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Student affairs practice and students with disabilities

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Student affairs practice and students with disabilities

Abstract

The composition of the college and university student body in the United States is growing more and more diverse, and reflecting more proportionately the population we currently have in the world. One way this is apparent is that students who have disabilities, physical challenges, and special needs are choosing to attend institutions of higher education in increasing numbers. Currently, there is much discussion in higher education involving the full integration of students with disabilities and physical challenges on college campuses, and about what needs to be done to facilitate this integration process.

STUDENT AFFAIRS PRACTICE AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

**A Research Paper
Presented to
The Department of Educational Administration
and Counseling
University of Northern Iowa**

**In Partial Fulfillment
for the Requirements for the Degree**

Master of Arts in Education

by

**Ann Michele Muller
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Student Affairs Practice and Students with Disabilities

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The composition of the college and university student body in the United States is growing more and more diverse, and reflecting more proportionately the population we currently have in the world. One way this is apparent is that students who have disabilities, physical challenges, and special needs are choosing to attend institutions of higher education in increasing numbers. Currently, there is much discussion in higher education involving the full integration of students with disabilities and physical challenges on college campuses, and about what needs to be done to facilitate this integration process.

The signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on July 26, 1990 signaled a turning point in the United States in terms of how to accommodate persons with disabilities and physical challenges: it is now against the law to discriminate in any manner against persons with physical challenges or disabilities, or prevent them from participating in daily life activities, such as attending colleges and universities. This act, and the related acts of Congress preceding it, did much for tangible aspects on campuses; it provided for building and furnishing accessible classrooms, restrooms, offices, libraries, and other services, and is designed to assure that equal access is granted for all qualified students. However, research has suggested that many college personnel involved with students who have disabilities, physical challenges, or special needs feel that they know very little about how to accommodate them (McCarthy and Campbell, 1993, p. 123).

The purposes of this paper are threefold: first, to review the current literature about students with disabilities and challenges to determine the history of the student disabilities movement in the United States; second, to examine the attitudes of faculty in regard to working with students with disabilities or physical challenges as determined by a campus survey conducted

in the fall of 1995 at the University of Northern Iowa; and third, to suggest possible ways for student affairs personnel to assist both students and faculty in providing appropriate and needed accommodations to students who qualify for them.

Review of the Current Literature

There is general disagreement in the academic community, and elsewhere, about the terminology regarding disabilities. Although the use of the term “handicapped” is no longer accepted, an appropriate alternative has not been agreed upon. This paper reflects an attempt to be inclusive in the use of its descriptive language. Terms such as “persons with disabilities,” “physical challenges,” and “special needs” are all used in an effort not to offend or exclude. Until we as a community and society reach agreement on this issue, I feel that using a variety of terms is the correct way to handle this dilemma.

Before looking at the specific findings in the current research, it is important to review and understand the history of the disabilities movement in the United States. It has only been within the last 25 years that students with disabilities, physical challenges, and special needs have significantly attracted the attention of researchers in higher education (Burbach & Babbitt, 1988, p. 12). However, much interest currently surrounds this population. The literature review is organized into the following five sections or areas of interest. The first section deals with the history and background leading to the creation of the ADA. The second deals with who we indicate when we refer to students with physical challenges, disabilities, or special needs. The third section discusses how the ADA and other disabilities legislation affects college campuses. Section four explains the options available for assisting faculty with issues regarding disabilities, and the role college student affairs plays in presenting these options. The fifth section summarizes

what research studies of faculty members at other colleges and universities have found regarding this issue.

What is the History and Background Leading to the ADA?

The realization of the need for equal access to education for persons with physical challenges, disabilities, and special needs is a relatively new idea. Our society did not seem to realize the importance of educating all persons, regardless of disability, until it began to be accepted and understood that ‘disabled’ did not mean ‘unable.’ Beziat (1990) explains that until the national movement toward “normalization” in the late 1970s, where the trend moved away from placing persons with disabilities in large institutions, society did not recognize the need to educate persons with physical challenges or special needs, because the majority of them were not in mainstream society (p. 21). Shortly after the normalization movement, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 was passed, which allowed all children the right to attend free public education, regardless of physical challenge or disability.

