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## ACCOMMODATING HANDICAPPED STUDENTS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

## Greta Henglein

Due to the increasing numbers of handicapped students attending college, student affairs professionals must be aware of the special needs and concerns of these students. Student affairs professionals must also help faculty, staff and students to develop realistic perceptions of the handicapped. The increased quality of interaction can create a positive environment for all students to live and learn.

Eleven years ago, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 made it illegal for institutions benefiting from federal funding to deny admission to qualified handicapped students (Redden, 1979). As a result of this and similar legislation, institutions have been forced to reorganize their present facilities to meet the needs of a growing population of handicapped students. This paper will highlight several areas responsive to fairly inexpensive and relatively easy alterations which may greatly improve the lives of handicapped students.

When asked what type of campus environment would suit them best, handicapped students state that they desire the same access to facilities and experiences as any other student, preferring not to be singled out because they are handicapped (DeGraff, 1979). Student services programs should mainstream handicapped students into existing campus services for several reasons (Sprandel, 1980). Mainstreaming eliminates the cost of establishing a separate set of facilities and staff just for handicapped students. It benefits both the disabled and non-disabled populations by giving them more opportunities to interact with one another. Too often when services are segregated, neither population adjusts to living with the other, and attitudinal barriers remain intact (Fix & Rohrbacher, 1977). Integration of services can aid in reducing barriers and create a sense of mutual awareness. Lastly, mainstreaming encourages all student services personnel to have some knowledge of the needs of the handicapped. However, a handicapped student services office staffed with professionals who specialize in the needs of the disabled can be beneficial. This office can assist other services and departments in accommodating handicapped students.

To facilitate student success and institutional compliance with regulations, a position called "Coordinator for the Handicapped" should be established. One person per campus should be responsible for services to the disabled since this offers the advantage of high visibility to the community and a referral source for students, faculty, and staff (Dailey & Jeffress, 1981). The Coordinator should know the number and types of students' disabilities, take responsibility for developing and providing information about campus services to handicapped persons, produce an accessibility map of the campus for use by disabled students, and plan for program accessibility (Sprandel, 1980).

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Even with the establishment of a central office for the disabled, all student services personnel must be sensitive to the needs of handicapped students. A discussion of how personnel in admissions, housing, academic advising and career planning can become sensitive to the needs of handicapped students will follow. How student personnel practitioners can change negative student attitudes toward the handicapped will also be discussed. These areas are being highlighted because they typically have the greatest effect on handicapped students.

#### Admissions

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A postsecondary institution may place no restrictions on the number or percentage of handicapped students who may be admitted, may make no pre-admission inquiries regarding the existence of handicaps, must make all recruitment activities available to handicapped persons, and may use no test or admissions criteria that would have an adverse effect on the admittance of handicapped persons. (Sprandel, 1980, p. 25)

This ensures fairness to handicapped individuals seeking admittance. However, this also prevents universities from knowing the number of handicapped students they accept, and the nature of their handicaps (McLoughlin, 1982). Thus, it is desirable to encourage self-disclosure of specific information. An option might be including a separate form with the application for admission, to be returned to the office handling the needs of handicapped students. In this way students would be assured that this information would not be used in determining admission.

The most recent edition of Barron's Guide to American Colleges and Universities includes information on the handicapped facilities of each institution listed. The percentage of the campus accessible to the handicapped and the support services available are included in the description. College catalogs are also beginning to include information on services and activities designed to meet the needs of handicapped students. This information is useful to disabled individuals trying to decide where they should apply for admission. When suitable accommodations do not exist on a campus, handicapped students should be encouraged to contact the institution to see if appropriate changes are financially and structurally feasible.

# Housing

"Handicapped students are entitled to comparable, convenient, and accessible housing, at the same cost as other students enjoy" (Sprandel, 1980, p. 28). Housing personnel should be aware of each disabled student's specific needs, in an effort to prevent problems of accessibility. Handicapped students should be housed in the same building as non-handicapped residents. They should not be segregated in separate facilities because to do so only fosters the notion that they are "different". Resident assistants should be trained to be aware of the needs of each handicapped student in the unit. This, combined with the efforts of housing personnel to make the residence halls physically accessible, can help handicapped students feel at home.

Other types of residence programs are possible. The University of California at Berkeley has a program in an undergraduate residence hall complex where 24 hour orderly assistance is available. During the students' first year in the program, they are oriented to the campus services and facilities by other disabled students. After the first year, these handicapped students must leave the program and move off-campus (Lifchez & Trier, 1979). Thus, this program carries the concept of mainstreaming beyond the university and into the community, readying these students for a future on their own. Although this particular program is difficult to replicate due to the expense involved, its goals can be accomplished in any housing system. Universities should encourage students to become independent and plan for life in a world outside the institution.

