

# Improving the Transition to Career for College Students with Learning Disabilities: Suggestions from Graduates

Joseph W. Madaus  
University of Connecticut

## Abstract

*There is a lack of literature on the transition to career for college graduates with learning disabilities (LD). The present study presents the results of 170 college graduates' written, open-ended responses related to how the transition to career may be improved. Responses focused upon two main categories, Suggestions for Programs and Suggestions for Students. Within Suggestions for Programs, the subcategories of Internships, Mentoring Programs, Specific Courses or Seminars, ADA Knowledge and Follow-Up with Graduates were identified. The Suggestions for Students responses were subdivided into two categories, Self-Understanding and Workplace Accommodations. Specific insights from graduates are offered within each of the categories, and recommendations for postsecondary LD programs and career service programs are offered.*

Statistics indicate that approximately 41% of students with disabilities in postsecondary education obtain a degree (Horn, Berkold, & Bobbit, 1999). Because adulthood and the world of work represents the longest and most complex stage of life, the transition to career is the most important one that people make in their lifetime (Gerber, 2002). Limited research exists regarding the career transition needs of students with disabilities, particularly those with learning disabilities (LD), and how postsecondary institutions enhance this process (Cummings, Maddux, & Casey, 2000; Friehe, Aune, & Leuenberger, 1996; Ohler, Levinson, & Baker 1996).

All college students confront the sometimes difficult issues of choosing a major, career exploration, and ultimately, the job search and interview process. However, for students with hidden disabilities such as LD, these issues are particularly complex (Conyers & Szymanski, 1998; Enright, Conyers, & Szymanski, 1996). Ideally, students with LD select a career that focuses on their strengths and minimizes their weaknesses (Gerber, Ginsberg, & Reiff, 1992). This assumes that the student has an understanding of the specific nature of her LD, including her strengths and needs. The individual must then make a determination about disclosure of the LD. Knowledge of one's rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA; Conyers & Szymanski, 1998) is a key component of this decision.

## Workplace Disclosure

The decision to disclose adds to the complexity of the job search and interview process. In the case of adults with LD, disclosure acknowledges an otherwise hidden disability, and risking chances of getting a job, job security, or relationships with co-workers or supervisors (Baldrige & Veiga, 2001; Gerber & Price, 2003; Rocco, 2004). The timing of disclosure must be considered, including during the interview process, after starting employment, or only after a problem emerges at work. Disclosure in any of these stages presents unique benefits and concerns (Vance, 2004). For example, if the employee does disclose, he must decide if accommodations should be requested, and if so, what kinds of accommodations are appropriate in a given work environment. There are no simple solutions to these issues and no single strategy can be applied to every situation that a student might face in the workplace (Enright et al., 1996).

The marked differences between the worlds of academe and work further confound these issues (Gerber, 2002). The assumption that the disclosure and accommodation process in the workplace parallels the process at the secondary and postsecondary levels is not supported by available research (Price, Gerber, & Mulligan, 2003). For example, Friehe et al. (1996) found that students with disabilities from two universities were likely to disclose their disability to an employer, but unlikely to request

accommodations. These students displayed limited knowledge of their rights under the ADA. Witte (2001) reported that a sample of college graduates with LD “understand very little, if anything, about the ADA and how it is designed to assist them in their employment settings” (p. 29).

Recent research on adults with LD reveals that disability disclosure is not the norm and that accommodation use is even less prevalent. For example Madaus (2006) found that of a sample of 500 college graduates with LD, 55% self-disclosed in a job situation, but only 12% requested a workplace accommodation. Most of those who did not disclose indicated that there was no need to do so, but fears for job security and of negatively influencing relationships with co-workers and supervisors were also expressed. While these graduates were more likely to agree that their college helped them prepare for their transition to a career, they were largely “unsure” that they had adequate knowledge of their rights under the ADA and that their college provided them with adequate transition planning related to the ADA. Likewise, Price et al. (2003) found that none of the 25 adults with LD in their sample requested workplace accommodations, and over two thirds had never heard of the ADA.

