Transforming Accessibility
Addressing the Impact of Trauma

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Agenda/Objectives

- What are we talking about
- What’s the problem
- What did we do?
- How did we do it?
- What happened
- Director’s role
- Next steps
What are we talking about

- Disability Services
- Accessibility Resources (in name)
- Accessibility Resource (in practice)
MCTC: Who Are We?

Minneapolis Community and Technical College provides high-quality, lifelong learning programs in the heart of a vibrant city. We are one of 31 colleges and universities in the Minnesota State system.

We offer more than 150 associate’s degrees, diplomas and certificates. Many of our programs transfer to four-year colleges while others prepare you for challenging careers.
So let’s talk about it!
MCTC: Who we were
(Academic Year 2014-2015)

Who are we?
What do we do?
What do we care about?
Disability Services: Who we were (Academic Year 2014-2015)

Minneapolis community and Technical College values diversity in our college community and is committed to ensuring equal access and opportunity to all qualified students.

The Disability Services assists students, faculty, and staff to ensure access to Saint Paul College programs, services, and activities.

Students with disabilities seeking accommodations are required to meet with the Disability Services at Minneapolis Community and College and provide appropriate documentation of their disability.
Initial Problems Observed

- We got in our own way
- We removed or reduced barriers by creating new ones
- How do you expect me to get documentation of my disability?
Culture: What is it?

- Gestures
- Literature
- Art & Entertainment
- Holidays
- Music
- Dress
- Cuisine
- Rituals
- Customs

- Concept of Time
- Concept of Personal Space
- Notions of Modesty
- Concepts of Leadership
- Concept of self and collective
- Nature of Friendship and Family
- Concepts of Justice & Fairness
- Understanding of Nature
- Religious Beliefs
- Rules of Self-Etiquette
How do cultures and perceptions create disabilities?

- Lived experience
- Definition of disability
- Cultural stigma
Education is Relational

Solid evidence indicates that strong student-faculty relationships is more predictive of success than curriculum or pedagogy.
ARC: Who Are We Now?

Minneapolis Community and Technical College holds equity and inclusion in high regard. We value diverse perspectives and experiences; and work to foster an appreciation and respect to ensure all students, faculty, and staff feel welcome.

The Accessibility Resource Center is charged with the mission of ensuring all programs, services, and activities at Minneapolis Community and Technical College are accessible. We do this important work by:

- Recognizing that disabilities are socially and culturally constructed and that individuals with disabilities are a vital element to our diverse campus community.
- Striving to empower students to be as independent as possible by facilitating an interactive process of creating a universally accessible campus.
- Believing equal access is the shared responsibility of everyone: faculty, staff, and students alike.
MCTC: Who Are We Now?

Our Values

- Student-centered - Anchor all decisions, programs and services around student needs
- Inclusion - Create a climate that empowers, supports and invites participation in the college and the community
- Community - Build an interdependent community allied with our external partners
- Excellence - Work daily to create an outstanding environment for learning and success
- Integrity - Be guided by honesty, fairness, and compassion in all our dealings
So what did we do?
How did we do it?

- Changed our name
- Changed ecology of office
- Asked questions
- Created the Zen Den
- Instituted ludic work environment
- Valued professional development
- Instituted the “no, but...” and soft referrals
- Divide and conquer approach
- Etc.
The role of documentation

Problems
- Diagnosis not always indicative of barrier (ADHD)
- Documentation not generated in context
- Misdiagnosis
- No ability to access systems that create/store documentation (HS past a certain date)
- Culture creates barrier between problem and explanation
How are stories told?

- Who is telling the story
- How are stories valued
What happened?

- By removing the document first model, stories became the central element letting people speak in their own words and validating their unique experience.
- It helped us move to a proactive model instead of leading conversations with accommodations.
- We spend more of our time coaching students and connecting them to support resources on campus.
- We are able to authentically engage with a wider audience in new ways.
Director’s role

- Set the tone
- Provided opportunities and resources for professional development
- Changed department way of doing business
- Evolved old and created new positions
- Diversification of staff
- Developed new onboarding procedures
Next Steps

- Equity and Inclusion
- Instructor Arranged Make-up Testing
- How do we tell our story
- Relaxation station
Questions?

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