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A Survey Of Disability Support Services In Illinois Higher Education

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This research is a product of the graduate program in [Counseling and Student Development](#) at Eastern Illinois University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

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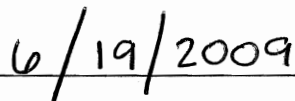
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A Survey of Disability Support Services

in Illinois Higher Education

(TITLE)

BY

Courtney Diann Quinn

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Science in College Student Affairs

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
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YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
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Abstract

This study explored the services and accommodations available to students with disabilities at several institutions of higher education in the state of Illinois. Focus was on the number of students with disabilities matriculating, the types of disabilities the students had, and the services colleges and universities were providing to support success among students with disabilities. A survey was distributed to disability services administrators at eighty colleges and universities in Illinois to obtain data regarding college and university demographics, and the programs and resources offered by the colleges and universities. Additional phone interviews were conducted to receive further information to supplement the survey.

A need for further funding and development of disability services support programs was identified. Illinois colleges and universities were proactive and innovative in creating disability services support programs other than the federally mandated provisions, as well as providing support and education to faculty and staff.

Dedication

I want to dedicate this thesis to my family and fiancé because without them this mountain would have been too hard to climb.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the disability services administrators across the state of Illinois who supported my research and gave me feedback to further my study.

Without the support of mentors and educators who understand the research and academic mindset necessary to produce this thesis I would not have survived. I would like to especially acknowledge Dr. Charles Eberly, my thesis advisor, for leading me in the right direction and supporting me through the process. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Gail Richard, thesis committee member, who was able to share my passion and lead me in the direction of this thesis topic. I also must acknowledge Dr. Lucia Schroeder, thesis committee member, for stepping in to my thesis with great energy and encouragement that kept me going.

This thesis has been a product of twenty-four years of support, growth, and development that has allowed me the capability to produce such a piece of work. The support, growth, and development have been possible due to the loving and supportive family and friends that always tell me to keep going. I acknowledge my entire family including my father Charles, mother Kimberly, brother Charles, grandma Janice, and Papa Charles for never letting me give up. I would also like to thank my fiancé Corey Niro and best friend Leslie Wheeler for their love and support. It is to them I acknowledge endlessly for giving me the strength to continuously further my education.

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Chapter I

The pursuit of higher education is sometimes called a privilege not a right, but despite admission requirements and challenging courses, higher education is a legislated civil right. Equal opportunities and access to higher education are expected to be granted to all individuals without discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, or religion (Simon, 1999). In the past thirty years, higher education has made great strides in legislation and administration to provide equal opportunity to students with documented disabilities (Rothstein, 2003). Landmark court cases (*Guckenberger v. Boston University, 1998; Davis v. Southeastern Community College, 1978; Wynne v. Tufts University School of Medicine, 1991*) have clarified the purpose and mission of special education in the K-12 system, as well as disability support services in the higher education system.

With recent increases in students with disabilities entering higher education, identifying the specific areas in which universities and colleges offer support and accommodations is needed so that recommendations for action and initiatives in areas that are weak or struggling can be developed. With many students receiving Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) under the provision of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990, administrators will continue to see a rise in the population of students attending colleges and universities who are seeking accommodations (Thomas, 2000).

Both the student and the university/college can benefit from the provision of appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities. Research needs to be conducted to discover the breadth and depth of outreach and initiatives at universities and colleges across the nation. The data collected can serve as a tool to identify “best

practices” that could be identified and implemented at other colleges and universities. Colleges and universities can use results from the present study to compare the current services at their institution to services provided at other institutions in the state of Illinois.

Statement of Purpose

This study examined disability support services available at universities and colleges in the state of Illinois. A researcher-designed survey was sent to disability services administrators in colleges and universities to examine the scope of services available to students in the state of Illinois in order to determine the current state of affairs in disability services within Illinois higher education. Results of the present study can be used as a starting point to summarize specific institutional policies, services, and accommodations, as well as serve as a resource to undergraduate students with disabilities who seek enrollment in Illinois universities or colleges.

Primary Research Questions

The primary research questions were as follows:

RQ₁: What disabilities do students who enroll in colleges and universities in Illinois have?

RQ₂: What services are being offered to students with disabilities at colleges and universities in the state of Illinois?

RQ₃: What are the challenges and limitations Illinois colleges and universities experience in attempting to provide services to students with disabilities?

RQ4: What education and outreach is provided to faculty and staff in Illinois regarding students with disabilities?

Limitations and Assumptions of the Study

Several factors limit the outcomes of this study. First, data were obtained through self-administered surveys, introducing the possibility of reporting bias (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The survey identified available accommodations, the demographics of disability offices, and the demographics of students being served. The researcher trusted respondents to be honest and unbiased due to the perceived low-risk nature of the survey item content.

Second, the success of the study to describe the state of disability services in the state of Illinois was based on the number of responses received from individual colleges and universities. A successful response rate was encouraged through follow-up contact with the eighty universities and colleges where the surveys were sent. Data were obtained from thirty-five institutions. Nevertheless, the Illinois Board of Higher Education website lists 175 institutions as providing post-secondary education (IBHE, 2009).

Third, the present research was conducted at a time when the political climate was unstable due to a national recession (Blumenstyk, 2009; Kelderman, 2009). The unfavorable economic climate could affect the operating budgets of various support services, causing the accommodations reported to be lower or more conservative than might have been seen in times when budgets and politics were more stable.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Introduction

This review of literature addresses the following topics of Illinois Higher Education: structure of higher education in Illinois, history of disability law, history of disability service offices, secondary versus post-secondary education disability policies, specific disabilities, and recommended accommodations. These areas were relevant to this study because they provide information regarding the state of Illinois which is the focus of the present study, they provide history and legislative information to better understand the field of disability services, and they provide specific information regarding disabilities and accommodations surveyed in the study.

Illinois Higher Education

Illinois higher education is governed by the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE, 2009) which was created in 1961 under the vision of Governor Otto Kerner and the General Assembly. The board consists of sixteen members with ten appointed by the governor, the chairs of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, the Chairs of the Illinois Community College Board, and two student representatives voted on by the Student Advisory Committee. The general responsibilities of the IBHE are planning and policy development, budget and fiscal affairs, grants programs, program review, and information systems (IBHE, 2009).

The IBHE governs public institutions, private institutions, community colleges, a mathematics and science academy, and four other state supported institutions for a total of 175 institutions in the state of Illinois. The information systems component of the IBHE is responsible for data collection and the maintenance and reporting of such data (IBHE, 2009).

The IBHE has an Advisory Committee that includes the following subcommittees: Disabilities Advisory, Faculty Advisory, Student Advisory, Independent not-for-profit College and University Advisory, and the Independent for-profit College and University Advisory. The committees and IBHE are legislatively required by the Board of Higher Education Act to create a report each year called the *Report to the Governor and General Assembly on Underrepresented Groups in Illinois Higher Education*. In the year 2003 a mandate was created that required the report to focus on more detailed information on a cyclical basis; the information required on a three year cycle is recruitment and preparation, academic achievement, and campus climate (IBHE, 2009).

History of Disability Law and Higher Education

Higher education institutions have admitted and provided education to students with disabilities for a long time, but in the past thirty-five years advances in legislation and support services have offered the opportunity for more disabled students to succeed than ever before in higher education (Dukes & Shaw, 1999; Thomas, 2000). The number of students eligible for disability services enrolled in colleges and universities has increased due to the advances. Accordingly, the increase in disabled student enrollment

supported an increased need for disability awareness, education, and support services (Dukes & Shaw, 1999). In a fast facts report provided by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2009) in 2003-2004, eleven percent of students attending institutions of higher education had a documented disability, an increase from seven percent reported in 1999-2000 (NCES, 2009). Since 16,911,000 students were enrolled in fall 2003 (NCES, 2009), a total of 1,860,219 students could have requested disability accommodations on campuses across the nation.

For the purposes of this review of literature, the focus will be on development of disability services in landmark legislation since the early 1970s. The first legislation that was established to provide non-discrimination to persons with disabilities, after the Fourteenth Amendment, was the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and its subsection 504 (Thomas, 2000). Section 504 was the first national civil rights legislation put in place to protect people with disabilities. The U.S. Congress was able to create landmark legislation, but it was just the beginning of the fight for equal rights among the disabled community and its advocates (Dalke, 1991). Employers within the business community became so worried about the cost of provisions and mandates required under section 504 that President Nixon's administration created an executive order requiring a study of the consequences of section 504. This process slowed down the release of the Section 504 guidelines, which created uproar in the disabled community. Advocates for the disabled community filed a class action lawsuit in November 1976 requesting Congress to release the guidelines, and the courts ruled in favor of the plaintiffs (Cherry v. Mathews, 1976). By this time, the Nixon administration had become the Ford administration, and that administration was transitioning over to the Carter administration. The Ford

administration requested that the guidelines wait to be released until the Carter administration took office and reviewed the documents; the courts sided with the Ford administration and ruled to wait to release the guidelines. Of course this new judicial ruling upset the disabled community even more, and visible protests broke out across the nation. The most noteworthy protest was a sit-in that occurred in late March 1977 in the Region IX Office of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (DHEW) (Jarrow, 1993). More than a hundred people in wheelchairs congregated in the lobby and chained themselves together, stating they would not leave until the guidelines were released in keeping with the purpose of Section 504. Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Joseph Califano, was present that day and returned to his home office where he released the guidelines on March 28, 1977. At this point, the fight for the rights of disabled individuals took on a national front, but it was just the beginning of what would be many small victories over long years of effort.

The next noteworthy piece of legislation, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), was created by the U.S Congress as an extension of the Civil Rights Act of 1961 (Bandyopadhyay & Scott, 2006) and was signed in July 1990 by President George Bush. ADA was more accepted than Section 504 and created mandates and provisions for the private sector; the private sector was an area not previously mentioned in Section 504 which focused on the public sector (Gordon & Keiser, 1998; Jarrow, 1993).

In September 2008, amendments were passed to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; these amendments were effective January 1, 2009. The law, which is now referred to as Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAA), has caused concern among stakeholders in the employment industry, but will have a smaller impact

on the higher education community. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) announced a “Notice of Proposed Rule Making” and will accept comments on the proposal from the public, but has not yet decided when the final rule will take effect (Martinez, 2009).

