PHASE II
PROPOSAL BRIEF # 7
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University of Hawai`i at Manoa Center on Disability Studies
National Center for the Study of Postsecondary Educational Supports
A Rehabilitation Research & Training Center

Margo Izzo
Improving the Quality of Higher Education Programs for Students with Disabilities
Ohio State University Collaborative Site

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**Promising Practices Resulting in Improved Programs and Studies**

**Statement of the Problem**

Results of the National Survey of Postsecondary Educational Supports for Students with Disabilities revealed that a wide range of supports are being offered through disability support offices in postsecondary education programs. Further, findings, based upon the voices of students with disabilities who participated in a series of National Focus Groups, revealed that a number of factors, beyond the provision of educational supports, contributed to their success in postsecondary education and subsequent employment. Those factors included:

- Negative attitudes and lack of knowledge by faculty members concerning the diverse attributes and needs of students with disabilities,

- Lack of coordination of supports and services with faculty instruction, related services provision and other campus activities available to all students.

- Lack of coordinated information or advocacy supports for students with disabilities.

**Research Questions**

1. What are the characteristics of promising program models being implemented by the 21 demonstration projects funded by the Office of Postsecondary Education?

2. What types of professional development activities are the program models implementing?

3. Who are the critical stakeholders involved in model project implementation?

**Method**

Exploratory Study: During Phase I of the Strategic Plan of Research for the RRTC on Postsecondary Educational Supports, an exploratory study was conducted with a sample of 18 postsecondary programs to determine a viable means of identifying promising educational programs and practices and measures of effectiveness and outcome.
The study focused on (1) type of institution/program, (2) types of innovative/promising program models and practices, and (3) types of effectiveness and outcomes measures and data collected. Findings from the pilot study supported the assumption of researchers that (1) a range of innovative or promising program models or practices are available, and (2) measures of effectiveness can be identified and validated with program and student outcomes, as well as other satisfaction measures.

Design
During the past year the United States Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE) selected twenty-one postsecondary programs for funding to demonstrate innovative and promising models of faculty and institutional development, resulting in improved program and student outcomes. Each of the twenty-two funded projects was selected as a promising program model or practice, providing a potential, database for study across the projects. Also, each of the project programs has the potential to generate data on the effectiveness of model or practice characteristics and to assess program and student outcomes.

Analysis
A framework will be developed to describe the characteristics of promising practices underway within the 21 projects. Five criteria proposed by Peters and Heron (1993) are considered to be the best to yield a reliable, valid and critical program description. They are (a) the practice is well grounded in theory; (b) the practice is supported empirically through studies that are internally and externally valid; (c) the practice has some underpinnings in existing literature; (d) the practice is associated with meaningful outcomes; and (e) the practice is socially valid. In addition consumers will validate emerging promising practices through a focus group consisting of postsecondary students with disabilities. This procedure, of validating findings with consumers of the research will establish Participant Action Research. Through the research, writing and review process, each practice will be continually validated from the perspective of the consumer as participant.

Implications for Training
- Promising program practices can be taught to postsecondary faculty and support personnel.
- Students as self advocates may take this information and use it independent of direction.
- All stakeholders need to be made aware of promising practices.

References
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<td><strong>October 1, 1999 to June 1, 2000</strong></td>
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