A Job Analysis of Accessibility Services Administrators in Higher Education

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Abstract

The identification and understanding of essential roles and functions in a profession, through the application of job analysis methods, can serve as a guide to develop and hone professional competency. The last such analysis of accessibility services administrators in postsecondary education was published in 1997. A variety of changes in the field over the past 25 years warrant an updated examination of these duties. This study presents the results of a Delphi study conducted with 18 experts in postsecondary accessibility services. They were asked to review and rate the prior job duties as well as an array of duties reflected in the current professional literature. The study resulted in a set of accessibility administrator responsibilities that can be used to guide job activities and professional development going forward.

Keywords: accessibility services, disability services, postsecondary education, job duties, essential roles and functions

Calls for understanding the roles and functions (i.e., job duties) of personnel who work in the field of accessibility services for students with disabilities in higher education go back to the mid 1980s, after a period of rapid development of the field. In 1977, 32 professionals developed the Association on Handicapped Student Service Programs in Postsecondary Education (AHSSPPE; now known as the Association on Higher Education and Disability, or AHEAD; Bonney, 1983; Madaus, 1997). Membership increased to 600 professionals representing over 400 institutions by 1984 (Pierce, 1984). At this point, Blosser (1984) stated, "little, if any research has been conducted on the role and function, or the professional preparation needs of program staff" (p. 6). Two years later, Richard Harris, then the President of AHSSPPE, called for a better understanding of the professional training of individuals working with students with disabilities in higher education, and wrote, "AHSSPPE must exert great effort toward quality professional preparation" (p. 112).

To meet this call, Madaus (1997) conducted a job analysis of accessibility services administrators in the United States and Canada. A sample of 567 service providers rated 54 items across 6 factors as important or moderately important in the administration of an accessibility services office. As noted by Madaus (1997), these items were shared with a 20 member Professional Standards Task Force convened by AHEAD, and then reviewed by the AHEAD Special Interest Group chairs and the AHEAD Board of Directors. As a result of these reviews, 51 items across 5 factors were accepted as the AHEAD Professional Standards (Madaus, 1997).

While the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) has promulgated Standards for accessibility services, they were developed by professionals both within and outside the accessibility services profession. Since the Madaus (1997) examination, accessibility services job duties have not been systematically reviewed and updated solely by current practitioners. Both Blosser (1984) and Madaus (1997) called for periodic updating of our understanding of the roles and functions of service providers, and as Blosser noted, given "student

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needs and other circumstances change" (p. 173). Certainly, a great deal has changed in the field since 1997, including ubiquitous technologies such as smartphones, smart watches, laptops and tablets that increasingly include embedded accessibility features (Walker et al., 2018); the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008 (Keenan et al., 2019); the rapid growth of online and hybrid instruction (Kmetz et al., 2016); the promulgation of universal design in both the physical and instructional environment (Faggella-Luby et al., 2017); changes in the types of disabilities now present on college campuses, such as autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability, and increasing numbers of students with psychological conditions; and changes in societal attitudes and beliefs about disability and social justice that impact how students access services and how these are delivered. Moreover, the number of professionals working in the field increased significantly. As previously noted, the 32 member AHSSPPE grew to over 600 members by 1984, and by 1995, AHEAD had over 2,000 members (Parkinson, 1997). Since this time, the AHEAD membership has doubled to over 4,000 members from all 50 states and 10 other countries (Scott, 2021). The time has come to again analyze the roles and functions of accessibility services personnel for the reasons articulated over three decades ago by Blosser and Harris, two of AHEAD's founding professionals. Therefore, the current study investigated and identified the roles and functions considered most important for accessibility services practitioners in institutions of higher education.

Methodology

The Delphi method was utilized in the present study to organize and build upon the collective wisdom of experts in postsecondary accessibility services. According to Scheele (1975, 2002), a panel consisting of scholars and those whom the research is about (i.e., accessibility services professionals) is best able to approximate the reality of the experience in question.

