

# Current Status on Accommodating Students with Disabilities in Selected Community and Technical Colleges

Sean Lancaster, Daryl Mellard, & Lesa Hoffman

University of Kansas  
Center for Research on Learning  
Division of Adult Studies

February, 2001

## Acknowledgements

This project "The Personal Accommodations Model: Accommodating Students with Disabilities in Postsecondary Settings" is 100% funded by the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs from October 1, 1998 to September 30, 2002 at \$150,000 each year (award number H324M980109-00). Serving as consultants on the project are Roger Smith and Dave Edyburn from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Winnie Dunn and Mary Pat Gilbert from the University of Kansas Medical Center. The project's principal investigator is Daryl Mellard, and staff include Sean Lancaster, Melissa Krueger, Lesa Hoffman, and Noelle Kurth. Inquires should be directed to: Gwen Berry, Project Coordinator, Division of Adult Studies, 517 JR Pearson Hall, 1122 West Campus Road, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045, (785) 864-7079 or to the project website at [das.kucrl.org/iam](http://das.kucrl.org/iam).

# Current Status on Accommodating Students with Disabilities in Selected Community and Technical Colleges

## Summary

During the spring of 1999, visits to 9 community colleges in 3 states were conducted to ascertain the status of students with disabilities in post-secondary education. Through a series of interviews, questionnaires, and panel discussions, administrators, faculty, staff, and students of these colleges provided information on various components of their college environment. These components included recruitment of students with disabilities, the registration process, academic requirements, accommodation procedures, awareness of supportive services, student life, and attitudes towards students with disabilities. Recruitment of students with disabilities to community colleges was inconsistent across schools, and while many of the colleges had well-developed supportive services programs, the lack of communication about these programs sometimes hindered their success. Lack of accessible housing and transportation were problems, as well as the lack of training for faculty and staff outside of supportive services on the detection and assistance of students with disabilities. Finally, a successful intervention needs to be geared towards the education of (a) faculty, (b) staff, and (c) students about disabilities and the removal of negative attitudes and behaviors towards students with disabilities.

## Method

### Participants

The sample for this study consisted of students, staff, and faculty at three community colleges in each of three states (Kansas, Minnesota, and California), for nine schools total. Demographic information for the schools is displayed in Tables 1 and 2. Demographic information for the participants is displayed in Table 3. Students were selected to participate by each college, with an effort to assemble a panel with diverse experiential and disability related backgrounds. Disabilities included learning disabilities, emotional/behavioral, mental health disorders, orthopedic/mobility, deaf/hard of hearing, blind/visually impaired, head injuries, chronic illnesses, and speech/language disorders. Faculty and staff volunteered their time and information; students were paid \$40 each for their participation in the student panel discussion.

### Materials

Several different questionnaires were given to the participants, and each of these is included in the Appendix. Students were given the Student Questionnaire, which asked for their demographic and educational background, their educational goals, the accommodations they had received, and their opinions on several accommodation issues.

Faculty and staff completed the Faculty Questionnaire, which asked for their position, their opinion of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the DSS program at their school, as well as beneficial experiences they may have had, and their suggestions for necessary components to include in a program to improve educational opportunities for students with disabilities.

A College Demographics Questionnaire was used to access the demographic information of all students enrolled in each college (summarized in Table 1), as well as financial information for the DSS and estimates of the number and classification of students being assisted by the DSS program (summarized in Table 2). The colleges are coded A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, and I in the tables and text.

The Support Services Questionnaire was used to gain specific information about what college services are available and how they are implemented. The two latter surveys were completed by administrators, staff and/or faculty.

Finally, a number of forms were used to guide oral discussions (Administrator Survey, Staff Interview, Student Panel).

Below is a list of abbreviations for sources used throughout:

Paper-Pencil Questionnaires

SQ - Student Questionnaire

FSQ - Faculty Staff Questionnaire

SSQ - Support Services Questionnaire

Oral Interview Forms

AS - Administrator Survey

SI - Staff Interview

SP - Student Panel

Other Codes

A-I - Nine Participating Colleges

**Procedure**

Visits were scheduled to colleges in each state for three consecutive days (one school per day) during the spring of 1999. After an initial meeting with the DSS coordinator at each school, selected faculty and staff were interviewed for approximately 1-1/2 hours and given the surveys for completion. A student panel was conducted, approximately 1-2 hours in length, to gain insight into some of the representative experiences of students with disabilities at that school. An exit interview was also completed. Any written policies or other relevant information available at the school was also collected.

