The Relationship Between Institutional Unit and Administrative Features of Disability Services Offices in Higher Education

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Abstract

Using data from an Association on Higher Education And Disability (AHEAD) survey, this study of 424 postsecondary disability services (DS) administrators examines how campus and office characteristics may vary with disability services placement in academic or student affairs. The results of this survey suggest that only modest differences exist, and that disability service offices provide opportunities for collaboration across units, and may serve as a model for collaboration in higher education.

Despite a common mission of ensuring disability access on campuses, disability services (DS) offices are as diverse as the educational institutions they serve. These offices may be found in almost any campus unit, including health services or counseling, business offices or human resources, or departments of general counsel, but the most common placement is in student affairs or academic affairs (Harbour, 2004). These administrative units have different philosophical foundations and campus roles, as well as a traditionally dualistic relationship. This article will explore whether there is any relationship between institutional placement of DS offices in academic affairs and students affairs, administrative features of the DS offices, and campus characteristics.

The Development of Disability Services

It is interesting to note that although disability access is a campus-wide concern, and a primary responsibility of DS providers is to ensure access to academics, academic affairs has had a peripheral role in the history of disability services. Even in recent decades, as higher education administrators complied with new laws like Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), they recruited DS personnel from across campuses. Most DS directors, however, continued to come from student services or counseling backgrounds because they seemed most qualified to provide direct services to students and understand (or learn about) any disability-related needs (Blosser, 1984; Madaus, 2000).

Since 2000, the field of disability services has reached a critical point. The Association on Disability And Higher Education (AHEAD) has developed program standards and professional indicators and started to define critical knowledge and skill bases for DS professionals, as a first step towards developing a national DS certification process (R. Allegra, personal communication, November 9, 2007; Shaw & Dukes, 2005), but considerable variability exists among DS offices, professional backgrounds of DS staff, and the availability (or lack thereof) of professional development opportunities (Blosser, 1984; Madaus, 1998). Adding to the complexity of the issue, DS offices are becoming more diverse and are required to provide increasing numbers of educational services and accommodations (Tagayuna, Stodden, Chang, Zeleznik, & Whelley, 2005). Offices may also serve disabled undergraduates and graduate students, faculty and staff (Harbour, 2004).[1]

Disabilities that were once considered rare, like autism, Asperger's Syndrome, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and psychiatric disabilities, are becoming commonplace (although there is still debate about whether

[1]*Person-first language is conventional when writing about people with disabilities (American Psychological Association, 2001). For example, authors typically write "people with disabilities" instead of "disabled people." In this paper, I will use people-first language and disability-first language interchangeably to reflect a growing awareness that some people use the term "disability" to refer to their identity or as a neutral descriptor. For further discussion, see Linton (1998).*

these disabilities were really rare, underdiagnosed, or underserved) (Collins & Mowbray, 2005; Harbour, 2004; Henderson, 2001). In fact, the number of people with mild disabilities who have graduated from college (13%) is nearly the same as the number of people with severe disabilities who have graduated from college (12%) (NOD & Harris, 2004), indicating the extent to which DS offices must deal with a variety of individuals, disabilities and accommodations. The context of higher education has also changed; with the emergence of disability studies as an academic discipline, DS offices are no longer the sole authorities on disability in higher education. As with women's studies and other cultural studies, disability studies uses disability as a lens for academic and cultural critique, developing a body of critical theory which is simultaneously challenging and informing the field of disability services (Brueggemann, 2002; Linton, 1998). With these trends happening simultaneously, administration of DS offices is a complicated task with external pressures (e.g., legislation, evolving societal attitudes, advances in technology and medicine) and internal pressures (e.g., disability studies, faculty concerns, funding constraints).

The Evolution of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs

The majority of DS offices are located in student affairs or academic affairs (Harbour, 2004). If there are differences in DS offices by administrative placement, it is important to understand how differences between the two units may explain the findings. This section provides a brief overview of the development of student affairs and academic affairs and their roles in higher education today.

Academic affairs began to split from student affairs in the late 19th century. Academic affairs became more focused on managing curriculum, faculty and academic programs, and student affairs became more focused on extracurricular concerns (Caple, 1994). As academic affairs and student affairs evolved, they developed very different cultures, values and attitudes even though both dealt with increasing student diversity, information technologies and globalization in higher education (Kramer & Associates, 2003). Differences between the two units have also been more tangible, including staffing size, budget and centrality of activities, with academic affairs being perceived as "preeminent" in each of these categories (Ferren & Stanton, 2004, p. 21). All of these differences are obstacles towards collaboration and evidence of a dualism that continues today (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001).

In the 1990s, various organizations for academic and student affairs professionals began actively calling for collaboration between academic and student affairs (see, e.g., Berson, Engelkemeyer, Oliaro, Potter, Terenzini, & Walker-Johnson, 1998; Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kuh, Lyons, Miller, & Trow, 1995). Yet even as student affairs and academic affairs begin to come together across philosophical and pragmatic differences, they continued to be two very different units and a dualistic relationship is the prevalent model on most campuses.