#### *Importance of Self-Awareness*

Hitchings et al. (1998) reported that a sample of college students with LD could describe their LD only in vague and incomplete terms, and demonstrated a “general lack of awareness regarding the precise nature of their disabilities” (p. 25). The lack of understanding of the LD carried over a lack of awareness of how the LD impacts career development (Hitchings, Luzzo, Retish, & Horvath, 1998). The power of self-awareness related to the specific nature of one’s learning disability was reflected by the finding of Ohler et al. (1996) that students who used more instructional accommodations had lower levels of career maturity than their peers with LD who used fewer accommodations. Michaels and Barr (2000) suggested that students with LD must be able to focus on the skills they have learned and what makes them uniquely qualified for a particular job, rather than to focus on the LD during interview process.

Postsecondary service providers and other professionals on campus may stress the importance of self-awareness and knowing about the ADA, but their emphasis may go unheeded for several reasons. However, several key factors need to be considered. First, students with LD may be more focused on the present than on the future. This may be a result of the nature of a learning disability, which compromises abstract thought and ability to perceive the “big picture” such as long-term vocational plans

(Brinckerhoff, McGuire, & Shaw, 2002). Second, because of issues with self-esteem, identity confusion, and learned helplessness, adults with LD may have a lower ability to self-assess strengths and weaknesses, which may lead to more difficulty in decision making, including career decision making (Ohler et al., 1996). Third, adults must often experience a “need to learn” in response to a real-life situation or problem (Knowles, 1984, in Price, 2002). Hitchings et al. (1998) reported that most of the college students with disabilities surveyed did not use career services on campus until they approached graduation and had to find employment. In addition, many students with LD may feel pressed for time due to demands related to academic work and feel unable to allocate time attending to a career issues (D. Korbel, personal communication, October 6, 2005).

Price (2002) pointed out that postsecondary LD programs must focus on “authenticity” or using real-life tasks and learning experiences when working with adults. For many students, the focus may be receiving accommodations as a means to obtain satisfactory grades. There may be no, or only passing interest, in the role of building skills and understanding the impact and role of accommodations in future employment situations. However, a balance must be found, because accommodations may be necessary to level the playing field in an academic environment and to enable students with LD to display their true understanding of the course materials. This, in turn, can lead to better grades, a higher GPA, and potentially more job opportunities. However, at the same time there is a need to provide what Price (2002) called structured, focused, and ongoing instruction about disability self-awareness. Price urged educators working with adults to be “problem centered” (p. 149) and to reflect the broader needs of adults in society “versus only ‘subject-matter’ material to pass specific courses or tests” (p. 149). Adults who cannot understand or explain the impact of their disability and who cannot develop compensatory strategies may struggle in employment (Hitchings et al., 1998). Wherever or whatever the specific learning environment is, student empowerment and the skills of personal control and independence must be of primary focus (Enright et al., 1996; Michaels & Barr, 2000; Price, 2002).

#### *The Value of Internships*

Internships and job shadowing opportunities may allow students to experience the “real-life tasks or problems” that Knowles (1984, used in Price, 2002) described as a prerequisite to become ready to learn. In such situations students would be forced to deal with “genuine, personal problems that they encounter in their everyday

lives” (Price, 2002, p. 139). In other words, by experiencing real-life situations in which strategies must be developed and implemented and in which the results of these strategies must be evaluated, students may develop additional skills and experience significant long-term benefits (Price, 2002).

In a review of nine projects nationwide related to the career development of college students with disabilities, Michaels and Barr (2000) noted that “all projects demonstrated that real and meaningful work experiences benefit the career development of students with learning disabilities” (p. 64). The authors cited the observations of several project directors related to the benefits of such programs. Specifically, that some students who struggle academically can perform well in some work experiences, and conversely, some students who do well academically may not be able to generalize classroom skills and learning to the workplace (Michaels & Barr, 2000). These work experiences allowed students the opportunity to assess the impact the LD in varying environments, to judge the need for accommodations, to validate areas of interest and strengths, and to learn about being a good employee (Michaels & Barr, 2000). The idea of developing lists of employers willing to offer volunteer experiences, cooperative education, or job shadowing opportunities was put forth by both Enright et al. (1996) and Friehe et al. (1996) nearly a decade ago. As Enright et al. stated, “often, students with disabilities simply need a foot in the door” (1996, Scope of vocational guidance section, para. 7).

#### *The Value of Mentors*

Another powerful way to teach with authenticity involves the use of mentors (Enright et al., 1996; Friehe et al., 1996; Price, 2002). Price commented that because mentors are drawn from environments that present difficulty and may have struggled with similar issues, “the realistic guidance that mentors can provide offers a gold mine of useful information about hidden and overt expectations” and challenges (p. 150). Gerber et al. (1992) found that highly successful adults with LD were much more likely to have “officially or unofficially adopted mentors so that they could learn in nontraditional and multi-sensory ways (typically experientially)” (p. 486) than other adults with LD.

