

DISSERTATION

EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS PROJECT:

A CASE STUDY ON STUDENTS' WITH DISABILITIES TRANSITION

TO POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

Submitted by

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School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS PROJECT: A CASE STUDY ON STUDENTS' WITH DISABILITIES TRANSITION TO POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

The number of students with disabilities entering postsecondary education is continuing to escalate each year. However, many of these students fail to successfully compete in the postsecondary environment. In 1990, the Federal government made a monumental move to improve students' with disabilities postsecondary educational outcomes by enacting the Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1990, PL 101-476.

Since 1990, many demonstration projects have been funded by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) to address problems facing students with disabilities in their transition to adulthood. One project in particular, the Exceeding Expectations: Model Demonstration Project (CFDA 84.32M) initiated at Colorado State University, has implemented a demonstration model for increasing the access and retention of students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions in five states: Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, South Dakota, and Wyoming. The project provides the context of this case study.

The purpose of this case study is to examine the processes and the outcomes of the Exceeding Expectations Model Demonstration Project Grant:

- (1) to determine lessons learned from the project,
- (2) to gather information addressing student transition outcomes/progress,

- (3) and to establish strategies to support teachers and staff in postsecondary institutions which will enhance educational opportunities for students with disabilities in their transition from high school to postsecondary institutions.

The intent of this study is to give a voice to students with disabilities, learn from their experiences, and improve the transition of these students. This study utilizes both qualitative and quantitative research methods with qualitative research methods as the dominant paradigm. Five data collection techniques were used: focus group discussions, individual interviews, document/ archival reviews, field notes from site visits, and a survey instrument.

The qualitative and quantitative findings reveal students lack preparation for their transition to postsecondary institutions. Although the study's student participants were unprepared for postsecondary education, they seem to be fairly satisfied with the services and activities offered at their institutions. The study's data provide evidences that the Exceeding Expectations Project (EEP) has attempted to improve the access and retention of students with disabilities at eight postsecondary institutions in five states. It also reveals activities and services are in place at each of the EEP sites to help students have a successful transition to postsecondary institutions.

Effective strategies are generated and presented from the compilation of focus group discussions, interviews, and survey instruments. In addition, recommendations and suggestions to aid students' successful transition from secondary to postsecondary institutions are provided by the researcher and students who participated in the study.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my phenomenal daughter and friend,

Rashida Braggs;

to my most cherished friend,

Wanda Riviere;

and to the loving memory of my grandmother,

Viola Garrison,

“the wind beneath my wings”.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background/Overview

Our society emphasizes education as the avenue to enhance employment opportunities. We encourage our children to do well in high school and to pursue postsecondary educational opportunities. In 2001-2002, approximately 2.9 million Americans received high school diplomas (2.6 million graduated from public high schools, 0.3 million from private high schools) and approximately 2.5 million (619,000 estimated associate degrees, 1,282,000 bachelor's degrees, 486,000 master's degrees, 80,800 first-professional degrees, and 44,900 doctor's degree) received college degrees (Hoffman, 2003). Our public schools encourage and support many students' entrance into postsecondary institutions by offering Advanced Placement courses, SAT and ACT preparatory seminars, dual enrollment programs, and school counselors to assist students in the college application process. In spite of these efforts, we must ask if we are doing all we can to meet the needs of all students, including those with disabilities.

In 1990, the Federal government made a monumental move to improve students' with disabilities postsecondary educational outcomes by enacting the Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1990, PL 101-476. This act mandated public schools design a written transition plan for all students with disabilities (16-21 years old) to prepare them for post school outcomes, including postsecondary educational services, employment, and community and independent living (Burganowski, 2001). Since the

enactment of the legislation, there has been an increase in programs designed to prepare students with developmental disabilities with functional skills to support the transfer and retention of knowledge over time (Dolyniuk, Kamens, Corman, DiNardo, Totaro, & Rockoff, 2002). Many of these programs' main focus appears to be preparing students with disabilities to transition directly into the workforce rather than to seek postsecondary educational opportunities. Regardless of these programs, students with disabilities are facing a bleak future with a decrease in employment opportunities.

One of the most difficult times in a student's life is the transition period from high school to adulthood (Burganowski, 2001). Not only is the postsecondary experience difficult for many students, it is especially difficult for students with disabilities who are facing numerous barriers in their transition to adulthood. Peraino (1992) states 70% of students with disabilities continue to live with their parents after leaving high school and less than 10% of the students ever participate in postsecondary educational opportunities. One to two years after completion of high school, 44% of youths with mild cognitive disabilities and 20% of youths identified with moderate, severe, or profound mental retardation are employed (Dolyniuk, et al., 2002).

Statement of the Research Problem

Despite the money, time, and effort spent on training students with disabilities, unemployment and normal access to inclusive community settings for these youths remains a "pervasive national problem" (Certo, Pumpian, Fisher, Storey, & Smalley, 1997). Today, students with disabilities face serious challenges in their transition to adulthood. Yet, little empirical data examine their transition into postsecondary institutions. There are a number of studies on students' with disabilities career

development, but few on the transition to postsecondary education. The lack of empirical data creates a problem in helping to properly prepare students with disabilities for postsecondary opportunities, employment, and community participation (Burganowski, 2001). Available research reveals a low rate of enrollment of students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions and programs, limited participation in the labor force and inadequate wages and benefits, and low levels of residential independence (Affeck, Edgar, Levine, & Kortering, 1990). Still, the number of students with disabilities entering postsecondary education escalates each year (HEATH, 1999). However, many of these students fail to successfully compete in the postsecondary environment. Recent research supports the findings that students with disabilities do poorly in the postsecondary environment (Fairweather & Shaver, 1991; Wagner & Shaver, 1989).

Since 1990, many demonstration projects have been funded by the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) to address problems facing students with disabilities in their transition to adulthood. One project in particular, the Exceeding Expectations: Model Demonstration Project (CFDA 84.32M) initiated at Colorado State University, has implemented a demonstration model for increasing the access and retention of students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions in five states: Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, South Dakota, and Wyoming (Lehmann & Davies, 2001). The U.S. Department of Education, OSERS awarded a \$175,000 annual grant, totaling \$700,000 for four years to the co-principal investigators, Jean Lehmann and Tim Davies, for the project.

The Exceeding Expectations project (EEP), uses a four step process-oriented model addressing: 1) students' concerns in regards to access and retention in

postsecondary education by providing vital information and strategies for preparation for the postsecondary educational system, 2) key secondary educators are targeted to receive training and support to facilitate students' readiness for the postsecondary educational experience, 3) postsecondary institutions (support personnel, instructors, etc.) are given support and encouragement to create an environment conducive to serving students with disabilities, thereby minimizing the attrition rate, and 4) the project will produce products and strategies for enhancing students' access and retention in postsecondary institutions. This project will provide the context of this study. The research guiding the model practice is based on a book entitled *Exceeding Expectations: Successful Adults with Learning Disabilities* by Reiff, Gerber & Ginsberg (1997). A major component of the model is designed to respond to the concerns of students with disabilities. Such a response would foster a better understanding of these concerns and would enhance the building of partnerships among school districts, post-secondary institutions, families, and students (Lehmann & Davies, 2001). The EEP goals include:

Goal 1: Identify and operationally define needs associated with the access and retention of students with disabilities in post -secondary educational institutions.

Goal 2: Support and guide practices by developing training and technical assistance opportunities addressing transformation needs of each participant group (i.e., parents, students, secondary educators, post- secondary educators).

Goal 3: Implement coaching and other replication procedures to assure project continuation/sustainability.

Goal 4: Evaluate the process and outcomes of the entire model and its individual components in order to improve model applicability, feasibility, and replicability.

Goal 5: Create and disseminate a postsecondary transition model via effective administration and coordination of the grant and through wide dissemination efforts (pp. 15-16).

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this case study is to examine the process and the outcomes of the Exceeding Expectations Model Demonstration Project:

- (1) to determine lessons learned from the project,
- (2) to gather information addressing student transition outcomes/progress,
- (3) and to establish strategies to support teachers and staff in postsecondary institutions which will enhance educational opportunities for students with disabilities in their transition from high school to postsecondary institutions.

The intent of this study is to give a voice to students with disabilities, learn from their experiences, and improve the transition of these students.

Research Questions

Two clusters of research questions are considered. One cluster of questions relates directly to evaluating the effectiveness of the Exceeding Expectations: Model Demonstration Project. The other set of questions is designed to increase the empirical data available on students' with disabilities transition to postsecondary institutions.

Cluster One

1. To what extent have the Exceeding Expectations project staff delivered as they stated they would deliver?
2. How effectively has each site implemented the stated programs?
3. Have student outcomes changed as a result of the Exceeding Expectations project?

Cluster Two

4. What are the most effective support services and strategies for teachers and staff members to use to help students with disabilities successfully transition from high school to postsecondary institutions?

5. What are the major concerns of students with disabilities in the transition from high school to postsecondary institutions?

Definition of Terms

Completing a degree or certificate program: the type of postsecondary level of award, Associate, Bachelor, Master, Doctorate degrees, or a non-degree certification program. It is based on the student's response to the student survey.

Demographic information: the student's age, gender, and ethnic background. It is based on the student's response to questions on the student survey.

Disability: level or type of impairment of the participants, (e.g., Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, mentally handicapped, learning disability, etc.). The term disability is based on the student self-identification and response to background information gathered from the student survey.

Postsecondary education: programs which emphasize further education or institution-based vocational and technical training for students with disabilities after high school. Postsecondary programs and training include: four-year colleges and universities, community and junior colleges, private vocational schools with certificate programs, on-the-job training programs, adult education programs, and the military (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000).

Self-determination: a combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehmeyer, 1998a).

Site: post secondary institutions participating in the Exceeding Expectations project.

Transition: students departing the K-12 school environment and advancing to postsecondary education or to the workplace environment.

Type of accommodation: type of modification provided to the student during examinations and instruction to enhance learning of the topic, (e.g., extended time on test, tape recorder, computer, interpreter, etc.). It is based on student background information.

Type of intervention: type of support services and/or training received by the student. It is based on the site coordinator's response to the question: "Tell me what goals and interventions you consider to be most useful to better prepare students for postsecondary education?"

Type of placement in high school: type of placement or curriculum received in high school, (e.g., segregated, self-contained special education), resource program, or integrated (regular education) program). It is based on background information provided on the student survey.

Type of transition services: type of services received by students to aid in advancing from high school to a postsecondary program or institution. It is based on the student's response to the question: "What high school experiences and/or resources do you think will prepare you for college, employment, or other postsecondary programs?"

Undergraduate degree program: reference the type of degree (e.g., Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Associate of Arts,) program or major, (e.g., Education, Engineering, Sociology, Art, etc.) the student is enrolled in the postsecondary institution. It is based on student background information.

Delimitations

The issue of students' with disabilities transition to adulthood is not limited to postsecondary institutions. However, the scope of this study will focus on postsecondary institutions, primarily four-year colleges and community colleges.

Empirical research data are limited on students' with disabilities access and retention in postsecondary institutions. It is not the intent of this study to claim the Exceeding Expectations Model Demonstration project is representative of all students with disabilities transitioning from high school to postsecondary institutions. This study will be restricted to students with disabilities and coordinators at those sites who are receiving funds from the Exceeding Expectations Demonstration Model.

Limitations

The outcome of the study may be affected by the cooperation of students and site coordinators participating in the study. Also, since the project sites are in five different states, the review of documents will be limited to brief visits by the researcher. Another limitation of this study is the researcher will only be examining three years of the project's progress, as final outcomes will not be available until the project ends in 2005.

Significance

To date, empirical research data are limited on students' with disabilities transition into postsecondary institutions. Based on the need to identify effective models to facilitate this transition from secondary to postsecondary institutions, this study will examine the Exceeding Expectations Demonstration Model in an attempt to identify strategies for increasing students' with disabilities success in postsecondary institutions.

The study is significant in that it will permit an examination of transition programs in five states (Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, South Dakota, and Wyoming).

Ultimately, the goal of this research study is to increase the knowledge base available on students' with disabilities transition to postsecondary institutions. It will provide valuable information to support students' with disabilities access and retention in postsecondary institutions.

Researcher's Perspective

For over twenty years, I have had an interest in learning how to best teach students with disabilities and improve their educational opportunities. The foundation of this interest is based on my belief that all children are capable of learning. My interest started in my first year of teaching. For some reason, I always gravitate toward students with the greatest challenge – the so-called “at-risk” students. Perhaps the reason is because others give up on these students. My interest became obvious to my colleagues, as well as my first principal.

Once the principal discovered I had a unique ability to teach and a strong desire to help these students, he would transfer students who were having problems in other classes to my class. He justified his actions by saying something like, “since you are so interested in saving every child...see what you can do with this one”. Even the teacher in the self-contained special education class would ask me to keep several of her students for long blocks of time, often extending the time period to the end of the semester. This was particularly outlandish since I had no formal training in special education. I just had a love for children, teaching, and learning.

As my roles changed from teacher, counselor, to principal, my interest in children and desire to learn effective teaching strategies to facilitate learning for all students expanded. I thought upon becoming a school administrator I would acquire these strategies in my training programs. Yet, I was surprised to learn my principal licensure program entailed very little on special education preparation outside of the school law course, which included special education laws and policies. I decided if I wanted to learn more, I would have to do the research myself. As a result, I learned all I could about students' Individual Education Plans (IEP), special education policies and laws, and differentiated teaching strategies and techniques.

Once I became principal of my school, I served on most of the IEP meetings rather than delegating responsibility to the assistant principals. I made sure I reviewed students' files and learned all I could prior to going into IEP meetings in order to effectively facilitate the discussions and offer interventions and ideas. In most cases, the students' IEPs incorporated objectives to help them transition from high school to the workforce. Rarely, can I recall a transition plan including postsecondary educational goals.

As my education continued, I found myself in the doctoral program at Colorado State University (CSU). As fate would have it, my first class at CSU was *Special Populations*. One of the class assignments was to read Reiff, Gerber, and Ginsberg's (1997) book, *Exceeding Expectations: Successful Adults with Learning Disabilities*, which was based on stories of 71 successful adults with disabilities. I was inspired by the study because it highlighted real-life success stories in the participants' own voices which culminated in advice to help parents, teachers, and employers. I soon learned from my teacher,

Professor Jean Lehmann, the book was her inspiration for the Exceeding Expectations: Model Demonstration Grant project in which she is co-investigator. Learning of my interest in special education and research, she invited me to join the EEP staff to research and evaluate the effectiveness of the project. Consequently, it is important to note that I do bring several biases to this study in that I am a part of the EEP staff. Another bias is my already formed assumption from personal experiences that secondary institutions do not properly prepare students for postsecondary educational opportunities. Still, I believe I am able to be objective in the data analyses of this study. To promote objectivity, I have incorporated multiple data sources and methods in the study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Historically, accessibility to postsecondary educational opportunities has been elusive for students with disabilities (Rattin, 2001). Admission to postsecondary institutions has been problematic and fraught with barriers prohibiting many from proceeding to college (Rattin, 2001; West, Kregel, Getzel, et al., 1993). Consequently, youths with disabilities are less likely than youths without disabilities to participate in postsecondary education (NCD, 2000).

A review of literature associated with students' with disabilities transition from secondary to postsecondary schools would not be complete without a look at the origin and evolution of the special education movement. Hence, the first section of this chapter will examine the historical movement and transition legislation leading to enhancing postsecondary educational opportunities for students with disabilities. This chapter also reviews literature related to transition outcomes, barriers and challenges facing students with disabilities, and successful transition strategies for students, parents, and teachers. The literature review encompasses six major sections: (1) historical overview, (2) transition legislation, (3) national transition outcomes, (4) transition planning and services, (5) barriers to successful transition to postsecondary institutions, and (6) successful transitions.

Historical Overview

To better understand students' with disabilities transition from secondary to postsecondary institutions, it is crucial to examine the historical path paving the way for postsecondary educational opportunities for all children. As late as 1972, half of the eight million children with disabilities in the United States eligible for educational services received no services (Douvani & Husley, 2002). Children with severe disabilities were often institutionalized, some remained home, and others were denied services (Lipsky, 1997). It was not until 1975 that the U.S. Congress passed a law, *Public Law 94-142* requiring each state to educate all children with disabilities. President Gerald R. Ford signed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act into law on November 29, 1975 (*Public Law 94-142, 89 Stat. 773*). At the signing of the bill, President Ford stated, "unfortunately, this bill promised more than the Federal Government can deliver, and its good intentions could be thwarted by the many unwise provisions it contains" (Ford Library/speeches, 1975). This statement may have set into motion the ambiguity of what the law mandates for students with disabilities. After all, if the President of the United States was cynical in regards to the legislation's effectiveness, the opponents of the legislation must have had a field day with this statement identifying the bill's flaws.

Nevertheless, the enactment of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (*P.L. 94-142*), renamed when it was reauthorized in 1990 to Individuals with Disabilities Education (IDEA), drastically changed services for children with disabilities. By passing *Public Law 94-142*, congress put into motion a law intended to establish a process by which state and local agencies are held "accountable for providing educational services for all handicapped children" (U.S.C.C.A.N., 1975, p. 1427). The legislation

included the following provisions: a mandate to provide free and appropriate public education for children with disabilities and requirements that an Individualized Education Program (IEP) be developed for each student with a disability; that the process actively involve parents in the IEP, and that students with disabilities be placed in the least restrictive environment (Gaddy, McNulty, & Waters, 2002). At that time, the IEP consisted of individual goals for the student with disabilities based on ability and need. IEP goals were found to be broad and unrelated to what was happening in the classroom (Thompson, Thurlow, & Whetstone, 2001).

Despite new legislation, many children with disabilities were taught in segregated classrooms. The most prominent special education issues in the 1970s were equal access, appropriate education, individualized educational planning, and due process for students with disabilities (Halloran & Simon, 1992). Throughout the special education reform, many lawsuits filed by parents paved the way for improved educational services for children with disabilities. Two such cases further redefining educational placement for children with disabilities include *Roncker v. Walter*, 700F.2d 1058 (6th Cir. 1983) which involved a two-part test to determine appropriate placement for special needs students and *Oberti v. Clementon School District*, 995 F.2D 1204 (3rd Cir. 1993), which started the change from the IDEA's "mainstreaming" approach to the concept of "inclusion". The court ruled in favor of placement of students with disabilities in a more inclusive setting. With these and other rulings, school systems were mandated to extend equal access in the least restrictive setting to all children.

Throughout the 1980s, school-to-work transition services expanded for students with disabilities to include:

- a. state and local efforts to improve the high school curriculum to address students' development of functional skills for work and community living;
- b. opportunities for students to learn in real world contexts (i.e., work sites and other community-based settings);
- c. increased student and family participation in the development of transition plans focused on a range of post-school outcomes in the areas of employment, postsecondary education, and community living;
- d. concerted efforts to increase the level and intensity of interagency cooperation among educators, employers, and community service agencies in addressing the transition needs of secondary students with disabilities (NCD, 2000, p. 16).

With the publication of *Nation at Risk* in 1983, public attention turned toward quality education and culminated in the development of Goals 2000 at the President George Bush Education Summit in 1989 (Bechard, 2000). Yet, students with disabilities were still served in separate classrooms, taught a different curriculum, and excluded from large-scale national, state, or district assessment measures (Bechard, 2000). In 1982-1983, 31% of students with disabilities were served in separate classes (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997). Not only were students with disabilities still being segregated in separate classrooms, but no attention was given toward their transition from school to adulthood.

In 1984, Madeline Will, director of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), was credited with championing the transition movement from school to adult services (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000). In the late 1980s, OSERS sponsored initiatives to increase students' with disabilities participation in

planning for their future (Lehmann, Bassett, Sands, Spencer, & Gliner, 1999). Madeline Will and the OSERS were not the only advocates for the transition movement for students' with disabilities transition from school to work. Many other advocates supported vocational and employment training for students with disabilities in transition efforts (Bellamy, Peterson, & Close, 1975; Rusch, 1986; Wehman, 1981). Fortunately, the scope of transition opportunities would broaden in the 1990s to include postsecondary educational opportunities.

Transition Legislation

Transition services for individuals with disabilities are mandated throughout various federal legislations. Over the past 25 years, federal legislation has been enacted to promote equal educational opportunities and prepare individuals with disabilities for meaningful employment. Relevant legislation includes the following:

Education of All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142),
Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Amendments of 1984 (P.L. 98-524)
Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990 (O.L. 101-392), Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1988, as amended in 1994 (P.L. 100-407 and P.L. 103-218) (Tech Act),
American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-336), Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendment of 1992 (P.L. 101-476) and 1997 (P.L. 105-17), School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-239),
Higher Education Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-244) including a new program for Higher Education Access for Students with Disabilities (Part D of Title VII),

1998 Rehabilitation Act Amendments (P.L. 105-166), Workforce Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-220), and 1999 Ticket to Work and Work Incentive Improvement Act (P.L. 106-170) (National Council on Disability, 2000, p.4, 5).

The transition legislation in the 1990s defined and broadened the scope of transition planning for students with disabilities. This section gives a brief overview of four major acts directly influencing students' with disabilities transition from secondary to postsecondary opportunities.

The Education of the Handicapped Act Amendment of 1983 (PL 98-1999) and its reauthorization as The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA 1990 (PL 101-476)

The Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA), later changed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, mandated that a free appropriate public education include education and related services be available to all individuals with disabilities (Karulak, 1996). This act extended the mandate of *PL 94-142* to include provisions requiring the development of transition services for students with disabilities (Martin, 1995). The significance of this act for individuals with disabilities is it not only mandated transition planning, but also authorized grants aimed at assisting students with disabilities in their transition from secondary to postsecondary education (Karulak, 1995).

In 1990, congress strengthened the IDEA in the reauthorization of IDEA 1990 (*PL 101-476*) by mandating a statement of transition be included in students' IEPs by age 16. The act defines transition services as:

a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment

(including supported employment), continuing and adult services, independent living or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, post-school adult living objectives, and when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocation evaluations (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1990, 34 C.F.R. Section 300.18).

The main purpose of the transition services' addition to the act is to "better prepare students with disabilities to enter the workplace, to go on for further training, become as independent as possible, and contribute to society" (Storms, DeStefano, & O'Leary, 1996, p. 3). The act clearly mandates and places the responsibility of initiating transition planning on special educators (Cavin, Alper, Sinclair, & Sitlington, 2001). It extends the transition from employment to multiple postsecondary outcomes (DeStefano & Wermuth, 1992).

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504 (PL 93-112), 1992 (PL 102-569), 1998 (PL105-220)

Hailed by some as a consumer empowerment bill, the Rehabilitation Act offers employment services for persons with disabilities (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000). The act's main purpose was "to empower individuals with disabilities to achieve economic self-sufficiency, independence, and inclusion and integration into society (NISH, 1996, p. 5). It actively involves students with disabilities in planning and implementing their education and transitional services. Rehabilitation and local education agencies work collaboratively with students to assist in planning for the transition from school to employment or postsecondary training. A great deal of emphasis is given to

students with severe disadvantages in preparation for entry to the employment market (Rivera, 1996).

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is momentous in that it greatly impacts employment, education, and training opportunities for individuals with disabilities. This section mandates reasonable accommodations be made for individuals with disabilities to access programs, services, and employment. Harvey (2001) credits the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, as providing support and services and inclusion opportunities for individuals with disabilities over the past years. As a requirement of this mandate, secondary and postsecondary institutions had to make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000). The regulation stipulates that postsecondary institutions must modify discriminatory academic requirements (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000). Accommodations and services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are provided to students otherwise ineligible for special education, (e.g., students with attention deficit disorders, visual or hearing impairments, or physical disabilities). Some examples of reasonable accommodations include “untimed tests, enlarged print in books, and assignments, note-takers, and interpreters” (p. 47).

The 1992 reauthorization of the Act was also of significance for secondary students because it mandated “the state plan must assure the individual written rehabilitation plan (IWRP) for a student with a disability who is receiving special education services is coordinated with the individualized education programs (IEP) for that individual in terms of goals, objectives, and services identified in the IEP” (Department of Education, 1997, pp. 6354-6355). This mandate promoted collaboration

among special educators, rehabilitation personnel, and students with disabilities (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000). Furthermore, this act recognizes that an individual's civil rights are not diminished because of a disability (Stodden, 2001).

Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984 (PL 98-524), 1990 (PL101-392) 1998 (PL105-332)

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act continued the empowerment of students with disabilities by focusing on meeting their needs in vocational programs where they had been previously underrepresented. This act mandated full involvement of individuals with disabilities in fulfilling transition requirements as stated under Section 626 of the Handicapped Act (Part B, Section 118). It encouraged collaboration among postsecondary institutions, community-based organizations, and other organizations for transition planning for students (Rivera, 1996).

With the 1990 reauthorization of the act, significant changes occurred because of the funding pattern (Boesel & McFarland, 1994). "Set-side" funding for special populations was no longer required. Instead, the language encouraged that all students were to have access to vocational education programs (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000). Many advocates feared the removal of "set-aside funding for special populations would cause a decrease in vocational training for students with disabilities (Boesel & McFarland, 1994). However, this did not occur since Section 626 of the IDEA requires states and local agencies to assist students of special populations in entering into vocational education programs in fulfillment of transition requirements (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000). The 1998 reauthorization further reduced its requirements and primarily focuses on academic, vocational, and technical skills of secondary and postsecondary students interested in vocational technical training (p. 55).

The Americans with Disabilities Act 1990 (PL 101-336)

The Americans with Disabilities Act 1990 further extends civil liberties to individuals with disabilities across education, employment, public services, public accommodations, transportation, and telecommunication. The act mandates employers and educational institutions make reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities in existing facilities. This law extends Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to the private sector by requiring access to reasonable accommodations in employment, schools, and community facilities (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000). Under the act, educational institutions, including postsecondary institutions are “required by law to provide any reasonable accommodation necessary for those persons with disabilities to have equal access to educational opportunities and services available to non-disabled peers, if requested” (Pierangelo & Crane, 1997, p. 156).

This law was put to test by a plaintiff group of students at Boston University (BU) who filed a class action lawsuit in the U.S. district court claiming discrimination under ADA (NCD, 2000). The students claimed discrimination against BU for establishing “unreasonable eligibility” criteria for students with a disability, not providing reasonable procedures for academic accommodations, and for their policy prohibiting course substitutions in foreign language and mathematics as academic accommodations. In August 1997, Judge Patti Sari ruled that BU violated students’ rights under the ADA law and other related laws (NCD, 2000).

In 1997, Duke University also experienced problems with ADA compliance. A student filed a complaint charging the campus facilities (dining halls, dormitories, academic buildings, water fountains) were inaccessible to people with mobility

impairments (NCD, 2000). Duke settled the case and agreed to pay \$25,000 in civil penalties, and \$7,500 to the Duke graduate filing the complaint (p.34).

Through the passage of ADA 1990 and IDEA 1997 legislations, increased social awareness of disabilities' issues resulted in an increase in students' with disabilities accessibility to colleges, universities, and vocational technical programs (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Benz, Doren & Yovanoff, 1998; Henderson, 1995; Stodden, 2001).

School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-239) (STWOA)

President Bill Clinton passed STWOA in 1994 to establish a framework to prepare students for work and further education to increase opportunities for students to enter high skilled, high-wage careers (Miller, Lombard, & Hazelkorn, 2000). STWOA offers states grant money for planning and implementing school-to-work systems. The school-to-work systems are designed to build on existing practices, such as: tech-prep education, career academies, school-to-apprenticeship programs, and work-based learning opportunities (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000).

The act requires programs to include three major components: school-based, work-based, and connecting activities (p.60). The components are designed to “(a) encourage students to stay in school and attain high standards of occupational and academic achievement; (b) make education more meaningful to students by integrating academic and occupational activities; and (c) enhance students’ opportunities for employment and learning by building partnerships between postsecondary schools, secondary schools, employers, community agencies, parents, and students” (Miller, Lombard, & Hazelkorn, 2000, p.128). The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development

(1995) implies STWOA should help students with disabilities address a variety of issues confronting them in their transition to adult life.

National Transition Outcomes

Although the emphasis on transition legislations has significantly impacted students' with disabilities transition to work and postsecondary institutions, outcomes for these students remain challenging. The National Council on Disability (NCD) (2000) implied post-school outcomes for many youths with disabilities remain poor. These students are faced with many problems which contribute to: "(a) poor graduation rates from high school; (b) low employment rates after high school; (c) low postsecondary education participation; and (d) an increasing number of youths receiving Social Security benefits and not leaving the benefit rolls" (p.3). Cavin, Alper, Sinclair, and Sitlington (2001) cite poor post-school outcomes for students with disabilities are well documented. For many students, successful transition is a mere promise.

A. Poor But Steady Graduation Rate

The percentage of students with disabilities graduating with a high school diploma has made slow but steady progress. Over the past ten years however, NCD (2000) did notice an increase in the overall number of youths and adults who vanished from the "radar screen because they have dropped out and/or exited for unknown reasons" (p.7).

According to the U.S. Department of Education, 51.7% of students with disabilities graduated from high school in 1993-94. The number increased to 54.4% in 1997-1998 (American Youth Policy Forum, 2002). In a 2000 Harris survey of adults with disabilities for the year 1986, 61% of adults with disabilities reported they had graduated

from high school compared with 91% of non-disabled adults surveyed (National Organization on Disability, 2001). According to the OSEP 24th Annual Report to Congress, 29.4 % of students with disabilities dropped out of high school in 1999-2000 as opposed to 10.9% of students without disabilities (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2001.) The research supports the fact there still is a huge gap between the education attainment of disabled and non-disabled adults.

B. Low Employment Rate

A longitudinal study conducted by Peraino (1992), revealed 49% of youths with disabilities were engaged in paid employment one year after completion of high school. Students with severe learning and behavioral disabilities faced even a more challenging transition to adulthood with deficient transition services (Kregel & Wehman, 1989). LaPlante, Kennedy, Kaye, and Wenger (1996) estimated 92% of individuals with severe disabilities remained unemployed.

A National Council on Disability (1989) publication entitled *The Education of Students with Disabilities: Where Do We Stand?*, cited “graduates with disabilities are more likely to be employed following school if (1) comprehensive vocational training is a primary component of their high school program and (2) they have a job secured at the time of graduation” (p. 42).

C. High Poverty Rate

Many research studies have documented bleak outcomes for these students who face below-average wages, limited fringe benefits, inability to maintain independent living, and lack of community participation (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Frank, Sitlington, & Carson, 1991, 1992; Karpinski, Neubert, & Graham, 1992; Marder

&D'Amico, 1992; Roessler, Brolin, & Johnson, 1990; Sitlington & Frank, 1990, 1993, 1994; Wagner & Blackorby, 1996). Youths with disabilities are twice as likely to live below the poverty level as those without disabilities (National Council on Disability, 2003). The typical household income of families with students with disabilities is significantly lower than the general population; 35% of youths' with disabilities annual household income is less than \$12,000 versus 18% of youths without disabilities (NCD, 2000).

D. Low Postsecondary Education Rate

Fairweather and Shaver (1991) reported high school students with disabilities are less likely to attend postsecondary institutions than non-disabled students (21% vs. 65%). The NCD (2000) reported the actual number of youths who go to college, jobs, or "welfare rolls" is unknown. They state "it is difficult to say with any degree of certainty from year to year" (p.7). However, the National Council on Disability (2003) reported 27% of students with disabilities transition to postsecondary education compared to 65% of their peers without disabilities.

Despite this evidence, the number of individuals with disabilities attending postsecondary institutions in 1978 was 2.6%, 9.2% in 1994, and approximately 19% in 1996 (Gajar, 1992, 1998; Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). The National Council on Disability (2000) revealed 17% of all students in the United States attending postsecondary institutions had a disability. HEATH (1999) reported one in eleven (approximately 154,520) first-time, full-time freshmen entering college in 1998 self-reported disabilities ranging from hearing, speech, orthopedic, learning, health-related, partially sighted or blind.

Transition Planning, Services, and Supports

Under the auspice of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) and federal legislation, secondary and postsecondary institutions assist youths with transition planning and other services. Through the passage of IDEA laws, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and ADA 1990, equal access for individuals with disabilities “have catalyzed an increase in postsecondary enrollment among students with disabilities over the past two decades” (NCES, 1999, p. 1).

IDEA legislation mandates students’ with disabilities transition planning for adulthood must start by age 16. Their Individual Education Plan (IEP) must incorporate transition goals and objectives. The National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (1993) offers the following domains to be included in the student’s planning for transition to adult life: “employment, including supported employment; postsecondary educational activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, and continuing and adult education; independent living, including exploration of residential options and daily living skills needed in adult life; eligibility for various adult services; and community participation, including recreational and leisure activities and the development of personal and social skills” (p. 13). Examples of appropriate goals and objectives in the student’s transition plan might include: “learning effective study habits; arranging for job try-outs to allow the student to sample work in a specific area; making arrangements for accommodations needed during College Board testing (e.g., test in Braille, oral presentation of questions, untimed testing, other); identifying postsecondary institutions offering the sort of training or education desired; identifying types of accommodations and support services the student needs because of his or her disability;

identifying postsecondary educational institutions that make available the accommodations or support services needed by the student; or applying to the schools of choice and advocating for needed accommodations” (NICHCY, 1993, p.16).

Still, some students’ IEP plans do not include clear transition goals and objectives. Johnson, Sharpe, Sinclair, Hasazi, Furney, and DeStefano (1997) examined 147 IEP/transition plans. The researchers found: (1) students did not generally attend IEP meetings and those who did were unprepared to participate; (2) a representative of a participating agency routinely did not attend IEP meetings and there were few interagency agreements with adult service providers; and (3) parents and professionals needed professional development activities regarding appropriate instructional and curricular strategies in transition services. In addition, findings indicated IEPs generally did not include transition-related information as linkages and responsibility of outside agencies and service needed after graduation.

Even with appropriate goals and objectives in place, the transition for many students with disabilities is complex and challenging (Stodden, 2001; Wagner & Blackorby, 1996). Many students with disabilities and their families often have a difficult time accessing appropriate adult services and/or postsecondary education and training programs (NCD, 1989). Gartin, Rumrill, & Serebreni (1996) state:

Students with disabilities graduating from high school move from a protective environment in which school personnel are legally responsible for identifying and providing appropriate services under the IDEA, to an environment where students are expected to identify themselves as a person with a disability and seek out and

request specific accommodations under Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (p. 33).

In other words, students seeking services in postsecondary institutions have to take a giant leap and request assistance from their postsecondary institutions or services will not be offered.

Some students are caught unaware when their secondary services are not automatically extended in postsecondary education (Stodden, Conway, & Chang, 2003). Requesting services is especially difficult for individuals not aware of their disability or available services. In one study, 31% of students with “specific learning disabilities” reported their disability was first identified at the postsecondary level (National Center for the Study of Postsecondary Educational Supports, 2001).

Karulak (1996) observed the effectiveness of secondary schools’ individual transition plans for students with disabilities attending community colleges. In the study, community college students who qualified for special services in three community colleges in San Antonio, Texas were surveyed regarding the effectiveness of their transition programs. The findings suggest individual transition plans were not effective for preparing students for transition in community college.

Transition services are supposed to be designed to help students with disabilities move from secondary schools to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, employment, adult services, and independent living (NICHCY, 1993). Yet, the primary focus of most transition programs appears to be preparing individuals for employment. Halpern (1985) advocated for transition programs which prepare students for all aspects of adult life, not just employment.

Since research supports postsecondary education as an avenue for increased employability (GAO, 1997; National Center for Educational Statistics, 199b; Roy, Dimigen, & Taylor, 1998), it leads one to wonder when transition programs will incorporate additional services to prepare students with disabilities for postsecondary education. Gilson (1996) states completion of any type of postsecondary education, (e.g., one college course, completion of a college course, completion of a college certificate program, etc.) greatly improved individuals' employability outlook. In addition, students with any type of postsecondary education enter into professions with salaries reaching \$40,000 to \$50,000 per year in contrast to typical earnings of those not participating in postsecondary education who earn about \$22,000 to \$31,000 per year (Gilmore, Bose, & Hart, 2001).

Cavin, Alper, Sinclair, and Siltlington (2001) examined transition services in a review of 1986 to 1999 literature. They found a "great deal of variability exists in regards to how these services are actually delivered" (p. 4). Some programs are undeveloped, and tend to lean toward advocacy, remediation, and information services (Stodden, 2001). Resources are frequently inadequate (National Council on Disability, 2003). Services are rarely individualized according to students' needs, but rather offered as a list of options associated with disabilities (NCD, 2003).

The National Council on Disability (2000), states there is an intense need for "(a) access to proven transition practices; (b) access for individualized and effective postsecondary education services and supports, when needed; (c) access to reasonable accommodations at the workplace (e.g., personal assistance services, assistive

technology); and (d) meaningful options for choice by individuals in the pursuit of education, career training, and individualized services and supports” (p. 39).

Research is needed in enhancing transition services to prepare students for transitioning into postsecondary institutions, as well as employment.

Postsecondary Opportunities

Postsecondary education is a choice approximately 17% of students with disabilities select to prepare themselves for adulthood (NCD, 2000). Access to postsecondary opportunities makes an enormous difference in the employability of individuals with disabilities (Gilmore, Bose, & Hart, 2001). Getzel, Stodden, and Briel (1999) confirm that postsecondary education results in a higher over-all level of employment for students with disabilities. In a recent study conducted by Grigal and Neubert (in press), 234 parents of secondary students with varying types of disabilities selected college as the most desired post-school outcome, irregardless of disabilities (Neubert, Moon, & Grigal, 2004).

Postsecondary education and training opportunities are provided in a variety of settings, including four-year colleges and universities, community and junior colleges, private vocational schools, on-the-job training programs, adult education programs, private training programs, military, and others (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000). Research reveals students with disabilities who complete a bachelor’s degree do better in the job market than those without a degree (AYPF, 2002). Stoddon and Zucker (2004) state “completion of nearly any type of postsecondary education significantly improves an individual’s chances of securing meaningful employment, a hallmark of successful adult life” (p. 4).

Of the postsecondary opportunities available to students with disabilities, two-year and community colleges are the most selected choices (National Council on Disability, 2000; NCD, 2003). Students with disabilities are more likely than their non-disabled peers to earn an associate degree or certificate; while non-disabled students are more likely to take general education courses transferable to a four-year institution (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000). Wagner and Blackorby (1996) state youths with disabilities rarely go to four-year colleges. Based on an extensive literature review, Black, Garnett, Chang, Harding, and Stodden (2002) hypothesized two-year educational institutions provide a more supportive environment for students with disabilities and other student needs. The type of supportive service offered by two-year educational institutions is especially needed as students with disabilities tend to take twice as long to complete their degree than students without disabilities (NCD, 2003).

Many researchers examined students' with disabilities access to postsecondary educational opportunities after completing high school (Black, et al., 2002; Dolyniuk, et al., 2002; Hart, Zaft, & Zimbrich, 2001; Stodden, 2001). Halpern, Yovanoff, Doren, and Benz (1995) conducted a study of students with disabilities from three states. Students were interviewed twice, their senior year in high school and one year after completing high school. Five predictors were associated with students who selected postsecondary education: "(1) high scores on a functional achievement inventory; (2) successful completion of instruction in certain relevant curricular areas (reading, writing, math, problem solving, and getting along with others); (3) participation in relevant transition planning; (4) parent satisfaction with instruction received by the student in high school;

and (5) student satisfaction with high school instruction” (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000, p. 208).

Disability Support Services in Postsecondary Institutions

Almost all postsecondary institutions provide some level of support or accommodations to assist students with disabilities (NCD, 2003). The Rehabilitation Act, Section 104.44, establishes regulations for institutions of higher learning to follow. Modifications such as extending time for completing degree requirements, allowing course substitutions, and adapting the course of instruction are considered reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000). Accommodations may include “taped texts, methods of making orally delivered material available, readers, equipment to aid with manual impairments, or other similar services and actions” (p.221). In 1996-1997 and 1997-98 survey, 98% of postsecondary schools surveyed provided at least one support service or accommodation to students with disabilities (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999). According to survey findings, the most typical type of accommodations were alternate exam formats or additional exam time (88%); tutors to assist with ongoing coursework (77%); readers, classroom note takers, or scribes (69%); registration assistance or priority registration (62%); adaptive equipment or technology (58%); textbooks on tape (55%); sign language interpreters (45%); and course substitutions or waivers (42%).

As federal legislation does not specify types of accommodations or services, institutions have considerable discretion on how they interpret and implement the law requiring reasonable accommodations (NCD, 2003). When supports and services are available, the primary focus is on academic outcomes rather than the full continuum of

outcomes leading to successful transitions (Stodden, Conway, & Chang, 2003). Supports and services are not well integrated with instruction and are often structured to focus on the institutions' goals, missions, and priorities instead of the students' (NCSPEs, 2000).