Also of great importance at this time was the passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This legislation was also important for persons with disabilities and their rights to education, especially Section 504, which “prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by any entity receiving federal financial assistance . . . and must assure that the programs and services they provide are accessible to all ‘otherwise qualified handicapped individuals’” (Jarrow, 1991, p. 26). This was a very important piece of legislation which was instrumental in defining the educational rights of persons with special needs and with disabling and physically challenging conditions. It meant that any college or university receiving federal funding had to create accessible programs and services. However, the wording in it was rather unclear, and guidelines for its compliance

took four years to be written. These factors meant that little was done for students with disabilities, special needs, and physical challenges in education, since the legislation was not inclusive of all parts of the educational system, especially within the private sector.

The Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law on July 26, 1990, and “extends the Rehabilitation Act’s anti-discrimination prohibition to all private and public colleges and universities regardless of receipt of federal funds” (Frank & Wade, 1993, p. 26). The passage of this act further defined the rights of individuals with disabilities, special needs, and physical challenges, and didn’t limit them to the public sector. This meant that changes now needed to take place in private educational settings as well. These specific requirements will be discussed in section three of the literature review.

Who Are We Talking About When We Say ‘Disabled?’

In order to more fully understand and better work with students with challenging or disabling conditions, it is necessary to define what is meant by a disability. The Americans with Disabilities Act defines a disability as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (e.g., walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, learning, or working)” (Rumrill, Gordon, & Roessler, 1993, p. 226). In an educational sense, a disability would refer to something which may prevent a student from having the same educational opportunities as other students if no alterations in the program or facility are made. This would include difficulty in mobility, learning disabilities, visual impairments, hearing impairments, and other similar conditions.

According to the statistics provided at the 1995 National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) teleconference on disability issues, one person in eleven has some form

of a disability (NASPA Teleconference Brochure, 1995, p. 15). An important point to be made here is that a student with a disability, physical challenge, or special need is not always identifiable by appearance, which is especially true of students with learning disabilities. It is the responsibility of the student to inform those who need to know of the condition so that the proper accommodations can be made. According to the tenets of the ADA, a student must provide documentation of the disability or challenge, such as a medical doctor's statement, to be eligible for such assistance. This documentation needs to be provided to a professional agency, such as the state's rehabilitation agency or the college or university's disability services office. Without the proper forms of documentation, a college or university legally does not have to provide such assistance.

How Exactly Does the ADA Affect Campuses?

The ADA does have far-reaching effects on campuses. The first aspect that usually comes to mind in this category is the kind of expenses associated with modifications made to physical structures around the campus, such as elevator and lift access in buildings, and curb cuts and wider doorways for wheelchair access. However, with so many schools covered by federal funding, the typical costs of these types of adaptations are quite low. It was unfortunate that initially, much of the focus on the ADA was concerned with the issue of physical costs. It has been shown, however, that this was overestimated and overstated, and that the actual costs of modifying facilities is much less than earlier thought (Jarrow, 1991, p. 27).

The ADA requires that colleges and universities participate in "readily achievable barrier removal," which means that access to buildings and programs must be in place, rather than need to be requested by a person with a physical challenge or disability (McGuinness, 1993, p. 23).

Simply put, the ADA requires that all areas of postsecondary education be made accessible to persons with physical challenges and disabilities, and all services and programs be made available to them, so that they have the same access as any other student. There must be a way to make every program accessible to an otherwise qualified person with a challenge or disability, and college personnel must be made aware of this fact so that benefits can be reaped from it.

