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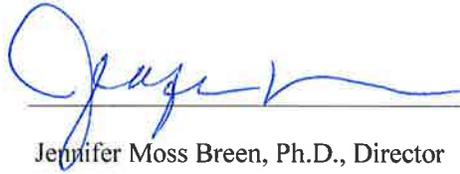
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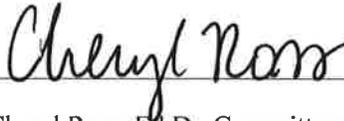
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ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: A CASE STUDY OF

FACULTY ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS AT A COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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By

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A DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE

Submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of Creighton University in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in

Interdisciplinary Leadership

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Omaha.NE

October, 22, 2018

Abstract

Postsecondary education at a community college is increasingly becoming an expectation for students with disabilities. However, research and practice in the area of community college support systems for students with disabilities has been limited. This dissertation reports the findings from a small-scale qualitative case study to discover the challenges faculty face in accommodating students with disabilities at a large, Midwestern United States community college. In the study, 10 faculty members were interviewed to gain their unique, as well as common, attitudes and behaviors about accommodating students with disabilities. The conclusion emphasizes the need for more research and special attention required to address the unique challenges faculty face in accommodating the individual needs of students with disabilities in community colleges.

Keywords: Disability, Support Services, Community College, Faculty Perspectives

Dedication

This paper is dedicated to:

My mother and father who raised me with strength and compassion, and whose faith, perseverance and deep love fills my heart.

My husband, Adam. You are the rock in my life. Thank you for loving me, having our beautiful boys and sharing this incredible journey together.

My sons, Arshaan and Jahan. You make me smile every day and for you I will continue to fight.

Acknowledgments

To the all-loving Lord, your bounty is beautiful and I am fulfilled every day by your warm embrace. My sincerest appreciation for Dr. Guetterman, Dr. Ross, and Dr. Moss Breen for your guidance and support. You have continually conveyed a spirit of adventure in regard to research and scholarship, and an excitement in regard to teaching. Without your guidance and persistent direction, this dissertation would not have been possible. I will be forever grateful for your patience, understanding, and honesty through this journey. To all of my instructors in the Ed.D program, I am grateful to those with whom I have had the pleasure to work during this and other related projects. Each of the members of my Dissertation Committee has provided me extensive personal and professional guidance and taught me a great deal about scientific research. I have gained much from our interactions, and am a keener learner as a result.

Nobody has been more important to me in the pursuit of this project than my family. I would like to thank my parents, whose love, faith and guidance are with me in everything I pursue. They are the ultimate role models of resilience and perseverance. Most importantly, I wish to thank my loving and supportive husband, Adam, and my two warrior boys, Arshaan and Jahan, who provide unending inspiration.

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CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE PROBLEM

Introduction and Background

Postsecondary education at a community college is increasingly becoming an expectation rather than an option for students with disabilities (Grigal & Hart, 2012). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016), students with disabilities are those who reported that they had one or more of the following conditions: a specific learning disability, a visual impairment, hard of hearing, deafness, a speech impairment, an orthopedic impairment, or a health impairment.

Postsecondary education offers the promise of pursuing a valued social role (that of college student), enhanced social networks, and, most significantly, increased employment options. To date, research and practice in the area of community college accommodations and provisions for students with disability has been limited (Oertle & Bragg, 2014). Yet, students with disabilities often require ongoing support through a combined team effort between faculty and offices of compliance like the Disabilities Support Services department. The better informed both community college leaders and faculty are about student disabilities and the success of appropriate accommodations, the more likely it will be for students with disabilities to achieve their full educational potential (Timmerman & Mulvihill, 2015).

Problem Statement

Students with disabilities are more likely to enroll in community colleges versus other postsecondary institutions. Among students with disabilities, an estimated 54% were enrolled at community colleges, compared to 36% in the student population as a whole (Raue & Lewis, 2011). However, students with disabilities continue to face

challenges that result in lower attendance and graduation rates when compared to people

without disabilities (Dowrick, Anderson, Heyer, & Acosta, 2005). While postsecondary

students who disclosed a disability comprise 11% of the total postsecondary population,

graduation statistics indicate the college students with disabilities are underrepresented in

students who earn a degree (Dowrick et al., 2005).