#### *Balancing Disability and Career Services*

Many colleges offer an office related directly to career services, and it is reasonable to expect that students with LD would be directed to these on-campus experts for issues related to career transition. However, college students with LD access career services at a lower rate than other students and have lower levels of career aware-

ness and maturity than other students (Friehe et al., 1996; Hitchings et al., 1998; Michaels & Barr, 2000; Ohler et al., 1996). The specific career approaches being used by colleges for students with LD, or the efficacy of these approaches, are largely unaddressed in the literature. It is possible, as Hitchings et al. summarized, that “college students with disabilities have basic career needs that are not being met” (1998, p. 29).

#### *Rationale for the Present Study*

How can colleges and universities better assist students with LD preparing for the transition to career? In order to begin to answer this question, it is useful to consider the perspectives and insights of graduates who have made the transition and can comment on the realities of the workplace. In comparison to the literature related to freshman transition, there is a paucity of available research and literature on methods to enhance the transition to employment. Importantly, data from the perspective of college graduates who have experienced the world of work is non-existent in the literature.

This article presents data from a group of graduates from three institutions, who completed a survey related to their employment outcomes, and specifically, responded to an open-ended question requesting suggestions related to how colleges could improve the career transition of students with LD.

### **Methods**

#### *Instrumentation*

A survey related to employment outcomes was mailed to 2,131 graduates with LD from six postsecondary institutions nationwide. These institutions represented a range of institutional types (e.g., Research 1 Universities, Public Universities, a Community Technical College). Four institutions were located in the northeast, while two were western institutions.

The instrument contained an optional open-ended question that asked the respondents to “provide any comments or suggestions related to how the career transition of students with LD might be improved.” The open-ended question was intended to understand the respondents’ perspective regarding the transition to career without pre-determining their perspective with set questions (Patton, 1987). Specific details on the development and technical aspects of the survey may be found in Madaus (2006). The data from the responses to this question is presented in the current analysis.

### *Sample and Mailing*

Each member of the sample was a graduate of one of the six participating institutions and had submitted LD documentation that met each institution's guidelines at the time of their enrollment. For the current study three waves of mailings were sent. To protect confidentiality, the primary researcher worked with a designated contact person at each participating institution. This person developed and maintained the roster of sample members. Each survey contained a code that indicated the participating institution and a unique respondent code. All surveys were returned directly to the investigator, who compiled a list of returned codes. The codes were shared with the contact person at the respective schools to track non-respondents for subsequent mailings. Through this approach, the surveys were never linked to a particular name or address, nor did the investigator know the identities of the respondents.

Response rates varied for each of the six institutions, ranging from 11% to 53% Madaus (2006). In addition to the institution with a response rate of 11%, two had a low total number of sample members (e.g.,  $n = 8$ ;  $n = 23$ ) compared to three of the institutions. Because of this variation, data from these three institutions were deleted for the final analysis, leaving a total of 1,438 graduates in the final sample. For the three institutions in the final sample, 500 responses were received, resulting in a response rate of 35%. The three institutions in the present analysis are all universities, two of them in the northeast and one in the west. Two of the institutions offer formal LD support programs, whereas the third offers LD support through an established disability services program.

### *Data Analysis*

As noted, the question related to suggestions for improving the career transition of college students with LD was an optional, open-ended question. In total, 170 respondents answered the question. That is 11% of the sample. Each response was typed into an electronic database as handwritten by the respondent. Responses that did not address the question were deleted from the present analysis. The total set was examined via an inductive analysis process (Patton, 1987), which allows the categories of analysis to emerge from the data, rather than being determined a priori.

The data were examined holistically, and emergent patterns were constructed as categories. Since the respondents did not articulate the specific categories, they were developed by the researcher (Patton, 1987). Initially, data converged into 10 broad categories, and were sorted accordingly. In some cases, respondents provided multiple suggestions. In those cases, the responses were divided

accordingly and placed into multiple subcategories. Upon additional analysis and review, two overarching themes emerged, Suggestions for Programs and Suggestions for Students. Within the Suggestions for Programs, the subcategories of Internships, Mentoring Programs, Specific Courses or Seminars, ADA Knowledge and Follow-up with Graduates were identified. The Suggestions for Students responses were subdivided into two categories, Self-Understanding and Workplace Accommodations.