Possibly the most visible difference on college campuses as a result of the ADA is simply the increased diversity of the student populations there. The ADA has made education accessible for all students with physical challenges, special needs, and disabilities, resulting in a richer and more diverse population. This is a very important effect of the ADA, since persons with disabilities were formerly denied the same access to education which was enjoyed by others. The addition of increasing numbers of disabled and challenged students does, however, present new and unique situations for faculty and staff; those who were previously not accustomed to working with persons with challenges and disabilities often have many new skills to learn. Fortunately, there are many services to assist faculty and staff in accommodating their students with special needs and challenges.

What Options Are Available For Assistance?

With the new regulations for compliance with the ADA come many new sources to assist faculty and staff in implementing them. Many campuses have offices specifically intended to facilitate students with disabilities, physical challenges, and special needs, and to help them work effectively with faculty and staff members. Seminars and other information-sharing sessions can also help to accomplish this task. Another excellent source for assistance for working with students with challenges is the students themselves. They are often the most beneficial resource

for information on what needs to be done to assist them, and on what kinds of auxiliary aids, services, or assistive technology will best benefit them.

Student affairs professionals are another excellent source of assistance in this area. The literature suggests that many faculty and staff members feel more comfortable and secure in working with students with challenges when they have a source to consult for information. McCarthy and Campbell (1993) found that a large majority of the faculty respondents to their survey (82%) indicated “access to a professional staff member” was the most helpful resource to them. Clearly, there are still many misconceptions in the academic community, and in the general population, regarding students with disabilities and challenges, and it is only natural for people to seek information about this topic, to assist in making sound and informed decisions.

How Do Other Universities Feel About this Issue?

Attitudes toward implementing the ADA and working to accommodate disabled, physically challenged, and special needs students can vary from college to college, and from faculty member to faculty member. McCarthy and Campbell (1993) conducted a survey to determine the attitudes which faculty members at a large land-grant university had in regard to students with challenges, and to gauge their reactions to services available for assistance. This is the only study of its kind of which I am aware.

McCarthy and Campbell were interested in discovering whether faculty felt that the services provided for students with challenges and disabilities, and for faculty interaction with them, were adequate, and whether the ADA had any impact on their views or actions. They used a survey format to attempt to assess the feelings and attitudes of the faculty members on their campus regarding what types of students with disabilities they had encountered, and what

they felt they as professionals could do to assist those students. According to the authors, this study was done to “provide information useful in re-evaluating Disabled Student Services . . . and could also be used to develop a format for communicating information about disabled students to the university community” (McCarthy & Campbell, 1993, p. 123). Their survey consisted of questions with a Likert scale format, and allowed the faculty members to share their own opinions. They determined, among other things, that faculty members were willing to learn more about working with disabled and physically challenged students. The faculty for the most part felt that they were lacking in information about disabilities and would benefit from learning about them. The authors recommended that a resource person be available to answer questions about disabilities for the general campus, and that “brief fact sheets” about specific disabilities be created and made available for faculty use (McCarthy & Campbell, 1993, p. 123).

Description and Discussion of Research Findings

The focus of this study is similar to that of the previously described McCarthy and Campbell (1993) survey. The purpose of conducting this study was to determine if faculty and staff at the University of Northern Iowa feel that they have adequate information for working with students with disabilities, physical challenges, and special needs, and if they are aware that these students are on the campus. I hypothesized that I would find responses and issues very similar to the McCarthy and Campbell results: that faculty would be aware of disability issues, but be unsure as to how to deal with them.

In terms of the practical utility of conducting this research, it was my intent to determine what the faculty felt were unaddressed issues regarding disabilities. Student affairs practice may play an important role in facilitating the integration of students with challenges on the campus,

and it was hoped that insight into what services could be created or improved would be gained.

Participants

The population for this study was all teaching faculty at the University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa, including both full- and part-time faculty who were employed in teaching during the Fall 1995 semester (N=650). A systematic sample with a random start was drawn from a faculty listing compiled at the campus mail center; this yielded a sample of 260 participants for the study. I chose to include all faculty for several reasons. Students with challenges, disabilities, and special needs are present in all college disciplines, regardless of whether people are aware of this fact or not. I was interested in a more diverse and encompassing set of responses than I would have received with a more limited group of respondents, such as only undergraduate faculty or those from a specific department.

