

Title: *Serving Students with Disabilities at the Community College. ERIC Digest.* ,
By: Prentice, Mary, ERICEDRS, 20020201
Database: ERIC

Serving *Students with Disabilities* at the *Community College*. ERIC Digest.

ERIC DIGEST

People with ***disabilities*** make up the single largest minority group in the United States. Over the past ten years the traditional profile of disabled persons as older, poorer, less educated and less likely to be employed has begun to change. This is due in part to a "dramatic increase" in the number of ***students*** with ***disabilities*** who are seeking higher education (Smith, 1998). This increase is attributed to, among other things, enhanced technology, expanded support service programs, and higher expectations of what ***students*** with ***disabilities*** can accomplish. A majority of these ***students*** have turned to two-year ***colleges*** for their educational needs; of the ***students*** with ***disabilities*** in higher education institutions in 1997-1998, fifty-five percent were enrolled in ***community colleges*** (Lewis and Ferris, 1999).

To begin serving ***students*** with ***disabilities***, college personnel must require documentation of the ***disability*** so that appropriate services can be arranged. Once a student has indicated that he or she may need assistance, an assortment of curricular, pedagogical, and technological services can be offered in a variety of configurations. Norris and Vasquez (1998) and Smith (1998) detail these services as follows:

* Curricular: special course groupings and faculty training on strategies that faculty can use to integrate ***students*** with ***disabilities*** into their classrooms.

* Pedagogical: providing oral testing, tutors, sign language interpreters, readers, note-takers, and extended testing time

* Technological: books on tape, assistive computer technology, tape recorders, and magnifying devices.

In addition to providing services, many ***community colleges*** have designed specific programs to help ***students*** with ***disabilities***, including strategies to assist ***students*** to be successful in the classroom and to locate employment when they have completed their education. Faculty acceptance and the development of a student-oriented approach have been found to be essential components of creating effective ***disability*** programs (Treloar, 1999).

This Digest presents two examples of successful ***community*** college initiatives designed to aid ***students*** in accessing the educational offerings of the college. It also provides two examples of initiatives designed to enhance career placement options for ***students*** with ***disabilities***. The Digest concludes with suggestions for serving this

population.

PROGRAMS FOR CLASSROOM SUCCESS

Longview **Community** College, Lee's Summit, Missouri

At Longview **Community** College, Academic Bridges to Learning Effectiveness (ABLE) is a support service program designed to teach individuals with learning **disabilities** or brain injuries the skills needed to become independent learners. ABLE's advantage is that it provides a structured curriculum to help **students** learn the skills needed to succeed in college. Every student in the program takes a basic core of courses related to personal awareness, assertiveness skills, and college survival skills. Other courses are offered for **students** who need to build basic academic skills. Additionally, former ABLE **students**, as well as **students** recruited from Phi Theta Kappa, are paired with new ABLE **students** to strengthen peer relationships and increase integration into mainstream campus life (Gugerty and Knutsen, 2000a). Through the support of the ABLE program, the majority of **students** pass their classes with a "C" or better, and over 80% of ABLE **students** are retained from one semester to the next. ABLE **students** are also more likely to transfer to a four-year institution than **students** with **disabilities** who are not enrolled in ABLE (Gugerty and Knutsen, 2000a).

Florence-Darlington Technical College (FDTC), Florence, South Carolina

The Program Accessibility Committee (PAC) at FDTC was designed to recommend appropriate action to the administration to ensure access into FDTC by **students** with **disabilities**, and to provide any appropriate accommodations that might be necessary to assure entry into FDTC (Gugerty and Knutsen, 2000b). The majority of the **students** at FDTC have cognitive **disabilities**, learning **disabilities**, neurological **disabilities**, and health impairments. One unique feature of the PAC is the training and orientation that staff provides for newly hired faculty. PAC has been able to influence how instruction is provided to **students** with **disabilities** through a guidebook given to new faculty and staff. This guidebook addresses questions and concerns that may arise when assisting **students** with **disabilities**, including issues dealing with curriculum, course requirements, and testing. Because of this level of involvement, the majority of **students** report satisfaction with the services that are provided at FDTC (Gugerty and Knutsen, 2000b).

