

Providing Support to Postsecondary Students with Disabilities to Request Accommodations: A Framework for Intervention

Jean Ann Summers
Glen W. White
E Zhang
Jeffrey M. Gordon
University of Kansas

Abstract

Federal laws supporting the rights of students with disabilities to access postsecondary education have helped to facilitate a significant increase in the number of individuals with disabilities enrolling in postsecondary institutions. The rate at which these students complete their education, however, continues to lag behind the rate of students who do not have disabilities. This conceptual paper reviews the literature to provide an overview of the supports offered to students with disabilities in postsecondary settings as well as barriers and gaps in that support. Primary gaps include the lack of tools for Disability Support Services staff to use in providing appropriate training to students to enhance their ability to self-advocate for accommodations. The authors then present a conceptual framework for and a description of a training curriculum that is intended to address these gaps. The training includes an online, interactive tutorial that offers knowledge about rights, procedures for accessing accommodations, and a self-assessment for students to learn about appropriate accommodations to meet their individualized needs.

Keywords: Americans with Disabilities Act, accommodations, empowerment, self-advocacy, self-determination, postsecondary, students, disabilities

Federal disability legislation such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADA-AA) of 2008, was enacted to help facilitate the successful inclusion, independence, and integration into society of all individuals with disabilities (Gajar, 1998; Henderson, 2001; Horn & Berkold, 1999). An important component of successful inclusion in society is employment and, as for all citizens, completion of an education to prepare for employment opportunities. Completing postsecondary education improves the likelihood that individuals with disabilities will be employed (Stodden, 2005; Stodden & Dowrick, 2001). For example, only 33% of adults with disabilities were employed in 2011 compared to 53% of adults without disabilities who completed college degrees (Bachelor's degree or higher) (Erickson, Lee, & von Schrader, 2012).

Given these data, it is not surprising that increasing numbers of students with disabilities are enrolling in postsecondary education. For example, The National Council on Disability (2011) reported that the number of students with disabilities at transition age who were enrolling in postsecondary education within four years of leaving high school rose from 27% in 2003 to 57% in 2009. Additionally, in 2010 the overall percentage of persons with disabilities with some college experience had increased to levels comparable to that of persons without disabilities; 30.1% for persons with disabilities and 32.2% for persons without. However, persons with disabilities *completed* a Bachelor's degree or higher at a rate of only 12.2%, compared with 30.9% of those without disabilities (Erickson et al. 2012). Finally, The National Council on Disability (2011) reported that, while nearly 28% of the general population 25 years or older has completed college, people with disabilities completed college at half that rate. These data suggest

that at some point in their postsecondary education, students with disabilities encounter a variety of barriers that could discourage them from completing their postsecondary education (Burgstahler, 2003; Dowrick, Anderson, Heyer, & Acosta, 2005; Flannery, Yovanoff, Benz, & Kato, 2008; Stodden & Zucker, 2004; Zaft, Hart, & Zimrich; 2004).

This conceptual paper has three broad purposes. First, we provide an overview of supports currently provided in postsecondary institutions for students with disabilities. Second, we examine barriers students with disabilities experience in accessing these supports, along with additional supports that students with disabilities need for success in postsecondary education. Finally, we will introduce a training module produced by our research team that is intended to address some of those barriers.

Overview of Supports and Needs for Students with Disabilities in Postsecondary Education

Current Disability Support Services

Increased participation in postsecondary education is an outgrowth of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990) and its subsequent amendments in the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADA-AA, 2008). These laws mandate that postsecondary institutions provide reasonable accommodations to “otherwise qualified” students with disabilities to allow equal opportunities for participation. Earlier ADA regulations state that a “public entity shall furnish appropriate auxiliary aids and services where necessary to afford an individual with a disability an equal opportunity to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of, a service, program, or activity conducted by a public entity” (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2002). To facilitate accommodations, many postsecondary institutions have offered supports through Disability Support Services (DSS) offices (Adams & Proctor, 2010; Black, Smith, Chang, Harding, & Stodden, 2002).

Additionally, the Association of Higher Education And Disability (AHEAD) is an international organization of more than 2,500 professionals providing supports to postsecondary students with disabilities (<http://www.ahead.org/>). AHEAD has helped to develop professional programs, standards, and performance indicators essential to establishing supports available through DSS offices. DSS staff may draw upon professional development and information disseminated by AHEAD to carry out a variety of roles and responsibilities, including: providing direct consultation and counseling, disseminating information about services and programs,

building faculty/staff awareness about disabilities and accommodations, developing policies and procedures to help facilitate access to eligible students, facilitating academic adjustments and accommodations, facilitating program administration, and providing training to DSS staff (Shaw & Dukes, 2006).

Through the guidance of the Rehabilitation Act and ADA-AA and with support from AHEAD, DDS staff has been able to provide a variety of reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. For students with disabilities who qualify, the DSS offices provide reasonable accommodations such as testing accommodations, qualified interpreters, assistive listening systems, captioning, TTYs (text telephones), notetakers, readers, audio recordings, taped texts, Braille materials, large print materials, materials on computer disk, priority registration, class relocation to an accessible location, and adapted computer terminals. Beyond these mandated accommodations, DSS offices may offer a variety of additional supports to students enrolled in the postsecondary institution. Examples of these include personal and career counseling, advocacy services, study skills, tutors, class relocation, and learning center laboratories (Sharpe & Johnson, 2001; Sharpe, Johnson, Izzo, & Murray, 2005; Stodden, Whelley, Chang, & Harding, 2001; Tagayuna, Stodden, Chang, Zeleznik, & Whelley, 2005).