Instrumentation

As mentioned earlier, McCarthy and Campbell (1993) completed a similar study on this topic at Oklahoma State University. After several telephone conversations with McCarthy, I received a copy of their survey questions, which were not published with the results of the study. With the author's permission, I developed a questionnaire based on their research instrument. I used colleagues and peer review to help revise the instrument for its utilization on the campus of University of Northern Iowa.

The finished instrument I devised was a 22-question survey to gauge faculty attitudes about students with physical challenges, disabilities, and special needs. The survey included 5 demographic and personal characteristic questions, including academic rank and gender. The remainder of the questions were Likert responses, open-ended questions, and closed-ended

questions, dealing with faculty perceptions of students with challenges, about services available to assist with disability issues, and regarding challenges faced by faculty in regard to issues of disability awareness. Appendix 1 contains a copy of the survey instrument.

Procedures

Materials and information about the survey were sent to the sample of 260 faculty members at the University of Northern Iowa. Each participant received a letter explaining the intent of the research project and a copy of the survey. Also included was a statement assuring the anonymity of all responses, and expressing the hope that all respondents would answer the questions in a truthful, candid manner. The packet also included a return envelope. All correspondence was done through the campus mail system.

Results of the Survey

Respondent Characteristics

Surveys were returned by 94 respondents, from a total of 260 sent out. This represents a total response rate of 36%. Fifty-four of the respondents were male (57%), 32 were female (34%), and 8 chose not to self-identify. They were distributed between the colleges of education (28%), social and behavioral sciences (12%), natural sciences (15%), humanities and fine arts (27%), and business (9%). Ten respondents did not specify their department. In regard to academic rank, 19 respondents were full professors (20%), 27 were associate professors (29%), 33 were assistant professors (35%), 7 were adjunct professors (7%), 5 were instructors (5%), and 2 were professional and scientific faculty (2%). One person chose not to answer this question. Of the 94 respondents, 11 said they themselves had a disability (12%), 78 indicated they did not (83%), and 5 persons chose not to respond.

Initial Findings

Since students with disabilities, special needs, and physical challenges are increasing in number on college campuses, it was important to determine how many faculty members would report that they had instructed students with disabilities in their classes at some time. Since the respondents could select as many options as applied, the percentage totals do not add up to 100 percent. Forty-nine respondents had students with visual impairments (52%); 38 had students with auditory impairments (40%); 75 had students with physical disabilities (80%); and 69 had students with learning disabilities (73%). Five respondents reported that they had never encountered students with disabilities or challenges. Additionally, other write-in responses to this question included students with mental retardation, behavior disorders, brain injuries, cerebral palsy, psychological problems, emotional problems, manic depressive disorder, and chronic fatigue syndrome.

A section of the survey gave statements with Likert-type responses, dealing with aspects of teaching students with special needs and challenges. The results are summarized as follows. Thirty-three respondents (35%) agreed or strongly agreed that students with disabilities should be advised not to enroll in a course where evaluation of their performance due to their disabilities would be difficult. Fifty-seven respondents (61%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 4 people chose not to respond. However, 53 respondents (56%) agreed or strongly agreed that University policy should allow for modifications in course requirements for students with disabilities who are unable to meet those requirements due to the disability. Thirty-five respondents (37%) disagreed, while six did not respond. Similarly, eighty respondents (85%) agreed or strongly agreed that University policy should allow for extended test time, oral examinations, and the like for students

with disabilities, while 11 respondents (12%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Three people did not respond to this particular item.

In regard to class participation issues, all 94 respondents were in agreement that students with physical disabilities should be required to participate as fully as possible in class activities (36% agreed, 67% strongly). Similarly, 92 respondents (98%) agreed or strongly agreed that students with disabilities should be encouraged to use such aids as tape recordings, computer programs, and the like in their classes. One respondent strongly disagreed (1%) and one person chose not to respond. Eighty-eight respondents (94%) would like students with disabilities to inform them of their disabilities before the beginning of classes; five respondents (5%) disagreed, and one person did not respond.

