

UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS REPORT 2004

Effective Institutional Practices

Chicago State University

Disability Awareness Day

The Abilities Office, with co-sponsorship support from other university offices, has annually organized the “Disability Awareness Day” since 1997. The purpose of the day-long event is to raise awareness of challenges facing people with disabilities and the services available to assist them. The events of the day are widely advertised on campus and directed to all students, faculty, and staff. Each year, a Chicago-area leader who lives with a disabling condition serves as a keynote speaker. Sports (e.g., wheelchair basketball), music, and contests create a festive atmosphere for the day. An exhibit hall features information and technology demonstrations from 30-60 organizations. Simulations allow able-bodied people to experience first-hand the challenges caused by wheelchair use, blindness, deafness, motor impairment, speech impairment, and learning disabilities. In one simulation, participants listen to a recording of speech as it would sound to a person with a 60 percent hearing loss. They are asked to write down what they think they hear. In another simulation, participants choose from a variety of goggles that contain lenses to simulate glaucoma, severe near-sightedness, and eight other visual impairments. They are guided around the building as they attempt to accomplish tasks such as walking stairs and drinking from a water fountain. Those who attend any part of the day’s activities consistently give high ratings on evaluation forms. In 1999, the day was featured on channel 7’s Karen Meyer Show.

Eastern Illinois University

Research Project – Campus Climate

To better analyze climate issues for students with disabilities, Eastern Illinois University began in fall 2003 collecting data about students’ perceptions of the treatment of students with disabilities. This research is part of broader longitudinal study of campus climate issues, including race, gender, and disabilities. A preliminary analysis of this data suggests that students perceived that instructors treat students with disabilities fairly. Eastern intends to expand its assessment of issues pertaining to students with disabilities. Data was collected by a telephone survey of 11 percent of the undergraduate students. The sample was a stratified, random sample with race, gender, and class rank represented. Within each stratum, randomization was based on computer-generated lists of telephone numbers.

Illinois State University

Disability Concerns: Electronic Text Conversion

Disability Concerns assists individuals with disabilities to function independently in the University community. The office promotes self-advocacy and self-sufficiency to prepare students to function independently upon graduation and in reaching their personal profession goals.

The program provided by Disability Concerns that exemplifies this mission is a text conversion program for students who are eligible for the accommodation of converted text. Converted text can take the form of enlarged print, Braille, books-on-tape or electronic text. Conversion to audiotape is time consuming, delaying the student's access to the material, and must be completed by someone other than the student. Conversely, electronic text conversion is a process students can learn to do for themselves. It is a process and a skill that will serve students after they leave Illinois State University. Conversion to E-text is also the first step to converting the printed word to Braille. Moreover, many Braille users now prefer to receive their textbooks as E-text due to the cumbersome nature of Braille textbooks. Implementation of an electronic text conversion process began three years ago to keep pace with the changing needs of the students who are attending Illinois State University.

The Director of Disability Concerns decided to discontinue production of books-on-tape and solely produce electronic text (E-Text) in order to foster self-sufficiency and provide materials to students in a timelier manner. Books-on-tape promoted a model of dependency for the person with a reading disability. That person would always have to rely upon others in order to gain access to the printed word in an aural format. This would become particularly difficult in the employment setting. For instance, if an individual were to attend a conference as an office representative and provide a report to staff upon return, it would be extremely difficult to find a colleague or a professional service willing to convert conference materials to taped format and within the timeframe needed. Electronic text would eliminate this barrier to greater independence because the individual can learn how to convert text without the assistance of others and have control over the timeframe involved for conversion. The individual then uses a screen reader to convert the E-Text to the spoken word.

Disability Concerns thus developed a text conversion program that has a four-pronged approach.

- 1) **On-line request and on-line download of completed textbook.** This program, named, Sahayak, meaning The Helper, is an in-house program written specifically for Disability Concerns by the Applied Computer Science Graduate Assistants. Students no longer must place and pick-up their requests in person. This is particularly advantageous for a student with limited mobility and limited vision.