The Delphi Method
The Delphi method was developed in the early 1950s "to obtain the most reliable consensus of opinion of a group of experts…by a series of intensive questionnaires interspersed with controlled opinion feedback" (Dalkey & Helmer, 1962, p. 1). According to Dalkey (1969), the method consists of three features:

(1) <u>Anonymous response</u>: Opinions of members of the group are obtained by formal questionnaire. (2) <u>Iteration and controlled feedback</u>: Interaction is affected by a systematic exercise conducted in several iterations, with carefully controlled feedback between rounds. (3) <u>Statistical response</u>: The group opinion is defined as an appropriate aggregate of individual opinions on the final round. (p. v)

The Delphi method has been used within higher education research to identify disability-related professional competencies (e.g., Lalor, Madaus, & Dukes, 2020), the essential tasks and functions of ADA coordinators (e.g., Friend, 2000) and disability-related program standards (e.g., Anderson, 1998; Shaw & Dukes, 2006). The Delphi method also allows for collection of both qualitative and quantitative data so that in addition to ratings of individual standards, wording of the standards can be refined across iterations.

Expert Panel
Selecting a panel of participants is an important consideration as it impacts the quality and validity of the Delphi outcomes (Day & Bobeva, 2005). According to Turoff (1975, 2002), there is no minimum number of experts needed for a Delphi study; however, Ludwig (1997) commented that "the majority of Delphi studies have used between 15 and 20 respondents" (p. 2). In order to identify experts, this study used a combination of (a) experience as an accessibility services professional, (b) leadership in delivering professional development, and (c) positions of leadership in postsecondary accessibility services. From this identified list of experts, the researchers narrowed the participants further by requiring that (1) accessibility services professionals hold a *primary* position as an administrator of an accessibility services office *and* a record of either relevant publications and/or an extensive record of providing professional development in the field and/or, (2) the expert is serving or has served in a formal leadership position within the postsecondary accessibility field (i.e., current or past President of AHEAD since 1996, Director of the National Center for College Students with Disabilities, current or past editor of the *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*). A total of 18 participants representing these two, nonexclusive groups agreed to participate in the study.

Questionnaire Development
Online questionnaires were employed as study instruments and are described below (all questionnaires are available from the first author upon request).

Review of the Literature

An extensive review of literature published since 1997 on accessibility services was reviewed by the research team and two special education doctoral students. A literature base consisting of all literature on higher education and disability published between 1955 and 2012 was reviewed. Additionally, publications spanning the years 2012 to 2019 were examined. Relevant publications, such as the AHEAD Program Standards and Performance Indicators (Shaw & Dukes, 2006), the Anderson study (1998) identifying essential services components for college students with learning disabilities, The CAS Standards in Higher Education (2013), and evaluation guidelines for accessibility services programs (Dukes, 2011), were particularly relevant during the item review and development process.

Review of the 1997 AHEAD Professional Standards. The original version of the AHEAD Professional Standards was reviewed by the five members of the research team. These items were examined for clarity of wording, representativeness of the field, and the extent to which the items reflected current language used within the field of postsecondary accessibility services (e.g., emotional support animals, interactive process, intersectional [in association with identity]). The five domains and the 51 corresponding items were revised, and additional job duties were included as a function of the previously described literature review resulting in five updated domains and 63 items (e.g., collaborates with diversity office to be inclusive of disability as an aspect of diversity, participates in campus-wide emergency planning). These became the Round 1 questionnaire.

Round 1. In Round 1, participants completed an electronic consent form, an eligibility screening confirming they each met eligibility requirements, a demographic questionnaire, and the accessibility services roles and functions questionnaire. Experts were asked to (a) rate each job duty statement based upon its importance regardless of financial, personnel, or budgetary constraints at an institutional level, using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*); (b) note any proposed changes to the wording of an item; (c) propose any missing roles and/or essential functions important to accessibility services work in the domain area; and (d) provide feedback on the domain definition regarding its wording including how to reword the definition, if appropriate. Participants had three weeks to complete Round 1. Consensus was defined *a priori* as 66.6% of participant ratings of an item falling within two increments of the 5-point Likert scale (Anderson, 1998; Diamond et al., 2014). When consensus was achieved on the rating of clarity or importance, the item was not included in subsequent questionnaires. Roles and functions that reached consensus with modal scores of 3 (*moderately important*) or lower were *not* included in the final set of job duties important to the work of accessibility services.