Empirical evidence is sparse in regards to current practices and effectiveness of educational support for students with disabilities at postsecondary institutions (Black et al, 2002). Yet, most recently Zafft, Hart, and Zimbrich (2004) conducted a follow-up study of forty youths with significant disabilities "who did and did not participate in postsecondary education" (p. 45). The researchers cited the major contributing factor for students with significant disabilities who were successful in college was they used a wide range of academic accommodations "they tended not to need or use in high school" (p. 51). Black, Smith, Chang, Harding, and Stodden's (2002) research study provides extensive data on educational supports and accommodations. The researchers distributed surveys to over 1500 disability coordinators in two and four year postsecondary institutions; 650 respondents returned the surveys. Study participants were asked about "the capacity of their institution to offer various support or accommodations as needed by students with disabilities" (p.5). By using a scale provided by the researchers, survey respondents identified the percentage of time each of the types of supports/accommodations was offered at their institutions. The researchers found testing accommodations were the most offered accommodations to students with disabilities in two-year postsecondary settings (84% of respondents offered this service more than 75% of the time). The less frequently offered support was disability-specific scholarships (59% of the schools did not offer disability-specific scholarships; 83% did not offer support for study abroad for all students). The most "common generic supports" (offered

more than 75% of the time) at the institutions included: testing accommodations (84.1%); personal counseling (67.9%); advocacy (64.5%); and tutors (59.8%). Other highly ranked supports offered more than 75% of the time, included developmental/remedial instruction (70.7%); learning center laboratory (61.8%); note takers/scribes/readers (65.9%) interpreter/translator (63.8%); study skills (57.3%); and priority registration/course scheduling (53.3%). Black et al (2002) found overall, two-year institutions provided more academic and career-guidance assistance and were willing to provide assistive technology when needed to help students succeed” (p. 11). However, researchers found no significant differences between two-year and four-year institutions in offering tutors, special learning strategies, study skills, memory skills, meta-cognitive skills, organization and time management, and communication skills as supports.

Similar results identifying support services at postsecondary institutions were observed in other research studies. These included rescheduling classes; providing early enrollment options, course substitutions for specific courses; note takers or tape-recording lectures; transportation training; career connections to employment; technology assistance; and arranging test taking accommodations (Hart, Zafft, & Zimbrich , 2001; Stodden, 2001).

Other Resources

There are numerous community-based and federal resources available to assist students with disabilities in their transition to adulthood, such as: Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs (employment services for disadvantaged youths, adult displaced homemakers, Native Americans, migrant workers), transitional employment

services (individual or group placement, facility or community-based employment for individuals with various ranges of disabilities), vocational rehabilitation services (counseling, vocational training, work adjustment services), Housing and Urban Development programs (housing assistance programs and provides low cost loans), and the Social Security and Health Care Services (provides disability insurance in the form of monthly payments to individuals with disabilities with a work history who have paid into the Social Security system---minors or children with disabilities are also eligible) (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000). Technical assistance is also provided by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and the National Transition Alliance to promote application to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs for youths with disabilities (NCD, 2000).

The Vocational Rehabilitation system (VR) provides assistance to students who require postsecondary educational assistance. Although they do not provide full tuition costs for students to attend college, the system will contribute money for tuition and textbooks, housing, food, and/or transportation costs (Hart, Gilmore, Zafft, & Bose, 2003). VR may also pay for instructional aids such as assistive devices (Braille, computer technology), and services (such as personal readers and interpreters).

Although there are many resources available to students with disabilities, many find the services difficult to access (US General Accounting Office, 2003). The National Council on Disability (2003) reported 8.3% of postsecondary students with disabilities participate in Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). According to the Social Security Administration Office, approximately 75,000 individuals between the age of 18 and 24 were awarded SSI or SSDI benefits in

1999; and as of June 2000, 335,000 persons between the ages 18 to 24 received SSI or SSDI benefits (NCD, 2000).

Barriers to Successful Transition to Postsecondary Institutions

There are many barriers facing students with disabilities in their transition to postsecondary institutions and adulthood. A few examples of these barriers are societal attitudes, lack of personal control, poor preparation, limited services, transportation, financial assistance, physical, and medical issues (Blumberg & Ferguson, 2003; Burgstahler, Crawford, & Acosta, 2003; Hart, Zafft, and Zimbrich, 2001; NCD, 2003). Furthermore, students are faced with barriers due to geographical distance and lack of access to public transportation, long waiting lists for disability-related services, and continuous stereotyping of people with disabilities (NCD, 2000). Hart, Zafft and Zimbrich's (2001) study reported transportation-related issues for students with disabilities entail learning to use public transportation; and needing support to identify and arrange transportation such as car pooling with other college students; and obtaining travel vouchers, accessible transportation, and driving lessons.

These barriers are compounded with additional concerns that students with disabilities have in continuing education. Some students enter postsecondary institutions without "systematic change and are struggling to overcome barriers created by lack of coordination of educational and related services" (Stodden & Whelley, 2004, p. 13). Burgstahler, Crawford, and Acosta (2001) examined concerns of students with disabilities in two-year institutions of higher education who transferred to four-year institutions. The researchers reported the following as concerns: moving away from home, understanding and working through the transfer process, securing financial

support, meeting the admission requirements and academic standards, adjusting to differences in disability documentation requirements and the disability-related services offered, and adjusting to a larger, less personal environment (p. 7).

For many students with disabilities, the paramount barriers facing them in their transition to postsecondary opportunities are overwhelming. Three barriers: societal attitudes, lack of preparation, and issues revolving around financial assistance may be the most detrimental to their transition to postsecondary institutions.

Societal Attitudes

The literature review suggests many students with disabilities are not expected to attend college. Expectations for students are set low. Hart, Zaft, and Zimbrich (2001) state “one of the initial barriers when considering postsecondary education for students with significant disabilities was low expectations for students with disabilities” (p. 23). Many parents and educators view college as a difficult transition for students in general, and especially for students with disabilities. Ultimately, they may not encourage students with disabilities to pursue college as an option. This is evidenced in statistics reported by Wagner and Blackorby (1996) that 28% of 12th graders with disabilities set a goal for postsecondary vocational training, compared with 23% who set college attendance as their postsecondary goal.

Societal attitudes reflect a lack of understanding of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities sometimes feel a lack of sensitivity from professors and school personnel (Burgstahler, Crawford, & Acosta, 2001). This leads many youths with disabilities to isolate themselves from society. Blumberg and Ferguson (2003) found 6%

of youths with disabilities reported significant levels of social isolation. The problem was greater for students with multiple disabilities where 25% reported social isolation.

Societal attitudinal barriers can be disabling to students with disabilities, more so than the limitations imposed by their physical, emotional, or mental disability (Ward, 1991). Still, many students do not succumb to negative societal attitudinal barriers and continue to forge ahead in their quest for a better education.

A qualitative study conducted by Lehmann, Davies, and Laurin (2000) confirms as well as identifies, other barriers facing students with disabilities. The study involved thirty-five college students with a variety of disabilities who participated in a half-day summit. The purpose of the summit was to document students' perspectives regarding their personal and academic needs and barriers to their success. Four dominant themes emerged from the focus group discussion: "(1) lack of understanding and acceptance concerning disabilities in general, and their disabilities in particular; (2) lack of adequate services to assist in tackling academic and nonacademic responsibilities; (3) lack of sufficient financial resources and the knowledge needed to acquire them to live a more self-sufficient life; and (4) lack of self-advocacy skills and training needed to live independently." (p. 204-205).

Lack of Academic Preparation

Students with disabilities lag behind their non-disabled peers in terms of postsecondary academic preparedness (NCD, 2003). The reasons for the lack of preparedness are many. For example, many students' with disabilities secondary education preparation only includes basic academic skills and job preparation skills. According to Henderson (1999), these students have not received the same kinds of

preparation for postsecondary education as their non-disabled peers. Rattin (2001) states, “the reality is... students with learning disabilities have entered college unprepared to handle the academic expectations of their college instructors” (p.30). Therefore, these students have extreme difficulty reading college textbooks (Hart, Zafft, & Zimbrich, 2001). Furthermore, college requirements for them are particularly problematic given their poor study skills, negative self-concept, dependency on others, and various negative behaviors and feelings (Rattin, 2001). Since many students with disabilities receive instruction in segregated programs, they often are not prepared for typical adult life and postsecondary education (Hart, Zafft, & Zimbrich, 2001).

The area of telecommunications illustrates the concerns surrounding students’ preparedness. Telecommunications (internet, e-mail, newsgroups, etc) are a major instructional tool for many students preparing for postsecondary education. The National Center for Education Statistics (2000) surveyed 1,000 high school administrators on the use of telecommunications in their schools. The study revealed major barriers to the access and use of telecommunications for students with disabilities: only 47% of special education teachers were sufficiently trained, 38% of computers had alternative input/output devices, and 34% of computers were inaccessible to students with disabilities.

Financial Assistance

Cost of attending college is a major hurdle for many families and students (NCD, 2003). According to the University of Washington statistics, the average cost for a four-year education ranged from \$41,000 to \$104,000 in 2001-2002. Many families have already spent enormous sums of money during elementary and high school to acquire

tutors and supplementary educational assistance (NCD, 2000). A report by the National Council on Disability concluded:

Many families and students perceive the cost of college to be an impossible obstacle. Family members testified they had already spent large sums of money in acquiring a better education for their children in special education programs, indicating they needed information concerning the types of postsecondary financial aid available to them. Testimony reflected the level of financial aid awarded to students with disabilities at the university level was disproportionately low when compared to the rest of the student body. (NCD, 1995, p. 140)

The difficulty of funding college is compounded by other financial obligations relating to a student's disability (Frieden, 2003). Such obligations might include acquisition and maintenance of special equipment, medical expenses not covered by insurance, transportation, and salaries for aides (p. 22). Ultimately, many families of students with disabilities do not have money set aside for college.

These families look for postsecondary programs and institutions to provide financial assistance to help augment the high cost of college education. Instead, they find limited financial assistance available to them. Students with disabilities are facing even greater costs for college than students without disabilities because they risk federal budget cuts and do not fit financial aid criteria (NCD, 2003). Furthermore, students with disabilities who were able to obtain assistance usually received a smaller amount (\$5,100 vs. \$6,500) than their non-disabled peers (NCES, 1999). Burgstahler, Crawford, and Acosta (2001) found that 21% of students with disabilities, responding to their survey,

identified inadequate financial support as a concern when transferring from two-year to four-year schools.

Students with disabilities want the postsecondary programs and institutions to make financial aid information more readily available to them and their families. The National Council on Disability (1995) reported “increased information from post-secondary programs would provide more students with disabilities with opportunities to access financial aid” (p. 140).

Successful Transition

Luecking and Tilson (2003) cited the “best” and “effective” practices for school-to-work transition for youths with disabilities should include: “written transition plans with clear and relevant objectives that are the basis for the student’s instruction; parent or family involvement in the transition planning process; relevant vocational assessment and career exploration; specific and work-based vocational and social skills training; interagency collaboration and cooperation, especially between schools and postsecondary services; paid work experience during high school; and integrated educational and community experiences” (p.2). However, there is no magic formula guaranteeing successful transition for students with disabilities. Nevertheless, three crucial factors essential for students’ with disabilities successful transition to postsecondary institutions were dominant in the literature review. These factors were self determination, parental involvement, and teachers’ high expectations.

Self-Determination

According to Stodden and Whelley (2004), the “ADA of 1990, STAT. 327 transformed the self-determination and empowerment movement undertaken by persons

with disabilities into federal legislations” (p. 9). Civil rights of students with disabilities are protected by ADA legislation which provides essential tools for students to develop self-advocacy skills in various settings, including postsecondary education (p.9). Self determination is a skill essential for students with disabilities to make a successful transition to pos-secondary experiences. It is the ability “to express one’s needs, the ability to make informed decisions, and then advocate for those decisions” (Stodden, 2001). Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, and Wehmeyer (1998a) define self-determination as:

a combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable a person to engage in a goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior. An understanding of one’s strengths and limitations together with a belief in one’s self as capable and effective are essential to self-determination. When acting on the basis of these skills and attitudes, individuals have greater ability to take control of their lives and assume the role of successful adults (p.2).

Wehmeyer and Berkobien (1991) state self-determination is often used interchangeably with self-advocacy, but it is not synonymous with self-determination. They include self-actualization and self-regulation as inherent processes of self-determination.

The National Information Center for Children and Youths with Disabilities (1993) affirms that self-determination and self-advocacy are relevant now and in the future for all students. They offer four fundamental skills or knowledge vital for students with disabilities to develop to aid in dealing with adult situations: the ability to assess themselves, including their skills and abilities, and the needs associated with their disability; awareness of the accommodations they need because of their disability; knowledge of their civil rights to these accommodations through legislation such as the

American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and the self-advocacy skills necessary to express their needs in the workplace, in educational institutions, and in community settings.

Ensuring students with disabilities are self-determined is a complex and difficult process (Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 1998). Parents and teachers must start at an early age promoting good self-determination skills to aid students in developing positive self-concepts (Ward, 1991). This requires an educational plan designed to promote self-determination which starts long before the student completes high school. The transition plan should consist of instructional activities and also include “efforts to create peer and adult mentor programs, structure learning environments and incorporate community-based learning, introduce functionally derived curricula, increase interactions with peers without disabilities, provide experiences with success, and involve students in educational planning and decision making” (p. 24). Field and Hoffman (1996) offer several instructional strategies useful in developing self-determination in postsecondary students, including: “(a) using modeling, (b) providing opportunities for choice making, (c) providing attribution retraining and, (d) using appropriate behavioral strategies” (Rattin, 2001, p. 24).

The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 (*P.L. 102-569*) clearly support the importance of self-determination as evidenced by the statement, “Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of an individual to...enjoy self-determination” (p. 24). This legislation affirms the importance of self-determination and encourages educators to require and emphasize skills which prepare students for expectations in their transition to adulthood (Hoffman & Field, 1995).

Field, Hoffman, St.Peter, and Sawilowsky (1992) found teachers' perceptions of students' self-determination were significantly lower for students with disabilities (n = 48) than for students without disabilities (n = 47). For students with disabilities to make a successful transition to adulthood, self determination skills are critical (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehmeyer, 1998b).

Parent Involvement

Parents' involvement in their child's education is indispensable. Their involvement in their child's high school education facilitates a successful transition from school to adult life (NCD, 1989). Current literature confirms the importance of parental support and involvement as critical for the success of the transition process (Brotherson, Berdine, & Sartini, 1993; Lehmann, Bassett, Sands, Spencer, & Gliner, 1999; Lehmann, Bassett, & Sands, 1999; Tobin, 2003). Successful transition for students with disabilities requires support from parents (Brotherson, Berdine, & Sartini, 1993; Benz & Halpern, 1987). A study, conducted by Collier (1992) examined the success and satisfaction with school to postsecondary life transition for young adults who were deaf, revealed family encouragement and support were conducive to success and satisfaction in the transition process.

Parents are usually the one constant factor in a child's life from birth to adulthood. For that reason, they are influential in their child's decision making process. Brotherson, Berdine, and Sartini (1993) cite two key reasons for parent participation: (1) parents influence their child through their values and expectations; and (2) parents are the single most important advocate for their child and are essential for ensuring continuity between school and adult services. Parents' role in the transition process may include

providing material support, emotional support, and advocating for appropriate services for their child (Hanley-Mawell, Whitney-Thomas, & Pogoloff, 1995; Tobin, 2003).

As parents are such an integral part of a child's transition to adulthood, secondary schools need to ensure they are included in every aspect of transition planning. If parents are given accurate information and support and recognized for their contribution to the transition process, they will be able to better facilitate their child's successful transition to adulthood (Brotherson, et al.,1993).

Teacher Expectations

Teachers' attitudes and expectations greatly affect all students. Reiff, Gerber, and Ginsberg (1997) state "the influence teachers exert can have either profound negative or positive impacts" on students with disabilities (p.159). Unfortunately, some parents and students report that schools have established low expectations and established inappropriate learning objectives and goals for their students (NCD, 1989). In testimony to the National Council on Disability (1989), Mr. Fred Schroeder, Executive Director of the New Mexico Commission, who is blind, described his experience in high school:

...I never was obliged to take spelling, because it was presumed that I would spend my life listening to tapes, so why bother having me do spelling: I was exempt from all homework assignments, virtually all of them as I went through school, virtually all reading assignment in class...I graduated with a high school education without ever taking algebra, although it's on my transcript. The teacher said to me, if you show up every day, I'll give you a C...[I also went through] without ever taking biology, without ever taking physical education. So, I was

successfully mainstreamed and have a high school diploma with a 3.0 grade point average on it. What in the world did that mean? What it means is, I had a very, very inadequate education, and the worst thing it meant for me is as a young child going through the program, I felt inferior to sighted kids, and I felt inferior, I thought, because of blindness. It never dawned on me that if I had some other kinds of training that I'd be able to compete (p.1).

Johnson, Stodden, Emanuel, Luecking, and Mack (2002) support promoting high expectations for students with disabilities. They implied high expectations should be maintained for students with disabilities extending throughout academic and nonacademic courses and programs. Neubert, Moon, and Grigal (2004) state the increasing trend to provide access to the postsecondary environment for students with significant disabilities has the potential to “open the door to higher education and raise the often low expectations that are placed on students with more significant disabilities” (p.23).

Although researchers found no empirical research examining the influence of teacher expectations on students' with disabilities transition to postsecondary institutions, it stands to reason positive teacher expectations will enhance students' achievement. Nevertheless, more research is needed to examine the influence of teachers' expectations on students with disabilities in their transition to adulthood.

Best Practices in the Context of Different Models

Even though this literature review confirms a need for transition services, a great deal of variability exists as to what services are actually delivered and what services are considered “best practices” (Cavin, Alper, Sinclair, & Sitlington, 2001). In a study

conducted by Kohler (1993) literature was synthesized to determine which transition practices had been identified as “best practices”. The researcher reviewed three primary types of documents: “(a) follow-up studies of students with disabilities; (b) pseudo and quasi-experimental studies; and (c) position papers (Cavin, Alper, Sinclair, & Sitlington, 2001, p.4). Kohler found modest empirical evidence to support transition practices. Additionally, Kohler found one third of the literature supported social skills training, paid work experience, and individual transition planning as best practices.

In 1998, the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) developed a partnership with five urban high schools and their local colleges to improve outcomes with students with significant disabilities to access postsecondary education options (Hart, Zaft, & Zimbrich, 2001). Twenty-five high school students with significant disabilities participated in the project. A strong collaboration between the secondary schools and local colleges was established to give students experience in attending college, and/or enrolling in a continuing education workshop or online courses. The project mirrored “best practices” presented by the National Transition Alliance by using a student-centered framework (Kohler & Chapman, 1999). The model included five guiding principles: (a) individual student vision and choice drive the model, (b) all options for students are inclusive and occur in settings reflecting a natural proportion of students with and without disabilities, (c) one size does not fit all and the development of supports emphasize individual needs and preferences, (d) there is no special program (e.g., classes or series of classes which segregate students with disabilities), and (e) collaboration is necessary (p. 21). Findings included each student in the study experienced a notable increase in employment options, several students completed high school and continued to take courses at their local

college; and students expanded their social networks to include peers without disabilities. The researchers stated, “The bottom line is that all participants have reported a greater sense of pride in themselves and a feeling of accomplishment in attaining a dream that at one time seemed totally out of their reach” (p.28).

Another noteworthy program for best practices is the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP) at the University of Michigan. The program was created to give opportunities for positive student-faculty interaction through research (Rattin, 2001). Research partners were created between first and second year students from the “under-represented”, including students with disabilities and faculty researchers. This program appears to have had a positive effect on students as UROP students’ attrition rate was 32% lower than under represented students in general, and students had higher grade point averages (2.69% for UROP students vs. 2.51% of all other under represented students) (p.24).

Phelps and Hanley-Maxwell’s (1997) examination of employment and postsecondary educational outcomes for youth with disabilities found two educational practices appear to be repeatedly aligned with positive outcomes for students. The practices include school supervised work experiences and functionally oriented curricula (specific occupational skills, employability skills, and academic skills). Other researchers, Blank and Harwell (1997), provided examples of effective strategies for students with disabilities to make connections between secondary school and the world beyond school. The strategies included: authentic instruction, project-based learning, problem based learning, service learning, school-based enterprises, apprenticeships, internships, career education, mentoring, and career academics.

A seemingly common sense strategy to use for all students to improve educational opportunities is called *Universal Design*. Bowe (2000) states, “The 1990s movement of universal design challenges us to think again about who should be responsible for accessibility” (p.2). The Universal Design Education Online Web Site (2004) defines Universal Design as “an approach to the design of all products and environments to be as usable as possible by as many people as possible regardless of age, ability or situation” (p.1). The main principles and guidelines of Universal Design were developed by architects, product designers, engineers, and environmental design researchers in partnership with the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University. The seven principles describe characteristics which make designs universally usable are: “(1) Equitable Use; (2) Flexibility in Use; (3) Simple and Intuitive Use; (4) Perceptible Information; (5) Tolerance for Error; (6) Low Physical Effort; and (7) Size and Space for Approach and Use” (Universal Design Education Online Web Site: © 2002-2004, p. 1). Universal Design products are intended to be flexible enough that a wide range of disabilities can directly use them without requiring any assistive technology or modifications (Trace Research & Development Center, 2004). Additionally, the design products are compatible with assistive technologies that might be used by individuals who cannot efficiently access and use the product directly (p.1).

The Universal Design for Instruction (UDI) is a teaching approach consisting of proactive design and inclusive strategies that benefit a wide-range of learners, including students with disabilities (Scott, McGuire, & Embry, 2002). It operates on the “premise that the planning and delivery of instruction as well as evaluation of

learning can incorporate inclusive attributes that embrace diversity in learners without compromising academic standards” (p.1).

Many other educational researchers identified strategies to promote successful postsecondary educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Some of these strategies for enhancing curriculum, transition planning, professional development, and postsecondary services strategies are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Strategies for Successful Transition to Postsecondary Education

Curriculum	Include self-advocacy and self determination skills in the curriculum (NCD, 2000, p. 43)
	Include assistive technology in academic and work-based learning experiences (NCD, 2000, p. 43)
	Use “universal design” approach to help students with disabilities access a full range of learning opportunities in the secondary education curriculum (Johnson, Stodden, Emanuel, Luecking, & Mack, 2002)
Transition Planning	Expand secondary transition programs for students ages 18-21 to include two and four year college campuses (NCD, 2000, p. 43)
	Arrange visits to four-year schools for students with disabilities so they can learn about services, sit in on classes, talk to faculty, and meet other students with disabilities (Burgstahler, Crawford & Acosta, 2001, p. 7)
	Provide service-learning and community outreach experiences by taking learning out of the classroom and into the community (Dolyniuk, et al., 2002, p.241)
	Clarify interagency roles and responsibilities, and coordinate services among vocational, regular and special education teachers, and counselors (NCD, 2000, p. 43)
Professional Development	Provide professional development activities focused on transition-relation skills and knowledge (NCD, 2000, p. 43)
	Provide in-service education for transition staff to promote student involvement and develop strategies to support transition planning activities (Powers, Turner, Westwood, Matuszewski, Wilson, & Philips, 2001)

Postsecondary Services	Include information about services for students with disabilities in all general student orientations and tours, student handbooks, and other publications and programs (Burgstahler, Crawford & Acosta, 2001, p. 7) Proactively address campus access issues (e.g. dorm rooms, transportation, and technology) (Burgstahler, Crawford & Acosta, 2001, p. 7) Offer orientation sessions at college and additional visits to the campus to ensure students learn their way around, can locate student support service facilities, and identify “safety net”/support systems (Hart, Zafft, & Zimbrich, 2001)
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Summary

This review of literature encapsulates a historical overview of the special education movement, national transition outcomes for students with disabilities, transition planning and services, barriers to successful transition, and best practices for successful transition strategies. Additionally, it entails the progress made in students’ transition to postsecondary institutions.

Through federal government mandates and legislation, attention has been equalizing the educational opportunities for students with disabilities. By including transition goals and objectives in students’ IEP plans, efforts are taken to enhance students’ transition to work and/or postsecondary institutions. Although there are some elements of transition planning which appear to be meeting the needs of some students with disabilities, many students with disabilities lag behind their peers in finding success in postsecondary institutions. It is still not clear how effective secondary schools are in preparing students with disabilities with the tools needed to transition to postsecondary institutions. The literature review reveals many students with disabilities are ill-prepared for the rigorous demands of postsecondary institutions. According to the National Council on Disability, “secondary and postsecondary educational systems fail to provide

youths with disabilities with consistent, individualized, and appropriate access, equity and quality learning experiences to support their completion of education and movement to meaningful employment” (p. 59).

While a variety of transition services and programs are in place throughout our nation’s colleges and universities, additional research is needed to evaluate whether these services and programs address the diverse needs of students. Wagner and Blackorby (1996) state, “a diversity of students requires a diversity of program choices if students are to benefit from their education and make a successful transition to adulthood” (p. 119. Other research opportunities were found in the literature review and are listed here.

Opportunities for further research include:

1. Conduct longitudinal studies which track individuals from a broad range of disabilities as they move from high school to college and into employment (Hart, Gilmore, Zafft, & Bose, 2003, p. 20);
2. Examine how IDEA is used to support access to postsecondary education options for students, age 18-21 (Hart et al., 2003, p. 20);
3. Investigate the degree of transferability for supports and services from secondary to postsecondary education and employment continuance (Hart et al., 2003, p. 21);
4. Determine how Vocational Rehabilitation can support a greater number of individuals with disabilities who access and complete a postsecondary education (Hart et al., 2003, p. 21);

5. Identify specific knowledge, skills, and characteristics of students with disabilities who successfully transfer from two-year to four-year institutions (Burgstahler, Crawford & Acosta, 2001, p. 7);
6. Ascertain clearer more comprehensive descriptions of program participants, and types and degrees of disabilities since programs vary depending on the population (Cavin, Alper, Sinclair, & Sitlington, 2001, p. 11);
7. Research transition needs of all individuals with disabilities, including the more severe disabilities (Karge, Patton, & de la Garza, 1992);
8. Identify exemplary practices which increase collaboration among stakeholders to provide students with an integrated and seamless system of technology supports that facilitate transition to postsecondary and career settings (Stodden & Conway, 2003, p. 11).

Nevertheless, what is missing from the literature is information based on empirical research to support the effectiveness of the transition programs and services in helping students with disabilities make a successful transition to adulthood. The NCD, 2000, cite research is needed to provide the foundation knowledge to “increase access to students with disabilities to postsecondary experiences; and to increase students’ access to relevant and rigorous curricula while in secondary school (p. 47)”. Consequently, this study is designed to examine the effectiveness of transition programs and services identified in the Exceeding Expectations Model Demonstration Project. While this study focuses primarily on postsecondary accessibility and retention, consideration will be given to students’ secondary experiences and resources which best prepare them for postsecondary education. Ultimately, this study hopes to contribute valuable information

based upon students' experiences, successes and barriers to augment their transition from secondary to postsecondary institutions.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The chapter begins with a discussion of the rationale for using a mixed qualitative and quantitative paradigm preceded by an overview of the case study research tradition. The remainder of the chapter presents a description of the participants and sites, data collection methods, data analysis process, and research reliability and validity.

Research Design and Rationale

This study utilizes both qualitative and quantitative research methods with qualitative research methods as the dominant paradigm. This technique is referenced by Creswell (p. 177, 1994) as a “dominant-less dominant design”. The design permits researchers to use a single paradigm as well as an alternate paradigm for a smaller portion, such as the data collection process. Creswell states, the “advantage of this approach is that it presents a consistent paradigm picture in the study and still gathers limited information to probe in detail one aspect of the study” (p. 177). In this study, the qualitative paradigm is the dominant design with quantitative methods used in the data collection process.

The researcher selected a qualitative approach as the dominant paradigm because the study’s primary focus is on information solicited from people and the themes which emerge from observations and data. Qualitative research methods enable the researcher to focus on human behavior, thoughts, and feelings in the study’s context. It is associated with words and descriptions with an in-depth involvement of the researcher. The theory is

induced from gathered data. In addition, the qualitative paradigm is more conducive to insights, inquiry, and interpretation of data than is hypothesis testing (Meriam, 1991).

Quantitative research methods, on the other hand, are associated with numbers or breadth of description and analysis. Such methods usually focus on specific factors and their relation to other factors (Denscombe, 1998). The researcher, unless involved in the development and administration of the instrument, is more removed and detached from the research. Since the researcher in this study is involved in the development and administration of the instruments, this was not a factor. The use of quantitative methods in the data collection process expands the scope of this study.

By using qualitative and quantitative methods, the researcher hopes the strengths and weaknesses of each approach complement the other. The data collected through mixed methods are compared to determine consistency and contradictions in the data. Ultimately, the mixed methods approach enhance the validity and quality of the research.

Overview of Case Study Research

Merriam (1991) defines a case study as an “examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social program” (p. 9). Case study research allows one to observe individuals, groups, organizations and programs, and to use multiple methods for data collection. In addition, the tradition permits the use of qualitative and quantitative methods. Case study is often referred to as non-experimental; it is most effective when descriptions and explanations are sought, when it is not possible to manipulate the cause of the behavior, and when variables are not easily identified (Meriam, 1991).

Secondly, the case study is an effective exploratory strategy to evaluate an intervention that has no clear, single set of outcomes (Yin, 2003). It is also useful when illustrating specific topics in a descriptive manner.

Denscombe (1998) states a case study approach focuses “on one instance (or a few instances) of a particular phenomenon with a view to providing an in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that particular instance” (p. 32). Case study researchers work inductively. This approach endorses a multi-method approach. Yin (2003) states “the case study as a research strategy comprises an all-encompassing method---covering the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis” (p. 14).

Case studies are also valuable in refining theory and identifying complexities for additional investigations (Stake, 1994). They are more holistic in nature than other research approaches and deal with more than isolated factors. Within the case study, there are many data collection methods, such as: interviews, observations, review of documents, and work samples (Gillham, 2000). The first step in case study is to collect data by keeping an open mind.

A limitation of the case study approach is it is sometimes viewed as “soft data” (Denscombe, 1998). Denscombe (1998) states some researchers claim case studies lack the rigor expected from social science research. Yin (2003) confirms this perception of case studies; he states case study research has been traditionally considered “soft research, possibly because researchers have not followed systematic procedures” (p.17). Other researchers support the use of case studies as a descriptive measure, but not as an analytical or evaluative method (Denscombe, 1998). Yet, other researchers contradict this

statement by indicating the use of case study as a tool for “meta-evaluation”, an evaluation study (Smith, 1990; Stake, 1986).

Another negative, although not exclusive to case study, is the researcher runs the risk of using techniques improperly. Improper usage decreases the opportunity to extensively address issues. Yin (2003) states having expertise and training in a variety of data collection techniques are essential for the case study researcher.

Overview of Exceeding Expectations Case Study Design

In *Case Study Research: Design and Method*, Yin (2003) identifies four types of designs for case studies, including: Type 1- single-case (holistic) designs, Type 2- single-case (embedded) designs, Type 3- multiple-case (holistic) designs, and Type 4- multiple-case (embedded) designs (p. 39). The term “embedded” refers to more than one unit of analysis; for example, the case study may be about a single organization “such as a hospital, but the analysis might include outcomes about the clinical services and staff employed by the hospital” (p. 42). In contrast, the term “holistic” refers to the “global nature of an organization of a program” (p. 43).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher selected a Type 2- single case (embedded) design. A single-case design is justifiable when the following conditions are represented: “(a) a critical test of existing theory, (b) a rare or unique circumstance, or (c) a representative or typical case or when the case serves a (d) revelatory or (e) longitudinal purpose” (p.46). The Exceeding Expectation project (EEP) is the single case. One rationale for selecting this design is the EEP is a “rare” and “unique model project. What is unique about the EEP is it builds upon the experiences of its consumers (Lehmann & Davies, 2001, p. 22). No other model currently exists with a similar purpose or focus for

facilitating students' transition into postsecondary institutions (Lehmann & Davies, (2001). The second rationale for selecting this design is the EEP provides resources and support to multi-sites; this design permits analysis of the outcomes of the various sites which for this study will be the embedded units.

Data Collection

One of the strengths of the case study is it permits the researcher to use a variety of techniques, sources, data, and research methods as part of the investigation (Denscombe, 1998). Multi-methods of data collection, such as questionnaires, interviews, observations, and documents complement each other. Combined, a multi-method approach can complement research by producing a supportive form of data collection. Denscombe, (1998) states "each method approaches the collection of data with a certain set of assumptions and produces a kind of data which needs to be recognized as having certain inherent strengths and certain inherent weaknesses in relation to the aims of the particular research and the practical constraints (time, resources, access) faced by the researchers" (p. 84). Five data collection techniques are used in this study: focus group discussions, individual interviews, document/ archival review, field notes from site visits, and a survey instrument. See Table 2.

Table 2

Data Collection Matrix

Data Collection	What	Who	Number of Participants
Focus Groups	Discussion 1- 1 ½ hours	Site Coordinators Students	59
Individual Interviews	30- 60 minutes Semi-structured	Site Coordinators Students	5
Survey Instrument	Questionnaire Likert Scale Semantic Differential items scale	Site Coordinators Students	2 9 51
Document/Archival Review	Brochures Program Descriptions Enrollment Information Demographics Calendar of Activities Student Background Information	Researcher obtains and reviews documents at each site	N/A
Field notes	Site visit observations Informal dialogue Focus group notes Interview notes	Researcher	N/A

Focus Groups

Initially, the researcher conducted focus groups from July 2003 to January 2004 to gather information on the transition services available to students with disabilities approved in an earlier EEP Human Subject application. From July 2003 to April 2004 focus group discussions were conducted at seven of the eight participating sites. The focus groups were coordinated by the site coordinator and facilitated by the researcher.

The site coordinators invited all students receiving disabilities services at their sites to participate in a focus group. There were nine separate focus group discussions that represented students from seven EEP sites. The group size ranged from three to eleven students.

The main purpose of focus group discussions was to gather information to determine if students are receiving the types of support and training needed to promote their access and retention in postsecondary institutions. Twelve major questions aligned with the EEP goals were asked, followed by probing questions to obtain a more in-depth description and response from students (see Appendix A for questions and protocol). The researcher modified the questions used from a previous EEP study to better explore this study's purpose and research questions. Data were collected by using an audio recorder to record each coordinator and student's responses.

Individual Interviews

Five site coordinators were interviewed on what is working and what is not working in the Exceeding Expectations project. These coordinators were selected as a representative sample of the two year and four year institutions in the Exceeding Expectations Project.

Questions were aligned with project goals (see Appendixes B and C for questions and protocol). Individual interviews were conducted by using a semi-structured format. Each coordinator interviewed was asked the same questions; however, other spontaneous questions arose in the interview in response to interviewees' comments.

In addition, two students from two different sites were selected from focus groups to participate in a follow-up individual interview at the end of the focus group

discussions. These students were selected to obtain more in-depth information on their transition experiences because their experiences were very unique to the other focus groups' participants. One student was hearing impaired and did not attend a traditional high school. The other student was a non-traditional (over forty years old) student who dropped out of high school in the ninth grade and attained a General Education Development (GED). Data were collected by using an audio recorder to record each coordinator's and student's responses.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was designed and administered after the first phase of focus groups and personal interviews. The qualitative data collected from six of the initial focus groups and personal interviews were used as a guide in the survey design. The focus group discussions raised additional questions. The researcher added these questions to the survey instrument to gather more information. In addition, the researcher used the literature review as a guide in developing questions on transition services and activities available at postsecondary institutions to determine if the EEP case study would have similar findings. Hence, the purpose of the survey was to gather additional information and/or corroborate data obtained from the focus groups and interviews. Appendix H presents a matrix of items which show how the two survey instruments are aligned with the research questions.

A survey was administered to all site coordinators and to students with disabilities (from participating sites) identified as a part of the EEP project. Students and site coordinators from each of the participating sites were invited by letter and email to participate in completing the survey (see Appendixes G Human Subjects Application

which includes sample survey invitation letters and email). The survey instrument was distributed in three ways: (1) some focus group participants completed the survey at the end or beginning of the focus discussions, 2) surveys were mailed directly to the site coordinator for distribution to students at three survey sights, and (3) one site provided students' addresses and surveys were mailed directly to individual students. The site coordinators' survey was mailed directly to each participating site.

The survey consists of a variety of questions using Likert and Semantic Differential scales (see Appendixes D and E). The items are aligned with the study's objectives and goals. The questionnaire was designed to gather information from participants that focus groups or personal interviews may have been limited in collecting. In addition, some questions were asked to confirm and/or compare data from other research methods.

Document and Archival Review

Document and archival information were reviewed prior to collection of other data to get a better understanding of services offered by each participating site. In addition, the researcher collected evidences from each site which supports the project participants' claims of services offered, how effectively services are delivered, and whether project activities are implemented in a timely and efficient manner. Documents from project participants were also gathered from two annual Exceeding Expectations Summer Institutions.

Field Notes

Noyes (2002) indicates field notes are a helpful "audit trail" to document procedures and methodology adjustments and barriers in the data collection process.

Field notes were made during each stage of data collection which included personal observations and reactions to the participants' responses and/or other perceptions on transition services gathered from site visits. A journal of field notes from site visits, review of documents, the summer institutions, and informal and formal dialogue of project participants was maintained. The researcher used the information for reflection of the visits, to remember key points and facts, and to get a more realistic view of each site.

Participants and Sites

The participants consist of site coordinators, staff, and students receiving grant money through the Exceeding Expectations Project. The project sites are located in five states. See Table 3 and map of site locations below.

Table 3

Location of Exceeding Expectations Sites

States	Colorado	Idaho	Iowa	South Dakota	Wyoming
Sites	Colorado Mountain College	Idaho State University	Iowa Community College	Black Hills State University	Northwest Wyoming College
	Pueblo Community College	College of Southern Idaho	Iowa State University		

Exceeding Expectations Site Map



Although the EEP consists of postsecondary and secondary educational institutions, the focus of this study will be on postsecondary institutions (colleges, junior colleges, and postsecondary programs).

Site coordinators and/or staff members from each identified site participated in the study by being interviewed individually and/or by completing a survey. Site coordinators and/or staff members selected to participate in the study were required to have at least two years experience working with students with disabilities and the Exceeding Expectations Project.

The site coordinators were asked by the researcher to invite students from their institutions to participate in focus group discussions, personal interviews, and a survey.

Students who participated in the study were required to have a disability and receive transition services from one of the participating sites. The criterion for student selection was based on their voluntary willingness to share transition experiences. The researcher talked with fifty-nine students through focus group discussions. From the focus group discussions, two students were selected by the researcher for individual interviews in order for the researcher to collect more personal and comprehensive information. The students were selected based on the uniqueness of their disabilities and background information. During the focus group discussions, it became clear to the researcher these students wished to share more of their experiences. One of the students voluntarily stayed after the focus group discussion and told the researcher he wished to continue the discussion privately to share additional information he was not able to share in the group discussion. The second student was selected for an additional interview because he was the only participant who could share experiences as an English Second Language (ESL) student who did not attend a traditional secondary program. As a result of the more in-depth discussion with these students, the researcher received a better understanding of their backgrounds and experiences. See Table 4 for information on number of study participants from all sites.

Table 4

Number of Study Participants by Site

Sites	Site Staff Interviews	Focus Groups Students	Students' Individual Interviews	Students Survey	Staff Survey
Colorado Mountain College	3	3		1	1
Pueblo Community College		11		8	2
Idaho State University		10		6	1
College of Southern Idaho		10	1	10	1
Iowa Community College	2	6		10	1
Iowa State University	1	8		5	1
Black Hills State University		11	1	11	1
Northwest Wyoming College				6	1
TOTAL	6	59	2	57	9

The participants were very open and candid with their experiences. The researcher hopes this will be valuable for other students with disabilities in their transition from high school to postsecondary institutions. This information was instrumental in determining the Exceeding Expectations Project outcomes to date, as well as exploring interventions and strategies to support students' access and retention in postsecondary institutions.

Data Analyses

After each site visit, all information was reviewed and documented. The personal interviews and focus group responses were coded to identify themes. Various Microsoft Word tools (highlighting, comment bar, theme format) were used to manage and analyze the data. The coding process utilizes the constant comparative analysis process which

includes “opening coding”, “axial coding”, and “selective coding” units of examination (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This approach is inductive in that no prior codes are assigned, but are “induced” from the data.

The questions asked during the interviews and discussions were carefully considered in the coding process so as not to misinterpret any as emerging themes. First, the researcher thoroughly read through the data several times to get a sense of the information. Next, the open coding process involved highlighting key phrasing and making comments in the margins. The third step, axial coding, involved linking various codes by placing them into conceptual categories. In the final step, selective coding, the researcher explicated themes and used them to form stories from the data. From the themes, the researcher selected key quotes to present the participants’ stories.

The survey data were analyzed by using a statistical software program, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), to present descriptive statistical data. Descriptive analysis is the process of transforming raw data into tables and charts to make better sense of the data and provide summaries (Denscombe, 1998). First, each site’s raw data were coded and tallied as frequencies and percentages and displayed in frequency distribution tables to give a clear picture of distributions for relevance and comparison. Next, various charts are used to present the data.

Validity

Kidder and Fine (1987) support the use of quantitative and qualitative methods in research. They state it is a form of triangulation which enhances the validity and reliability of one’s study. The multi-methods process of data collection is based on the “triangulation” concept that bias in one data source or investigation is neutralized or at

least lessened when other data sources, methods, and investigations are used and/or identified (Jick, 1979). The use of multiple methods helps to “facilitate the validation of data through triangulation” (Denscombe, 1998, p. 40). The triangulation of data in this study is looking at similar data sources through different methods; qualitative (focus groups, interviews) and quantitative (survey instrument). In addition, the study entails multiple sources, including students and coordinators. Hence, this study utilizes multiple sources as well as multiple methods.

Through incorporating a survey into the data collection process, the researcher compares findings against qualitative data collection. Viewing data from different perspectives gives a check and balance system to corroborate findings and enhance the validity of the data (Denscombe, 1998) and the study. A data review does not prove the researcher is correct, but gives “some confidence that the meaning of the data has some consistency across methods and that the findings are not too closely tied up with a particular method used to collect the data” (p. 85).