- 2) **Conversion of the textbooks for each student.** This is accomplished by graduate assistants through the use of computers, a high-speed scanner, programs that convert text in preparation for use with a screen reader and the editing of the scanned text. The software used for this phase is Omnipage Pro. It is this phase of the process that prepares the textbooks and then places them into Sahayak for the students to download.
- 3) **Training of the students in the skills to complete conversion themselves for now and in future employment.** The students are trained on Scan and Read Pro. This software program is all-inclusive; it allows the user to scan and convert the text, acts as a computer screen reader, and enables the user to convert the text to MP3 files for playback in a CD player if they so choose.
- 4) **The equipping of University labs with text conversion equipment.** This provides students with immediate access to class handouts, articles, and other written materials. Students can scan materials themselves rather than having to wait for Disability Concerns to be open and staff to be available to scan materials for them. This promotes equal and timely access to those materials as well as independence. Ten labs currently have this equipment. These labs are located in each of the residence hall complexes, an educational computer lab building and Milner library.

As a complete program, equal and independent access to the printed word, whether for a student who is blind or for a student with a reading disorder, is provided. Students are using this program on a daily basis and are eagerly signing up for trainings. The Sahayak program was piloted prior to implementation and students volunteered without hesitation to be a part of that pilot. They made productive suggestions before the current program was implemented. Some students have even purchased their own scanning equipment and software, thus gaining the independence they will need when entering the workforce upon graduation.

Northeastern Illinois University

Learning Center and Writing Lab

The goal of this lab is to contribute to the effort of retaining Northeastern Illinois University students who have a verifiable learning disability. During the summer of 2003, an Ad Hoc group composed of a faculty member and three academic support staff organized to develop actions to assist students who sought help from the basic skill and tutoring assistance centers. It was determined that this group would attempt to focus on the learning disabled student. Challenges exist in determining how to assist students who don't disclose their disability for a variety of reasons. The following areas of concentration were derived from the meetings held

- Creating a list of offices that assist students with academic, physical and emotional challenges that they may encounter while attending NEIU. This list can be shared with both students and faculty.

- Training for the tutors in the Writing Lab and the Learning Center on the characteristics of a person with learning disabilities and approaches to assist them.
- Assisting in creating a support group/club for students. This club could address advocacy training, study strategies, legal information, as well as a sense of community for students.
- Facilitation of study groups and study skills assistance through the Learning Center. Referrals could be gained by the tutors providing assistance in the General Education curriculum.
- Developing a “shared information sheet” to communicate between the academic support centers to coordinate assistance. Also, amending the student intake forms to allow for disclosure of disability.

Northern Illinois University

Certificate Training in Deaf-Blindness

This program provides comprehensive continuing education for rehabilitation personnel who have responsibility for delivering quality services to persons who are deaf-blind. Targeted participants include practicing rehabilitation professionals who are knowledgeable and experienced in providing rehabilitation services to persons who are either deaf or blind but who lack expertise in applying these skills to persons who are deaf-blind. It is intended to significantly impact the delivery of rehabilitation services to persons who are deaf-blind by providing rehabilitation personnel who are knowledgeable concerning the unique considerations of the combined disabilities of deafness and blindness and who are, therefore, better able to provide quality and accessible services. Training consists of an intensive three-week on-campus module at NIU followed by a distance-learning component completed during the eleven months following the on-campus workshop.

Admission

Twenty trainees and five alternates are chosen by a selection committee each year to participate in the project with attempts made to ensure geographic diversity. Individuals with disabilities and members of ethnic/racial minority groups are particularly encouraged to apply. Trainees complete appropriate registration materials to receive academic credit at the graduate level. Students who have a baccalaureate degree will be admitted as Students at Large and will earn fifteen hours of graduate credit. Students without a baccalaureate degree must make application to NIU through Undergraduate Admissions. Upon completion of the program, students will receive a certificate, a recognized educational credential awarded by Northern Illinois University.

