



# 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: Written Policy Regarding Educational Supports

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

### ISSUE

There is scant literature regarding current practices of providing educational supports to students with disabilities at the postsecondary level. A national survey was conducted which provides important information for researchers and service providers 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 survey data and various sub-analyses will provide a comprehensive data to better understand issues concerning educational support provision in postsecondary education programs.

### RESEARCH QUESTION

Have postsecondary education programs developed and implemented written policies concerning the provision of educational supports to students with disabilities?

### METHOD

A survey instrument was developed and distributed to a national sample of more than 1500 Disability Support Coordinators within postsecondary education programs. More than 650 respondents completed the survey providing a profile of educational supports offered. 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 were from four-year schools.

Respondents were asked:

“Please indicate whether your unit or institution has written policies on any of the following when providing supports to students with disabilities?”

## FINDINGS

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
Institutional commitment to provide reasonable accommodations	86.3%	13.7%

Modification of admissions policies for students with disabilities	26.6%	73.4%
	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
A process for a student to declare a disability and request accommodations and supports	86.8%	13.2%
Documentation to establish the existence of a disability and needed accommodations to assure equal access	83.8%	16.2%
Assignment of responsibility for determining disability and related accommodations	77.8%	22.2%
Course waivers/substitutions	46%	54%
Confidentiality	85.5%	14.5%
Definition of full-time status for students with disabilities	32.3%	67.8%
A grievance procedure regarding disability determination and/or accommodations	71.5%	28.5%
Access to technology	50.2%	49.8%

### Overview of Findings

The majority of the surveyed institutions have written policies regarding students with disabilities, such as, processes for students to declare a disability and request accommodations and educational supports.

For a few key issues, more than 50% of the respondents did not provide written policy for students, faculty or disability support providers to refer to; those areas included:

- Modification of admissions for students with disabilities (73% said no).
- Definition of full-time status for students with disabilities (68% said no).
- Course waivers/substitutions (54% said no).

In general, public schools had more of the above issues addressed through written policies than private schools. Overall, two-year and four-year postsecondary programs didn't differ on the number or types of written policies they had developed.

Public schools had more written policies covering the following areas:

- Documentation to establish the existence of a disability and needed accommodations to assure equal access
- Assignment of responsibility for determining disability and related accommodations
- A grievance procedure regarding disability determination and / or accommodations
- Access to technology

Four-year programs had more extensive written policies addressing the following issues than two-year postsecondary programs:

- Processes for students to declare a disability and request accommodations.
- Definition of full-time status for students with disabilities.

However, more two-year programs had written policies on access to technology than four-year programs.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

The majority of surveyed institutions didn't have written policies on:

- Modification of admissions procedures for students with disabilities (73%, no)
- A definition of full-time status for students with disabilities (68%, no)
- Course waivers/substitutions for students with disabilities (54%, no)
- Access to technology (50%, no.)

As found in a series of focus groups with students with disabilities in postsecondary programs, clear definitions and procedures within the above four areas are viewed as important to ensure equal access and support to succeed in postsecondary education

programs. Student experience shows that when policy or guidelines are nonexistent or unclear students with disabilities are often caught in the middle with the various programs and agencies.

Written procedures also may encourage more students with disabilities to seek access and pursue lifelong learning and further education in postsecondary institutions.

**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](mailto:chuanc@hawaii.edu) or go to the Center website [www.rrtc.hawaii.edu](http://www.rrtc.hawaii.edu).**

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***Central RRTC Contact Information:***

Center on Disability Studies • University of Hawai'i at Manoa  
Director – Robert Stodden • (808) 956-9199 • [stodden@hawaii.edu](mailto:stodden@hawaii.edu)  
1776 University Avenue, UA 4-6 • Honolulu, HI 96822;  
WEB: [www.rrtc.hawaii.edu](http://www.rrtc.hawaii.edu) • EMAIL: [rrtc@cds.hawaii.edu](mailto:rrtc@cds.hawaii.edu) •  
Administrative Assistant, Juana Tabali Weir (808) 956-3975 • [juana@hawaii.edu](mailto:juana@hawaii.edu)