Summary of the Issue
The objective of this research effort, *A 20/20 Analysis of Postsecondary Support Characteristics*, is to provide information about the range of support options available to students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions nationwide. Representing Year I of a three-year study, *Longitudinal Analysis of the Experiences of Students with Disabilities with Postsecondary Support Service Systems: Characteristics of Effective Support Systems*, the overall goal of this research is to identify effective components of support services in relation to student outcomes. To accomplish this task, two basic research strategies either will be, or have been, employed: (1) an examination of student outcomes by conducting a “20/20” analysis of support service characteristics, and (2) an examination of input and process variables that lead to the identification of effective components of support services. A 20/20 analysis approach is utilized in the current study to describe the range of support options (e.g., “capacity”) available within various types of institutions (e.g., 2 year, 4 year) and the extent to which supports systematically vary as a function of institution type.

Study Questions/Method
Three main questions are to be addressed in the longitudinal study:
1. How does support service capacity impact consumer perceptions of access, satisfaction, and anticipated postschool outcomes?
2. What characteristics of postsecondary support service capacity that are most likely to result in high levels of consumer access, satisfaction, and positive perceptions of postschool outcomes? And
3. What aspects of support service capacity are considered most effective in terms of carryover to subsequent employment?
In a 20/20 Analysis of Postsecondary Support Characteristics, we have selected a sample of the Top 20% and the Bottom 20% of institutions representing high and low levels of support services based on “capacity” ratings obtained from data collected through the NCSPES 1999 National Survey of Post-Secondary Educational Support for Students with Disabilities. A method used initially by Reynolds (1993) to examine characteristics of high and low academic achievers, 20/20 analysis is applicable to a wide range of phenomena, including the study institutional characteristics. The objective of this approach is to “look at the margins” to study differences between the “Top” and “Bottom” 20% of a institutional sample to identify key variables which may account for differences in service capacity and eventually, consumer satisfaction and outcomes.

Implications by Audience
While tentative at this point, students with disabilities and those who provide them with secondary transition services need to consider the type of institution students will be entering as they continue their postsecondary studies. In general, public 4-year and 2-year postsecondary institutions tend to demonstrate greater levels of capacity and hence, are more likely to provide testing accommodations, note takers, tutors, career counseling, vocational assessment services and the like. While a number of private, nonprofit 4-year and 2-year institutions offer similar services, these generally tend to be more variable and limited in scope. As such, it is incumbent upon students and those who serve them develop a knowledge base about the level of services available to facilitate the transition to postsecondary education. The next phase of this study will examine issues of consumer access, level of satisfaction, and perspectives in an effort to ascertain the general relationship of capacity to outcomes for students—e.g., “Does more capacity necessarily mean better outcomes for students?”

Findings
Initial findings indicate that the Top 20% group (N=139) obtained average “capacity” ratings about one standard deviation above the overall average. In contrast, the capacity ratings of the Bottom 20% were found to be well below this threshold. Less variability was observed in the Top 20% group, suggesting that these institutions tend to be more “consistent” with regard to the range of services provided to students with disabilities, while the Bottom 20% (N=140) appears to be more variable in this regard. This finding was generally repeated when the initial sample was partitioned into groups based on other institution “types.” That is, similar results were observed whether the analysis was conducted with only 4-Year or 2-Year institutions, public or private, or profit or nonprofit. To a large extent, the results of the 20/20 analysis magnify the findings of the National Center for Education Statistics in the report, An Institutional Perspective on Student with Disabilities in Postsecondary Education (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). That is, public institutions in general more likely to provide more services to students with disabilities and large public institutions in particular are more likely to demonstrate greater overall capacity. Although preliminary at this point, there appears to be some evidence that greater levels of “capacity” (i.e., range of service options provided to students with disabilities) may not always be reflected in lower staff-to-student ratios for all institutional types. That is, on average, public 4-year institutions
tend to have higher staff-to-student ratios than public 2-year or non-profit 4-year institutions. Follow-up analysis is currently being conducted to examine this issue more closely.

Contact Information:
Any comments or ideas regarding this study are welcome

Michael N. Sharpe
Institute on Community Integration
University of Minnesota, 108A Pattee Hall
150 Pillsbury Drive Southeast
Minneapolis, MN  55455

Phone:  612-626-8155
E-mail:  sharp004@tc.umn.edu