Denscombe (1998) states some case study research tends to involve “protracted” involvement over time, which as a result of the researcher’s presence can lead to the “observer effect”. In other words, subjects being observed might behave and respond differently if they feel they are “under the microscope”. This effect in all likelihood could cause one to question the validity of the data. A multi-method process of data collection helps to minimize this.

Data were collected by using a tape recorder to record program participants’ responses. The data were transcribed by using a professional transcriber. The field log of

notes taken throughout the interview was used to maximize efficiency and accuracy of the data.

Reliability

Denscombe (1998) states “the use of statistics can give researchers additional credibility in terms of the interpretations they make and the confidence they have in their findings” (p.192). The reliability of the survey was pilot tested at one of the sites prior to administering it to other participants. Ten participants with various levels of disabilities provided information on their comprehension of language, clarity of the instructions, and comfort level of the instrument. In addition, the instrument was critiqued for consistency and comprehension by two researchers and twenty graduate-level research students prior to the pilot test.

The quantitative data were analyzed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The use of this software minimized human errors in statistical calculations. A Microsoft Word database was used to store and manage the data, as well as track the original origin of the source material.

A transcriber was used to transcribe audiotapes to increase the reliability of the study. Multiple listening of the audiotape and review of the transcripts by the researcher and transcriber was done to check the reliability of the data. In addition, the researcher’s field notes of site visits, document reviews, and interviews support the reliability of the data.

Two researchers (observers) reviewed the coding of the qualitative data (Gliner & Morgan, 2000). They reviewed the data and checked for reliability in coding. Findings were compared and a consensus was reached on the reliability of the process.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Description of Exceeding Expectations Programs and Services

Exceeding Expectations Project

The philosophical foundation of the Exceeding Expectations project (EEP) is “(a) providing multiple opportunities for collaboration between diverse groups, (b) promoting change via the self-determination of all participants through training and by allowing participants to choose how to best implement the model based upon their site needs, and (c) recognizing the societal and community values of successfully including persons with disabilities in postsecondary education” (Lehmann & Davies, 2001, p. 14). The major goals of the project are to assure individual sites create processes that welcome and facilitate student success, provide essential information to students, parents and educators to prepare for postsecondary education, and foster all involved staff members’ understanding of their responsibilities for serving students with disabilities (Lehmann & Davies, 2001, p. 9).

The project implements its goals through various modes: summer institutions, utility of products, and dissemination of resources. Since the inception of the grant, the EEP has sponsored yearly summer institutions for their site coordinators and support teams. To date, there have been three summer institutions. The purpose of summer institutions is to provide training and avenues for collaboration for project participants. EEP hopes individuals and sites benefit from the knowledge and experiences of others.

Summer institutions also provide overall cohesiveness, and to maintain effective administrative procedures, and demonstrate fiscal accountability. During the summer institutions, each site reports changes made in their programs, including: curriculum infused into secondary high schools, checklists for parents and students, and changes in transition planning procedures. In addition, the summer institutions contain project evaluation activities, dialogue opportunities, and training related to electronic networking activities.

Each site develops products for secondary and postsecondary education to create competent supportive environments for students with disabilities, parents, teachers, and staff. The products are designed to address the needs of the individual sites. Currently, EEP is working on developing two products useful for all sites. The first product is a video which entails clips from each site consisting of orientation information on available services and programs for students with disabilities and parents' and teachers' training programs. The second product, a student handbook for each site, includes "most asked questions", recommended strategies for successful college transition, and lists of local, state, and national resources available to postsecondary students with disabilities.

In addition to dissemination of information and products at the summer institutions, EEP has developed and disseminated a number of products nationally, including presentations at conferences, scholarly articles and dissertations. EEP maintains an Exceeding Expectations website as well. Currently, project participants have presented at seven conferences (State Community Education Centers' Conference, Association of Career and Technical Education Conference, Parents Educators' Conference, Department of Education Transition Conference, Deaf Itinerant Teachers' Conference, Vision

Teachers' Conference, and Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder (CHADD)—Ames Chapter Conference), published three articles (Lehmann, J.P., Davies, T.G., & Laurin, K., 2000; Lehmann, J.P., Davies, T.G. & Laurin, K.M., 2001; Quick, D., Lehmann, J., & Deniston, T., 2003) and published two dissertations linked to the project (Ankeny, E.M., 2003; Tobin, R., 2003). Three additional dissertations connected with EEP should be completed prior to December 2004. Additionally, the EEP website includes a listserv that connects to the various sites, updated project news, resources, staff names and contact information, project information, and local and national events.

Since each site has unique needs, every site does not require the same type of support from EEP. Some participants only attend summer institutions and use EEP website sources while other sites are funded to support training and product design. On an average, a maximum grant of \$7,000 is awarded to each site requesting funding to augment special programs and services, training, and product design.

Individual Sites

EEP includes sites at postsecondary institutions and the surrounding secondary schools sending students to them. However, this study only focuses on services for students with disabilities in eight postsecondary institutions: Black Hills State University, Colorado Mountain College, College of Southern Idaho, Idaho State University, Iowa Lakes Community College, Iowa State University, Pueblo Community College, and Northwest College. All eight institutions are in rural locations.

Black Hills State University (BHSU). Black Hills State University is a four-year postsecondary institution located in Spearfish, South Dakota. Student enrollment is approximately 3,873. Disability Services and Student Support Services operate in

conjunction with each other to provide comprehensive supports to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The Postsecondary Disability Coordinator at BHSU provides services to approximately ninety students. Comprehensive supports include: accommodations (alternate format, extended time, alternate setting), auxiliary aids (taped texts, note taker, interpreter, and calculator), and assistive technology (tutorial software, speech to text, text to speech, word prediction, screen magnifier, and adapted keyboard/mouse). In addition, the Student Support Services (SSS) offer students with disabilities academic and financial support to augment a successful college experience. To accomplish this goal, SSS develops a written Academic Plan for students with disabilities seeking assistance. The plan includes checkpoints, academic support needs, personal/social concerns, service needs, activity interests, and goals.

The Postsecondary Disability Coordinator works closely with Black Hills Special Services Cooperatives (BHSSC), the broker for transition services in the state that works with both rehabilitation services and high schools. EEP provides funding to one BHSSC program called *Catch the Wave*. The primary purpose of *Catch the Wave* is to familiarize high school students with postsecondary opportunities and campuses.

College of Southern Idaho (CSI). College of Southern Idaho is a two-year comprehensive community college located in Twin Falls, Idaho with an enrollment of approximately 5,500 students. Students eligible to receive disability services at CSI may select from a spectrum of services: education advising, admission and registration assistance, assistive technology, curriculum/academic modifications, Disability Support Staff, test/quiz accommodations, and classroom materials/alternate formats. CSI offers individualized services for students with disabilities who request such services.

According to the Student Disability Services Coordinator, the major goal of the Student Disability Services (SDS) at CSI is to build and maintain “partnerships with students, faculty, staff and administrators to promote an accessible, non-discriminatory learning, teaching and working environment that meets the needs and abilities of students with disabilities.” Her case load consists of seventy students with various disabilities.

Colorado Mountain College (CMC). Colorado Mountain College is a two-year postsecondary institution with three locations in the Colorado Rockies: Alpine Campus in Steamboat Springs, Roaring Fork Campus in Glenwood Springs, and Timberline Campus in Leadville. EEP provides support to the Alpine Campus in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Student enrollment at the Alpine Campus is approximately 3,000 students. The Special Populations Coordinator provides services for approximately 120 students with disabilities at the Alpine campus. The program at CMC is designed to improve student’s enhancement of basic skills and remove barriers in the classroom while preserving the integrity of course objectives. To receive services, students must have a documented disability and apply for services through the Special Population Coordinator. Special population support services include: extended test time, oral testing, books on tape, sign interpreter, note taker, tutoring, personal counseling, education advising, campus referral, community referral, student advocacy and other needed accommodations.

The Exceeding Expectation project provides funds to supplement *Colorado Mountain College Academic Summer Program in a Rocky Mountain Environment (ASPIRE)* for students with disabilities to improve academic skills prior to starting college. The program is a four-week curriculum designed to enhance students’ college placement tests, college prerequisite skills, and confidence needed to pursue

postsecondary opportunities. It provides professional instruction, tutoring, mentoring, and CMC college credit. Weekly environmental thematic units are planned for the summer program. Units include reading, writing, math, and study/self management skills. In addition, ASPIRE includes daily activities, fieldwork, guest speakers, and other hands-on academics.

Idaho State University (ISU). Idaho State University is a four-year university located in Pocatello, Idaho. Approximately 13,227 students are enrolled at ISU. The mission of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Disabilities Resource Center at ISU is to “increase access to all programs and services sponsored or funded by Idaho State University” by advocating equitable treatment for students with disabilities in every aspect of campus life (The Deaf/Hard of Hearing Student Handbook, p.1). The Disability Resource Center provides annual services to approximately 400 students with disabilities. The ADA and Disability Resource Center provides co-curricular and academically related services, including: staff interpreters and service providers, assistive technology, auxiliary aids, accommodations (academic adjustments; note taking, nonstandard test-taking, tape recorded lectures, priority registration, test proctors, textbook on tape, transcribers, etc.) and tutoring programs.

EEP provides funding to the *Blackfoot Transition Team (BTT)* at ISU. The program’s purpose is to develop a partnership between various organizations to enhance students’ with disabilities successful transition from high school to college. The Assistive Technology Coordinator indicates the group mentoring model is designed to benefit high school and university participants, enhance personal achievement and self-understanding,

and allow participants to explore postsecondary institutions while still dealing with their disabilities.

Iowa Lakes Community College (ILCC). Iowa Lakes Community College, a two-year postsecondary institution is located in Emmetsburg, Iowa. ILCC reports enrollment for full-time students is 1,472 and part-time student enrollment at 1,521. Qualified students with disabilities may access Special Services, which provide services such as tutoring, counseling, note taking, readers and special equipment can be provided. All services are based on requests for services and appropriate documentation provided by the student.

EEP provides financial assistance to the *Student Alternative Vocational Education (SAVE)* program at ISU. The Program Coordinator states the SAVE program is designed to support secondary students between the ages sixteen to twenty-one with current Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to meet transitional needs such as life skills and employability skills, and to develop or explore vocational skills. The program is jointly administered by Lakeland Area Education Agency and Iowa Lakes Community College. This program claims to be the gateway for students with disabilities to access and successfully transition to postsecondary vocational programs. It is the initial site of the EEP grant.

Iowa State University (ISU). Iowa State University, a four-year university, is located in Ames, Iowa. Over 25,280 undergraduate and graduate students are enrolled at ISU. According to the Manager of the Disability Resources (DR) at ISU, the program is dedicated to providing services to students with disabilities to improve their educational development as well as enhance their understanding and support within the campus

community. The Disabilities Resources center serves approximately 500 students with disabilities yearly. Services available to students with disabilities at ISU include: accessibility advice, referrals, academic accommodation requests, technology services, educational resources and programming, and career services. Additionally, DR assists students in locating readers, note-takers, sign interpreters, and personal assistants. DR operates in conjunction with the Academic Success Center (ACS) at ISU, which encompasses a collection of services and programs in one location, including: disability resources, the learning lab, presentations, Psychology 131, supplemental instructions and tutoring.

EEP provides funding to support a transition from a high school to college program through the DR services at ISU. The program trains qualified ISU students with disabilities to serve as mentors and coaches for high school students. Bi-weekly activities and quarterly socials at local high schools mentor students with disabilities and encourage them to pursue postsecondary opportunities. Additionally, EEP supports a mentoring program for students with disabilities at ISU which offers weekly or bi-weekly sessions where students work either in individualized sessions or in small groups with staff to handle disability or accommodation related issues. Management, organization skills, communication skills, handling requests and demands, and other issues facing students with disabilities are the focus of the sessions.

Pueblo Community College (PCC). Pueblo Community College, located in Pueblo, Colorado is a two-year co-educational institution. It is the most diverse of all EEP sites with an enrollment of approximately 4,626 students. PCC reports 65% of the students enrolled are female and 34% represent a minority (PCC, 2003). Services are

available at PCC for students with disabilities who seek them. Reasonable and appropriate accommodations are provided to students who identify themselves and furnish adequate documentation. The Disability Resource Specialist reports many accommodations are available at PCC including: accommodations for note taking (audio tape class sessions, laptop for note-taker, 20/20 pen, PCC note-taker, notes transcribed to Braille), alternate text format (audio tape text, Braille text, enlarged text, magnifier for reading text), assistive technology, modification of in-class handouts, accommodations for taking tests, service providers (sign language interpreter, tutor, classroom aide, note taker, reader, scribe), and assistive technology (Dragon Naturally Speaking, Dvorak keyboards, Ergonomic Track Marble, Intellikeys keyboard, JAWS for Windows, Kurzweil 1000, Kurzweil 3000, The Language Master, Microsoft Natural Keyboard, and Read and Write) (PCC, 2004).

PCC works closely with a transitional program called the *Community Transition House (CTH)*. CTH provides services to students with disabilities in grades 9-12 in Pueblo City's 60 school districts. Approximately 77 students are enrolled in the program. According to the Coordinator of Transition Programs at CTH, the program offers students hands-on real life experiences to enhance independent living skills (e.g. budgeting, meal planning, shopping, banking, etc.), pre-employment skills (e.g. applications, resumes, filing, phone skills, and interviews), employment skills (e.g., work attitudes, work ethics, co-worker relations), recreation and leisure skills, tutoring and remediation, sports activities, and academic/transition planning. The EEP provided financial support to PCC Disabilities Services to purchase assistive equipment and various tools and equipment to support students with disabilities at their institution.

Northwest College (NWC). Located in Powell, Wyoming in the Rocky Mountains, Northwest College is a small two-year institution totaling approximately 1,719 students. The Student Success Center at NWC houses services to address individual needs of students, including: disability services, career and personal counseling, adult student services, transfer information, multicultural services and crisis intervention, Project Succeed, student health services, and tutoring services. The Disability Services offer students with disabilities academic adjustments which include modifications to academic requirements and auxiliary aids and services, such as: priority registration, reduced course load, course substitutions, note takers, recording devices, sign language interpreters, extended time for testing, assistive technology, adaptive software and/or hardware. According to the Director of Student Success Programs at NWC, approximately 80 students use Disabilities Services' resources each semester.

Focus Group Discussions

Summary of Findings

Focus groups were used to elicit data regarding students' transitional experiences to better examine services and activities available to them. During the course of the study, nine focus group discussions were conducted which represented seven EEP sites. Typically, group sizes ranged from three to eleven students with disabilities. The focus group discussions produced more than 180 pages of transcribed data.

Initially, data from each focus group were analyzed independently of each other. The data were coded line-by-line using the Constant Comparative Analysis process. Although the students interviewed had different experiences and backgrounds, similar themes were found in the focus group discussions and coordinators' personal interviews.

Seven themes were generated from the focus group discussions data. The themes were:

- (1) Lack of understanding of disability, (2) Lack of preparation, (3) Parental influence, (4) Perseverance and self-motivation, (5) Problems receiving accommodations, (6) Anxiety about college, and (7) Financial barriers.

In the first theme, students shared the lack of understanding many people have of their disabilities. This theme was the most prevalent. In some cases, students attributed people's lack of understanding of various disabilities to ignorance, lack of training, refusal to accept differences, unwillingness to understand, and prejudices. There were many heart wrenching stories told by students about negative experiences resulting from others' lack of understanding of their disabilities. Table 5 presents some of their stories.

Table 5

Theme 1--Focus Group Discussions

Theme 1: LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF DISABILITY

None of these people had any experience with this. They had never dealt with chronic fatigue immune deficiency before. They had never dealt with fibromyalgia before. They had dealt with people in wheel chairs, on crutches, cancer... all the more common diseases. The chronic fatigue was something new and foreign, something they tried to pigeonhole into something else. When they couldn't make a square peg fit into a round hole, they threw up their hands.

If people can't see your disability, they assume its not there or that you're exaggerating. I had to actually take my advisor to the mat on this one because she was trying to convince me to stay in my chemistry class, that I could just work my way through it. She is a microbiology professor and explaining to her that this was not my imagination, but that this was an actual problem even though there are no definable small bacteria to take care of the explanation that took a long time to convince. The prejudice on it being called yuppie flu for about a dozen years is something I still have to break barriers on because that's actually what she referred to it as.

(table continued)

Table 5 (continued)

Having a genetic bone disorder that no one has ever heard of sucks. You try to explain to people and I'm thankful the movie *Unbreakable* came out because there's a character that Samuel Jackson plays. He breaks. So if people have seen the movie, I can say, hey I'm like the guy in *Unbreakable* and people understand. But my advisors at my college, unfortunately we only have one because the department isn't that large. He told me flat out that I was lying and he refused me a medical drop. I broke my leg. I knew I had broken it and the doctors couldn't prove it because it took them nine months to diagnose that my leg was completely broken in half. The muscle was holding it together. I have this incredibly high pain tolerance and it was effecting me, which means there's something wrong. So I needed to drop out of college. I told him this. He needed a letter from my doctor but my doctor was on vacation. I had this team of surgeons but he was my main contact. Well his backup was this guy from hell who I had seen a couple of times but I know find this guy totally incompetent. I wrote a letter saying that it was my left arm or something that I had problems with when in fact it was my right leg. So because of that, my advisor no longer believes me. To this day, he does not actually believe that I have a physical disorder so he gave me that medical drop.

I've had lots of different experiences. Overall, it's been really positive. It's just that people don't know. They just don't understand. I found that maybe the international students didn't understand the concept of why a person would be typing for me. They would think that person was a participant in the class. One guy couldn't understand why I couldn't understand him but I could have a conversation with my friend. When he says something to me, I can't understand. Or one time this guy got upset because there was one extra person in the classroom. I had to explain that they were typing for me. I had to take Organic Chemistry four semesters when I should have only taken it in two. I needed to focus on what's being drawn on the board, the chemical formulas. I do remember going to that class the first day and the professor had her arm in a brace. I gave her the microphone and she was like, I already have enough stuff on you, I can't wear that. I just walked out. When I came back, she said, I didn't think you were going to walk out. I was like, what was I suppose to do. I'm not going to sit here and not have a lecture or anything. That kind of taught her a lesson.

(table continued)

Table 5 (continued)

They thought I was a freak because I wore hearing aids. I had my own little group of friends. One had epilepsy and another had multiple sclerosis and another had polio. They didn't accept us because we were different. Now that's not quite the case anymore.

My peers were mean and called me retarded. High school was really hard. I didn't want to go and I hated it but during my junior year, I didn't care. I knew they didn't know what they were talking about. It took a while to get over it. They were really mean to me. My parents told me not to listen to them but it was hard not to.

They gave me a lot of crap in high school about going to another world. I would just blow it off but sometimes it got overwhelming. It affected my grades somewhat but not to the point where I was failing because of people telling me that I'm dumb. It was like that in high school but I haven't seen any of that in college. They don't care and there is more important stuff to worry about. It's like day and night opposite than high school.

Whenever I tell people my disability, brain injury, they always immediately assume it's like a broken leg where you can just work around it. You can work around it but it's always going to be there.

ADHD is not taken seriously as a diagnosis, especially in women. It's mislabeled as depression. A lot of them are facing the issue where they are trying to get medication and the doctors believe they just want the drugs. Just this whole stigma around medications and not believing and being labeled as depressed and junkies.

I had a problem but I never told anybody. I was talking in class one day and the teacher said, "I can't understand what she's saying, can somebody tell me what she just said?" He said that in front of the whole class.

Lack of preparation, the second theme, was reported in all focus group discussions. A majority of students who participated in focus group discussions did not take advanced or college preparatory courses in high school. Repeatedly, students related their high school classes were not challenging and did little to prepare them for college, especially for mathematics and writing. Additionally, students used terminology such as "watered-down", "dumb, dumb, math", "too easy", and "slide through classes" to describe their secondary classes. See Table 6 below.

Table 6

Theme 2--Focus Group Discussions

Theme 2: LACK OF PREPARATION

All of my problems are in math. This teacher didn't know what to do with me. It took me three years to learn multiplications and divisions. I did not have to take remedial math. I slept my way through the ACT. They mainstreamed you in the 70's and early 80's. When they mainstreamed you, they just kind of let you go by. You got your C's and B's. If you got an F, they'd up it to a C- or D and they'd let you slide.

My teachers let me slide through classes. I had some teachers who wanted me to succeed, go on and make it through college and they were more than willing to give me oral exams or give me extra time on the test. But I also had teachers who would say not to worry about the test. Then there were others who said not to bother because I wasn't going to make it.

There was nothing to help me transition into college and I had to kind of feel myself around blindly, trying to figure out.

The teacher never did any English with me for four years. I kept telling them that I wanted to learn how to write sentences but the teacher never gave me any help. The focus was mainly on math and the social sciences.

During my junior and senior years in high school, my English classes were pretty much jokes. There weren't any writing classes. My high school was like college where you go in and pick the teacher you wanted and what time you wanted and what day you wanted. You didn't have to go to school from 8-3 everyday. You could go in whenever you wanted. My senior year, I went from 8-10:30 and I was done.

Dumb, dumb math is for people who choose after three years of high school math that they don't want to take pre-calculus or trigonometry or algebra II. So a lot of people would take consumer math, which is dividend, interest, and compound interest, simple stuff you should have learned back in algebra I or geometry. Its very easy and an easy A. Learn not to go for the easy A but take the harder courses. It takes more time and effort but it's worth it in the end because you're further ahead than other people.

Geometry wasn't easy. It was just because I didn't have a very strong finance and math background when I left high school. When I came here, I just needed the basic levels. They offer free tutoring and really helps having someone one on one helping you out.

(table continued)

Table 6 (continued)

I graduated from alternative school, and the only reason I got a 2.2 cumulative GPA was because alternative school just gives you the A. You don't have to try hard.

I wasn't prepared. I expected to fail. In fact, I'm very surprised I haven't. The students and staff have been extremely supportive.

I wasn't prepared for Math and English. History was no problem but I was behind in math. I had to start at the bottom and work my way up.

The third theme, parental influence, was common in every focus group discussion. Almost all students cited their parents as being the most important factor in their decision to pursue college. Additionally, many students indicated their parents were the primary reason they received services and/or accommodations in high school. Other relevant support groups were teachers, family members, and friends. Refer to Table 7 for examples.

Table 7

Theme 3--Focus Group Discussions

Theme 3: PARENTAL INFLUENCE

I grew up believing I could do anything. My parents said that I could do anything I want to do.

My father really helped me a lot. He taught me that the only way to know how to do something is to believe that you can do it.

When college came around, it wasn't actually a choice for me. It was expected in my family that you go to college, so my parents helped me with the enrollment process, but I mean, there was no one to help me decide stuff for college because it was expected and that's what you did if you were a part of my family. My family is chalked full of teachers, so yea it was expected of me. By the time you had graduated, it was expected that you had picked a college.

(table continued)

Table 7 (continued)

My parents would ask me, what are your plans for college? They really encouraged it but my mom didn't go to college and my dad went but he dropped out. They couldn't say to me, oh yeah you have to go because this is what is expected. It was more like, if they didn't go, they were trying to get us to go but they didn't want to pressure us into thinking that it is your only option. My counselor helped me a lot but my parents were the first to support me. They were the first to say, it's really important for you to go to college. They explained to me what might happen if I didn't go to college opposed to what might happen if I did go to college.

My mother never got the chance to go to college and she wanted me to be the first person in our family to get a chance to go to college, and I really wanted to go. She sat down with me and said that I probably should go to college because she thought that I have good emphasis in counseling and that I would be good at it.

My parents have always been really supportive of me, trying to expand myself into doing as much as I can to prepare myself.

They (my parents) didn't want me to rely on others; they never gave me any other option.

My parents told me to either do this or to go to college to pursue something further. They inspired me to go to college right after high school. That was four years ago.

My parents... They pretty much said that I had to get a job or go to college.

At the beginning I thought it was weird because I always had my mom do all that stuff or the school would do that for me. Then I got into college and I realized that I couldn't count on mom anymore and that I'd have to do it on my own.

Perseverance and self-motivation, the fourth theme, emerged from the data. This theme demonstrated students' "will to succeed". While many students appeared to receive inspiration from their parents, others were clearly self-motivated to succeed. Although most all students had negative experiences to share regarding others' lack of understanding and/or prejudices toward them, they articulated their refusal to let others' perceptions or biases stand in the way of accomplishing their goals. See Table 8 below.

Table 8

Theme 4 --Focus Group Discussions

Theme 4: PERSERVANCE AND SELF-MOTIVATION

When someone tells me I can't do it, that motivates me even more to prove to them that I can do it and I not only can but I will succeed. No matter what they say, I will do it. It might take longer than most but I will do it.

I'm stubborn and I refuse to let the chronic fatigue dictate what I do. I've had a lot of problems but I've decided that that's what (college) I want to do and I'm going to find a way to do it.

I sat down and I thought, well, is this (college) going to work for me? Am I going to be able to get through this? Am I going to be able to get all of this work done? I got down on myself the other day thinking about it, and I thought to myself that I don't know if I'm ever going to be able to do this. I then looked at myself and said, you know what, you can do it.

I hate it when people tell me I can't do something because then it makes me want to do it even more. It increases my motivation. I will go at it until I actually succeed in doing what I want. I'll push my way through. I've been in school for ten years. I'm just taking it one step at a time.

If I fail a class, I don't like to show the instructor that. I hate failure. Sometimes failure is good in certain aspect. You can always come back and improve on it and succeed. I want to show the instructor that I'm not a failure but that I'm going to keep going until I pass.

I've learned that you have to rely on yourself before you learn to rely on others. You learn how to do things by yourself first before having other people doing things for you. I known for most of my life that when I have to do things by myself, I have to believe in myself and actually do what I want to do. ..Just follow your dreams.

There is no shame. We're our own self-advocate. We need to go out and learn to do these things ourselves and be independent. That's something that each one of us wants to be. We want to take care of ourselves. I tried everything that the college has to offer and there is no program to help me with my disability. I have to figure it out on my own.

I just think over the years I've always had to struggle but I've always made it. If I put my mind to something, I know I can do it. I kind of discovered it myself but my parents did help me.

I've gotten a lot better over time, other people's perceptions of me used to bother me a lot but now I've learned not to care because it's not their life, it's mine. If they don't understand me, it's their loss, not mine.

The fifth theme, problems receiving accommodations, was an issue widely shared by focus group students. Many students initially had problems receiving accommodations and/or services in college because they were unaware of how to receive services. Some expected the same types of services as in high school and others expected not to have to initiate the needed services. In some cases, students experienced problems with instructors providing accommodations established by the Disabilities Services. However, their Disability Resource Counselors generally advocated for needed services. As a result, most students indicated their counselors were the most important resource they had in their postsecondary institutions. See Table 9 for examples.

Table 9

Theme 5---Focus Group Discussions

Theme 5: PROBLEMS RECEIVING ACCOMODATIONS

The one thing I've had to wrestle with professors is that they'll stick me in rooms where there are three other people and you can hear their papers rustling and I hear everything. It's taken a lot to explain that to professors. A distraction free room means I need to be by myself, preferably not even with a moderator. I'll leave all my junk in the office. I'll leave everything outside, just please don't put me in there with another person. Often with exams, if it's like an essay type question or short answer, I'll like get up and walk around the room or do stuff just to get the blood flowing again really helps. That's why I like the distraction free room.

Upon returning after my accident, I encountered barriers through disability resources in getting the accommodations I needed. You have documentations. You have to have a letter from a doctor, which I don't really have. I don't know a lot about this though because my mother was my conservator and guardian at the time. She did a lot of that stuff for me.

I thought my freshman year here would be easy. I thought the classes would be all accommodated. Unfortunately they weren't. One of the elevators sounds like a dying cat when you're trying to go down. The first couple of days I went down on the elevator to my biology but the rest of the time, I stayed at the top. When you stay at the top, there isn't a table and you sit next to the garbage.

(table continued)

Table 9 (continued)

They do provide accommodations for me, but it just took a lot to get anything done. Some of the teachers wouldn't cooperate and because I had been diagnosed with several disabilities at a young age, they didn't catch the math at a young age, they didn't bother going back and trying to see if there was anything else wrong.

I would say that professors need to believe you. I have a disability. I'm pretty forthright, if someone wants to ask me a question, I'll answer it. I'm fairly open in talking about stuff but when they just assume that I'm lying, I can't get accommodations.

When I came here as a freshman, I told them that I have this bone disorder and that I break easily. It didn't register and they put me on the third floor. I broke my leg. No elevator. You can't use the elevator in H because it is freight only and there are some lawsuits. Whenever I was on crutches, I'd go to my room four or five times a day because I'd have classes spaced out. That's three and a half flights of stairs on crutches, which was a pain in the butt. Two years on third floor and finally I got moved to F where they put me on a handicap accessible floor and get moved out to F Court which is campus apartments, third floor. They have an elevator but when the elevator breaks, I'm suppose to call maintenance, tell them the elevator is broken, then call DPS and report myself as a fire hazard. If I don't notify them, then apparently I'm at fault for being the fire hazard on the third floor. They're going to arrest me one of these days for being like a fire starter because I'm reporting myself.

I've had mostly by far good accommodations. There has been one particular professor. One time I took an exam and made arrangements with the professor. I get to the room and there are eight other people in there. I looked at him and said, I get privacy room for tests but he told me I had to go with it. He made me take the test that way. I told my counselor and from then on, I had private tests. So my first exam I didn't do very well because of that.

In chemistry, there is a lab. Unfortunately the tables were always up too high. For chemistry, you couldn't do that and I always had to have my lab partners tell me what was happening above my head. That was okay for doing the lab reports but when you're actually suppose to do the experiments by yourself, that became a bad deal. I do believe that they may be installing lower chemistry lab tables and the biology course I'm taking now have a lower station.

I went to voc rehab but they weren't there to help me the way I needed help. They were there to help me financially.

I went to an advocate here in the dean of students. They shuttled me over to voc rehab who said they couldn't do anything for me, expect for like give me money. So they shuttled me over to disability resources. That's how I got hooked up with disability resources and my accommodations.

The sixth theme, anxiety about college, was revealed in the data. Primarily, students experienced anxieties of attending postsecondary institutions because of fear of the unknown. The most common anxieties students shared include: fear of not having friends, fear of acceptance, and fear of larger campuses. The most thriving students in the focus group discussions gave the impression they found ways to overcome their anxieties. Refer to Table 10 for supporting quotes.

Table 10

Theme 6 (Focus Group Discussions)

Theme 6: ANXIETY ABOUT COLLEGE

I didn't go to high school. I didn't even attend high school except for two days in ninth grade. To start, I was intimidated by postsecondary education. Even though I had worked with the financial aid process with my kids and wife, I still didn't understand how it applied to me. There were quite a few people who thought I shouldn't go to college because I did make quite a bit of money before I came here. So I faced some community resistance. The biggest problem was that I was afraid I couldn't achieve. And I did have some social problems.

There's no real way to understand what you're doing when you're headed into the unknown.

I had some fears of making new friends. It was kind of nerve racking, but I did have some support.

To me there was definitely a fear of having to drop out for health reasons or falling behind in classes because of some sort of cognitive problem. It's quite frequent when I get overstressed and over tired. So I was very much afraid that I would spend the money, come here, do the entire stressful thing, and basically get nothing out of it.

I came from a very small town. The dormitory that was the same size as my hometown. So that kind of freaked me out. If you just don't think about it, you'll be fine. That wasn't really so much a fear because I adjusted quickly.

I prefer knowing what is going to happen. And to me, uncertainty is huge for me to handle it.

(table continued)

Table 10 (continued)

My step-mother and brother really teased me about the way I talk, so if I don't know you, I don't really speak up because I'm scared.

I think my only fear about college or technical school is that there is going to be a lot of hard work. Also, that the teachers in college can get strict.

I tend to be a little more nervous. I tend to look at things and wonder if I can handle it. It's a weird mental thing.

All of my teachers told me in high school, college is a lot of reading. And that was one of the fears that I had, but it wasn't enough to stop me from coming. I didn't get diagnosed until after my second year in college I got diagnosed with dyslexia. I kind of feel like now when things come up, I hesitate more now than I used to.

The final theme, financial barriers, seemed to be an important obstacle for many students. Students were concerned about funding needed for special services/resources, medical needs, transportation, housing, and special equipment to enhance learning.

Several students indicated most of the financial aid they received was based on a traditional four-year college completion schedule. For some students, this created a major issue because generally it takes longer for them to complete course requirements. This can be attributed to not being prepared for rigorous courses, needing to take prerequisite classes, and/or having to repeat classes several times prior to successfully completing a course. Table 11 provides supporting quotes.

Table 11

Theme 7---Focus Group Discussions

Theme 7: FINANCIAL BARRIERS

The only one I encountered when I came to campus was that I actually was offered an assistantship in the disability resources office as a grad student. I found out that whatever I would get paid there would automatically come off my financial aid, so I would have to have another job to support having that job.

I'm definitely going to be looking for financial aid next year. My parents do have enough money tucked away to cover it for four to six years but with vet school, I'm definitely going to have to look for financial aid. One reason I took the more advanced classes in high school is that I'm now getting \$3500 off financial aid just for doing very well in high school. It was unplanned but a very nice decrease in the bill.

It's not tuition only. If I want insurance, it's \$800 plus for this year. That doesn't cover any prescriptions. There is a \$1500 deductible before they cover a lot of things. There's not necessarily help for that. If I were a TA, they'd cover a certain amount. Rehab is not in the habit of doing ongoing meds. They have done it for a few months for me. This month, they are cutting me off their list. I have one final meeting but essentially I was cut off August 31st. In fact, they weren't going to help me with tuition this semester. Being a grad student, there is no Pell grant. Although I will give the voc rehab credit. I didn't have time to research this and she volunteered to do that for me. The bottom line is, there's that money issue all over again. If I graduate in December, I still have to pay a full year. If you start in the fall, you don't have an option.

Money has become such an issue with colleges so the only way to help students out is to maybe make a free tutoring type of thing.

This school doesn't cost as much as other colleges and being a college student, you pay thousands of dollars to go to school a year and to go to a school where you get everything you need pretty much set for you is pretty neat. Whereas, if I were to go to a bigger university, I know I'd probably quit right now because I wouldn't have the money. I think its ridiculous how much people have to pay to go to school.

In my family, once you hit eighteen, you're on your own. So, any school I ever went to was going to be paid for solely by myself.

table continued)

Table 11 (continued)

I had some problems with attention in money management since I've moved. You know, why can't I get the hang of this? Are you stupid? What's going on? Well, finding that I have attention deficit disorder was a reason for all of these things financially. It was nice to have an explanation for some of the things like yes I blew all the money in my checking account in high school. It's nice to have an explanation for okay, I have poor money management skills but at the same time, it's like a double edge thing.

I needed a lot of help to trying to figure out supplemental security income, supplemental disability income, vocational rehab, Medicare, Medicaid and what each one pays for. The paperwork you have to fill out is like an essay. I wish it could be more centralized in that capacity.

They say that my parents make too much money but I pay for my own college. They changed it (age) to 24 because everyone was saying that they were independent but they really weren't. You have to be 24 years old, married before you can get that (financial aid).

Money is a barrier because I think I'll be here more than four years. It's expensive.

Response to Research Questions

The second part of the research was to explore the extent to which the EEP was meeting its objectives. In other words, are evaluation issues addressed by the data collection? Although the project maintains records regarding transition activities and services, this research specifically links students' perceptions to the grant outcomes. The focus group discussion addresses all five of the research questions. This section will respond to each of these questions.

Research Question One: To what extent have the Exceeding Expectations Grant project staff delivered as they stated they would?

Two focus group questions 6 and 7 were aligned to the first research question. Question 6 examines the types of services and accommodations students with disabilities

received from their institutions. Question 7 examines students' level of satisfaction with various services received. Students' responses verified they received various academic accommodations, auxiliary aids, assistive technology, counseling, tutoring, and other services as identified in site descriptions. Many students acknowledged their Disability Resources Counselor as being an important part in their successful transition to college. A vast majority of the students who participated in the focus groups indicated they were very satisfied or at the least, satisfied with the services delivered by the Disability Resources Services. In addition, students shared with the researcher their involvement in various activities funded by EEP. Although the majority of students were not aware of EEP support and funding to their institution, they verified various activities/services and/or equipment funded by EEP did exist at their institutions.

Research Question Two: How effectively has each site implemented the stated programs?

Focus group questions 11 and 12 speak to the second research question. Question 11 asks students to discuss specific experiences, positive or negative, regarding their disability-related access with faculty at their institution. Question 12 gives students an opportunity to share any information they think would be helpful for faculty and staff, students, and EEP to better provide services to students with disabilities. Although students' responses to these questions do not provide conclusive evidence to how effectively each site implements their programs, student responses indicate satisfaction with EEP funded programs and activities. A supporting example is observed in the following statement:

“For me it was definitely the Aspire Program that taught me time management

which is very important. I found that out the hard way my second year here. I wasn't writing things down and I forgot a lot of things that I had to get done, then I sat down with.... (Disability Resources Counselor). I thought that (ASPIRE) was pretty cool because of the fact that we had to do our work and once we got our work done, we were able to do something fun" (Focus Group, Colorado Mountain College, October 30, 2003).

Research Question Three: Have student outcomes changed as a result of the Exceeding Expectations project?

None of the focus group questions directly evaluate students' outcome as a result of EEP. Yet, question 8 asks students to identify important help received from their college; this question indirectly addresses change in students' outcome. Tutoring was specifically identified by many students as changing their performance in classes. The following statements by students during focus group discussions illustrate their perceptions about the benefits of tutoring:

"I would say the tutors helped me through my general classes and I figured out that I could actually do the work. They gave me the confidence to go on. I think that if you come in and couldn't pass the general classes, the one hundred levels, you probably wouldn't keep going (Focus Group, Black Hills State University, April 2004)".

"Since last January, I had difficulty understanding all of my work (math, English, vocabulary, and spelling classes). I found a tutor who has been working with me for about two months. That really makes a difference with my understanding (Focus Group, College of Southern Idaho, April 2004)".

Additionally, students talked about the effectiveness of academic adjustments and accommodations on improving their class performance. Several students discussed how the use of Palm Pilots greatly enhanced their organization and planning skills by helping them to stay on task and turn classroom assignments in on time. Palm pilots were funded by the EEP.

Research Question Four: What are the most effective support services and strategies for teachers and staff members to use to help students with disabilities successfully transition from high school to postsecondary institutions?

Focus group questions 3, 4, 8, and 9 explore the effectiveness of services and strategies for teachers and staff members to help students transition from high school to postsecondary institutions. The most effective resources and/or services identified by students in their transition from high school to college include: parents, teachers, counselors, special education classes, technical classes (computer and other vocational classes), college prep classes, mainstream classes in regular education, Advanced Placement classes, assistive technology, accommodations, tutors, interpreters, and learning centers. Students reported the following skills were essential in a successful transition to college: mathematic, writing, reading, English, science, study skills, and time management. The most difficult subject area identified by many students was mathematics. Many students attributed their lack of preparation for college to “watered-down” classes in high school and a lack of college preparatory classes. Overwhelmingly, students articulated the lack of challenge in their high school curriculum. Only a few students indicated they had taken college-prep or advanced courses in high school. Students stated the most helpful resource for students in college include: disability services, Vocational Rehabilitation, and counseling services. A majority of students received accommodations including: note taker, extended time-on-tests, separate testing room, priority registration, adaptive equipment, and textbooks on tape.

Research Question Five: What are the major concerns of students with disabilities in the transition from high school to postsecondary institutions?

Focus group question 10 addresses this research question by asking students to discuss barriers they have encountered in completing their postsecondary education.

Focus group students indicated concerns regarding passing classes (especially Math and English), money issues and the lack of financial aid to fund extended years in college, medical problems, receiving appropriate accommodations, lack of understanding and training in students' disabilities, parking issues, and accessible room and equipment.

Table 12 provides supporting quotes from the focus group discussions.

Table 12

Supporting Focus Group Discussion Quotes

Passing classes	I'd go to the tutor to get help but nobody could help me through it. I got like D's on all of my papers. I'd go through different steps to get better at it and nothing changed. I ended up just getting a D in the course. I tried to retake it again this summer and I still didn't do good. To me there was definitely a fear of having to drop out for health reasons or falling behind in classes because of some sort of cognitive problem. It's quite frequent when I get overstressed and over tired. So far it hasn't happen. I have had to drop one class to try and keep up with the other four that I have and that seems to be working.
Money issues	This school doesn't cost as much as other colleges and being a college student, you pay thousands of dollars to go to school a year and to go to a school where you get everything you need. Whereas if I were to go to a bigger university, I know I'd probably quit right now because I wouldn't have the money. I think its ridiculous how much people have to pay to go to school. Money because I think I'll be here more than four years. It's expensive.