PROGRAMS FOR EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS

Community colleges have also created programs that help **students** with **disabilities** attain jobs after their educational goals have been met. Traditionally, graduates with **disabilities** have needed a significantly longer time to locate employment, partly because people with **disabilities** may lack the skills needed to sell themselves in an interview and may feel discomfort with self-advocating for accommodations that would help them succeed at work (Norton and Field, 1998)

North Iowa Area **Community** College, Mason City, Iowa

Staff members at North Iowa Area **Community** College have developed a career placement project with four areas of placement services to assist **students** with **disabilities** to prepare for successful careers. The four areas of placement services are

career exploration, job readiness, job-seeking skills, and job shadowing. **Students** are given individual career counseling, access to computerized career exploration, and job shadowing opportunities, and are enrolled in a 15-session job-seeking skills class. During an evaluation of the first three years of the program, it was ascertained that career preparedness in **students** with **disabilities** enrolled in the program had been greater than in **students** with **disabilities** who had not participated (Norton and Field, 1998).

College of Dupage, Glen Ellyn, Illinois

The College of DuPage, a Midwestern suburban **community** college, has a career placement and preparedness program designed to help **community** college **students** with **disabilities** find employment after college. **Students** with **disabilities** at this **community** college are given access to the cooperative education (co-op) program on campus. Co-op programs may benefit **students** with **disabilities** because they have multiple objectives such as academic skill development, career development, and personal growth. Indeed, participants in this program have indicated that they have more awareness of the world of work and a better understanding of the emotional, educational, and skill requirements for various occupations (Trach and Harney, 1998).

SUGGESTIONS FOR WORKING WITH **STUDENTS** WITH **DISABILITIES**

One commonality among the four programs highlighted here is an understanding and acceptance of the support needs of **students** with **disabilities**. Staff members in the programs described have been educated in **disability** issues and how they might be addressed in a **community** college. Unfortunately, most educators have not had the benefit of such training. As Treloar (1999) stated, "Few teachers in **community colleges** have any significant prior exposure to **disability**. As a result, disabled persons may feel misunderstood in educational settings and negatively affected by teacher perceptions about **disability**" (p. 31). To better serve **students** with **disabilities**, faculty and staff members at **community colleges** should be trained in four areas: creating receptive environments, becoming aware of language, applying the ADA to **community** college settings, and promoting the success of **students** with **disabilities**. This involves treating **students** with **disabilities** as people, seeing them as able and accepting their differences, learning the appropriate language of **disability**, recognizing a student who may have a **disability** and modifying teaching and learning situations appropriately, and adopting a student-oriented approach to providing education for people with **disabilities** (Treloar, 1999).

CONCLUSION

People with **disabilities** are increasingly turning to higher education to achieve their career and professional goals. As they arrive, **community** college personnel need to welcome these **students** to their campuses while constantly searching for additional curricular, pedagogical, and technical approaches to support these learners in achieving their goals. More professional development, focusing on recognizing a student with a **disability** and making appropriate teaching and learning modifications, needs to be designed for **community** college faculty and staff. If college personnel continue to develop the attitudes of inclusion and acceptance that have shaped the **disability** programs described here, **students** with **disabilities** are likely to continue choosing **community colleges** as the avenue for fulfilling their academic aspirations. Indeed, it is

this acceptance of all that should be at the heart of **disability** programs on **community** college campuses.

REFERENCES

Gugerty, J., & Knutsen, C. (Eds.). (2000a). Serving **students** with significant disabilities in two-year **colleges**: ABLE program, Longview **Community** College, Let's Summit, Missouri. Madison, WI: Center on Education and Work. (ERIC Document Reproduction No. ED 447 635).

Gugerty, J., & Knutsen, C. (Eds.). (2000b). Serving **students** with significant **disabilities** in two-year **colleges**: Program accessibility committee--Florence-Darlington Technical College, Florence, South Carolina. Madison, WI: Center on Education and Work. (ERIC Document Reproduction No. ED 447 633).

Lewis, L., & Farris, E. (1999). An institutional perspective on **students** with **disabilities** in postsecondary education, (NCES 1999046). Washington D. C.: National Center for Education Statistics.

Norris, M., & Vasquez, L. (1998). Creating structured collaboration in implementing assistive technologies in a **community** college setting: Library access: A case study. Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement. (ERIC Document Reproduction No. ED 423 637).

Norton, S., & Field, K. F. (1998). Career placement project: A career readiness program for **community** college **students** with **disabilities**. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 35, 40-44.

Smith, M. C. (1998). The College Access, Retention, and Employment (CARE) program model. Washington, DC: Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. (ERIC Document Reproduction No. ED 418 751).

Trach, J., & Harney, J. Y. (1998). Impact of cooperative education on career development for **community** college students with and without **disabilities**. *The Journal of Vocational Education Research*, 23 (2), 147-158.

Treloar, L. L. (1999). Editor's choice: Lessons on **disability** and the rights of **students**. *Community College Review*, 27(1), 30-40. (ERIC Document Reproduction No. EJ 590 042).

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education under contract number ED-99-CO-0010. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. ERIC Digests are in the public domain and may be freely reproduced.