SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: 30 YEARS OF ADVOCACY

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Abstract

Over the past half century higher education in the United States has faced legislation which has challenged campuses to develop and implement policies and practices that effectively promote the access, retention, and graduation of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities, whose equal access to higher education has been mandated for the past 25 years by Federal legislation, notably the transition language in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA),Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, have made a significant presence on postsecondary campuses. One unintended consequence of this legislation appears to be that institutions may be content with only meeting the letter of the law by providing accommodations and supports for equal access to the physical plant and to academic instruction, while neglecting other spheres of need. However, leading theories of persistence in higher education highlight both academic integration and social integration, as reflected in having a sense of "belonging" on campus, as key factors for student success. Emerging trends suggest that the next phase of progress for students with disabilities in higher education will be establishing and implementing shared norms about what it takes to make a campus barrier-free and welcoming – a place where disability is not seen as a marker of membership in a "special" group virtually nobody wants to be a part of but is, rather, accepted and appreciated as an element in a valued range of diversity.

As important as Section 504 and the ADA have been, and as important as it is for people with disabilities to have access [to] legal remedies to overcome discrimination, compliance with the law is not enough. It is merely the starting point…universities and postsecondary institutions must move 'beyond compliance' and adopt new philosophies and approaches regarding students with disabilities (Taylor, 2003).

The Civil Rights movement that emerged in the United States in the 1960s focused on ending discrimination against Blacks, but it also inspired action by numerous other marginalized groups, including people with disabilities (Fleischer & Zames, 2001). People with disabilities were, however, different from other groups fighting for their rights because they also comprise a marginalized minority within those groups – a status that has been described as a "double or triple whammy" by making them liable to discrimination on at least two counts (Hollins, Downer, Farquarson, Oyepeju, & Kopper, 2002).

Education was a major battle arena as members and advocates of marginalized groups came together to demandequal access and treatment in the public school system and higher education. People with disabilities arguablyfaced the highest barriers of all since they were liable to be excluded from even attending school and many institutions of higher education (IHEs) routinely rejected applicants because they had disabilities (Paul, 2000).Significant victoriescame in the 1970s with passage by the U.S. Congress of what is now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), which assuresa "free appropriate public education" for children with disabilities ages three through 21, as well as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973(Section 504, 1973), which prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities byeducational institutions, including IHEs, receiving federal funding.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA, 1990) expanded this requirement to institutions not receiving federal funding.Later reauthorizations of the IDEA came to define special education's ultimate purposeas the preparation of children with disabilities for adulthood, particularly with respect to"further education, employment, and independent living." The IDEA supports this purpose by requiring that transition-to-adulthood services be provided to students in special education based on individualized transition plansdeveloped by age 16 at the latest. Special educators and many parents commonly encourage students to aim for further education in the form of postsecondary learning, and research indicates this is listed as a goal in over 80% of transition plans of students with disabilities (Newman et al., 2011).

Students with Disabilities in Higher Education

The combination of special education and transition-to-adulthood services required by the IDEA and the nondiscrimination mandates of Section 504 and the ADA have been credited with increases in the rates of enrollment in higher education by people with disabilities (Wolanin & Steele, 2004). Disability in higher education may be examined from the perspective of (a) differences among students with disabilities (SWDs) or (b) disability as a component of diversity.With regard to the former, there is tremendous diversity among SWDs as to their kinds of disabilities, each of which tends to be associated with different sets of challenges. It is common to distinguish between disabilities that are (a) obvious or visible and therefore most likely to come to mind for members of the public in response to the term "disabilities" (e.g., conditions requiring wheelchair use, blindness) and (b) those that are hidden or invisible (e.g., learning disabilities, attention disorders). Fewer than 10% of SWDs have obvious disabilities, while the great majority has hidden disabilities (Newman, et al., 2011).