### *Suggestions for Programs*

Although some respondents simply commented that the LD program at their alma mater was "excellent" or "great" most provided specific suggestions for components of a career transition program that would enhance existing services. These responses were broken five categories, Internships, Mentoring Programs, Specific Courses or Seminars, ADA Knowledge, and Follow-Up with Graduates.

*Internships.* Eight respondents recommended that college programs provide job internships for students during the college experience to prepare them for what one called "practical on-the-job situations." It was suggested that these experiences be provided early in the college experience, to help students "to plan for career more in advance." The respondents commented that such internships would provide a "real-life experience" or a "real-world education." One respondent summarized, "I believe in internships. The best way to transition into the work place is to jump in."

*Mentors.* Five respondents recommended that mentoring programs be established with past graduates of the institution or with "LD adults in the work force." One participant commented that graduates would be able to share information with current students about how the LD program helped and "how their college experience compares to their work after college life." Another respondent stated that such a program would allow current students to "see what they can achieve when they get out of school." It was also noted that alumni could "be utilized as a sounding board/mentor for motivated and driven students who are looking for advice."

*Specific courses or seminars.* In what was the most common suggestion, 36 respondents suggested that college programs offer specific courses or seminars related to LD or to the transition to employment. Specific topical areas mentioned included time management, self-advocacy, the ADA, and self-disclosure in the workplace. Role-playing in "real-world situations" such as "multitasking" and in "thinking, organization, and planning" was also recommended. One respondent commented that it would be helpful to "teach students about

cash management, credit debt, benefits and retirement before graduation.” Several respondents recommended that college programs spend more time helping students understand their specific strengths and weaknesses, and then assisting students in finding matches related to majors and careers. Some suggested that this type of training occur as early as freshman year, while others thought this should occur at least one year prior to graduation. One respondent stated that it is important to “prepare students with LD to show them that the work place is not always about grades, tests, and other classroom need, sometimes it is about a keen sense. Street smart vs. book smart.”

*ADA knowledge.* Fourteen respondents commented that colleges need to provide more information about the ADA and specifically, the rights of workers with disabilities in the workplace. Five respondents reported that the ADA was never discussed with them while in college. One respondent recalled only using the LD program to receive testing accommodations, but suggested that seminars related to the ADA and transition be provided. Another respondent wrote that although the LD program helped him or her to be a successful student and to work effectively in his or her professional field, “I was never informed about the ADA” while in college. Likewise, one respondent stated, “I was never informed that the ADA was anything that I should be concerned with. All human rights should be spoken about and explained, especially to those entering the workforce.” One respondent summarized the importance of knowing more about the ADA, noting, “An employer can let you go after finding out someone has a LD. It is very hard to define reasons for letting someone go. It is nice to have the ADA, but it is also a double edged sword and can be used against you.”

*Follow-up with graduates.* Five respondents suggested that institutions offer some sort of follow-up contact and support for recent graduates. One stated, “Transitioning from college to career is a daunting task; however equally as daunting is finding employment years after when you don’t have a support group that you were accustomed to when you were in college.” Another respondent suggested that support or transition groups be established to “ease transition.” It was also noted that it might be useful to set up an “advice line” or to provide “access to occasional follow-up counseling. One graduate recommended that such support be available for 6-12 months after graduation to help “students with additional questions and concerns that they might have with coping with ADD, ADA, AOHO (sic) in the work place or other disabilities.”

### *Suggestions for Students*

Twenty-five respondents directed their comments and suggestions at current students preparing to transition to work. These suggestions centered in self-understanding and workplace accommodations.

*Self-understanding.* Several respondents underscored the importance of recognizing one’s strengths and weaknesses and being able to use this knowledge to one’s advantage. One respondent advised students on how to best position themselves in a company, writing, “By matching up your personal strengths to an organization ...looking strong and then you really are.” When mentioning weaknesses, respondents often focused on acknowledging one’s limitations and dealing with it in a positive manner. One respondent wrote, “Don’t be afraid of your weakness. Let your co-workers know if you can’t spell very well in a light hearted way.” Another stated, “I think it is important for each individual to fully understand their strengths and weaknesses. (The) LD department... helped me understand this. Students should not be embarrassed or ashamed about LD, but need to be able to use resources in the work place to help them.”