The degree to which these additional services are offered, and the specific types of supports, varies widely across postsecondary institutions (Stodden et al., 2001; Tagayuna et al., 2005). For example, some institutions offered significantly less in terms of training and informational materials to faculty about responsibilities and techniques for providing accommodations to students with disabilities (Sharpe & Johnson, 2001).

In general, students with disabilities tend to be satisfied with the services they receive from DSS offices. For example, Kurth and Mellard (2006) surveyed 108 students with disabilities who were receiving services from DSS offices in 15 colleges across three states. The students rated their satisfaction with the accommodation requesting process (e.g., the process of selecting an accommodation, perceived effectiveness of the accommodation, confidentiality). Overall the student mean ratings of all components were above 4 on a 5-point scale, where 1=not satisfied and 5=very satisfied. Students in this study reported that the use of note takers was the most effective accommodation received (87.5% of students using this service rated this service as effective). Supports beyond mandated services, such as mental health counseling, were rated the least effective (63.6% of students using this ser-

vice rated it as effective). More nuanced results about satisfaction were presented in a study by Kundu, Dutta, Schiro-Geist, and Crandall (2003). This study examined whether there was a difference in satisfaction with DSS services among 445 students based on various demographic characteristics, type of disability, educational status, and high school grade point average, in four institutions of higher education. The majority of students at all four universities expressed satisfaction with the overall quantity and quality of services and supports. Men tended to have greater needs and higher satisfaction than women; sophomores had both higher levels of need and higher satisfaction; students with higher grade point averages in high school also tended to be more satisfied with their accommodations and services (Kundu et al., 2003).

Barriers and Facilitators to Success for Students with Disabilities

Facilitators. While the laws and regulations go far to ensure students with disabilities have access to accommodations in postsecondary campuses, the next question is, what factors are most contributive to successful degree completion once they have accessed postsecondary education? The research literature on this question is somewhat sparse. Barber (2012) conducted a qualitative study of 20 students with disabilities who were defined as successful “college completers” at three community colleges and two universities. These students encompassed a range of physical, emotional, and learning disabilities. The findings suggest that a common thread among these students was their self-awareness of their disabilities and the ability to advocate for the accommodations they needed. Further, they cited positive relationships with mentors, either on campus or among their families. For some, these mentors were support staff at their Disability Support Offices (Barber, 2012). In another study of 262 college students with learning disabilities, Troiano, Liefeld, and Trachtenberg (2010) found that students with higher levels of attendance at learning support centers were more likely to have higher grades and to graduate college than those who did not. Finally, Trammell (2003) found that students who experience both ADD and LD attained a significant boost in grades after using ADA-related accommodations.

Regarding barriers to successful outcomes (e.g., higher grades, degree completion), there is a greater body of literature available. We will address three barriers that present a consistent theme in the literature: (a) students’ lack of knowledge about their rights for accommodation in postsecondary programs; (b) students’ lack of self-awareness of their needs for ac-

commodations; and (c) students’ lack of self-advocacy and self-determination skills.

Knowledge of legal rights. Early research documented that students often lack knowledge about their legal rights (Carroll & Johnson-Brown, 1996; Rumrill, 1994). This appears to continue to be the case. In a more recent study of 110 students with learning disabilities at a four-year university, Cawthon and Cole (2010) found that only 9% of the respondents reported they had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in high school, despite the fact that their descriptions of services received in high school suggest they must have had either an IEP or Section 504 plan in order to receive those services. In this same study, these students reported a low level of interaction with their instructors outside of the classroom (32%) and only 48% had contacted their Office of Students with Disabilities. Students with disabilities who have limited knowledge about their rights and who do not request accommodations have been found to experience significantly lower levels academic achievements (Barnard-Brak, Saluk, Tate, & Lechtenberger, 2010).

Contributing to this lack of awareness of legal rights are the differences between supports and accommodations offered through elementary and secondary special education specified by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) and the requirements for accommodation established under ADA-AA and other laws. Students must be proactive and establish their eligibility for accommodations by presenting documentation of their disability to DSS offices; students and their parents are often surprised to find that the IEP that served to guide accommodations in high school is not sufficient documentation in postsecondary institutions (Madaus & Shaw, 2004). Changes in both IDEIA in 2004 and in the ADA-AA in 2008 were intended to address the need to smooth transitions for students from high school to postsecondary education.