The predominance of hidden disabilities is significant when considering the provision of services, supports or accommodations for students with disability in higher education. One reason is that students with hidden disabilities are not visible on campus in the same way as students of color or wheelchair users might be seen, which is likely to leave the mistaken impression that disabilities are rare among students at an IHE. Another reason is that students with hidden disabilities are quite likely to want to keep them hidden due to the associated stigma, and therefore do not self-disclose to peers who might provide social supports, or on surveys used to estimate SWD numbers, or to obtain classroom accommodations and other supports to which they might be entitled under the ADA (Litner, Mann-Feder, & Guerard, 2005).

With regard to disability as a component of diversity in higher education, numerous diverse subpopulations have been identified and studied. To gain a view of the range of subpopulations and the attention given to them, numerous sourcesindicateSWDs have substantially lower retention rates than their peers without disabilities (Belch, 2005; Newman et al., 2011). SWDs are more than twice as likely to attend two-year than four-year postsecondary institutions (Newman et al., 2011) requiring such institutions to provide extensive student services often with a commitment to the development of the "whole person" (Braxton, 2009).Often students with disabilities are not a high priority for receiving support in accessing higher education. Another indication of the anomalous position of SWDs among diverse subpopulations is that they are often not included in the diversity initiatives provided by many IHEs to foster greater understanding of and connections between diverse student subpopulations (Higbee, Siaka, & Bruch, 2007).

Doing "What is Right" Beyond Compliance: Importance of a Sense of Belonging

The Disability Rights Movement was driven in large part by the resentment of people with disabilities in that they were viewed and treated as second-class citizens. Despite much progress in promoting the full inclusion of people with disabilities, SWDs who are given

voice in interviews and focus groups still report, often with much emotion, that they face many barriers and often experience marginalization on campus (e.g., Denhart, 2008; Myers & Bastian, 2010; Najarian, 2008; Troiano, 2003).This is a matter of concern in view of the widespread understanding in higher education that students who feel accepted are more likely to persist and graduate than those who do not (e.g., Tinto&Pusser, 2006).

Research indicates that if new students do not start to feel like they "belong" within eight weeks of arriving on campus, they are at especially high risk for dropping out (Raley, 2007), while students who develop supportive networks tend to be more successful academically (Antonio, 2001; Thomas, 2000). It has been argued thathaving viable support networks may be particularly critical for SWDs in view of the greater challenges they are likely to face compared to their peers without disabilities (Mamiseishvili& Koch, 2010). SWDs, however, often experience stigmatization and social exclusion due to the negative attitudes of their peers and even faculty, or avoidance by others because of uncertainties about how to appropriately interact (Myers & Bastian, 2010; Nevill& White, 2011).

It is notable that a great deal of research and commentary has appeared in the higher education literature on how to make various underrepresented groups feel more welcomed and socially integrated on campus. In addition to the previously mentioned diversity initiatives, most large IHEs responded to racial anti-discrimination mandates by establishing or supporting centers or clubs for various racial/ethnic minority groups that serve as safe havens where students can support each other to better understand and negotiate the complex sociocultural and bureaucratic landscape of the IHE (Tinto &Pusser, 2006). However, SWDs may not find these centers or clubs welcoming, as negative and stigmatizing perceptions of disabilities are common in just about all racial/ethnic groups (McDonald, Keys, &Balcazar, 2007).

Faculty members have often been identified as a key target of efforts to make SWDs feel like they truly belong, as too many continue to appear to lack a good understanding of disability issues in the classroom (Getzel, 2008).Like many people in the wider society, faculty members may tend to doubt the claimed disability status of students with hidden disabilities and may not believe that classroom accommodations should be provided because they give them unfair advantages (Barnard, Stevens, Siwatu, & Lan, 2008). SWDshave often reported feeling such negative perceptions and, as a result, deciding not to seek accommodations that might prove important to their academic success(e.g., Litner et al.,2005).