Comments were reviewed with domain names and descriptions revised based on panelist feedback. Individual roles and functions items were reviewed and subsequently collapsed or revised as necessary employing conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Items were collapsed to eliminate redundancy and increase richness. Item revision increased clarity by eliminating acronyms and editing any grammatical and spelling errors. Domain definition, and domain item collapse and revision were completed by one researcher and reviewed by the four remaining researchers for accuracy. Additional changes were completed in response to feedback from the four researchers. These changes further improved grammar and redundancy in word usage within respective domain items.

Rounds 2 and 3. In Rounds 2 and 3, participants received (a) the revised questionnaire, (b) aggregate quantitative data (e.g., mean, mode, standard deviation, and a frequency table reflecting prior round ratings) from the previous round's participant responses, and (c) all qualitative comments from the previous round. In light of the aggregate quantitative data and qualitative remarks provided in the prior round, experts were asked to (a) rate each remaining job duty statement based upon its importance regardless of financial, personnel, or budgetary constraints at an institutional level, using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*); (b) note any proposed changes to the wording of an item; (c) propose any missing roles and/or essential functions important to accessibility services work in the domain area; and (d) provide feedback on the domain definition regarding its wording including how to reword the definition, if appropriate. Again, participants had three weeks to complete Rounds 2 and 3 and procedures for data recording and analysis mirrored the Round 1 procedures.

Essential roles and functions that reached consensus in Rounds 2 and 3 were included with Round 1 duties that met consensus, and items that did not reach consensus after Round 3 were also noted. An *a priori* decision was made to terminate the study following three rounds due to feasibility concerns related to the likelihood of increased attrition (Schmidt, 1997).

Results

Expert Panel

All participants who agreed to participate in the study responded to the Round 1 questionnaire, 16 of the 18 expert panelists (88.9%) responded to the Round 2 questionnaire, and 15 of the 18 (83.3%) experts submitted data for all questionnaires. Table 1 presents the number of participants by round and expert group as well as demographic information.

Results by Domain

The panelists reached consensus on essential roles and functions that clustered into five domains: Administration (25 items), Consultation and Collaboration (25 items), Institutional Awareness (10 items), Professional Development (13 items), and Student Development (10 items). The results for each domain are reviewed below.

Administration

Table 2 contains the 25 roles and functions related to administering services and programs to students with disabilities. Panelists rated "maintaining student records to ensure privacy" (e.g., documentation of disability) ($M = 4.9$, $SD = 0.32$); "providing guidance for the college/university on policies and their impact on disability services" ($M = 4.9$, $SD = 0.25$); "advocating with campus leadership for budgetary needs" ($M = 4.8$, $SD = 0.38$); "developing, administering, and managing program budgets" ($M = 4.8$, $SD = 0.38$); and "developing, publicizing, reviewing, and regularly revising all relevant program policies and procedures" (e.g., program mission, student eligibility for services, service delivery to students) ($M = 4.8$, $SD = 0.43$) as being important administrative duties of accessibility services. Items related to the Administration domain that did not reach consensus after three rounds of the Delphi include potential duties such as "coordinates individual mentoring to students relating to disability issues as needed" ($M = 2.7$, $SD = 0.87$) and "coordinates or provides academic advisement to students relating to disability issues" ($M = 1.8$, $SD = 0.40$).