Congress initially intended there to be a less demanding requirement to qualify as having a disability than the courts usually determine. This broadened Congressional definition concerned disability service providers at higher education institutions because there was a fear of more students qualifying for services with limited resources, as well as the necessity to further modify the university structure or programs under limited resources. The ADA specifically addressed this concern and stated that the change in definition of disability, as done by the amendment, will not affect the original “fundamental alteration” (p.4) provision, which governs the way in which disability service accommodations are implemented in higher education (Barry, Benfer, & Feldblum, 2009).

History of Disability Service Offices in Higher Education

The first disability service office at an institution of higher education was in the state of Illinois at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). According to the University of Illinois – Urbana-Champaign’s website, in the 1947-48 academic year a veteran’s hospital in Galesburg, Illinois, was converted to a satellite campus to accommodate the growing number of World War II veterans utilizing the GI Bill. In 1949 the Galesburg campus was scheduled to be closed, creating an uprising of students with disabilities at UIUC who expressed their concern. The students traveled to the state

capitol at Springfield, IL with requests to speak to the governor and convince him to keep the Galesburg campus open; this request was met with defeat, but it was the first movement of its kind seen in a college setting. These same students, through great strides of self-advocacy, were able to establish a temporary “rehab program” at UIUC. In 1948 they formed Delta Sigma Omicron, the first disability service fraternity, which was indispensable in the forging of events and initiatives which would eventually lead to the permanence of the Disabled Student Services office at UIUC in 1954 (History of Disability Services at the University of Illinois, n.d.).

In 1962, Ed Roberts, a person with quadriplegia due to Polio, became a student at the University of California Berkeley. Roberts became an icon for the disability rights movement in the early sixties due to his resilient nature in completing his course-work, participating in campus activities and debates, all while only able to remain away from his iron lung for minimal hours at a time. Roberts’s ability to be successful at UC-Berkeley, contrary to common perception, led to other students being admitted to the university; by 1967 there were twelve more students with disabilities in attendance. These students formed a close-knit bond and referred to themselves, and became widely known, as the “Rolling Quads” (Trusty, Looby, & Sandhu, 2002, p. 183).

Another noteworthy example of students advocating for their beliefs was in the case of the “Deaf President Now” (p. 171) movement at Gallaudet University in Washington, District of Columbia. Gallaudet University, an institution established for the deaf in 1957, was searching for its seventh president. Students and deaf advocates nationally were upset that in six presidencies there had yet to be a president elected who was deaf. Marches, letters, and petitions were on display for legislators in regard to the

decision. The university trustees moved forward and hired a seventh non-deaf president. The students and advocates were outraged and formed protests and marches that lasted for days. Dr. Elisabeth Zinser resigned from her position as the seventh president and I. King Jordan, a deaf person, subsequently accepted the Gallaudet presidency. This movement received wide support from the press, in which the deaf student protest was compared to the black civil rights march in Selma, Alabama (Summerfield, Devine, & Levi, 1998).

Secondary Special Education versus Higher Education ADA/Section 504

There are differences between Secondary Special Education and the accommodations offered at institutions of higher education or the post-secondary setting. Many students who qualified to receive accommodations and support in K-12 do not qualify to receive accommodations in the higher education setting. It is important to be aware of the reasons when helping students transition from secondary to post-secondary schooling (Gordon & Keiser, 1998; Jarrow, 1993).

The secondary school setting is guided by section 504 as well as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (U.S. Department of Justice). The most obvious difference between secondary and post-secondary accommodations is who is responsible for identifying and documenting disabilities and needs. In the secondary setting, school personnel are expected to identify a student with a disability, coordinate documentation, and then provide free resources and accommodations to help the student be academically successful. This legal mandate for K-12 education is very different from the higher education setting where university personnel are not required to identify disabilities. In

higher education, it is the student's responsibility to advocate for his/her self and provide documentation to the institution from a professional certified in testing for the specific disability. If the disability is a medically related, the student has probably already incurred many financial hardships regarding his/her disability. For a student with a learning disability, who has always had the documentation and assessment provided for free from his/her secondary institution, he/she may be surprised by the expense involved in getting documentation in post-secondary education (Dalke, 1991; Madaus, 2005; Rothstein, 2003).

Another important aspect of the transition from K-12 to post-secondary education is that the student is expected to advocate on behalf of his/her own disability in the post-secondary setting. In the case of *Carten v. Kent State University* (2003), the plaintiff attended graduate school at Kent State University under a conditional basis and was later dismissed for poor performance. The plaintiff, Trevor Carten, claimed that the dismissal was based on a learning disability that the university made no attempts to accommodate. Upon review, the U.S. Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit, found that Carten had received speech and language therapy in high school, but had not provided proper documentation or contacted the disability services at Kent State to request accommodations. The court found that Kent State University was reasonable in releasing Carten.

Overview of Specific Disability Categories

Knowledge of the basic characteristics of common disabilities aids in understanding the need for support services. Examples of common disabilities include hearing impairments, learning disabilities, Asperger Syndrome, vision impairments,

mobility impairments, and psychological and health related issues (Dalke, 1991; Thomas, 2002). This overview will briefly address some of the aforementioned disabilities.

Hearing Impairments. Hearing impairments are a disability that can occur at birth or anytime throughout life, resulting in different levels of difficulty for the individual. Hearing impaired students may use lip reading, Sign Language, and/or various types of hearing aids to help them receive the same information as other students. A student may hire an interpreter to attend and record lectures with him/her. The student must first communicate with the professor and then find a place in the classroom where all items of instruction are visible to the hearing impaired student while still being easily viewed by the interpreter. In general, disabled students should discuss the nature of their disability with the professor prior to the initial meeting of a course; in this case, asking the professor to avoid the common habit of talking while facing away from students is critical to the student's success (Dalke, 1991).

Learning Disabilities. Learning disabilities can take many forms because they are not due to a lack of intelligence, but a deficit in the way a student may cognitively process or express information. A student might struggle with short term or long term memory, which may inhibit success with note taking, listening to lectures, or reading course material. Other difficulties may be in the area of written and/or oral language, problem solving, or critical thinking. The difficulties students with learning disabilities face will often cause a hardship in their study skills and academic success. These disabilities are diverse in the way they present themselves; therefore, not all accommodations will work for every student with a learning disability. There are

numerous reasonable accommodations that can help a student with learning disabilities succeed in higher education (Dalke, 1991; Thomas, 2002).

Asperger Syndrome. Asperger Syndrome is a disability that is classified as a Pervasive Developmental Disorder within the Autism Spectrum (Richard & Hoge, 1999). Students who have Asperger Syndrome can be a challenge for faculty and staff due to the variety of characteristics encompassed within the disorder. Students with Asperger Syndrome are high functioning intellectually, but may exhibit pragmatic deficits, lack ability to understand non-verbal language, exhibit poor social skills, and have extreme interests. These students are often considered awkward and different (Atwood, 1998) children in social circles, and have been described as appearing equivalent to a professor due to their extreme interests and above average IQ regarding certain subjects. Bring specific and direct in language and other forms of communication with students with Asperger Syndrome is very important. Many of the accommodations used to address pervasive developmental disorders are similar to those used with students who have learning disabilities (Atwood, 1998; Kowalski, 2002).

Vision impairments. Vision impairments can range in severity from mild to complete blindness. Students with vision impairment will benefit from meeting with a professor before the beginning of the semester to talk about classroom procedures, such as the way in which the professor talks and describes concepts during lecture, as well as logistical issues such as large print while writing on the board and other technology issues. Text can be provided to the student in audio, but it may be difficult for students who have an assignment that requires library research or filtering through a lot of text quickly to determine whether or not a resource is valid (Dalke, 1991).

Mobility impairments. Mobility impairments may present in a variety of ways so there is no one accommodation that would work universally for all students. Some students may have trouble with written communication and would need a note taker or the ability to take tests orally. Other students may experience frequent absences due to health issues or medical visits, while still other students experience classroom interruptions due to the inability to control their bladder or other organs. When working with students who have mobility issues, it is also important to consider architectural barriers such as classroom, service, and event accessibility (Dalke, 1991, Thomas, 2002).

The descriptions above are not exhaustive descriptions of the specific disabilities or an exhaustive list of the type of disabilities a university disability services coordinator may encounter in their work. Service providers, administrators, and faculty members should continue to educate themselves on disability issues in order to better serve their students (Atwood, 1998; Dalke, 1991).

Reasonable and Recommended Accommodations

There is limited research available that supports the validity and success of accommodations used in the higher education setting (McGuire, 1998). Section 504 requires that a university or college provide accommodations to a student with a disability as long as it does not cause undue hardship on the institution. The deployment of accommodations often requires collaboration between many offices in student affairs as well as academic affairs (Thomas, 2002). Despite the difficulty in providing such services, doing so is the most important and valuable aspect of a disability services office. Only through provision of reasonable accommodations can disabled students have equal access to education (Kroeger & Schuck, 1993).

Accommodations can vary among disabilities so it is important to assess the disability and research the commonly used accommodations; the ultimate goal is to recognize the student as an individual and assess his/her needs and create accommodations that are best suited for that particular student (Dalke, 1991). For example, in the case of *Rush v. National Board of Medical Examiners* (2003) in June 2003, a student with a learning disability asked for double time on the U.S. Medical Licensing Exam and was denied the request. When taken to the District Court of Texas, it was decided that the student, James Avery Rush IV, would be allowed the double time because limiting the time would not test the competency of the test taker, but instead, enhance the disability. Despite the differing needs of students with disabilities, there are common accommodations that are frequently used in the higher education setting. They include the following examples (McGuire, 1998).

Extra time on tests/exams

Selective seating

Recorded lectures

Note takers

Early registration

Oral exams

Scribes

The above list is not exhaustive of the accommodations available to students in higher education. Auxiliary services are also an option, but are sometimes not considered reasonable or are available at the student's expense. Some auxiliary aids may include, but are not limited to, an interpreter, service animal, adaptation of classroom equipment, large print, or Braille. Ultimately, with all of the aforementioned accommodations, there

are times in which a disability cannot be reasonably accommodated under any circumstance (Thomas, 2002). One illustration is from the case *Spychalsky v. Sullivan* (2004) where the plaintiff was not allowed to waive a required tax course in his law school curriculum. He claimed, due to difficulty with reading speed, spelling, proofreading and number manipulation (which had been confirmed through diagnostic psychological testing), he should be allowed this accommodation after receiving numerous others. The District Court of New York decided that, although his disabilities were documented, the request was not reasonable based on the isolated and minor nature of his disabilities.