## Recruitment

When asked what the incentives were for recruitment of students with disabilities, several of the administrators, faculty, and staff surveyed listed reasons such as increasing diversity (E, F, G, I, FSQ), improving the lives of the those students (C, F, FSQ), serving the needs of the community (C, E, I, FSQ), and philosophical or legal obligations (C, E, F, G, H, FSQ). Another incentive cited was an increase in federal money that an increase in enrollment would bring (B, D, G, I, FSQ), yet a few schools included money as a reason *not* to recruit students with disabilities, because it “taxes the budget of the college,” (D, FSQ) or “they [students with disabilities] cost more money and take more time for an already overworked staff,” (F, FSQ).

Regardless of the reasons to do so, recruitment of students with disabilities varied across schools. A few schools cited only general recruitment policies (D, SI) or recruitment through related programs, such as the EXCEL program for first generation college students (A, SI). At other schools, however, the DSS staff visited high school special education classes and college fairs at other schools (C, G, H, SSQ), or arranged for high school teachers and students to come visit the DSS (C, D, E, SSQ).

Students at each of the schools surveyed cited location as a deciding factor in choosing to attend their current school. Also mentioned were athletic programs (A, B, SP), academic programs of interest (A, C, H, I, SP), personal recommendations (C, D, E, SP), and small size (B, I, SP). Students at several schools chose to attend after learning about various services for students with disabilities from coaches, teachers, or other personnel (A, B, E, F, G, H, SP). One student explains, “I think what got me here was that the counselor said there were a lot of people to help you with your schoolwork,” (B, SP).

## The Registration Process

Advance or priority registration was available at some schools (C, G, H, SSQ; I, SI; E, SP). Help filling out forms by the DSS or Learning Center staff was available at most of the schools (A, B, SI; B, C, E, G, H, SSQ). The reaction of the students in describing this process ranged from very positive (“easy registration” [B, SP], “...somebody sat down and helped me right off the bat” [A, SP]) to somewhat negative (“...registration was somewhat confusing” [C, SP], “...the advisors at registration did not know what they were doing” [D, SP]). The DSS staff usually performed subsequent academic advising (C, D, E, G, SSQ).

Campus orientations of some form were conducted for most of the schools (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, SSQ). More personal, 1-1 orientations were also conducted for some schools (C, D, E, SSQ; G, SI), as well as a DSS open house (F, SSQ). The students were enthusiastic about orientation at some schools (“... they took us on a tour and showed us where the math lab was...how there were tutors and a computer center” [D, SP]),

and disappointed at others (“no orientation to campus...confusion about layout, location of classrooms, access to classes” [H, SP]).

Financial aid is another important part of attending college. With a documented disability, part-time enrollment can be considered full-time status in order to make students with disabilities eligible for financial aid at some of the schools (A, C, E, F, SSQ). Social security tuition waivers were also available at a few schools (G, H, SSQ), as well as disability-related scholarships (E, G, H, SSQ; I, SI). Students pointed out some of the flaws in the system, such as the loss of athletic scholarships if a student doesn't pass 12 hours with a 2.0 or better, regardless of disability (B, SP), how scholarships received reduce the amount of student loans one can borrow (I, SP), and how time limits on financial aid may be unreasonable for students with disabilities (“...with financial aid they only give you a certain amount of time to get your education...we're at a financial difficulty as well as a mental difficulty as well as a physical difficulty so I feel that the money should be extended to us longer than the average student,” [H, SP]). Policy areas such as credit hour requirements, distinctions between full-time and part-time student status, and amount and time limits on financial aid influence student's access and retention to college environments. These areas are also appropriate for accommodating students.

## **Academic Requirements**

The student and the instructor generally negotiated modifications to course instruction, assignments, or testing on an individual basis. Some examples of these were seating in the front of the room (E, SSQ), extra time for tests/assignments (A, SP; B, D, E, G, SSQ; E, G, SQ), extended due dates (A, SP; I, SQ), scribes for tests (A, E, SSQ), readers for tests (D, E, SSQ), oral tests/reports instead of written (A, SSQ; B, SP; G, SQ), and separate testing rooms (A, B, D, E, I, SSQ). Placement testing is often required in order to place students in courses appropriate to their knowledge level, and accommodations are generally provided as necessary (A, C, D, E, F, H, SSQ).

