How does this project support the Student Affairs and Enrollment Management mission?
-The Disability Cultural Center (DCC) works toward educating our campus and community on disability identity, culture, and diversity since these are areas not typically embraced in higher education. Additionally, one focus area of the DCC is supporting undergraduate students through career-based experiential learning and leadership opportunities through our student internships. Our interns gain skills and experiences in curriculum development and implementation, event planning and facilitation, marketing and outreach, and community engagement. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, unemployment rates for disabled people are 7.3%, twice the rate of non-disabled individuals. The DCC prepares disabled students with skills, experience, and leadership qualities to be competitive applicants after graduation.

-In fall 2020, the DCC started implementing peer mentorship support for graduate and undergraduate students through our Cultural Learning Communities in collaboration with the Thrive Center. We aim to specialize in providing peer mentorship for disabled students but also have that support available for all students. As it continues to grow, we wish to establish a robust peer mentorship program for both graduate and undergraduate students.

-According to the Student Support Fees Fall 2017 Student Survey, funding for disabled students is a top priority for funding special campus populations. 48% of students classified disabled students as essential, and 38% classified them as high priority. These classifications show that the campus community values disabled students and maintaining the Disability Cultural Center ensures disabled students have a dedicated space for and by disabled students on campus.

What is the reason for creating/maintaining this program?
-The University of Arizona is widely recognized for its commitment to disability on campus. Upon the creation of the DCC, we realized disabled students did not have a politicized disability identity and did not come together with other disabled folks in community. We believed this was due to the dominant narrative and messaging on disability which views it as the neglected demographic or the forgotten minority (Davis, 2016; Grigley, 2017; Vodicka, 1971). The Disability Cultural Center works to combat negative perceptions on campus and instead celebrate disability identity rather than to ignore or hide it. By maintaining a center that actively recognizes and validates disability identity across campus, we tackle issues of isolation which may lead to an increase in retention and graduation rates for disabled students, as we have seen happen for other groups (Raver, Murchake, & Chalk, 2018)

-The DCC at UA is unique because it is one of the few in the nation dedicated to disability identity and culture. Upon switching to a virtual space as a response to the covid-19 pandemic, we’ve expanded our engagement globally. Through our Reading Groups, Disability Discussions, and Ableism 101 series, the DCC has engaged with students, activists, professionals, and community members nationally and internationally, making a name for ourselves and the University for our commitment to disability. Students from other universities have attended our programs to find a sense of community they may not find in their own campuses. Professionals across higher education and the non-profit sector across the country are also referred to our various programs for training and professional development. Lastly, the DCC is often used as a model to guide other institutions in establishing their own Disability Cultural Centers.

-The DCC also engages in outreach through local collaborations. We have collaborated with Tucson organizations such as Direct Center for Independent Living, Arizona Center for Disability Law, EMERGE survivor advocacy, and with local activists and advocates. Tucson has several disability service and advocacy organizations but very few, if any, spaces that address disability through a social justice lens. The DCC aims to fill that gap to recognize disability as an integral part of diversity and social justice efforts.

-The Disability Cultural Center has developed a strong social media presence on Facebook and Instagram. Our platforms provide educational content and connect us to disability organizations, scholars, and activists. Due to physical barriers and lack of accommodations in physical spaces, disability communities often come together online to organize, educate, and advocate even before the pandemic. The DCC’s virtual presence is strong and contributes to our global recognition.

How many students will be directly impacted?
- The DCC has served 3408 people since Fall 2018, and we expect to continue increasing our numbers every year given our virtual programming that we aim to continue in addition to our in-person programming.
- With our organizational move from the Disability Resource Center to the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Engagement (IME), we will have more access to students involved with other cultural centers on campus.