Another common accommodation is the use of assistive technology. According to the Assistive Technology Act of 1988 (P.L. 105-394), assistive technology, often synonymous with Assistive Technology Devices, can be defined as, “any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities” (Sec. 3). The number of students with learning disabilities are increasing in higher education and the use of assistive technology will be very helpful in their academic support (Day & Edwards, 1996; Hecker, L., et. al., 2002). Common among assistive technology devices are closed captioning, tape recorders, voice reproduction software, and electronic text conversion scanners.

It may be difficult for disability service offices to afford or have the media space available to provide access to assistive software. Disability service offices can partner with college and university libraries to provide a media room with some of the most commonly used assistive software. This software includes JAWS for Windows,

Kurzweil 3,000 version 9, ZoomText, Texthelp Read and Write 7.1E Gold, Inspiration, and Dragon Naturally Speaking (Neal & Ehlert, 2006).

JAWS for windows. JAWS for Windows is manufactured by Freedom Scientific and is a screen reader that can interpret the information on the computer screen and read it aloud to the user. This technology is valuable for students with visual impairments or severe reading impairments, such as those often found in learning disabilities (Neal & Ehlert, 2006).

Kurzweil 3,000 version 9. Manufactured by Kurzweil Education Systems this product is very effective for the support of students with attention deficit disorder and learning disabilities (e.g. difficulty with reading, study skills, and test taking). Some of the features of the program include: optical character recognition, text-to-speech, study skills tools, word prediction, and additional online features. This software is also available for instructors to personalize test taking and assignments for students (Neal & Ehlert, 2006).

ZoomText. ZoomText is a CD-ROM package that can be used as a screen magnifier and screen reader. This CD-ROM comes with numerous features and is manufactured by AI Squared. ZoomText can enlarge any windows program by two through sixteen times the original size of the text. Another way a user could better read an area of the computer screen is through the zoom feature which allows the user to zoom in on one area of the screen. The program is also a screen reader which can orally read any document on the screen to the user as well as read information in which the cursor is hovering (Neal & Ehlert, 2006).

Texthelp read and write 7.1E gold. This software, quickly known as Texthelp, is a toolbar feature that allows a student to access multiple features to assist in reading difficulty. The features available in this program are text-to-speech, fact finder, pronunciation tutor, word predictor, and spell checker. This product also has a built in scanner which allows a student to scan documents in to the program to be read aloud. This product is also helpful with test taking and study skills and is manufactured by Texthelp Systems (Neal & Ehlert, 2006).

Inspiration. Manufactured by Inspiration Software, this assistive technology is a CD-ROM software package that is a visual learning tool used to help students organize their thoughts visually. This product uses various outlining and diagramming tools to help students understand and map complex material. For different learners it also has a feature that allows the outlines and diagrams to be read aloud, or the student can add his/her own speech to the documents (Neal & Ehlert, 2006).

Dragon naturally speaking. Dragon Naturally Speaking (DNS) is recognized as a leading product in voice recognition software. The software allows user to speak naturally in to a headset and dictate text in to a word processing program. The accuracy of the dictation increases as the software calibrates to the user's annunciation of words (Roberts & Stodden, 2005).

Summary

The formation of the first disability service office at the University of Illinois—Urbana-Champaign in 1954 (History of Disability Services at the University of Illinois, n.d.) marked the beginning of a new era of support for students with disabilities. With the

rich history of disability services in Illinois, it was expected that universities and colleges have well established disability service programs. With increased numbers of students attending universities and colleges (NCES), there is an increased need for the development of support services and awareness for students with disabilities (Dukes & Shaw, 1999). Some of the disabilities that are present and increasing in colleges and universities are hearing impairments, learning disabilities, Asperger Syndrome, Attention Deficit Disorder, intellectual disabilities, and chronic health disorders (Dalke, 1991; Thomas, 2002). The purpose of the present study was to assess what disabilities are present among students attending Illinois colleges and universities, and to identify accommodations and programs offered to students with disabilities to understand what Illinois universities and colleges are doing to better support the academic success of students with disabilities. Accommodations for students with disabilities can vary among disabilities and require collaboration between disability service staff and faculty members and is the key component in providing equal access to students with disabilities (McGuire, 1998; Kroeger & Schuck, 1993).

Chapter III

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to explore the scope and methods of providing disability services at higher education institutions in the state of Illinois. An increasing number of students with disabilities are entering higher education (Dukes & Shaw, 1999; Hong, Ivy, Humberto, & Ehrensberger, 2007; Rothstein, 2003; Thomas, 2000); therefore, there is a need for increased support and accommodations. The present study was intended to extend the amount of information available to prospective students, as well as university administrators, regarding the current level of support and accommodations offered at institutions in the state of Illinois. This study was also intended to identify current challenges and limitations faced by Illinois institutions as staff members worked to accommodate students who presented with disability documentation.

Methodology

The design of the present study was both qualitative and quantitative. Data were collected using an online survey tool created by the researcher via institutional membership to Zoomerang.com. The researcher-designed survey contained quantitative multiple choice and multiple answer questions, as well as qualitative open ended questions as described below. Follow-up qualitative telephone interviews were arranged with selected participants who volunteered to provide additional explanatory information augmenting survey results.

Research Study Participants

Participation in the present study was limited to 80 undergraduate universities and colleges out of the 175 possible institutions identified on the Illinois Board of Higher Education website (IBHE, 2009) for which the name of a specific person could be found who had responsibility for a disability services agency. Among the 80 institutions were undergraduate public universities (N=12), community colleges (N=34), independent not-for-profit universities/colleges (N=26), and independent for-profit universities/colleges (N=6). The researcher used links on the IBHE website to the universities and colleges and searched the institutional websites for the presence of a disability services officer. Names of administrators were identified from the university and college websites that were either directly responsible for the operation of the disability services office at his/her institution, or a principal administrator working within the office. A Microsoft Excel spreadsheet containing e-mail addresses of all such administrators working with disability services was generated with one contact identified for each institution.

Instrumentation

Zoomerang survey. The Zoomerang survey designed for the purposes of this study consisted of an eighteen item instrument which contained a series of multiple choice and open-ended questions (Appendix A). Survey items one through eight asked for demographic information to understand the size of the institution, the number of students identified and served with disabilities, the amount of staff at the institution, and the types of disabilities enrolled. Questions nine through eleven asked about the specific accommodations and services provided to students with disabilities in order to better

understand the provisions provided to students with disabilities. Questions twelve and thirteen asked about the education and outreach provided to faculty and staff members, while questions fifteen and sixteen asked about current challenges disability service office staff members faced and if the office was impacted by the current economic recession. Questions fourteen and eighteen asked participants to voluntarily share documents regarding their faculty/staff outreach and education programming, as well as volunteer to be contacted by the researcher for a telephone interview. Question seventeen asked the participant if there was anything additional they felt would be beneficial to the study.

Telephone interview protocol. The second instrument used for the purposes of the present study was a telephone interview protocol (Appendix F) that consisted of six questions based on a preliminary analysis of open-ended survey item responses designed to add richness to the results. The interview protocol items asked participants about challenges faced by the disability services office at his/her institution, outreach and education for faculty and staff, specific increases in the incidence of selected disabilities, coaching and mentoring programs used to support students with disabilities, negative/positive perceptions from faculty and staff, and specific assistive technology used by the disability services staff members.

Data Collection

Zoomerang survey. The disability services survey using the Zoomerang platform was distributed to 80 disability services administrators at institutions in Illinois via an e-mail that explained the justification for the survey, a link to the survey, and the statement

that completion of the survey included implied consent to participate in the research. The initial email (Appendix B) was sent on March 20, 2009, with an e-mail reminder (Appendix C) sent on April 19, 2009. Access to the survey was closed on May 17, 2009.

Telephone interview. After survey access was closed, the researcher contacted participants who volunteered for further contact via a telephone interview to collect additional qualitative data augmenting information provided via the survey. Prior to telephone interviews, each volunteer interviewee received a summary of themes extracted from a preliminary analysis of open-ended survey item responses (Appendix E) and an interview protocol based on the preliminary analysis (Appendix F). The researcher contacted three participants who volunteered to be interviewed by phone and recorded the conversation with a phone recording device. Telephone interviews were transcribed and sent to the participants for a member to check prior to the researcher coding the data for the purpose of the study

Data Analysis

Use of Zoomerang.com allowed the researcher to create a survey with diverse question styles, including open ended, multiple choice, multiple answers, and drop down menus. Raw data were exported from Zoomerang into Microsoft Excel for descriptive data analysis. The categorical nature of the data meant that only frequency and percentage of responses could be reported. Responses to open ended questions were coded into themes, and the major themes were then used to create a phone interview protocol used to seek more in-depth information.

Summary

The third chapter discussed the research methodology, survey construction, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter IV will report the results of the survey and follow-up phone interviews. Chapter V will discuss the conclusions of the study and the implications found from the data, as well as recommendations for professionals in the field of disability services and student affairs. The chapter will conclude with recommendations for further research based on findings from the present study.

Chapter IV

Results, Limitations, and Recommendations

The purpose of the present study was to explore the provision of disability services in institutions of higher education in the state of Illinois. More specifically, information was requested regarding the enrollment levels of students in disability services, specific disabilities institutions were encountering, and accommodations and/or support services being offered to students with disabilities. Thirty-five disability services participants responded to an eighteen item electronic survey and the results of survey items 2-10 are reported in the first part of this section as quantitative outcomes. Themes from the open ended questions (items 11-18) in the survey are reported in the second part of this section as survey themes. Thirteen of the participants volunteered to be contacted for phone interviews, and three phone interviews were conducted. Results of the phone interviews are reported in the third section of this chapter under qualitative results.

Quantitative Results

Demographics

Participants were asked about the type of institution they represented. Of the 35 participants (44 % return) who responded out of the 80 disability services professionals who were contacted, 13 were from community colleges, 11 were from private-non-profit universities or colleges, 7 were from public universities or colleges, 3 were from liberal arts colleges, and 1 represented a for-profit university.