(table continued)

Table 12 (continued)

Medical problems	For me it's medical. I have manic depression and was taking the wrong medication. It makes it hard to focus and getting suicidal is kind of scary. I seem to be doing better now though.
Over Accommodations	I had one professor who was over accommodating. He like gave it away too much. He gave me excessive time. It was just kind of funny. Once in a blue moon you'll find someone who goes over board. It's like him opening up the door for me and pulling out the chair for me. I can do that myself.
Understanding students' disabilities	My disability is definitely more visible than yours. Here in college, maybe because people are more mature, I've had people open the door for me. I've had people ask me if I need help. I've had some warm thoughts but I've also had the glares. I usually don't get labeled but I go into the mall shopping, I see people staring. People talk loud because they think you're deaf. They talk slow because they think you're slow. Then people will talk to my boyfriend and not me even though I'm the one who's handing them the credit card or the money.
Parking issues	I have one issue about the handicap parking. You can park in the vendors' space for two hours. You can park at a parking meter no more than two hours and then there are the handicap spaces, which is also two hours. So many of our handicap spaces on campus have been reserved full-time twenty-four hours a day for faculty or staff. As I understand, the faculty and staff are demanding more of them. I have to have reserved space. Every time there's construction, the spaces taken are the handicap spaces for construction vehicle only. The handicap parking spaces are horrible. Other than finding the parking spaces, they aren't big enough. I require that my door swings completely open so I can assemble and disassemble my wheel chair.

(table continued)

Table 12 (continued)

Accessible class rooms & equipment

I learned that bathrooms have always been an issue for me. I had a three hour lab my first semester and unfortunately there was no handicap restroom. So if I needed to go to the bathroom, I went across the parking lot [nearby dorm]. This was a problem because I was running out of my lab in snowy weather, but then an accessible bathroom was installed.

Usually I'm sitting behind all the other chairs. In chemistry, there is a lab. Unfortunately the tables were always up too high.

Individual Student Interviews

Summary of Findings

Two separate individual interviews were conducted at two different sites. The data are extracted from approximately ten pages of dialog collected from individual interviews. The researcher analyzed the data and carefully selected key points to represent students' stories. The data are presented in a narrative format instead of themes to let the students' voices be heard.

The students were interviewed to get a more comprehensive understanding of their experiences as individuals with disabilities and their transition experiences from high school to postsecondary institutions. Both students interviewed are enrolled at a two year community college. These students volunteered to tell the researcher more about their experiences as individuals with disabilities. Names of the participants are deleted to protect their identities. Both interviews revealed students with strong characters who overcame extreme obstacles in a world not always kind to those with differences. In the first interview, a student born in Mexico shared the challenges he faced as an individual

born deaf who had to learn how to communicate in a foreign land. As with the other students with disabilities in this study, he also dealt with ridicule from his peers and insults from people who did not understand him. Yet, his story is unique because he did not attend traditional school, did not speak or write English or Spanish until he was in his mid-teens, and could not communicate his needs. Below is his story.

Student Interview 1

I live in American Falls, Idaho but I was born in Mexico. I came here (United States) in 1997. I was born deaf. I could communicate with my family fine. I understood what they were saying and what they were doing and I could hear them if they were close enough. I didn't go to school. So I learned how to butcher cattle for a trade. There was a lot of bad treatment there. I took a lot of abuse because I didn't go to school. I have three brothers that are deaf as well. At about eight or nine, they asked God to help them hear and it seemed like maybe they regain some of their hearing. In 1995, I went to a private ceremony at church. Neither of my brothers wanted to go but I did. I think it did improve my hearing and I told my brothers about it. They didn't use hearing aids or have speech. I however did have some speech and had hearing aids. They refused hearing aids but I accepted hearing aids to help me.

When I was 13, we moved to the U.S. and I didn't know anything. I wanted to go to public school because I could use my voice and I could hear a little bit but my mother sent me to the deaf and blind school in Gooding. The school was very small. The majority of them (students) are deaf and some are blind. I enjoyed the school but I'm not really deaf. I'm hard of hearing so I could use my voice some. It was really a different situation. I went there not knowing any English. I didn't know any sign. I couldn't write. I was very shy and quiet. 1997 was my first exposure to English. I had no way to communicate. I just learned as I went. It was a real communication barrier because they didn't speak any Spanish. They didn't know Spanish and they wanted me to learn sign language and they wanted me to turn my voice off and develop those skills and become part of the deaf community while I was there. I didn't know how to behave in a school. I didn't know what to do. They would tell me things but I didn't know any sign language. I didn't know any written Spanish or English. When the teacher wanted to tell me something, I had no idea what they were telling me. I would ask the teachers to use their voice when they were teaching me. The students were all deaf so many of the teachers didn't use their voice when they were teaching. But I wanted to hear the words. I wanted more English. When I had interviews with bosses, I knew that we would have to communicate back and forth and I wanted more speech so that I would be able to be in those interviews. But the teachers often didn't use their speech when they were teaching. They would just use sign language. So they started with very

simple pictures and words. I learned signing and English and some Spanish sign language as well. The students taught me and I just learned by being immersed. It was very frustrating. It was a very hard struggle. The teacher said if I had hearing aids, I probably could have learned written Spanish. I started using a hearing aid in 1997 and I stopped in 1999. I wore two hearing aids. I got a lot of teasing from my peers and they said that if I wore a hearing aid, they wouldn't be my friend. Most people insulted me and say that I'm stupid because I can't hear. That frustrated and made me upset because they saw my hearing aid, so I took them off so they wouldn't know. That stops the insults but then I can't hear. I haven't worn hearing aids for a long time. Now I want them.

Then coming to college was much different than high school, having to learn new things all over again. I'm the first one in my family to go to college. My mom told me that it was my decision on whether to go to college. I decided to go to college because hearing and learning more English and writing could be really important for my future and my job. I thought that people would look down on me because I was wearing hearing aids but I have found that since I've been here at [college] that just about everybody is trying to learn. The ESL group that I work with now uses their voices and that helps me. When I get my hearing aids, I will be able to monitor my speech better. I will be able to hear my speech and therefore be able to monitor it better.

The second student interviewed is unique in that he did not know until his mid-thirties that he had a disability. His story is one of violence and perseverance. He shared being kicked out of kindergarten, violent escapades, sympathy for his classmates who had to tolerate his behavior, and how he turned his life around to survive. In addition, he shared his views on education in general and on mainstreaming students with disabilities in regular classes. His story is one of transformation and fortitude. Below is his story.

Student Interview 2

I was very socially handicapped. I was kicked out of kindergarten after two hours on my first day for fighting. I was extremely violent. I carried a gun to middle school. I should have not been in the classroom. No way in hell should I have been in the classroom. I should have not even been in the school. It was not safe for the other students. I think of all the people I inhibited from learning because of my presence. Fortunately it worked out for most of us. It worked out for me. I hope I didn't deter anybody else from learning to the extent that it affected the rest of their life.

I think that mainstreaming is not necessarily the best idea but there needs to be a happy median between mainstreaming and segregation. Had I received the assistance that I needed, I might have adjusted better socially. Most of my problems are social adjustment and I don't think it does everybody a service to mainstream some students. Had I been taken out of the classroom and dealt with on an individual basis, I would have adjusted far better I'm sure. There needs to be someone to assess them, to determine which one to mainstream and which one not to mainstream. That's not happening. We're trying to make everybody fit the same mold. As I've heard people say, disability is a mold. You don't have the same disabilities. I see that time and time again with a lot of the students. Had they been able to specifically target what that student needed instead just lumping them into the disability program, they would have succeeded far better. So they (teachers) should determine what the student really needs instead of putting everybody in the same box.

I didn't go to high school. I did attend high school for two days in ninth grade. They tried to put me in prison twice before I was eighteen back in the 70's. I was intimidated by secondary education. I was working since I was twelve years old. I dropped out in the ninth grade and took the GED test. I think the GED test was far too easy. It took me half the time it normally takes people. That level of education no way prepared me for college. Had I gone to college directly after that, I would have failed miserably. I really think it is a disservice to allow someone to think that they are up to speed when they are not. I then went to work and then went to the military a few years after that. I'm actually retired after twenty-eight years of service.

My wife encouraged me to go to college. My former probation officer also pushed me to go to college. He and I are still very good friends. Every time I talked to him after I retired, he would say something encouraging. There were quite a few people who thought I shouldn't go to college because I did make quite a bit of money before I came here. So I faced some community resistance. The biggest problem I faced was that I was afraid I couldn't achieve. I wasn't prepared for college. I expected to fail. In fact, I'm very surprised I haven't. I go to school with two of my kids also. I'm waiting for the speeches about the bad grades, so I've got to keep my grades up. I don't want to hear my words repeated back to me.

Even though I had worked with the financial aid process with my kids and wife, I still didn't understand how it applied to me. I also have extreme ADHD. And I still have some social problems. It was identified when I was about 33-34 years old. They tell me it's severe enough that I could have drawn social security disability. My wife is a school counselor. She helped me come to the realization that I did have a problem and how to work with it, and about accommodations. I did not have the concept of accommodations until I came here. She explained the difference between accommodations and modifications. The students and staff have been extremely supportive. The math classes were hard for me even though I'm very well versed in math. I did a lot of trigonometry and algebra in the

military. I worked as a radiation protection officer and also as a fire control officer, but I learned only the very specific pieces that I needed to do to perform my work. Therefore I have huge holes in my knowledge. Also, I had to change from the military style of writing which was very short and choppy. The instructors that I've talked to said that the biggest problem they have with high school students is that they are being taught to write to the teachers' expectations in high school without ever having the concept that there will be something different later. I tested into Comp. 201 and when I told my instructor I had never been to high school, he went out of his way to help me learn what I should have learned in high school.

One of the biggest issues I see that is damaging to people with disabilities is mainstreaming that is thought to be good for the self esteem of the student. To a large degree it is because you develop a sense of being together and not being set apart but mainstreaming does not allow you to have the specific disability area targeted. For instance, there is a lot of the controversy about the No Child Left Behind; I was a child who should have been left behind.

I really think that education in a large degree has sold out to businesses. I think that if you look at the board of regents in most states, they're probably businessmen. Now I wouldn't go to a businessman for medical advice. I don't think these people are qualified to make educational decisions. They see it through the business world lens. It's just like you wouldn't want the military making decisions about how to run your daily life. I think the education community has sold out to these people to get money. We need the money because we have unfunded mandates from the federal government. Look at the colleges; we're turning out people that can perform functions instead of educated people.

Response to Research Questions

The student interviews address two research questions, 4 and 5. They provide information on effective support services and strategies. In addition, they record concerns and barriers comparable to those observed in the focus group discussions. The following response to the two research questions is based on the students' interviews.

Research Question Four: What are the most effective support services and strategies for teachers and staff members to use to help students with disabilities successfully transition from high school to postsecondary institutions?

For interviewee 1, the most effective support services are the services offered through the English Second Language (ESL) program and through disabilities services. The interviewee has an interpreter funded through his college. He hopes to soon get a hearing aid to enhance his learning. Interviewee 2 indicates the most effective strategy for helping students transition from secondary to postsecondary is not to “lump” all students into the disability category. He believes teachers “should determine what the student really needs instead of putting everybody in the same box.” The interviewee recommends assessing students to determine the best strategy, whether to mainstream or not to mainstream students with disabilities.

Research Question Five: What are the major concerns of students with disabilities in the transition from high school to postsecondary institutions?

Interviewee 1 indicates his greatest concern in transitioning from high school to postsecondary institutions was others’ perception of him. Due to the harsh ridicule he endured from his peers because of his hearing problems, he did not know what to expect. In addition, he was concerned about his preparation for college. His written skills in English and Spanish are very poor. Communication still is a major concern for participant 1.

Interviewee 2 was also concerned about his preparation for college. Although he had entered college after a successful career in the military, he was insecure and frightened by the challenge of college. He thought he would fail, but was willing to try.

The interviewee knew his writing and mathematics skills would have to be better developed. In addition, he was concerned about social interaction in a college setting.

Student Survey Instrument

Summary of Findings

The survey instrument was administered to fifty-seven students with disabilities who attend postsecondary institutions identified in the EEP site map and Figure 5. The purpose of the data collection was to attain more information on the EEP sites' programs: transition planning, delivery systems, and students' concerns and skill levels entering postsecondary institutions. The survey instrument consists of eight major components which examine activities and services provided by students' colleges, transition planning, services' delivery, preparation for college, college experiences and supports, students' concerns, students' skill levels, and student background information. Bar charts present data attained from the student survey instrument.

Participants Background information

Survey questions 77-88 provide background information on student respondents. The background information collected from the 57 survey respondents reveal approximately 49% of the students are males ($n = 28$) and 51% are females ($n = 29$). Eighty-one percent ($n = 49$) of the students are white, non-Hispanic origin, which is attributed to the location of the sites in the study. The highest minority representatives are Hispanic/Latino, which is approximately 5.5% or 3 respondents. Two respondents did not identify their ethnicity.

The respondents' ethnicity mirrors the general populations of the study's locations (see Figure 5). Respondents range from ages 18 to 56. Approximately 33% of respondents are age 19. Five respondents are over 40. Two respondents did not identify their age. Approximately 51% of respondents indicated their primary disability was a learning disability. Multiple handicaps were the second highest type of disability of respondents, consisting of approximately 28%. Multiple handicaps were defined by the researcher as an individual with more than one dominating disability. Most respondents are enrolled as full-time students (84% or 47 students) and are unemployed (54% or 31 students). Respondents' enrollment status include: 22 students in 2-year postsecondary programs, 19 students in 4-year colleges, 10 students in other programs (certificate programs, combination of high/school college, etc.), 4 students in high school taking college courses, and two students in graduate programs. Figures 1 through 8 present the background information.

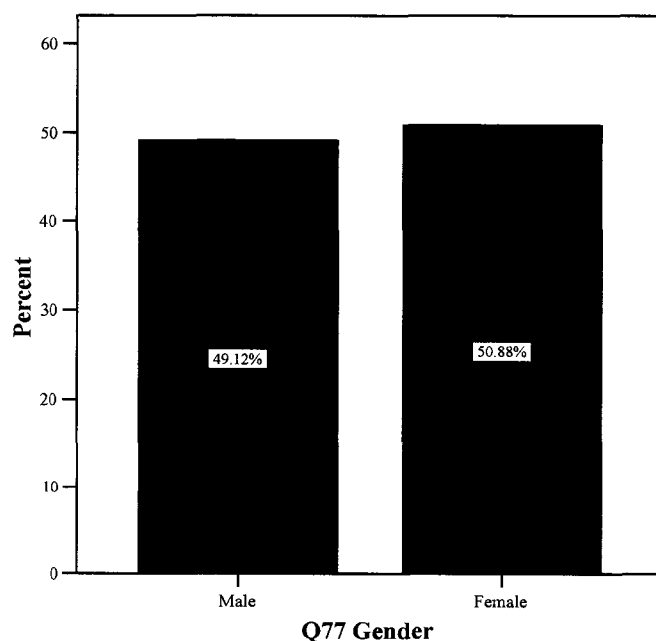


Figure 1. Gender of students (n = 57)

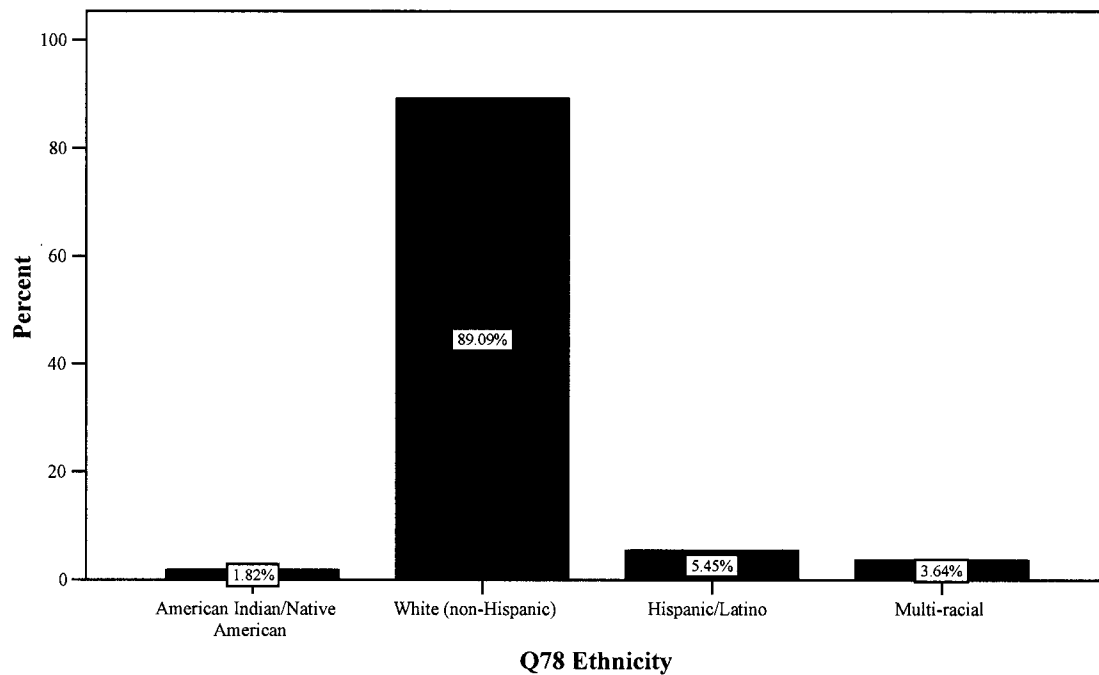


Figure 2. Ethnicity of students (n = 57)

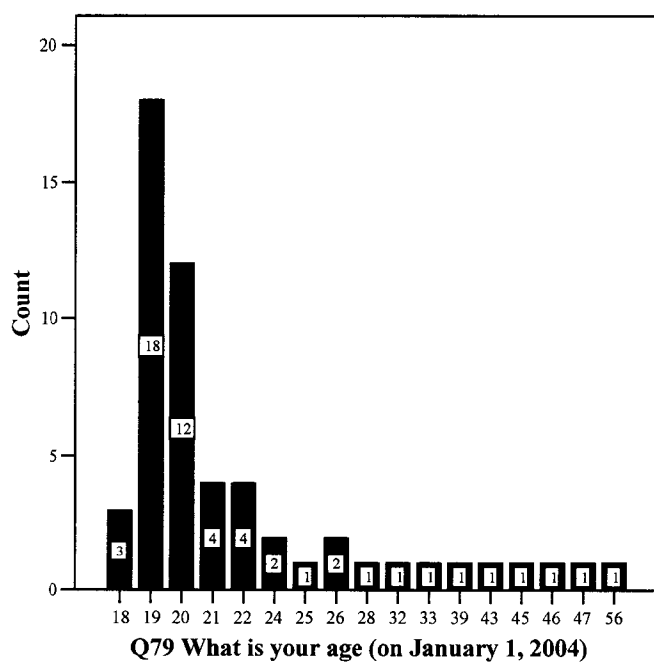


Figure 3. Age of students by count (n = 57)

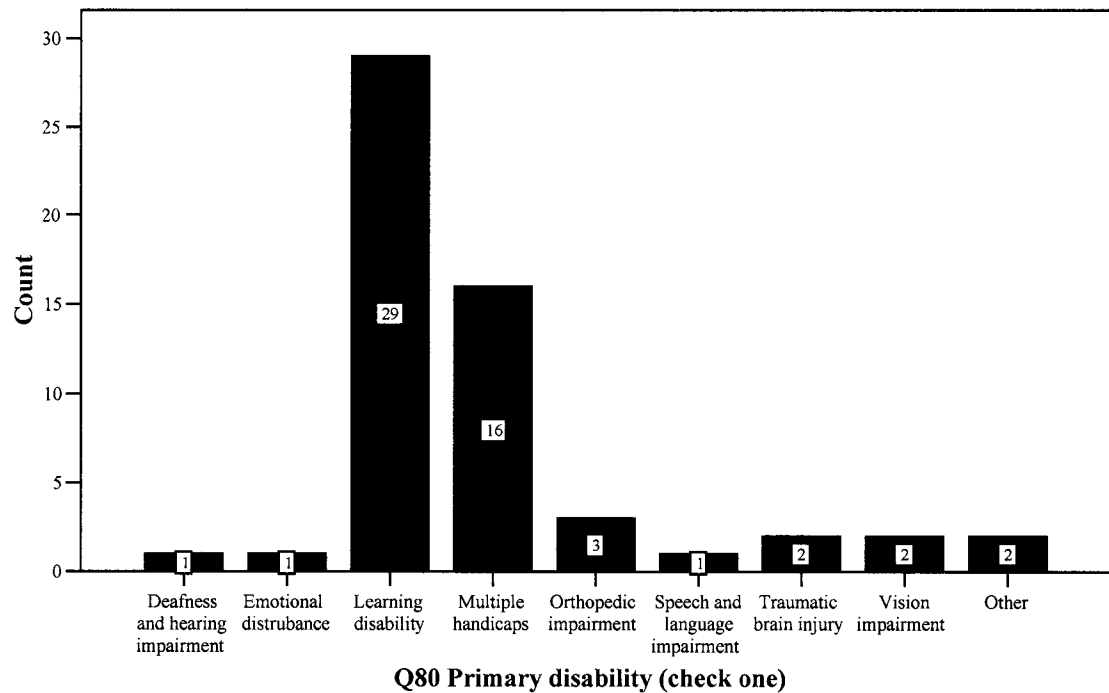


Figure 4. Students' primary disabilities by count (n = 57)

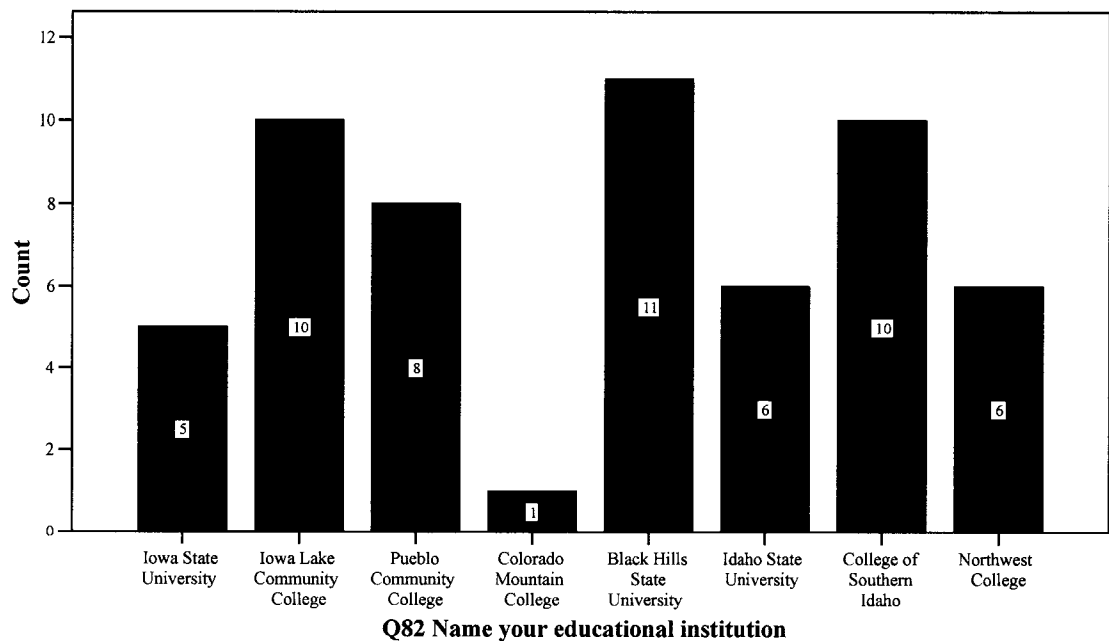


Figure 5. Locations of students' educational institutions by count (n = 57)

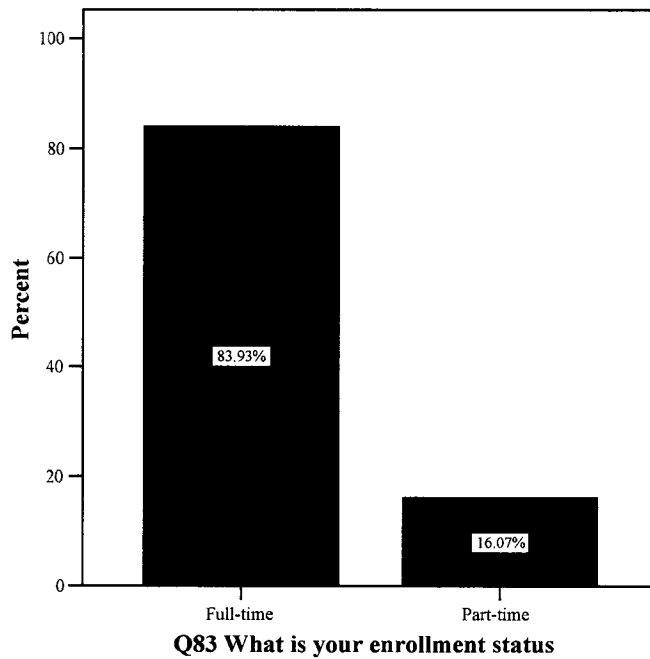


Figure 6. Enrollment status of students (n = 57)

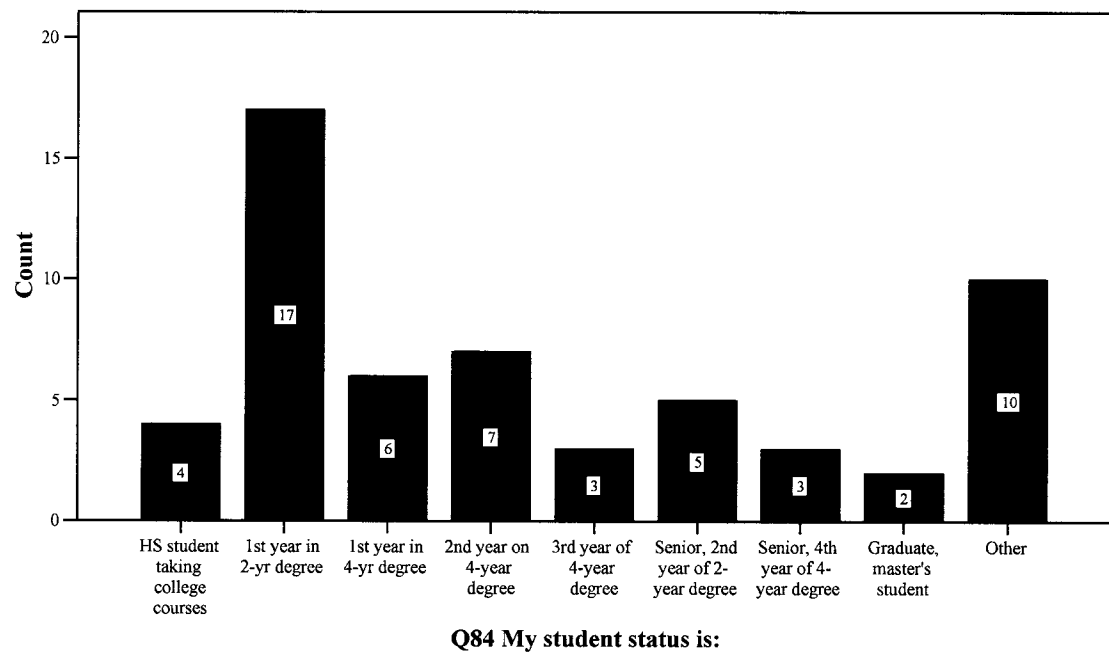


Figure 7. Students' years (classification) in college/length of degree (n = 57)

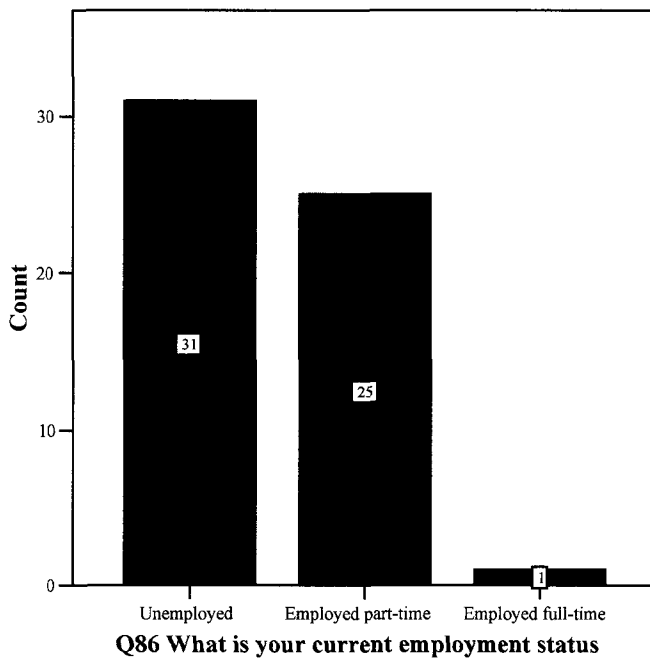


Figure 8. Students' employment status (n = 57)

Questions 1-8

Questions 1-8 explore students' level of satisfaction with services and activities offered by their institutions and their transition counselors. In addition, questions are designed to determine whether students' transition plans are relevant to their needs, how often students meet with their counselors, and whether students are actively involved in the transition planning process.

Figure 9 reveals over 75% of students (n = 43) strongly agree their college provides services and/ or programs to help them be successful in college.

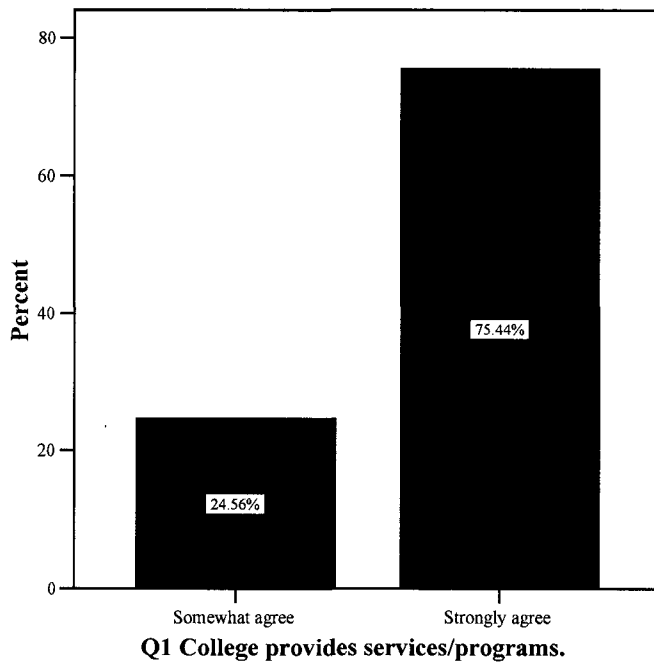


Figure 9. Level of satisfaction with services/programs (n = 57)

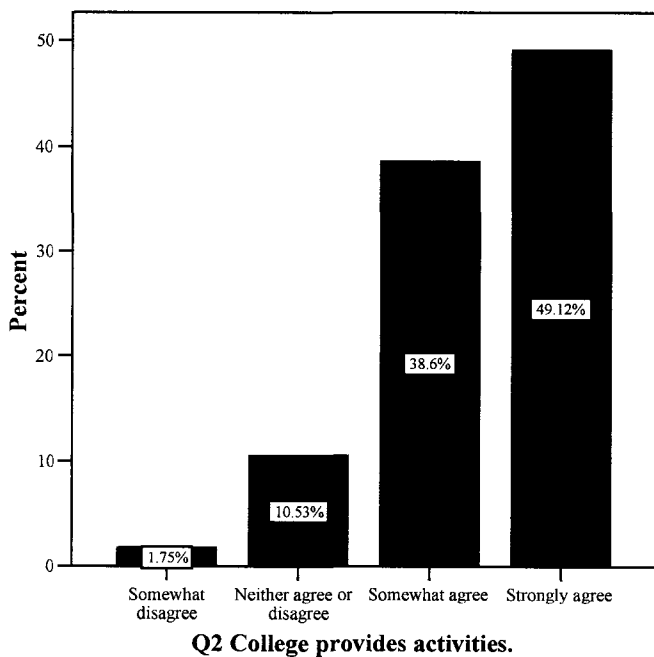


Figure 10. College provides activities (n = 57)

Figure 10 shows slightly less than a majority, 49% of students (n = 28), strongly agree their college offers activities to help them be successful in college.

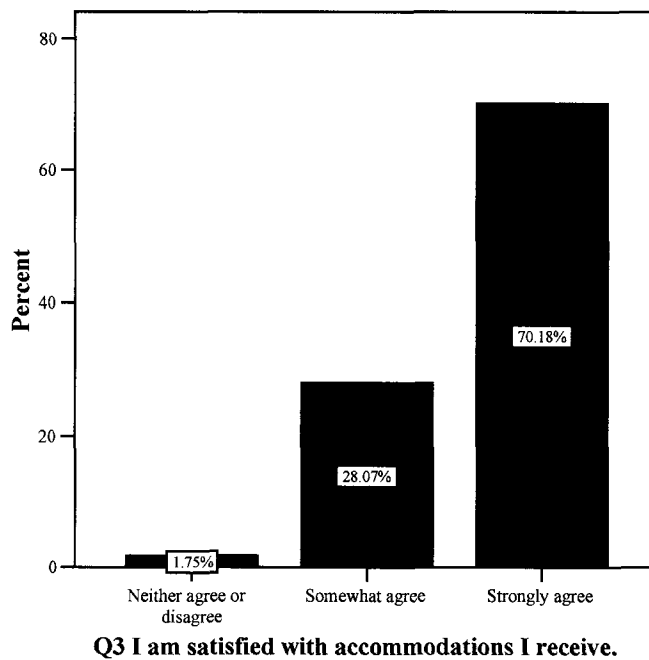


Figure 11. Accommodations (n = 57)

Figure 11 supports a high level of students' satisfaction with academic accommodations provided by their institutions as evidenced by over 70% of students (n = 40) who strongly agree accommodations are satisfactory.

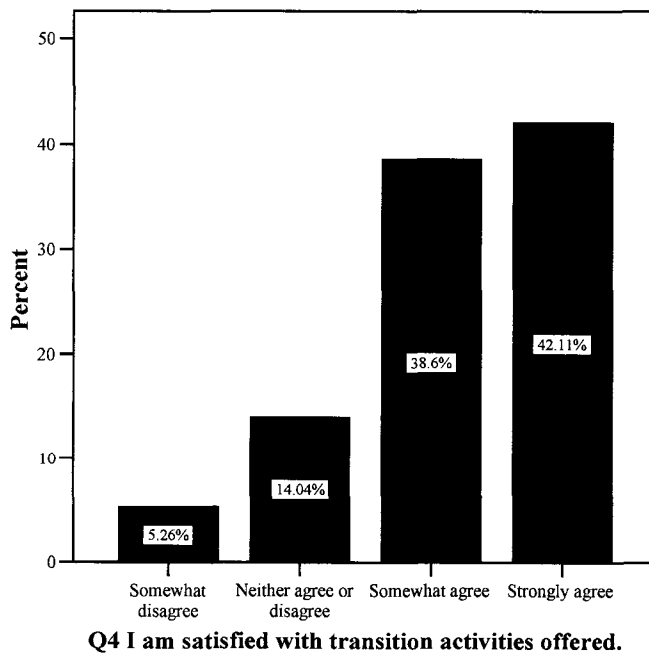


Figure 12. Level of satisfaction with transition activities (n = 57)

Figure 12 reveals 42% of students (n = 24) strongly agree and 39% somewhat agree (n = 22) transition activities are satisfactory.

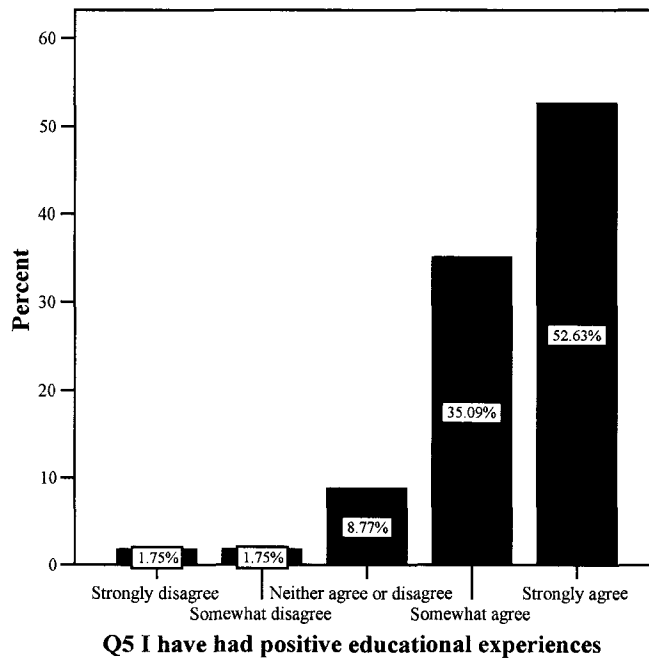


Figure 13. Positive educational experiences (n = 57)

Figure 13 shows a majority of students, 53% or 30 students, are having positive educational experiences, while 35% or 20 students somewhat agree their educational experiences have been positive. Less than 3% or 2 students strongly disagree or somewhat disagree their educational experiences have been positive.

Figure 14 reveals students frequently meet with their transition counselor with approximately 74% or 42 students meeting with counselor fairly often to very often.

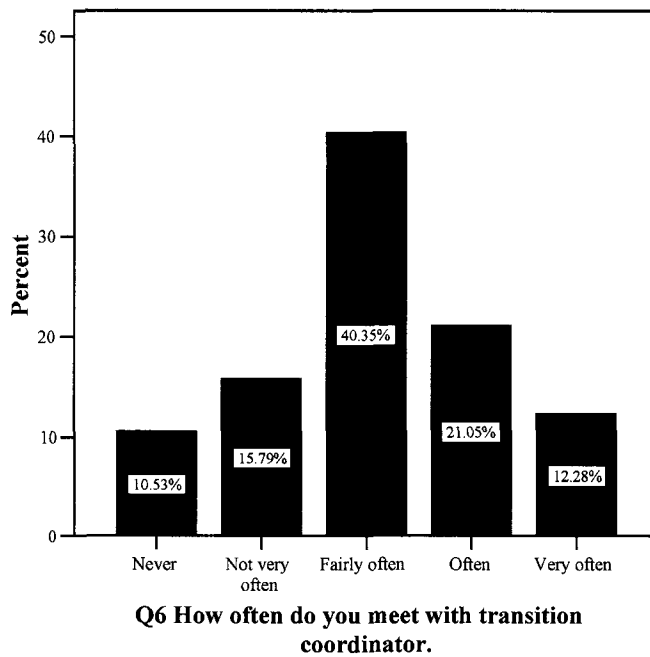


Figure 14. How often students meet with transition coordinator (counselor) (n = 57)

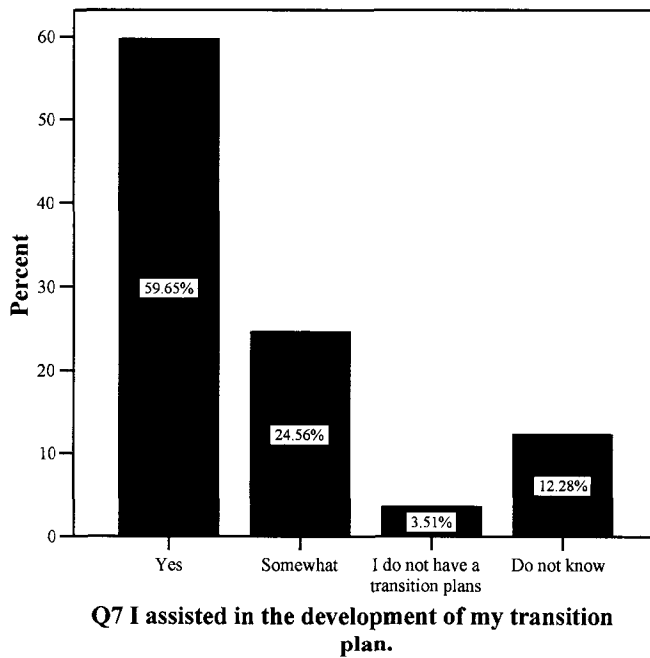
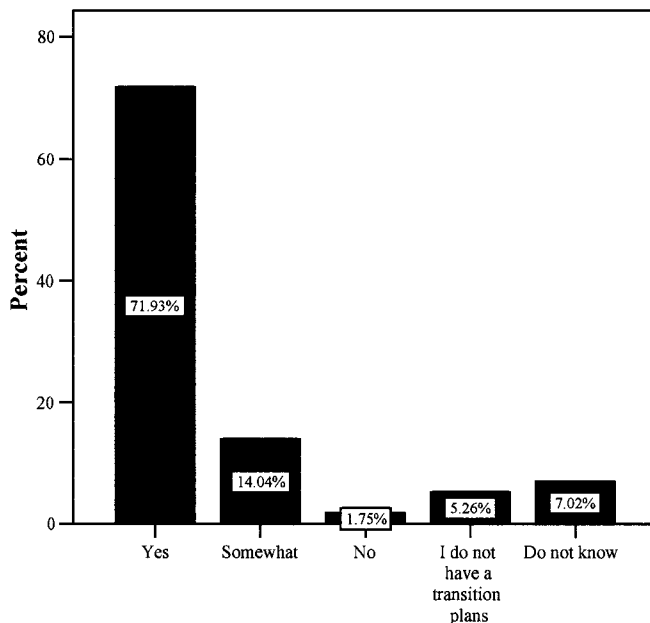


Figure 15. Students assist in development of transition plan (n = 57)

Figure 15 indicates over 84% of students (n = 48) assisted in some degree in developing their transition plan. Twelve percent (n = 7) had no knowledge of or did not

know whether they participated in their transition planning. Only 3.5% (n = 2) of students indicated they did not have a plan.