How the success of this initiative will be assessed?
-The DCC will continue to gather attendance at every event we host and track students who continuously attend our events long-term. We showed we were successful in adapting to a virtual space and will continue offering virtual programming in addition to in-person events.
-We send feedback forms after our Ableism 101 series, CLC sessions, and at the end of each semester. We ask for student input regarding programs and topics they’d like to engage in and offer advice/suggestions on ways to improve.
At the end of each semester, we started holding student forums where students gather to address difficulties during their semester navigating campus, and provide feedback regarding the Disability Resource Center, and the Disability Cultural Center. This feedback has been used to advocate for disabled student needs during president Robbin’s reentry briefings at the start of campus closures.

How are you ensuring the longevity of this program?
- Despite the success of DCC and the unique niche it fills, there is no sustained funding to support its staff or programming. We rely entirely on SSF funding and are pursuing external grant funding to ensure it is supported long-term.

- In regards to programming, we’ve been able to modify and adapt our in-person programs, to an online format and better serve the needs of students and community members regardless of distance. Our ability to adapt amidst uncertainty allows the DCC to continue supporting students long-term.

Funding Request

Total Request: $492,400 for 3 consecutive years, or $164,400 per fiscal year.
The DCC is currently run by 2 staff members (a coordinator and a graduate assistant) and 2 student interns, all whom are disabled. We would like to request an additional graduate assistant and 2 two additional student interns.

- **Program Coordinator (Full-time; $47,000 + $14,600 ERE):** The Program Coordinator oversees the operations and assessment of the DCC, supervises graduate assistant and student interns, meets and connects with campus stakeholders, and engages in outreach efforts across campus and in the community.

- **Graduate Assistant (Part-time) (2 at $16,000 each + $1,776 ERE each + 11,939 tuition):** The Graduate Assistant provides support and mentorship to students, manages the day-to-day logistical operations of the center, and implements daily programming and outreach. We would like to hire an additional graduate assistant to support the DCC in expanding outreach efforts listed under outreach and serve as a connection between K-12 schools and community colleges.

- **Student Interns (4 interns $5,400 each + $97 ERE each):** Student interns are vital to our student-centered programming. They determine the programs we will implement each semester and contribute to their development. They assist with event planning, logistical preparation, and program facilitation. We currently have 2 interns and would like to add 2 additional interns. 1 Intern would focus on connecting with student organizations on campus and bring affiliate organizations to our center and the other intern would assist with social media and marketing. This would support students with leadership development and career readiness to improve employment opportunities which are also scarce for people with disabilities.

Marketing ($3,000): Despite the DCC’s success, our center is still not widely recognized across campus. A marketing budget would fund printing flyers for all programming and events, provide accessible braille business cards for all DCC staff, and purchase t-shirts, stickers, and items with the DCC logo to distribute widely.

Outreach ($5,000): The DCC would like to expand our outreach efforts by building a college access pipeline for K-12 public schools and with Community Colleges across Arizona to build relationships with students. We would like to host a symposium that addresses the college application process and enrollment for students with disabilities. This day-long event would invite disabled students and parents/guardians/caregivers to learn the difference between access and accommodations in K-12 settings versus higher education and provide strategies for their successful transition into college. We would include presentations on resources and services provided at the Disability Resource Center and the Disability Cultural Center, and a student panel where current UA students address questions and concerns. We hope to increase general enrollment of more diverse disabled students whether to the UA or higher education in general.

Programming ($10,000): When in person, we generally provide food or snacks during our Disability Discussions, Reading Groups, Ableism 101 series, or any other general programming that we host. We also purchase materials needed for our programs such as books for our Reading Group, flyers to promote our events, and art/office supplies needed for our Ableism 101 series (i.e poster paper for group activities, art/craft supplies for open house activities, etc.)

We have invited prominent national disability activists and scholars such as Lydia X. Z Brown and Eli Claire to speak on disability justice. We have also invited local Tucson disability advocates Brieanne Buttner and Alisha Vasquez to speak on the intersections of disability, parenting, and the Chicancx/Latinx identity. By bringing in various speakers, scholars, and panelists from other areas of disability advocacy across the nation, we aim to provide a broader disability consciousness across campus. Funding would go towards paying honorariums, travel, lodging, and food.