Participants were asked to provide information regarding total student enrollment at their college or university (Item 3). The participants were also asked to provide

enrollment numbers for students classified as having a disability (Item 4). Since responses for both items originally requested participants to report within data ranges (e.g. 1,001-5,000), the median of the range intervals for both items was used to estimate the proportion of students seeking disability services versus the estimated number of students enrolled at participating Illinois institutions (Table 1). Regardless of institutional type, Illinois institutions of higher education typically reported that 5 to 7 percent of the student body was being served through their disability services operations.

Table 1

Estimated total enrollment of students at institutions and the number of students enrolled in disability services

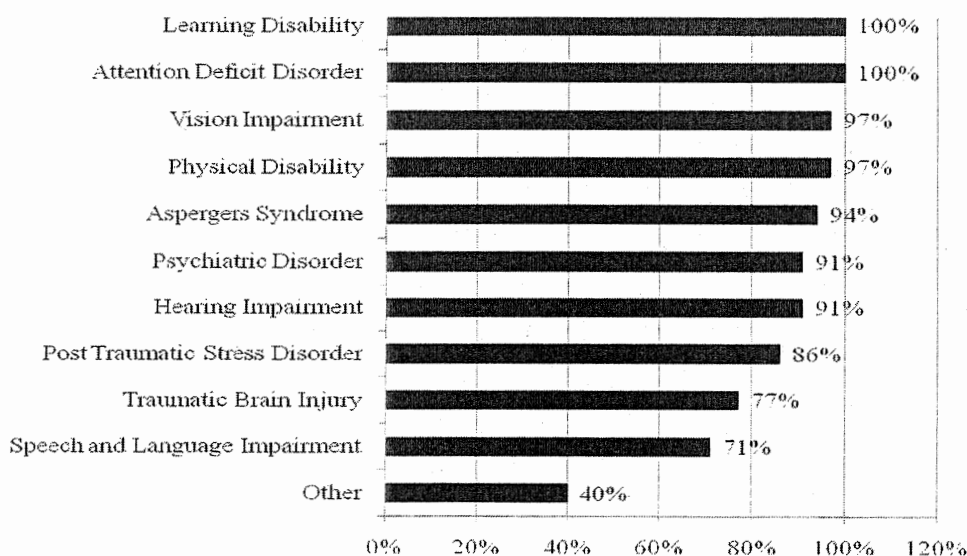
Median number of enrolled students eligible for disability services	Median <u>Institutional Enrollment Range</u>		
	2,500	7,500	More than 17,500
25	5%	0	0
75	6%	0	1%
125	5%	1%	0
175	7%	0	0
225	0	6%	0
275	0	0	4%
325	0	4%	5%
375	0	5%	2%
425	0	5%	2%
525	0	14%	3%
575	0	0	6%
More than 600	0	0	3%

Research Question One: What disabilities do students who enroll in colleges and universities in Illinois have?

Information was requested (item 8) regarding specific disabilities for which disability service offices provided services (Figure 1). The survey item was designed to have participants check all disabilities that applied to their institution, and report any disabilities not offered in the item. All insitutional participants reported working with students with learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder, while vision impairments and physical disabilities were the second most prevelant disabilities reported.

Figure 1

Percentage of reporting institutions enrolling students identified with a specific disability



Participants were also given the option to report disabilities they provided accommodations for that were not listed in the initial survey (item 8). Among these were

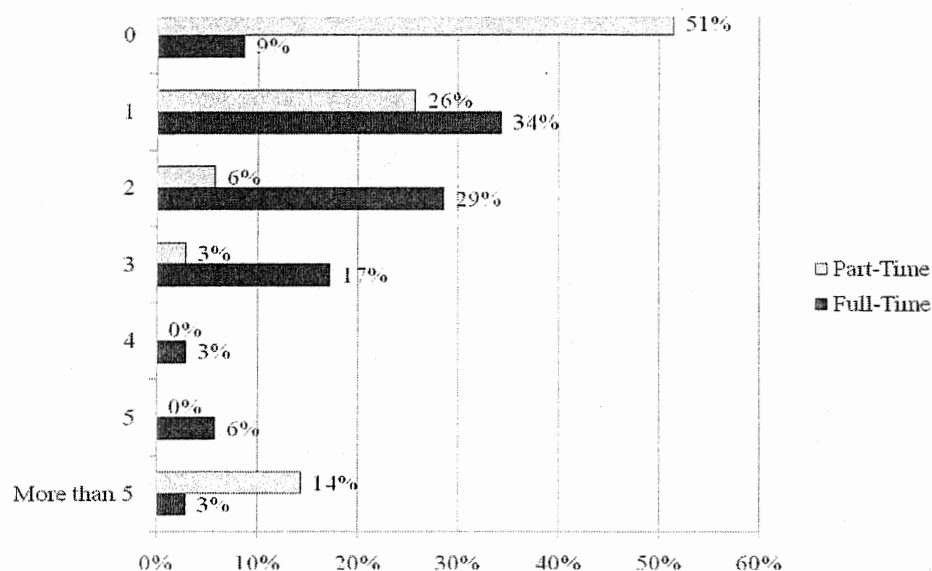
mobility impairments, chronic health impairments (seizures, fetal alcohol syndrome, and severe allergies), cognitive impairments, and temporary disabilities.

Research Question Two: What services are being offered to students with disabilities at colleges and universities in the state of Illinois?

The second research question asked what colleges and universities were doing to support and provide services to students with disabilities. The number of professional staff and student employees were described, other campus agencies that provided services supporting disabled students were listed, and special accommodations such as extra time on tests and use of assistive technology were named.

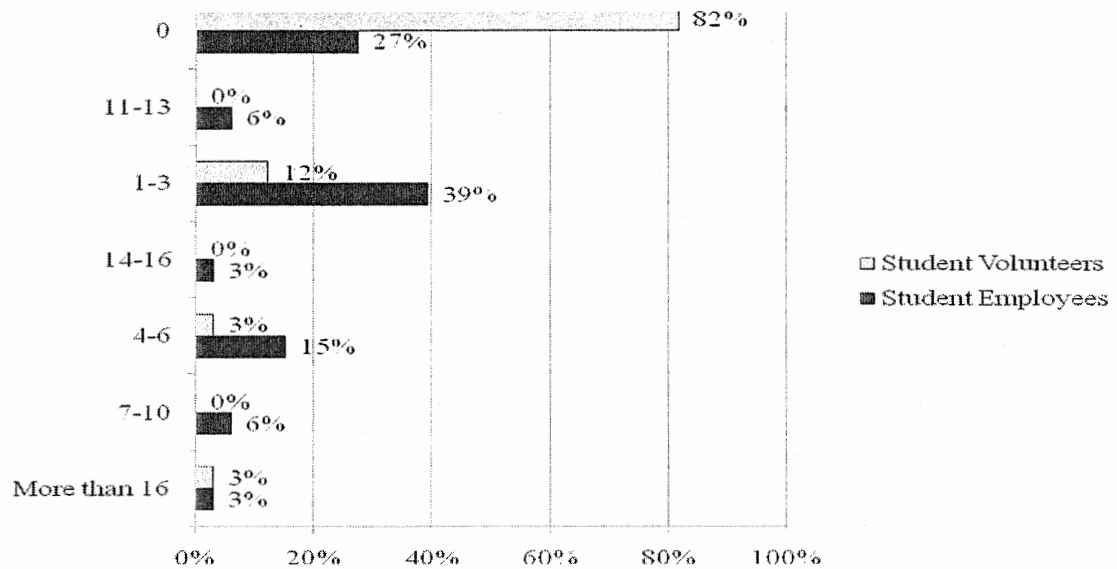
Staff available to students with disabilities.--Information was requested regarding the amount of professional staff and student staff working at colleges and universities to provide services to students with disabilities (Items 6 & 7). The majority, twelve institutions (34%), reported having only one full-time staff member serving in their disability service offices, and three institutions (9%) reported no full-time staff members in their disability service office (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Professional staff in disability service offices

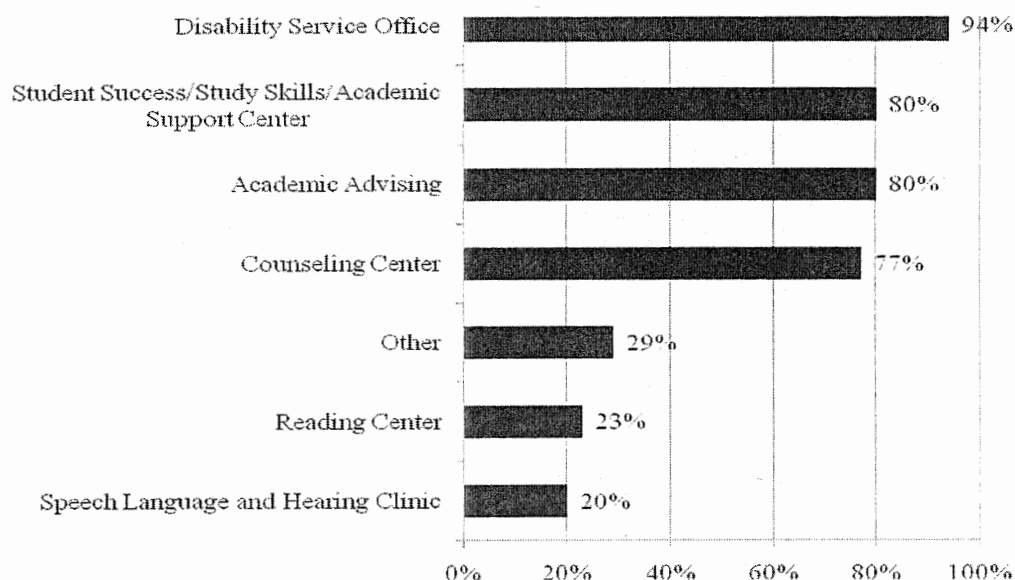
Thirty-three institutions reported employing student staff members as well as student volunteers (item 7). The majority of the colleges and universities, twenty-seven (82%), reported not using student volunteers within the disability service office. The majority of the colleges and universities reporting student employees, thirteen (39%), reported having three student employees working in the disability service office (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Student staff and volunteers in disability service offices

Offices offering services to students with disabilities. Participants were asked which offices at their colleges and universities provided services to students with disabilities. The survey item requesting the information was designed to allow participants to choose all offices that applied, and write-in any offices not mentioned (Item 9). Participants reported services were principally provided in Disability Services (94%), with Student Success/Study Skills/Academic Support Center and Academic Advising providing the second most support with 80%. Thirty-three out of thirty-five participants identified a disability services office (Figure 4).