With regard to physical facilities on the campus, 62 respondents (66%) felt that more accessible classroom locations should be available for students with disabilities. Twenty-two respondents (23%) disagreed with this idea, and ten people chose not to answer. Seventy-six respondents (81%) agreed or strongly agreed that faculty should be willing to have meetings with a student who has a physical disability in a location most accessible to the student. Fifteen respondents (16%) disagreed with this statement, two of them strongly.

Another section of the survey dealt with sources of information regarding disabilities. When asked which campus resources had been utilized by faculty, 2 persons reported contacting the vice president, 2 had contacted the dean, 19 had consulted with a department head, 4 had contacted the Affirmative Action office, 24 reported using Student Disability Services, 8 had consulted their peers in academic departments, 8 had contacted the health center, 26 had called the counseling center, 20 had contacted academic advising, 2 had consulted with admissions, and

5 had used the Center for Academic Achievement. Thirty-three respondents reported that they had never used campus resources for this purpose.

It was of interest to me as a student affairs practitioner to determine what other kinds of resources or information pertaining to students with challenges or special needs would be useful and helpful to faculty members. Thirty-five respondents (37%) indicated a workshop or seminar; 54 (57%) indicated that reference materials pertaining to specific disabilities would be helpful; 77 respondents (82%) wanted a resource person to answer specific questions; and 55 (59%) requested a listing of faculty responsibilities. Many other suggestions were written in, including the need for consultants, in-service training, and greater availability of assistive technology. The full range of suggestions is listed in appendix 2.

A question was also asked to determine the challenges faced by faculty in working with students with disabilities, challenges, and special needs. Once again, the entire list of suggestions can be found in appendix 3; some of the more frequent responses included finding adequate time in already full schedules to work with students with special needs; determining fair accommodations and modifications; and overcoming the lack of knowledge about disabilities.

A final question asked pertained to whether or not the Americans with Disabilities Act had any impact on the way faculty members interacted with students who have challenges or disabilities. Few people chose to respond to this question, but of those who did, the response was overwhelming that it had not. Most faculty members said that they had always treated all students fairly, regardless of legislation. However, some respondents indicated that the ADA now heightened their sensitivities to and awareness of disabilities, and now included a statement in their syllabi regarding students with disabilities and challenges. The full range of responses to this

question can be found in appendix 4.

Discussion

Implications and Conclusions

In this study, I felt that respondents were honest and open in their answers, and that a great amount of valuable data were collected. In response to the hypothesis I posed at the beginning of the study, I am at once pleased and disheartened by the findings. As I expected, my findings were somewhat similar to those in the McCarthy and Campbell study. Faculty members for the most part were aware that students with challenges, special needs, and disabilities were in their classes, but many faced challenges when it came to assisting them. As was the case in the previous study, a resource person to answer questions was the most requested service that could be provided to faculty. Overall, I felt that many of the respondents were eager and willing to assist students with challenges, but were still unsure what was required of them.

Unfortunately, I also found many negative attitudes surrounding the serving of students with disabilities. I was hoping that with the ADA legislation being over five years old, more people would feel changed by it. A number of responses to the statements posed in this survey indicated that many faculty are unaware of, and unconcerned by, what is required by the ADA. For example, over 34% of respondents disagreed with the statement that accommodations should be made in classes for students with disabilities and challenges. This is not a choice; it is required by law to grant equal access to all qualified individuals. It is unfortunate that some people have to fight for what many of us enjoy as a right.

I was also disappointed by the failure of many respondents to accept learning disabilities as a legitimate challenge or special need. Many respondents added comments to the surveys

regarding this issue. For example, one respondent indicated that he/she felt that the fact that “learning disabilities” were included in the study was ludicrous, because there was no such thing. According to the definition of a disability as given in the ADA, any condition that substantially limits a life activity is considered a disability. If a person has a problem with reading, which would limit the activity of learning, the ADA recognizes this as a disability. More educational efforts need to be put in place so that everyone understands this.