This leads to the current study of DS offices and administrators. If student affairs and academic affairs have considerable differences, it is reasonable to question whether DS offices in each unit will have considerable differences, as well. DS service providers are concerned with access for the whole campus, necessitating work with both units, as well as collaboration between them. The question for this study, however, is focused on the administration of DS offices rather than their work, and how administrative features of the offices may vary by institutional placement.

Best Practices for Institutional Placement of Disability Services Offices

With the development of professional and programmatic standards, as well as the beginnings of a national certification process for DS providers, it seems possible that the field of disability services is mature, stable, and consistent enough that offices would differ little by administrative unit. However, given the different cultures and orientations of student affairs and academic affairs, it also seems possible that DS offices may vary by supervising unit.

Support for DS placement in academic affairs largely stems from the argument that DS needs to be involved in the same facets of university administration that academic affairs oversees. It is important for DS to be involved with institutional policy-making and long-range planning (Van Meter, 1993). DS offices are also often working on facilities across campus, concerned about access issues and academic needs in all colleges and units (Ferren & Stanton, 2004), including access to every academic program and all curricula (Konur, 2006). Zavos (1995) conducted a study of 62 departmental directors and deans at private and public colleges in Pennsylvania. Although respondents were familiar with disability-related legislation and satisfied with the overall level of services at DS offices, Zavos noted that DS offices still needed frequent ongoing contact with academic affairs for access to buildings, student orientation, faculty development, and financial resources.

The question about whether DS offices should be in academic or student affairs also reflects broader questions about diversity, student learning, pedagogy and the

role of faculty in efforts to make campuses diverse and accessible (Jensen, McCrary, Krampe, & Cooper, 2004). For example, in a 1993 study of 761 students with disabilities in Virginia public and private higher education institutions, over half of the students were reasonably or very satisfied with accommodations and services from the DS office; the most frequently reported barrier for students' access was instructors and professors who were insensitive or unknowledgeable about students with disabilities (West, Kregel, Getzel, Zhu, Ipsen, & Marh, 1993). Classrooms are often places where disabled students don't feel comfortable or "safe" in showing they are not learning, or in asking for assistance from instructors (Scott, 1991, p. 729). Whether positive or negative, the attitudes of faculty not only affect students with disabilities, but also the classroom climate for other underrepresented students, as well as general expectations for pedagogy in diverse classrooms and the role of faculty in maintaining or supporting diversity efforts (Jensen et al., 2004).

Furthermore, one of the central stereotypes about disabled students (as with many other underrepresented groups on campus) is that they lower academic standards, a concern noted by various authors since the 1950s (Madaus, 2000; Rusalem, 1962a, 1962b; White, 2002). Despite provisions in the ADA that require students to be qualified and to meet the standards of any given college or university, faculty continue to worry that accommodations either give disabled students an unfair advantage or require a watered-down curriculum. Some faculty have noted that their colleagues see increasing numbers of students with learning disabilities as "an egregious instance of political correctness," trying "to replace academic rigor with excuses" (White, 2002, p. 705).

DS offices in academic affairs can work closely with academic deans, who need to know about legislation pertaining to students with disabilities, especially to address these concerns about maintaining high academic standards while providing disability accommodations and meeting legal requirements (Findlen, 2000a, 2000b). DS offices in academic affairs may be well-positioned to address these concerns related to faculty and academic access. However, faculty biases, misperceptions of DS work, or other attitudinal barriers in academic affairs may in fact become barriers to service delivery and continued growth of DS offices, making student affairs a better "home base" for DS offices.

Student affairs has a historical tradition of explicitly and vocally valuing difference, diversity and equality, as well as supporting diverse and affirming learning experiences for students (Engstrom & Tinto, 2000; Hall & Belch, 2000). With its stated moral values of diversity and student development, student affairs also provides a complement to DS's consistent focus on access as a matter of law and legislation (Hall & Belch, 2000). With training in student developmental theories, student affairs staff may also promote student involvement "in determining the creative accommodation which best suits the individual situation" (Frank & Wade, 1993, p. 28). Frank and Wade (1993) note that student affairs staff may also be better at creating a holistic picture of accommodations and disabled student development, since they have a concept of what is variable or individualized about student learning and what is invariable or the same for all students; this may eventually help develop comparative models of nondisabled and disabled student development and needs. Hall and Belch (2000) summarize the advantages of placement in student affairs: "Increased campus diversity requires that we face head on the growing concerns of students with disabilities and respond in multiple ways to a wide variety of needs, issues and student assumptions. Who better to respond than student affairs?" (pp. 8-9).

Yet student affairs has been "built on helping" (Caple, 1994, p. 201), an attitude which disabled people and disability scholars may associate with patronizing or pathological models of disability oriented towards helping or taking care of students with disabilities (see, e.g., discussion in Linton, 1998). Student affairs has also been critiqued for focusing on the short-term, refining old student development models rather than reflecting and developing new best practices for providing student services in the long-term (Caple, 1994; Engstrom & Tinto, 2000; Hall & Belch, 2000), and that lack of critical reflection may not bode well for DS professionals trying to change the campus climate. Also, while student affairs values diversity, it has not been highly successful in truly helping underrepresented groups feel like a part of campus (Hall & Belch, 2000). Student services and organizations can be disjointed or fragmented in their attempts to serve multiple constituents (Engstrom & Tinto, 2000; Hall & Belch, 2000).

