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# Successful Transitions in Disability and Higher Ed

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# Disability and Higher Education

Estimated that 26% of students with disabilities attend four year universities

It is expected that even more individuals with disabilities will wish to attend college as technology continues to improve and creates more opportunities.

Estimated only 21% of students with disabilities persist to graduation compared to 58% of peers without disabilities

“Many students with disabilities enter college not knowing how to communicate their needs (self-advocacy), how to evaluate their own performance (self-regulation), how to recognize the connection between behavioral outcomes and whether these outcomes occur as a result of something within or outside of one's perceived control (locus of control), and how to become aware of their own strengths, interests and limitations (self-knowledge; Flong, et al., 2007; Wehmeyer, 1996).”

# Education and Disability Law

## HIGH SCHOOL

IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)/ Section 504 (Right to a free and appropriate public education)

School provides evaluations to determine disability

School district identifies students with disabilities, teachers approach student if they believe assistance is needed.

Parent has access to records, participates in the accommodation process, and can be an advocate.

Curriculum and pace of assignments can be altered/modified

Time is structured by others, you are reminded of due dates

Emphasis is on student success

## Post-secondary

ADA/ Section 504 (students must be eligible)

Student is responsible for cost of evaluations and providing their own documentation

Student must self-identify to the Disability Office.

Parent does not have access to student information without written consent. Student is their own advocate.

Assignments and curriculum are not required to be modified or redesigned.

Students manage their own time and deadlines.

Emphasis is on equal access.

# Section 504: Differences from High School To Postsecondary Education (Madaus & Shaw, 2004)

Area	Secondary	Post Secondary
Identification	School District	Student
Evaluation and Fees		Student
IEP/Service Plan		Not Required
Course planning, selection, and programming		Student
Transition Plan		Student
Monitoring Student Progress		Student
Ensuring provision of reasonable accommodations		Institution IF student self-identifies
Monitoring effectiveness of accommodation		Student

# Student Engagement

There are 3 distinct phases of association with other members of an institution.

Separation from communities of the past, transition between high school and college, and incorporation into the society of the college.

Student engagement is a critical component to retention.

Becoming actively engaged in campus life in a variety of ways helps with the transition between high school and college.

Disability supports can help students to engage more effectively with their instructors and classes, identify other campus resources, and offer a safe haven on campus.

Early intervention is key!

Wessel et. al., 2009

# The Accommodation Process

## Aquinas

Student SELF-identifies with our office through an online system, call, or drop-in office.

Director is notified and requests the student provide supporting documentation of disability from an appropriate professional

Once documentation is received and reviewed the student attends a Needs Assessment (intake)

Most accommodation determinations are made during the needs assessment and generated in a Letter of Accommodations

Letters are renewed every semester.

## FSU

Student SELF-identifies with our office via phone, email, or drop-in office.

Students are assigned to a counselor.

Students bring documentation to the initial appointment or can send via email, mail, or fax.

Most accommodation determinations are made during the initial appointment and thorough intake. Students are required to self-advocate with VISA (Verified Individualized Service and Accommodation Letter) with each instructor.

Accommodations are renewed/reviewed every semester.

# Examples of Accommodations

**Testing:** extended testing time, reduced distraction environment, etc.

**Classroom:** modified attendance, occasional deadline extension (impromptu assignments), notetaking assistance, ability to take breaks, and snacks in class etc.

**Assistive technology:** FM systems, CART, Livescribe pens, CCtv, screen reading, assistive apps, alternative format etc.

**Housing:** Single room, specific location, PA access, dietary restriction/allergies, air conditioning, and ESA (assistance animal)

**Others:** electronic text, braille, and service animals

# Strengths-Based Advising

Schreiner et. al., 2005

Model that promotes identifying strengths and abilities, then assists students in how to apply those skills productively.

Frame conversations around abilities and access as opposed to disabilities and barriers.

Ex: In the past what strategies worked for you? What are you like at your best?

# Strengths-Based Advising

Strengths-based advising typically involves the following steps:

- Identify strengths
- Affirm and increase awareness of strengths
- Envision the future by discussing goals and how strengths can assist in reaching goals
- Plan specific steps to take towards the goal
- Review strategies and tools to enhance student's strengths

# Preparing Students BEFORE College

Start early!

- Discuss student's disability
- Instruct students on how to self-advocate (where, and when will this instruction happen?)
- Explain changes in law, and student's rights to service, prepare parents for the differences
- Explore post-secondary opportunities – does the school meet student's needs? How to make student an informed consumer
- Assist students in organization and independence
- Discuss access to resources that fill in gaps that occur post-transition
- Prepare students with gathering documentation needed for early self-identification

# Benefits of Higher Education

- Nearly 60% of all jobs in the US economy require higher education
- A bachelor's degree recipient makes about 75% more money over a lifetime than a high school graduate
- Successful participation in education has been linked to improved employment outcomes and durable employment
  - Opportunity to interact with people with a diverse group of individuals
  - Comprehensive Support
  - On-campus centralized support services

# Building bridges

- How do you see VR services and higher education working together?
- What models/approaches have you participated in that have been effective?

# VR Services and Higher Ed

- The United States state-federal rehabilitation service program spends more than \$2.5 billion annually supporting individuals with disabilities in finding employment.
- 14% of VR customers nationwide are transition-aged youth.
- Increased focus on transition services legislatively.
- Job placement of people with disabilities at the highest level possible has been central to the mission of vocational rehabilitation programs.
- Young adults with disabilities have historically lower levels of employment, earnings, and job security during times of recession.
- It is critical for VR counselors to be knowledgeable of the supports available in postsecondary education when assisting young adult client in planning services and supports.

Fleming et. al., 2012, Dutta et. al., 2008

## Case Study vignette

Kelly is a high school student with a history/diagnosis of generalized anxiety disorder and learning disability.

- A. What do you perceive this student would struggle with
- B. How could you prepare Kelly for transition to college

Questions???

# Contact Information

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