Consultation and Collaboration

Table 3 reflects the 25 roles and functions related to working both in collaboration and consultation with campus or community personnel and agency stakeholders. Panelists rated "maintaining effective working relationships with campus legal counsel" ($M = 4.7$, $SD = 0.57$); "collaborating with other campus operations that work with students with disabilities"

(e.g., residential life, athletics, veterans services, registrar) ($M = 4.6$, $SD = 0.86$); "participating in campus-wide emergency planning" ($M = 4.6$, $SD = 0.78$); and "serving on campus administrative committees to foster consideration of the needs of students with disabilities" ($M = 4.6$, $SD = 0.70$) as being particularly important accessibility services responsibilities related to providing consultation and collaboration. Items related to the Consultation and Collaboration domain that did not reach consensus after three rounds of the Delphi include "collaborates in the provision of mentoring/advisement to enhance student development" (e.g., self-advocacy) ($M = 2.9$, $SD = 0.85$), "responds to requests for assistance or guidance from human resource departments making accommodations for student employees" ($M = 3.6$, $SD = 1.12$), "responds to requests for assistance or guidance from human resource departments making accommodations for non-student employees" ($M = 3.1$, $SD = 1.23$), and "responds to requests for assistance or guidance from departments making accommodations for employees" ($M = 2.6$, $SD = 1.45$).

Institutional Awareness

Table 4 includes the 10 roles and functions related to sharing information and expertise regarding disability with members of the campus community. Panelists believed it was important for accessibility services professionals to raise institutional awareness of disability-related matters via various methods of communication and representation. For example, panelists rated "serving on campus committees to develop institutional policies and procedures regarding students with disabilities" ($M = 4.6$, $SD = 0.79$) and "fostering the inclusion of disability in campus diversity initiatives" ($M = 4.6$, $SD = 0.62$) as being particularly important responsibilities of raising institutional awareness for accessibility services professionals. Interestingly, no items related to the Institutional Awareness domain failed to reach consensus and were considered nonessential.

Professional Development

Table 5 contains the 13 roles and functions regarding maintaining up-to-date professional knowledge and skills. Panelists believed it was important for accessibility services professionals to develop and maintain competencies necessary for offering quality services to individuals with disabilities. In particular, panelists rated "adhering to and applying a relevant code of ethics" ($M = 4.8$, $SD = 0.75$); "maintaining up-to-date knowledge of emerging issues in accessibility services" (e.g., technology, legal issues, documentation, service animals, emotional support animals)

Table 1

Expert Panelist Demographics by Round of Data Collection

	Round 1		Round 2		Round 3	
Demographic	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Expert group[a]						
Accessibility services professionals	13	72.2	11	68.8	10	66.7
Accessibility services leaders	14	77.8	12	75.0	12	80.0
Gender identity						
Man	4	22.2	4	25.0	4	26.7
Woman	14	77.8	12	75.0	11	73.3
Identify as a person with a disability						
No	13	72.2	13	81.3	12	80.0
Yes	4	22.2	3	18.8	3	20.0
Unsure	1	5.6	0	0.0	0	0.0
Race/ethnicity						
Black	2	11.1	1	6.3	1	6.7
White	16	88.9	15	93.8	14	93.3
Highest degree earned						
Bachelor's	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Master's	12	66.7	10	62.5	9	60.0
Doctoral	5	27.8	5	31.3	5	33.3
Other	1	5.6	1	6.3	1	6.7
Nation employed						
Canada	1	5.6	1	6.3	1	6.7
United States	17	94.4	15	93.8	14	93.3
Institutional type						
Associate's college	3	16.7	2	12.5	1	6.7
Baccalaureate college	1	5.6	1	6.3	1	6.7
Master's college or university	2	11.1	2	12.5	2	13.3
Research or doctoral university	8	44.4	7	43.8	7	46.7
Other	4	22.2	4	25.0	4	26.7
Sector						
Private	3	16.7	3	18.8	3	20.0
Public	11	61.1	9	56.3	8	53.3
Other	4	22.2	4	25.0	4	26.7
Total participants	18		16		15	

Note. Additional answer choices were offered in most demographic areas (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity) but not selected by participants and thus not included in Table 1. [a] Percentages do not sum to 100% due to some participants meeting the criteria of expertise for both expert groups.