Several graduates urged current students to accept themselves, weaknesses and all. One graduate suggested to, “Just be yourself ... study a lot, ask questions no matter if you think they are stupid ... just do what is best for you to advance in life and in a career.” Another respondent urged students to deal with the limitations caused by the LD in this way: “Don’t hide from it. Fight it. It’s that simple!” The graduates recommended using this self-knowledge to set personal goals. One wrote, “Encourage students to pursue careers in areas that they enjoy and have strength in. Do not take a job. Take the job that works well for you. You will make the most money and be the happiest if you stay in a career area you enjoy.”

In addition to self-knowledge and planning, the respondents urged current students to act, and often, to simply work hard. One respondent commented that despite the LD, a person must “just ‘get on the horse and hold on tight.’ Do the best you can with the opportunity given you!” Another simply said, “Don’t be the nice guy, go after what you want.” Another respondent provided a slightly different perspective, writing, “I really have no suggestions other than reinforcing for students LD does not limit income. The outside world is easier than school. Have a vision and go for it!!”

*Workplace accommodations.* For some, the importance of self-understanding related directly to the fact that disclosure and accommodation use in the workforce is very different than in the postsecondary arena. One respondent reflected on this disparity, stating:

*The academic world and the business world are vastly different. The self-advocacy skills that I learned in college to get appropriate accommodations were not compatible with the real world. Identifying my personal strengths and accepting my limitations was the first step to my professional success. After this the task was/is to find a career that best utilizes my strengths and relies very little on my limitations.*

Another respondent wrote:

*Special accommodations are only a way to buy time before your employer finds some other reason to fire you. Using special accommodations to force compatibility between the individual and the job does not work in a profit driven business world. For me, being self-employed is the best way to assure I will not be fired as a result of my LD shortcomings and special accommodations, but I may not be earning as much money.*

Clearly, self-understanding of strengths and weaknesses and how these impact workplace demands was of significant importance to the respondents.

## Discussion

The sample from which these insights related to improving the transition to career were drawn represents the largest, most heterogeneous data set available on college graduates with LD to date (Madaus, 2006). Therefore, it is the largest study that has specifically elicited the perspectives of graduates with LD on this topic. At the program level, the graduates suggested internships, mentors, and courses and trainings related to the world of work and the ADA. Each of these would provide current students with opportunities to experience the realities of the world of work, to learn about their strengths, preferences, and needs and how these intersect with their legal rights under the ADA. Clearly, the respondents believed that college programs need to improve or, in some cases, begin to, discuss the ADA and help students understand their rights and responsibilities under the law after graduation. Many respondents commented that they could not remember ever discussing the ADA. This is consistent with findings on the larger sample of 500 graduates with LD that they were largely “unsure” of their rights under the ADA (Madaus, 2006). In another study of adults with LD by Price et al. (2003), over two thirds of the sample had never heard of the ADA.

Implementation of such programs could help lead current students to a critical insight; namely, that suc-

cessful adults with LD have a clear understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. This knowledge must be developed from the first semester of freshman year and be refined throughout college. Several respondents stated that although college LD programs help arrange particular accommodations and encourage students to focus on grades, the worlds of school and work are different, and accommodations from school do not transfer into work. It is more important in the long term to focus on self-understanding and skill development than accommodation use. One respondent specifically encouraged students to focus on generalizing the skills learned in school, writing, “LD is not an excuse. Too many people with LD don’t really learn that the skills taught can be used to succeed outside of school.”

One extremely encouraging finding from the data was the suggestion that it would be helpful to have adults with LD who are in the workplace serve as mentors for current students. These mentors could provide advice and insight, and act as a “sounding board” for students as they prepare to transition. Five of the respondents specifically commented on this idea in their open-ended response. Additionally, in the larger data set, graduates from one of the participating institutions were specifically asked if they would be willing to serve in such a capacity. Fifty-two percent agreed or strongly agreed that they would be willing to participate. Such a program would provide graduates with a chance to remain connected with the institution and the LD program (a suggestion of several respondents) and would serve as a method to “give back” by helping current students. These graduates are working in a range of careers, have full-time employment rates and salaries that are competitive with their non-disabled peers and more job stability than their peers with LD who do not graduate from college (Madaus, 2006). They use a range of compensatory strategies and techniques to assist them in the workplace, many of which are internal, and are largely satisfied with their jobs (Madaus, 2006). In short, these individuals “walk the walk” regarding being an adult with LD in the workplace. Disability programs would benefit from tapping into their experiences and expertise. Additionally, the mentoring opportunities suggested by the respondents would provide authentic learning experiences to current students, a critical component of adult learning (Knowles, 1984, used in Price, 2002).