Q8 My transition plan is based on my needs

Figure 16. Transition plan is based on students' needs (n = 57)

Figure 16 shows a significant percentage, 72% or 41 students' transition plans address their needs.

Questions 9-29

In Questions 9-29, determines how important each of the services offered by the institutions was to the students. Each of these questions asks the students to indicate how often they use each service. Comparing the means of the responses (the higher the mean value, the more important) allows the researcher to rank the services in order of importance to the students. Questions 9-29 show how often students use certain services at their institutions based on a scale ranging from (5) always to (1) never. The top five services ranked by students include: special accommodations (3.68), tutoring (2.95), preparation for tests (2.84), vocational rehabilitation (2.55), and technology assistance

(2.5). The bottom five services used include: adult living assistance (1.43), parent advisory group (1.36), team building (1.77), self advocacy training (1.84), and student focus meetings (1.89). Figures 17, 18, 19, and 20 present student responses to the questions.

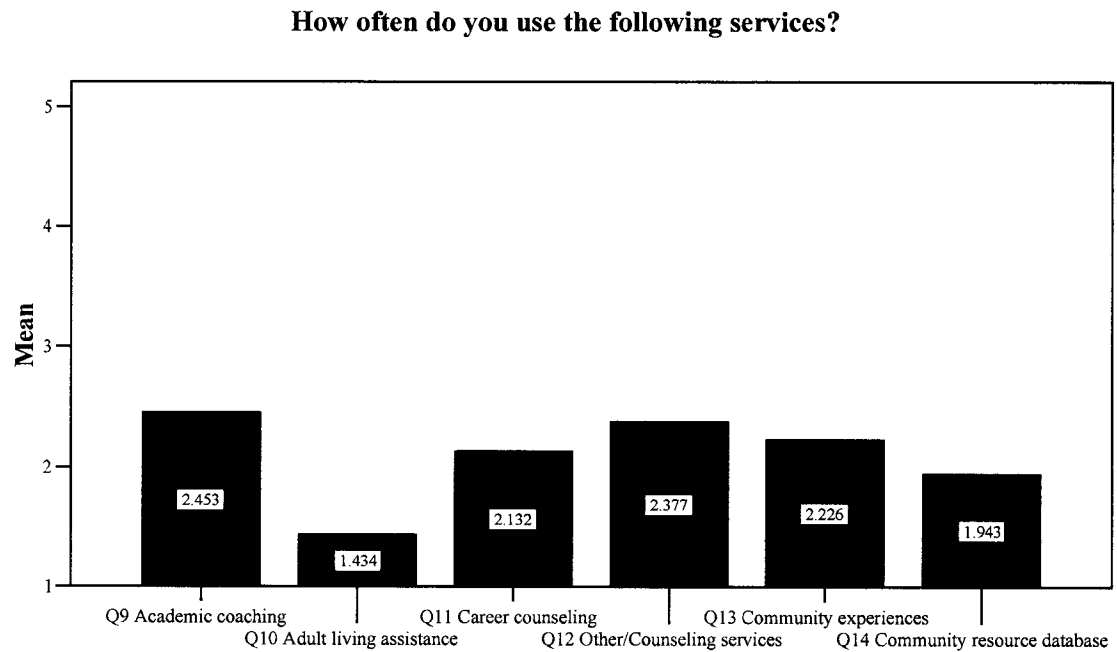


Figure 17. How often students use services (Questions 9-14) (n = 57)

How often do you use the following services?

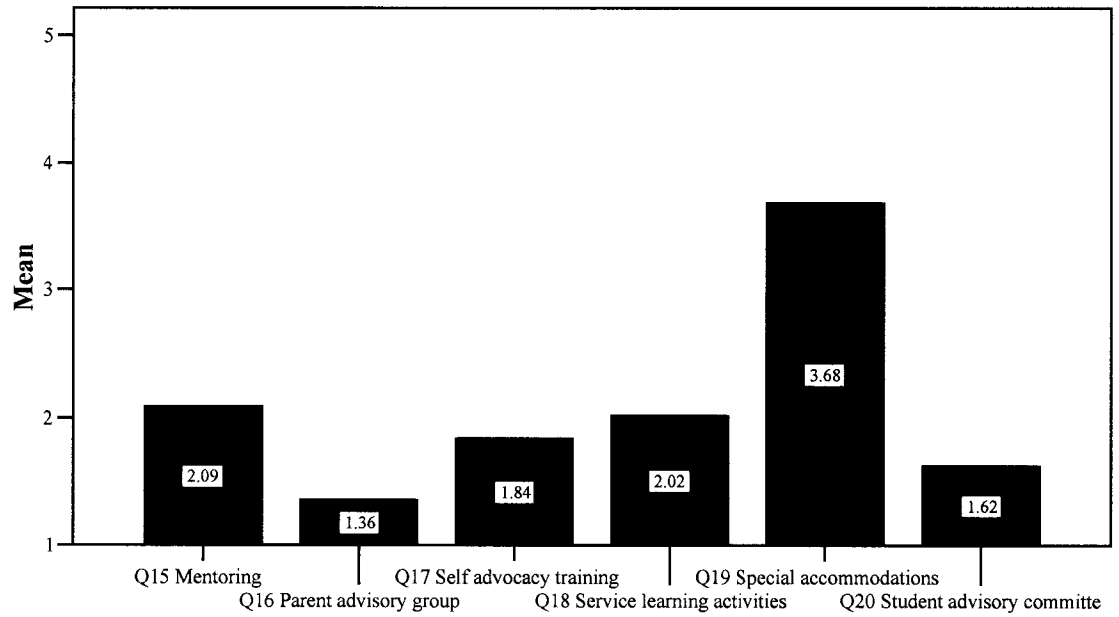


Figure 18. How often students use services (Questions 15-20) (n = 57)

How often do you use the following services?

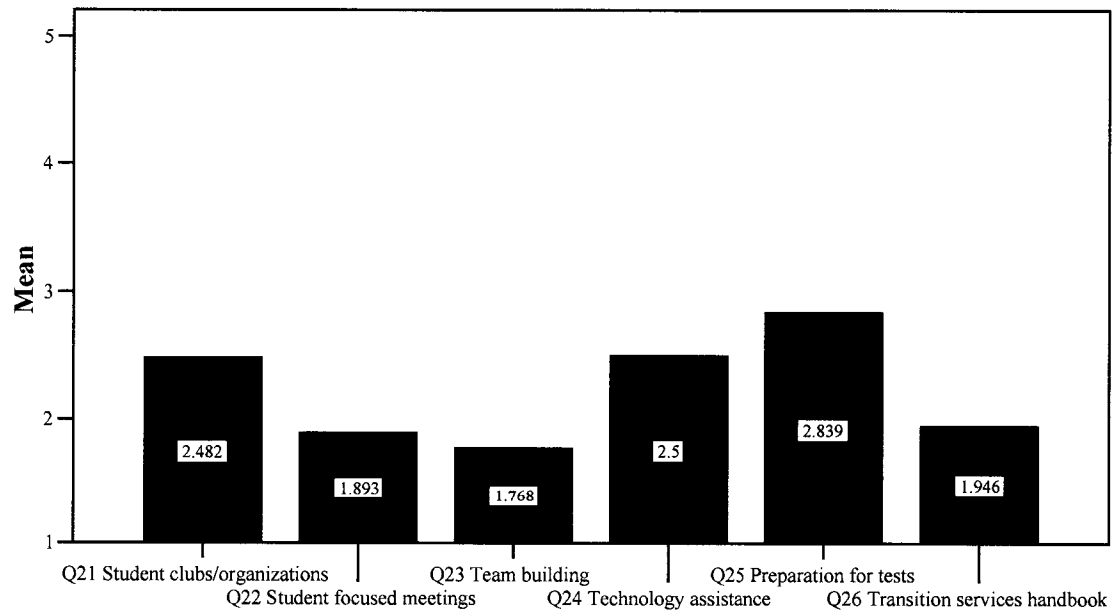


Figure 19. How often students use services (Questions 21-26) (n = 57)

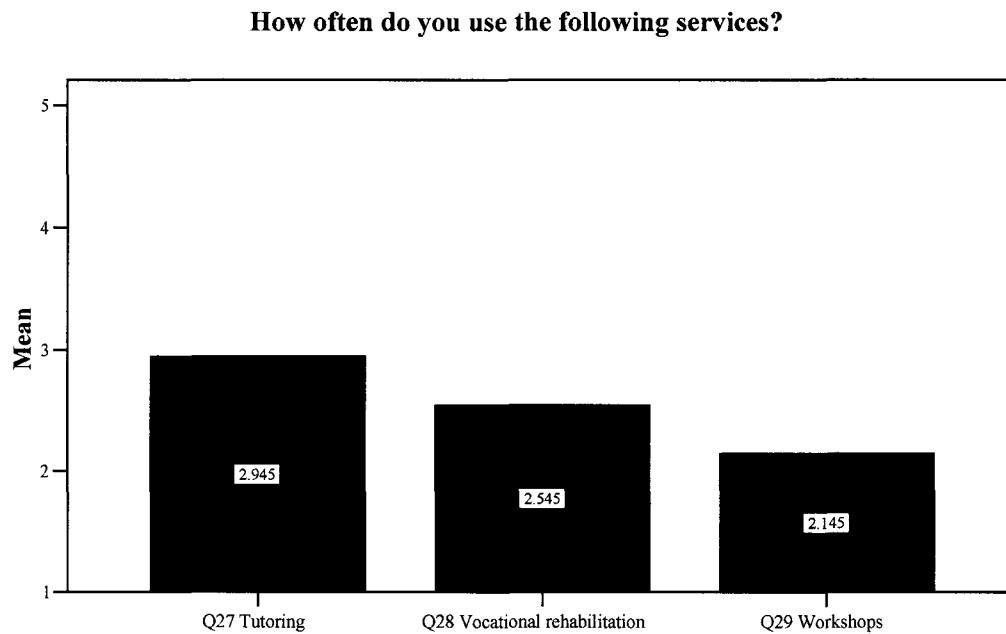


Figure 20. How often students use services (Questions 27-29) (n = 57)

Questions 30- 34

Questions 30-34 gave students the opportunity to rate services not listed on the survey. Only three students listed other services to include: class for ADA students, cognitive development memory, speech therapy, and reader/scribe. The other services were rated by the students as 5 (always using).

Question 35

In question 35, students rate their level of preparation for transitioning from high school to college. It is worth noting some students seem to have difficulty with this question as evidenced by the fact ten students left the question unanswered. Figure 21 presents the results to the question.

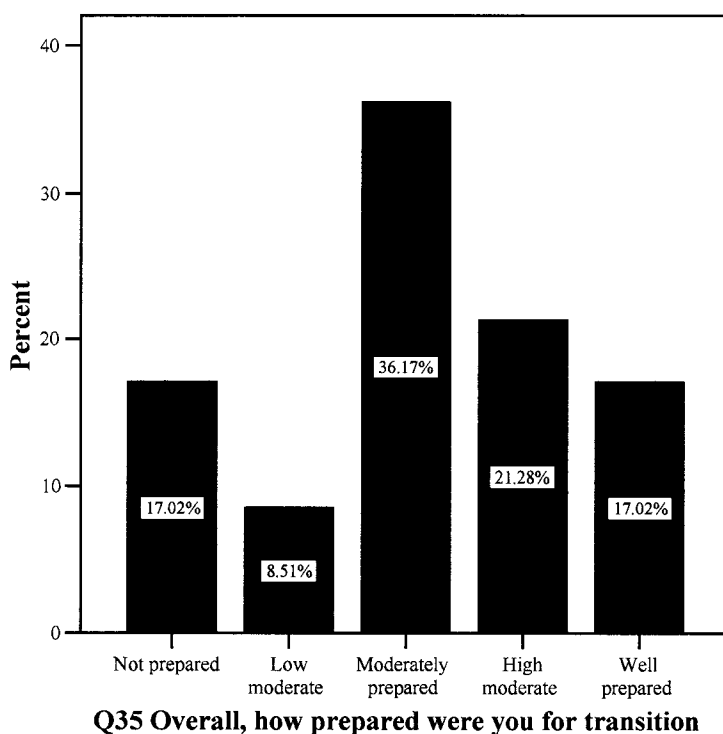


Figure 21. Overall level of preparation of students when transitioning to college (n = 57)

Figure 21 reveals the highest percentage, 36% or 17 students believe they were moderately prepared for the transition from high school to college while only 17% or 8 students indicated they were well prepared for the transition.

Questions 36-42

In questions 36-42, students select from a Semantic Differential scale consisting of adjectives best describing their college experience. The scale is converted into a number ranging from 1 to 5; 1 represents a negative experience (i.e., boring = 1) and 5 represents a positive college experience (i.e., exciting = 5).

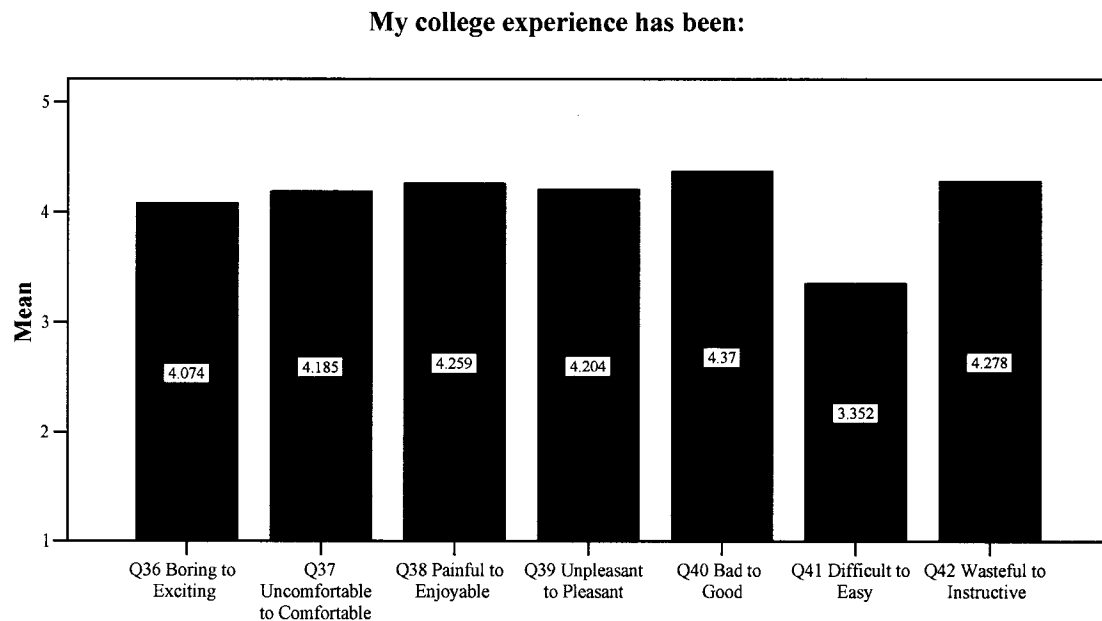


Figure 22. Describes students' college experiences (n = 57)

Figure 22 shows most students' college experience has been exciting, comfortable, enjoyable, pleasant, good, and instructive as evidenced by mean responses to the questions ranging above 4.0 on a 5-point scale.

Questions 43-47

In questions 43-47, the Semantic Differential scale is used once again. Students place their response closest to the adjective best describing their disability counselor. The scale is converted into a number ranging from 1 to 5; 1 represents a negative response and 5 represents a positive response.

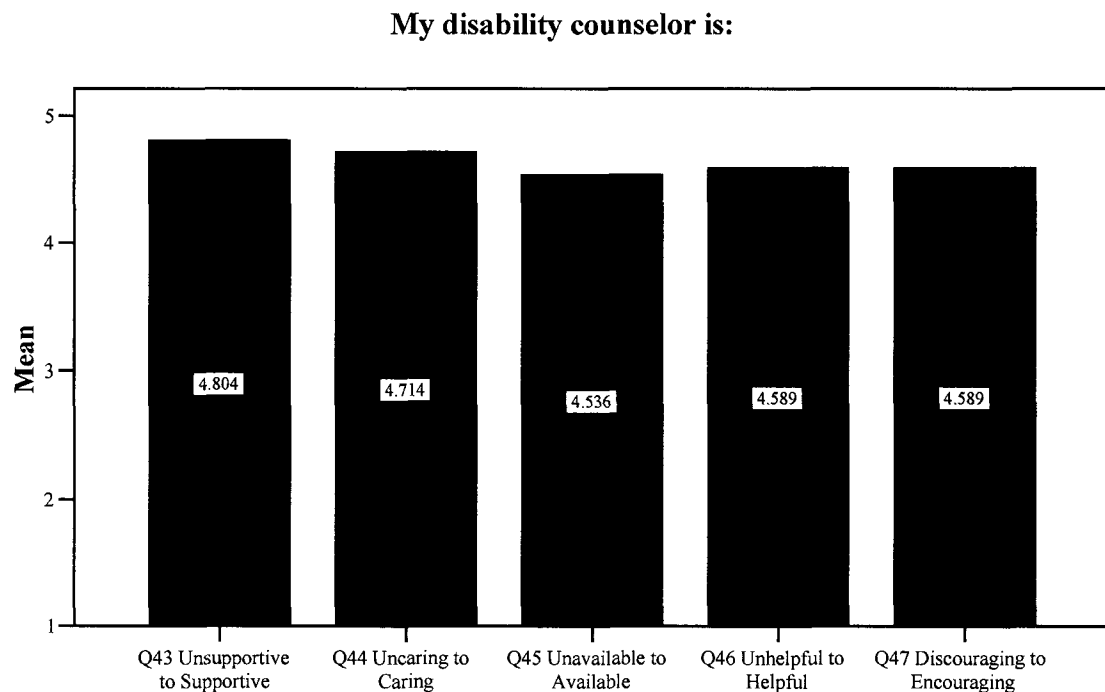


Figure 23. Describes disability counselor (n = 57)

Figure 23 show most students' disabilities counselor is supportive, caring, available, helpful, and encouraging as evidenced by the lowest mean score of 4.53 (available) on a 5 point scale and highest mean score 4.8 (supportive) on a 5 point scale.

Questions 48-65

In questions 48 -65, students identify how concerned they are regarding certain issues which may affect their college performance. The scale ranges from 1 (very concerned) to 5 (not very concerned). Students' mean responses reveal their top five concerns are: academics (2.15), employment (2.31), career development (2.34), communication with teachers (2.42), and failing courses (2.48). Students are least concerned about: living arrangements (3.78), parking (3.78), dropping out of school

(3.73), independent living (3.63), and family problems (3.43). Figures 25 and 26 present the mean of students' responses.

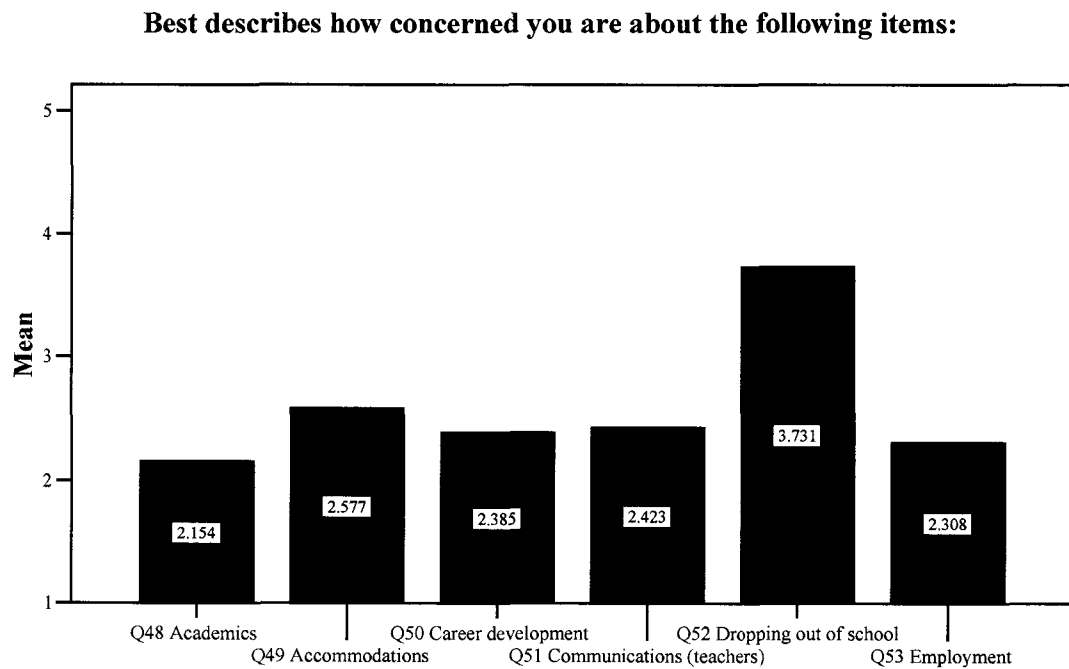


Figure 24. Describes how concerned students are about listed items (Questions 48-53) (n = 57)

Best describes how concerned you are about the following items:

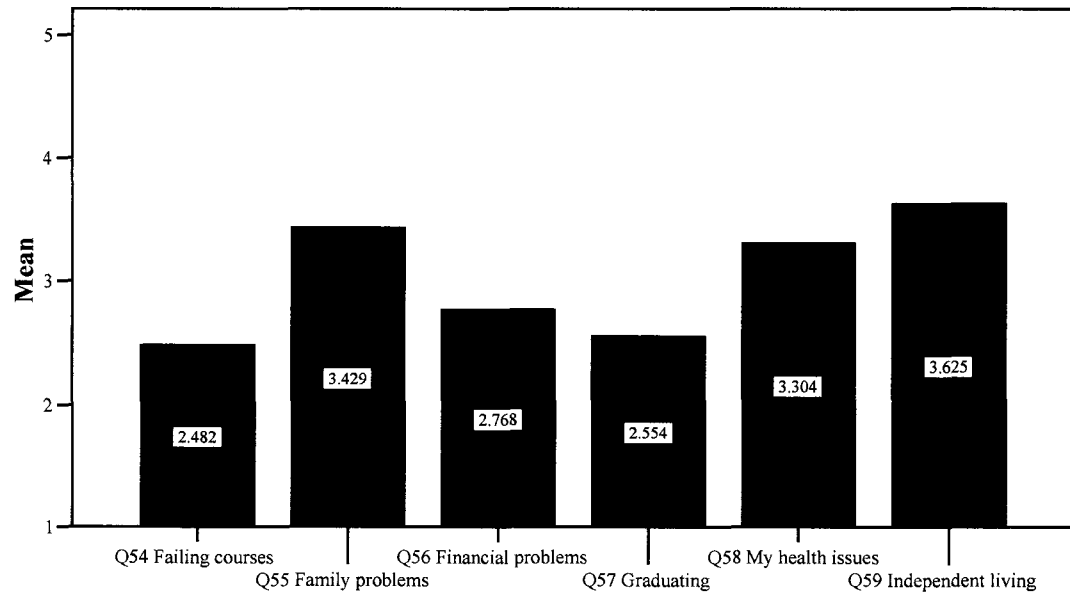


Figure 25. Describes how concerned students are about listed items (Questions 54-59) (n = 57)

Best describes how concerned you are about each of these items.

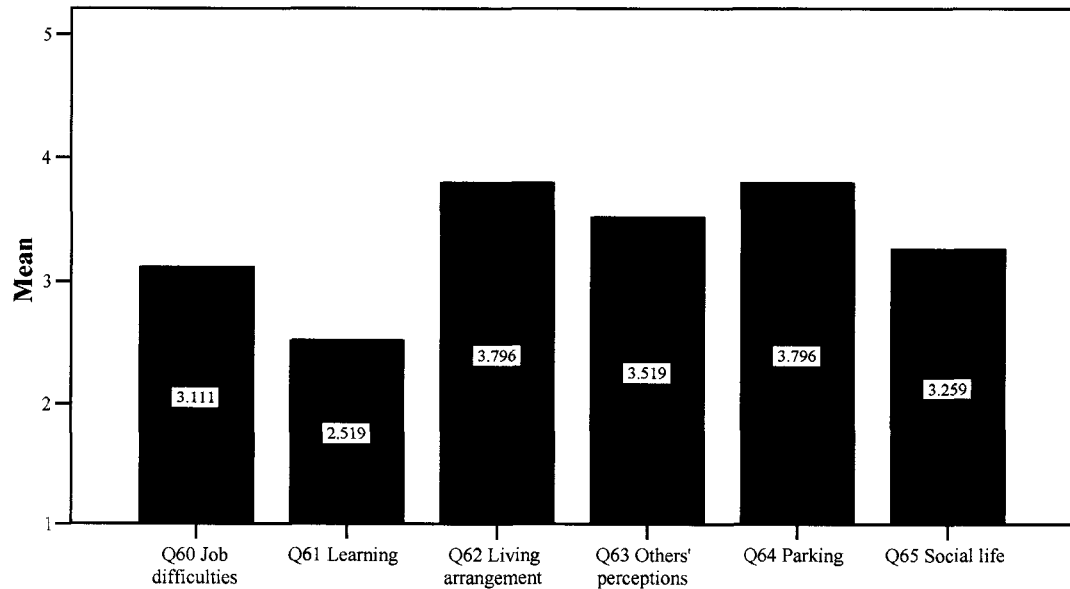


Figure 26. Describes how concerned students are about listed items (Questions 60-65) (n = 57)

Questions 66-70

In questions 66-70, students describe how skilled they are in certain competencies. The scale ranges from 1 to 5 with the low end 1 (not very skilled) and high end 5 (very skilled). According to students' mean responses, they are adequately skilled in: life skills (3.86), problem solving (3.77), social skills (3.70), literacy (3.63), and organizing (3.61). Mathematics (2.88) was the only skill students identified as being less than adequately skilled in.

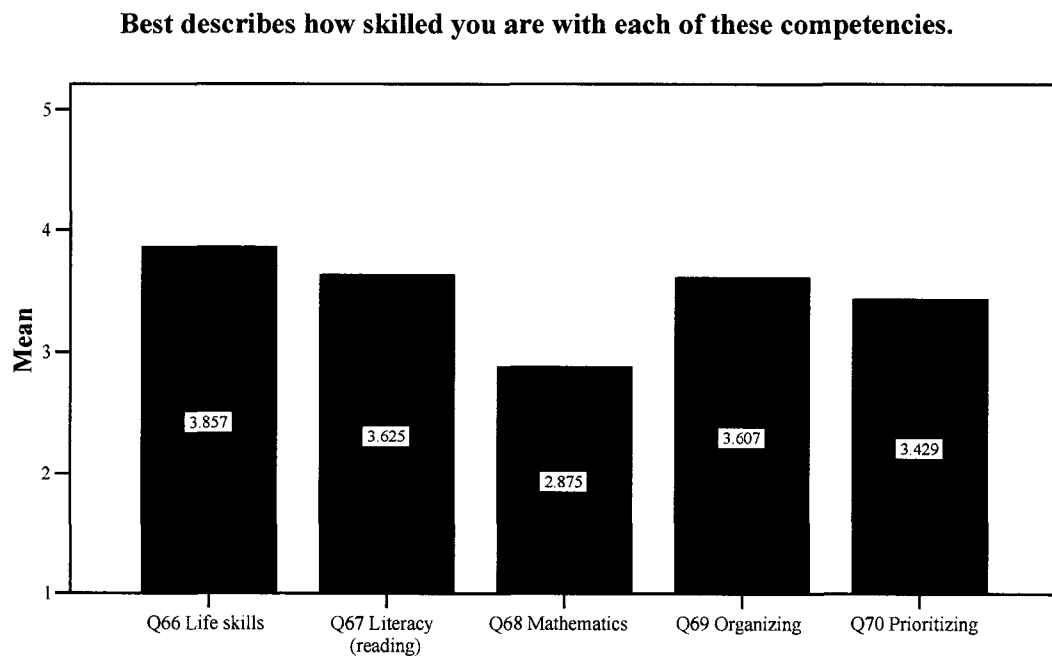


Figure 27. Describes how skilled students are in various competencies (Questions 66-70) (n = 57)

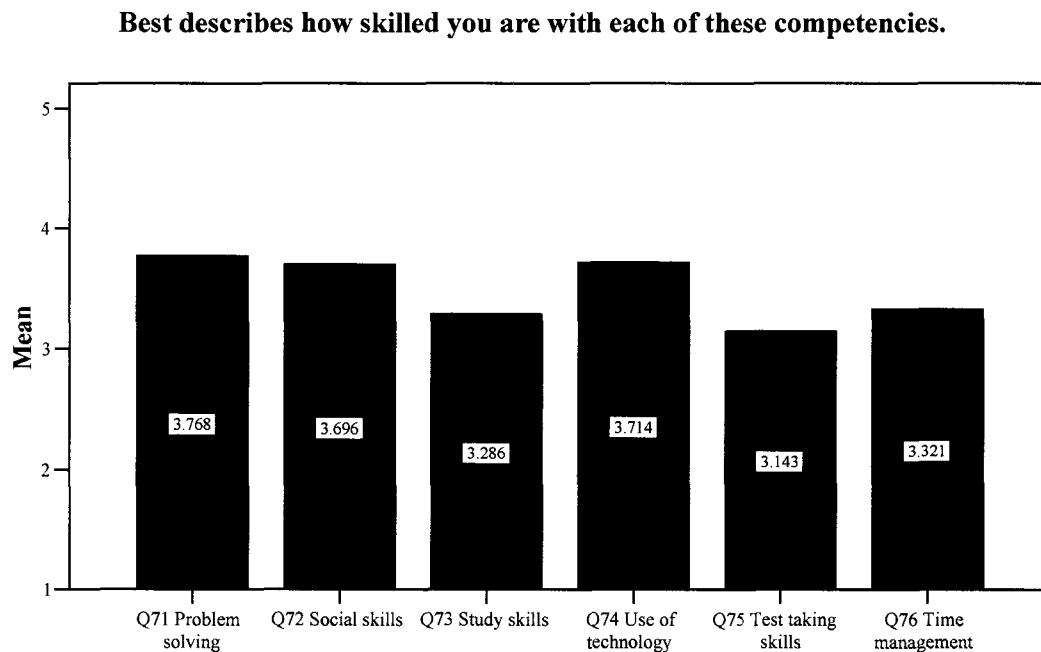


Figure 28. Describes how skilled students are in various competencies (Questions 71-76) (n = 57)

Response to Research Questions

Research Question One: To what extent have the Exceeding Expectations project staff delivered?

Survey questions numbers 2 and 6 indirectly address this research question.

Question 2 asks students whether their college provides activities to help them to be successful; and question 6 evaluates how often students meet with their transition coordinator (disability counselor). Since 49% of students strongly agree and 39% somewhat agree their colleges are providing activities to enhance their success in college, it appears EEP transition coordinators are delivering services identified in the grant. However, the survey question does not distinguish activities funded by EEP from activities automatically sponsored by individual colleges. From question 6, it appears over 73% of students meet fairly often to very often with their transition counselor. This

high level of time EEP staff has with students seemingly provides the support and services to aid students in their retention in postsecondary institutions.

Research Question Two: How effectively has each site implemented the stated programs?

Survey questions 4 and 5 indirectly address research question number two. Question 4 asks students to rate their satisfaction for transition activities offered by their college; and question 5 examines whether students have had a positive educational experience as a result of transition services and activities at their college. Once again, the survey does not respond exclusively to EEP programs, but to all activities offered by individual colleges in the EEP. Therefore, the survey can not conclusively confirm EEP sites are effectively implementing stated programs. Nevertheless, 42% of students strongly agree and 39% somewhat agree transition activities are satisfactory. As a result, a majority of students (53%) are having a positive educational experience while 35% somewhat agree their educational experience has been positive. Less than 3% strongly disagree or somewhat disagree their educational experience has been positive.

Research Question Three: Have student outcomes changed as a result of the Exceeding Expectations project?

Questions 43-47 indirectly answer research question number three by examining how students feel about their disability counselor. It appears the disabilities counselors are very helpful to students as evidenced by most student respondents to the survey who describe their disabilities (transition) counselor as supportive, caring, available, helpful, and encouraging. In addition, 36-42 describe how students feel about their college

experiences. Most student respondents reported their college experiences have been exciting, comfortable, enjoyable, pleasant, good, and instructive as evidenced by mean responses to the questions ranging above 4.0 on a 5 point scale.

Research Question Four: What are the most effective support services and strategies for teachers and staff members to use to help students with disabilities successfully transition from high school to postsecondary institutions?

Student survey questions 9-34 are aligned with the fourth research question. These questions ask students to describe how often they use listed services. From this information, teachers and staff members may be able to determine the most popular services to help students with their transition from high school to postsecondary institutions. In addition, teachers and staff members can assess whether their institutions offer essential services to address students' needs. The lowest mean scores reported by student respondents were not a result of students' lack of interest in the services. In most instances, students ranked the services as "never" using them because the services were not offered at their institutions. Table 13 presents the least used and most used services.

Table 13

Least and Most Used Services

Lowest Score	Services	Highest Scores	Services
1.36	Parent Advisory Group	3.68	Special Accommodations
1.43	Adult Living Assistance	2.95	Tutoring
1.62	Student Advisory Committee	2.84	Preparation for test
1.77	Team Building	2.55	Vocational rehabilitation
1.84	Self Advocacy Training	2.50	Technology assistance

Research Question Five: What are the major concerns of students with disabilities in the transition from high school to postsecondary institutions?

Student survey questions 48 -65 ask students to best describe how concerned they are about a list of factors relating to their college experience. The scale ranges from 1 (very concerned) to 5 (not very concerned). Table 14 presents the least 5 concerns and top 5 concerns of respondents.

Table 14

Students' Concerns

Very Concerned	Items	Not Very Concerned	Items
2.15	Academics	3.80	Living Arrangement
2.31	Employment	3.80	Parking
2.39	Career Development	3.73	Dropping out of school
2.42	Communication (teachers)	3.63	Independent living
2.48	Failing Courses	3.43	Family problems

Exceeding Expectations Site Coordinators' Interviews

Summary of Findings

The interviews represent data from six site staff members within the EEP project. While the formal interviews consists of six site members, all nine transition coordinators informally talked with the researcher regarding activities and services for students with disabilities at their institutions. From interviews, the researcher attained information on the effectiveness of programs and activities, as well as other relevant information on students with disabilities. The Constant Comparative Analysis coding process was

used to code interviews. From the interviews, three common themes were induced: (1) lack of adequate preparation, (2) self advocacy, and (3) accessing services.

The first theme, lack of adequate preparation, is the most prevalent of the three themes. The interviewees freely share their concern for the lack of preparation they see in many students with disabilities in their first year of college. They state many students with disabilities lack study skills, mathematical skills, and writing skills. In addition, one coordinator claimed some students view their high school preparation as a “joke”. Table 15 presents supporting quotes.

Table 15

Theme 1(Coordinators)

Theme 1: LACK OF ADEQUATE PREPARATION

One of the ongoing concerns I do have regarding supporting students with special needs while they are preparing to enter post- secondary education, is the lack of adequate preparation. What I mean by this is there are instances where students are not knowledgeable enough about their disabilities. They have no idea the effect of the disability on their learning and they may not even know the types of accommodations they need. They don't know how to request those accommodations. So I think the lack of adequate preparation is an essential concern.

The people who do not succeed are the ones who are not adequately prepared. They are the students who don't have different community experiences. Another concern I have which I believe is not unique to students with disabilities is a lack of study skills. Many students come to the post secondary environment without adequate preparation for the coursework. They have no idea they are going to need a minimum of two hours for every credit hour they are going to be taking. And when you explain that to them, they feel there must be something wrong.

Many students I've met with will tell me their high school experience was a joke. They really did not prepare well. They got extra credit for some work and they wonder why they are not going to get those types of extra credits within the university.

(table continued)

Table 15 (continued)

They (teachers) fail to express to students what they can do. When students come, I ask them what their strengths are. They have no idea. But when I ask what some of the challenges are or what are some of their difficulties are, they say, "I cannot spell. I cannot write. I cannot do math". "I cannot, cannot, cannot", becomes the sentence they give rather than, "I may not be able to spell, but I have a lot of ideas". When I hear a student say that, I will go to any expense to make sure I provide the avenue for such student because the student is able to identify the barriers which may be standing in his or her way.

The one-on-one kinds of aides or tutoring students sometimes receive in high schools often are deterrents. The idea they can do a percentage of their work and it will be sufficient is also detrimental.

Self-advocacy, the second theme, is very important for students' transition to postsecondary institutions. Several interviewees indicated many students with disabilities come to college without developing self-advocacy skills, because they are accustomed to their parents advocating for them. Consequently, this creates problems for these students because their parents are no longer available to make decisions for them or advocate for their needs. Without self-advocacy skills, many students find the transition from high school to college difficult. See Table 16 for supporting quotes.

Table 16

Theme 2---Coordinators

Theme 2: SELF-ADVOCACY

It's important for them (students) to be taking as many math and computer classes as possible and important for students to develop their self-determination and self-advocacy skills.

They need to have families teach their children to advocate for themselves and not do everything for them.

(table continued)

Table 16 (continued)

I think the self-advocacy skills that are going to be beneficial to students in their independent living, employment area, and social interactions are ones we need to look at.

The goals I feel are most important are self-sufficiency and independence. Many can't articulate what it is they need, or they may not be able to get what they need.

When they get to the post- secondary environment, especially those students who come and live in the dormitories, they might not be ready to face the challenges before them. They don't know how to live with people. They don't know how to make sure boundaries are set. They don't know how to study. They don't know how to ask for what they need. They always rely on their parents to do it and the parents are always willing to do it. There are so many instances where I have parents and students visiting us. I turn to students and ask them to share some of the challenges they have faced. Their parents start to answer for them, but I tell students I want to hear from them.

Accordingly, the third theme, accessing services, is critical to students' success in college. One coordinator states students with disabilities often do not access services and "flunk out" before receiving services to help them. Several reasons were given for students not accessing services: (1) fear of being labeled as disabled, (2) lack of information on services available at their institution, and (3) students may not realize they have a disability. Consequently, several site coordinators state, "We think it is very important for both students and parents to see the differences clearly between secondary and post-- secondary settings". College visits are recommended for both parents and students prior to students matriculating at the institution, because students often think services received in high school will automatically transfer to college. In addition, a visit to the institution will give students a better understanding of how to access needed services. Table17 presents supporting quotes.

Table 17

Theme 3---Coordinators

Theme 3: ACCESSING SERVICES

I think too often students with disabilities go on to post- secondary schools and may not access those services during their first semester or first year. They may flunk out and then they are kind of stuck. They can't get any more grants or loans to continue.

We work with many faculty members who have no idea how to accommodate students. I see my role as a dual role: attending to the needs of students as well as advocating for them, but also attending to the needs of faculty in helping to educate them. I try to seize every opportunity I have to educate faculty and to provide different types of resources for them. When a student requests a specific type of accommodation and the faculty member calls to ask for help, I try to find general information and not specific information, to share with the faculty member.

There are instances where students are not knowledgeable enough about their disabilities. They have no idea the effect of the disability on their learning, and they may not even know the types of accommodations they need. They don't know how to request accommodations.

Being able to create that connection between high school and post- secondary school is important. It helps to let the student know it is okay to say, "I have a disability and I may need some help".

A lot of times, students will think they have made it through high school, gotten their diploma, and are ready for college. Students may not fully understand they need to look at the supports available at the post- secondary level.

Response to Research Questions

The data from EEP site staff interviews address three of the research questions (questions one, two and four). The following is a response to those questions.

Research Question One: To what extent have the Exceeding Expectations project staff delivered?

From formal and informal interviews, there appears to be some evidence EEP staff members are delivering stated goals. The interviewees provided documentation that various programs (mentoring, parent advisory meetings, coaching, study skills, pre-college transition programs, etc.) funded by EEP to assist students' with disabilities access and retention at their institution do exist. In addition, several site coordinators shared with the researcher that one of the most beneficial resource of the project is the collaboration with other site coordinators in the Exceeding Expectations project. One coordinator states after being asked whether EEP has been effective, "Well definitely, I'm glad that we are able to do this and we have unique things".

Research Question Two: How effectively has each site implemented the stated programs?

This research question is particularly difficult to answer based on data from interviews with the coordinators. Although there is evidence coordinators have implemented stated programs, it is difficult to separate EEP programs from programs already funded by their institutions. In fact, EEP funding often supplements already existing programs. In addition, it is difficult to measure the programs' effectiveness because coordinators still face some of the same problems they did prior to changes to their program. One coordinator states, "Many of these same problems have been ongoing for many years and they are continuous because of the population that we deal with. We deal with students who are 18-21 years old, but often times their maturity levels are more

adolescent than their age”. Another coordinator discusses the effectiveness of a coaching program funded from the EEP:

“The first month of the individual coaching, either I or my staff will be the ones that will go through the program or the meeting. We set the agenda and we go through the agenda. “What if? What if? What if?” After the first month, we share the responsibility of the agenda with students so we are helping the students take over how to go about managing these types of meetings”.

Research Question Four: What are the most effective support services and strategies for teachers and staff members to use to help students with disabilities successfully transition from high school to postsecondary institutions?

Table 18 presents recommendations from the interviewees for improving students’ with disabilities transition from high school to postsecondary institutions.