Table 2

ADMINISTRATION: Responsibilities Related to Administering Services and Programs to Students with Disabilities

- Develops, publicizes, reviews, and regularly revises all relevant program policies and procedures (e.g., program mission, student eligibility for services, service delivery to students).
- Identifies, establishes, and evaluates program goals at least annually.
- Prepares and disseminates reports on program activities and services.
- Maintains up-to-date staff job descriptions and performance expectations.
- Develops, administers, and manages program budget.
- Advocates with campus leadership for budgetary needs.
- Develops, regularly reviews, and revises all program media (e.g., social media, website).
- Responds to requests for interpretation of legal mandates on campus-specific issues related to students with disabilities.
- Interprets court and government agency rulings and interpretations affecting services for students with disabilities.
- Maintains student records to ensure privacy (e.g., documentation of disability).
- Determines program eligibility for services based upon institutional expectation of documentation of a disability.
- Responds to inquiries from prospective students and/or their families.
- Processes disability related complaints/grievances from students in compliance with campus protocol.
- Coordinates auxiliary aides for students (e.g., note takers, assistive technology).
- Coordinates individualized accommodations for students (e.g., testing accommodations, housing accommodations, online course accommodations).
- Adheres to a set of relevant office guidelines/standards.
- Advocates with faculty on behalf of students regarding proper accommodation implementation.
- Responds promptly to feedback about services from members of the campus or community.
- Provides supervision for staff members.
- Communicates program activities, services, and outcomes to institutional administrators.
- Communicates the availability of disability-related services to students transitioning to the college or university (e.g., high school workshops, transition fairs) in collaboration with other campus departments.
- Provides guidance for the college/university on polices and their impact on disability services.
- Understands staffing strengths and needs.
- Understands how to leverage existing staff as resources to complete needed office mission.
- Addresses office staff professional development and training needs.

Table 3

CONSULTATION AND COLLABORATION: Responsibilities Related to Working with Campus or Community Personnel and Agencies Regarding Disability Issues

- Facilitates the development and convening of an institutional disability advisory committee.
- Serves on campus administrative committees to foster consideration of the needs of students with disabilities.
- Consults with faculty or appropriate campus personnel to foster effective instructional and assessment techniques for students with disabilities.
- Consults with state, provincial, or community resources (e.g., rehabilitation services, medical professionals, psychologists, social service organizations, secondary schools).
- Collaborates with campus architects/campus facilities department to review or plan new construction and renovations.
- Collaborates with facilities personnel regarding modifications to ensure campus accessibility.
- Facilitates the communication of program-sponsored activities available to the campus community.
- Communicates with campus Information Technology staff to support student success and legal compliance (e.g., web compliance, campus technology purchases, student distributed campus access).
- Facilitates the communication of program activities to campus community (e.g., via campus news sources).
- Maintains effective working relationships with campus legal counsel.
- Fosters authentic inclusion of students with disabilities as representatives on relevant campus committees.
- Participates in campus-wide emergency planning.
- Collaborates with library personnel regarding accessibility of materials.
- Collaborates with other campus operations that work with students with disabilities (e.g., residential life, athletics, veterans services, registrar).
- Communicates information regarding accessibility services program activities and services to students.
- Consults with faculty regarding the instructional needs of students with disabilities.
- Consults with institutional administrators regarding the needs of students with disabilities (e.g., department directors, vice provost/president).
- Consults with other campus departments regarding the needs of students (e.g., health services, residential life, admissions, counseling services).
- Communicates information regarding program services to the campus community (e.g., websites, admissions brochure, student catalog).
- Serves as an advocate for accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities with all campus personnel.
- Collaborates with diversity office to be inclusive of disability as an aspect of diversity.
- Prioritize collaborations and consultations that are likely to have positive effects on students, faculty, and staff with disabilities.
- Contributes to the development of communication channels between institutional units specifically devoted to disability, health, and counseling.
- Works to ensure American Sign Language users and Deaf culture is included on campus (e.g., supporting acceptance of American Sign Language to fulfill language requirements, providing opportunities for sign language users to gather and organize).
- Respond to requests for assistance or guidance from departments making accommodations for graduate students.

