



RESEARCH FINDINGS BRIEF

APRIL 2000 • STUDY AREA 4d, VOLUME 5

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: Two-Year Schools versus Four-Year Schools

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 seeking to ascertain the current status of educational supports offered 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 Support. The survey and the sub-analyses will provide a comprehensive baseline of data to address issues concerning educational support provision.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How do two-year postsecondary educational institutions compare with four-year institutions when offering educational supports for students with disabilities?

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 profile of educational support offerings within four year and two year postsecondary institutions. 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.

KEY FINDINGS

When comparing the offering of supports within two-year and four-year schools, overall, two-year postsecondary schools offer significantly more supports in most of the areas surveyed. Two-year schools performed significantly better in their offering of assistive technology and within the other following support areas:

- Learning center laboratory
- Developmental/remedial instruction
- Equipment or software provision
- Skills training on equipment/software
- Assistive Technology supports across campus
- Disability-specific assessment/evaluation
- Provision of interpreter/translator

Moreover, two-year schools are better connected *with the community when supporting students with disabilities*, with significantly more outreach programs with community business/employers,

federal programs, parent/family organizations, and consumer advocacy groups.

Some of the areas where four-year postsecondary institutions offered a greater range of supports than two-year programs are:

- Class relocation
- Supports for study abroad
- Accessible transport on campus
- Note takers/scribes/readers
- Memory skills & meta-cognitive strategies,
- Internships/externships

Two-year institutions did offer significantly more supports in the area of Assistive Technology than four-year schools, further comparing the two types of institutions, there was not a significant difference when offering skill development services and activities or when offering services related to employment.

Note: *Four-year schools mentioned that funding for developmental/remedial instruction has decreased on their campuses due to the perception that students should receive this type of support at a two-year institution or in adult education programs separate from postsecondary education.*

IMPLICATIONS

It is apparent that two-year postsecondary schools serve a student population with more diverse learning and behavior needs than four-year schools.

Further research might be conducted to obtain a more complete understanding of how two-year schools support students to learn. Also, such a study might investigate ways for four-year and two-year institutions to learn from each other regarding the provision of supports to students with disabilities.

Examples of two-year postsecondary school community outreach program models could be described and offered as a prototype for four-year schools when supporting students with disabilities to access related community services and subsequent employment.

Examples of two-year postsecondary school Assistive Technology support program models could be described and offered as a prototype by four-year schools when serving students with disabilities.

For further information on this brief or for an executive summary/full report on the National Survey of Educational Support Provision, please contact Tom Harding (808) 956 – 5344; tharding1@yahoo.com, or go to the Center web site www.rrtc.hawaii.edu

The RRTC on Postsecondary Educational Supports is supported by grant #H133B980043 from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) within the U.S. Department of Education. Opinions and perceptions as shared in this document are those of the researchers involved and no endorsement is implied by the funding agent.

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