Thus, the question of best practices for office placement remains unanswered. With arguments for and against DS offices in academic affairs and student affairs, the best course of action is to determine what campuses are doing at this point in time. While not providing guidance about what is best for the field, it does provide a picture of what offices are doing, and whether DS office administration or campus features vary by institutional placement.

Method

Data Collection

This research utilizes data from a 2004 survey conducted by the Association on Disability And Higher Education (AHEAD). While other recent studies of DS services include the 1999 and 2001 studies of postsecondary supports reported by Tagayuna et al., (2005), and Stodden, Roberts, Picklesimer, Jackson and Chang (2006), the 2004 AHEAD data remains the most current data at the time this article was submitted for publication.

The AHEAD survey was extensive, and collected data on a wide range of variables related to DS staff, their offices and campuses, including information about the institutional unit where participants' DS offices were housed. AHEAD board members developed the questions, which were grouped into four categories: (a) personal and professional demographic information about respondents; (b) information about survey respondents' work in DS offices; (c) salary and compensation information; (d) characteristics of respondents' DS offices and campuses. The survey had 38 questions, and space limitations prohibit inclusion of the full list of questions. Table 1 shows examples of questions from each of the survey's four categories.

Participants were self-selected and recruited via e-mail and listservs related to the DS field. AHEAD sent out one general recruitment e-mail through listservs related to disability services, the AHEAD e-mail membership rosters, and through AHEAD regional affiliates and special interest groups. The e-mail contained a direct link to the survey, and used a snowball recruitment technique, asking those receiving the e-mail to distribute it to colleagues in the disability services field. After two months, a second follow-up e-mail was sent out before the AHEAD survey data collection period closed. The follow-up e-mail utilized the same snowball recruitment technique.

AHEAD's anonymous survey was in English and available through the AHEAD Web site, which included information about how to access the survey and update web browsers, as needed. Respondents were not required to be AHEAD members. Various AHEAD members with disabilities tested disability access and Mac/PC compatibility before its implementation. After the AHEAD survey closed, database responses were downloaded into Excel software, and then analyzed using SPSS software.

Participants. The larger AHEAD survey had over 1300 respondents. This study, however, only used data from the 424 full-time administrators in the United States who responded to the survey. All administrators were full-time employees of colleges and universities. The term "administrators" includes professionals with the title of office or departmental director, coordinator or manager; project or program director, coordinator or manager; and associate or assistant director, coordinator or manager (some participants had more than one position or title). Respondents were asked to identify their position by the title they use for their job, whether or not it was the same title campus administration used for job classification purposes.

The 876 AHEAD survey responses from DS assistive technology staff, sign language interpreters, support staff, and direct service providers were not included in this study. Responses from outside the United States were also not included. This study restricts data to the 424 administrators to eliminate inaccurate responses from staff who may not have access to exact administrative figures and statistics for the office and campus, and to eliminate multiple responses from personnel in different roles at the same campus (e.g., a project director, secretary, and disability specialist from one campus). Thus, when this paper discusses study "participants" or "respondents," the terms refer to the 424 DS administrators.

Validity and reliability. As with any survey involving self-selected participants instead of randomly selected participants, this sample of DS administrators may be affected by selection bias and not be representative of DS administrators in the United States.

Another concern is the online nature of the survey. Many DS providers attempted to do the survey and found that their computers lacked the software, memory, Internet access or processing speed to respond. Although AHEAD offered ongoing technical guidance through the survey's Web site and phone-in technical support, respondents most likely represent the more technologically savvy DS administrators, as well as the DS offices best equipped with current computer technology.

Also, it became apparent that a lack of centralized information about disability and disability services created other concerns. For example, there are no organizations in the United States that currently collect ongoing systematic statistics about disabled students in higher education. Because there are no agreed-upon standards or categories for data collection, most DS statistics vary by office or by administrator. For example, some offices may count deaf, deaf-blind and hard-of-hearing students as having three distinct types of disabilities. Other campuses may count these students with blind and visually impaired students as having one type of disability: sensory disabilities.

AHEAD staff members responding to these con-

Table 1

Examples of questions from the AHEAD survey, by category of questions

Category	Examples of Survey Questions
Part 1 – Personal and professional demographic information	• How many years of experience do you have in your current position? • Are you a member of the Association on Higher Education And Disability? • What is the highest (most advanced) degree you have *completed* at this time? Do not include degrees that are in progress. • What is your ethnicity? • Do you consider yourself to be a person with a disability?
Part 2 – Information about respondents' work	• What is the job title(s) you use to describe your job? Choose the title(s) you use for your current position, whether or not it is the title used by your campus administration for job classification purposes. *Select all titles that apply to you*. • Are you employed full-time or part-time? • What is the *minimum* educational level required for your job?
Part 3 – Salary and compensation information	• Is your position funded through permanent funding (hard money) or through grants and other limited funding sources (soft money)? • What is your gross annual wage? If you are a temporary or part-time employee, enter the amount you will be paid in your current Disability Services position this year. • Are you paid on salary, an hourly wage, or on a contract/temporary basis? • What other forms of compensation do you receive?
Part 4 – Characteristics of DS offices and campuses	• What is the title of your office? • How many staff members work in your office? Include full-time and part-time employees. Do not identify full-time equivalent (FTE) hours – your answer should indicate the *number of people* working in your office.

cerns were consistent, and in constant communication with each other about how to best respond to emerging issues. AHEAD staff also offered extensive technical advice over the phone, through e-mail, and on the AHEAD Web site. To eliminate inconsistencies in how staff responded to the survey, the survey frequently used embedded explanations to clarify questions (e.g., when asking for the number of staff in the office, the survey question explained that this figure included all staff, including part-time workers).