As a federal law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 and

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 governs all special education and related

services for students with federal-identified disabilities (i.e., Autism, specific learning

disability, speech or language impairments, emotional disturbance, traumatic brain injury,

visual impairment, hearing impairment, and other health impairments) that impede

educational performance, as summed up in Section 601(d) of the Act (2004):

> To ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free
>
> appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related
>
> services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further
>
> education, employment, and independent living, [and] to ensure that the rights of
>
> children with disabilities… are protected. (n.p.)

Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) define the scope of

accommodations to which postsecondary students are entitled. Like Section 504 of the

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, ADA is a civil rights law and its Titles II and III apply to

schools that receive any form of federal funding, including universities, community

colleges, and vocational schools (Leuchovius, 2003). Such institutions must ensure that

their programs and extracurricular activities are accessible to students with disabilities.

Upon receipt of imposed and required documentation from a student that verifies

disability status and/or prior accommodations in a K-12 setting, the college or university

must ensue with "reasonable accommodations."

Reasonable accommodations or modifications can take many forms, depending on

the individual student's needs. According to Timmerman and Mulvihill (2015),

examples of modifications that colleges and universities might be required to make to

their policies, practices and procedures to accommodate students with disabilities

include:

- Not assessing penalties for spelling errors on papers or exams;

- Allowing course substitutions for certain required or pre-requisite courses;

- Allowing extra time on exams;

- Allowing a reduced course load and extended time within which to complete

  degree requirements; or

- Providing housing accommodations for a student's personal care assistant.

However, colleges and universities are afforded much power and control in

interpreting these accommodations (Vickers, 2010) and are not required to fundamentally

alter programs of study or overall content and objectives (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005). More

importantly and relevant to this study, once accommodations are in place, faculty are

called upon to deliver these mandates within the classroom (Angeli, 2009). However,

knowledge gaps among faculty may undermine the provisions of these laws (Timmerman

& Mulvihill, 2015). Faculty members may not be familiar with the nuances associated

with ADA, but are nevertheless required to comply with ADA and determine the manner

in which its intent is fulfilled in their specific courses (Scott & Gregg, 2000). Once the

Disability Support Services (DSS) office, or the compliance office at universities or

colleges, provides a legal accommodation letter outlining a specific student's ADA entitlement, such communication often lacks enough detail to help each faculty member personalize his/her course in accord with each student's specific disability (Becker & Palladino, 2016). In the absence of a clear understanding of what constitutes a "reasonable accommodation" and how this would unfold in a specific course or subject, and without specific directions for instruction in the classroom, faculty may be limited in their ways of accommodating students with disabilities.

As disability support services in postsecondary education evolve, community colleges will need an increased understanding of the complex needs of students with disability to enable these students to participate fully in the education process (Heward, 2013). In addition, as an increasing number of students with disabilities enter colleges and universities, faculty will face greater demands to increase their understanding of student's individual needs, evaluate their attitudes towards students with disabilities, and develop strategies to work with students with disabilities in ways that are effective. Developing further understanding about the attitudes and perceptions of faculty is important because this information may be used to develop targeted interventions that are designed to build natural supports for students with disabilities within community college or higher education contexts.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore faculty attitudes and behaviors about accommodating students with disabilities at a large community college in Midwestern America. While the Americans with Disabilities Act guarantees access to education, it does not offer clear guidelines to faculty on how to provide these

accommodations. This study contributes to the ongoing exploration of barriers

(institutional and personal) that may prevent faculty from accommodating students with

disabilities on college campuses.

Research Question

The following research question guided this qualitative case study: how do faculty

accommodate students with disabilities at a large, Midwestern community college? To

address this purpose, three specific sub-questions were used to guide the study:

- What do community college faculty perceive as the challenges of accommodating

  students with disabilities?

- What strategies have community college faculty found to be effective in assisting

  students with disabilities?

- What are the community college faculty experiences with assistance from

  Disability Support Services?

Aim

The growing population of students with disabilities presents new challenges for

community colleges, yet innovations by educators to address the needs of these students

can improve education not only for students with disabilities, but potentially for all

students in the classroom (Heward, 2013). The study's findings and conclusions

contribute to the body of knowledge and provide insights and recommendations for

faculty and administrators at the community college to better serve students with

disabilities. The study aimed to provide community college leaders with a list of

accommodations faculty use to meet these students' unique needs and to determine what

their professional development needs are to ensure higher levels of success for this large

subpopulation of students. Based on the results of the study, recommendations for

program modifications as well as focused professional development for faculty were

made.