Table 18

Strategies for Teachers and Staff

Establish High Expectations	Students should avoid some of those easy classes to keep expectations high. Setting high expectations for students right away and informing parents of what needs to happen in order for students to be successful at the next level is important. The expectations need to be the same, both for students with disabilities and students without, and making sure to help those students reach the expectations we have set for them. There are instances where we tell the student with disabilities it is okay ...foreign language is really difficult for you. So don’t worry about taking foreign language. If we expect less of the students, we will get less. If we expect a lot, we will get a lot. We should make sure expectations are high enough for every single student, within the high school environment, within the post- secondary environment, on the job, and even at home.
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(table continued)

Table 18 (continued)

Transition Planning	If students are considering pursuing post-secondary education, they really are in need of intense transitional guidance before they enter the post-secondary setting, during the process of entering it, and after they enter the post-secondary setting. It's really important in making these plans to determine who is responsible for them so there is a clear continuity and students are getting the help they need to make that difficult transition.
Empower Students	Another personal area with me, the one I feel very strongly about, is to try to make sure we're empowering students and not enabling them. That's kind of a fine line, but we should always try to work on empowerment.
Advanced Math Classes	Make sure students get enough math classes. They may have to start with some more basic math when they start in high school, but definitely get them into algebra and geometry before they graduate from high school.

Transition Coordinators' Survey Instrument

Summary of Findings

Nine transition coordinators in the EEP completed the survey instrument which consists of fifty-five questions. The coordinators are EEP site representatives from Black Hills State University, College of Southern Idaho, Colorado Mountain College, Idaho State University, Iowa Lakes Community College, Iowa State University, Pueblo Community College, and Pueblo Community College (Community Transition House).

The instrument encompasses six major components: examining transition programs and services provided by their institutions, transition planning, items included in students' transition plans, extent to which students use services and activities at their postsecondary institutions, measurable outcomes and strategies to enhance students' transition in postsecondary education, and coordinators' background information. Bar graphs present data attained from the coordinators' survey instrument.

Participants' Background Information

While this study refers to study participants affiliated with the EEP as transition site coordinators, their official job titles designated by their institutions varies:

Community Transition Coach, Coordinator of Accommodations in Technology, Coordinator of Student Disability Services, Director of Student Success Program, Disabilities Resources Specialist, Disability Services Advisor, Program Director, SAVE Program Coordinator, and Special Populations Coordinator. Their experience level in working with students with disabilities ranges from three to seventeen years with eight years as the mean years of experience. Tables 19, 20 present data on coordinators' years of experience.

Table 19

Frequency Table on Coordinators' Years of Experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	2	22.2	22.2	22.2
	4	2	22.2	22.2	44.4
	5	1	11.1	11.1	55.6
	12	1	11.1	11.1	66.7
	12	1	11.1	11.1	77.8
	15	1	11.1	11.1	88.9
	17	1	11.1	11.1	100.0
Total		9	100.0	100.0	

Table 20

Mean Years of Experience working with Disability Services

N	Valid	9
	Missing	0
Mean		8.28
Minimum		3
Maximum		17

Questions 1 to 4

Question 1 asks coordinators to evaluate the services at their institutions. Over 56% or 5 coordinators strongly agree and 33% or 3 coordinators somewhat agree their services help students transition from high school to postsecondary opportunities. Eleven percent somewhat disagree their services help students transition to postsecondary opportunities.

Question 2 evaluates whether the quantity of activities at the institutions help students make a successful transition to postsecondary opportunities. The coordinators responded less favorably to this question. Only 22% (n = 2) strongly agree, 56% or (n = 5) somewhat agree, 11% (n = 1) neither agree nor disagree, and 11% (n = 1) somewhat disagree.

Question 3 evaluates the willingness of staff to offer appropriate accommodations to students with disabilities. All nine coordinators responded to this question as strongly agreeing (n = 9) their staff is willing to offer appropriate accommodations. Since the mean response for this question is 5, no bar graph or frequency table is presented.

In question 4, coordinators rank their level of satisfaction with transition activities at their colleges. While the majority, 22% (n = 2) strongly agree and 33% (n = 3) somewhat agree are satisfied with transition activities at their colleges, 22% (n = 2) of respondents neither agree nor disagree and 22% (n = 2) somewhat disagree. Figures 29, 30, and 31 present the data.

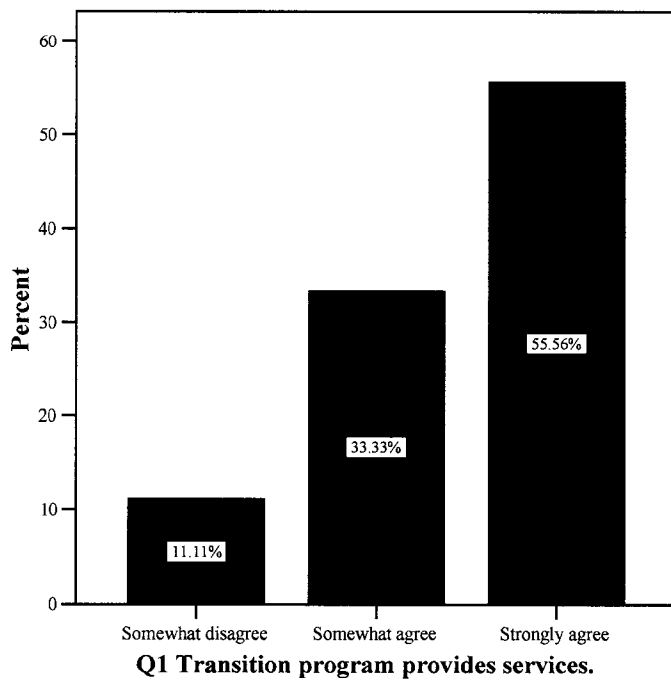


Figure 29. Transition program services (n = 9)

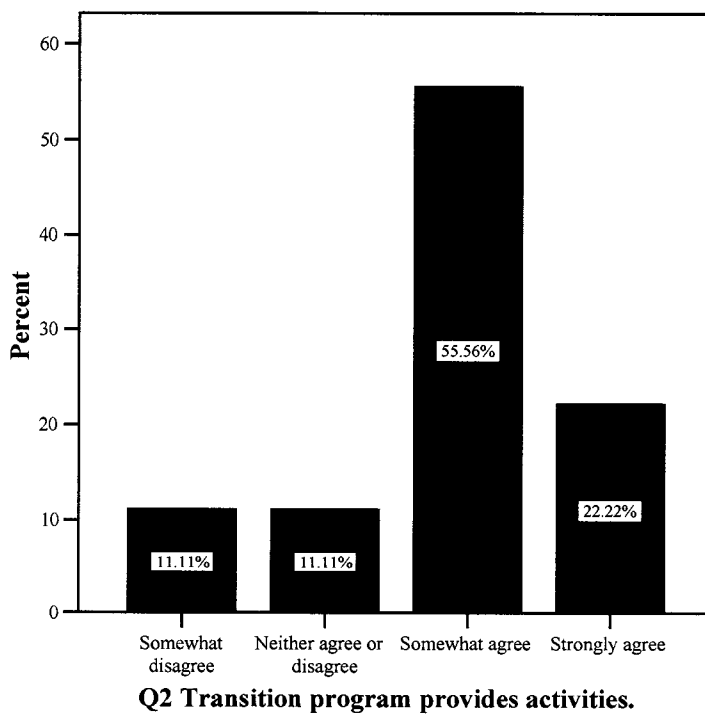


Figure 30. Programs' activities enhance students' transition (n = 9)

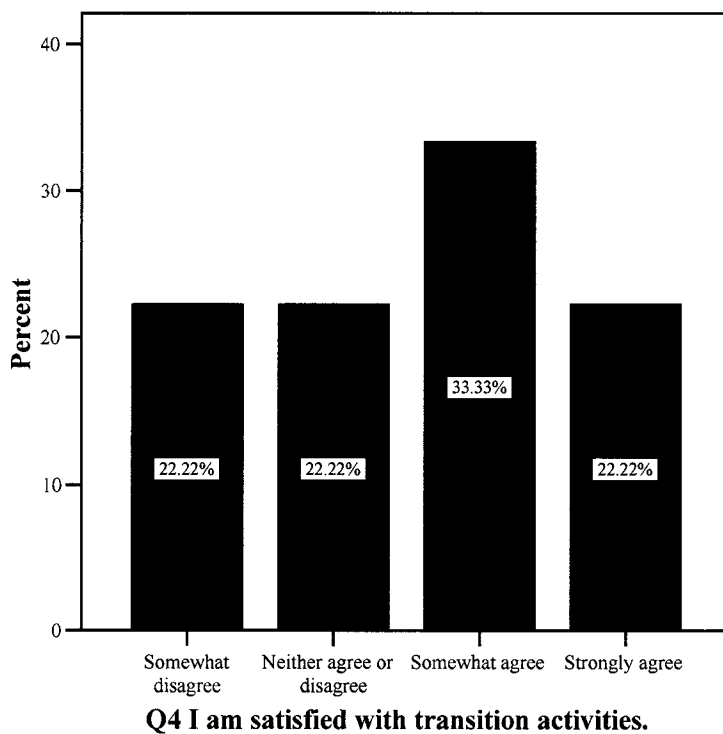


Figure 31. Level of satisfaction with transition activities (n = 9)

Questions 5 to 11

Question 5 examines whether students with disabilities have had a positive educational experience as a result of transition services provided by their institutions. Only 22% (n = 2) of coordinators strongly agree students' experiences have been positive as a result of services provided at their institutions, 11% (n = 1) somewhat disagree and 67% (n = 6) somewhat agree with this question.

In response to question 6, which asks how often coordinators spent time with students to schedule services and special activities, approximately 63% (n = 8) meet very often with students, 25% (n = 2) often, and 12.5% (n = 1) sometimes meet with students to schedule services and activities, with one coordinator not responding to the question.

Coordinators' responses to question 7 reveal 33% (n = 3) of respondents very often develop transition plans for their students, 11% (n = 1) often, 22% (n = 2) seldom and 33% (n = 3) never develop transition plans.

According to question 8, less than half, 44% or 4 coordinators design transition plans based on students' needs. Over half of the coordinators are not involved in students' transition planning, as 33% (n = 3) do not develop transition plans and 22% (n = 2) are not responsible for their development.

Question 9 reports 50% or 4 coordinators occasionally provide group activities for students in their programs, 1 coordinator provides activities once to twice per semester, and 3 coordinators provide monthly activities. One coordinator did not respond to the question.

Question 10 reveals coordinators solicit feedback from their students to determine what services and activities are needed to improve students' outcomes. Seventy-eight percent responded yes, 11% sometimes, and only 11% answered no to the question (n = 9).

In response to question 11, approximately 67% or 6 of the coordinators believe the Exceeding Expectations grant has improved their transition services and activities for students at their institutions. Yet, 22% or 2 respondents answered no to question 11. Figures 32-38 present the data.

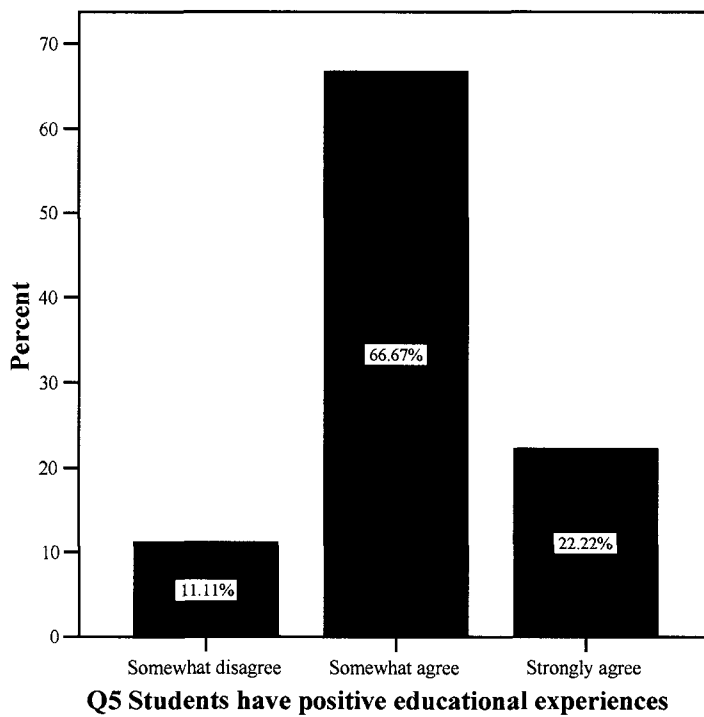


Figure 32. Services and activities help students have positive educational experiences (n = 9)

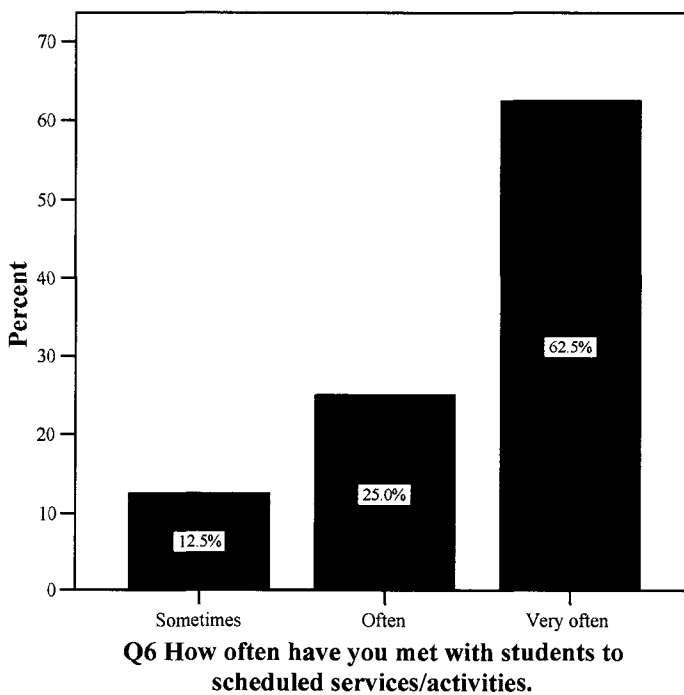


Figure 33. Time spent with students (n = 9)

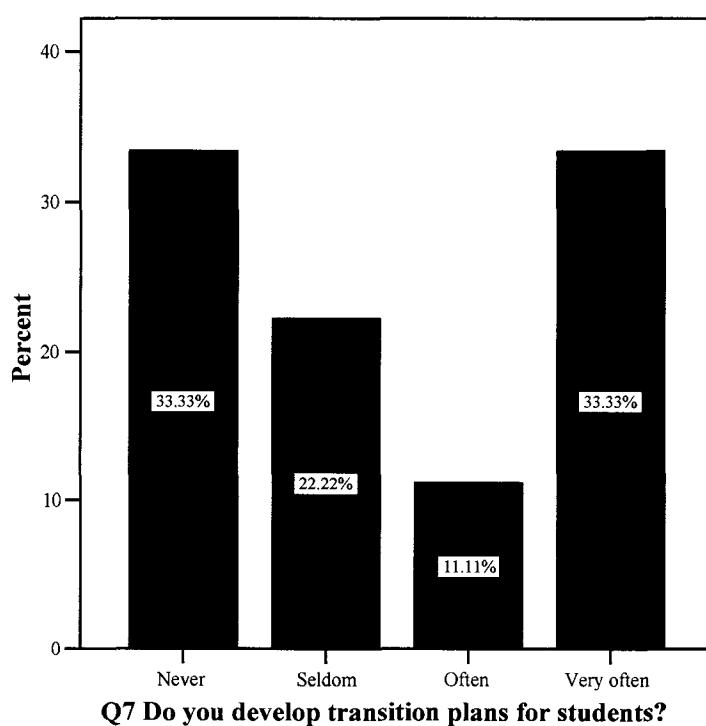


Figure 34. Transition plans for students (n = 9)

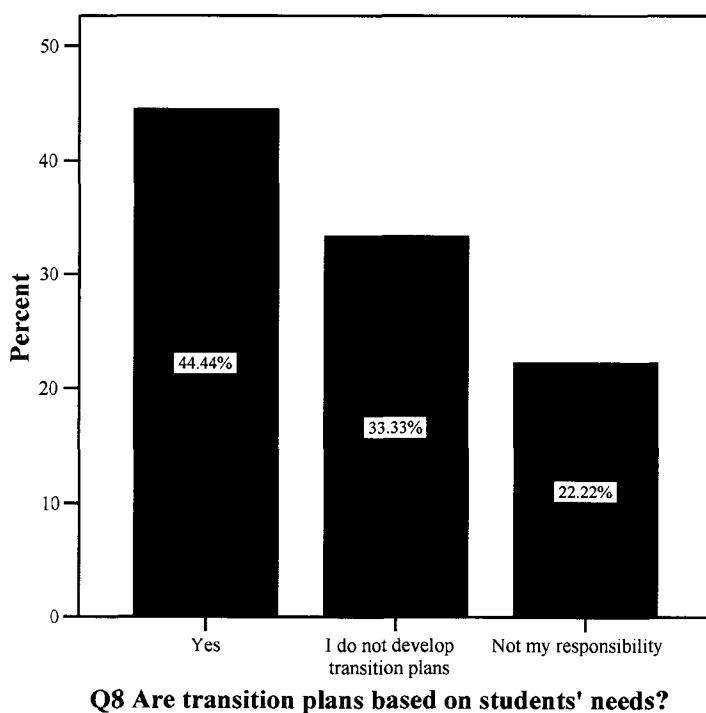


Figure 35. Transition plans based on students' needs (n = 9)

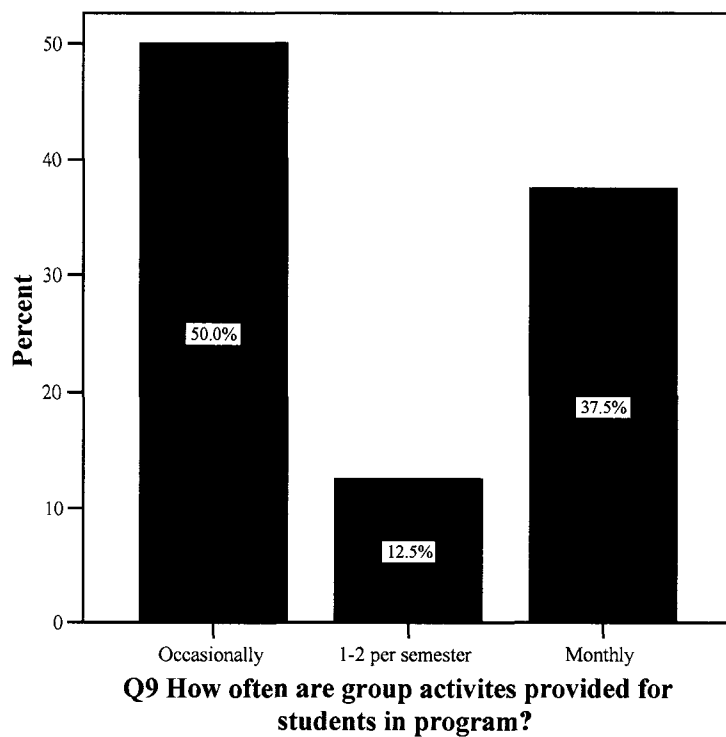


Figure 36. Activities for students (n = 9)

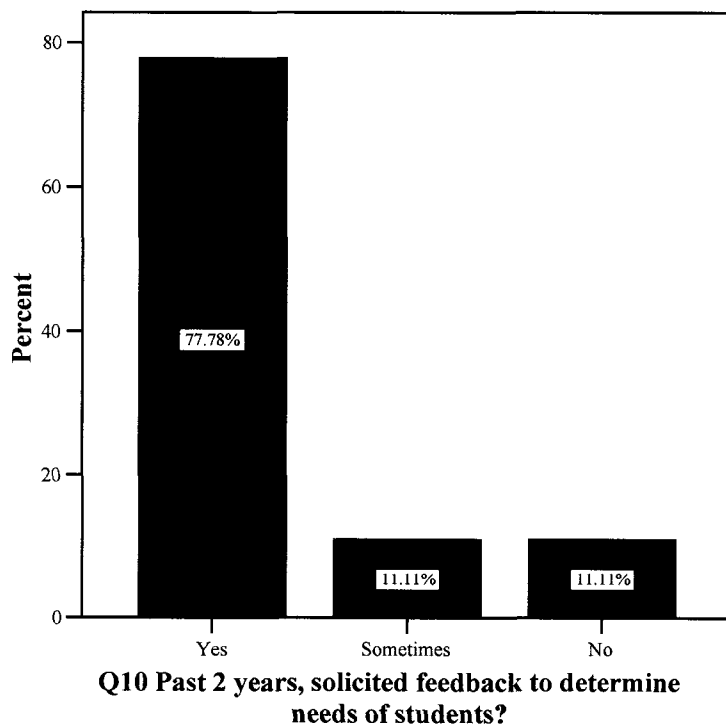


Figure 37. Feedback from students (n = 9)

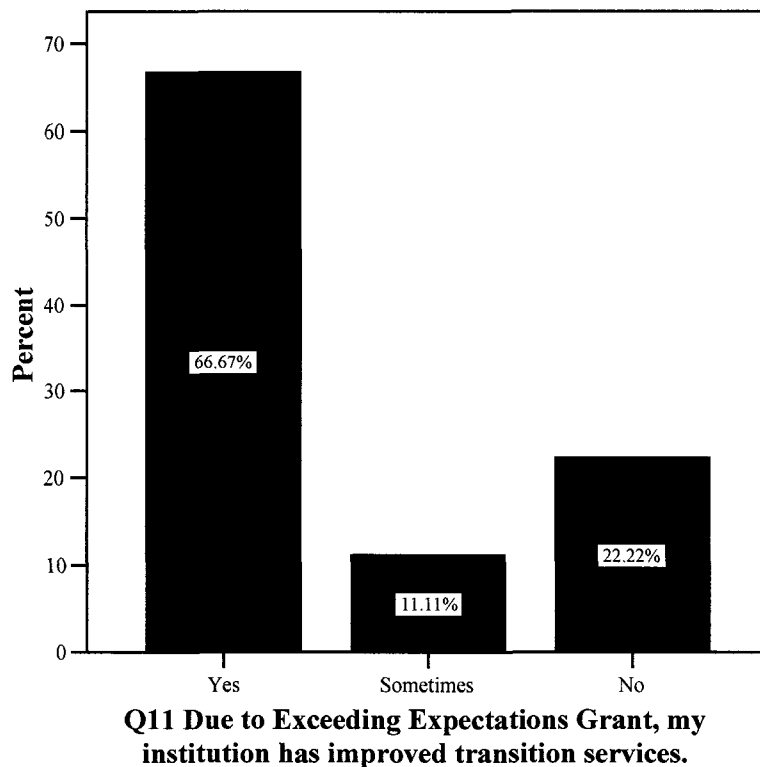


Figure 38: EEP improved transition services (n = 9)

Questions 12 to 25

In questions 12-23 coordinators are asked to describe how often they include the goals listed on the survey in students' transition plans. The goals' rating ranges from "never" (1) to "always" (5). The self-advocacy goal was selected by all respondents with a mean of 5, or "always". Postsecondary educational goals was the second highest mean score (4.5), followed by planning for the future (4), financial/income needs (4), social relationships (4), transportation/mobility (4), and vocational education/training (4). The goal least included in students' transition plan was employment (2.8). Some coordinators did not respond to some of the questions as their students did not have transition plans.

Questions 24 and 25 gave coordinators an opportunity to list other goals not included in the survey. Only one coordinator listed an additional goal, personal care.

Figures 39 and 40 present the data.

Describes how often each item is included in your students' disabilities transition plan.

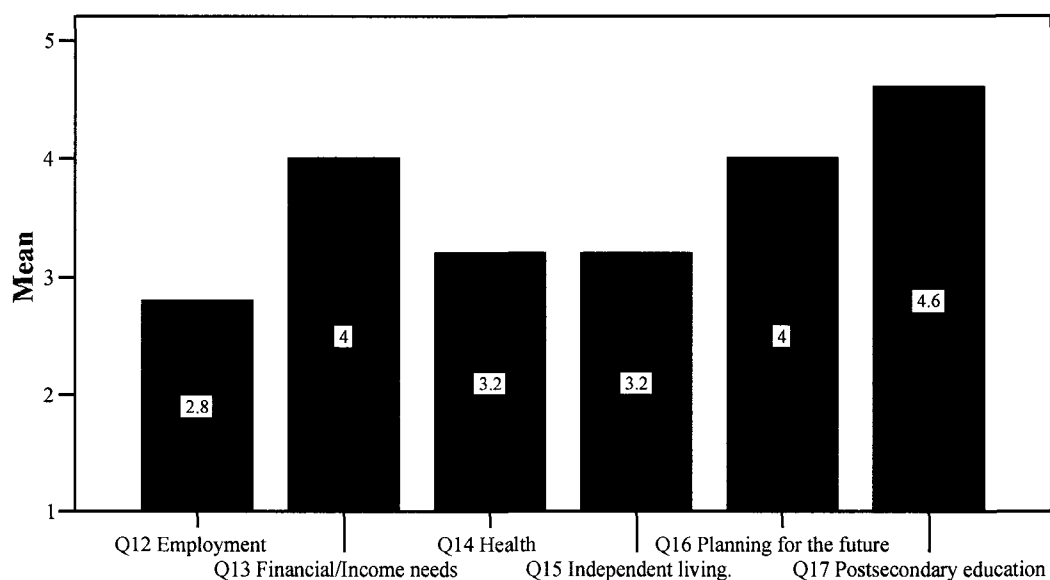


Figure 39. Items in students' transition plan (n = 9)

Describes how often each item is included in your students' disabilities transition plan.

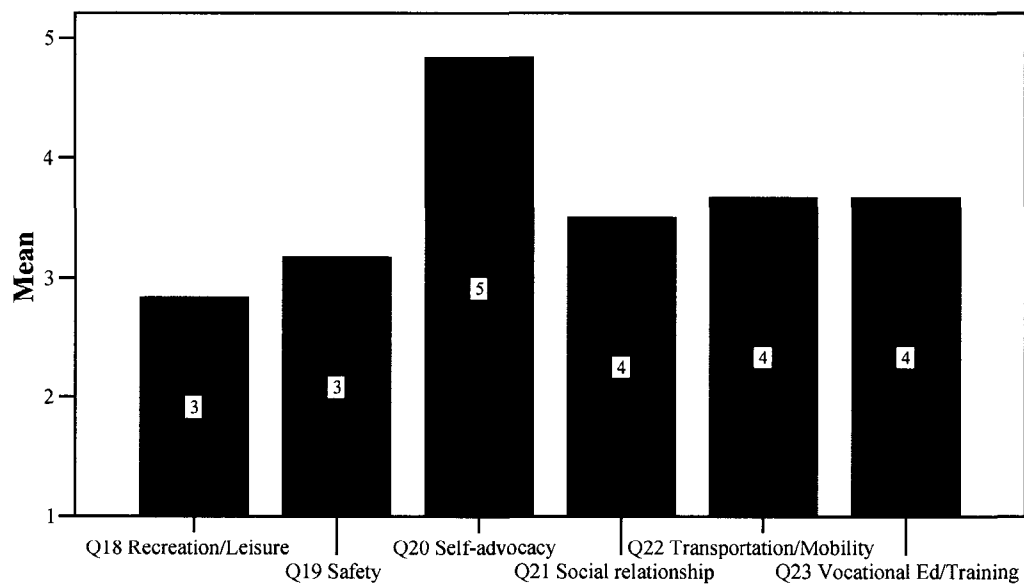


Figure 40. Items in students' transition plans (n = 9)

Question 26

Question 26 asks coordinators to indicate if their students do not have transition plans. Two out of nine transition coordinators indicated their students did not have transition plans.

Question 27

In questions 27, coordinators rate on a scale from 1 (not prepared) to 5 (well prepared), students' with disabilities level of preparation for their transition from high school to postsecondary schools. Interestingly, no coordinators rated students as being well prepared for their transition to postsecondary institutions. Instead, coordinators rated 43% (n = 3) of students as being moderately prepared, 43% (n = 3) between not prepared and moderately prepared, and 14% (n = 1) not prepared. Figure 41 presents the data.

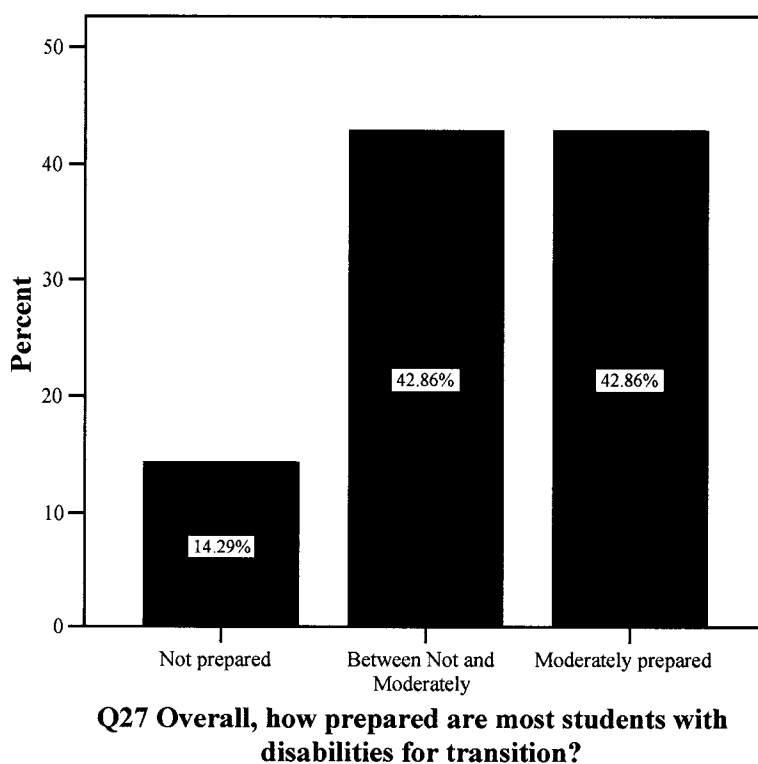


Figure 41. Overall preparation of students with disabilities for postsecondary institutions (n = 9)

Questions 28 to 48

In questions 28-48, coordinators select the rating 1 (never) to 5 (always) which best describes the extent students use the services listed. Ultimately, special accommodations received a mean score of 4 indicating they are often used by students. They were followed by tutoring (3.67), vocational rehabilitation (3.33), technology assistance (3.167), and student focused meetings (3). All other services received a mean score below 3 (sometimes) which indicates the services are seldom or never used. The student advisory committee was the least used service, receiving a mean of 1.6. Figures 42, 43, 44, and 45 present the data.

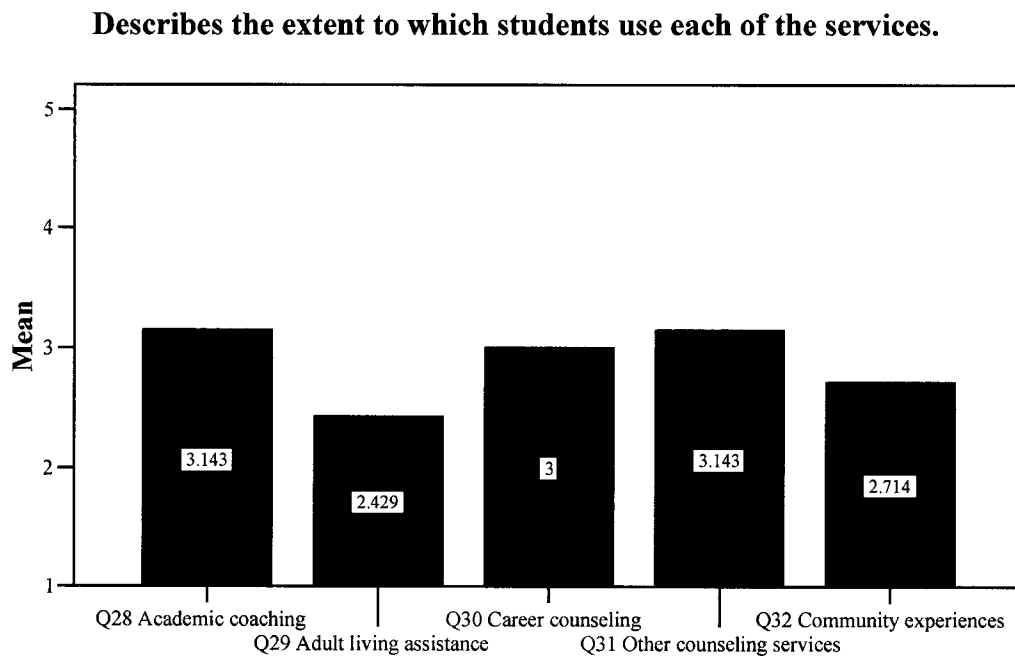


Figure 42. Extent students use services (Questions 28-32) (n = 9)

Describes the extent to which students use each of the services.

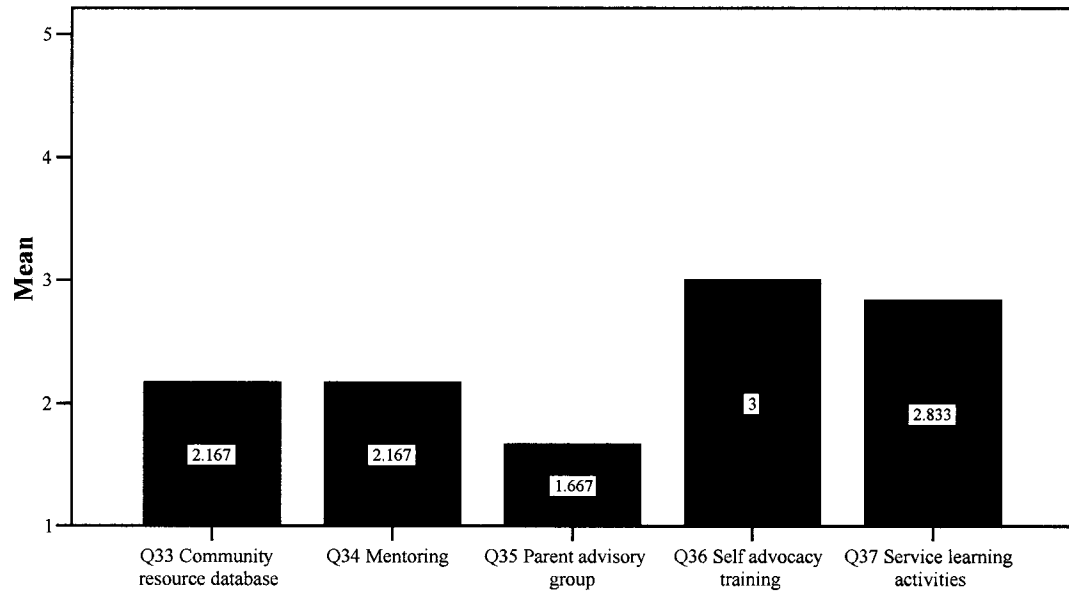


Figure 43: Extent students use services (Questions 33-37) (n = 9)

Describes the extent to which students use each of the services.

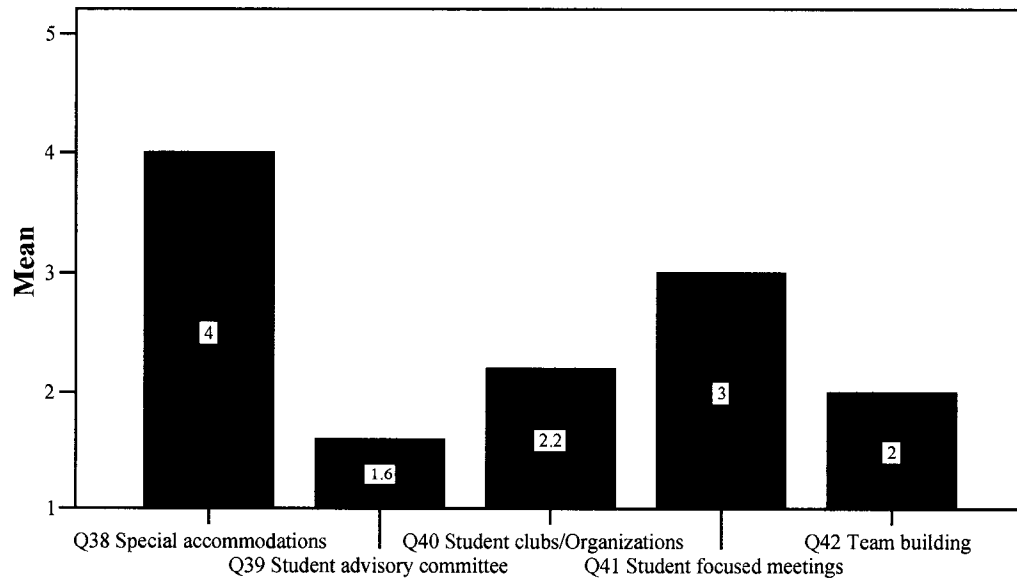


Figure 44. Extent students use services (Questions 38-42) (n = 9)

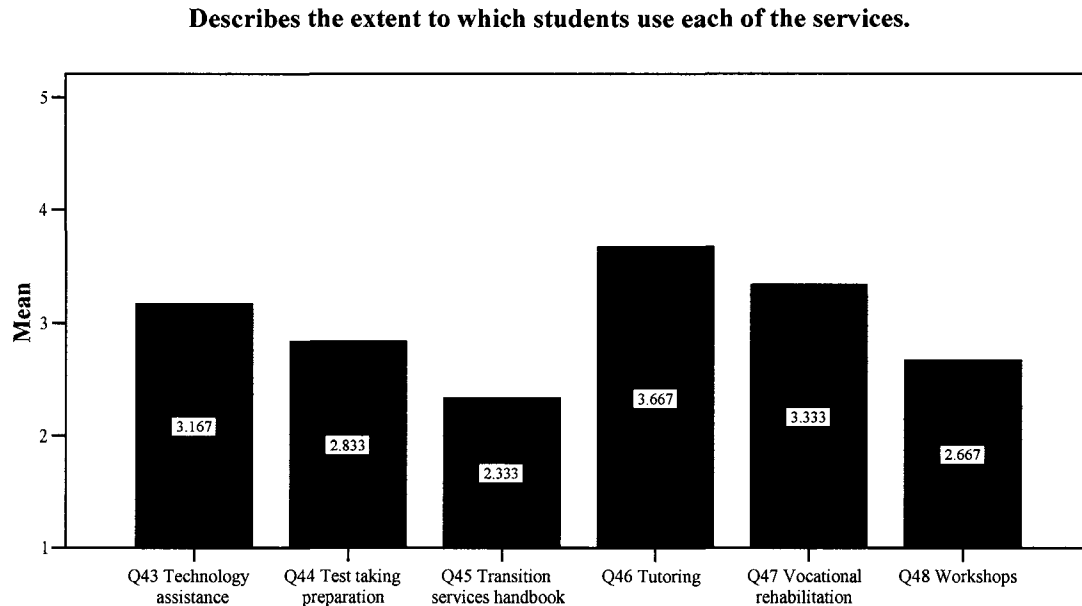


Figure 45. Extent students use services (Questions 43-48) (n = 9)

Questions 49 and 50

Questions 49 and 50 give coordinators an opportunity to rank other services not included on the survey. Van transportation services were added to the list by one coordinator who stated students often use the services.

Question 51

An open-ended question, 51, asks coordinators to list measurable outcomes used to determine if students with disabilities improved as a result of services offered by their programs. The coordinators listed these measurable outcomes: retention rate, withdrawal status, post- graduation employment, academic success, less dependency, and increased social interactions. Three coordinators did not report measurement of students' outcomes.

Question 52

This question asks coordinators to list strategies they personally use to help students with disabilities in their program successfully transition in postsecondary institutions. Table 21 presents the coordinators' strategies.

Table 21

Helpful Strategies to Aid Students' Transition to Postsecondary Institutions

Coordinating Strategies to Help SWD be Successful in College

Our strategies are numerous: monitor student progress (i.e. grades, IEP goals, attendance), maintain close connection with student's parents and high school, hold high standards (attendance, assignments, test prep, and communication), self-determination/self advocacy expectations (student led IEP; student interviews instructors every 4 weeks to monitor progress, student meets weekly with SAVE Coordinator to monitor progress, student responsible for writing quarterly reports sent to school), give more independence to students as they successfully progress, spend considerable time with students before they begin their first day of classes, have an extensive routine for Jr. year and Sr. year visits to college for students and parents, attend student's senior year IEP meeting at their high school and again spend time talking about postsecondary expectations and assist the as they develop goals. I hold a college orientation session and throughout the year, hold seminar sessions. Mentors for 2nd semester are aligned with new students.

There is no actual transition plan between the college and area high school. I am invited to transition meetings in some area high schools but not others---depending on the administration at the high school. Also, the college does not give me the time to focus on this program's development even though I handle all disability services alone. The disability services are only about 5% of my job duties, so time is very limited. My program is based on an academic planning and advisement process. Within this process, my office is responsible for accommodation planning and follow-up, skills instruction, and referrals (follow-up) to various support systems available to all students at BHSU.

I run the Computer Access Center. I talk to the SWD and ask questions needing more than a yes or no answer. I try to find out what has worked so far and build on that. I have done role playing with SWD when they need to talk to someone and are uncomfortable. I encourage independence. This usually starts with dependence and then I help them toward independence—I hope.

(table continued)

Table 21 (continued)

I conduct task analysis of academic goals, coaching for self advocacy, strategies to improve academic deficits, individual counseling, active listening, career exploration, technology training, and disability awareness training for staff and faculty.