Research on Social Integration Issues for Students with Disabilities

Given the social integration barriersoften encountered by SWDs, one might expect policy makers and researchers to focus upon issues experienced by this subpopulation. However, it has been observed that there is surprisingly little attention or discussion of this topic (Belch, 2005; DaDeppo, 2009; Papasotiriou& Windle, 2012; Trammel, 2009). Rather, most attention is focused upon "technical" topics such as classroom accommodations, diagnostic assessments, and assistive technology access. "Technical" issues are viewed as extremely important for the academic integration of SWDs. It is understandable that attention would focus on how to reliably assess the unique needs of students in different disability categories and how to effectively respond to those needs, which typically involves medical, educational, or assistive technologies that can be applied at the individual level. Another factor, and perhaps a more significant one, is that disability rights ornon-discrimination legislation may have had some unintended consequences by guiding attention to "equal access" as the predominant intended outcome (Taylor, 2003).IHEs typically responded to Section 504 and the ADA by establishing disability support services(DSS) offices responsible forensuring that qualifying students gain legally mandated equal access (Madaus, 2000)."Equal access" has been primarily interpreted as referring to physical access to campus

facilities (e.g., building entry ramps, accessible housing) and to accommodations and supports enabling participation in academic activities (e.g., note takers for students with hearing impairments). In contrast, equal access to the co-curricular domain (social, recreational, and other non-academic activities) has rarely been highlighted as a responsibility for DSS offices (Guzman, 2008; Loewen & Pollard, 2010).The essential need for supportive social relationships is not mentioned in either Section 504 or the ADA, and is apparently therefore seldom seen as a priority issue forDSS offices.

Envisioning aFuture of Diversity and Disability in Higher Education

Described below are several emerging trendsthat hold promise for raising awareness of the total needs of SWD to be more socially and academically integrated on campuses . All of these trends point towards a possible future in which the campus climate is experienced by SWDs as welcoming and supportive so that all students feel like they truly belong.

Reorienting Disability Support Services towards the Social Model

Understandings of the causes of and appropriate responses to disabilities have commonly been classified as fitting either a medical or a social model. The medical model targets the individual for intervention, and potentially provides SWDs with essential supports for higher education success. Following a social model, disabilityis a social construction emerging from society's environmental, economic, and cultural barriers to full social acceptance and inclusion (Fleischer &Zames, 2001). These models are not mutually exclusive but can complement each other. However, DSS offices, with some exceptions, have been critiqued as being guided almost exclusively by the medical model, which is congruent with the ADA's orientation to ensuring equal access for individual SWDs but does not direct attention to important social issues of stigma and unwelcoming campus environments (Hadley, 2011). Wider adoption of the social model is expected to reorient DSS offices to expand beyond a narrow interpretation of equal access to also address campus-level social barriers and foster social inclusion (e.g., Gabel, 2010; Guzman &Balcazar, 2010; Strauss & Sales, 2010; Thornton & Down, 2010).

Enhancing Collaboration among Student Services

AS advocated byHarbour and Madaus (2011),more collaboration amongstudent servicesis needed to better address the physical and social barriers faced by SWDs. Currently various IHE offices and programs tend to be situated in what have been called bureaucratic "silos" with the DSS office typically considered to have primary or sole responsibility for supporting SWDs (e.g., Burnett &Segoria, 2009). The University of Connecticut provides a model for how the barriers inherent in silos can be broken down and commitment for supporting SWDs expanded (Korbel, Lucia, Wnzel, & Anderson, 2011). Key elements of the model include (a) having each DSS office staff member serve as a liaison to promote collaboration with specific departments across campus, and (b) conducting workshops on a range of disability-related topics for various student affairs units, which also serve as venues for developingcollaborative partnerships. An example of the potential of cross-unit collaboration is provided by Wessel, Wentz, and Markle (2011), who described how at least five different offices at a university collaborated to organize a "power soccer" club soundergraduate power wheelchair users could participate in athletics, with those who were subsequently interviewed reporting enhanced friendships, greater self-confidence, and improved communication and interpersonal skills.