Results

Campus and University Level

Of the 424 full-time DS administrators in the sample, 69% of their DS offices were located in student affairs, and 31% were in academic affairs. Most campuses (82.9%) had a centralized DS office, with one office serving the entire campus, as opposed to having a decentralized office with a DS office in each college or department (1.2%), or a mix of each with some students going to a centralized office and others going to decentralized offices (11.2%). The percentage of centralized offices in student affairs (83.7%) and academic affairs (81.0%) did not differ significantly. A

minority of DS administrators (4.6%) did not have any disability services office on their campus.

Office titles varied considerably. "Disability Services" was the most common title among DS offices in student affairs (34.9% of offices). For administrators from academic affairs, the majority (40%) reported that the title of their office did not match any options presented in the survey. For the sample as a whole, the title of the DS office was "Disability Services" (33.9%), not listed (26.8%), "Office for Students with Disabilities" (14.7%), "Disabled Student Services" (10.2%), "Disability Resource Center" (9.7%), and "Access Center" (4.7%).

The average campus had 11,338 students (SD = 10,828), with the smallest campus having only 350 students and the largest having 72,000. The distribution was skewed, with a higher representation of smaller schools in the sample. On average, administrators from DS offices in student affairs were from larger campuses, with an average of 12,806 (SD = 11,481), compared with DS offices located in academic affairs reporting an average of 7,496 (SD = 7,714) ($t(362) = 4.289$, $p < .001$).

Dividing the total number of DS student clients by the total number of students on campus gave an approximation of the percentage of registered disabled students on campus. For offices in student affairs, the average was 4.29%, and for academic affairs the average was 5.01%. These results were not significantly different.

Slightly more than two-thirds of respondents were from public colleges and universities (69.6%), and a majority of DS administrators from these campuses reported to student affairs (78.2%). For DS administrators at private colleges and universities, however, exactly half (50%) reported to student affairs and half reported to academic affairs. A Chi-Square test found these differences in percentages to be statistically significant (x^2 (1, N = 417) = 33.00, $p < .001$). Slightly more than two-thirds of the DS administrators (69.6%) were from four-year institutions, including research universities, comprehensive universities that do not offer graduate degrees, and four-year colleges offering only bachelor's degrees. The other 30.4% of administrators were from two-year colleges and universities, such as community colleges offering associates degrees, technical colleges or professional schools offering associate degrees. For the majority of campuses, 64.7% of four-year colleges and 84.0% of two-year colleges, the DS offices were located in student affairs (x^2 (1, N = 391) = 14.90, $p < .001$).

Most respondents were from urban campuses (84.6%), in cities or suburbs, and of these nearly three-quarters of respondents (71.6%) were under student affairs. In rural areas, however, the percentage of DS offices in student affairs (57.8%) was closer to the percentage of DS offices in academic affairs (42.2%). These differences by urban and rural location were statistically significant (x^2 (1, N = 416) = 4.85, $p < .05$).

All regions of the United States were well represented, with 32.4% from the South, 26.3% from the Midwest, 23.4% from New England, and 17.9% from the West. There were, however, regional differences by institutional unit. More respondents from Western states and Southern states were from student affairs, and more administrators from the Midwest and the Northeast were from academic affairs, differences that were significant with a Chi-square test (x^2 (3, N = 414) = 22.87, $p < .001$).

When controlling for private versus public colleges and universities, differences among regions change considerably. DS administrators from private colleges tend to be housed in student affairs, except in the Midwest (a difference that is not significant). At public colleges, all DS offices tend to be housed in student affairs. Statistics on DS offices by region are summarized in Table 2.

Office Level

DS offices in student affairs also had an average of 8 staff members (SD = 12), which was nearly double that of an average of 4 staff members in academic affairs (SD = 6). This difference in staff sizes is statistically significant ($t(386) = 2.985$, $p = .003$). For the sample, the average budget was $234,109 (SD = $329,423), with the smallest annual budget of $0 and the largest of $2,500,000. Consistent with larger staff numbers, the average budget for DS offices in student affairs was $277,150 (SD = $364,999) and the average budget for DS offices in academic affairs was nearly one-third less at $126,696 (SD = $189,118) ($t(194) = 2.93$, $p = .004$). There was also a strong positive correlation between the size of DS annual budgets and the size of institutions as measured by the total number of students on campus ($r(183) = .51$, $p < .001$ for original data; $r(180) = .63$, $p < .001$ for data transformed by natural log (ln)), with a tendency for DS offices at larger schools to have larger annual budgets.