On the part of ADA-AA, the recent amendments have clarified that the determination of disability is based on functional limitations rather than diagnostic categories (Shaw, Keenan, Madaus, & Banerjee, 2010). On the part of IDEIA, high schools are expected to develop a Summary of Performance (SOP) consisting of a summary of the student’s academic achievement and functional level of performance, along with recommendations needed to assist the student in achieving postsecondary goals (IDEIA, 2007). In a review of 16 articles published on SOP’s, Richter and Mazotti (2011) note that common recommendations among these authors is that the SOP offers promise to improve coordination between secondary and postsecondary

programs and that postsecondary programs should consider using the SOP as documentation of the disability. While this idea is not yet universally accepted, the clarifications in ADA-AA toward a more functional assessment of disability-related needs suggest this may be the future direction (Shaw, et al., 2010). Regardless of how well these changes may affect transitions, students and their families will need to understand these changes in the law and how to use them as they prepare to enroll in a postsecondary program.

Self-Awareness. Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, and Eddy (2005) noted, “students must have knowledge of themselves and know that they have rights before they can self-advocate effectively” (p. 49). Students with disabilities often are unable to describe their disability and its impact on their lives (Hitchings et al., 2001; Glover-Graf, Janikowski & Handley, 2003; Troiano, 2003).

Lack of awareness about the nature of their disability may be compounded by a reluctance to disclose a disability. The National Longitudinal Transition Study (Newman et al., 2011) found that more than half (52%) of youth who received special education services while in secondary school and attended college reported that they do not consider themselves to have a disability. An additional 7% reported that they do consider themselves to have a disability but choose not to disclose it to their postsecondary schools. Bernard-Brak et al., (2010) developed a measure to assess student attitudes toward requesting accommodations. The authors used a sample of 276 college students who were registered with their DSS offices in 10 universities. Students were asked to rate their degree of agreement with 32 items concerning the appropriateness or risks of seeking accommodations. A factor analysis revealed four factors: academic integrity (degree to which requesting accommodations might be considered “cheating”), disability disclosure (concern that disclosure would be stigmatizing), disability acceptance (degree to which the student agrees he or she has a disability), and accommodations process (perceived degree of difficulty in obtaining accommodations). All of these factors were discriminative of students who had versus those who had not requested accommodations. In sum, knowledge of rights, awareness of one’s own disability characteristics and needs, and attitudes toward the value and “fairness” of seeking accommodations, are critical components of the knowledge base which leads a student to avail himself or herself of accommodations and other services.

Self-Advocacy and Self-Determination Skills. Self-determination skills are important for students with disabilities to acquire because they can lead to

improved self-awareness and self-advocacy. According to Turnbull and Turnbull (2001), self-determination is “the means for experiencing quality of life consistent with one’s own values, preferences, strengths and needs” (p. 58). Self-determination emerges across an individual’s life span and plays a significant role in an adult’s life (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2006; Wehmeyer, Martin, & Sands, 2008). A self-determined young person has the ability to identify goals, problem-solve effectively, and appropriately express and advocate for him or herself (Karvonen, Test, Wood, Browder, & Algozzine, 2004; Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003). Components of self-determination include autonomy, problem solving, and persistence (Field, Sarver, & Shaw, 2003).

Both self-determination and self-advocacy skill sets have been identified as critical factors related to success for students with disabilities in postsecondary settings. Field et al., (2003) propose that self-determination is a critical skill for college students with disabilities because it fosters a sense of autonomy and independence for students to enable them to succeed in the far less structured college environment where, for example, there are no structured study times and students must have self-reliance and self-discipline to meet assignments. Self-advocacy, a part of self-determination, involves the ability to appropriately problem solve and negotiate on one’s own behalf. Self-determination, including assertiveness, self-advocacy, and independence is “salient to [students’] success in attaining a degree in a postsecondary setting” (Belch, 2005, p. 11). These comments are consistent with the voices of young adults with disabilities in postsecondary settings. For example, Getzel and Thoma (2008) conducted a series of focus groups with 34 students with disabilities who were referred by their DSS offices in three community college and three four-year college sites. The DSS staff were asked to identify students who they believed had self-determination skills and who were in good academic standing in their institutions. The researchers convened these students in focus groups and asked them to discuss what skills they believed were essential to staying in school and getting needed supports. The analysis produced a series of themes including self-awareness, problem-solving, goal setting, self-management, seeking services, forming relationships with instructors, and developing support systems on campus (Getzel & Thoma, 2008). In another qualitative study of 34 young adults with disabilities, Carter, Swedeen, Walter, Moss, and Hsin (2010) identified key attitudes and skills they believed were important for leadership. The results included perseverance, independence, positive attitude,

confidence, goal setting, effective communication, advocacy, and self-advocacy.

IDEIA contains a number of provisions encouraging development of self-determination and self-advocacy, including requirements that students over age 16 attend their own IEP meetings, that they participate in developing their SOP, and that secondary programs provide training in self-determination. However, there are indications that students with disabilities are arriving on postsecondary campuses without adequate training in self-determination and self-advocacy. An example is the finding, noted earlier, that a large proportion of students with learning disabilities were not even aware that they had an IEP during their high school career (Cawthon & Cole, 2010). Only 32% of students in this study reported any level of interaction with college faculty and staff, and of those they primarily asked for letters of recommendation, not accommodations. Despite broad agreement in secondary settings on the importance of self-determination, these skills are still not regularly incorporated into the high school curriculum (Cease-Cook, Test, & Scroggins, 2013; Fiedler & Dannaker, 2007). Initially, self-determination and self-advocacy for secondary students was included as an elective course; however, increasing emphasis on core curriculum standards, access to the general curriculum, and multi-tiered instruction requiring greater time spent on academic learning, has meant an even greater reduction in instructional time spent in high school on self-determination and self-advocacy (Cease-Cook et al., 2013). The upshot is that many students leave high school without self-advocacy skills (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005).

