



Access to Quality Higher Education: A Demonstration Project

Courtney V. Vierstra

Phillip D. Rumrill

Kent State University



Trends in Higher Education and Disability

- Enrollment rates triple since 1978
- 7% of American student body have documented disability
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
- Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act
- Services and supports rapidly expanding
- Increased federal funding
- Increased number of employees with disabilities

Postsecondary Students with Disabilities...



- Have slightly lower academic performance than non-disabled students
- Have higher drop out rates
- Take longer to complete their degrees
- Report fewer friends on campus and less social capital
- Believe that faculty are accepting of their needs but lack specific knowledge of disability issues

Concerns of Students with Disabilities



- Funding
- Independent living
- Social relationships
- Choosing a major
- Housing
- Transportation
- Access to technology
- Access to health care
- Asking for help
- Supports on campus
- Internship/Co-op
- Reactions of other students
- Reactions of instructors
- Physical accessibility
- Employment after graduation



Employment and a College Education

- College graduates have \$1,000,000 greater lifetime earning potential than those who never attended college
- College graduate with a disability is 4-6 times more likely to be employed than a person with a disability who never attended college
- College graduates with disabilities are 8 to 12 times more likely to be unemployed than non-disabled college graduates



Faculty Concerns

- Information regarding disabling conditions
- Disability etiquette
- Responsibility to provide accommodations
- Equity of accommodations
- Academic integrity/adherence to standards
- Students with psychiatric disabilities
- Academic freedom vs. civil rights
- Resources – on and off campus
- Legal liability
- Technical assistance/use of technology



Faculty Members Regarding Students with Disabilities

- Who are they and what are their needs?
- Technical assistance, services, and resources?
- Disability issues in a broader societal context?



Overview of the Access to Quality Higher Education Project

- Faculty Mentoring Program
- Distinguished Lecture Series on Universal Design for Instruction
- Faculty Professional Development Institute
- Faculty Learning Community on Disability Issues
- Classroom Accommodation Network



Faculty Mentoring Program

- College students with disabilities are paired with university faculty in their area of concentration for mutually beneficial discussion
- Two semi-structured meetings provide an introduction to the program and its purpose



Faculty Mentoring Program

Topics

- Academic advisement
- Career exploration and planning
- Professional networking
- Classroom accommodations
- Disability resources on and off campus
- Internship/Externship/Co-op opportunities



Faculty Mentoring Program Topics (cont.)

- Mutual research and/or practical interests
- Professional associations, especially student organizations
- Graduate school
- Job after graduation
- Other areas of interest or concern



Distinguished Lecture Series: Universal Design for Instruction (UDI)

- Bring one national leader in UDI to the KSU campus each year
- One day workshop for 75-100 faculty members, administrators, student disability service staff members, and students with disabilities
- Apply UDI principles to specific course content and assignments



Professional Development Institute (PDI)

- Conducted for one week during the summer with 20 university faculty
- Invited speakers lead open discussions on the following issues:



PDI Topics

- Faculty and student perspectives
- Our (KSU) population
- Student disability services and accommodation process
- Vignettes of issues in higher education
- Broad issues of disability and culture
- Abilities and accommodations
- Universal design
- Effective teaching



PDI Topics (cont.)

- Media portrayals of people with disabilities
- Panel of effective and experienced faculty
- Evolution of disability rights movement
- Legal issues and the ADA
- Technology



Faculty Learning Community (FLC) on Disability Issues

- Improve faculty awareness of how to facilitate a positive transition to higher education for students with disabilities
- Increase faculty members' self-efficacy in implementing classroom accommodations and using assistive technology
- Equip faculty members with a repertoire of Universal Design for Instruction techniques
- Involve faculty members in enhancing career preparation of students with disabilities while they are in school



Classroom Accommodation Network (CAN)

- Address: www.classaccommodation.org
- Telephone and web-based service
- Respond to queries of higher education faculty and administrators regarding students with disabilities
- Provide information and referrals to appropriate services
- Deliver technical assistance



CAN (cont.)

- “Follow-up” contacts
- Visit classes to recommend accommodations and assess technology needs
- Create and maintain extensive database regarding pertinent information