In addition to a large range for DS budgets, the budget sizes are also strongly skewed, with large variability in the sample (i.e., large standard deviation). As a result, this data was transformed using natural log to minimize the asymmetry of the distribution and residuals. After transforming the data, the difference between budgets of offices in student affairs and academic affairs was still significant ($t(191) = 3.354$, $p < .001$).

However, when controlling for whether the institution was public or private, the difference in budgets (whether using the original sample or transformed data)

Table 2

Percentages of DS administrators and their institutional placement in student affairs and academic affairs, based on regions of the United States, for all campuses, private institutions, and public institutions

Group and Region†	Percent of Respondents		Chi Square Results
	Student Affairs	Academic Affairs	
All Campuses			χ^2 (3, N=414) = 22.87***
West	85.1	14.9	
South	76.1	23.9	
Midwest	64.2	35.8	
Northeast	54.6	45.4	
Private Institutions			χ^2 (3, N=124) = 4.78
West	58.3	41.7	
South	58.3	41.7	
Midwest	34.3	65.7	
Northeast	51.2	48.8	
Public Institutions			χ^2 (3, N=281) = 20.02***
West	90.3	9.7	
South	83.2	16.8	
Midwest	79.2	20.8	
Northeast	57.7	42.3	

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

† States are identified as follows: West (Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming); South (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia); Midwest (Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin); Northeast (Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Massachusetts, Maine, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont).

Table 3

Budgets of DS offices, controlling for public versus private institutions

	Student Affairs		Academic Affairs				
Type of Campus	n	M (SD)	n	M (SD)	df	t	*p*
Private	26	$93,108 (14,812)	31	$55,601 (93,792)	55	1.162	.250
Public	113	$35,1507 (387,499)	24	$22,1723 (239,919)	135	1.211	.228

was no longer significant, meaning that the relationship between DS budgets and institutional unit was spurious. Table 3 shows the difference in budgets for student affairs and academic affairs, using the original untransformed data.

As seen in Table 4, there were no significant differences in the numbers of undergraduates, graduate students, extension students or employees served by DS offices in student affairs and academic affairs. Table 5 shows the differences in percentages of disabled undergraduates, graduate students and extension students on campus (calculated by dividing the numbers in each group by the campus' total student population). Staff in DS offices under academic affairs reported significantly higher percentages of disabled undergraduates on students. They also reported significantly higher total percentages of disabled students in the student body, with offices in student affairs serving 3.9% of the total student body, and offices in academic affairs serving 6.7%.

There were also some differences in the average numbers of students by types of disability. DS offices in student affairs reported higher average numbers of students with disabilities in nearly every disability category (see Table 6). However, in Table 7, numbers of disabled students are reported as percentages of the total student body. Statistically significant differences between percentages reported by student affairs and academic affairs are somewhat spurious when further analyzed by type of institution (i.e., public or private) as seen in Table 7. Taken together, these tables suggest that there are relatively little differences between student populations served by DS offices in student affairs and academic affairs.

While there were no differences in the percentage of offices in student affairs (22.9%) and academic affairs (27.9%) serving employees (i.e., faculty and staff) with disabilities, this changed when controlling for public versus private colleges and universities. At public campuses, the percentages of offices in student affairs (27.2%) and academic affairs (30.8%) were only slightly different. At private colleges the difference between DS offices in student affairs (8.5%) and academic affairs (25.9%) was more pronounced (x^2 (1, N=113) = 6.14, $p<.05$).

Table 8 shows the percent of DS offices in student affairs and academic affairs offering various services. While some of these services (e.g., conversion of documents into alternative format) are required by law, others (e.g., online training) are optional. The survey asked DS administrators to indicate whether or not their office offered the service, and if so, whether the service was on a fee-for-service basis. Only services offered by the DS office (i.e., not services offered elsewhere on campus) are shown in Table 8. There are no significant differences in the types of services offered, except for online training, disabled student clubs or groups, and a lounge or rest area, which are all more common in student affairs' DS offices. For services offered on a fee-for-service basis, only LD assessments show a significant difference between student affairs and academic affairs. No DS offices in academic affairs offered this, but 27 offices in student affairs did.

Discussion

Summary of Findings

The working hypothesis for this study was that DS offices would differ in quantifiable ways, depending on their placement in student affairs or academic affairs.