While a few schools insisted that assignments were the same for all students (A, SSQ), other schools reported instances of instructors “adapting” assignments for students with disabilities (B, C, SSQ; C, E, SQ; E, SP). Online courses were also available at one college (C, SSQ). The DSS staff or classroom instructors similarly try to make lab and field work accessible by hiring interpreters/helpers, paying mileage for accessible vans, or other modifications as needed (A, C, E, SSQ). Nevertheless, some students were forced to miss field trips because of inaccessible facilities (C, SQ; E, SSQ).

In most cases, no substitutions were allowed for degree requirements (C, D, SSQ). Physical requirements for a nursing program, for example, were not waived (A, SSQ), nor was an elementary algebra course (G, SI). However, course substitutions were available in most instances, such as substituting a computer course for foreign language for a deaf student (C, SQ), health courses for physical education (E, SSQ), and

a logic course for a math course (E, SSQ). In a few instances, specific classes were waived, such as a computer course (A, SI) or a pre-algebra course (I, SI).

The graduation ceremony itself was accessible at some schools, including ramps and interpreters (upon request) (C, E, H, SSQ), but not all (B, SI). Transfer assistance was available at most of the schools on an individual basis (B, C, D, E, F, G, H, SSQ), as was job seeking skills training (A, C, D, G, SSQ) and job placement (A, B, C, F, SSQ). One school required an employment orientation course (A, SI). Several schools indicated a need for better career counseling and follow-up on their graduates (A, C, I, SI; D, F, G, FSQ).

### **Accommodation Procedures**

The goal of providing course accommodations for students with disabilities is to modify materials or testing procedures in order to help students become as successful as they can be. This should be done in such a way that the rigor of the academic program is not compromised, or without giving the students an unfair advantage. Some students chose to speak to the instructor directly to ask for an accommodation(s) (A, H, SQ); faculty and staff often can provide reasonable accommodations themselves as they turn up (B, FSQ).

A few of the schools had written policies given to students that detail what the students' responsibilities were in acquiring an accommodation(s), such as documentation (B, FSQ; C, E, SSQ). In these instances the DSS staff and the student can work together, trying to determine how his or her disability affects his or her learning and what a reasonable and effective accommodation(s) would be in terms of meeting course requirements (A, B, C, D, E, G, FSQ). The factors reported by the students to be the most important in selecting an accommodation were effectiveness, availability, ease of use, and independence. The students were generally trained on how to use the accommodation(s) by DSS staff.

Resources were available in the form of assistive technology such as spell checkers (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, SSQ), voice-input software (C, E, F, G, H, SSQ), electronic reading machines (D, E, F, G, H, SSQ), talking calculators (C, G, SSQ), and computer screen readers (C, E, F, G, H, SSQ). Some schools had specific classes for students with disabilities as part of the accommodation process, such as a class in utilizing adaptive technology (C, G, SSQ). Various forms of equipment was provided, such as magnifiers (A, B, D, F, G, H, SSQ), computer text magnifiers (C, D, F, G, H, SSQ), specialized keyboards (C, F, H, SSQ), and tape recorders (B, D, E, F, H, SSQ). Modifications to classroom material were also found, including taped texts (A, B, C, D, E, F, SSQ), alternative exam formats (A, B, D, E, F, G, H, SSQ), Brailled texts (C, SQ), and enlarged tests/handouts (E, SSQ). Additionally, Braille services (C, D, F, G, H, SSQ), tactile campus maps (G, H, SSQ), closed circuit television systems (C, E, F, H, SSQ), and TDD's (C, D, E, F, G, H, SSQ) were available.

Resources in the form of personnel were present in some form at every school who provided this information (8 out of the 9 surveyed), namely, ASL interpreters (A, C, D, E, F, G, H, SSQ), notetakers/scribes (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, SSQ), readers (A, B, C, D, F, G, H, SSQ), and tutors (A, C, D, F, SQ; B, SI). Additionally, most schools had learning centers where students could go for study skills training and test-taking strategies (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, FSQ). Two schools had a writing center (F, SQ; H, SI), and two schools had writing and math skills classes (G, H, SSQ). All schools surveyed had private study or testing areas available. Of all the accommodations available, the students reported that they used notetakers, tutors, interpreters, and alternative test locations most frequently, perhaps due to the fact that the majority of the students surveyed had learning disabilities that would necessitate such accommodations.