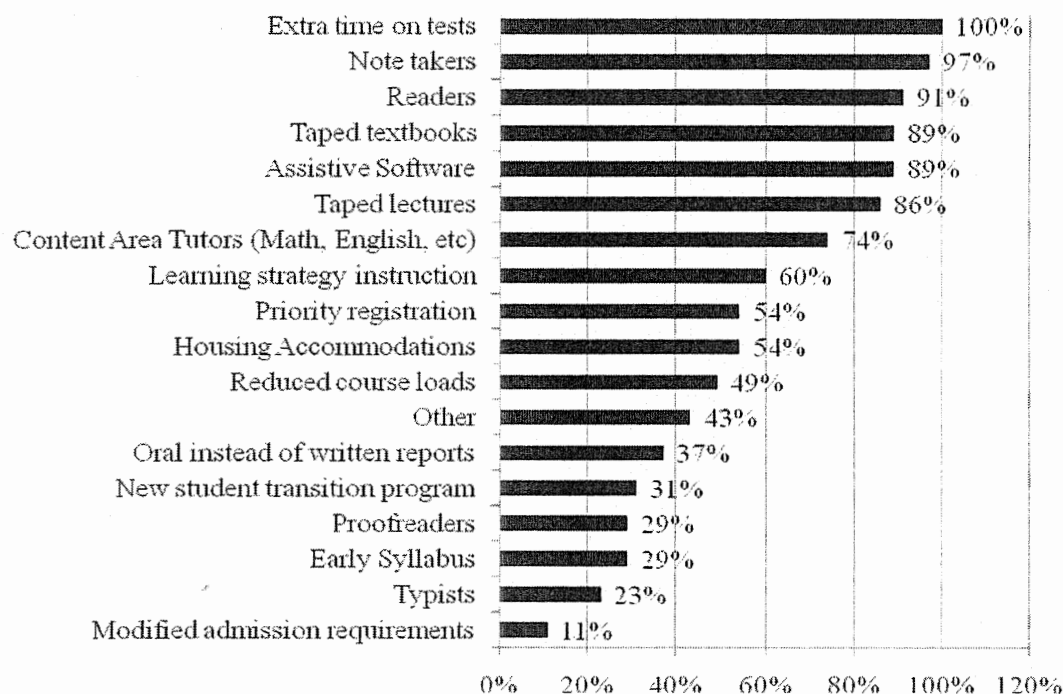
Figure 4

Offices providing services to student with disabilities

Participants were given the opportunity to report other offices that provided services to students with disabilities. Write-in responses included a Center for First Year Students, Equal Opportunity and Access, Tutoring Services, Library, Writing Center, Learning Center, and one institution reported that “all of our areas work with students with disabilities.”

Accommodations offered to students with disabilities. Participants were asked to provide information regarding the types of services offered to students with disabilities at their institution. A survey item was provided that allowed the participant to choose all the options that applied, and write-in any services not mentioned in the survey. All participants reported providing extra-time on tests for students with disabilities, and the second most frequent accommodation reported was using note takers (97%).

Figure 5

Accommodations offered in Illinois higher education

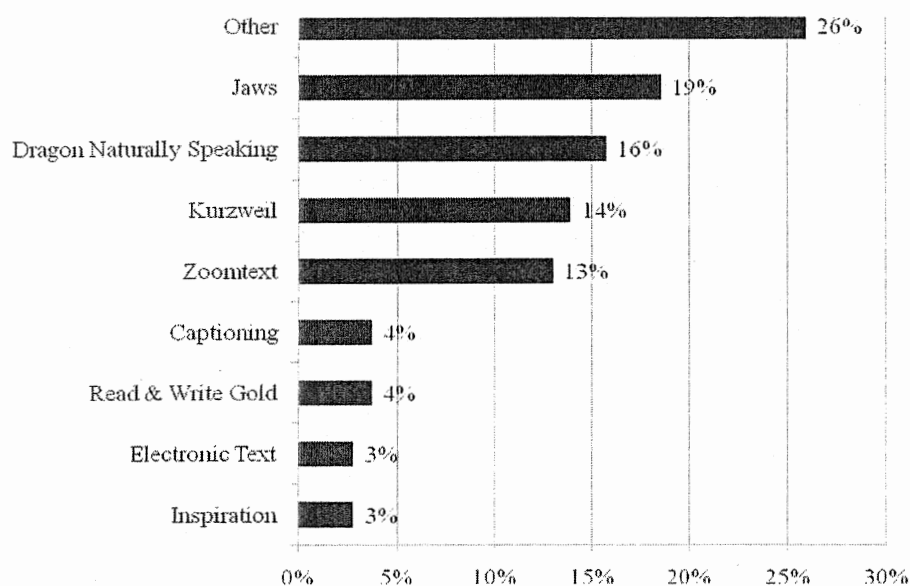
Participants were given the option to report accommodations that were not listed in the survey. Write-in responses included the use of scribes, Braille, American Sign Language interpreters, text conversion services, enlarged print, and test readers.

Assistive Technology. Participants were requested to provide information regarding the assistive technology their institution utilized. This question allowed participants to write-in the numerous types of assistive technology and the most prevalent technologies were identified from the written responses (Item 11). Out of 30 responses regarding the use of assistive technology, the 4 technologies that occurred most frequently were Jaws, Dragon Naturally Speaking, Kurzweil, and Zoomtext. There were 32 other software packages and instruments reported, ranging in frequencies of 1 to 3

(Figure 6). Out of 30 responses, 108 different instruments or software packages were mentioned; only 5 institutions did not report use any technology.

Figure 6

Assistive technology used by Illinois colleges and universities



Survey Themes

The survey requested open-ended answers to questions regarding research questions three and four. This section will report the responses to the open-ended items in the survey in order to address the research questions.

Research Question Three: What are the challenges and limitations Illinois colleges and universities experience in attempting to provide services to students with disabilities?

The survey requested information regarding the challenges disability service offices faced with providing a full range of services to students with disabilities (Item

15). Participants were also requested to provide information about the challenges the economic recession would place on providing a full range of services to students with disabilities (Item 16). The following themes emerged from a qualitative analysis of responses to the survey items requesting information about challenges.

Lack of Funding. The most common challenge that disability service providers reported was a lack of funding. Most all responses mentioned the word “funding” directly, but a few administrators elaborated on how the funding was specifically a challenge. One participant wrote, “...the budget is not keeping pace with paying for accommodations needed.” Another participant wrote that their challenge is “growing the budget with increasing numbers of students to help.” Although funding was noted as an overall issue in providing disability services, a majority of the participants reported that they did not expect the economic recession or budget cutbacks to significantly affect their ability to provide services since they are mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (item 16). Participants did report that professional development opportunities, as well as hiring of new personnel, would be cut back before accommodations. A smaller percentage of institutional respondents reported that the budget cutbacks may affect their ability to provide extra services. One respondent wrote that cutbacks “may force us to cut student work hours which would have a direct impact on how well we serve our student needs.” Other responding professionals reported difficulty providing sign language interpreters and adaptive equipment due to potential budget reduction.

Lack of disability service personnel. Limited number of staff was a problem among most of the participant schools, and many connected the lack of staff to minimal funding (Item 15). Another issue negatively impacting personnel was the multiple roles

staff members had to serve at their institutions, thereby limiting time that could be devoted specifically to disability services. One participant wrote, “Our DSS advisor is full-time, but has other duties beyond disability services; more could be done if the DSS advisor’s time was not pulled in various directions” (item 15). Another respondent reported that aside from working to support students with disabilities, they also served as academic advisors (item 15).

Increase in specific disabilities. Respondents reported they observed an increase in students with disabilities (item 15 & 16). Specific disabilities that respondents noted as increasing were learning disabilities, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Asperger’s Syndrome, autism, and psychiatric disabilities. One participant responded in the survey by saying (item 15), “We have adjusted our program to meet the changing population with a student coaching program”; another institution in the initial survey mentioned the need to increase student mentor training due to the rise in students with Asperger’s Syndrome. Participants reported that the enrollment of students in colleges and universities was rising, which was increasing the amount of students identified as having a disability. One institution attributed the student increase to the economic recession: “More students with disabilities are seeking guidance or education because of being laid off; money is tight.” Other respondents stated there was a general increase in students each semester: “Our enrollment[s], including those for students with disabilities are growing” and “we expect the number of students to increase who are requesting services”

Research Question Four: What education and outreach is provided to faculty and staff in Illinois regarding students with disabilities?

Participants were asked if the institution they were representing provided education and outreach to faculty and staff regarding students with disabilities. The majority (89%) of the participants surveyed reported some form of outreach or education that was provided to faculty and staff at their institution regarding disabilities or accommodations. The common methods were workshops, seminars, training sessions, one on one consultation, and professional development. One participant said (item 13),

We work with our faculty per individual basis so they can have a specific training for the student in their class. Someone from our office sits on the committees for new program development; this way we are considering needs of the students before a program is started.

Less common outreach methods used were the following: online training modules, new faculty orientation, handbooks, simulations, and disability awareness month activities.

Follow-up Telephone Interview Qualitative Results

Research Question One: What disabilities do students who enroll in colleges and universities in Illinois have?

Participants who volunteered for a phone interview were asked to elaborate on the specific disabilities they were seeing increases (interview item 3). One participant responded by saying,

I would say that our numbers in learning disabilities have increased over the years, but students that are LD are graduating from high school with an expectation now that there are services provided. The higher functioning students with learning disabilities can be successful at a community college or university with regular accommodations, and we have seen an increase in those students.

In a phone interview one participant mentioned the need to educate her staff on disability issues regarding veterans of war due to the reported increase in enrollment.

The participant said:

I have a special education background, and in the history of special education we were not serving students with learning disabilities in the public school system. Soldiers came back from serving in World War II and they were brain damaged and needed help acclimating and becoming functioning members of society. Students with learning disabilities have a lot of the same characteristics as the war veterans, and we used what we learned with the war veterans to better serve students with learning disabilities. Now we have people coming back from war again and we are looking at what the disabilities field has done for people to come up with a plan for what we are going to do to support the veterans when they return. So there is a full circle that has occurred in disability services by learning to support students with learning disabilities from what we did with war veterans, and now trying to support war veterans with what we have learned through supporting students with learning disabilities. We have been sending our personnel to all the workshops we can find regarding the topic of veterans

returning from war. We have a few veterans enrolled at our college right now, but we expect a steady stream of enrollment as they exit the military soon.