Curriculum

The training curriculum is structured as a three-week training institute generating a total of nine credit hours for 12 hours of direct instruction and a distance-learning component that generates six semester hours of credit and is based on individual student learning contracts. The curriculum for the three-week training institute focuses on six competency areas related to providing quality services to adults who are deaf blind. These begin with a general orientation to deaf-blindness and then include individual learning modules on employment, independent living, psychosocial considerations, assessment, and technology, all as related to persons are deaf-blind.

Trainee Benefits and Responsibilities

Trainees receive stipends to cover all tuition and fees associated with the nine hours of academic instruction. In addition, trainees are reimbursed for travel to the training institute held on the NIU campus and also receive housing and meals while in residence on the campus for the three-week institute. Trainees are provided with all necessary training materials including workbooks, textbooks, and handouts without cost. These benefits will obligate trainees under the payback agreement stipulated in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. The payback agreement stipulates that individuals receiving these benefits must maintain employment in a nonprofit rehabilitation agency or a state rehabilitation agency, including a professional corporation or practice group through which the individual has a service arrangement with the designated state agency. The trainee agrees to be employed in such a setting for two years in return for each year of training received. Individuals who fail to complete the training program or who do not meet the payback requirements may be asked to repay the costs associated with the training received.

Governors State University

Project A.C.E.S.S.S.

The A.C.E.S.S.S. Program (Access to College Education Student Support Services) at Governors State University is one of three TRIO Programs. The purpose of A.C.E.S.S.S. is to retain and graduate students from GSU, and provide a campus climate that is conducive for students who are low-income, first generation college students or students with disabilities. The grant was funded for five years effective Fall, 1997, with an average funding amount per year of \$190,000.

The program provides academic counseling, tutoring, workshops, seminars, graduate school visits, gift aid, and cultural activities. It provides a support system for those students needing that extra assistance. Since its inception in 1997, the A.C.E.S.S.S. program has served more than over three hundred students; over one hundred have graduated from GSU, and over fifty have gone on to graduate school and ten have graduated from graduate school.

Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

Office of Disability Support Services

Disability Support Services (DSS) coordinates physical and academic support services for SIUC students with disabilities. DSS operates under the philosophy of integrated service delivery while assuming the role of centralized coordinating office. DSS is a government-mandated compliance program that guarantees equal accessibility of education under the law to all students. DSS coordinates the service delivery of many different accommodations to many students with many different disabilities. The staff of 4 professionals and 1 office supervisor, assisted by 2 graduate students and 100 student workers, serves a population of about 500 students each year. Some of those students are learning disabled, some are blind or visually impaired, some are deaf or hard of hearing, some have mobility impairments, and some have brain injuries, chronic health conditions, or psychological disabilities. Services specifically for learning disabled students include tutor referrals, test proctoring (extra time, readers, scribes, quiet setting, and computers), note takers, access to adaptive technology, campus familiarization, adapted tests and course materials (taped, enlarged, Braille or electronic format), equipment loans (tape recorders, listening devices, etc.), consultation with instructors, and general guidance and counseling. The program has state-of-the-art adaptive technology including CCTV (full color video magnification), the Arkenstone Open Book Reading System, JAWS for Windows, and Dragon Dictate, which students may use by appointment during office hours.

Project Achieve, a fee-for-service program, is specifically tailored for students with learning disabilities and exceeds in many ways the services that are mandated by law. DSS provides an array of services for students with all types of disabilities. The general purpose and goals of each program are different. They have different missions, serve different populations, provide very different services and intensities of service, have different budgets, and employ very different service professionals. Students who do not require or want comprehensive services may be better served by DSS. Project Achieve better serves students with learning disabilities and those who need comprehensive services, guidance, and support.

Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville

Disability Awareness Day

For the past several years, SIUE has held a Disability Awareness Day on campus. The purpose of the event is to raise awareness in the university and surrounding communities regarding the abilities and needs of individuals with disabilities and to address responsibilities of the university. Disability Awareness Day has had campus-wide support. Though the primary responsibility for planning and conducting the event has come from Disability Support Services and the ADA coordinator, many other units and offices on campus have provided support. For example, the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs, the Office of the Assistant Provost for Cultural and Social Diversity, the SIUE

Foundation, the student group New Horizons, the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, and the Office of the Chancellor have all provided financial support. Faculty and students in academic departments have provided support by assisting with planning, advertising, and conducting the events.

Although the purpose remains constant, the focus and activities have changed from year to year. In 2003 the theme was "Celebrating Abilities" when Disability Awareness Day joined with the university's Arts & Issues series to feature the National Theater of the Deaf and its production of "Oh Figaro." The actors, most of whom were deaf, also performed for area elementary school children, who were bused to the campus for a production of "The Giving Tree." The campus theater was filled with children, many of whom had a hearing impairment. Vendors and local agencies were at tables and booths to distribute and discuss their services and products. A wheelchair basketball game was held again with the St. Louis Rolling Rams versus the SIUE women's varsity basketball team. Halftime activities included free throw contests, drawings and prizes. The second annual five-kilometer roll, walk, and run race resulted in an increase in participants from the previous year, from 150 to more than 300. The SIUE track team cosponsored the event, and students from several academic classes participated in planning and conducting the race. They prepared flyers, arranged for radio, newspaper, and photographic coverage, solicited donations for prizes and food, and arranged for student volunteers to help with the event.

One of the ways the university assesses the success of Disability Awareness Day is through attendance and participation. For the last few years there has been an increase in participation at the Disability Awareness Day events. For example, there was a 100 percent increase in the number of participants in the run, walk, and roll race in 2003 over the previous year. The race is funded through community donations. In 2003 the number of donors doubled over the previous year. A local company that had 45 employees who participated in the run, walk, and roll race awarded Disability Support Services \$1,000. This award is given annually to a corporate-sponsored project attended by their employees. The City of Edwardsville has also been very supportive of the annual race. In the 2003 event, several Edwardsville police officers volunteered their time to assist with the race. Local merchants generously donated food for both the race and the wheelchair basketball game. The acceptance and desire by able-bodied persons to show their support for university-sponsored events concerning disability issues has been welcomed. Faculty and students are enthusiastically talking about future disability awareness events. The shirts given to participants in the race are seen all over campus. Students are proud of the fact that they supported a disability awareness event.

University of Illinois Chicago

Online Complaint Channel

The Online Complaint Channel provides persons with disabilities an avenue to voice their concerns and seek resolutions to them. Since its establishment in May 2003, a number of complaints have been registered and addressed by the appropriate units.

The Channel. An online reporting form was recently created to be used for persons with or without disabilities to report problems such as building and classroom accessibility, assistive technology, general services, construction and renovation, and program/event concerns. The form was tested in April 2003 on users with visual impairments and implemented in May 2003. The reporting system was developed in conjunction with the Office for Access and Equity (OAE), the Chancellor's Committee on the Status of Persons with Disabilities (CCSPD) and the Office of Disability Services (ODS).

This forum allows individuals to report complaints anonymously or to seek a response to their concerns. The Office for Access and Equity (OAE) is the recipient of the complaints and serves as the triage in determining which office(s) need to be notified and involved when resolving the problem. OAE maintains the website as well as a database of reports. This complaint mechanism creates automatic documentation of both problems and the response from the University.

Results. Since May 2003, OAE has received 18 complaints and each individual noted that he or she was a person with a disability. About half of the complaints have been anonymous. When individuals identify themselves, OAE responds with how the matter will be handled. For example, an individual submitted four online reports related to the motor pool and difficulties with the chair lifts on the shuttle buses. Each bus identified was inspected and either repaired or removed from service until the problems was resolved. As a result of these online reports, Facilities Management implemented an improved Chairlift Inspection Program.