Table 4

INSTITUTIONAL AWARENESS: Responsibilities Related to Sharing Information and Expertise Regarding Disability Issues to Members of the Campus Community

- Fosters communication about disability relevant matters via all media for campus information sharing.
- Serves on campus committees to develop institutional policies and procedures regarding students with disabilities.
- Serves on campus committees addressing regulatory issues affecting students with disabilities.
- Provides disability awareness programming for the campus community (e.g., accommodations, auxiliary aides, rights and responsibilities).
- Supports training of faculty regarding serving students with disabilities (e.g., instructional techniques and supports).
- Supports training for campus professionals to facilitate student integration in the campus community (e.g., residential life, registrar, library, institutional technology).
- Collaborate to provide training for student leaders to increase awareness and accessibility of all programming activities.
- Promote a positive disability narrative in support of a welcoming campus climate.
- Foster the inclusion of disability in campus diversity initiatives.
- Ensure that members of the campus community receive training about the diversity of people with disabilities and how different backgrounds, identities, ethnicities, and cultures intersect with disability.

Table 5

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Responsibilities Related to Maintaining Up-to-Date Professional Knowledge and Skills

- Attends conferences and professional development workshops.
- Reads and applies professional literature related to higher education and students with disabilities.
- Holds membership in professional organizations.
- Facilitates staff participation in relevant orientation and professional development activities.
- Maintains working knowledge of disability, disability types, diagnoses.
- Facilitates staff, delineates and evaluates professional goals and expectations.
- Adheres to and applies a relevant code of ethics.
- Maintains up-to-date knowledge of emerging issues in accessibility services (e.g., technology, legal issues, documentation, service animals, emotional support animals).
- Maintains a current knowledge of appropriate supports for specific populations of students with disabilities (e.g., students who are veterans; have mental health concerns; are autistic; are first-generation students; are student athletes; or who are attempting science, technology, engineering, or math majors/courses).
- Develops and applies cultural competence to work with individuals with disabilities.
- Ensures that staff understand and abide by their professional code of ethics (e.g., accessibility services professionals, interpreters, etc.).
- Ensures that information obtained from professional development is shared with other accessibility services staff.
- Understand ableism and one's own power and privilege as it relates to individuals with varying abilities.

Table 6

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT: Shared Responsibilities Related to Working Collaboratively with Students to Promote Their Development

- Consults with students regarding their needs including but not limited to academic and student affairs matters.
- Utilizes an interactive process with students with disabilities regarding appropriate individualized accommodations based upon documentation.
- Assists students with disabilities to monitor the effectiveness of accommodations.
- Provides information to students with disabilities regarding their legal rights and responsibilities.
- Encourages students to develop executive functioning skills, learning and study strategies, social skills, and self-determination/self-advocacy skills.
- Refers students to community resources (e.g., vocational rehabilitation, social service agencies, etc.) as appropriate.
- Shares information with students with disabilities about resources across campus and connects them as appropriate.
- Supports community building among people with disabilities on campus (e.g., cultural centers, disability organizations, groups focused on disability and deaf culture, support groups, advocacy groups, social groups).
- Supports students in understanding their disability through the interpretation of available documentation and the reason why any accommodations were granted.
- Distributes program materials in paper and/or electronic formats to campus departments (e.g., health services, counseling services).

($M = 4.6$, $SD = 0.69$); "facilitating staff participation in relevant orientation and professional development activities" ($M = 4.6$, $SD = 0.49$); and "ensuring that staff understand and abide by their professional code of ethics" (e.g., accessibility services professionals, interpreters, etc.) ($M = 4.6$, $SD = 0.81$) as being important to accessibility services duties related to promoting staff development of knowledge and skills. Once again, no items related to the Professional Development domain failed to reach consensus. All items associated with the Professional Development domain were deemed essential.