My tasks are to develop student orientations, arrange one-on-one meetings with coordinator, schedule individual counseling with students when requested, and training with instructors about services and effective approaches to use with students with disabilities.

Mentoring, coaching, role playing are effective tools to enhance students' transition in college

Offer one-on-one tutoring to all our students and arrange for appropriate accommodations such as: book on tape, tutor, use of tape recorder; a scribe or note taker, adaptive technology if needed, extended time for assignment and tests, and readers if needed.

Response to Research Questions

The coordinators' survey addresses four of the research questions, numbers 1 to 4.

The following is a response to those questions.

Research Question One: To what extent have the Exceeding Expectations project staff delivered as stated?

Coordinators' responses to questions 1 and 2 indirectly answers research question number one. Once again, the question does not separate services and activities funded by their institution from those funded by EEP. From coordinators' responses, it appears a majority (55%) strongly agree and 33% somewhat agree, transition services and activities are helpful to students. Eleven percent somewhat disagree their services help students transition to postsecondary opportunities.

Based on coordinators' responses to question 2, it appears they are mixed on whether their institutions offer numerous activities to help students in their transition from high school to college as only 22% strongly agree, 56% somewhat agree, 11% neither agree nor disagree, and 11% somewhat disagree. While their responses do not deny activities and services exist at their institutions, it does seem to raise some concerns on the quality and quantity of the transition programs and activities at their institutions.

Research Question Two: How effectively has each site implemented the stated programs?

Coordinators' responses to question 5 appear to question the effectiveness of EEP funded activities. Only 22% of coordinators strongly agree services and activities offered by their institutions help students have positive educational experiences. Question 6 reveals coordinators spend a great deal of time with students; 62.5% of coordinators indicated they "very often" meet with students and 25% "often" meet with students. However, their responses to question 9 show only 37.5% of coordinators arrange group activities on a monthly basis.

Research Question Three: Have student outcomes changed as a result of the Exceeding Expectations Grant project?

Question 10 reveals approximately 78% of coordinators solicit feedback from their students to improve services and activities. Approximately 67% of respondents attribute EEP as improving transition services and activities available to students with disabilities. Even though the survey questions can not conclusively evaluate whether

student outcomes changed based on EEP funded programs at their institutions, it does seem to indicate the EEP enhanced services and activities for students with disabilities, which may have a positive influence on students' outcomes.

Research Question Four: What are the most effective support services and strategies for teachers and staff members to use to help students with disabilities successfully transition from high school to postsecondary institutions?

Based on coordinators' responses to questions number 12-25 the most important goals to include in students' transition plans are: self-advocacy, financial/income needs, planning for the future, postsecondary education, social relationships, transportation and mobility, and vocational education/training. Services most useful for students with disabilities include: special accommodations, tutoring, vocational rehabilitation, student focused meetings, technology assistance, academic coaching, career counseling, other counseling services, and self-advocacy training. In addition, Table 21 presents a list of strategies coordinators personally use to help students with disabilities be successful in their transition from high school to college.

Document and Archival Review

The researcher collected evidences from each site which supports the project participants' claims of services offered, how effectively services are delivered, and whether project activities are implemented in a timely and efficient manner. The documents and archival information were used to confirm findings and to write up program descriptions. No further analysis was done on this data.

Field Notes

Field notes were used by the researcher for reflection of the site visits, to remember key points and facts, and to get a more realistic view of each site. No further analysis was done on this data.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

In Chapter IV, the study's findings were presented and examined in connection with the research questions. What does it all mean? Do the study's findings corroborate with the literature review? Did the researcher appropriately address the research questions and accomplish the intent of the study? Does this study add to the knowledge base on students' with disabilities transition to postsecondary institutions? Chapter V explores these questions. The chapter presents key findings and links to previous studies cited in the literature review, provides an interpretation of the data, and concludes with recommendations for enhancing students' with disabilities transition to postsecondary institutions. Recommendations are also made for future research.

Interpretation of the Data and Key Findings

Prior to exploring the key findings, it is important to revisit the purpose and intent of the study in an effort to examine its alignment with the key findings. Hence, the purpose of this case study is to examine the processes and outcomes of the Exceeding Expectations Model Demonstration Project Grant: (1) to determine lessons learned from the project, (2) to gather information addressing students' transition outcomes/progress, and (3) to establish strategies to support teachers and staff in postsecondary institutions which will enhance educational opportunities for students with disabilities in their transition from high school to postsecondary institutions. The intent of this study is to

give a voice to students with disabilities, and to learn from their experiences in an effort to improve the transition of these students.

The qualitative data collection process of the case study incorporated focus group discussions and interviews with students and site coordinators. From the data several major themes emerged. The themes obtained from the students' focus groups include: lack of understanding of disability, lack of preparation, parental influence, perseverance and motivation, problems receiving accommodations, fear, and financial barriers. Although the students interviewed had different experiences and backgrounds, similar themes were found in the focus group discussions and coordinators' personal interviews. Observable themes include: perseverance, lack of understanding of disability, and poor preparation for postsecondary opportunities. Three themes emerged from the coordinators' interviews: lack of adequate preparation, self-advocacy, and accessing services. Significantly, one theme, lack of preparation, was common to both students' and site coordinators' interviews, which further emphasizes its importance. In addition, the coordinators' theme, self-advocacy, is closely aligned with the students' themes, perseverance and self motivation. All are important to students' success in postsecondary institutions. The following key findings are summarized from the qualitative data, discussions, and interviews with students and site coordinators.

Qualitative Data Key Findings

1. Many people lack understanding of students with disabilities.
2. Students lack adequate preparation for postsecondary institutions, especially for advanced college mathematics. Few students take college preparatory or advanced courses in high school.

3. Parents are the most important factor in students' decisions to pursue postsecondary institutions.
4. Some high school classes are not very challenging for many students with disabilities. Several students defined their classes as "watered-down", "too easy", and "slide through classes".
5. Students who are successful in postsecondary education have a strong will to succeed. These students are self-motivated and they persevere despite the odds against them.
6. Some students have problems receiving accommodations as a result of some instructors' refusal to give identified accommodations and/or lack of understanding of students' instructional needs.
7. Anxiety about college is a barrier for some students with disabilities in attending postsecondary institutions. They are initially fearful of not having friends, not being accepted by others, and fearful of attending a large institution.
8. Inadequate financial support concerns many students with disabilities. They are concerned about funding needed for tuition, special services/resources, medical needs, transportation, housing, and special academic equipment.
9. Students with disabilities are most concerned about: accessing classes and equipment, accommodations, parking issues, passing classes, money issues, medical problems, and other people's lack of understanding of students' disabilities.

10. Self-advocacy skills are essential for students' with disabilities independence and success in postsecondary institutions.
11. Failure of students with disabilities to access services in postsecondary institutions may be detrimental to their success and transition to postsecondary institutions.
12. Students' with disabilities most effective resources in preparing for postsecondary institutions include: parents, teachers, counselors, special education classes, technical classes, college preparatory classes, mainstream classes, advanced placement classes, assistive technology, accommodations, tutors, interpreters, learning centers.

The key findings from the qualitative data align with other research studies previously referenced in Chapter II, Literature Review. The researcher was particularly surprised to find such a strong parallel between this case study and Lehmann, Davies, and Laurin's (2000) study which shows there is a lack of understanding and acceptance of students' disabilities, lack of sufficient financial resources for students with disabilities, and a lack of students' self-advocacy skills and training to live independently. Table 22 includes other studies which report findings comparable to this study.

Table 22

Research Studies Aligned with the EEP Case Study Qualitative Findings

Researchers	Dates	Research Studies	EEP Findings #
Blumberg & Ferguson	2003	Recognized societal attitudes, lack of personal control, poor preparation, limited services, transportation, financial assistance, physical, and medical issues as barriers facing students with disabilities	1, 2, 8
Burgstahler, Crawford, & Acosta	2003		
Hart, Zafft, & Zimbrich	2001		
Burgstahler, Crawford, & Acosta	2001	Discovered students with disabilities who transfer from a two-year institution to a 4-year institution have concerns securing financial support, disability-related services, and adjusting to a larger, less personal environment	6, 7, 8
Lehmann, Davies, & Laurin	2000	Study revealed there are a lack of understanding and acceptance concerning disabilities in general, and a lack of adequate services to assist students with disabilities in tackling academic and non-academic responsibilities. Students with disabilities lack sufficient financial resources and knowledge to acquire them, and students lack self-advocacy skills and training needed to live independently.	1, 2, 8,10
Henderson	1999	Found secondary students with disabilities lack the same kinds of preparation for postsecondary education as their non-disabled peers	2
National Council on Disability	2003	Reported the cost of attending college is an impossible obstacle for many families and students	8
National Information Center for Children and Youths with Disabilities	1993	Affirms self-determination and self-advocacy are relevant for all students	10
Brotherson, Berdine, & Sartini	1993	Cites successful transition for students with disabilities requires support from parents	3,12

Quantitative data were collected from students' responses and coordinators' responses to the survey instrument. The key findings compiled from the quantitative data align with some of the qualitative findings, as well as add further findings. The list below summarizes quantitative findings from the survey instruments.

Quantitative Data Key Findings

1. The services most used by students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions are special accommodations, preparation for tests and testing modifications, tutoring, technology assistance (assistive technology), and vocational rehabilitation.
2. The services used less by students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions are adult living assistance, community resource database, mentoring, parent advisory group, student advisory committee, team building, and transition services handbook.
3. The majority of students and transition coordinators (counselors) agree their postsecondary institutions provide services to help students make a successful transition from secondary to postsecondary institutions.
4. The majority of students and transition coordinators (counselors) agree their postsecondary institutions provide activities to help students be successful.
5. The majority of students attribute the activities and services offered by their postsecondary institutions with helping them have positive educational experiences.
6. Slightly more than half (59%) of students participate in the development of their transition plan.

7. Most transition plans for students with disabilities focus on their needs.
8. Students with disabilities who attend postsecondary institutions are most concerned about: academics, accommodations, career development, communication with teachers, employment, failing courses, financial problems, graduating, and learning.
9. Students with disabilities who attend postsecondary institutions are less concerned about: dropping out of school, independent living, living arrangements, others' perceptions, and parking.
10. Students with disabilities who attend postsecondary institutions are not adequately skilled in mathematics prior to attending postsecondary institutions.
11. Few students with disabilities are well prepared for the transition from high school to postsecondary institutions.
12. Counselors of students with disabilities are very supportive, caring, available, helpful, and encouraging.

As with the qualitative findings, the quantitative data's key findings support other research studies referenced in Chapter II, Literature Review. This study's findings particularly confirm there are typical or generic types of accommodations offered at most institutions. In addition, this study confirms transition for students with disabilities is difficult and challenging, as implied by other researchers in the literature review. Table 23 presents collaborating research studies referenced in Chapter II which support this case study's findings.

Table 23

Research Studies Aligned with the EEP Case Study Quantitative Findings

Researchers	Dates	Research Studies	EEP Findings #
National Center for Education Statistics	1999	Survey findings revealed the most typical type of accommodations provided for students with disabilities were alternate exam format or additional exam time, tutors, readers, classroom note taker, or scribe, registration assistance, adaptive equipment or technology, textbooks on tape, sign language interpreters, and course substitutions or waivers	1
Johnson, Sharpe, Sinclair, Hasazi, Furney, and DeStefano	1997	Study examined 147 IEP/transition plans and found the plans did not include transition-related information as linkages and responsibility of outside agencies and services needed after graduation. Parents and professionals needed professional development activities regarding appropriate instructional and curricular strategies in transition services	11
Stodden	2001	States even with appropriate goals and objectives in place, the transition for many students with disabilities is complex and challenging	8
Zafft, Hart, and Zimbrich	2004	Follow-up study of 40 youths with significant disabilities who were successful in college used a wide range of academic accommodations	3,4
Black, Smith, Chang, Harding, and Stodden	2002	Discovered “common generic supports” at the postsecondary institutions included: testing accommodations, personal counseling, advocacy and tutors, developmental/remedial instruction, learning center laboratory, note takers/ scribes/readers, interpreter/translators, study skills , and priority registration/course scheduling	1

Comparison of the Multi-method Data Collection

The multi-method data collection was used by the researcher to facilitate and validate the data based on the “triangulation” concept that bias in one data may be neutralized or lessened when other data sources or methods are used. For most incidences, the multi-method data collection used in the case study complemented and supported the overall findings. Nevertheless, there appears to be a few discrepancies.

One discrepancy is noted in the qualitative data which cites students are most concerned about parking issues, while the quantitative data cites students are less concerned about parking. A second inconsistency between the data are observed in the qualitative data which recognizes parents as the most important factor and resource for students with disabilities in their transition from secondary to postsecondary institutions. Yet, when one views the quantitative data, it is evident students do not use services that counsel parents such as parent advisory groups.

This raises an important question: if parents are so instrumental in students pursuing postsecondary education, why are students reporting their parents are not involved in parent advisory groups? There may be several reasons for students not using these services: (a) it is possible students and coordinators misinterpreted the question, (b) the services are not available at their institutions, and (c) parents are not interested in participating in advisory groups. Whatever the reason, it seemingly raises concerns as to the importance of parents to students’ with disabilities success in postsecondary institutions.

Another discrepancy is seen in the importance of students developing self-advocacy skills. The qualitative data clearly presents the importance of students

developing these skills. However, when one looks at the quantitative data showing how little students receive self advocacy training as a service, it raises a red flag. How can students develop self-advocacy skills if slightly less than half perceive themselves to be uninvolved in their transition planning? In addition, why are students reporting they are not using mentors, team building activities, student advisory committees, and workshop services to enhance their transition into postsecondary institutions?

Discrepancies can also be observed between the students' and coordinators' responses to similar questions on the two survey instruments. While some of the findings acquired from the students' survey support the coordinators' survey findings, there are some contradictions between students' and coordinators' views of certain questions. In a comparison of how students and coordinators responded to similar questions asked, Table 24 shows students responded more favorably toward their transition activities and services. This table reflects the comparison of the students and coordinators only responding to "strongly agree" or "agree" and "very often" or "often". Some of the response options differ between student questionnaire and coordinator questionnaire. In that case, the comparisons are based on the response options presented.

Table 24

Comparison of Students' and Coordinators' Survey Responses

Survey Question #	Common questions (paraphrased) from Students' and Coordinators' Surveys	Students' Responses	Coordinators' Responses
1	Transition services/programs at the postsecondary institutions help students to be successful.	75.44% Strongly agree 24.56% Somewhat agree	55.56% Strongly agree 33.33% Somewhat agree
2	My college provides activities that help students to be successful.	49.12% Strongly agree 38.5% Somewhat agree	22.22% Strongly agree 55.56% Somewhat agree
3	I am satisfied with students' accommodations offered by my college.	70.18% Strongly agree 28% somewhat agree	100% Strongly agree
4	I am satisfied with the transition activities offered by my college.	42.11% Strongly agree 38.5% Somewhat agree	22.22% Strongly agree 33.33% Somewhat agree
5	As a result of the transition services and activities offered by my college, students have positive educational experiences.	52.63% Strongly agree 35.09% Somewhat agree	22.22% Strongly agree 66.67% Somewhat agree
6	How often do students meet with the transition coordinator (counselor) at their college?	12.28% Very often 21.05% Often	62.5% Very often 25% Often
7	Students assist in the development of their transition plan	59.65 % Yes	33.33% Very often 11.11% Often
8	Students' transition plan is based on their needs	71.93% Yes 14.05% Somewhat agree	44.44% Yes 33% Do not develop plans

In a second comparison, Table 25 shows how students and coordinators responded to questions which examined the “extent” students used listed services. From the Table, one can observe major differences in students’ responses to the extent they use certain services, and how coordinators responded to the questions. Students in almost all incidences tend to use the services less than coordinators perceived students used the services. Table 25 presents the comparison of students’ and coordinators’ responses to services used.

Table 25

Comparisons of Students’ and Coordinators’ Responses to the Extent Students Use Listed Services

Question #	Extent Students Used Services	Students’ Responses	Coordinators’ Responses
S-9, C-28	Academic coaching	2.45	3.14
S-10, C-29	Adult living assistance	1.43	2.42
S-11, C-30	Career counseling	2.13	3.00
S-12, C-31	Other counseling services	2.37	3.14
S-13, C-32	Community experience	2.22	2.71
S-14, C-33	Community Resource Database	1.94	2.16
S-15, C-34	Mentoring	2.09	2.16
S-16, C-35	Parent Advisory Group	1.36	1.66
S-17, C-36	Self Advocacy Training	1.84	3.00

A third comparison looks at students’ and coordinators’ responses to how they perceive students’ overall preparation. This comparison observed inconsistencies between students’ and coordinators’ responses. Students’ perceptions of their overall preparation seem to be more favorable than coordinators’ perceptions. Consequently,

Table 26 shows students' overall rating on their preparation for postsecondary institutions is higher than the coordinators' rating of their preparation.

Table 26

Comparison of Overall Preparation of Students for Postsecondary Institutions

Question #	Question	Students' Responses	Coordinators' Responses
S-35, C-27	Overall, how prepared are students for the transition to postsecondary institutions?	17.02% well prepared	42.85% moderately prepared
		21.28% high moderate	42.85% between not and moderately
		36.17% moderately prepared	14.29% not prepared
		8.51% low moderate	
		17.02% not prepared	

Still, there are many corroborating findings between the qualitative and quantitative data collections. Both qualitative and quantitative data reveal students lack of preparation for their transition to postsecondary institutions. According to the data, many students lack adequate preparation for mathematics. In addition, students in the EEP case study indicated they are not very skilled in life skills, literacy, organizing, prioritizing, problem solving, social skills, study skills, use of technology, test taking skills, and time management as evidenced by students' rating of their skill level on the survey instrument.

Although students with disabilities are still entering postsecondary institutions unprepared, they seem to be fairly satisfied with the services and activities offered at their institutions to enhance their learning. Yet, students appear to be concerned about

receiving accommodations. Therefore, based on the corroborating data, attention is needed to address their concerns

Site coordinators appear to not be completely satisfied with the services and activities offered by their institutions. From discussions with the coordinators, the Exceeding Expectations project has provided opportunities to collaborate with other coordinators/counselors and to access valuable resources which provide ideas to strengthen their programs. Consequently, the coordinators are continuously assessing and making modifications to their programs to aid students' retention and success at their institutions.

Summary of Responses to Research Questions

This research study started with five major research questions designed to examine the processes and outcomes of the Exceeding Expectations Model Demonstration Project. In Chapter IV, a response addressing the research questions was provided after each data collection section. Based on the case study's findings, the following is an overall summary addressing the research questions.

Research Question One: To what extent have the Exceeding Expectations project staff delivered as stated?

Qualitative and quantitative data provide evidence the EEP has attempted to improve the access and retention of students with disabilities at eight postsecondary institutions in five states. Through summer institutions, the EEP website, local and national conferences, the EEP supports and guides the development of postsecondary educators. Ultimately, it appears the EEP staff and coordinators are better equipped to help students, parents, and secondary and postsecondary educators. Yearly, the EEP requires each site

coordinator to complete an activity report which examines what worked well, barriers encountered, products developed, and support needed to conduct future activities. In addition, at the Summer Institute each site coordinator and staff evaluates the project's progress, and share their successes and failures with other EEP participants in an effort to improve the project's outcomes. The EEP staff and coordinators disseminate relevant information through their website, dissertations, journals, and workshops. The EEP has future plans to develop several products (orientation video and transition handbook) to aid students, parents, and educators. It appears the Exceeding Expectations Grant project staff has delivered on the project's goals.

Research Question Two: How effectively has each site implemented the stated programs?

The research study reveals activities and services are in place at each institution to help students have a successful transition to postsecondary institutions. According to students' responses on the survey instrument, the majority of students have had a positive educational experience as a result of the transition services and activities offered at their institutions. Still, this study is limited in that it was not able to isolate and evaluate exclusively the activities and programs funded by the EEP. Therefore, this study is unable to conclusively evaluate the effectiveness of each site.

Research Question Three: Have student outcomes changed as a result of the Exceeding Expectations project?

Currently, there is no tool in place to measure the change in students' outcomes as a result of the Exceeding Expectation Grant project. However, some of the site

coordinators use students' retention rate, withdrawal status, grades, accomplishment of transition goals, social interactions, graduation rate, and job obtainment as measures of student outcomes. Still, this study cannot assess whether students' outcomes have changed as a result of the EEP.

Research Question Four: What are the most effective support services and strategies for teachers and staff members to use to help students with disabilities successfully transition from high school to postsecondary institutions?

In Chapter IV, effective services and strategies were generated and presented from the compilation of focus group discussions, interviews, and survey instruments. Additional strategies and recommendations were generated by the students during the focus group discussions. Students offered excellent recommendations and suggestions on encouragement, expectations, parents, professional development for teachers and students, preparation, respect, self-advocacy and support. Table 27 shows students' recommendations and suggestions to help students with disabilities make a successful transition from secondary to postsecondary institutions.

Table 27

Students' Recommendations and Suggestions

Areas of Recommendation	Students' Recommendations and Suggestions
Encouragement	Do not discourage students. You should actually encourage and talk to students to the point where they feel comfortable. I would have liked to have heard in high school that we want you up here, or we need you up here, or this is where you stand, or we can help you when you get up here or something like that. I may have wanted to do more when I was younger with that direction if I'd heard that. I would say professors need to believe you. I have a disability. I'm pretty forthright, if someone wants to ask me a question, I'll answer it. I'm fairly open in talking about stuff, but when they just assume that I'm lying, I can't get accommodations.
Expectations	Don't try to give us an easier time than other students. Try to treat us as you treat any other student. If they [students with disabilities] want to try to do things on their own, don't try to make their work easier just because they have a disability. Keep an open mind about these folks [students with disabilities]. Give them a chance. Talk to them.
Parents	As parents, don't be afraid about being over aggressive as far as making sure that your kids gets what they need. The first couple of days I was here my system was still trying to adjust; I basically asked my mom to do it. Thankfully, over the years my mom has learned to not let go of the problem until it's solved. So parents, be willing to stand up for your kids but at the same time, make sure they are learning how to handle things on their own. Let your child be independent when they are in high school and help them learn responsibilities so when they get here, they'll know what to do. Be extra supportive.
Preparation	Offer something to prep you for college, to give you an idea what college classes will be like, how the syllabus might be set up, things to give you an idea what to expect and what the university might expect.

(table continued)

Table 27 (continued)

Preparation	Develop study skills. I took the class here and it's great. It really helps. I think that should have been offered as an elective.
	Show them (students) the services that are available at their college and maybe have a contact person when they arrive on campus. I think I would have benefited from that. I think I would have been able to start off on a better foot.
	I would advise high school teachers to bring their students to college to see. I thought it was silly when they told me that. I didn't do that. I really didn't understand the point of college. I just wanted to learn how to weld.
	Learn to write. Take more English and math classes. I would say to take college prep classes to help be more prepared.
	I think if we got students with disabilities and people in the disability office to go around to different high schools to let students know the services available that would make a lot of difference. I see a lot of new freshmen students who are shocked to find the work is hard.
Professional Development	I think professors and grad students need to take multi-cultural training. As an employee of the university, they should take disability awareness training. I also think the disability resource counselor should help first year students who come to the university be an advocate for themselves and show them the proper way to ask for accommodations.
	I think a big issue is getting the faculty out of the mindset that because you have three hundred or five hundred students in class they have to lecture. They can't use different methods. Open your mind up to other options of how to teach and what students can do. It doesn't necessarily have to be the student with the disability who does things differently. Maybe it's a student who learns. Just be open to those possibilities. The other thing is to treat people like adults. Remember if people are coming here, they are adults.
	Provide some workshops or seminars for the faculty to get information and learn new ways to help people with disabilities. Each case is different, but if they could get the basics, then they can refine whatever it is they need to reach individual students. Some of the instructors have asked for help because they have never had any training.

(table continued)

Table 27 (continued)

Respect	As far as professors go, compensate, don't discriminate. It's a really simple thing. If I ask for something, I need it. It's not that I'm asking for attention. It's not that I'm trying to get out of the work. It's not that I'm trying to find an easy route through college. It's that I need help to get through college. I don't want to be treated like a little kid who needs my hands held as I work my way through college. I want to be treated as someone who has worked hard to get here, because I am and I want to be treated like an adult. That's probably my biggest issue, a lot of times they treat me like a little kid. Basically, if I ask for something, listen. That's quite possibly the biggest thing. If I ask, I know I need it. It's not a possible thing that I might need in the future. It means I need it now and consistently. I just want people to know we're just as smart as anybody else. We struggle or need a little push sometimes, but we're as smart as anybody else. Don't characterize and generalize people because some people have different needs. When you have people pushing you and telling you to do things, you tend to do it better.
Self-Advocacy	My advice to the students is for them to be patient. You have to look for help and you have to ask for help. And when you're given things like disability accommodation letters, use them, because if you don't and you're doing badly, you don't have an excuse. So use the resources that are available. I think students need to seek help and any other resources to help them get through college. They need to be an advocate for themselves. You can't ignore your disability. You have to realize there is a problem and there are accommodations out there. You're not stupid, you just learn different. So once you accept the fact you have a disability, you can reach out and get help.
Support	I think the district really should rethink how they put people into certain classes because I get very upset. It is not just me that they put in the wrong class.

(table continued)

Table 27 (continued)

Support	A support group would be helpful. I noticed just this semester, having this little focus group to talk to about my difficulties with college has helped. As far as that goes, you have such an emotional support net with your family and friends from where ever you're from who has dealt with your disability throughout all the years, to suddenly be isolated, ostracized in college is a really big emotional shock. Students with disabilities should incorporate their stories in a transition manual. I would have high school counselors help students transition, get started, help them with the paperwork and maybe even help fill out scholarship forms and help with contact information for the ADA Center to help make the transition into college a lot easier. Maybe take a trip from high school to the college. I think students who need extra help, need more one on one specialized services where they get a tour and meet with college contacts. Something to at least help transition them and make it more of a smooth process rather than a blind process. Incorporate fun classes like art and music to motivate students to stay in school.
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Research Question Five: What are the major concerns of students with disabilities in the transition from high school to postsecondary institutions?

Major concerns of students with disabilities in their transition from high school to postsecondary institutions were compiled in this study from focus group discussions, interviews, and survey instruments. On page 127, Table 14 shows current students' concerns (most and least) generated from the survey instrument. Also, on page 97, Table 12 provides supporting quotes from the focus group discussions on students' concerns.

Conclusions/Implications

Throughout this study, I examined the processes and outcomes of students' with disabilities transition to postsecondary institutions in the Exceeding Expectations Model Demonstration Project. The data collection instruments were specifically aligned to evaluate whether the EEP accomplished goals and to examine its effectiveness on students' with disabilities transition to postsecondary institutions. Hence, throughout the data analyses, I carefully examined multiple data sources to determine their validity and relevancy to the EEP case study. To avoid or at least minimize forming bias assumptions on the findings, I acquired assistance from several researchers in the data analysis phase of the study. One researcher assisted in entering the data in SPSS database and assisted in the data analysis. Two additional researchers reviewed the qualitative data coding process to determine consistency and accuracy.

Multiple sources and methods were used; however, this study did not yield new findings, but rather confirmed previous empirical research studies' findings. As seen in the earlier analyses, the EEP case study closely resembles other findings noted in the literature review. Additionally, while students' recommendations presented in this study are informative, they offer no new solutions, but instead offer confirmation to previous studies' findings.

Across the eight disparate sites and a multitude of students, the study reveals there are many commonalities in students' with disabilities transitional experiences. Coordinators' findings corroborate students' data, but their perceptions of the quality of services and activities are rather different. Nevertheless, the coordinators' data are also aligned with the literature review.

Still, I believe the purpose of the research was partially accomplished. The case study did examine the EEP and established strategies to support teachers and staff to improve educational opportunities for students with disabilities in their transition from high school to postsecondary institutions. This study shows the EEP provides support to institutions aligned with the project to promote the access and retention of students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions by providing: financial support to sponsor special programs and services, training sessions, and products and publications which help educators facilitate students' with disabilities educational experiences. Yet, this study was limited in gathering information to determine if students' outcomes changed as a result of the EEP. The data seem to offer some evidence students connected with the EEP are satisfied with their counselors, services, and activities offered by their postsecondary institutions. This study does not provide conclusive evidence.

The intent of the study was to give a voice to students with disabilities, to listen and learn from their experiences, and to create a body of knowledge which could aid other students with disabilities in their quest for higher education. In one way, this study has far exceeded my expectations. I did not anticipate the overwhelmingly positive response from students and staff who participated in this study. Students candidly shared their stories and challenges; stories which inspired and motivated me to learn more about their plight. Although this study is small, involving only about one hundred students and nine staff members, the findings are in no way diminished by the size of the study. I hope this study has in some way enhanced the lives of the study's participants by giving them a voice and a channel to communicate to others their barriers, concerns, and challenges. I have heard their voices. I understand their challenges. Hopefully, this study provides an

avenue for others to listen to students' voices, and to take action to improve students' outcomes.

The most rewarding part of the study for me was meeting, talking to, and learning from students. Many students were excited to be heard; one could see it on their faces and hear it in the way they expressed their gratitude for an opportunity to discuss their barriers and share their recommendations for improvement. The lessons I have learned from the students are invaluable. In addition, I am grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with dedicated counselors, site coordinators, and other EEP staff members who are committed to helping students succeed at their postsecondary institutions. By visiting institutions in the EEP project, I gained a real understanding of how challenging it is to design activities and services to address the needs of all students with disabilities.

I keep seeing the pain on their faces and hearing the frustration in the voices of several of the study's participants. One statement in particular, made by a student is forever etched in my mind, "Just because I have a disability, does not mean I'm stupid". Other voices of students are recorded throughout this study. I believe one only needs to listen to these voices to better understand students' needs. By listening, I feel we can change outcomes and create an educational environment conducive for all students to learn and become productive citizens. Hopefully, this study causes others to listen, to hear, to see the pain and frustration of students with disabilities, and to encourage them to take action to improve their educational outcomes. Once again, I return to the question presented in Chapter One, "Are we doing all we can to meet the needs of students, including those with disabilities"? At least one program, the Exceeding Expectations Model Demonstration Project is trying to make a difference.

Recommendations

In spite of the study's limitations, many recommendations are made by students and coordinators to enhance students' transition to postsecondary institutions. I think these suggestions give us ideas how model secondary and postsecondary institutions' transition programs should look. Most significantly, these suggestions emphasize the importance of setting high expectations for students with disabilities, empowering these students, and treating them with dignity and respect.

Based upon the study's findings, an ideal secondary school would involve students in developing written plans for transitioning from their high schools to postsecondary institutions. Transition planning in model secondary schools would focus on students' goals and objectives. Students would be encouraged to start thinking about postsecondary opportunities as soon as they enter secondary school. Transition plans would include college tours for students during their junior or senior year in high school in order to promote their understanding services and activities available. In addition, students with disabilities would be encouraged to take advanced placement and/or college preparatory classes (especially mathematics) in high school to prepare for rigorous academic expectations at postsecondary schools. Model secondary programs would offer workshops or training for students to improve self-advocacy skills, study skills, problem solving skills, organizational skills, literacy, social skills, use of technology, and time management skills.

Model postsecondary institutions would reach out to secondary students with disabilities interested in pursuing postsecondary educational opportunities in their junior or senior year in high school. Postsecondary counselors would develop transition

handbooks for students with disabilities interested in pursuing postsecondary education.

The handbooks' development would involve students with disabilities already enrolled in college to acquire a better understanding of questions other students with disabilities may have prior to college. In addition, model postsecondary programs would offer pre-college orientation sessions for students and parents. Once students reach postsecondary schools, model programs would survey students to determine their needs and interest for services and activities at postsecondary institutions. Measurable outcomes would be developed to monitor students' progress.

Students would be encouraged to advocate for their needs. Student advisory groups and parent support groups would provide opportunities to learn from others' experiences. In addition, model postsecondary transition programs would organize focus groups to discuss concerns, provide one-on-one discussions, and have a drop box available for students to voice concerns. Community resources' databases including services to help students with financial, housing, health, and personal needs would be maintained. Also, career and employment services would be available to assist students in transitioning from postsecondary institutions to career and employment opportunities.

Model postsecondary institutions would not stop short of providing services just to students. They would also offer training to secondary and postsecondary educators on types of disabilities, accommodations, services and activities available to students with disabilities. The training would also include teaching strategies and techniques for differentiated instruction to address the needs of diverse learners.

Ultimately, students and coordinators in this study provided helpful strategies and recommendations to increase students' access and retention in postsecondary institutions.

While these recommendations are not totally innovative, they do offer authentication to the existing knowledge base on students' with disabilities transition to postsecondary institutions presented in earlier empirical studies.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based upon the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are suggested for future research:

1. More research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of services and activities offered at postsecondary institutions aligned with measurable students' outcomes.
2. Additional research is needed to examine whether students are actively involved in transition planning while in secondary schools and to examine how the plans are monitored.
3. Future surveys should include pre and post self-assessments of students' skill levels. The survey should be administered to students at the beginning and end of their postsecondary education to compare progress.
4. Longitudinal research study is recommended to observe and track students with a wide range of disabilities in secondary institutions and follow these students to postsecondary institutions to better access their transition.
5. Research the effectiveness of various types of academic accommodations and adjustment; determine their accessibility and availability.
6. Research the effectiveness of Universal Design for enhancing students' learning.

7. Research gender differences of students with disabilities for services used and importance of services.

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APPENDIX A

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL AND QUESTIONS

APPENDIX A

Focus Group Protocol and Questions

Moderator introduction, thank you, and purpose (2 minutes)	Hello. My name is Dorothy Garrison-Wade. I am with the Exceeding Expectations Grant Project. I will be moderating our discussion today. I would like to begin by thanking each of you for taking time to help us with our study. Your voice really does matter We will be here for about an hour or no longer than an hour and a half. The reason we are here is to get your opinions about support needed to prepare students with disabilities for a successful transition to college. I am not here to convince you of anything or try to sway your opinions. My job is just to ask you questions and then encourage and moderate your discussion.
Consent (3 minutes)	Before we begin with introductions of participants and guidelines, I want to go over a few things on how this session will be conducted and what we need from you. First of all, we will be tape recording our discussion to make sure we document all of the valuable information you will be sharing. However, no names are attached to any report. Also, if at any time you are uncomfortable to continue to participate, you are free to leave. Finally, to participate in this interview process, we need to make sure we have a signed consent form from each of you.
Introduction of participants (3 minutes)	Before we start the discussion, I would like to meet each of you. Please tell me: • Your name • Classification (Year in College, Major, etc) (Students will be given name placards)

APPENDIX A (continued)

Guidelines (3 minutes)	To allow this sharing process to flow more freely, I would like to go over some guidelines. 1. Please talk one at a time and avoid side conversations. 2. Everyone does not have to answer every question. On the other hand, I would like to hear from each of you today as the discussion progresses. I will call on you to break the silence. 3. This will be an open discussion. Feel free to comment on each other's remarks. 4. There are no "right or wrong answers," just different opinions. 5. Say what is true for you, even if you are the only one who feels that way. Do not let others sway you. However, if you do find yourself having a changing viewpoint, please let me know. Any questions regarding the guidelines?
Questions	Detail Probes or Expanders
1. Who helped you decide to apply for college?	• Did your family or friends encourage you?
2. What barriers did you encounter in applying for college?	• What made it difficult for you?
3. What high school experiences, and or resources prepared you for college?	• Any special programs or resource teachers?
4. How could your high school have helped you to better prepare for college?	• Study Skills assistance, tutoring...
5. What skills and training do you think students need prior to entering college to be successful in college?	• Please be specific. • How about your reading, math, and study skills?
6. What do you know about the services on your campus which provide accommodations to students with disabilities?	• Tell me more about these services. • What types of accommodations are provided?
7. Discuss your level of satisfaction with these services.	• On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating low satisfaction and 5 indicating the highest satisfaction. Explain your rating.

APPENDIX A (continued)

8. What has been the most important help you have received thus far in college?	• For example, academic, counselor, special accommodations, financial assistance, tutoring, encouragement, etc.
9. Which support and/or resources have been the most helpful?	• Describe your level of satisfaction with these support services/resources.
10. What barriers have you encountered in completing your postsecondary (college) program?	• Academic, social, family, etc...
11. Tell me about specific experiences, positive and/or negative, you have had regarding disability-related access issues with faculty and staff in high school and/or college.	• How did these experiences make you feel?
12. Share any information you think could be helpful to faculty and staff, students, and Exceeding Expectation project to better provide services and activities to assist students with disabilities.	• Anything you can tell us will help others. • How does that affect other students?

Conclusions

1. Summarize the major areas.
2. Explain the next steps in Exceeding Expectations Research (data will be transcribed and analyzed for meaning to help inform other educators).
3. Thank and dismiss participants.

APPENDIX B

STUDENT INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

APPENDIX B

STUDENT INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

Interview Protocol

Introduction/Thank you/Purpose

Hello. I am Dorothy Garrison-Wade with the Exceeding Expectations Grant Project. I will be moderating the interview today. I would like to start by thanking you for taking time to help us with our study. The interview should take no longer than an hour of your time.

The purpose of the interview is to evaluate the Exceeding Expectations project and to determine what services are needed to support students with disabilities. My job is to ask you questions and listen to your answers.

Consent

Before we begin, I want to go over a few things on how this session will be conducted and what we need from you. First of all, our discussion will be tape recorded to make sure we document all of the valuable information you will be sharing. However, no names are attached to any report. Finally, to participate in this interview process, we need to make sure we have a signed consent form from each of you.

Introduction of interviewee and interviewer

Before beginning the interview, I am going to turn on the tape recorder and re-introduce myself; then I would like you to introduce yourself by:

Your name (Name placards will be provided)

Your Classification (Year in College/Major)

Questions	Detail Probes or Expanders
1. What type of disability do you have?	Does your disability interfere with your progress in college?
2. What types of services/ accommodations did you receive prior to coming to college?	Did you or your parents request the accommodations? How helpful were the accommodations or services in your academic progress?
3. What was your biggest concern(s) in coming to college?	Who or what helped you to overcome this concern?
4. What services and/or accommodations are you receiving in college?	What are they? How helpful are these services/accommodations?
5. Have you benefited from any special programs at your college?	What programs have been the most helpful?

APPENDIX B (continued)

6.	Do you know about the special programs available at your college to help students?	What are these programs? Please be specific.
7.	Do you participate in activities offered by the Student Disabilities office at your college?	What activities? Why not?
8.	Are you satisfied with your progress in college (insert name of college)?	What types of grades do you make? Are you learning information that will be helpful in your future career choice?
9.	What support or assistance do you need from your college?	How can your counselor help?
10.	What are the barriers that may keep you from being successful in college?	What is standing in your way in accomplishing your college goals?
11.	What other thoughts would you like to share with us that may help others to understand what students with disabilities need to be successful in college?	

Conclusions

1. Summarize the major areas.
2. Explain the next steps in the study will be to transcribe and analyze the data.
3. Thank participants.

APPENDIX C

TRANSITION COORDINATORS INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

APPENDIX C

Transition Coordinators' (Counselor) Interview Instrument

Interview Protocol

Introduction/Thank you/Purpose

Hello. I am Dorothy Garrison-Wade with the Exceeding Expectations Grant Project. I will be moderating the interview today. I would like to start by thanking you for taking time to help us with our study. The interview should take no longer than an hour of your time.

The purpose of the interview is to evaluate the Exceeding Expectations project and to determine what services are needed to support students with disabilities. My job is to ask you questions and listen to your answers.

Consent

Before we begin, I want to go over a few things on how this session will be conducted and what we need from you. First of all, our discussion will be tape recorded to make sure we document all of the valuable information you will be sharing. However, no names are attached to any report. Finally, to participate in this interview process, we need to make sure we have a signed consent form from each of you.

Introduction of interviewee and interviewer

Before beginning the interview, I am going to turn on the tape recorder and re-introduce myself, and then I would like you to introduce yourself by:

Your name

Your position with the college

How long have you worked with students with disabilities?

Questions	Detail Probes or Expanders
1. Tell me what goals you consider to be most useful in preparing students with disabilities for postsecondary education opportunities?	Why? Be specific.
2. What goals do you consider to be least beneficial in supporting students to successfully complete college?	Why? Please give examples.
3. Which interventions do you consider to be most useful in preparing students with disabilities for postsecondary education opportunities?	What are some of the interventions your program provides?
4. Which interventions do you consider to be least beneficial in supporting students to successfully complete college?	Why? How are the interventions less effective in helping students?

APPENDIX C (continued)

5. What ongoing concerns do you have regarding supporting students with special needs who enter post secondary education?	What are they?
6. In an ideal world what would be the best way to support students with disabilities in their transition from high school to college?	Describe what families and students, high schools, and post-secondary institutions would do. Would the roles of any of these individuals or organizations change?
7. How is your site or situation unique in any way which may influence how you perceive these issues?	How?
8. What has the Exceeding Expectation Grant Project done for your transition program?	Please be specific.
9. What support do you need from the Exceeding Expectation Grant Project?	How can we help you to enhance your program?
10. What other thoughts would you like to share about your project?	

Conclusions

4. Summarize the major areas.
5. Explain the next steps in the study will be to transcribe and analyze the data.
6. Thank participants.

APPENDIX D

STUDENT SURVEY INSTRUMENT

APPENDIX D
Student Survey Instrument

**Postsecondary “Exceeding Expectations” Student Survey
OSERS Grant Project**

The purpose of this questionnaire is to examine the services you currently receive from your college. Your response to this survey will help us determine what services are needed to support students with disabilities to successfully transition from high school to postsecondary education opportunities.