Methodology

The case study methodology is one that allows a specific case to be closely

examined for information and themes. As Barbour (2008) states, the case study "relates

to study design and to sampling, either of individuals or setting, in order to allow study of

specific identified characteristics and their impact on the phenomenon being researched"

(p. 93). It enables a researcher to closely examine data within a specific context. In most

cases, a case study method selects a small geographical area or a very limited number of

individuals as the subjects of study (Yin, 2003). Case studies, in their true essence,

explore and investigate contemporary real-life phenomenon through detailed contextual

analysis of a limited number of events or conditions, and their relationships. Yin (2003)

defines the case study research method "as an empirical inquiry that investigates a

contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between

phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of

evidence are used" (p. 23). Thus, case studies enable detailed research to be conducted at

a specific place and time where a social problem can be closely examined. Given that

this research study aimed to understand faculty perspectives about accommodating

students with disabilities at a community college by looking at policies, practices,

insights and suggestions, the case study method was selected.

Definition of Relevant Terms

The following terms were used operationally within the study:

Students with Disabilities: Students who reported they had one or more of the following conditions: a specific learning disability, a visual impairment, hard of hearing, deafness, a speech impairment, an orthopedic impairment, or a health impairment.

Accommodations: To ensure that their programs and activities are fully accessible to students with disabilities, colleges and universities are required to provide "reasonable modifications," which are also sometimes known as "reasonable accommodations." Specifically, colleges and universities are required to make reasonable modifications in their practices, policies and procedures, and to provide auxiliary aids and services for persons with disabilities, unless to do so would fundamentally alter the nature of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and accommodations (IDEA, 2004).

IDEA: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 is a four-part (A-D) piece of American legislation that ensures students with a disability are provided with Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) that is tailored to their individual needs.

ADA: The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA; P.L. 101-336) is the most comprehensive civil rights legislation adopted to prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities.

Faculty: Those who instruct in the classroom, online or in settings in higher education.

Community College: A post-secondary, undergraduate educational institution offering lower-level (freshman and sophomore) classes.

Disclosure of Disability: The act that a student takes in notifying the appropriate disability services office on campus of disability, usually to seek services and/or accommodations (Lightner et al., 2012).

Self-Advocacy: The ability to articulate one's needs and make informed decisions about

the supports necessary to meet those needs (Sloane, 2016).

Limitations, Delimitations, and Personal Biases

Because this case study focused on a single community college, the findings may

not be representative of all community colleges. However, the study provided detailed

description to ensure transferability of findings to other settings. Because I have a

disability, care was taken to minimize any bias by continually reevaluating impressions

of respondents and challenging preexisting assumptions and hypotheses. I avoided

elaborating on a respondent's answer or putting words in their mouth (Creswell, 2014).

To minimize bias, I asked follow-up questions that used the respondents' language and

inquired about the implications of a respondent's thoughts and reactions.

The Role of Leadership in this Study

There is a real need to 'act urgently' (Lamb, 2009, p. 2) to reconsider and address

the many flaws in postsecondary education which fail to take account of the individual

rights of students with disabilities to participate fully in educational experiences with

their peers, and to do this in inclusive ways which are centered around meeting the needs

of the student. In many contexts, moving forward will 'necessitate fundamental cultural

change' (Barton, 2010, p. 90). Within higher education systems, there is a need for

leaders who reflect deeply and are willing to engage in and support a principled, values-

driven approach to meeting the needs of students with disabilities, in inclusive ways

within their educational setting.

This may involve highly individualized small steps of progress within individual

higher education settings, looking at where colleagues are now as a school community,

and how small steps of progress can be taken to improve the outcomes and possibilities

for students with disabilities, within the confines or limitations of federal and state policy.

There is a need to ensure that the student is put at the center of relevant educational

thinking and decisions. All the discussions in this study will have a wider applicability

and purpose to support leaders and practitioners to critically question and develop

practice around inclusive values and ideals which more fully and meaningfully meet the

needs of all students within their education setting. Such developments in thinking and

practice may best be achieved through distributed leadership practices which may be

innovative and challenging. Yet, change is easier to achieve through the development of

a culture and community of practice built upon shared vision and values. New systems

and practices may need to be developed, and these systems need to 'build upon,' not the

old notions of 'can we?' but upon new notions of 'how can we?' (Sakellariadis, 2010, p.