University of Illinois Springfield

The E-Mail Connection

The E-Mail Connection at UIS is among one of the most valuable initiatives that make UIS an inviting place for students with disabilities. One of the largest contributors to high dropout rates among college students with disabilities is frustration over organization and time management. Recent research suggests that students with executive functioning deficits tend to have greatest difficulty with scheduling and planning. While the Adaptive Technology Lab addresses students' need for access to state-of-the-art learning and productivity software, it cannot address the more basic issues

of motivation and time management experienced by individuals with learning disabilities. The Office of Disability Services has designed a process to address this problem.

In the two semesters that it has been in practice, the E-Mail Connection has proven to be extremely useful for individuals with learning disabilities. The concept for E-Mail Connection was adapted from a seminar sponsored by the Association on Higher Education and Disability. E-Mail Connection has several important elements: It requires students to take initiative and to review the semester's requirements in a systematic fashion; it builds on the existing cooperative relation with ODS staff, but still depends on the independent functioning of the student; and it results in an overall improved approach to study, project completion, and time management. Finally, it is based on the electronic technology that students use on a daily basis in their own dormitory rooms or apartments.

E-Mail Connection is an innovative and inexpensive means of keeping students on task and organized. Through this program ODS staff work with students to develop timelines along which they receive e-mail reminders of upcoming assignments, quizzes, tests, or project deadlines. At the start of the semester, students are invited to E-Mail Connection workshops, where they review each course syllabus with ODS staff. Together, they identify the major deadlines and test dates for which e-mail reminders should be sent. Students have found E-Mail Connection to be simple but effective. They report that reminders keep them organized and give them an opportunity to review upcoming events and keep focused on important deadlines.

With the introduction of the Academikit Study Organizer binder system in 2002, the results have been especially striking. The traditional and convenient calendar and note-taking sections of the Academikit are reinforced by the reminders generated by E-Mail Connection. The combination of the printed study system and the electronic e-mail reminders suits many students. To date, not one of the students participating in the E-Mail Connection program has dropped out of school.

E-Mail Connection uses a familiar technology to motivate students with learning disabilities. By helping students establish timelines for important tasks, E-Mail Connection has proven to be an important way for UIS to accommodate students. The program is also an indication of the resourcefulness of the ODS staff and their determination to offer alternatives to a major challenge facing students with learning disabilities.

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Neuropsychological Assessment Support for Students Suspected of Having Undiagnosed Disabilities

In 1979, DRES had but one registered student with a learning disability who was receiving accommodative academic modifications and adjustments and/or auxiliary aids and services. However, over the ensuing 24 years, that number has grown to over 170

students. In addition, the number of students with attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder, traumatic brain injury, and psychiatric disabilities requesting disability support services has also grown substantially over the past decade. As a result of these changes in the disability demography of UIUC students, over 60 percent of the 677 students registered with DRES and receiving disability support services have documented cognitive disabilities.

Concomitantly, an increasing number of students with cognitive disabilities are arriving without a prior diagnosis. As previously noted, while most students with cognitive disabilities receive diagnoses and accommodations in elementary and/or secondary school, a substantial number of “gifted” students with learning disabilities who have not been previously diagnosed or accommodated are accepted to UIUC through a disability “blind” and highly competitive admissions process. Such individuals are typically high functioning students with above average intelligence whose cognitive strengths were more than sufficient to compensate for their weaknesses within the less rigorous environments of elementary and secondary education. However, in the faster, more rigorous and more competitive environment of UIUC courses, their compensatory skills and cognitive strengths are no longer sufficient to compensate for their disabling weaknesses, and a downward spiral of failure ensues. Without interdiction, such students frequently go on probation and/or must withdraw from the University. Concurrently, the aforementioned context often leads to the development of exacerbating psychiatric symptoms, such as clinical depression and anxiety. In response to this concern, DRES, in collaboration with the Counseling Center and McKinley Health Center, developed a diagnostic intervention to facilitate the identification and accommodation of such students to better ensure their retention and graduation.