The implication of this study seem to be that although many of the respondents report positive attitudes and actions toward students with disabilities, there is still much that needs to be done in the arena of faculty involvement with students with challenges and disabilities. For example, the fact that 15 people responded that they were not willing to meet with a student who has a physical disability in an accessible location for the student, indicates that negative attitudes toward challenges students still exist among some of those who serve them.

It is also apparent that there is much disagreement surrounding what constitutes a “disability,” as was indicated by what categories of people were listed as “disabled,” and by other comments listed in the challenges section of the surveys. Aside from the fact that learning disabilities need better definition as discussed above, it appears that better definitions also need to exist for all kinds of disabilities, challenges, and special needs. Perhaps it will also become necessary to create clearer standards for students to provide documentation of their disabilities to eliminate some of the misunderstandings.

Specific implications for student affairs personnel are many. The sheer number of suggestions for services indicates that many of the persons surveyed are in need of assistance regarding disability issues. From the varied responses received, and the number of people who

were against more services, the manner in which they are presented needs to be carefully considered. For example, the same number of respondents indicated that they would like in-service training on this topic as did those who were against it. It seems that perhaps the answer may be to provide services (such as the resource person requested by so many respondents) for those who want them, but not to impose them on others who don't. The fact that similar services and programs were suggested by many respondents indicates that a need exists beyond what we already provide, and that the new services seem obvious to a large number of people. It is notable that not one of the suggestions given would be unrealistically difficult or expensive to implement.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The validity of this study was limited by the small number of faculty members who took the time to respond. With this small number, I cannot be certain that those who did not respond are not significantly different from those who did. For this reason, generalizing to a larger population may not be possible. Therefore, replication of the study is advised. Some suggestions for this include rewording some of the questions which were interpreted in different ways by respondents. Also, respondents indicated confusion regarding terms used to describe students.

Although the results may not be generalizable to a larger population, the data collected in regard to what services could be provided remains valuable. There are numerous suggestions listed in the appendices which could be implemented by student affairs practitioners in a variety of settings. The data from this survey seem to indicate that there is a definite need for more services.

Educators have always had the task of working with students with special needs. Now, the ADA mandates that all students with disabilities, challenges, and special needs be accommodated in higher education. Some educators feel no pressure from this; others feel very

insecure. Hopefully, student affairs personnel can help alleviate some of the difficulties surrounding the serving of students with disabilities by creating services and programs which faculty can benefit from and use.

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Appendix 1
DISABILITIES SURVEY

PLEASE CIRCLE THE RESPONSE REFLECTING YOUR VIEWS ABOUT THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

SA - Strongly Agree
A - Agree

D - Disagree
SD - Strongly Disagree

1) A student with a physical disability should be advised against enrolling in a course if the student's performance would be difficult to evaluate due to the disability.

SA A D SD

2) Taking into account a student's physical disability, the student should be required to participate as fully as possible in class activities.

SA A D SD

3) A faculty member should be willing to have meetings with a student who has a physical disability in a location which is most accessible to the student.

SA A D SD

4) The University should provide more classroom locations to accommodate students with physical disabilities.

SA A D SD

5) University policy should allow modifications or substitutions in course requirements if a student with a disability cannot successfully meet the standard requirement due to the disability.

SA A D SD

6) Faculty members should encourage disabled students to use compensatory technology (tape recordings, computer programs, etc.) to aid the student in the course.

SA A D SD

7) If seminars about working with students with disabilities were offered on this campus, I would want to attend.

SA A D SD

8) University policy should provide modifications in testing procedures for students with disabilities, such as extended test time, oral examinations, etc.

SA A D SD

9) Students with disabilities should inform their professors of their disabilities prior to the beginning of a class.