The effectiveness of the accommodation was formally evaluated in only one of the schools surveyed (H, SSQ). Informal evaluation took place in the form of level of success in mainstream classes (G, SSQ), observations by faculty and staff (B, SSQ), or student input (B, D, E, SSQ). One school even stated explicitly in its handbook that "follow-up for accommodation effectiveness is entirely the student's responsibility."

Student panel responses on the topic highlighted the gap sometimes found between accommodations and effective accommodations. For example, a staff member at College B stated in an interview that "tutoring is a real strength of the college" (B, SI). Some of the students did agree that they did find the tutors helpful (B, SP), while another student at the same school reported that his tutors often did their own work instead of helping him (B, SP). A student at another college reported "I have a tutor who sits there and does the problem for me...I go to take my math test and I'm stumped because someone else did it for me" (G, SP). A staff member at College D claimed to have "strong interpreter services" (D, FSQ), while the students at the college reported that the signers are often late to class, resulting in deaf or hard of hearing students missing the first part of the lecture (D, SP).

The issue of notetakers also prompted a series of mixed responses. Some students found this service useful ("I take notes along with the notetaker so when it's time for the test I compare our notes," [C, SP]) while others found it lacking ("One time I asked for a notetaker and I couldn't read what they wrote....we should get people we can rely on," [H, SP]). Other problems arose when notetakers failed to show up for the class, provided poor content, or turned in the notes late. Notetakers could be volunteers in a class or hired specifically for drafting notes (F, SI). Other problems were also mentioned, including "useless" computers in the Learning Lab (B, SP), the ineffectiveness of taping class lectures (C, SP), crowded computer labs (G, SP), the limited number of private testing rooms (G, SP), the limited number of computers with voice recognition (H, SP), tape recorders that were too heavy to be portable (I, SP), and lack of assistance provided for computers and software programs when needed (A, D, SP).

## Awareness of Supportive Services

In order for students with disabilities to receive the assistance they may need, two things are necessary. The first is that students identify themselves, or are identified as having a disability, to become eligible for DSS services. Many of the personnel surveyed stated that they experienced frustration in attempting to provide their students with the appropriate assistance. Some students with disabilities, particularly those with learning disabilities, try to “hide” and are found only when they are doing poorly (A, B, C, E, F, H, I, FSQ; B, SSQ, E, SI). In fact, only some of the schools surveyed had screening for learning disabilities available (C, E, G, H, SSQ; I, SI).

In attempting to combat this problem, DSS staff often recommended that instructors receive more training in how to identify students with learning disabilities and what techniques may be useful in helping them. Although most schools reported having staff development programs in place (A, B, C, E, F, G, H, SSQ), representatives from almost all of the schools indicated they felt more training was necessary (A, B, C, E, F, G, I, FSQ; G, H, I, SP). However, in identifying students in order to give them the assistance they need, the student’s right to privacy must still be maintained. Achieving this balance can be difficult (C, E, FSQ; E, F, SP). One student explains his experience: “I just learned that it is up to me. If I want to use the program I can...if I want professors to hear me, I have to go talk to them. They’re aware that there are students with disabilities in class but they don’t know who” (E, SP).

The other necessary component in getting students the assistance they need is that the students, faculty, and staff be made aware of what services are offered. While communication seemed to be good between the DSS staff and faculty and students at some of the schools (C, G, H, FSQ; D, SP), this was lacking in others (E, I, SP). One student explains this: “I don’t think a lot of faculty and staff are aware of what is available through supportive services and that’s part of the problem,” (I, SP). Written materials or videos to show during staff meetings would be helpful, according to some of the people surveyed (C, E, F, I, FSQ). Ironically, most of the schools claimed to have formal written materials on DSS services available (C, D, E, F, G, I, SSQ).

The sharing of personal experiences by students/adults with disabilities with faculty and staff was deemed to be the most useful strategy in attempting to better educate faculty and staff on the needs of their students (A, C, D, E, G, H, I, FSQ; D, G, SI). “Having a face to attach to a service is important,” explains one staff member (G, SI). Another instructor had this to say: “We need to focus on what students can do, not what they can’t. We need to emphasize that using different techniques, media, and other teaching/learning styles will help *all* students,” (E, FSQ). Getting students to understand how they could benefit from DSS services was also a challenge (D, H, FSQ). One student stresses the importance of this: “Recognizing yourself and what your needs are is really, really important,” (D, SP).