Including Disability in Diversity Initiatives

As noted earlier, many IHEs implement diversity initiatives, but these often fail to include disability. In line with the emerging idea that greater collaboration is needed acrossstudent services, DSS offices might work with those involved in diversity initiatives to strengthen or add a focus on disability (Higbee, Siaka& Bruch, 2007). This would provide an avenue for promoting social modellanguage about disabilities moving away from the deficit

orientation inherent in medical model descriptions of SWD. For example, Depoy and Gilson (2008) promote use of the terms *typical* and *atypical* to highlight the fact that human characteristics occur along a continuumand also toavoid the value judgments inherent in commonly used terms such as *normal* and *abnormal*, which imply a binary division rather than a continuum.In this vein, there has been increasing use of the term *neurodiverse*(as opposed to *neurotypical*) to describe people with disabilities such as autism, learning disabilities, attention disorders, or certain psychiatric disorders.

Neurodiverse individuals may in fact have advantages in certain situations and occupations such as the attention to detail that many people with autism can bring to a task (Armstrong, 2010). Research also suggests that people with disabilities achieve more positive self-identities when they are able to "reframe" problematic personal characteristics as lying on a continuum of diversityrather than being outside the range of normalcy (Hahn & Belt, 2004; Olney & Kim, 2001).Asuse of neurodiverse and other non-stigmatizing terms becomes the standard, we can expect SWDs to gain enhanced feelings of belonging that in turn support the development of more positive self-identities and greater willingness to self-disclose in order to access services and supports promoting improved social and academic outcomes.

Extending Universal Design to the Co-curricular Domain

Ensuring equal access often involves use of universal design principles, which refers to the modification of environments and activities so they are accessible to everyone, no matter their functional limitations (Roberts, Park, Brown, & Cook, 2011). Universal design is best known with regard to physical access, while what is known as universal design for learning is increasingly being used to make educational materials and activities more accessible for students with a wide range of learning styles and physical and sensory abilities. Universal design for learning holds the promise of helping to "normalize" the higher education experience of SWDs by reducing the need for them to self-identify and followed detailed procedural steps necessary to obtain classroom accommodations. The universal design approach also has the potential to improve access to the co-curricular domain (e.g., large screen transcription of announcements and speeches at public events) (Belch, 2005; Johnson, 2000; Strange & Banning, 2001).

Promoting Change through Student Activism

The Disability Rights Movement has achieved many successes largely because people with disabilities have stood at the forefront and become visible as fellow human beings. The frontline advocacy of SWDs themselves may also be essential to successfully prompting IHEs todo what is needed to create campus environments that are truly welcoming for all. The Beyond Compliance Coordinating Committee at Syracuse University provides one model for student activism. According to the organization's website (http://bcccsyracuse.wordpress.com/), it was founded in 2001 by a group of graduate SWDs with membership open to all students.The organization has held numerous awareness-raising events and worked with the university administration to change policies and practices. The committee has achieved national reach through publications and conference presentations and its model has been adopted at other IHEs. Another organization working to strengthen the collective voice of SWDs is the Youth Legacy Foundation. Its activities include a Higher Education Network (currently focused in Minnesota) designed to link student groups at different IHEs so they can share resources and expand their impact and reach (http://youthlegacyfoundation.org/?page_id=621).

Assessing Progress in Creating Welcoming Campus Climates

The various activities described above may be viewed as components of a broader initiative to transform what has been called the "campus climate" so it is experienced by SWDs as welcoming and fully accessible (Huger, 2011; Wilson, Getzel, & Brown, 2000).Over the years a number of instruments have been developed to assess how welcoming

the climate is for diverse student subpopulations, including several specifically for students with disabilities. The College Students with Disabilities Campus Climate surveyis comprised of 43 six-point Likert scale items (Lombardi, Gerdes, & Murray, 2011). The Assessment of Campus Climate to Enhance Student Successconsists of several questionnaires that gather the perspectives of administrators and staff, faculty, and students(Vogel, Holt, Silgar, & Leake, 2008). AHEAD offers a service to administer these questionnaires online and produce summary reports (http://www.ahead.org/program_eval_tools). Stodden, Brown, and Roberts (2011) provided a brief climate assessment tool consisting of 10 "agree" or "disagree" items (derived from a set of larger instruments on attitudes to people with disabilities, programmatic supports, facilities access, and instructional access) along with a scoring guide.Such instruments can be used by faculty and administratorsto evaluate and improve their programs to better serve SWDs, and by SWD groups to validatetheir advocacy efforts to promote change and track the extent to which change is happening over time.