## Career Planning

"Society has not historically expected handicapped people to enter the work force" (Olson, 1981, p. 48). Thus, career planning personnel may find it difficult to counsel handicapped students. The key is to work with students as individuals to determine their capabilities and interests. Many handicapped college students have no previous work experience. Career counselors should make every effort to locate work-study or field experience positions for these students (Olson, 1981). The Coordinator for the Handicapped, through knowledge of specific problems and contacts with outside agencies, can play an important role in helping students to set realistic goals and preparing them for entry into the job market.

# Academic Advising

The Coordinator for the Handicapped plays a key role in assisting students with their adjustment to college-level coursework. The Coordinator should work with faculty members to increase awareness of the effects of students' handicaps on their ability to complete given assignments. There should also be at least one faculty member on each campus who is familiar with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the services provided on campus (Sprandel, 1980). This person can assist the Coordinator in working directly with faculty members to increase their knowledge of the handicapped.

"No two people have exactly the same set of things they can and cannot do. Each has capabilities and degrees of independence" (Jastram, 1979, p. 13). It is quite appropriate for a professor to ask whether a student can accomplish the tasks required for course completion. Necessary modifications can then be decided upon by the faculty member and student. Establishing personal contact between professors and handicapped students is one way to ensure that completion of coursework is possible for all.

#### Student Attitudes

"Disabled people often discuss the fact that the disability is not so much a functional limitation as it is the negative attitude of others" (Fix & Rohrbacher, 1977, p. 176). The Coordinator for the Handicapped must serve as an educator for faculty, staff, and students. Handicapped students desire effective relations with their non-handicapped peers. This is not always easily accomplished. Some students may have totally erroneous perceptions of the handicapped, causing them to avoid disabled students in their classes or residence halls. These students need the help of faculty and residence hall staffs, as well as the understanding of disabled students if they are going to conquer their "fear" of handicapped people. Student services personnel can help them overcome this fear by formulating programs for students to increase their awareness and dispel myths about the handicapped. This can lead to a mutual understanding and increased interaction between handicapped and non-handicapped students.

Handicapped students themselves can also help to increase awareness in other students. For example, a group of handicapped students at Miami-Dade Community College in Florida developed a workshop for students. During the workshop, students were "disabled" through the use of blindfolds, earplugs, and wheelchairs, and then carried out everyday activities (Fix & Rohrbacher, 1977). This forced participants to confront their feelings about handicaps and become more aware of the needs and concerns of handicapped students.

The administration of college services for the handicapped is a new and growing area. All student services personnel on campus should continue to share their knowledge of the handicapped with faculty, staff, and students. By doing so, they play an important role in providing an opportunity for both handicapped and non-handicapped students to get the most from their college experience.

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# PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING COMPETENCE: A LOOK AT THE INDIANA UNIVERSITY WELLNESS PROGRAM

#### John R. Saddlemire

The Wellness Program at Indiana University is discussed and the relationship between wellness and competence development is examined.

In Education and Identity, Arthur Chickering offered a framework for student growth and development, and described areas within the college environment which affect the student (Widick, Parker & Knefelkamp, 1978). Chickering (1981) proposed that competence, managing emotions, and autonomy are the first three vectors of development for college students. The competence vector consists of three components: intellectual competence, physical and manual competence, and social competence (Chickering, 1981). This paper will describe how the wellness program instituted at Indiana University (IU) provides opportunities for students to develop the three components of the competence vector suggested above.

### The Wellness Program

Wellness, more than just the absence of disease, helps people become aware of and maximize their capabilities in all aspects of life (Flynn, 1980). The theory of wellness, or wholistic health, holds that the human being is a fully coherent and integrated life support system with built-in mechanisms of balance and control (Pelletier, 1974). In this sense, the mind is regarded not just as a biological switchboard but a center for total management. It is further recognized that the mind must not be bypassed or underestimated in any effort to deal with breakdowns, whether from stress or pathological organisms (Pelletier, 1974).

Wellness theory incorporates six areas of concern: spiritual, intellectual, emotional, occupational, physical, and social. The IU Wellness Program addresses the emotional, social, and physical areas. For other areas, a referral service is provided. Wholistic wellness stresses that students develop a balance between all six areas. If one of the areas is extensively deficient in development, the other areas will suffer. While working on one, the program stresses the importance of the others.

# Physical Competence

The physical aspect of the wellness program at IU proved easiest to implement and maintain. Current health status and specific dimensions in which significant improvement is possible must be determined for an individual to begin a personal wellness program. For the student interested in a wellness program, the first step is to complete a lifestyle assessment questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of a wellness inventory, as well as questions dealing with topics of personal growth and emotional needs. Once this is completed and evaluated, the student is ready for a fitness test.