25).

Significance of the Dissertation in Practice Study

The study's findings and conclusions provide insights and recommendations for

faculty at the community college to better serve students with disabilities. The study

aimed to provide community college leaders a list of faculty professional development

needs to ensure effective accommodations to meet these students' unique needs and to

identify strategies for ensuring higher levels of success for this growing subpopulation of

students. Based on the results of the study, I made recommendations for program

modifications as well as focused professional development.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Postsecondary education at a community college is increasingly pursued by students with disabilities. However, research and practice in the area of community college supports for students with disability has been limited. The literature review in this chapter looks at inclusive practices in higher education and the barriers to success for students with disabilities. The chapter then goes on to examine literature on faculty's knowledge, awareness of laws, and the barriers faculty face in providing accommodations for students with disabilities. The final part of this chapter examines servant leadership and its role in achieving inclusive practices in higher education with particular focus on students with disabilities.

Inclusive Practices in Higher Education

Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza, and Levine (2005) estimated that 25% of students with disabilities attend college after graduating high school. This is in comparison to about 60% of students without disabilities who had graduated from high school and enrolled in college (US Department of Education, 2010). During the 2011-2012 academic year, 11% of all students attending community colleges had some type of disability (Raue & Lewis, 2011). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016), students with disabilities are those who reported that they had one or more of the following conditions: a specific learning disability, a visual impairment, hard of hearing, deafness, a speech impairment, an orthopedic impairment, or a health impairment. However, despite the increase in students with disabilities attending postsecondary education, this population continues to have much higher dropout rates

than students without disabilities (Newman et al., 2011). These differences could be

attributed to many factors including poor relationships and experiences with instructors

or courses and instructional methods that are inaccessible for this population (Cook,

Rumrill, & Tankersley, 2009).

Presently, postsecondary institutions in the United States are legally mandated to

provide, on an individual basis, academic accommodations for "qualified" students with

disabilities who make requests. Examples of academic accommodations may include

extended time on exams, audio books, and human note takers. Students must self-

identify themselves to Disability Support Services (DSS) on campus and request

accommodations. This is often a time-consuming process that may begin after a course

has started (Scott, McGuire, & Shaw, 2003). McGuire and Scott (2006) argued for a shift

from legally mandated accommodations to full inclusion through better inclusive

practices.

The American Association of Community Colleges (2016) determined that only

half of the students with disability ever formally requested accommodation services, and

of all students with disability, 71% were enrolled in community colleges. While students

without disability may have a primary goal of attaining an academic degree or developing

job skills at the community college, students with disabilities, when surveyed, indicated

that a primary goal for them is to seek out new social experiences (Humpthry, 1999).

Other reasons students with disabilities attend community colleges included: access to

enhanced technology, expanded support service programs, and higher expectations for

what students with disabilities can accomplish (Murray, Wren, & Keys, 2008).

The potential for community colleges to assist students with disabilities can be great. The Task Force on Post-Secondary Education and Disabilities (2000) concluded that students who successfully graduate from community colleges can expect incomes and careers which pay wages comparable to those of graduates without a disability and that educational achievement can be the most effective means for people with disabilities to achieve financial independence and equality. However, students still often struggle. The U.S. Census Bureau (2016) found the overall percentage of students without disabilities graduating from colleges to be 43%. For students with non-severe disabilities (see Table 1), the graduation rate drops down to 33%. Alternatively, for students with severe disabilities (see Table 1), the graduation rate is nearly half of students without disabilities, at 22%. To explain the lower graduation rates for students with disability, a variety of areas have been identified in the literature as possible global barriers.

Table 1

Types of Disability

Types of Disability	Severity	
	Non-severe	Severe
Had difficulty seeing words in ordinary newsprint, hearing a normal conversation, or having speech understood.	X	
Was deaf, blind, or was unable to see, hear, or have speech understood.		X
Had difficulty moving arms or legs.	X	
Had difficulty walking, running, or playing/taking part in sports.	X	
Had difficulty performing one or more functional activities: walking, using stairs lifting/carrying, or grasping small objects.	X	
Unable to perform one or more of the functional activities.		X
Used a wheelchair, cane, crutches, or walker.		X
Had difficulty with one or more activities of daily living (ADLs): getting around inside the home, getting in or out of bed or a chair, bathing, dressing, eating, or toileting.	X	