Other participants reported learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder as the most prevalent disabilities occurring in their colleges and universities. Autism, speech and hearing impairment, and intellectual disabilities were also mentioned as disabilities occurring and growing.

Research Question Two: What services are being offered to students with disabilities at colleges and universities in the state of Illinois?

Assistive technology. One participant told a story about a first generation college student who could barely read upon attending college.

We have been lucky with assistive technology because a donor provided us with a site license for the TextHelp Read and Write 7.1E Gold software which helps students read and write better. This site license allows us to download the software on every computer on campus. We are also working with an anonymous donor out west who will provide us with a site license that will allow every student on campus to download the software to their personal computer. We had a student who could barely read when first enrolled at our university. Through the use of TextHelp she was able to increase her reading and writing skills and graduated with a bachelor's degree in social work as a first generation college student in May 2009.

In a phone interview discussing the need for electronic text conversion one participant said,

With the increase in students who have learning disabilities, are blind, or physically disabled there is an increase in the need for e-text materials. The time, expertise, and equipment needed to provide e-text, as well as finding materials and ordering them, is a huge job that requires technical expertise.

Another participant in a phone interview mentioned the challenges to providing students with assistive technology:

There's a lot of great assistive technology available to support students such as JAWS, screen readers, Dragon Naturally Speaking, speech input, and Kurzweil reading tools, but it is expensive to buy. It is also expensive to hire personnel knowledgeable on how to install it and how to make it work. My impression is that schools have the minimum stuff set up, but they do not have a lot of equipment or software distributed around the campus, and furthermore do not have personnel who has assistive technology expertise.

Support Programs. Phone interview participants had the opportunity to share in-depth information about the programs their colleges or universities provided to support students with disabilities. One participant shared information regarding her colleges' "Supported College Transition" program:

The Supported College Transition program is for-credit, and the goal is to support the students in their transition through semesters one and two, so that by semester three they are successfully in academic program courses. The students learn about how to access accommodations, how to ask for accommodations, and what accommodations are available. The program also does a lot of career exploration

to assess if the career goal the student originally had in mind is realistic for his/her disability.

Another participant reported in a phone interview that once a month someone from the disability service office sits at a booth in the institution's cafeteria and provides students with material on the services offered through their office. One college is creating sections of the freshman seminar course that will be taught by a disabilities specialist and freshmen students with disabilities will be enrolled in the course. The instructor will serve as the student's advisor and case manager for the year, and they are required to meet with the instructor at least three times throughout the semester outside of class for progress checks and academic scheduling.

Research Question Three: What are the challenges and limitations Illinois colleges and universities experience in attempting to provide services to students with disabilities?

Participants were asked in phone interviews if they could elaborate on the biggest challenges they faced in providing provisions to students with disabilities (interview item 1). In a phone interview, one participant reported,

The biggest challenge in providing services is the increasing number of students with disabilities that are attending colleges. This increase can be seen everywhere, and the funding for disability service programs are not growing to keep up with the increase in students

Another participant reported the need for more staff if the numbers of students with disabilities continued to increase.

If an institution has one staff member responsible for the direct delivery of services as well as protecting the college within the guidelines of Section 504 and ADA it can probably be manageable with a case load of one hundred students with disabilities. If a single person office suddenly has a case load of three hundred students with disabilities one staff member cannot do justice or provide quality service to the students.

In a phone interview, one participant stated that a large issue at her institution was how to balance the amount of accommodations to give a student; the participant referred to it as a “balancing act between what is there for the student without them using the disability as a crutch.” She shared a story that referred to a student with dyslexia who had not used accommodations other than headphones during tests, but upon facing a difficult course tried to use extra time on a test when the accommodation had never before been necessary. In this case the student was denied extra time on the test.

In a few instances, participants reported that there was an apparent disconnect between the disability service office, faculty, and/or students. One phone interview participant referred to a specific scenario where there had to be collaboration to work with a difficult student:

Most often we have supportive staff, but there are times when an instructor is inflexible (though they do follow accommodations). A difficulty that has reoccurred is when a student with a psychiatric disability wants to push the envelope and wants to turn in late work beyond a stipulated time. Their requests

become unreasonable. Working on one case right now takes up considerable time in working between student, faculty, department heads, and the vice president.

One participant noted that in the health professions it was harder to make reasonable accommodations. Another participant noted that some faculty were not adopting universal design which makes it harder to address accessibility. Distance and online education were also mentioned as being challenges when providing disability services.

Research Question Four: What education and outreach is provided to faculty and staff in Illinois regarding students with disabilities?

Phone interview participants were asked to elaborate on any faculty or staff outreach provided by the college or university they represented (interview item 2). One phone interview participant reported that his university utilized an online program for faculty to access a class on their own time to learn more about disability services. The participant reported that the college had received better results allowing the class to be available online at any time instead of offering workshops or seminars. All of the phone interview participants reported one on one consultation with a faculty member or making brief presentations at departmental meetings based off of the needs of the department at that time.

One participant explained that the college she works for has created a new faculty roundtable that is mandatory for every new faculty member. At the two to three roundtables the faculty member learns about compliance, what is the responsibility of the faculty member, how they are going to be notified, and available accommodations. Once

faculty members begin to retire the college will have a full staff of faculty who has gone through the new faculty orientation on disability services.

Summary

A total of 80 participants were invited to participate in a survey and 35 (44%) responded to the 18 item quantitative and open-ended question survey. Of those 35 who responded to the survey, 3 participated in a phone interview. Results from the survey and phone interviews reported that there was an increase in students with disabilities who are enrolling in colleges and universities. Of those students who are attending the most prevalent disabilities were learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder. Colleges and universities were providing accommodations such as extra time on tests and assistive technology to the students through disability service offices. In some cases colleges and universities were going beyond mandated provisions and were providing programs that helped support students in their transition to higher education. Colleges and universities were also educating faculty and staff about disability services and rights through programs such as new faculty orientation. Some challenges that disability service providers were facing included lack of funding, lack of staff, and an increase in students with disabilities.

Chapter V

The purpose of this study was to explore the provision of disability services in institutions of higher education in the state of Illinois. More specifically, information was requested regarding the enrollment levels of students in disability services, specific disabilities institutions were encountering among the disabled students enrolled, and accommodations and/or support services being offered to students with disabilities.

Discussion of research questions

Research Question One: What disabilities do students who enroll in colleges and universities in Illinois have?

The first research question asked what disabilities do students who enroll in colleges and universities in Illinois have? The National Center for Educational Statistics and other literature substantiated an increase in enrollment of students with disabilities, which will continue with the advances in legislation making education more attainable to students with disabilities (Dukes & Shaw, 1999; Thomas, 2000).

Colleges and universities are facing a myriad of disabilities such as learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, vision impairment, hearing impairment, intellectual disabilities, chronic illness, and others (Dalke, 1991; Thomas 2002). Results from Illinois universities responding to the survey indicated that their largest growing groups of students with disabilities was learning disabilities, followed by ADHD, and then psychiatric disabilities. One phone interview participant said,

I would say that our numbers in learning disabilities have increased over the years, but students that are LD are graduating from high school with an expectation now that there are services provided. The higher functioning students with learning disabilities can be successful at a community college or university with regular accommodations, and we have seen an increase in those students.

Another institutional representative acknowledged the need to start preparing for war veterans who returned to universities and colleges with psychiatric disabilities. They were currently sending staff in that university's disability service office to workshops and educational opportunities on the topic.

Research Question Two: What services are being offered to students with disabilities at colleges and universities in the state of Illinois?

The second research question addressed what services were being offered to students with disabilities at colleges and universities in the state of Illinois. While section 504 mandates the provision of specific services, the present study also focused on what institutions were doing beyond legal mandates to provide increased support.

Survey respondents substantiated the 504 provision that basic accommodations such as note takers, extended time on tests, and quiet places to take tests were being offered to students with disabilities (McGuire, 1998). However, Illinois institutions were also providing additional support programs for students with disabilities. Examples included a college outreach program in which the college disability provider went to high schools and taught about the specific accommodations and support offered at the community college, a supported curriculum that focused on transitioning students with

intellectual disabilities in the first three semesters of their education career, college freshmen orientation courses taught by learning disability specialists who also coached the students academically outside of class, mentoring programs where students with disabilities met weekly with peer mentors to practice learning strategies, and internship programs for students with disabilities. Results suggested that the community colleges in Illinois were more focused on creating an inclusive environment for students with disabilities due to the high number of students with special needs who enrolled in community college rather than in four-year institutions.

A trend in the literature, as well as in participant responses, was the use of assistive technology. Results from the survey showed that many disability service providers were aware of the need and offered some assistive technology. However, the ability to provide extensive amounts of assistive technology to larger groups of students throughout campus required more funding to support the software licensing, as well as a professional staff member with the technical expertise capable of distributing such technology.

A phone interview participant reported that her college was lucky to have financial donors who could help her campus provide assistive technology software packages to students.

We have been lucky with assistive technology because a donor provided us with a site license for the TextHelp Read and Write 7.1E Gold software which helps students read and write better. This site license allows us to download the software on every computer on campus. We are also working with an anonymous

donor out west who will provide us with a site license that will allow every student on campus to download the software to their personal computer. We had a student who could barely read when first enrolled at our university. Through the use of TextHelp she was able to increase her reading and writing skills and graduated with a bachelor's degree in social work as a first generation college student in May 2009.

With many of the colleges and universities reporting that learning disabilities were increasing, there was a growing need reported for electronic text conversion and other assistive technology which could strain the disability service office staff in terms of having qualified personnel on staff who are trained in the specific technology. The reported increase in learning disabilities and need for assistive technology in this study's results was consistent with literature previously reviewed that advocates increased assistive technology to support the growing enrollment of students with learning disabilities (Day & Edwards, 1996).

Research Question Three: What are the challenges and limitations Illinois colleges and universities experience in attempting to provide services to students with disabilities?

The third research question evaluated the challenges and limitations that Illinois colleges and universities were experiencing in attempting to provide services to students with disabilities. The researcher anticipated that funding would be a problem for disability service providers, which was supported by survey results. Disability service providers reported increased enrollment in their institutions, creating an increased demand for technology, space, personnel, and interpreters. While needs continued to

escalate, the funding provided to disability service offices to accommodate the growing number of students was limited. Many of the respondents reported working with limited personnel and resources, making it harder to provide accommodations beyond what is required by compliance laws.

