Lilly Conference on Evidence-Based Teaching & Learning

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**A Rural Land Grant University Instructors’ Perceptions about Students with Disabilities** Yocom, D.J. (Cho, J. & Hunt, T.L)

**Summary**

A survey was used to collect data (N=309) at a university in the rocky mountain region. Results showed that instructors were willing to accommodate for students with disabilities in many aspects of their instructional practice.

**An Introduction to Wyoming**

* Wyoming in the mountain region of the Western United States.
* The state is the 10th largest by area and 50th in population (578,000).
* The University of Wyoming is the only 4-year college/universe in the state.
* Wyoming's economy primarily based on mineral extraction – mostly coal, oil, natural gas, and trona – and tourism.
* Agricultural commodities include livestock (beef), hay, sugar beets, grain (wheat and barley), and wool.

**Review of Federal Laws**

* Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, which was amended in 2008, prohibits discrimination in higher education. Unresolved complaints are referred to the Office for Civil Rights of the US Department of Education or the US Department of Justice.
  + Primary difference between K-12 and post-Secondary laws
* One of the goals of the 2007 Access to Success Initiative (The Education Trust, 2012) was to increase the number of college graduates with different backgrounds. However, a recent U.S. Senate report (2015) specifically stated that the success goal has not yet been met and more support should be provided for students with disabilities.
* According to the National Center for Education Statistics, three million or approximately 11% of undergraduates on university campuses are students with documented disabilities (Raue & Lewis, 2011).

**Purpose of the Survey**

* The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which rural instructors (faculty, adjunct faculty, and graduate teaching assistants) demonstrated willingness to accommodate instruction and assessments to meet the needs of students with disabilities.
* A survey questionnaire was designed to collect data (N=309). Results indicated instructors were largely willing to accommodate many aspects of their instructional practices, even in areas that faculty were known to be unwilling in previous research findings.
* While instructors were in strong favor of providing assessment accommodations in many areas, they were neutral or unwilling to accommodate other key areas of their assessment practices.
* Chi-square tests showed significantly different degrees of willingness among varying colleges, academic positions, and years of service.
* **Your ideas for the most common accommodations for students at university/college level**

**Discussion of Data from the Survey**

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| Table 1 *Compare Students with Disabilities to Other Students* | | | |
|  | Students with disabilities  do more (%) | Students with disabilities  do about the same (%) | Students with disabilities  do less (%) |
| They seem to have clear career goals | 18.90 | 74.57 | 6.53 |
| They are problem solvers (or critical thinkers) | 20.41 | 71.69 | 7.82 |
| They come to office hours | 35.50 | 55.97 | 8.54 |
| They ask for extra help in class | 42.37 | 49.15 | 8.48 |
| They get along well with other students (e.g., group projects, presentations) | 14.14 | 78.45 | 7.40 |
| They turn in assignments on time | 14.96 | 72.79 | 12.24 |
| They actively participate in class discussions | 17.57 | 69.26 | 13.17 |
| They work hard | 42.76 | 53.54 | 3.70 |

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| Table 2 *Level of Willingness to Provide Instructional Accommodations* | | | |
|  | Willing (%) | Neutral (%) | Unwilling (%) |
| Syllabus provided early | 79.73 | 13.45 | 6.83 |
| Extra credit (option not available to other students) | 19.02 | 22.95 | 58.03 |
| Use of alternative assignments (e.g. oral presentation in place of written) | 61.05 | 20.79 | 18.15 |
| Extended assignment deadline | 68.20 | 20.33 | 11.48 |
| Copy of instructor’s notes provided to student | 62.95 | 20.33 | 16.72 |
| Use of a laptop computer for taking notes | 90.76 | 6.93 | 2.31 |
| Use of a student note-taker | 89.18 | 9.51 | 1.31 |
| Tape-recorded class sessions | 78.76 | 13.40 | 7.84 |

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| Table 3 *Level of Willingness to Provide Assessment Accommodations* | | | |
|  | Willing (%) | Neutral (%) | Unwilling (%) |
| Use of a Laptop Computer for in-class written exams | 69.93 | 17.49 | 12.87 |
| Use a Scribe (another student dictates responses) | 77.38 | 15.74 | 6.88 |
| Use of a Reader (another student reads the exam to them) | 83.88 | 11.18 | 0.63 |
| No Penalty for Writing Mechanics | 58.55 | 29.61 | 11.84 |
| Use of a Calculator during Exams | 63.82 | 29.93 | 6.25 |
| Different Exam Time | 81.70 | 10.78 | 7.51 |
| Alternative Test Format | 55.96 | 23.51 | 20.13 |
| Alternate Test Location | 90.82 | 6.23 | 9.60 |
| Extended Time on Tests | 91.17 | 5.88 | 9.40 |

**Questions and Comments?**