In summary, this overview of literature related to supports for students with disabilities in postsecondary settings highlights several critical points. First, postsecondary education programs appear to be attracting larger numbers of students with disabilities and the research suggests that accommodations are effective in improving access to postsecondary education. Accommodations and supports offered through DSS offices were included among factors associated with successful college completion (Barber, 2012; Troiano et al., 2010).

We identified several knowledge-based barriers which impeded students' abilities to access accommodations. These included a lack of knowledge about their legal rights and lack of self-awareness of their own disabilities. These knowledge and attitudinal gaps (Barnard-Brak et al., 2010) persist in spite of changes in the law to smooth transitions (e.g., SOP documentation) and in spite of requirements for students in high school to attend their own IEP and SOP planning meetings (Richter & Mazzotti, 2011).

Self-determination and self-advocacy skills are identified as critical to successful outcomes beyond high school, including in postsecondary settings (Belch, 2005). However, despite requirements for self-determination instruction in high school, many students are arriving in postsecondary settings without the requisite self-determination and self-advocacy skills they need (Fiedler & Dannaker, 2007). Recent trends emphasizing greater academic time and access to the general curriculum for high school students with disabilities suggest that students with disabilities will continue to have restricted opportunities for instruction in self-determination and self-advocacy (Cease-Cook, et al., 2013).

To address these issues, we have developed an online knowledge and skills based training program for students with disabilities, *Access for Success*, through a Field Initiated Development grant from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research. In the following section, we present an overview of the training model and content. A further evaluation of the efficacy of the *Access to Success* training in terms of student acquisition of knowledge and skills will be presented in a separate article (White, Summers, Zhang, & Renault, 2014). The current paper provides a more detailed, conceptual description of the training and the empirical results from it.

Access to Success: Teaching Postsecondary Students with Disabilities to Request Appropriate Accommodations

The basic framework for *Access to Success* is focused on providing two critical components to students with disabilities: (a) knowledge about their legal rights and their own disability and (b) specific skills to self-advocate for accommodations. Figure 1 describes the framework of knowledge and targeted skill components provided in the training. For the knowledge-based component, we focused on creating an online-based curriculum that DSS staff could easily provide as a self-paced tutorial for students. For the skills-based component, we designed a face-to-face workshop to teach and provide practice opportunities for students to negotiate appropriate ADA accommodations with faculty and staff.

Knowledge-Based Online Tutorial (KBOT)

The technological platform for the knowledge-based online tutorial (KBOT) was the e-Learning Resource Authoring (ERA) system developed by our partners in this project (Meyen, Poggio, Aust, & Smith, 2008). This program enabled us to use universal design

