PHASE II
FINDINGS BRIEF #6
(MS#021b(1)-H01)

University of Hawai`i at Manoa Center on Disability Studies
National Center for the Study of Postsecondary Educational Supports
A Rehabilitation Research & Training Center
Tom Harding & Chuan Chang

Comparison of 2-Year Institutions Versus 4-Year Institutions in Offering Supports and Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Audience
2-year colleges; 4-year colleges; students with disabilities (SWD), parent/family organizations; high school counselors or transition coordinators; special education teachers; disability support coordinators (DSC); career placement specialists; faculty, instructors, and teaching assistants; administrators; state vocational rehabilitation personnel and other rehabilitation professionals; policymakers from federal and state agencies; businesses/employers; and other researchers.

Statement of the Problem
There is very little known regarding current practice concerning the provision of educational supports to students with disabilities at the postsecondary level. A national survey was conducted that provides crucial information for researchers seeking to ascertain the current status of educational supports in postsecondary programs. The survey and the sub-analyses have provided a comprehensive baseline of data to address issues concerning educational supports provision.

Research Question
How do 2-year institutions compare to 4-year institutions in offering supports and accommodations for students with disabilities?

Method
A national 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 characteristics. The 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.

Significant Findings
When comparing supports within 2-year and 4-year programs, generally speaking, 2-year programs offered more support in most areas surveyed. They did significantly better in Assistive Technology (AT) supports than 4-year programs, including:
• Assistive technology evaluations for students
• Skills training on equipment/software
• AT supports across campus
• Equipment or software provision (loan/lease/purchase)
• Adaptive furniture

2-year programs also performed better in the provision of the following areas:
• Learning center laboratory
• Developmental/remedial instruction
• Interpreter
• Disability-specific assessment/evaluation
• Career/vocational assessment and counseling

Moreover, 2-year programs are better connected with the community through better outreach programs with:
• Special education teachers
• High school counselors or transition coordinator
• Other rehabilitation professionals
• State vocational rehabilitation personnel
• Federal programs
• Businesses/employers

Some of the areas where 4-year institutions offered a greater range of supports than 2-year programs are:
• Class relocation
• Supports for study abroad
• Accessible transport on campus
• Note takers/scribes/readers
• Memory skills & meta-cognitive strategies
• Internships/externships

Further comparing the two types of institutions revealed that the two groups did not differ on providing skills development for students and on services related to employment.

Implications
It is apparent that 2-year institutions serve a student population with more diverse learning and behavioral needs than 4-year institutions. Further research might be conducted to obtain a more complete understanding of how 2-year schools support students to learn. Also, such a study might investigate ways for 4-year and 2-year schools to learn from each other regarding the provision of supports to students with disabilities.

Examples of 2-year postsecondary community outreach program models could be described and offered as a prototype for 4-year schools when supporting students with disabilities to access related community services.

Examples of 2-year postsecondary Assistive Technology support program models could be described and offered as a prototype by 4-year schools when serving students with disabilities.

Two year postsecondary institutions have developed supports more extensively for students with disabilities, generally. Students and parents of students with disabilities should consider these findings when choosing postsecondary institutions. More research is needed on how many students are provided with what support and how satisfied students are with the quality of supports.

Contact Person
Chuan Chang, Ph. D Candidate,
University of Hawaii, Honolulu Hawaii, 96825 chuanc@hawaii.edu