Student Development

Table 6 reflects 10 roles and functions related to working collaboratively with students to promote their development. The student development domain was not part of the roles and functions originally identified by Madaus (1997). Panelists believed it was important for accessibility services professionals to be knowledgeable about and supportive of student development, which aligns with the sentiments of several authors of research examined as part of the literature review (e.g., Hadley, 2011; Higbee, 2004; Myers, 2008). Panelists rated "utilizing an interactive process with students with disabilities regarding appropriate individualized accommodations based upon

documentation" ($M = 4.7$, $SD = 0.75$) as being particularly important to accessibility services work. Items related to the Student Development domain that did not reach consensus after three rounds of the Delphi include "supports students in understanding their disability through the interpretation of available documentation and the reason why any accommodations were granted" ($M = 3.2$, $SD = 0.83$) and "provides or collaborates in creating programs that foster development and self-determination" ($M = 2.8$, $SD = 1.29$).

Discussion

Shaw et al. (1997), stated, "It can be expected that changes in student needs, legislation, medicine, and technology will result in changing professional practice" (p. 26-27). The present study provides an overview of the current status of the responsibilities performed by accessibility service providers on college campuses and updates the work by Madaus (1997), which led to the AHEAD Professional Standards approved by the organization's Board in 1997. The updated roles and functions have been identified as being essential regardless of type of institution (e.g., two/four-year, degree offered). This job analysis adds critically important data to the research literature by documenting the status of a field that is

responding to myriad legal, technological, and societal attitudinal changes over the past quarter century. Compared to the analysis of roles and functions conducted by Madaus (1997), this examination reveals the scope of work performed by accessibility service professionals has continued to expand as the number of essential duties has shifted from 51 in 1997 to 83 in the present study.

While direct service, a category of the AHEAD Professional Standards, remains a key aspect of the role of accessibility service providers, in the current study, it is no longer a distinct area and its content has been subsumed in multiple domains. For example, (a) the coordination of accommodations and auxiliary aides is delineated as an Administrative domain function, (b) the communication of information regarding program services to the campus community is a Consultation and Collaboration domain function, and (c) providing information to students with disabilities regarding their legal rights and responsibilities is now an element of the Student Development domain. In fact, the Student Development domain was not an outcome of the Madaus (1997) study, nor was it a component of the resultant AHEAD Professional Standards, thus in the current study it is an entirely new domain. The importance of fostering student development, both directly and indirectly, resulted in these functions becoming a unique domain in the present job analysis, ostensibly supplanting direct service as a domain. Indeed, there is a purposeful focus upon the promotion of students' taking on an active role in both advocating for and determining their academic strengths and needs based upon disability documentation and personal experience. For example, as part of the Student Development category, accessibility services staff: (a) Utilizes an *interactive* process with students with disabilities regarding appropriate individualized accommodations based upon documentation, (b) *assists* students with disabilities to monitor the effectiveness of accommodations, and (c) *supports* students in understanding their disability through the interpretation of available documentation and the reason why any accommodations were granted (emphasis added). The current focus is clearly upon an active role for the student, with one goal being the development and promotion of student self-determination during and after college completion. In fact, data have long suggested that promoting self-determination results in positive student outcomes (Field et al., 2003).

Further, the role of accessibility service professionals has grown increasingly collaborative with other campus programs and offices. The number of roles and functions in the Consultation and Collaboration domain has grown from 8 in 1997 to 25 for the present study. Over time, there has been a greater emphasis on authentic inclusion of students with disabilities campus wide. For example, a role identified in the current study includes collaborating with the diversity office to be inclusive of disability as an aspect of diversity. Students, study participants believe, should utilize campus services and supports across the campus community in the same manner as any other individual. For example, a role of accessibility services is to consult with other campus departments regarding the needs of students. So, rather than a student with disability seeking out counseling from accessibility services, the student would instead seek out counseling support from the campus wellness center.