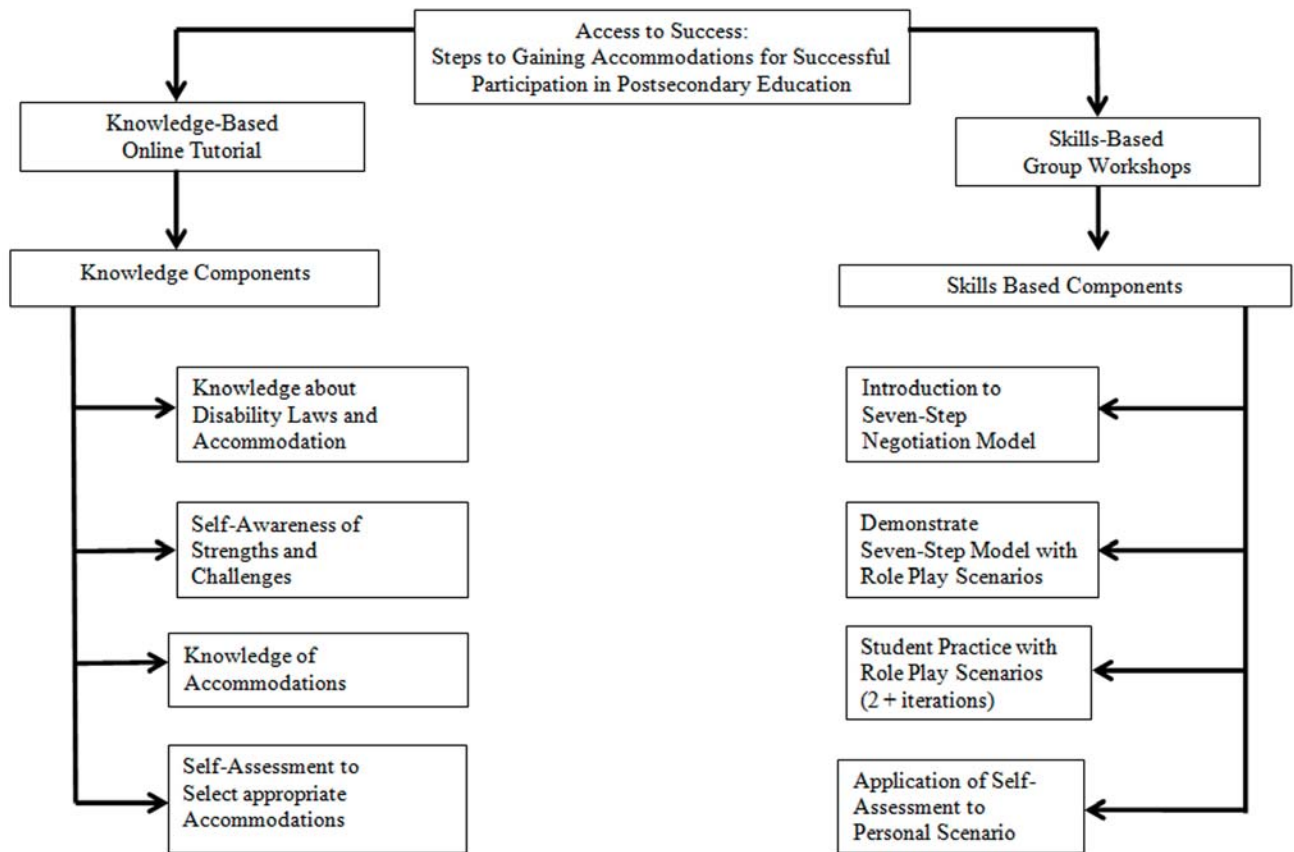
for learning (UDL) principles to enhance access for students with different learning styles and disabilities. The user interface elements include multiple navigation strategies with pagination and position indicators, a main table of contents, and sub-menus that support a modular design that allow lessons to be used independently. Interactive features include multiple choice and open-ended assessments to assist in individualizing remediation (through correction and repetition of original material) and hyper reference links to context-sensitive glossaries and other instructional features. The module design and interface maximizes accessibility for persons with disabilities by offering four different formats for students, depending on their instructional needs and/or learning preferences. All software applications comply with BOBBY, W3C, and Section 508 standards for web accessibility. Format options include a text version with graphics, multimedia version with audio and visuals, downloadable MP3 files, and a screen reader version. The text version has embedded icons so that students can access resources without leaving the text they are studying. KBOT content includes two main sections: (a) knowledge about the law and accommodations and (b) two self-assessments of strengths and challenges needed to request appropriate ADA accommodations.

Legal Knowledge Base. The knowledge tutorial includes four components that include information about the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADA-AA). The tutorial first introduces students to their legal rights to accommodations through a brief description of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA-AA. Next, the tutorial helps students consider how these laws help protect their rights in higher education settings and allow for a comparison of what they currently know based upon previous experiences in high school and with the IDEIA. This section also informs students how to establish their eligibility for accommodations and gain access to their DSS Office. Additionally, the tutorial provides an overview of the different types of accommodations available, an explanation and interactive exercise to learn the difference between “reasonable” and “unreasonable” accommodations, and a description of different technological and non-technological accommodations. Finally, students review the different types of ADA-AA accommodations and supports commonly provided based on types of disabilities, including motor, sensory, and cognitive/neurological disabilities.

Self-Awareness Knowledge Base. The self-assessment component of the KBOT is intended to help students apply the general knowledge they have learned to consider their own needs for accommodation. In this section, students learn to consider their strengths as well as their challenges before considering the specific accommodations they may want to request. The *Strengths and Needs Self-Assessment Worksheet* is a simple checklist focused on typical activities in higher education programs. These activities include (a) academic skills (e.g., reading, math, writing); (b) classroom participation skills (e.g., taking notes, avoiding distractions); (c) test-taking skills (e.g., working under a time limit, writing essays); (d) homework (e.g., managing time, reading and taking notes); (e) campus accessibility (e.g., accessing classrooms); and (f) social interactions (e.g., participating in group assignments). Students rate the items in each category on a five-point scale where 5=a strength, 3=neutral, and 1=a challenge. See Figure 2 for the first page of the Self-Assessment Worksheet. Students are able to download the worksheet for future reference and to bring to the skills-based workshop.

The second step in self-assessment is to guide students through the process of applying their strengths and challenges to think systematically about choosing appropriate accommodations linked to their individual needs. Students are asked to download and complete the *Choosing Accommodations Worksheet* before the skills-based workshop. As part of the worksheet, each student is asked to think of a specific and challenging class or campus life situation, consider challenging aspects of it, then consider appropriate accommodations to meet the challenge. For this specific class or situation, the student is asked to list (1) environmental challenges (e.g., accessibility, visual or auditory distractions, etc.); (2) academic expectations/challenges (amount of reading, teaching style, group discussions, projects); and (3) social and self-advocacy expectations/challenges (whether the class requires group or team projects, class discussions, etc.). In each of these three areas, the student thinks about specific personal strengths that might be useful and potential accommodations that could help to overcome the challenge(s). Finally, the student is asked to prioritize which accommodation would be the most effective and consider whether the best option would be a technology-based (e.g., a digital recorder) or non-technology based (e.g., extended test time) accommodation. See Figure 3 for the first page of the *Choosing Accommodations Worksheet*.