Table 4

Differences in numbers of undergraduates, graduate students, extension students, and employees with disabilities served in DS offices in student affairs and academic affairs

	Student Affairs		Academic Affairs			
Consumer Group	M	SD	M	SD	df	t
Undergraduates	272.45	307	232.60	265	359	1.175
Graduate students	30.79	81	15.71	32	359	1.884
Employees	25.21	232	19.76	65	359	.237
Extension students	18.82	105	10.00	53	359	.828
Total number of clients	348.67	458	278.26	313	359	1.458

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 5

Proportions of disabled students in total student population, with differences in means between DS offices in student affairs and academic affairs

	Student Affairs		Academic Affairs			
Consumer Group	M	SD	M	SD	df	t
Undergraduates	0.034	0.057	0.064	0.144	335	-2.756**
Graduate students	0.002	0.005	0.002	0.005	348	0.274
Extension students	0.003	0.021	0.001	0.002	353	1.080
Total percent of students with disabilities	0.039	0.060	0.067	0.144	333	-2.537**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 6

Total numbers of students with disabilities served in DS offices in student affairs and academic affairs, by type of disability, in descending order of prevalence

	Student Affairs (n=220)	Academic Affairs (n=100)		
Disability	M (SD)	M (SD)	df	t
Learning disabilities	121.40 (132)	79.29 (88)	318	2.906**
ADD/ADHD	76.91 (95)	54.43 (71)	277	1.944*
Psychiatric disabilities	43.49 (53)	22.18 (25)	271	3.472***
Chronic health conditions (e.g., diabetes)	39.98 (50)	21.19 (28)	268	3.118**
Mobility and orthopedic	24.72 (32)	12.45 (23)	273	3.038**
Deaf and hard of hearing	13.42 (15)	6.43 (9)	300	3.929***
Visual impairments	12.38 (15.00)	5.04 (6.57)	273	4.142***
Traumatic brain injuries	8.37 (14.09)	3.65 (5.63)	279	2.841**
Developmental disabilities	5.75 (1.84)	1.84 (6.88)	228	1.448
Speech and language	4.65 (13.36)	6.18 (25.54)	219	-0.577
Autism and Asperger's	3.60 (5.12)	2.36 (2.86)	260	2.033*
Deaf-blind	2.13 (8.35)	0.71 (1.85)	248	1.434

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 7

Proportion of disabled students served in DS offices to total campus student population, by DS office placement in student affairs or academic affairs, type of disability and type of institution (public or private)

	Public Institution				Private Institution			
	Student Affairs	Academic Affairs			Student Affairs	Academic Affairs		
Disability	M (SD)	M (SD)	df	t	M (SD)	M (SD)	df	t
Learning disabilities	0.014 (0.017)	0.016 (0.021)	177	-0.715	0.014 (0.010)	0.023 (0.020)	98	-2.776**
ADD/ADHD	0.007 (0.007)	0.007 (0.005)	166	-0.030	0.012 (0.009)	0.019 (0.023)	92	-1.761
Psychiatric disabilities	0.005 (0.004)	0.006 (0.004)	167	0.945	0.005 (0.011)	0.007 (0.009)	89	-0.932
Chronic health conditions (e.g., diabetes)	0.000 (0.001)	0.001 (0.002)	137	-2.938**	0.002 (0.002)	0.004 (0.007)	62	-1.437
Mobility and orthopedic	0.003 (0.005)	0.003 (0.003)	171	0.775	0.002 (0.009)	0.002 (0.001)	86	0.538
Deaf and hard of hearing	0.002 (0.002)	0.001 (0.001)	181	0.980	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	90	-0.767
Visual impairments	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	169	1.006	0.001 (0.002)	0.001 (0.001)	88	0.352
Traumatic brain injuries	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	167	0.874	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	86	-0.543
Developmental disabilities	0.001 (0.002)	0.001 (0.003)	142	-0.023	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.001)	76	-1.084
Speech and language	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	130	-0.293	0.001 (0.003)	0.003 (0.010)	77	-1.249
Autism and Asperger's	0.000 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	161	-0.664	0.001 (0.002)	0.001 (0.001)	85	0.687
Deaf-blind	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	162	0.396	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	80	-0.450

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 8

Services offered by DS offices in student affairs and academic affairs, for free and on a fee-for-service basis, in descending order of prevalence

	Percent Offering Service					Percent Offering Service for Fee				
Service	n	Student Affairs	Academic Affairs	df	χ^2	n	Student Affairs	Academic Affairs	df	χ^2
Online training	395	93.4	84.4	1	8.01**	358	0	1.0	1	2.483
Adaptive technology, computer lab	398	88.3	85.5	1	.584	348	2.4	1.0	1	.728
Document conversion	408	88.2	81.0	1	3.632	351	1.6	1.0	1	.728
Orientation and transition services	392	72.5	63.9	1	2.96	274	4.0	5.3	1	.196
Study abroad counseling	394	72.4	63.9	1	2.845	275	3.5	0	1	2.743
Resource Library	393	56.3	55.2	1	.044	220	0	0	--	--
Career counseling	396	42.7	32.5	1	3.566	157	2.5	2.6	1	.001
PCA, tutor, typist, and other personal services	402	40.4	38.3	1	.154	160	5.3	4.3	1	.058
Disabled student clubs or groups	385	39.5	28.1	1	4.531*	139	0.9	6.3	1	3.296
Counseling or therapy	386	33.5	41.0	1	.207	132	0	0	--	--
Workshops and seminars	390	28.6	22.8	1	1.387	105	8.9	0	1	2.468
Lounge or rest area	382	22.2	10.7	1	6.854**	72	6.7	0	1	.847
Gym or athletic programs	382	21.6	24.5	1	.016	82	3.4	4.2	1	.025
Tutoring	381	21.3	26.3	1	1.119	87	1.8	3.3	1	.218
LD assessment	403	14.5	10.7	1	1.051	54	53.7	0	1	11.771***
Equipment repairs (e.g., wheelchairs)	391	6.2	3.4	1	1.199	21	23.5	25	1	.004
Physical therapy	394	2.2	1.7	1	.086	8	33.3	50	1	.178

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

This hypothesis was largely based on literature about the differences between student affairs and academic affairs. In part, offices in the two units were different, but not to the degree suggested by the literature. In most respects, disability services offices were remarkably similar across units. Analyzing data at two levels (by campus and office characteristics) proved helpful in understanding the results and the degree to which offices did vary.