The number of Institutional Awareness roles and functions grew from 8 in 1997 to 10 in the present study. While the overall number has not increased substantially there are some important distinctions among the previous and current roles and functions. First, the 1997 Professional Standards noted accessibility services "*provides* training for faculty regarding awareness of disabilities" while the current synonymous item states, the office should "ensure that members of the campus community *receive* training about the diversity of people with disabilities …" (emphasis added). Next, whereas the 1997 Standards use language such as "provides" and "responsible for", the current roles and functions in this domain instead utilize terms such as "foster" and "support", with the intent to communicate that campus awareness of disability is an institution-wide obligation.

One of the primary purposes of the AHEAD Professional Standards was for professional development. In fact, Madaus (1997) stated, "Identifying the current roles and functions of (accessibility services) leadership personnel would serve as a critical foundation in the delineation and development of professional training needs" (p. 10). Certainly, this need remains when one considers that the Professional Development area included 3 items in 1997 and has since grown to include 13. Given the evolving nature of the role of accessibility services on campus, the ongoing technological evolution, the shifts in legal expectations and the widening array of disabled students accessing college, it is to be expected that the importance of receiving and providing professional development has expanded. Training reflecting the current study results could be applied to both professional development for current practitioners as well as those completing accessibility services preparation programs (e.g., graduate or certificate programs).

While this study reveals changes in the field since 1997, it also demonstrates that many of the issues

facing the profession remain. Accessibility services personnel still bear the primary responsibility for advocating for the needs of students with disabilities, which is perhaps why the number of Consultation and Collaboration and Institutional Awareness roles and functions have expanded during this period. In the same vein, the results also reflect the incredible diversity of the ways these supports are provided on campuses. While many colleges/universities have robust programming and many professionals devoted to meeting the needs of these students, many other colleges and universities are serviced by part-time sole providers who only review documentation and provide accommodation letters (Scott, 2021).

Limitations

The study results come with a few limitations that merit consideration. First, the Delphi technique study results are, in large part, dependent upon the utilization of an appropriate panel of expert participants (Anderson, 1998). The current study utilized a set of benchmarks previously used in similar studies to identify 18 experts in the field of higher education and disability as participants, with the majority of participants not identifying as disabled. These participants reflected a diverse array of colleges and universities across the United States and Canada. Panel member dropout during the three study rounds can also be considered a limitation. However, the current study had a response rate of more than 83% across all rounds of the process. Secondly, the Delphi process is, ostensibly, a method in which the terminology agreed upon is done by committee. As a result, some readers may find that the job analysis results have a diffusive tone. Personnel utilizing the study results when preparing job descriptions, for example, are encouraged to modify the tone of the roles and functions for operational applications. Lastly, a potential limitation is the possibility that the survey instrument did not fully reflect the entire universe of content; that is, it may not have included all roles and functions of an accessibility services office. In order to ameliorate this limitation, an extensive literature review was completed as part of the survey development process, and the previous AHEAD Program Standards were used as the baseline for survey development. Moreover, the study authors, who were responsible for the initial survey content, all have extensive experience in the field of higher education and disability. Lastly, as part of the Delphi protocol, panelists were able to make survey content recommendations if there were roles and functions they perceived as missing from the instrument.

Conclusions

This study provides a current snapshot of the typical roles and functions of accessibility service offices. It indicates that accessibility services professionals provide a range of supports and services both directly and indirectly. The importance of collaboration and consultation has increased since the original AHEAD Professional Standards were developed (Madaus, 1997). The scope of services provided by accessibility services professionals continue to vary widely across campuses. Additionally, there may be duties not reflected in the results that professionals may need in their particular settings, and it is also possible some roles and functions identified in the current study may, in some settings, not be as important as others. Overall, the responsibilities of accessibility services personnel continue to evolve as indicated by the scope of roles and functions identified by the study participants. Moreover, it is recommended the examination of job duties be an ongoing activity that is subsequently reflected in the higher education and disability literature.

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