of reaching a goal and feel more confident because they may have another tool to help them? Due to improved and effective communication and planning among collaborators, collaborative work can assist higher student achievement (Farmer 2009). It is evident that in order to corroborate this assumption further research and follow up is necessary.

The collaboration between the Library and DSS at Seminole State College of Florida was transformative, and has resulted in ripples of collaborative work across other departments and divisions in the college in a non-threatening collegial community initiative. Collaboration and partnership might also relate to the idea of *collective impact*. *Collective impact*, as articulated by Susan Hildreth, director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services is “what we can accomplish when we partner effectively with others to address society’s needs” (Miller 2014, p.8). Collective impact is what the library and DSS have accomplished by addressing some of the needs of students with disabilities and consequently creating better access and

improving awareness of what the needs of this population may be in other areas. These are possibly what Gaetz (2012) was referring to when considering theoretically - thick/social collaborations which are engaged in without regard for sacrifices or cost. These sacrifices or costs might include political, departmental, budgetary, philosophical, ethos, cultural, or opportunity costs. Engaging partnerships that move from personal to professional/organizational collaboration relationships (Love & Edwards 2009) requires a certain readiness to take some risks and communicate at a high level of professional trust.

## Conclusion

Casual conversations, interactions, and dialogue were transformed into ideas, opportunities, and action - three tools used to create collaboration. Innovation breeds innovation, and we suggest that collaboration breeds collaboration and inspires collaborative thinking and *collective impact*. The personal communications emerged into organizational relationships to forge a collaboration that produced impactful ripples of new types of communication across departments at SSC.

The innovative steps taken by the Library and DSS, translated three tools - casual conversations, interactions, and dialogue - into a collaboration that has unleashed new direction and inspired new projects for both departments and for the opportunity to include other college departments and divisions. We have experienced *collective impact*. The collaboration has provided new online learning and working support for students, faculty, and staff and set an example for future collaborative work in our departments. This collaboration has inspired new dialogue and communication patterns in cross-disciplinary work. Collaborating over time has been impacting departments, communication, and campus culture and student success. This has affected transformative thinking and doing, innovative projects and deliverables, and contributes to student academic success and an enhanced collegial ethos. The influx of students with disabilities on college campuses requires a revision on how to best serve this population. At Seminole State College of Florida partnering and collaborating amongst the Library and DSS is one way the college will foster opportunities for academic, collegial, departmental and division success and integration. This collaboration will undoubtedly attract others to collaborate for the benefit of all.

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