### *Implications for Postsecondary Programs.*

How can the suggestions of these graduates be implemented on campus? Given the myriad complex demands placed on many disability service programs and the limited resources available, such programming might not be

possible. Students who are preparing for graduation are viewed as “success stories” and in need of less support than others. Correspondingly, the attention and focus of program staff is turned to incoming freshmen and underclassmen or students who are struggling. The world of work presents a never-ending variety of types of jobs and workplace environments. When these factors are combined with the dynamic of a hidden disability and an individual’s profile of strengths and weaknesses, even a veteran service provider cannot be expected to know how a student preparing to go out into the workplace can deal with specific situations. It is notable that the transition of students into the workplace is not included in the Professional Standards of the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) or the AHEAD Program Standards (AHEAD, 2004).

A common philosophy of disability service programs is to not replicate services available elsewhere on campus (Brinckerhoff, Shaw, & McGuire, 1993). In other words, if there is a career services office that provides expertise in the transition to work, students with LD should access that office. Thus, Enright et al. (1996) commented that students with disabilities should not be segregated from their peers in career development programs, and that career programs can adequately serve students with and without disabilities. They further suggested that career counselors should take a leadership role on campus and work to broaden their knowledge of students with disabilities. Conyers and Szymanski (1998) described a campus-based intervention provided to students both with and without disabilities. The authors reported reduced levels of career indecision and increased career decision-making self-efficacy in both groups of students.

Friehe et al. (1996) called for career services personnel to explore collaborations with other offices on campus to share information about the ADA, disclosure, and job discrimination. Likewise, Brinckerhoff et al. (1993) suggested over a decade ago that disability service providers should work closely with career offices to provide the most up-to-date information possible in regards to disability self-disclosure, and resources related to the ADA in the workplace. It is clear that such collaboration is necessary between the two offices (Michaels & Barr, 2000) and would serve to benefit personnel from both offices, and perhaps more important, students with LD.

Brinckerhoff et al. (2002) commented that cooperative efforts with other campus departments are time-consuming, but “will lead to priceless understanding and commitment” (p. 500). Collaboration might be as basic as sharing emerging research on adults with LD, or be more involved, such as teaming with the career services staff to offer semester-long seminars or courses related to career transition. Such courses, sometimes known as a

“senior year experience,” are available at some schools for all students, and parts could be tailored to address the unique needs of students with disabilities, just as a freshman seminar “college survival” course might be. Graduates with LD could be invited to visit and to speak with current students, or presentations and chat rooms could be established. Partnerships with the career services office might also be the most logical avenue for setting up internships and job shadowing experiences. LD service providers and career services staff could collaboratively work with students with LD to discuss issues created by the LD and possible solutions. If these internships or job shadowing opportunities can be established with graduates with LD, powerful mentor connections could also be established.

### *Limitations*

It is important to note that each of the respondents in the present sample attended four-year postsecondary institutions that offer formal and established support programs for students with LD. The types of career transition services that might be offered at schools with more generic LD services (e.g., accommodations only) are not known, nor is it known how graduates of such services have fared in employment and what suggestions they might offer to current students. Likewise, the perceptions of graduates of two-year or community colleges regarding transition to employment are not known.

### **Summary**

The lack of literature on adults with LD led to Price (2002) to comment that many disability professionals are on a journey, traveling through an unexplored country, unsure of where they are going. The comments of the respondents in the present study and other data on adults with LD in the workplace (Madaus, 2006; Price et al., 2003) provide some direction on how to understand the realities of the workplace. Michaels and Barr (2000) observed that while many of the federally funded projects that focused on the career development of students with LD from 1980 to 1990 formed advisory boards consisting of representatives from business and industry, agencies, and postsecondary institutions, students with LD were not included as stakeholders. In retrospect, this was described as a tremendous oversight (Michaels & Barr, 2000). It should be noted that some of the suggestions of the respondents, such as training on the ADA, discussion of workplace disclosure, mentoring and internship programs may be in place at some institutions, descriptions of these approaches are not readily available in the literature.