Figure 1. Access to Success Framework



Skills-Based Training

The *Access to Success* skills-based training is an in-person workshop intended to improve skills to help the student request accommodations with higher education faculty or staff. The *Access to Success* skills-based training involves breaking down the negotiation process into seven steps and detailing the target behaviors to be used during each step. Research has demonstrated that acquisition of *behavioral skills* is best accomplished through a combination of reviewing definitions of the target response, rehearsal or practice of different scenarios related to obtaining accommodations (Fenstermacher, Olympia, & Sheridan, 2006; Roter et al., 2004; White & Vo, 2006), and performance feedback (Shanley & Niec, 2010). As such, the workshop includes the following components: (a) review, discussion and questions about the KBOT; (b) introduction of the seven-step negotiation skills model designed to enable students to negotiate effectively for needed accommodations; (c) demonstration of the seven-step model by workshop facilitators; (d) several practice opportunities for participants using a variety of hypothetical role play situations; and (e) application of the self-assessment materials from the KBOT to help students construct their own plan to request an accommodation. The skills-based training was designed to be completed during a 1.5-day workshop. While we have not tried other schedule formats, our intent has been to create a workshop agenda flexible enough to be delivered during times that are more sensitive to students' schedules (e.g., over five 1- or 2-hour sessions).

We also designed the workshop to be flexible in allowing facilitators to vary the number of students to whom they are delivering the training. However, anecdotal data seem to indicate that the training may have greater social validity when it includes about eight to 10 students. Thus, while learning hands-on skills, students experience an opportunity to network with other students with disabilities on their campus. Students are asked to complete the KBOT before attending the workshop and to come with their completed self-assessments.

The first section of the workshop includes introductions and an opportunity to learn about one another through "ice breaker" activities. The facilitator reviews the online knowledge-based module and asks for discussion. In this introductory section, the facilitator introduces a staff member of the local DSS office, who describes the student services of that office. Thus far, facilitators of the skills-based training component have been members of our research team; future trials will assess the training when it is delivered by DSS staff directly. It appears from our social validity results

that having two facilitators is optimal in order to enable more dialogue, monitor and support small group activities, and demonstrate role plays.

The seven-step negotiation model is a decision tree that outlines actions and anticipates responses the students may need to engage in when requesting accommodations. See Figure 4 for an overview of the seven steps. The seven steps include (a) opening the meeting, (b) making the accommodation request, (c) asking for suggestions (if the request is refused), (d) asking for a referral (if the request is still unresolved), (e) planning future action, (f) summarizing the meeting, and (g) closing the meeting. For each of these seven steps, the facilitators describe several examples and non-examples of behaviors associated with each step. Following this presentation, the two facilitators demonstrate the process with a hypothetical role play, where one takes the role of a student and the other takes the role of the instructor or staff member. The facilitator playing the staff role will deliberately refuse the request for accommodations in this role play scenario, so that the full behavioral repertoire of asking for suggestions and requesting a referral can also be demonstrated. The facilitators then provide feedback on this demonstration with discussion and additional role play scenarios using the students' suggested situations.

Using a checklist with the seven steps and the behaviors in each step, students are then divided into dyads so that they can practice with additional role plays scenarios (see Figure 5 for a hypothetical role play scenario). The description of each scenario contains directions for both the "staff" and the "student" roles. Each student dyad practices each scenario with one person taking the student role and the student taking the staff role. After completing a role play, the students then switch roles and repeat the scenario. The student taking the staff role completes the seven-step checklist as his or her partner goes through the hypothetical role play to check for completeness of the accommodation requesting skills. The facilitators then elicit discussion and descriptive feedback on each student's performance following each role play scenario practice session.

Finally, the students use the personalized self-assessment worksheet that they brought to the workshop to construct a seven-step "script" to request an accommodation related to their individual need for accommodation(s) that they have identified as most important for them. This part of the training is an individual exercise, with the facilitators working with each student to guide them in creating their personal scenario. Following this step, the students again break into pairs and practice using their "real" (as opposed to previously hypothetical) scenarios.

Figure 2. Self-Assessment Worksheet Example (Page 1)

Choosing Accommodations That Fit Individual Needs: Strengths and Needs Self-Assessment Worksheet

ADA Accommodations Training Project

STEP ONE: Assess Your Strengths and Challenges:

Think about the kinds of activities you will be doing in your higher education program. Then think about the kinds of strengths you have to do those activities well and also the kinds of challenges that you will need to think about to determine what accommodations you may need.

Instructions: In the next section, six skill categories of activities that are typical in a higher education setting are listed. For each of the skills listed, circle the number that best matches your rating for each item:

5 = a strength 3 = neither 1 = a challenge

1. Academics: Think about the areas of basic school work skills that every student needs to be successful.

| Academic Skills | Strength | Neither | Challenge |
|----------------------------------|----------|---------|-----------|
| 1. Reading | | 4 | 3 |
| a. Speed | 5 | 2 | 1 |
| b. Understanding | 5 | 4 | 3 |
| | | 2 | 1 |
| 2. Math | | 4 | 3 |
| a. Completing word problems | 5 | 2 | 1 |
| b. Calculating | 5 | 4 | 3 |
| | | 2 | 1 |
| 3. Writing | | 4 | 3 |
| a. Grammar and spelling | 5 | 2 | 1 |
| b. Composition and writing style | 5 | 4 | 3 |
| | | 2 | 1 |
| 4. Other | | 4 | 3 |
| a. _____ | 5 | 2 | 1 |
| b. _____ | 5 | 4 | 3 |
| | | 2 | 1 |

Figure 3. Choosing Accommodations Worksheet

Think of an example of a class or campus life situation – this may be a class you recently took, or it may be one you plan to take next. Or, you could choose a non-classroom environment you find challenging (library, study area of your dorm, etc.). Your task is to think about the particular accommodations you will need to be successful in this environment.