The first step in this pilot venture is for students suspected as having undiagnosed cognitive disabilities to be referred to DRES, McKinley Health Center, and the Counseling Center on a self-referral basis, by faculty, by staff, by parents, and by other healthcare and/or student service staff. A brief intake is performed followed by a more extensive screening to rule out other behavioral, psychological, and/or health causes of their difficulties. Students who are deemed to be at risk of having a specific learning disability or attention deficit disorder are then informed that they should obtain a comprehensive psychological/neuropsychological evaluation. Students are also informed that they can contact DRES to arrange for this service; however, they are also given contact information for clinicians in the Urbana-Champaign community and the Psychological Services Center administered by the UIUC Department of Psychology to obtain this service.

By the close of FY03, 300 students had undergone academic screening. Of that number, 151 students were referred for neuropsychological testing, and 148 of those students were identified as having substantially disabling impairments. Of the latter group, pre-post performance data are presently available for 90 students (71 undergraduates and 19 graduate students). To date, 76 percent of the students for whom pre-post data are available experienced a 37-38 percent improvement in their overall grade point average performance as a result of this intervention.

Western Illinois University

FY03 Disability Services Needs Assessment Survey

In response to concern by the IBHE that a sizeable population of university students with disabilities are not receiving campus support services designed to enhance their academic endeavors, WIU undertook a summative evaluation using online survey technology in conjunction with review of historical records to collect both quantitative and qualitative information to estimate the extent of students with disabilities who were not receiving support services on its campus. The online survey was developed in accordance with disability access Bobby® guidelines with survey links provided on the student information system, STARS, during registration for the spring semester, as well as the student services home page. In addition, a mass e-mail was sent to all WIU students inviting their participation.

Results of the online survey indicate a sizeable unmet need for support services among students with disabilities. Of the 497 students participating, 44.47 percent indicated at least one type of categorized disability. Yet, of these students, only 36.65 percent had registered to receive support services. While these students were largely pleased with the support they had received from Disability Support Services (DSS), with 81.48 percent rating services as good to excellent, nearly two-thirds (63.35 percent) of the responding students with disabilities had not registered to receive support services. Of these, 41.12 percent indicated that their disability did not require services at this time or that their disability needs were already being met. Of significant concern, however, were the 23.35 percent who were not aware that such services were available; the 14.21 percent who did not know how to contact the DSS office; the 5.08 percent who had not had the time to request assistance; and the 16.24 percent who listed “other” reasons for not registering for disability support services, predominantly reasons such as “I am not sure if my disability is severe enough,” “I was not aware that my ailments were considered disabilities,” and “I don’t want other people to know about my disability.” Thus, it seems quite likely that fully 58.88 percent of the respondents, who have not sought DSS services, or roughly an additional 82 students, would benefit from DSS support. This is truly a sizeable number in that, even if this survey were to have captured all of the students with disabilities, who have not registered with DSS, these additional 82 would result in 32% increase above the existing 256 student clientele DSS is currently serving.

Western’s DSS has shown a strong increase in students with disabilities seeking support services providing support for only 195 in FY97 while topping the 275 mark in FY03. In fact, the FY03 figure represents a 34-student increase in just a single year. Yet, clearly as these online survey results indicated, there is a sizeable population of students with disabilities who are not receiving, but would benefit, from DSS services. Given that over 50 percent of the students who are not currently receiving disability support services indicated either a lack of awareness that support services were available or a lack of awareness of how to contact the DSS office, there is clearly a need for increased

marketing. However, this likewise indicates a need for increased staffing to meet the needs of a greater support seeking population of students with disabilities. Currently, only 1.75 full-time professional positions support more than 250 students with disabilities. Students who do receive these services commented that their only concern is with staff not always being able to meet their needs in a timely manner. Efforts would certainly be made to accommodate an additional 80+ students, providing them with the support they need and deserve, but additional professional staff becomes increasingly paramount.