The present findings seem to validate these approaches, but they also present a challenge from graduates with LD to disability service providers to improve transition services for current students preparing to graduate and enter the workforce. As these programs are developed, understanding the reality of the workplace from the perspective of the graduates will provide a compass to guide the journey.



# REFERENCES

- Association on Higher Education and Disability. (2004). *Resources*. Available <http://www.ahead.org/resources/>.
- Baldrige, D. C., & Veiga, J. F. (2001). Toward a greater understanding of the willingness to request an accommodation: Can requesters' beliefs disable the Americans with Disabilities Act? *Academy of Management Review*, 26, 85-99.
- Brinckerhoff, L. C., McGuire, J. M., & Shaw, S. F. (2002). *Postsecondary Education and Transition for Students with Learning Disabilities* (2nd ed.). Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.
- Brinckerhoff, L. C., Shaw, S. F., & McGuire, J.M. (1993). *Postsecondary Education and Transition for Students with Learning Disabilities*. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.
- Conyers, L. M., & Szymanski, E. D. (1998). The effectiveness of an integrated career intervention for college students with and without disabilities. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 13, 23-34.
- Cummings, R., Maddux, C. D., & Casey, J. (2000). Individualized transition planning for students with learning disabilities. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 49, 61-72.
- Enright, M. S., Conyers, L. M., & Szymanski, E. D. (1996). Career and career-related educational concerns of college students with disabilities. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 75. Retrieved October 4, 2005, from <http://search.epnet.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db+eric&an=ED401303>.
- Friehe, M., Aune, B., & Leuenberger, J. (1996). Career service needs of college students with disabilities. *Career Development Quarterly*, 44. Retrieved October 4, 2005 from [rom http://search.epnet.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db+eric&an=EJ528996](http://search.epnet.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db+eric&an=EJ528996).
- Gerber, P. J. (2002). Navigating the beyond-school years: Employment and success for adults with learning disabilities. *Career Planning and Adult Development JOURNAL*, 18; (1), 136-144.
- Gerber, P. J., Ginsberg, R., & Reiff, H. (1992). Identifying alterable patterns in employment success for highly successful adults with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 25, 475-487.
- Gerber, P. J., & Price, L. A. (2003). Persons with learning disabilities in the workplace: What we know so far in the Americans with Disabilities Act era. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, 18(2), 132-136.
- Hitchings, W. E., Luzzaro, D. A., Retish, P., & Horvath, M. (1998). Identifying the career development needs of college students with disabilities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 39, 23-32.
- Horn, L., Berktold, J., & Bobbit, L. (1999). *Students with disabilities in postsecondary education: A profile of preparation, participation, and outcomes*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.
- Madaus, J. W. (2006). Employment outcomes of university graduates with learning disabilities. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 29(1), 19-31.
- Michaels, C. A., & Barr, V. M. (2000). Best practices in career development programs for post-secondary students with learning disabilities: A ten-year follow-up. *Career Planning and Adult Development Journal*, 18, 61-79.
- Ohler, D. L., Levinson, E. M., & Baker, W. F. (1996). Career maturity in college students with learning disabilities. *Career Development Quarterly*, 44. Retrieved October 4, 2005, from <http://search.epnet.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&an=EJ528995>.
- Patton, M. Q. (1987). *How to use qualitative methods in evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Price, L. (2002). The connections among psychosocial issues, adult development, and self-determination. In L. C. Brinckerhoff, J. M. McGuire, & S. F. Shaw (Eds.), *Postsecondary education and transition for students with learning disabilities* (2nd ed.). Austin, TX: PRO-ED.
- Price, L. A., Gerber, P. J., & Mulligan, R. (2003). The Americans with Disabilities Act and adults with learning disabilities as employees: The realities of the workplace. *Remedial and Special Education*, 24, 350-358.
- Rocco, T. S. (2004). *Towards a model of disability disclosure*. Presentation at the Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference in Adult, Continuing, and Community Education, Indianapolis, IN.
- Vance, M. L. (2004, Summer). Career strategies for people with disabilities. *ALERT*, Retrieved July 7, 2004, from <http://www.ahead.org/alert/summer2004/index2.html>.
- Witte, R. H. (2001). College graduates with disabilities and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): Do they know their employment rights? *Learning Disabilities: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 11, 27-30.