1. What Physical and Sensory Challenges does this classroom or other space have for me? (For example, fixed auditorium seating, poor lighting, noise distractions, visual distractions (for example, windows):

What personal strengths can I use to meet these challenges?

What additional accommodations do I need to meet these challenges?

2. What Academic, Classroom, and Homework Expectations does this class have for me? (For example, lectures, group projects and discussions, required readings and reports)

What personal strengths can I use to meet these expectations?

What accommodations could I use to help me meet these expectations?

3. What Social and Advocacy Expectations does this class or other setting have for me? (For example, interactions with other students in group discussions or team projects)

What personal strengths can I use to meet these expectations?

What accommodations could I use to help me meet these expectations?

Conclusion

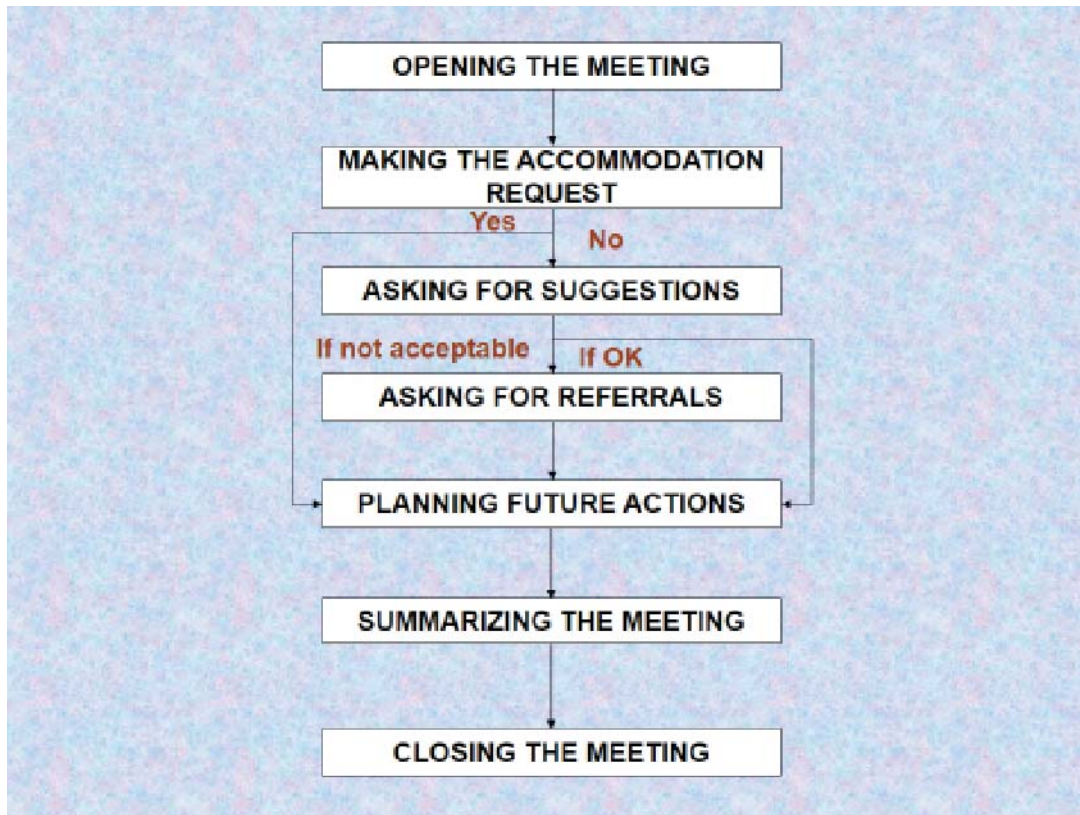
Access to Success is a training curriculum designed to help students develop the self-advocacy skills needed to request disability-related accommodations in higher education settings. DSS programs in postsecondary institutions are the primary vehicle for providing supports to these students. *Access to Success* can help to build both knowledge and skills through more convenient media-based means. Formal self-advocacy training in group settings can maximize staff members' limited time and provide social learning benefits to students not available in one-on-one situations. Second, many students with disabilities lack the knowledge and skills needed to access postsecondary accommodations and services from which they could benefit. By pairing an online-based tutorial with a face-to-face skills-based workshop that provides students with the information and skills needed to successfully request accommoda-

tions, we hope to give DSS staff a more efficient tool to deliver the training that students with disabilities may need to access their services.