Other roadblocks in assisting students with disabilities mentioned by the personnel included lack of funding (A, D, I, FSQ; D, SI), being understaffed (B, SSQ; E, I, FSQ), lack of readiness for college of the students (B, E, H, FSQ), and difficulty understanding students with non-traditional communicative systems (D, FSQ). Working with students who have mental illness or behavioral problems was also deemed challenging by those surveyed (B, C, E, F, G, FSQ). "We need a better understanding of the illness and guidelines for how to deal with this type of problem," explains one staff member (C, FSQ).

## Student Life

Accessibility is an important issue for some students with disabilities. Despite federal regulations that public buildings be made accessible, students at each school reported instances of inaccessibility. Although small physical modifications were made as needed to facilities (i.e. raising a desk or table to fit a wheelchair [A, D, F, SQ; I, SI]), students reported awkward access to or lack of elevator accessibility in parts of their campus (B, D, SI; C, D, G, I, SQ; B, D, F, H, SP), and even an inability to use the restroom in certain buildings (A, SQ; D, SP). Ironically, faculty at these same institutions claimed, "All buildings have ramps, electric doors, and elevators," (A, FSQ), "The ADA transition plan is in effect," (B, SI), and "I'm sure our facility is in compliance with the ADA," (C, FSQ). While the facilities were in compliance, students with limited upper body strength or mobility would have difficulty navigating the doors, narrow walkways and tight turns. Two staff members at different colleges commented negatively on accessibility, one whose college was older so facilities were not adequate or marginally adequate for mobility impaired students (D, FSQ), the other who was concerned about the lack of a fire evacuation plan for students in wheelchairs whose classes were above ground floor (E, FSQ).

Housing and transportation for students with physical disabilities is another problematic issue. Few of the schools surveyed offered accessible student housing on campus (A, F, SSQ), one only for females (B, SSQ); the students at one of these schools were unaware of any available housing on campus for students with disabilities (A, SP). Students at one school reported that affordable and accessible housing in the community was almost nonexistent (H, SP); personnel at the same school and one other reported it to be available (D, H, SSQ). The availability of accessible transportation was also inconsistent across schools. At times staff have helped transport students to and from school at one school (A, SSQ). Two of the schools had trams or carts for transportation across campus (G, SSQ; I, SP). Bus service with lifts for wheelchairs was reported as available for students at a few of the schools by the personnel, but the service was reported to be unreliable and expensive by the students (D, E, H, SP). One student explains, "I tried to go to college the first year and I couldn't...they had a limit on the number of paratransit rides you could use which didn't even begin to allow me

to go to school," (H, SP). Additionally, students had to wait for the bus after evening classes, a practice described as "dangerous," (H, SP).

Social opportunities were limited, mainly because of the nature of the campuses included in the study (few students lived on campus). Most schools listed campus-wide organizations or clubs that students with disabilities were free to join, or activities that had been adapted so students with disabilities could join (A, E, G, H, SSQ). Peer support/counseling was available at some of the schools surveyed (B, E, G, SSQ).

### **Attitudes about Students with Disabilities**

In addition to educating faculty and staff about disabilities and how they can help their students, the personnel indicated that instructor attitudes about disabilities needed to be changed as well (B, SI; B, D, F, FSQ). "The technology we have is great – it's the mental barriers of our own students, peer pressures, and others' judgmental attitudes that get in the way" (E, FSQ). Working with those negative attitudes is an important staff development activity. For students, broadening awareness of disability issues could be part of an orientation about student diversity and its importance to the college community. Borrowing from the concept of "universal access," one dean described his college as "universally friendly" (A, AS). Several people reported that faculty tend to mistrust, disbelieve, or ignore disabilities they cannot see, such as learning disabilities (A, B, SI; D, G, SP; E, FSQ). For example, students with learning disabilities are often viewed as lazy (B, SSQ; B, SI; B, SP). "Students with disabilities are considered slower, lesser, not academically prepared, and therefore somewhat not useful," summarized one staff member (D, FSQ).

Other faculty have problems with the legal entitlements for accommodations, finding them "unfair" (E, SI; I, FSQ). Still others resent the financial obligation of accommodating students with disabilities (B, SI; C, D, FSQ). Nearly every student we surveyed had an example of the indifference of an instructor to share. One of the more poignant: "Last semester I had an instructor, I told him I was mentally disabled...he said, 'If you're absent, you're absent, just like anybody else.' Well, there are days that I have to stay home, doctor's orders" (G, SP).

