



RESEARCH FINDINGS BRIEF

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Overview of RRTC's Purpose

The purpose of the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) is to conduct a strategic program of research, training, technical assistance, and information dissemination focused upon educational supports that increase access and improve outcomes for persons with disabilities in postsecondary education programs and subsequently, in the labor force. Addressing this priority, the primary goals of the RRTC are as follows: 1) To identify the nature and range of educational supports 2) To identify new technologies that improve postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities; 3) To identify effective supports and models of support delivery that contribute to improved outcomes for students with disabilities; 4) To investigate methods by which the supports in postsecondary programs can be extended to the employment environment, including students with severe disabilities; and 5) To provide training, technical assistance and information to educational support personnel, public and private rehabilitation personnel, career placement specialist, and students with disabilities concerning the effectiveness of specific educational supports and models of delivery in improving postsecondary educational and career outcomes of the people with disabilities.

National Survey: Assistive Technology Supports

AUDIENCE Disability Support Coordinators, Career Placement Specialists, Faculty Instructors, Teaching Assistants, Students with Disabilities, Administrators, Related Agencies (Vocational Rehabilitation), Employers, Other Researchers and Policy-makers (Federal and State Agencies).

ISSUE

There is scant literature available regarding current practices of providing educational supports to students with disabilities at the postsecondary level. A national survey was conducted to determine the extent to which educational supports are offered. Information shared in this Brief contributes to one

of the four priority areas as identified in the Strategic Program of Research for the RRTC on Postsecondary Educational Supports. The survey and the sub-analyses will provide a comprehensive baseline of data to address issues concerning educational support provision.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the availability and capacity to offer various forms of assistive technology for students with disabilities in postsecondary educational programs?

METHOD

A survey instrument was developed and distributed to a national sample of more than 1500 disability support coordinators. More than 650 respondents completed the survey providing a national profile of educational support provision. Respondents within the sample were profiled as follows: 422 were from public schools vs. 193 from private schools; 246 were from two-year or less than two-year schools vs. 369 from four-year schools.

Survey participants were asked:

“What is the capacity of your institution to offer the following supports or accommodations as needed by students with disabilities?”

- 0 = not offered
- 1 = offered less than 25% of time
- 2 = offered 25-50% of time
- 3 = offered 51-75% of time
- 4 = offered more than 75% of time

Question #1	Percentages: based on 650 respondents				
	0	1	2	3	4
Real-time captioning	71	9	3	3	15
AT evaluations for students	59	14	7	5	16
Skills training on equipment/software	29	16	14	11	30
Equipment or software provision	35	16	12	12	26
AT supports across campus	25	12	14	15	35

Does your institution offer:

Distance learning for students who are deaf or blind --	NO	YES
(1) Accessible library services?.....	52%	48%
(2) Accessible on-line student services (e.g., registration) . . .	67	33
(3) Accessible TV courses (e.g., captioning, descriptive narration)	80	20
(4) Accessible Web-based courseware?	66	34

KEY FINDINGS

- Overall, Assistive Technology (AT) offerings for students with disabilities are not readily available. Public schools offer AT supports across campus (e.g., library, computer lab), more readily than private schools.
- When comparing supports offered at two-year and four-year schools, two-year schools offer far more technology support for students with disabilities. Educational supports such as learning centers, equipment or software provision, and skills training on equipment/software, are more readily available at two-year schools than four-year schools.

IMPLICATIONS

- The needs of persons with deafness and blindness to access on-line instrumental services should be further studied.
- Private schools should be made aware of the major deficits in their programs regarding access to technology for students with disabilities.
- The provision of AT within two-year schools could be demonstrated as a model for all postsecondary institutions to follow.

For further information on this Brief or for an Executive Summary/Full Report on the National Survey of Educational Supports Provision, please contact Tom Harding at (808) 956 – 5344, tharding1@yahoo.com, or go to the Center website www.rrtc.hawaii.edu.

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