Research Question Four: What education and outreach is provided to faculty and staff in Illinois regarding students with disabilities?

Research question four asked participants to provide information regarding the outreach to faculty and staff at his/her college or university. The majority of the disability services professionals reported that workshops were utilized to educate faculty and staff about disability services. When speaking with participants in phone interviews their answers ranged from describing very organized outreach programs such as a new faculty orientation, to consultation with individual faculty members offered on request. The results showed that colleges and universities were providing outreach programs or were offering consultation to instructional faculty and staff members.

Limitations

Three primary limitations impacted the current study. The first limitation related to the method used for identification of participants. The researcher used the Illinois Board of Higher Education website to access the websites of undergraduate colleges and universities in the state of Illinois, which were difficult to navigate in many cases. From a reported 175 institutions of higher education in the state of Illinois, 80 surveys were sent via e-mail; the resulting response rate was 44% and consisted of 35 universities and colleges. While the response percentage was good, the original mailing was a small subset of the total potential population of 175 institutions.

The second limitation was in regard to the time of year the survey was distributed. The survey was sent to participants between March 18, 2009 and May 17, 2009. This time of year was approaching the conclusion of the academic year. Many among the target participants were supporting students at the end of the semester, conducting personnel recruitment and selection, completing end of year reports, and other academic year closing tasks. An earlier timeframe when participants were not as busy might have resulted in a better response rate.

The third limitation was a result of the method in which research participants were identified. The researcher identified participants by searching university websites to obtain contact information for administrators that appeared to be a part of the disability services office or delivery at colleges and universities. In this study there may have been e-mails sent to administrators who were not the direct link to the data the researcher was trying to collect, and therefore e-mails may have been dismissed or not forwarded through accurate channels.

Implications

In phone interviews with disability service staff, the impact of war veterans returning to higher education was discussed. One phone interview participant said that the beginnings of special education were a direct result of providing services to veterans of war. The University of Illinois – Urbana-Champaign created the first disability service office as a result of accommodating veterans returning from war and seeking education through the GI Bill (History of Disability Services at the University of Illinois, n.d.). The participant in the phone interview said she used to research what was done to support veterans of war in order to better support students with disabilities; now she is

researching what has been done with students with disabilities to better support returning veterans of war. The creation of disability services has come full circle and support services for veterans of war who have suffered from traumatic brain injuries, physical disabilities, and intellectual disabilities are valuable.

I have a special education background, and in the history of special education we were not serving students with learning disabilities in the public school system. Soldiers came back from serving in World War II and they were brain damaged and needed help acclimating and becoming functioning members of society. Students with learning disabilities have a lot of the same characteristics as the war veterans, and we used what we learned with the war veterans to better serve students with learning disabilities. Now we have people coming back from war again and we are looking at what the disabilities field has done for people to come up with a plan for what we are going to do to support the veterans when they return. So there is a full circle that has occurred in disability services by learning to support students with learning disabilities from what we did with war veterans, and now trying to support war veterans with what we have learned through supporting students with learning disabilities. We have been sending our personnel to all the workshops we can find regarding the topic of veterans returning from war. We have a few veterans enrolled at our college right now, but we expect a steady stream of enrollment as they exit the military soon.

Multiple survey participants noted that a challenge to providing services to students with disabilities is the limited number of staff available in the office.

Participants also noted the increasing need for assistive technology and its value when

working with students who have learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder. If colleges or universities could utilize assistive technology and software effectively the need for additional support staff could be reduced. The setback to this plan is that multiple colleges and university respondents wrote that funding was a challenge, and licenses for assistive software that could eliminate the need for more staff were expensive and potentially out of range for most disability service offices with small budgets. One participant said in a phone interview,

There's a lot of great assistive technology available to support students such as JAWS, screen readers, Dragon Naturally Speaking, speech input, and Kurzweil reading tools, but it is expensive to buy. It is also expensive to hire personnel knowledgeable on how to install it and how to make it work. My impression is that schools have the minimum stuff set up, but they do not have a lot of equipment or software distributed around the campus, and furthermore do not have personnel who has assistive technology expertise.

One community college in Illinois has had great success with the Texthelp software due to a private donor providing the campus with a site license so every student who needs the software can have it on their personal computer. Disability service office staff members could work on fundraising through alumni outreach, community organizations, and grant writing.

Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher found a trend in many Illinois colleges and universities providing programs of support, especially in the community colleges, for students with disabilities.

It would be helpful for future researchers to identify the programs at each college and university in Illinois and create a guide for parents and students to use when searching for a school to attend. This guide could provide the name and location of the institution and a description of the support programs provided beyond the legally mandated services. Such a publication would provide students with the opportunity to find colleges or universities that have support programs that are geared towards their specific disability.

Participants reported an increase in students with disabilities entering colleges and universities. Future researchers could do a longitudinal study to measure the growth of enrollment in disability service enrollments in proportion to the enrollment of students at colleges and universities. In order to obtain accurate proportions the researcher needs to obtain specific enrollment numbers instead of ranges, as was done in the present study (Table 1).

Many colleges and universities had cutting edge support programs with various instructional or support methods. Many of the programs had differing learning outcomes and goals for the program so it would also be recommended for researchers to assess different program types and identify best practices based off of theory and results collected from the programs.

Further research should be conducted to assess if the use of assistive technology could decrease the need for more personnel in the field of disability services. Further research could also be conducted to find out what assistive technology is being used by colleges and universities, and what disabilities the institutions are using the technology to assist the most. As one telephone respondent reflected,

There's a lot of great assistive technology available to support students such as JAWS, screen readers, Dragon Naturally Speaking, speech input, and Kurzweil reading tools, but it is expensive to buy. It is also expensive to hire personnel knowledgeable on how to install it and how to make it work. My impression is that schools have the minimum stuff set up, but they do not have a lot of equipment or software distributed around the campus, and furthermore do not have personnel who has assistive technology expertise.

Since there is an expected increase in students entering colleges and universities who are veterans of war further research is recommended in the area of common disabilities as a result of war experience and the existing or possible support programs colleges and universities could utilize to support veteran's transition into higher education.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to research the current state of affairs in disability service provisions in Illinois Higher Education. The researcher was interested in discovering if the trends in national literature were the same trends found in the state of Illinois, and if Illinois disability service offices were keeping up with the trends. Results of this study found that many of the disability service offices reported experiencing similar issues to those found in the literature. Some of the trends included increased enrollment of students with disabilities, particularly students with learning disabilities and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder; an increase in support programs to accommodate the growing number of students with disabilities; and an increased need for

assistive technology. It was found that, despite the need for larger budgets and more resources, many of the Illinois colleges and universities were meeting the basic needs of students with disabilities, and in many cases, going beyond the required services to provide support programs that coached, mentored, and transitioned students with disabilities in the higher education setting. Illinois, home to the first disability service office in the nation, has maintained a national standard by creating new programs that are innovative and appear to be accommodating the needs of its disabled students. The challenge is now to maintain that leadership in providing disability services in the face of a growing student clientele.

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Appendix A

Illinois Higher Education Disability Services Survey

1. Please include the name of the institution you are representing (this information will not be included in the study).

0 Responses

2. Please select the type of institution you are representing.

Public University/College	0	0%
Private Non-Profit University/College	0	0%
For-Profit University/College	0	0%
Liberal Arts College	0	0%
Community College	0	0%
Technical/Trade School	0	0%
Other, please specify	0	0%
Total	0	0%

3. What is the total enrollment of your institution?

Less than 1,000	0	0%
1,000-5,000	0	0%
5,000-10,000	0	0%
10,000-25,000	0	0%
More than 25,000	0	0%
Total	0	0%

4. What is the total number of students identified as having a disability by your institution's Disability Services?

0-50	0	0%
51-100	0	0%
101-150	0	0%
151-200	0	0%
201-250	0	0%
251-300	0	0%
301-350	0	0%
351-400	0	0%
401-450	0	0%
451-500	0	0%
501-550	0	0%
551-600	0	0%
601-650	0	0%
651-700	0	0%
More than 700	0	0%
Total	0	0%

5. What is the total number of students receiving services through your institution's Disability Services Office?

0-25	0	0%
26-50	0	0%
51-75	0	0%
76-100	0	0%
101-125	0	0%
126-150	0	0%
151-175	0	0%
176-200	0	0%
201-225	0	0%
226-250	0	0%
251-275	0	0%
276-300	0	0%
More than 300	0	0%
Total	0	0%

6. What is the total number of professional staff that work in the disability service office at your institution?

0 Responses

7. What is the total number of student staff that work in the disability service office at your institution?

0 Responses

8. For what disabilities does the Disability Service Office at your institution provide services (select all that apply)?

Asperger's Syndrome	0	0%
Attention Deficit Disorder	0	0%
Hearing Impairment	0	0%
Learning Disability	0	0%
Physical Disability	0	0%
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder	0	0%
Psychiatric Disability	0	0%
Speech and Language Impairment	0	0%
Traumatic Brain Injury	0	0%
Vision Impairment	0	0%
Other, please specify	0	0%

9. Which offices offer services to students with disabilities at your institution (please check all that apply)?

Academic Advising	0	0%
Counseling Center	0	0%
Disability Service Office	0	0%
Reading Center	0	0%
Speech Language Hearing Clinic	0	0%
Student Success/Study Skills/Academic Support Center	0	0%
Other, please specify	0	0%

10. What types of services are offered to students with disabilities at your institution (please select all that apply)?

Assistive Software	0	0%
Content area tutors (Math, English, Etc)	0	0%
Early Syllabus	0	0%
Extra time on tests	0	0%
Housing accommodations	0	0%
Learning strategy instruction	0	0%
Modified admission requirements	0	0%
New student transition program	0	0%
Note takers	0	0%
Oral instead of written reports	0	0%
Priority registration	0	0%
Proofreaders	0	0%
Readers	0	0%
Reduced Course Load	0	0%
Taped lectures	0	0%
Taped textbooks	0	0%
Typists	0	0%
Other, please specify	0	0%

11. If your institution utilizes assistive technology could you please identify the software/resources?

0 Responses

12. Does your institution offer outreach and/or education to faculty and administration in other departments on campus regarding students with disabilities?