Additionally, we have presented results of an initial efficacy test of *Access to Success Tutorial* in a separate report (see White, Summers, Zhang, & Renault, this issue). The data presented students' acquisition of knowledge and skills immediately following the training. These findings show significant increases in knowledge using a pre-post test for the KBOT and significant increases in accommodation negotiation skills based on pre-post assessments using an observational measure of video recordings of participants engaging in role play scenarios (see White et al., this issue).

There are several next steps needed to further test the efficacy of this work. First, while we developed *Access to Success* under the advice and guidance from DSS staff, it will be important to demonstrate transferability and fidelity of the use of the training by

Figure 4. Outline of the Seven-Step Accommodations Negotiations Process



non-research facilitators. Second, more longitudinal evaluation of the efficacy of the training is needed to determine whether it has lasting impacts. Based on our conceptual framework (Figure 1), these would include (a) increased self-awareness and willingness to self-disclose and request accommodations, (b) generalized use of the knowledge and skills taught in *Access to Success* in real-life situations where accommodations are needed, and (c) successful completion of coursework and graduation.

Future research should also focus on making the process of disclosing and accessing accommodation supports more attractive to postsecondary students with disabilities. Learning to self-advocate requires a shift in attitude (i.e., that one can and should accept support), as well as in knowledge and skills targeted by *Access to Success*. The task is to find efficient and effective ways to provide long-term support to students as they complete their postsecondary educational

careers. Additionally, a component analysis could be conducted to determine which steps in the process are most important for students with disabilities to learn self-advocacy skills. These steps could make it easier for DSS staff to further disseminate the access to self-advocacy training. Finally, extensions to the *Access to Success* training could be made to help individuals with disabilities learn self-advocacy skills related to areas of employment, recreation, housing, and other areas in which people with disabilities encounter barriers that could affect their independence within the community. In sum, extensions of the *Access to Success* training could be used to help individuals further build capacities to help ensure their independence and interdependence in adulthood.

Figure 5. Example Roly Play Scenario

Setting Description (Student sees only this paragraph)

You are a student with a reading disability. You are very good at numbers and math. With math, you can handle number problems very well, but when there is a story problem, you need to read the problem over to yourself several times before you understand it. You have enrolled in an Algebra class and were really looking forward to it. On the first day of class, while Dr. Rapp is explaining the requirements and the schedule for the course, he says that he plans to give a pop quiz at the beginning of class at least once a week. It will only be one problem but he says it will almost always be a story problem because he believes that it is important for students to be able to apply math principles to real world situations. He tells everyone not to worry because he doesn't think it will take people more than 5 minutes at the beginning of class to finish the one problem. But you are very worried because you know that it will very likely take you much more than 5 minutes to read and understand the problem well enough to answer it. You talk to the Disability Supports counselor about your worries. She suggests you get an appointment to talk with Dr. Rapp before the second class. So you call him and he agrees to meet with you on the day before the next class, in his office.

Role-play Partner: (Partner playing instructor role sees both sections)

You are Dr. Rapp, a math instructor. You have a meeting with a student who tells you he/she has a reading disability requests the accommodation he/she needs for his/her tests. You know very little about the ADA.

Step 1: You listen politely, but do NOT ask questions (except “What can I do for you?” OR “Can I help you?”), rather simply let the student introduce him/herself, describe his/her personal situation and the challenge, and make the request.

Step 2: You will say, “I know how hard it is for you, but unfortunately I cannot give you more time because it gives you unfair advantage over other students.”

Step 3: ONLY ASKED FOR SUGGESTION, “I don't know. You may try to talk to a counselor from the University Services for Students with Disabilities.”

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About the Authors

Jean Ann Summers received her Ph.D. from the University of Kansas. She has nearly 40 years' experience working as a researcher on various issues related to disabilities in both education and rehabilitation, services for people with disabilities and their families, and disability policy. She is a senior Research Professor at the University's Life Span Institute, and currently is the Research Director of the KU Research and Training Center on Independent Living, as well as Associate Director of the Beach Center on Disability. She can be reached by email at jsummers@ku.edu.

Glen W. White received his Ph.D. from the University of Kansas. He is currently Director of the Research and Training Center on Independent Living, is a tenured professor in the Department of Applied Behavioral Sciences, and a senior scientist at the Schiefelbusch Institute for Life Span Studies at the University of Kansas. He has over 35 years' experience as a researcher and educator on issues related to people with disabilities, including addressing barriers to community participation and empowering students with disabilities. His research interests include prevention of secondary conditions and promoting health for people with disabilities, as well as developing educational supports for students with disabilities. He can be reached by email at glen@ku.edu.

E Zhang received her B.A. and M.Ed. degrees in psychology from Beijing Forestry University in China and is a current doctoral student in Department of Applied Behavioral Science, University of Kansas. Her research interests includes people with disabilities, independent living and self-advocacy. She can be reached by email at alicezhang@ku.edu.

Jeffrey M. Gordon received his B.A. and M.A. degrees in behavioral psychology from the University of Kansas. His experience includes working as a consultant for the Lawrence Public School District and serving as a research assistant in the Department of Applied Behavior Analysis at the University of Kansas. He is currently working on his doctoral degree which will evaluate the self-advocacy skills training literature. His current research interests include self-advocacy for people with disabilities, behavioral economics, and sustainability of community-based interventions. He can be reached by email at jmgordon@ku.edu.

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