



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: Public Postsecondary Schools vs. Private Postsecondary Schools

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

ISSUE

There is scant literature regarding the current practices of offering educational supports to students with disabilities at the postsecondary level. A national survey was conducted which provides important information for researchers seeking to ascertain the current status of educational support offerings in postsecondary programs. 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 overall survey data and various sub-analyses will provide a comprehensive data base to address issues concerning educational support provision in postsecondary education.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How do private postsecondary schools compare to public postsecondary schools when offering educational supports and accommodations to students with disabilities?

What are the strengths and weaknesses public and private postsecondary schools bring to the provision of educational supports for students with

disabilities, and what can be learned from each of these program types?

METHOD

A comprehensive survey instrument was developed and distributed to a national sample of more than 1500 disability support coordinators in postsecondary institutions. More than 650 respondents completed the survey providing a profile of program characteristics and educational support offerings for both public and private postsecondary settings. The respondents 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.

Chi-square test was performed for questions with categorical data (e.g., yes or no), to obtain Pearson's Chi-square values. One-way ANOVA analysis was performed for questions with numerical or ordered data (e.g., the rating scale of 1, 2, 3, and 4) and questions composed of several sub-questions, to compare the average means on each specific question between the two groups.

KEY FINDINGS

Overall

Public schools offered more types and a greater range of supports to students with disabilities than

private schools across the support areas surveyed. offering of assistive technology supports, and were also better connected with community resources, though structured outreach programs. Further public institutions placed more emphasis on monitoring the quality and effectiveness of disability support services, and more often had in place written policies regarding support provision for students with disabilities on campus.

Significant Findings

The survey studied the capacity of postsecondary institutions to offer a wide range of supports to students with disabilities. Public schools outperformed private schools for 17 out of 36 different types of supports listed as offered.

- Public schools were rated significantly higher than private schools when offering Assistive Technology supports to students with disabilities.
- Public schools outperformed private schools in the following areas of support offerings for students with disabilities:
 - 1b: Priority registration / course scheduling
 - 1d: Testing accommodations
 - 1e: Disability-specific scholarships
 - 1f: Disability-specific assessment / evaluation
 - 1i: Learning center laboratory services
 - 1k: Developmental / remedial instruction
 - 1n: Interpreter / translator services
 - 1o: Notetakers / scribes / readers

Public institutions performed better in the

- 1q: Real-time captioning services
- 1t: Career / vocational assessment and counseling
- 1x: Facilitate transfer of supports to work setting
- Public schools performed significantly higher than private schools when offering overall distance-learning access and support.
- Public schools offered screening services for students with disabilities more often than private schools. Majority of the survey respondents (disability support offices) (63%) didn't offer a screening service to determine whether the student has a specific learning disability previously undiagnosed.
- Public institutions rated significantly higher than private schools in the offering of community outreach programs or linkages for students with disabilities.
- Public institutions rated significantly higher than private schools when offering supports such as providing materials and training activities to aid faculty / staff in working with and teaching students with disabilities.
- Public institutions rated significantly higher than private schools when focusing upon the conduct of program evaluation of their disability supports & services.
- Public institutions developed and made available to students and faculty written policies significantly more often than private schools, and they more often maintained written policies in the following areas:
 - Documentation to establish the existence of a disability and subsequent need for

accommodations for students with disabilities.

- Documentation of assignment of responsibility for determining disability and related accommodations.
- A grievance procedure regarding disability determination and / or accommodations.
- Procedures and guidelines regarding access to assistive technology.
- Public institutions supported advocacy organizations and activities on campus more often than private schools. (Most of the schools (73%) didn't have an advocacy organization on campus for students with disabilities).
- Public institutions had a significantly greater number of advisory committees and activities on campus, with a focus on students with disabilities, than private schools. In general, nearly 62% of the schools responding either didn't have an advisory committee focused upon students with disability or students with disabilities did not serve on such committees.
- The areas that private schools outperformed public schools were in the following areas:

- Offering of opportunities and supports for study abroad (was offered less than 25% of the time among public schools vs. more than 25% of the time among private schools)
- Offering of internship/externship opportunities and supports specific to the needs of students with disabilities.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings clearly indicate that private postsecondary institutions do not adhere to the same level of support offering provided by publicly funded institutions. Nonetheless, students with disabilities attending private postsecondary institutions are in need of an appropriate range of educational support offerings.

It is possible that students with disabilities eventually leave private institutions and attend schools (more than likely public) that respond to their needs. Also, students with disabilities attending private postsecondary schools may have support mechanisms beyond that provided by the school (strong family/community support)

For further information on this Brief or for an Executive Summary/Full Report on the National Survey of Educational Supports Provision, please contact Chuan Chang at (808) 956 – 2898, chuanc@hawaii.edu or go to the Center website www.rrtc.hawaii.edu.

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