SA A D SD

10) Sources of information pertaining to students with disabilities which would be helpful to me are (check all that apply):

- a workshop or seminar
 reference materials for specific disabilities
 a resource person to answer specific questions
 a listing of faculty responsibilities
 others (specify) _____

11) Identify any campus resources at UNI which you have used to assist you in working with students with disabilities (check all that apply):

- Vice President
 Dean
 Department Head
 Affirmative Action Office
 Student Disability Services
 Academic Departments
 Health Center
 Counseling Center
 Academic Advising
 Admissions
 Center for Academic Achievement
 Others (specify) _____
 I have never used campus resources for this purpose

12) Identify which of the following student populations you have encountered professionally (check all that apply):

- Students with visual impairments
 Students with auditory impairments
 Students with physical disabilities
 Students with learning disabilities
 Others (specify) _____
 I have never encountered disabled students

13) If there are costs involved in serving students with disabilities, where do you feel this money should rightly come from?

- Student fees
 General funding
 Federal money
 The students with disabilities
 Other (specify) _____

14) What types of resources could be offered that would be helpful to you in working with students with disabilities?

15) What challenges have you faced as an educator regarding students with disabilities?

16) Has the ADA (the Americans with Disabilities Act) had any impact on the way you work with students who are disabled? Why or why not?

17) What is your academic rank or position?

- Professor
 Associate Professor
 Assistant Professor
 Adjunct Professor
 Graduate Teaching Assistant
 Other (specify) _____

18) In what academic college do you teach? _____

19) Are you male or female?

- Male
 Female

20) Do you have a disability (excluding correctable vision/hearing problems)?

- Yes
 No

21) Years employed at UNI _____

22) Please include any additional suggestions or comments you have regarding students with disabilities. Use the back of this sheet if necessary.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey - it is much appreciated!

Appendix 2

The following are responses taken from the disabilities survey and represent the feelings and attitudes of those faculty members surveyed only. These answers are in no way a projection of the opinions and/or attitudes of the author of the project.

Responses to Question 14:

What types of resources could be offered that would be helpful to you in working with students with disabilities?

- *transcribers for Braille
- *note taker services
- *test reader services
- *need an office/person to contact to help achieve classroom goals and objectives
- *consultants
- *making buildings fully accessible
- *knowing what persons with certain disabilities are capable of achieving
- *more teaching assistants
- *more audio-visual equipment
- *equipment for making hard copy from blackboards
- *work study students to proctor tests or give oral exams
- *panels of students with disabilities
- *advance notice of students with disabilities before coming to the first class
- *in-service training about disabilities
- *projection equipment for visually impaired students
- *tutors
- *how to identify students with learning disabilities
- *list of resources to contact
- *ideas from other instructors on how they handle students with disabilities
- *someone to transfer overheads to large print and written materials to tape
- *no more university policies on this issue
- *how to define learning disabilities
- *brochures on disabilities
- *assistance in planning alternate assignments
- *workshops
- *newsletters
- *phone call from student disability services on how well I'm doing
- *seminars
- *student aid
- *putting classes with students in wheelchairs on the first floor
- *assistance in evaluating student performance
- *how to plan fair alternate assignments
- *have an ADA speaker come to classes
- *need adjustments in large lecture halls

Appendix 3

The following are responses taken from the disabilities survey and represent the feelings and attitudes of those faculty members surveyed only. These answers are in no way a projection of the opinions and/or attitudes of the author of the project.

Responses to Question 15:

What challenges have you faced as an educator regarding students with disabilities?