Conclusion

The ultimate goal of the Disability Rights Movement has been to reach a point where everyone is viewed and treated as deserving of respect and full social acceptance. Higher education can play a leadership role in attaining this goal by creating inclusive and welcoming campus environments that serve as models for the wider society. Such environments are not legislated or legally required, as they would be based on changed attitudes and behaviors typically not possible to legislate. The development of welcoming attitudes and behaviors would instead seem to require continued advocacy by concerned individuals with and without disabilities who work to define and spread enhanced norms about what an IHE should be. Issues to consider include:

• Promote the benefits to higher education as a place of valuing and seeking out diverse ways of perceiving and thinking. This would require campuses to work toward a culture of exploration, acceptance and support for and by a diverse range of teachers and learners.

• Advocate making campuses barrier-free and welcoming, physically, programmatically, and attitudinally.While many people may support this statement, it is imperative that SWDs and other marginalized students take up the charge for higher education campuses to be truly welcoming and supportive for all students. This requires that training (self- and group-advocacy) and support be provided to SWDs to step into the lead.

• Increase the proportion of faculty and staff with disabilities and other diverse characteristics on campuses, to raise the visibility and status of such persons and provide SWDs with more potential role models, mentors, and advocates.

• Give more attention to social integration issues for SWDs within the context of diversity. It is important to seek out and involve social scientists and others in this effort – too many times only researchers and advocates in the disability field are involved,which amounts to "preaching to the choir." Research is especially needed on SWDs who are liable to face discrimination on other counts, such as being of ethnic/racial minority heritage or having a non-normative sexual orientation.

• Raise awareness of these issues broadly by publishing research articles and advocacy pieces in academic journals and general audience publications outside disability fields.

As the social model of disability continues to impact upon how disability services, supports, and accommodations are provided in higher education, increased opportunities will become available to support SWDs within the broader context of supporting all students to successfully access, retain, and complete the program of study of their choice. Furthermore, asSWDs are supported to rethink about themselves and others on a continuum of diversity, it is expected that all learners will feel a sense of belonging and express their needs to be successful learners, free of the restrictions and stigma that come with labels.Once campuses have become places where all students are supported to learn, regardless of their diverse

needs, then we can all begin to feel the shift from a "rights based approach" to a "what's right" approach to supporting SWDs in higher education.

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REGIONAL MENTALITY AND THE DIALOGUE OF CULTURES

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The article is devoted to the problems of the dialogue of cultures and languages. The research was conducted in the North Kazakhstan region, a multicultural region, where the main ethnic groups are Russians and Kazakhs. The authors put forward a hypothesis: the interaction of cultures and languages of ethnic groups living together for more than one century led to the formation of a regional mentality. The transformation of mentality is due to the benevolent attitude towards the culture and traditions of the representatives of the interacting ethnic groups.

The proposed hypothesis is justified by the results of the analysis of various materials, the observations of the authors, confirmed by the results of an experimental survey of students, and a targeted survey of respondents of Kazakh and Russian nationalities of different age groups.

The family, the natural factor of residence, language, culture and folk traditions are considered as the basic concepts of mentality. The interdependence of cultures in the present research is traced by the method of interpretive semantic analysis of the poetic texts of local authors, since in the poetic picture of the world the borrowed nominations are markers of a visual and figurative perception of the changed world view (or the picture of the world).

North Kazakhstan is a unique region, because it is situated at the linguocultural juncture. In the modern Kazakhstan there are two dominant ethnic groups: the Kazakhs and Russians, and there is a mutual influence of the Turkic and Slavic language pictures of the world. Let us turn to the Kazakh and Russian linguistic pictures of the world on the example of texts of modern Kazakh and Russian songs with elements of national identity.

In the poetic text of the song of the rock group "Alice" ("Alisa") the primordially Russian landscape is praised: lightnings, thunderstorms, gray clouds, falcon heights, sky cover, deer trail, village smoke, snowdrifts, white-toothed winter and the snow skyline.