Yes	0	0%
No	0	0%
Total	0	0%

13. If you answered yes to question number 11 please explain the outreach/education programming your institution provides.

0 Responses

14. If your institution has written documentation of the outreach services or education programming and you would be willing to share this information with the researcher please provide the contact information below (if not, leave blank). Information can also be sent to cdquinn2@eiu.edu or to 1521 4th Street, Charleston, IL 61920 attention C. Quinn.

0 Responses

15. What are the challenges your institution faces with regards to disability services and providing a full range of services to students with disabilities?

0 Responses

16. In what ways do you anticipate current economic conditions will impact the provision of disability services at your institution?

0 Responses

17. Is there anything else you would like to share that you feel would be beneficial to this study that focuses on the provision of disability services in higher education institutions?

0 Responses

18. If you consent to the researcher contacting you in the future to ask further questions regarding the demographics and/or services offered to students with disabilities at your institution please enter your contact information below.

0 Responses

Appendix B

E-mail Sent Requesting Participation

Dear Administrator,

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Courtney Quinn, college student affairs master's student in the *Department of Counseling and Student Development* at Eastern Illinois University, under the direction of Dr. Charles G. Eberly, Professor. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

You have been asked to participate in this study because you have been identified as having direct involvement with the Disability Services Operation at your institution and are assumed to have knowledge regarding the Disability Service Operation.

By clicking the following link you will gain access to the survey:

<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB228UCJ82KP2>

The following will provide you with further information regarding the survey and research:

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The purpose of this study is to identify the current demographics of Disability Support Services across the state of Illinois, and to identify the scope of services provided by the aforementioned offices.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study you will be asked to:

Complete a fifteen question electronic survey generated via Zoomerang.com that asks questions pertaining to the demographics of the institution in which you are employed, as well as questions regarding the services the institution provides to students with disabilities. You will be asked permission at the end of the survey to be contacted for further questions at a later time regarding the services offered and demographics at your institution of employment.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no known risks to this study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR SOCIETY

Information will be collected from universities and colleges throughout the state of Illinois between February and March 2009. The research will then be analyzed and reported via a Master's Thesis at Eastern Illinois University. The thesis will be held at the Eastern Illinois University library with permission to be reprinted for the use of furthering research in the field or serving as a manuscript that can be a resource to Illinois students and administrators. The research could also be used as a design for other Masters students in other states to deploy a similar audit.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and can be identified with you will remain confidential. Mention of institutions will only be identified through demographics such as private, public, community college, for-profit, etc. Institutional names or other material unique to your institution that would cause it to be identified will not be used unless given permission via you or your institution.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Participation in this research study is voluntary, and if you volunteer to be in this study you may withdraw yourself at any time without consequence of any kind. You may also choose to abstain from answering any question on the survey without penalty.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATOR

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact Courtney Quinn Day: 217-581-2579, Evening: 217-581-2478, EIU, Associate Resident Director, Pemberton Hall, 1521 4th Street, cdquinn2@eiu.edu, and / or Dr. Charles G. Eberly, 217-581-7235, cgeberly@eiu.edu.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatments of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board

Eastern Illinois University

600 Lincoln Ave.

Charleston, IL 61920

Telephone: 217-581-8576

E-mail: eiurb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions or concerns you have about your rights regarding this research study with a member of the Institutional Review Board.

Appendix C

E-mail Reminder Asking for Participation

Dear Administrator,

This is a friendly reminder that you were recently invited to participate in a research study conducted by Courtney Quinn, college student affairs masters' student in the *Department of Counseling and Student Development* at Eastern Illinois University, under the direction of Dr. Charles G. Eberly, Professor. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

You have been asked to participate in this study because you have been identified as having direct involvement with the Disability Services Operation at your institution and are assumed to have knowledge regarding the Disability Service Operation.

If you could please take a moment to complete the survey it would be greatly appreciated and beneficial to the success of the study. Please follow the link below to complete the survey.

<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB228UCJ82KP2>

Sincerely,

Courtney Quinn, Principal Investigator

Appendix D

E-mail Sent Requesting Participation in Phone Interview

Dear [Administrator],

I am currently writing my master's thesis which focuses on accommodations and provisions within the higher education disability services community in Illinois. I sent an electronic survey in the past two months and I appreciate your support in completing the survey.

In the survey I asked if you would be willing for me to contact you about further details involving the survey and you entered your information. I am attaching a PDF document with some of the initial themes I found in my open ended questions, which I am sure will not be a surprise. I am also attaching a word document with an interview protocol that I would like to ask you in order to better explore some of these themes.

If you are willing to spend around fifteen minutes on the phone with me to discuss the questions I have attached I would appreciate you letting me know what would be most convenient for you.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Courtney Quinn

217-581-2579

cdquinn2@eiu.edu

Appendix E

Themes Attached to Request for Interview E-mail

Courtney Quinn Master's Thesis; Thesis Advisor: Dr. Charles Eberly; Eastern Illinois University

Illinois Higher Education Disability Services Survey (3.18.09-5.17.09)

Themes found in Survey's Open-ended Questions

Enrollment increase

Participants answered on multiple occasions, when asked different questions, that the enrollment of students is increasing which is increasing the enrollment of students with disabilities. One institution in response to the current economic recession said, "More students with disabilities are seeking guidance or education because of being laid off; money is tight." Other responses stated that there is a general increase in students each semester. There were also trends that there is an increase in students with Asperger's Syndrome, autism, and psychiatric disabilities than before. One institution responded to the increase in students by saying, "We have adjusted our program to meet the changing population with a student coaching program," while another institution mentioned the need to increase student mentor training due to the rise in students with Asperger's Syndrome.

Funding

The most common challenge that disability service providers reported was a lack of funding. Most all responses mentioned the word "funding" exactly, but a few administrators elaborated on how the funding was specifically a challenge. One participant said, "...the budget is not keeping pace with paying for accommodations

needed,” while another participant said a challenge is “growing the budget with increasing number of students to help.” Although funding has been noted as an overall issue in providing disability services, a majority of the participants reported that they did not expect the economic recession or budget cutbacks to significantly affect their ability to provide provisions since it is mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Participants did report that professional development opportunities as well as hiring of new personnel would be cutback before accommodations. A smaller percentage of institutions reported that the budget cutbacks may affect their ability to provide extra services. One institution said the cutbacks “may force us to cut student work hours which would have a direct impact on how well we serve our students needs.” Other institutions reported difficulty providing sign language interpreters and adaptive equipment due to potential budget cutbacks.

Lack of Staff

Limited number of staff was a problem among most of the participants, and many correlated the lack of staff back to the lack of funding. Another issue identified with the limited staff was staffs that were stretched between multiple roles and were limited in time that could be given specifically to disability services. One participant said “DSS advisor is [full-time], but has other duties beyond disability services; more could be done if time was not pulled in various directions.” Another school reported that aside from working to support students with disabilities they are also academic advisors.

Lack of resources

Institutions commonly reported an overall need for more resources. Specific resources mentioned was the need for more physical workspace, more sign language interpreters, more assistive technology, more accessible facilities, and assisting students with social aspects of their disabilities.

Faculty issues and/or support

Participants reported on a few occasions that there was an apparent disconnect between the disability service office, faculty, and/or students. One participant referred to a specific scenario where there has to be across the board collaboration to work with a difficult student: “Most often we have supportive staff, but there are times than in instructor is inflexible (though they do follow accommodations). A difficulty that has reoccurred is when a student with a psychiatric disability wants to push the envelope and wants to turn in late work beyond a stipulated time. Their requests become unreasonable. Working on one case right now takes up considerable time in working between student, faculty, department heads, vice president.” Other issues were more programmatic, such as one participant noted that the health profession is harder to make reasonable accommodations; another participant noted that some faculty are not adopting universal design which makes it harder to address accessibility. Distance and online education were mentioned as being another challenge to providing disability services.

Accommodations not noted in Survey

Participants were given the option to report accommodations that were not listed in the survey that their institution utilizes. The following were listed as accommodations

not listed, but used at some of the institutions: scribes, Braille, American Sign Language Interpreters, text conversion services, enlarged print, and test readers.

Disabilities not noted in survey

Participants were also given the option to report disabilities they provide accommodations for that were not listed in the survey and the following were reported: mobility impairments, chronic health impairments (seizures, fetal alcohol syndrome, severe allergies, etc), cognitive impairments, and temporary disabilities.

Outreach/Education

The majority of the institutions surveyed had some form of outreach or education that they provided to faculty and staff at their institution regarding disabilities or accommodations. Most commonly used were workshops, seminars, training sessions, one on one consultation, and professional development. One participant said, "We work with our faculty per individual basis so they can have a specific training for the student in their class. Someone from our office sits on the committees for new program development, this way we are considering needs of the students before a program is started." Other outreach methods that are not as common are the following: Online training modules, new faculty orientation, handbooks, simulations, and disability awareness month activities.

Assistive Technology

Out of 30 responses regarding the use of assistive technology 4 technologies were the most prevalent. Jaws was reported 20 times, Dragon Naturally Speaking 17 times,

Kurzweil 15 times, and Zoomtext 14 times. There were 32 other software packages and instruments reported ranging in frequencies of 1 to 3. There appears to be a strong preference towards specific software packages for assistive technology purposes.

Overwhelmingly, out of 30 responses 112 different instruments or software packages were mentioned, and only 5 institutions did not report technology. This is evidence that there is a strong effort to assist students through more advanced means such as assistive technology.

Appendix F

Phone Interview Protocol

1. Could you please elaborate on what you find are the biggest challenges in providing services to students with disabilities at your institution? For example, if funding is an issue in what area do you specifically need more funding (assistive technology, personnel, etc)?
2. Could you please elaborate on your outreach and/or education to faculty and staff at your university regarding students with disabilities? For example, if you provide workshops what do they entail, who presents them, how often are they offered, who is in attendance, etc.
3. Are you identifying an increase in specific disabilities among new students, or has there been a general increase in all disabilities?
4. Does your institution provide any coaching or mentoring programs to support students academically or socially? If so, please tell me more about the project management and implementation of the program?
5. Have you witnessed any negative or positive perceptions/attitudes between faculty and the initiatives in your office to support students with disabilities?
6. Is there a specific reason why your department uses the assistive technology it uses if any at all? For example is it more cost efficient to use one versus or another, does one work for a wider range of disabilities, etc?