On the campus level, most DS offices are located in student affairs, and placement within student affairs is especially common among public, urban, four-year or two-year colleges and universities. Among private colleges and universities, as well as rural campuses, there was a more even split between the percentages of offices in student affairs versus academic affairs. Campus size (as measured by the total number of students on campus) was also a factor of interest; administrators housed in student affairs reported that they were from significantly larger campuses compared with offices in academic affairs.

At the office level, there were differences between annual budgets of DS offices in student affairs and academic affairs, but this difference was not significant when controlling for whether the institution was public or private. This is a finding of particular interest, since there is a perception of academic affairs units having greater funding and resources on most campuses (Ferren & Stanton, 2004). Whether campuses were public or private was also a factor when examining the percentages of offices in student affairs and academic affairs serving campus staff and employees with disabilities. In public colleges and universities, there were no real differences. At private colleges and universities, however, a significantly higher percentage of DS offices in academic affairs served employees, compared with student affairs. This difference itself is not surprising, given that academic affairs typically works with students, staff and faculty, and student affairs' priority is to work with students; it is reasonable to expect that offices in academic affairs may be more willing or able to serve campus employees with disabilities. However, the difference between public and private campuses is less expected. Another variable at the college level of analysis was the size of the campus. Even though most larger campuses had DS offices in student affairs, there were no significant differences by unit in the total number of students served by DS offices, although academic affairs staff reported a higher total percentage of undergraduates with disabilities and students with disabilities on campus. While student affairs staff reported significantly higher average numbers and percentages of students within almost all disability categories (e.g., learning disabilities, ADD/ADHD, and psychiatric disabilities), the percentages were not significant when controlling for public and private institutions.

There were few differences in the types of services offered by DS offices in each unit, although a higher percentage of offices in student affairs had online training for students or faculty, disabled student clubs or groups, and a lounge or rest area for students to use (the latter being not only a potential social space but also a possible disability-related need for students with chronic health issues who need a quiet area to rest during the day). These results are not surprising, as each of these (especially clubs and groups) are common in student affairs, which typically has responsibility for campus outreach and training about diversity, as well as student organizations and social spaces (e.g., lounges).

The unexpected finding, however, was that while there were no differences in the percentage of DS offices offering learning disability assessments (i.e., testing to learn whether students have learning disabilities), a significantly higher percentage of DS offices in student affairs charged a fee for this service. Indeed, none of the offices in academic affairs charged a fee. Given student affairs' tradition of strong services and student advocacy, a fee-for-service mentality may seem paradoxical. Yet the issue of DS offices providing LD assessments is still controversial and context sheds light on this statistic. Under the ADA, DS offices are not required to provide accommodations unless disabled students can provide written documentation verifying that they have a disability (Block, 1993; Simon, 2000). Since the impact of learning disabilities changes over time, students need updated documentation on a regular basis, even though most health insurance companies do not cover the cost of these assessments. Despite the costs and concerns about a conflict of interest (i.e., DS offices providing the documentation they will use to justify the accommodations they will provide), some offices view in-house LD assessments as a way to assist and advocate for students who may otherwise fall through the cracks of the bureaucracy; a fee for LD assessment at a DS office is likely to still be less than the cost of going to an off-campus psychologist for the same testing (Block, 1993). Seen from this perspective, LD assessments do not seem as contradictory to the nature of student service in student affairs work.

The Need for Collaboration

In 1990, Richardson and Skinner conducted case studies at ten public universities across the United States, examining achievement of students of color by studying four levels of organizational influences on student learning: institutional/campus, state policies, off-campus

community, and student levels. They also looked at academic affairs, student affairs, and collaboration between the two. They noted that campuses generally use student affairs to "change minority students before they enter the institution, to buffer them from hostile elements of the institutional environment and to retain them in 'special' programs that do not threaten the status quo in the rest of the institution" (p. 503).

For these two researchers, the essential question was one of diversity versus high standards and achievement, and how they were related or mutually exclusive. They found no correlation between increased diversity and lower academic quality. They did, however, learn that selective institutions often deemphasize diversity, or they try to expand diversity but are ill-equipped to deal with problems of diversely prepared learners. In selective institutions, academic failure (regardless of context or individual circumstances) is the equivalent of failing to meet academic standards. Campuses with open enrollment are vulnerable to criticisms about their academic quality even though they have a culture of openness and are better prepared for diverse types of students (Richardson & Skinner, 1990).