- *attitudes of others toward working with students with disabilities
- *rethinking the work I normally require to see how it may impact someone with a disability
- *making modifications to help the student be successful
- *how to understand disability, yet minimize impact on learning
- *only finding ways to appropriately accommodate the students; it takes extra time and effort, but it is not a problem; however, it could be if there were many students with disabilities in the same semester
- *trying to be inclusive in classroom activities
- *deciding what accommodations need to be made
- *trying to understand any limitations that need to be considered
- *room assignments - i.e. 4th floor for wheelchair-users
- *walking the fine line between those who want and need help, and those who are strongly independent
- *preparing students to enter profession when I know they will not be likely to achieve employment - unrealistic goals
- *the biggest ongoing issue for me is students with apparent learning disabilities who try to dodge getting assistance; for example, I would be most willing to accommodate a student, but I feel it's unfair to others in the class to make such accommodation unless the student is willing to offer evidence that he/she has sought help from academic advising, or wherever documentation comes from
- *poor communication between service staff and faculty
- *determining fair and equitable standards that are applicable to all class members
- *understanding special needs and abilities of students with disabilities
- *my subject is most difficult to teach to visually impaired students
- *finding the time to deal with students with disabilities on a one-to-one basis
- *test-taking is a problem
- *lots of extra test times are needed
- *I had a blind student in a lab course who refused to have the same "aide" from week to week - I found it necessary to "train" new aides weekly, and none were in her major
- *arranging classrooms not designed for them to fit wheelchairs
- *reading exams to students
- *I learned sign language to communicate with hearing impaired students directly
- *in one case, a student used her disability as an excuse
- *the term "learning disability" is too vague
- *arranging visual materials
- *inconsistent class attendance due to disability-related factors

- *power failure shut down elevator and stranded wheelchair users on third floor
- *visually impaired students can't see blackboard, overheads, VCR
- *knowing what adjustments are appropriate
- *business building needs better facilities - i.e. sloping floors a problem, etc.
- *assessment issues
- *students with learning disabilities who dodge getting assistance
- *had to plead to get Braille on elevator
- *providing accommodations is a royal pain for instructors
- *explaining to other students why "X" gets more time
- *determining whether poor performance is due to disability or lack of understanding of the material
- *spending as much time with one student as 20-25 others
- *being asked to waive required courses
- *poor counseling- when students cannot become employable in the areas they are training in and counselors won't advise as such
- *arranging alternate test sites
- *I look at this as an opportunity for me to be creative as an instructor
- *time is already scarce
- *meeting the needs of students with disabilities, yet holding them accountable for meeting an accepted standard
- *how do I evaluate them
- *some disabled students are disruptive
- *I have never had a student with a disability
- *it should be the students' full responsibility to set up accommodations
- *physical disabilities and field trips - hinders the education of the non-disabled
- *students with "learning disabilities" simply do not belong in college any more than the blind belong behind the wheel of a car
- *students who do not recognize or choose to deal with their disabilities - virtually impossible to work with
- *how to help a wheelchair student exit the 4th floor during an emergency
- *knowing how far to push students
- *finding enough outside class time
- *access to all offices is not there
- *being informed too late in the semester about the disability
- *the time needed to revamp everything I do - a big burden
- *dealing with students with disabilities detracts from the quality of educational experience of other students

Appendix 4

The following are responses taken from the disabilities survey and represent the feelings and attitudes of those faculty members surveyed only. These answers are in no way a projection of the opinion and/or attitudes of the author of the project.

Responses to Question 16:

Has the ADA (the Americans with Disabilities Act) had nay impact on the way you work with students who are disabled? Why or why not?

YES

- *strengthened the concepts of Section 504 mandating non-exclusion
- *helped call attention to various disabilities and how it may impact my teaching and their learning
- *have become more sensitive
- *put a statement in my syllabus
- *made us all more aware
- *more information available - attended ADA workshop
- *workshop for department heads alerted me to ADA and discrimination
- *I am more compassionate

NO

- *I've always been open to teaching students with disabilities
- *the accommodations were already being made
- *not really - little information reaches grass roots
- *my classes are open to all students
- *not in my personal work - I try to accommodate students with challenging conditions to the best of my abilities and in the spirit of the ADA
- *haven't dealt with very many disabled students, but have always tried to work with them
- *none whatsoever
- *it has not had impact
- *I have made the same arrangements as before
- *I've always been professionally sensitive to these issues
- *I don't know what the ADA requires
- *I've never had disabled students in class
- *I try to see students first, and disabilities second
- *I didn't need legislation to tell me to do this