You are invited to participate in this study because you have identified yourself as a student with a disability who is receiving services from a postsecondary institution or have been identified as receiving special services in high school. This questionnaire will require approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Please respond to each item to the best of your ability. Thank you for your cooperation!

Instructions: Please read each statement and indicate your response by marking an ‘X’ in the ☐ the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

My college provides services/programs I need to help me be successful. (1)

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

My college provides activities I need to help me to be successful. (2)

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

I am satisfied with the accommodations I receive from my college. (3)

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

APPENDIX D (continued)

I am satisfied with the transition activities offered by my college. (4)

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

As a result of the transition services and activities offered by my college, I have had a positive educational experience. (5)

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

Instructions: Please read each statement and indicate your answer by marking an 'X' in the ☐ of the most appropriate response. (6)

How often do you meet with the transition coordinator (counselor) at your college?

- ☐ Very often
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Fairly often
- ☐ Not very often
- ☐ Never

I assisted in the development of my transition plan. (7)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not have a transition plan
- ☐ Do not know

APPENDIX D (continued)

My transition plan is based on my needs. (8)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not have a transition plan
- ☐ Do not know

Instruction: Place an 'X' on the line that best describes how often you use the following services.

(9-34)

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
Academic coaching	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Adult living assistance	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Career counseling	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other/Counseling services	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Community experiences	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Community resource database	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mentoring	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Parent Advisory Group	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Self Advocacy Training	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Service Learning Activities	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Special accommodations	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Student Advisory Committee	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Student Clubs/Organizations	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Student Focused Meetings	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Team Building	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Technology Assistance	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Preparation for tests	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Transition services handbook	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Tutoring	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Vocational Rehabilitation	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Workshops	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
List other services(s)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

APPENDIX D (continued)

Instruction: Circle the number that best answers the question below. (35)

Overall, how prepared were you for the transition from high school to college?

Not prepared		Moderately prepared		Well prepared
1	2	3	4	5

Instructions: Place an 'X' on the line between each word pair that best describes how you feel about your college experience and your disability counselor.

My college experience has been:

Boring	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Exciting	(36)
Uncomfortable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Comfortable	
Painful	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Enjoyable	(38)
Unpleasant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Pleasant	
Bad	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Good	(40)
Difficult	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Easy	
Wasteful	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Instructive	(42)

My disability counselor is:

Unsupportive	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Supportive	
Uncaring	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Caring	(44)
Unavailable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Available	
Unhelpful	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Resourceful	(46)
Discouraging	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Inspiring	

Instructions: Place an 'X' on the line that best describes how concerned you are about each of these items. (48-65)

I am:	Very Concerned					Not Very Concerned
Academics	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Accommodations	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Career development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Communication (teachers)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Dropping out of school	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Employment (after college)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Failing courses	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Family problems	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Financial problems	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Graduating	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
My health issues	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Independent living	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Job difficulties	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Learning	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Living arrangement	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

APPENDIX D (continued)

Others' perceptions _____
 Parking _____
 Social life _____
Place on 'X' on the line that best describes how skilled you are with each of these competencies? (66-76)

Competencies:	Not Very Skilled		Adequately Skilled		Very Skilled
Life skills	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Literacy (reading)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mathematics	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Organizing	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Prioritizing	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Problem solving	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Social skills	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Study skills	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Use of technology	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Test taking skills	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Time management	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Background Information:

What is your gender? ☐ Male ☐ Female (77)

What is your ethnicity? (78)

☐ African American/Black (non-Hispanic) ☐ American Indian/Native American

☐ Asian/Pacific Islander ☐ White (non-Hispanic)

☐ Hispanic/Latino ☐ Multi-racial

What is your age? (on January 1, 2004) _____ (79)

Which best describes your primary disability? (Check one) (80)

☐ Autism ☐ Cognitive disorder

☐ Deafness and hearing impairment ☐ Emotional disturbance

☐ Health impairment ☐ Learning disability

☐ Mild mental retardation ☐ Multiple handicaps

☐ Orthopedic impairment ☐ Speech and language impairment

☐ Traumatic brain injury ☐ Vision impairment

☐ Other (please specify): _____ (81)

Name of your educational institution _____ (82)

APPENDIX D (continued)

What is your current enrollment status? (83)

- ☐ Full-time student ☐ Part time student

Instructions: Place an 'X' in the box that best describes your current student status. (84)

My student status is: (mark one)

- ☐ High school student taking college courses
☐ 1st year in 2 -year degree
☐ 1st year in 4-year degree
☐ 2nd year of 4 -year degree
☐ 3rd year of 4 -year degree
☐ Senior, 2nd year of 2-year degree
☐ Senior, 4th year of 4-year degree
☐ Graduate, master's student
☐ Graduate, doctoral student
☐ Other _____ (85)

What is your current employment status? (86)

- ☐ Unemployed ☐ Employed part-time ☐ Employed full-time

Where do you live now? (Mark one) (87)

- ☐ With my family
☐ Rent my own place
☐ Supported living (includes group home)
☐ In a home I own
☐ In a dorm room/suite
☐ Homeless
☐ Other _____ (88)

Thank you for your assistance in this study!

APPENDIX E
TRANSITION COORDINATOR SURVEY INSTRUMENT

APPENDIX E

Transition Coordinator Survey Instrument

Transition Coordinator “Exceeding Expectations” Survey OSERS Grant Project

The purpose of this questionnaire is to evaluate the Exceeding Expectations project and to determine what services are needed to support students with disabilities to successfully transition into college. As a recipient of the grant, you are invited to participate in this study. Please respond to each item. Thank you for your cooperation!

Instructions: Please read each statement and indicate by marking an X the extent to which you agree or disagree.

My transition program provides services to students with disabilities to help them successfully transition from high school to postsecondary opportunities. (1)

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

My transition program provides numerous activities to students with disabilities to help them successfully transition from high school to postsecondary opportunities. (2)

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

Staff members are willing to offer appropriate accommodations to students with disabilities to enhance instruction. (3)

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

APPENDIX E (continued)

I am very satisfied with the transition activities offered by my college. (4)

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

As a result of the transition services and activities offered by my college, students with disabilities have positive educational experiences. (5)

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

Instructions: Please read each statement. Indicate by marking an X in the square of the most appropriate response.

How often have you met with students with disabilities to schedule services and special activities? (6)

- ☐ Very often
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Never

Do you develop transition plans for students with disabilities? (7)

- ☐ Very often
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Never, not required at my college

Are the transition plans based on students' needs? (8)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not develop students' transition plans
- ☐ Not part of my responsibility

APPENDIX E (continued)

How often are group activities provided for students in your program? (9)

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Every 2 weeks
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ 1-2 times per semester
- ☐ Occasionally

In the past two years, have you solicited feedback from students to determine what services and activities are needed to help improve student outcomes? (10)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not work directly with students
- ☐ I am new in this position

As a result of the Exceeding Expectations Grant, my institution has improved transition services/activities available to students with disabilities. (11)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ No
- ☐ Do not know
- ☐ I am new in this position

Instructions: Place an X on the line that best describes how often each item is included in your students' disabilities transition plans. (12-26)

A goal (s) for:	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
Employment	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Financial/Income needs	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Health	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Independent living	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Planning for the future	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Postsecondary education	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Recreation/Leisure	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

APPENDIX E (continued)

Safety	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Self-advocacy	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Social relationship	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Transportation/ Mobility	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Vocational Education/Training	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
List other item(s) _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

My students do not have transition plans _____

Instruction: Circle the number that best answers the question below. (27)

Overall, how prepared are most students with disabilities for the transition from high school to postsecondary school?

Not prepared		Moderately prepared		Well prepared
1	2	3	4	5

Instructions: Place an X on the line that best describes the extent to which students use each of the services. (28-50)

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
Academic coaching	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Adult living assistance	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Career counseling	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other counseling services	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Community experiences	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Community resource database	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mentoring	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Parent advisory group	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Self advocacy training	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Service learning activities	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Special accommodations	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Student advisory committee	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Student clubs/Organization	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Student focused meetings	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Team building	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Technology assistance	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Test taking preparation	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

APPENDIX E (continued)

Transition services handbook	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Tutoring	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Vocational rehabilitation	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Workshops	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
List other service(s) _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

What measurable outcomes are used to determine if students' with disabilities achievement improved as a request of services received from your program? (51)

What strategies do you personally use to help students with disabilities be successful in post secondary institutions? (52)

Background Information: (53-55)

Location of your educational institution _____

Your Job Title _____

Years of experience working in Disability Services _____

Thank you for your assistance in this study!

APPENDIX F

RESEARCH SUPPORT LETTER

APPENDIX F
Research Support Letter

Memo

To: Colorado State University Human Research Committee
From: Jean P. Lehmann
CC: Dorothy Garrison-Wade
Date: 1/20/2004
Re: Exceeding Expectations Model Demonstration Project

Dorothy Garrison Wade is conducting her doctoral research on the Exceeding Expectation Model Demonstration grant. Her research, as shown on her Human Subjects application, is a part of the existing grant research project already approved by this committee (H324M010078). She is following the same procedures outlined originally in terms of identifying participants and collecting data. The purpose of this research (like the original application) is to learn how students with disabilities can best be supported as they access and successfully complete post secondary education. The major difference between Ms. Garrison-Wade's research and the original HRC is she is selecting participants at the post secondary level and not from high schools. As grant PI and as Dorothy's major adviser, I am familiar with the scope of her research and am satisfied all individuals involved are adequately protected as human research subjects. I understand my role in this dissertation research is to provide Dorothy with a list of the site coordinators/post secondary providers who have already agreed and signed Humans Subject Consent forms to participate in the project's research.

APPENDIX G
H100 APPLICATION

APPENDIX G (continued)

PART B. ATTACHMENTS

Indicate those which apply to and are included for this protocol.

_____ Advertisements or posters

___X___ Telephone scripts or other recruitment scripts

___X___ Consent form(s), including parental permission and child consent for minors (model form available)

_____ Cover letter(s), on departmental letterhead, include main elements of informed consent, with faculty signature

_____ Letter(s) from counselors/specialists itemizing credentials, on letterhead

___x___ Letter(s) of agreements from organizations, on letterhead, with original signatures

___x___ Instruments/tests/photos to be used; note if purchased or provide documentation allowing use

_____ Debriefing materials

_____ Principal Investigator's current résumé, **if** one is not currently on file with the Regulatory Compliance Office

_____ Proposal copy or methodology section (only one copy)

OR

___X___ Thesis/dissertation prospectus, abstract, or methodology chapter (only one copy)

I think this qualifies for the following type of review:

☐ Exempt Category number _____ ☐ Expedite Category number 7
☒ Full

Office Use Only:

Tracking number: _____

Type of Review: ☐ Exempt ☐ Expedite ☐ Full
Category # _____

FDA: ☐ Yes ☐ No Elapsed time:

Other: Revised 7/02; supercedes all other versions

APPENDIX G (continued)

Part C. PROTOCOL INFORMATION

List **every question** by number, brief heading, and your response. Using a different font for your response aids the reviewer. Mark “N/A” if question does not apply to your protocol, but do not use N/A for benefit or risk questions. (Note: **Focus your responses to approximately 3 pages. DO NOT replicate the proposal here.**)

The purpose of this case study is to examine the process and the outcomes of the Exceeding Expectations Model Demonstration Project Grant, to determine lessons learned from the project; to gather information addressing student transition outcomes/progress; and to establish strategies to support teachers and staff in post-secondary institutions which will enhance educational opportunities for students with disabilities in their transition from high school to post-secondary institutions. The Exceeding Expectations: Model Demonstration Project (CFDA 84.32M) initiated at Colorado State University, has implemented a demonstration model for increasing the access and retention of students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions in five states: Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, South Dakota, and Wyoming. Exceeding Expectations is a four-year project. This project will provide the context of this study.

Objectives

- (1) To examine the process and the outcomes of the Exceeding Expectations Model Demonstration Project Grant.
- (2) To determine lessons learned from the Exceeding Expectations Model Demonstration Project Grant.
- (3) To gather information addressing student transition concerns.
- (4) To establish strategies to support teachers and staff in post-secondary institutions which will enhance educational opportunities for students with disabilities in their transition from high school to post-secondary institutions

Human Participants description

2. Source of participant population: Participants will consist of site coordinators, staff, and students receiving grant money through the Exceeding Expectations project. The project covers sites in five states: Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, South Dakota, and Wyoming.
3. Number of participants (for example, number of surveys to be distributed): There will be approximately eleven coordinators/staff participants and 100 college students.
4. Characteristics of participants (such as age, gender, student, disease conditions, behavioral abnormalities; affiliations or memberships). All the participants (students & site coordinators) will be over the age of eighteen. The students included in the study will have various disabilities (cognitive, learning, physical, etc.). There will be a variety of male and female participants in the study.

APPENDIX G (continued)

5. Recruitment procedures: Exceeding Expectation grant recipients will be invited to participate in the study. Each site coordinator receiving grant money through the Exceeding Expectations project will be asked to identify students who are interested in volunteering to participate in the study.
6. Recruiting materials (attach advertisements, posters, letters, and scripts): Invitation for recruitment of students participants is attached. Site coordinators will be contacted by telephone and Exceeding Expectations listserv to request a visit and to schedule interviews, surveys, etc.
7. Criteria for excluding participants involuntarily (such as “failed to keep food diary as required”): Inclusion: participants must fit the parameters of the grant (students with disabilities ages 18 and Up, post-secondary instructors and support personnel (i.e., resources for the disabled). Participation is voluntary.
Exclusion: No one is excluded from receiving training and support but we only need information from numbers of individuals itemized in number 4 above.
8. Rationale for using “at-risk” populations (e.g., minors, pregnant women, prisoners): This project is based upon the philosophies of inclusion and self-determination which means that students with disabilities are one of the participants group from whom information is solicited.
9. Original letters of HRC agreement/approval from organization where participants sought (not concept support letters): Letters are attached from Coordinating members.
10. Other matters pertinent to the human participants: None.

Procedures to be followed with participants (Methodology)

11. Specify location of study: Participants are working at or attending post-secondary institutions located in five states: Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, South Dakota, and Wyoming.
12. List variables to be studied (what are you measuring or examining):
 - Rural issues in preparing students for post-secondary settings: barriers and strengths
 - Students’ perceived support needs for entering into and successfully completing Post-secondary education common goals and objectives between sites
 - Designing competent environment that promotes the success of post-secondary students with disabilities
 - Validated post-secondary model
13. Describe method of data collection (attach copies of surveys, instruments, etc. If using a copyrighted instrument, document authorization of use.)
Three data collection techniques will be used: focus group discussions, individual interviews, and a survey instrument.

APPENDIX G (continued)

DATA COLLECTION	WHAT	WHO
Focus Groups	Discussion 1- 1 ½ hours	• Students
Individual Interviews	30- 60 minutes Semi-structured	• Site Coordinators • Students
Survey Instrument	Questionnaire with Likert Scale Semantic Differential items	• Site Coordinators • Students

Please refer to the attached survey instrument, and interview questions and protocol for more information.

- Describe activities involving participants, including frequency and duration of each activity (this could be an experimental stimulus, a survey, what questions would be asked in an interview, for example) Diagramming helps.
Duration of Focus groups will be approximately 1 to 1^{1/2} hour; personal interview will last no longer than 1 hour in duration; and survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Transition Coordinators' Interview Questions

Questions	Detail Probes or Expanders
1. Tell me what goals do you consider to be most useful in preparing students with disabilities for postsecondary education opportunities?	Why? Be specific.
2. What goals do you consider to be least beneficial in supporting students to successfully complete college?	Why? Please give examples.
3. Which interventions do you consider to be most useful in preparing students with disabilities for postsecondary education opportunities?	What are some of the interventions your program provides?
4. Which interventions do you consider to be least beneficial in supporting students to successfully complete college?	Why? How are the interventions less effective in helping students?
5. What ongoing concerns do you have regarding supporting students with special needs entrance into post secondary education?	What are they?

APPENDIX G (continued)

6. In an ideal world what would the best way to support students with disabilities in their transition from high school to college?	Describe what families and students would do: high schools, and post-secondary institutions. Would the roles of any of these individuals or organizations change?
7. How is your site or situation unique in any way that may influence how you perceive these issues?	How?
8. What has the Exceeding Expectation Grant Project done for your transition program?	Please be specific.
9. What support do you need from the Exceeding Expectation Grant Project ?	How can we help you to enhance your program?
10. What other thoughts would you like to share about your project?	

Student Interview Questions

Questions	Detail Probes or Expanders
1. What type of disability do you have?	Does your disability interfere with your progress in college?
2. What types of services/ accommodations did you receive prior to coming to college?	Did you or your parents request the accommodations? How helpful was the accommodations or services in your academic progress?
3. What was your biggest concern(s) in coming to college?	Who or what helped you to overcome this concern?
4. What services and/or accommodations are you receiving in college?	What are they? How helpful are these services/accommodation?
5. Have you benefited from any special programs at your college?	What programs have been the most helpful?
6. Do you know about the special programs available at your college to help students?	What are these programs? Please be specific.

APPENDIX G (continued)

7. Do you participate in activities offered by the Student Disabilities office at your college?	What activities? Why not?
8. Are you satisfied with your progress in college (insert name of college)?	What types of grades do you make? Are you learning information that will be helpful in your future career choice?
9. What support or assistance do you need from your college?	How can your counselor help?
10. What are the barriers that may keep you from being successful in college?	What's standing in your way in accomplishing your college goals?
11. What other thoughts would you like to share with us that may help others to understand what students with disabilities need to be successful in college?	

Focus Group Discussion Questions

Questions	Detail Probes or Expanders
1. Who helped you decide to apply for college?	Did your family or friends encourage you?
2. What barriers did you encounter in applying for college?	What made it difficult for you?
3. What high school experiences, and or resources prepared you for college?	Any special programs or resource teachers?
4. How could your high school have helped you to better prepare for college?	Study skills assistance, tutoring...
5. What skills and training do you think students need prior to entering college to be successful in college?	- Please be specific. - How about your reading, math, study skills?
6. What do you know about the services on your campus that provide accommodations to students with disabilities?	- Tell me more about these services. - What types of accommodations are provided?
7. Discuss your level of satisfaction with these services.	On a scale 1 to 5, with 1 indicating low satisfaction and 5 indicating the highest satisfaction. Explain your rating.

APPENDIX G (continued)

Questions	Detail Probes or Expanders
8. What has been the most important help you have received so far in college?	For example, academic, counselor, special accommodations, financial assistance, tutoring, encouragement etc.
9. Which support and/or resources have been the most helpful?	Describe your level of satisfaction with these support services/resources.
10. What barriers have you encountered in completing your post-secondary (College) program?	Academic, social, family, etc...
11. Tell me about specific experiences, positive and/or negative, that you have had regarding disability-related access issues with faculty and staff in high school and/or at college.	How did these experiences make you feel?
12. Share any information you think could be helpful to faculty and staff, students, and Exceeding Expectations project to better provide services and activities to assist students with disabilities.	- Anything you can tell us will help others. - How does that affect other students?

15. Describe equipment used with subjects, if any:

A tape recorder will be used to record interviews and focus group discussions.

16. Specify what factors will lead to stopping procedures causing physical or emotional stress: The study is on a volunteer basis. At any time, the participant may discontinue participation in the study by refusing to answer any question.

17. Describe biological samples to be taken, method, and qualifications of individuals taking samples
None

18. Provide de-briefing method and materials for participants (required for concealed or deceptive research, desirable for other research) N/A

19. Other aspects of the procedures: none

Risks to participants

20. Describe potential risks and assess the likelihood, severity, duration, and effects of each.

It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researchers have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential risks. Participants are informed that their participation is on a volunteer basis and their confidentiality will be protected.

APPENDIX G (continued)

21. Describe methods for minimizing risks.
At any time, a participant becomes uncomfortable with the process; he/she may refuse to answer or to continue. No one individual participant's information will be singled out.
22. Describe other methods, if any, that were considered alternatively and why they will not be used: None
23. Other matters relative to risk to participants: Given that this project is validating a model of service delivery, no other risks are anticipated.

Benefits to participants

24. Describe the direct benefits to these participants because of their participation.
Indirectly, this study will benefit students by increasing the knowledge base on students' with disabilities transition to adulthood and provide valuable information to support students' with disabilities access and retention in postsecondary institutions. Students have increased opportunities to access post-secondary education. State and educators within the states have increased opportunities for communicating and collaborating in their delivery of services to students with disabilities.
25. Describe the benefits accruing to the class of participants these individuals represent:
 - State needs are addressed. States create new policy or change existing policy as a result of their knowledge gained during the project regarding the needs of students interested in pursuing postsecondary education and in response to the needs of secondary educators.
 - Parents and students receiving the information may network ideas and resources to friends. There are a greater number of students who enter into and succeed in postsecondary education.
 - Disability Resources Services (DRS) may strengthen their institution's policies and procedures and become better supports for both students and faculty alike throughout the entire institution. Educators enhance their knowledge of instructional accommodations and curriculum practices thereby creating learning environments that are welcoming and supportive. Further, educators teach self-advocacy skills foster future success of all students even those not going into postsecondary education. IEP/ITP goals address postsecondary education.
26. Describe the benefits accruing to society-at-large or other: It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit society by improving educational opportunities for students with disabilities.
27. Other aspects of benefits to participants:
National recognition for Exceeding Expectations project and participating sites for their work with improving educational opportunities for students with disabilities.

APPENDIX G (continued)

Consent procedures

28. Describe how potential participants will be informed about the project activities: Site coordinators will be notified of project activities by email, followed-up by a telephone call. The Exceeding Expectations' website will be used to keep project participants informed of the study activities. Exceeding Expectations listserv will also be used to communicate with study participants.
29. Attach the consent form (*use reading level and terminology understandable to participants*) or cover letter, script, or other substitution for a consent form. Check 45 CFR 46.117(c) for criteria for waiver of documentation of consent, and 45 CFR 46.116(d) for waiver of consent entirely. If you employ these, provide complete justification of how this project meets the criteria.
See attachments
30. Other aspects of the consent process: None

Confidentiality

31. Describe the method(s) used to protect the identity of individual participants. If a linked list is used, when will it be destroyed? Participants will not be identified by name with any information resulting from the study. Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be publicly available.
32. Describe plans for maintaining data after study is complete. Faculty should keep a copy, so the data are auditable. Who retains copies, stored where/how, how is confidentiality maintained, for how long.
All transcription and data will be kept in a locked file in Dr. Lehmann's office at the Education Building, Fort Collins, CO 80523. Audio tapes used will be destroyed after their transcriptions.
33. Describe how federal requirement will be met for consent forms to be retained for 3 years following the conclusion of the project.
Data resulting from the study will be maintained for three years after study ends.
34. If audio- or video-taping, specify tape storage, use, and when and how disposition of the tapes will take place: Audio tapes will be kept in a locked file in Dr. Lehmann's office until the transcription and immediately destroyed after their transcriptions.
35. Other aspects of confidentiality: None

APPENDIX G (continued)



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT *Student Group Interview (Focus Group), Personal Interview, Survey Participants*

TITLE OF PROJECT: Exceeding Expectations Project: A Case Study on Students with Disabilities
Transition to Postsecondary Institutions

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jean P. Lehmann, Ph.D.

NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR: Dorothy Garrison-Wade, MA, MAED

CONTACT NAME AND PHONE NUMBER FOR QUESTIONS/PROBLEMS: Dr. Jean P. Lehmann,
(970) 491-5169

SPONSOR OF PROJECT: US Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation
Services, Grant # H324M010078

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

The purpose of this case study is as follows: (1) to examine the process and the outcomes of the Exceeding Expectations Model Demonstration Project Grant; (2) to determine lessons learned from the project; (3) to gather information addressing student transition concerns; and (4) to establish strategies to support teachers and staff in postsecondary institutions which will enhance educational opportunities for students with disabilities in their transition from high school to postsecondary institutions. The purpose of this study is to give a voice to students with disabilities, learn from their experiences, and improve the transition of these students.

PROCEDURES/METHODS TO BE USED:

You will be asked to participate in a group interview (focus group) discussion, personal interview, and answer survey questionnaire. If you agree to participate in this study, your participation will last for up to 2 hours and will involve completing a questionnaire and participating in a focus group discussion. In addition, you may be asked to participate in a follow-up personal interview. The personal interview will take no longer than 60 minutes.

Focus groups consist of up to ten participants, and will be scheduled after all participants have consented to involvement. The focus group leader, (and co-leader, if present) will answer any participant questions about the research. Participants are reminded that information discussed during the focus group will be kept confidential. Focus group members will be asked to keep the discussion information confidential, but there is a possibility that there may be a violation of confidentiality. We can not guarantee focus group participants will keep statements made during the discussion confidential. Confidentiality of the interviewees' names and statements will be carefully maintained by the researchers throughout the study process.

Each focus group discussion and personal interview will be tape-recorded and interviewer may take notes. Tape recordings and notes will be transcribed verbatim, and identities of participants will be replaced with a false name in the transcription document and will not be recorded elsewhere. After the study, the audiotapes will be erased. Participation is voluntary, and you may choose not to answer any question, for any reason.

Page 1 of 3 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

APPENDIX G (continued)

The questionnaire (survey) consists of a variety of questions designed to determine the services you currently receive from your college. Your answers to the survey will help us determine what services are needed to support students with disabilities in college. The survey will require no more than 20 minutes of your time to complete.

RISKS INHERENT IN THE PROCEDURES:

It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks. If at any time you are uncomfortable with a question, you may refuse to answer. There are no known risks involved with this study.

BENEFITS:

There is no known immediate benefit to you as an individual participant in this study. The focus group discussions and interview process may result in opportunities for you to review and report the successes and challenges you have encountered. Your information may benefit other students with disabilities. The lessons you have learned about adjusting to college will be used to improve transition practices and services in the future.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Your name and interview responses along with all other participants' names will remain anonymous in any research reports. All your responses (survey, focus group, personal interview) will be kept in strict confidence and will not be traceable to you. Any information that you would like not to be shared will not be. All transcription and data will be kept in a locked file in Dr. Lehmann's office at Colorado State University for 3 years and any audio-tapes used will be destroyed after their transcriptions.

LIABILITY:

The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

Questions about participants' rights may be directed to Celia S. Walker at (970) 491-1563.

PARTICIPATION:

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 3 pages.

Participant name (printed)

Participant signature

Date

Witness to signature (project staff)

Date

Page 2 of 3 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

APPENDIX G (continued)

PARENTAL SIGNATURE FOR MINOR

As parent or guardian I authorize _____ (print name) to become a participant for the described research. The nature and general purpose of the project have been satisfactorily explained to me by the Exceeding Expectations staff and I am satisfied that proper precautions will be observed.

Minor's date of birth

Parent/Guardian name (printed)

Parent/Guardian signature

Date

Page 3 of 3 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

APPENDIX G (continued)



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT
Site Coordinators

TITLE OF PROJECT: Exceeding Expectations Project: A Case Study on Students with Disabilities Transition to Postsecondary Institutions

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jean P. Lehmann, Ph.D.

NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR: Dorothy Garrison-Wade, MA, MAED

CONTACT NAME AND PHONE NUMBER FOR QUESTIONS/PROBLEMS: Dr. Jean P. Lehmann,
(970) 491-5169

SPONSOR OF PROJECT: US Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, Grant # H324M010078

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

The purpose of this case study is as follows: (1) to examine the process and the outcomes of the Exceeding Expectations Model Demonstration Project Grant; (2) to determine lessons learned from the project; (3) to gather information addressing student transition concerns; and (4) to establish strategies to support teachers and staff in post-secondary institutions which will enhance educational opportunities for students with disabilities in their transition from high school to post-secondary institutions. The intent of this study is to give a voice to students with disabilities, learn from their experiences, and improve the transition of these students.

PROCEDURES/METHODS TO BE USED:

You will be asked to complete a survey questionnaire and may be asked to participate in a personal interview. If you agree to participate in this study, the survey will take no longer than 20 minutes to complete and the personal interview will take no longer than 60 minutes.

The survey consists of a variety of questions designed to determine the services you currently offer at your college. Your answers to the survey will help us determine what services are needed to support students with disabilities in college.

The personal interview will be tape-recorded and facilitators may take field notes. Tape recordings and notes will be transcribed verbatim, and identities of participants will be replaced with a pseudonym in the transcription document and will not be recorded elsewhere. After the study, the audiotapes will be erased. Participation is voluntary, and you may choose not to answer any question, for any reason.

Page 1 of 2 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

APPENDIX G (continued)

RISKS INHERENT IN THE PROCEDURES:

It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks. If at any time you are uncomfortable with a question, you may refuse to answer. There are no known risks involved with this study.

BENEFITS:

There is no known immediate benefit to you as an individual participant in this study. The survey and personal interview process may result in opportunities for you to review and report the successes of your program in working with students with disabilities. We hope the research will indirectly benefit you by producing information about your students' transition issues. The lessons learned about students' transition to postsecondary institutions may be used to improve transition practices and services in the future.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Your name and interview responses along with all other participants' names will remain anonymous in any research reports. All your responses (survey, personal interview) will be kept in strict confidence and will not be traceable to you. Any information that you would like not to be shared will not be. All transcription and data will be kept in a locked file in Dr. Lehmann's office at Colorado State University for 3 years and any audio-tapes used will be destroyed after their transcriptions.

LIABILITY:

The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

Questions about participants' rights may be directed to Celia S. Walker at (970) 491-1563.

PARTICIPATION:

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 2 pages.

Participant name (printed)

Participant signature

Date

Witness to signature (project staff)

Date

Page 2 of 2 Participant's initials _____ Date _____



Sample Consent Form for Students with Visual Impairments

**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A
RESEARCH PROJECT**

***Student Group Interview (Focus Group), Personal
Interview, Survey Participants***

**TITLE OF PROJECT: Exceeding Expectations
Project: A Case Study on Students with Disabilities
Transition to Postsecondary Institutions**

**NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jean P.
Lehmann, Ph.D.**

**NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR: Dorothy
Garrison-Wade, MA, MAED**

**CONTACT NAME AND PHONE NUMBER FOR
QUESTIONS/PROBLEMS: Jean P. Lehmann, Ph.D.
(970) 491-5169**

**SPONSOR OF PROJECT: US Department of
Education, Office of Special Education and
Rehabilitation Services, Grant # H324M010078**

Page 1 of 7 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

The purpose of this case study is as follows: (1) to examine the process and the outcomes of the Exceeding Expectations Model Demonstration Project Grant; (2) to determine lessons learned from the project; (3) to gather information addressing student transition concerns; and (4) to establish strategies to support teachers and staff in postsecondary institutions which will enhance educational opportunities for students with disabilities in their transition from high school to postsecondary institutions. The purpose of this study is to give a voice to students with disabilities, learn from their experiences, and improve the transition of these students.

PROCEDURES/METHODS TO BE USED:

You will be asked to participate in a group interview (focus group) discussion, personal interview, and answer survey questionnaire. If you agree to participate in this study, your participation will last for up to 2 hours and will involve completing a questionnaire and participating in a focus group discussion. In addition, you may be asked to participate in a follow-up personal interview.

Page 2 of 7 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

APPENDIX G (continued)

The personal interview will take no longer than 60 minutes.

Focus groups consist of up to ten participants, and will be scheduled after all participants have consented to involvement. The focus group leader, (and co-leader, if present) will answer any participant questions about the research. Participants are reminded that information discussed during the focus group will be kept confidential. Focus group members will be asked to keep the discussion information confidential, but there is a possibility that there may be a violation of confidentiality. We can not guarantee focus group participants will keep statements made during the discussion confidential. Confidentiality of the interviewees' names and statements will be carefully maintained by the researchers throughout the study process.

Each focus group discussion and personal interview will be tape-recorded and interviewer may take notes. Tape recordings and notes will be transcribed verbatim, and identities of participants will be replaced with a false name in the transcription document and will not be recorded elsewhere.

Page 3 of 7 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

APPENDIX G (continued)

After the study, the audiotapes will be erased. Participation is voluntary, and you may choose not to answer any question, for any reason.

The questionnaire (survey) consists of a variety of questions designed to determine the services you currently receive from your college. Your answers to the survey will help us determine what services are needed to support students with disabilities in college. The survey will require no more than 20 minutes of your time to complete.

RISKS INHERENT IN THE PROCEDURES:

It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks. If at any time you are uncomfortable with a question, you may refuse to answer. There are no known risks involved with this study.

BENEFITS:

There is no known immediate benefit to you as an individual participant in this study. The focus group discussions and interview process may result in

Page 4 of 7 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

APPENDIX G (continued)

opportunities for you to review and report the successes and challenges you have encountered. Your information may benefit other students with disabilities. The lessons you have learned about adjusting to college will be used to improve transition practices and services in the future.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Your name and interview responses along with all other participants' names will remain anonymous in any research reports. All your responses (survey, focus group, personal interview) will be kept in strict confidence and will not be traceable to you. Any information that you would like not to be shared will not be. All transcription and data will be kept in a locked file in Dr. Lehmann's office at Colorado State University for 3 years and any audio-tapes used will be destroyed after their transcriptions.

LIABILITY:

The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because

Page 5 of 7 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

Questions about participants' rights may be directed to Celia S. Walker at (970) 491-1563.

PARTICIPATION:

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 3 pages.

Participant name (printed)

Participant signature

Date

Witness to signature (project staff)

Date

Page 6 of 7 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

APPENDIX G (continued)

PARENTAL SIGNATURE FOR MINOR

As parent or guardian I authorize
_____ (print name) to become
a participant for the described research. The nature
and general purpose of the project have been
satisfactorily explained to me by the Exceeding
Expectations staff and I am satisfied that proper
precautions will be observed.

Minor's date of birth

Parent/Guardian name (printed)

Parent/Guardian signature

Date

Page 7 of 7 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

APPENDIX G (continued)

Survey Letter to Coordinators



February 1, 2004

Dear (Insert Site Coordinator First Name),

As a recipient of Exceeding Expectations grant, you are invited to participate in a research study investigating students' with disabilities transition to postsecondary institutions. The purpose of this survey is to evaluate the Exceeding Expectations grant project and to determine what services are needed to support students with disabilities successful transition into college.

Your input is very important to this study. Please answer the questions on the enclosed questionnaire. Be sure to complete all of the sections. All of your responses will be kept in strict confidence and will not be traceable to you.

To make sure that we receive your important information, please return your survey and signed consent form to us in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope by (insert date). If you have questions about the survey or consent form, please call Dorothy Garrison-Wade at (970) 491-2965 or send an email to dgarris@lamar.colostate.edu or call Dr. Jean Lehmann at (970) 491-5169, send email to lehmann@cahs.coloste.edu.

We are looking forward to hearing from you. Thank you in advance for returning the survey to us as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Jean Lehmann, Exceeding Expectation Director

Dorothy Garrison-Wade, Exceeding Expectation Research Coordinator

APPENDIX G (continued)
Survey Letter to Student Participants



February 1, 2004

Dear (Merge Student's First Name),

You are invited to participate in a research study investigating student's with disabilities transition to college. The purpose of this questionnaire (survey) is to examine the services you currently receive from your college. Your response may help us determine what services are needed to aid students with disabilities in a successful transition from high school to college.

Please answer the questions on the enclosed survey. Answer the questions to the best of your ability. We would like you to complete all of the sections. But, you do not have to answer any question that you feel uncomfortable answering. You are not required to place your name on the survey. All your responses will be kept in strict confidence and will not be traceable to you.

To make sure that we receive your important information, please return your survey and signed consent form to us in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope by (insert date). If you have questions about the survey or consent form, please call Dorothy Garrison-Wade at (970) 491-2965 or send an email to dgarris@lamar.colostate.edu or call Dr. Jean Lehmann at (970) 491-5169, send email to lehmann@cahs.coloste.edu.

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to complete the survey. We appreciate your help. Thank you in advance for returning the survey to us as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Jean Lehmann, Exceeding Expectation Director

Dorothy Garrison-Wade, Exceeding Expectation Research Coordinator

APPENDIX G (continued)

Email to Coordinators

To: Site Coordinators

From: Jean Lehmann, Exceeding Expectations Director

Dorothy Garrison-Wade, Exceeding Expectations Research Coordinator

Date: (Insert date)

Re: Exceeding Expectation Research project

Dear _____,

As a part of Dorothy's doctoral dissertation research, she will be conducting a study to gather information on the progress of the Exceeding Expectations grant project. The purpose of this study is to examine the process and the outcomes of the Exceeding Expectations Model Demonstration Project Grant in order to (1) determine lessons learned from the project; (2) gather information addressing student transition outcomes/progress; (3) and establish strategies to support teachers and staff in postsecondary institutions which will enhance educational opportunities for students with disabilities in their transition from high school to postsecondary institutions. As a recipient of the Exceeding Expectations grant, you will be asked to solicit and schedule students with disabilities at your college to participate in a focus group discussion, follow-up interview (only if needed for further clarification) and complete a survey instrument. In addition, you will be invited to complete a survey and may be invited to participate in a personal interview. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please let me know if you're not able to participate in the study. We will be contacting you soon to provide more information about the study and arrange a time to visit your site. Thank you for your consideration to this request.

APPENDIX G (continued)

Sample Focus Group Invitation

Your voice matters! Join us for refreshments (*insert site coordinators preference for refreshments*) and good discussion. You are invited to participate in a group interview (*focus group*) discussion sponsored by the Exceeding Expectations grant project. In addition, you may be invited to participate in a follow-up personal interview. We hope to gain from the discussion information that may be helpful in improving services for students with disabilities.

Research is needed:

- To obtain information on students with disabilities adjustment from high school to college and learn key strategies that prepare students to successfully navigate their course in post-secondary educational systems;
- To gather information addressing student transition concerns;
- To determine strategies to support teachers and staff in postsecondary institutions that better serve students with disabilities.

Project research will be publicized and disseminated via brochures, websites, resource materials, conference presentations, juried publications and annual written reports to OSERS.

If you have any questions about the focus group discussion, please call _____ (*Insert Site Coordinator Information*), Jean Lehmann, Ph.D. (Principal Investigator) at (970) 491-5169, or Dorothy Garrison-Wade (Co-Investigator) at (970) 491-2965.

Please contact _____ (*Insert Site Coordinator name*) if you're interested in participating in the study. Thank you in advance for your consideration in participating in our study.

APPENDIX H
ANALYSES MATRIX

APPENDIX H

Analyses Matrix- Part I

Profile of Sample (Research Questions)	Items from Instrument Data Bases (Raw Data)
Research Q 1 To what extent have the Exceeding Expectations” Grant project staff delivered as they stated they would?	Transition Coordinator Survey Q1, Q2, Q7, Transition Coordinators Interview Instrument Q8, Q9 Student Interview Instrument- Q5-6 Student Survey Instrument Q1, Q2, Q4, Q6, Q8, Q10-31 Focus Group Discussion Q6-7
Research Q 2 How effectively has each site implemented the stated programs?	Transition Coordinator Survey Q3, Q10, Q11, Q12-25 Transition Coordinators Interview Instrument - Q7 Student Interview Instrument Q4, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9 Student Survey Instrument Q2-4, Q7, Q9, Q32-43 Focus Group Discussion Q11

APPENDIX H (continued)

Research Q 3 Have student outcomes improved as a result of the “Exceeding Expectations” Grant project?	Transition Coordinator Survey Q11, Q 50 Transition Coordinators Interview Instrument - Q8 Student Interview Instrument- Q3 Student Survey Instrument Q5, Q64-74 Focus Group Discussion- Q12
Research Q 4 What are the most effective support services and strategies for teachers and staff members to use to help students with disabilities successfully transition from high school to post-secondary institutions?	Transition Coordinator Survey Q 12-Q25, Q27-49, Q51 Transition Coordinators Interview Instrument Q1-4, Q6, Q7 Student Interview Instrument- Q4, Q11 Student Survey Instrument- Q10-31 Focus Group Discussion Q3-4, Q8-9
Research Q 5 What are the major concerns of students with disabilities in the transition from high school to postsecondary institutions?	Transition Coordinator Survey- Q26 Transition Coordinators Interview Instrument Q5, Q10 Student Interview Instrument Q3, Q11 Student Survey Instrument Q32-63, 64-74 Focus Group Discussion Q2, Q10, Q12

APPENDIX H (continued)

Analyses Matrix- Part II

Variables Level Composite Labels	Analyses Steps	Data to Report
<u>Survey Instruments</u> Convert likert scale & semanatic differential item responses to a number Enter numerical response in SPSS database	<u>Survey Instruments</u> 1. Develop Database in SPSS 2. Enter data in SPSS 3. Run Descriptive Statistics Report (Mean, Median, Mode, Standard Deviation, Standard Error of Skewness, Range, Skewness)	<u>Survey Instruments</u> Frequency Chart Bar Graph Written summary of findings relating to each research question
<u>Individual Interviews & Focus Group Discussions</u> 1. Enter transcribed data in NVivo & Microsoft Word 2. Code data using constant comparative analysis	<u>Individual Interviews & Focus Group Discussions</u> 1. Transcribe data 2. Code Data by using the following steps: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. 3. Select quotes as representative samples to include in Chapter IV 4. Summarize findings	No statistics will be reported for Individual Interviews & Focus Group Discussions Themes will be reported
<u>Document Review</u> 1. Enter field notes on document review in Microsoft Word	<u>Document Review</u> 1. Summarize findings by in a Matrix	