Richardson and Skinner (1990) found that behavior patterns for diversity and achievement involved three campus units: campus administration, student affairs and academic affairs. If institutions had low minority participation and graduation rates or disparate enrollments across majors, those findings typically correlated to low or absent academic affairs involvement, as well as a lack of "concurrent and coordinated" strategies across the three units (p. 505). They noted that no particular program or policy leads to success of minority students, but the two most important factors are coordination between campus units and a simultaneous focus on both student achievement and diversity. Each campus may do this in different ways, according to its own culture, resources, or student needs. Their recommendations for resolving "quality versus diversity" tensions involve better coordination between units and a focus on the larger campus environment (Richardson & Skinner, 1990, p. 489). They noted that most "interventions" to raise participation and achievement rates are simply directed at students, helping them survive a "cold, hostile or racist environment" instead of focusing on ways to change the institution as a whole (pp. 485-486). As a result, the focus becomes how the students are of lesser quality instead of how the campus needs to improve.

Others have published similar findings. In a review of the literature, Torres (2003) reported that predictors for success of diverse students included social integration (extracurricular involvement, being engaged with campus life) and academic integration (relationships with faculty, developing "cognitive maps" to navigate the campus and its climate) (p. 338). Creating programming and policies for these two domains requires close collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs.

Professional organizations have advocated for collaboration as well. The American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and NASPA advocated for collaboration for decades (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001). As early as 1937, the American Council on Education (ACE) published *The Student Personnel Point of View*, which defined higher education's obligation to consider students holistically, rather than simply focusing on their intellectual growth (Caple, 1994). Student affairs adopted this view, emphasizing the way services, support, extracurricular activities and the educational climate can influence learning (Berson et al., 1998; Engstrom & Tinto, 2000; Winston, 2003), and how learning can be "an ongoing part of everyone's job" across campus (Burnett & Oblinges, 2003, p. 18). The 1998 *Powerful Partnerships: A Shared Responsibility for Learning*, a joint report published by AAHE, ACPA, and NASPA further notes that when organizational units work and learn together, they model collaborative learning and connections for students (Berson et al., 1998). Just as the academy has worked toward eliminating other dualisms of mind vs. body, individual vs. society, and knowledge vs. action, the "in class/out of class dualism" of academic and student affairs is no longer as assumed as it once was (Caple, 1996, p. 198).

There are other signs of positive movement toward collaboration. Kezar (2001) studied 128 chief student affairs officers, in research supported by ACPA and NASPA. Although there was more collaboration at two-year colleges than four-year colleges, 70% of institutions had moderate or high levels of collaboration, and all institutions were engaged in some type of collaboration, with most of it for first year programs, counseling services, orientation programs, and admission recruiting (Greenbaum & Shearer, 1982). Likewise, many student affairs offices now report to academic affairs (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001), and "academic services" often have an emphasis on student development and a similarity to services traditionally found in student affairs (Winston, 2003). Furthermore, many campuses are integrating multiple functions and services, with one-stop web-based service or information centers, cross-training of staff, and other integrative organizational designs (Burnett & Oblinges, 2003).

While these reports are optimistic about the possibility of collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs, there was no research or commentary

about disability and DS offices as another opportunity for collaboration. Tagayuna et al. (2005), did note what is at stake, however, commenting that a "lack of institutional collaboration and coordination in [DS] support provision exacerbates the [current problems with DS service provision]" (p. 20). DS offices must work across campus, with student affairs, academic affairs, and administration (Dailey & Jeffress, 1981; Greenbaum & Shearer, 1982; Schuck & Kroeger, 1993), with the potential for the kind of collaboration Richardson and Skinner (1990) suggest as best practices. Increasing diversity of disabled students and the increasing frequency of once rare or traditionally underserved disabilities (e.g., AIDS, eating disorders, severe psychiatric conditions) have also required increasing collaboration across units, as questions arise about how to serve these students and their complex, often fluctuating needs and whether they are covered by disability legislation (Bishop, 1995; Collins & Mowbray, 2005). Although determining academic accommodations are a major responsibility of DS staff, they also arrange accommodations for extracurricular activities that largely fall under the domain of student affairs (Johnson, 2000). Some researchers have also noted that collaborative efforts unrelated to disability *per se*, such as prevention of substance abuse, must make an effort to include disability as part of the diversity among students served; they also recommend including campus disability services offices to ensure accessibility of programs and outreach to disabled students (West & Graham, 2005).

Further research on this topic can investigate whether DS professionals' philosophical orientations or approaches to direct service differ by institutional unit, as well as whether one unit is better equipped to implement campus change (a question that goes beyond simple quantitative differences in funding or staff size examined in this study). Also of interest is how administration of DS offices may differ among public and private schools, since that was an important variable of consideration in this study (especially at the office level of analysis) and in other recent surveys of disability services providers (see, e.g., Stodden et al., 2006). Finally, while this study focused on DS offices, other inquiries into disability from the perspective of students, faculty, or non-DS staff may be valuable in providing depth and breadth for the ideas and statistics discussed in this paper.

Conclusion

This study examined how DS offices differ by placement in student affairs and academic affairs, examining features of campuses and DS offices. It found that DS offices had only modest differences by institutional units. Disability and disability services is re-framed as an opportunity to create cross-campus collaborations that have implications for higher education as a whole.

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