According to those surveyed, a program that is successful in changing attitudes will explain the responsibilities of the faculty in accommodation and access (H, SI), convince faculty that their efforts can make a real difference for the underachieving student (B, FSQ), show faculty how something can help students be more successful without causing too much effort on the staff's part (B, FSQ), and provide support for faculty to alleviate any suggestion they are being 'dumped on' (D, FSQ). One staff member would like to see "...Numbers and facts that 'prove' how accommodations are easy to implement, promote student success, and are not giving students with disabilities an unfair advantage," (G, FSQ).

The attitudes of other students towards students with disabilities can be problematic as well. Other students were described as “rude” (B, SP) and “uncooperative” (I, SP) at times by members of our student panel, who gave examples of other students making fun of a speech disorder (B, SP), parking in handicapped parking spaces (A, SP), or refusing to yield elevator or computer space when needed (D, SP). Other students were accepting of physically disabled students, but less accepting of mentally disabled students (C, SI). Overall, it was suggested that the students be given “sensitivity training” (C, FSQ; C, SI; H, SP).

On a brighter note, students’ descriptions of the DSS staff were extremely positive. Faculty, staff, and students repeatedly used words like “caring,” “sensitive,” and “helpful” in reference to DSS staff (A, C, D, G, I, SSQ; B, D, E, I, SP). One dean of instruction noted that DSS staff have a very important advocacy role for students with disabilities and disability issues on campus. Their attitudes and support for students and faculty are central to the quality and receptiveness of services (A, AS). One student shares her feelings, “When I came here...they took me in, put me under their wing, and took care of me,” (I, SP). Students mentioned positive interactions with instructors as well. “...The faculty have been very receptive to me and my disabilities” (A, SP). “The teacher let us know...he would always be there for us...” (I, SP).

## Conclusion

Administrators, faculty, staff, and students from nine community and technical colleges in three states were surveyed and interviewed about several aspects of college life in order to determine the status of students with disabilities in community colleges. Their comments revealed many important issues including:

- 1) lack of recruitment of students with disabilities to college.
- 2) numerous problematic practices regarding the selection and evaluation of students’ accommodations.
- 3) maintaining the confidentiality of student disability information.
- 4) student experiences of negative attitudes and actions from faculty, staff, and other students.

Students with disabilities are often not actively recruited to college, which may contribute to the extraordinarily low percentage of students with disabilities who do participate in post-secondary education. We do not yet understand the circumstances that influence a student’s decision to attend college versus students who do not attend. Because students with disabilities may choose community colleges for the same reasons that other students do (location, programs of interest, etc.), lack of advertisement about the services available to them may deter potential students from attempting to go to college.

Communication about accommodation services between DSS staff and the rest of the colleges seemed to be lacking overall, which may inhibit students with disabilities

from being as successful as they otherwise would be if they were aware such assistance was available, and chose to use it. Systemized evaluation of the effectiveness of accommodation procedures was also severely lacking. The students highlighted several areas in which accommodations were ineffective, of which the faculty and staff did not appear to be aware. An apparent issue with current accommodation practices ties to the negative attitudes associated with having students with disabilities on campus. Too often the accommodation process involves staff deciding the “appropriate” accommodation for the student. The student’s role is minimized in evaluating alternative accommodations and their pros and cons. The general approach also suggests that students are accommodated by their type of disability rather than by their needs and goals.

Another issue raised by our findings is that of the right to privacy of the student with disabilities. In some settings the accommodation procedures were as anonymous as possible (i.e. a notetaker would be in the class, but the instructor would not know for whom he or she was taking notes), while other schools required students to self-identify before they could get any cooperation from the instructor. This violates the student’s right to privacy and may subject him or her to potential stigmatization by his or her peers and the instructor. For example, for students with psychiatric diagnoses, confidentiality is considered of critical importance. Misconceptions about mental health issues are very limiting. On the other hand, college and employment settings are very different. Employers will likely require disclosure of the specific disability before they agree to accommodate, especially those accommodations requiring much money. DSS staff can assist students’ development of disclosure and advocacy skills.

Finally, the most powerful deterrent to success for students with disabilities may be the attitudes of the faculty and staff. Faculty were reported to be insensitive and operating under stereotypes, particularly about students with “invisible” disabilities, across the schools surveyed. Faculty and staff indicated the need for training about the detection of disabilities and how to best accommodate their students. This issue and the aforementioned other issues will be the focus of the next report which is tentatively entitled, “Issues and Strategies for Accommodating Students with Disabilities in Post-Secondary Settings.”