Needed assistance of another person to perform one or more ADLs.		X
Had difficulty with one or more instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs): going outside the home, managing money and bills, preparing meals, doing light housework, taking prescription medicines, or using the telephone.	X	
Needed assistance of another person to perform one or more IADLs.		X
Had difficulty with schoolwork.	X	
Was limited in the kind or amount of housework.	X	
Had difficulty finding a job or remaining employed.		X
Had a learning disability such as dyslexia.	X	
Had Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.	X	
Had Alzheimer's disease, dementia, or senility.		X
Had a developmental delay.		X
Had an intellectual disability or a developmental disability, such as autism or cerebral palsy.		X
Had some other developmental condition for which received therapy or diagnostic services.		X
Had difficulty getting along with other children of the same age.	X	
Had one or more selected symptoms that interfered with everyday activities: was frequently depressed or anxious, had trouble getting along with others, had trouble concentrating, or had trouble coping with stress.		X
Had some other type of mental or emotional condition.	X	

Table1: The definition of disability. Adapted from *Americans with Disabilities: 2010* (p.

70-117). Retrieved May 5, 2017, from https://www.census.gov/prod/2012pubs/p70-

131.pdf. The definition of ADLs and IADLs is consistent with other national surveys

like the Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey and the National Health Interview Survey.

Global Barriers for Students with Disabilities

      One of the barriers to graduation is accessing accommodation services for

students with disabilities. Academic accommodations are services most often provided

by a specific office within the college to make college materials more accessible (Murray,

Wren, & Keys, 2008). Accommodations can be services such as: having extended time

to complete examinations for students with cognitive processing difficulties; note taking

services for students with physical impairments who struggle to keep up with the pace of

instructor's lectures; or audio books for students who are learning disabled or blind and

unable to read in a traditional manner (Leyser, 1989; Wolman et al., 2004). For a student

to access services, they must, "self-identify [report] they have a disability and provide

appropriate [medical/legal] documentation" (Cook, Gerber & Murphy, 2000, p. 123). In

the most recent survey of students with disabilities in higher education by the National

Center on Education Statistics (2016), 22% of students with disabilities report not

receiving the academic accommodations they need to be successful. As noted previously,

the American Association of Community Colleges (2016) states only half of the students

with disability ever formally seek services. This leaves a large population of students to

whom accommodations are never delivered.

One reason students may not self-report or disclose a disability is the stigma or in

other words, the social, academic, and psychological consequences of disclosing a

disability, in this case formally to the disability support office (Peters, 2006). Students

who self-disclose in order to receive accommodations for their disability place

themselves at greater risk on a number of levels, possibly being subjected to: negative

stereotypes associated with disability, inaccurate assessments of their ability to complete

college level work, inappropriate judgments by peers, lack of accommodations outside of

the classroom, or even increased likelihood of self-doubt and academic anxiety

(Hartmann, 2003; Davis, 2006; Trammell, 2006).

Furthermore, students may be aware of a specific condition or a set of symptoms

they have but may not understand that their condition is a disability under the ADA. The

concept of disability in postsecondary education is markedly different than the definition

of a "disabled person", which often conjures images of a person unable to work or care

for oneself (King, 2004). Students must become aware of their disability to make a

disclosure, self-report and self-advocate, which is a complicated process (Raue & Lewis,

2011). Students have to figure out that they have a diagnosable condition such as a

learning disability, Asperger's Disorder, or a chronic illness (Lightner et al., 2012). A

student may be struggling for years with the impacts of disability on academic and life

functions. It is only when someone such as an instructor, counselor, or peer refers them

to a disability office that the student begins to understand that they have a disability

(Kong, 2012). Morris and Turnbull (2007) theorized that because college faculty and

academic advisors did not always understand the nature of disabilities, they assumed

students' continual struggles to read and spell were a result of personal flaws or under-

preparedness, rather than a potentially undiagnosed disability.

This brings us to the issue of the lack of awareness and knowledge concerning

students with disability and their needs across all levels of higher education, including

presidents (West, 2008), and faculty members (Dona & Edmister, 2001). A possible

explanation for this low level of knowledge is a lack of training for faculty and staff on

the topic of working with students with disability (Timmerman & Mulvihill, 2015).

Specific Barriers for Students with Disabilities

Beyond these global issues for students, there are additional factors that can

uniquely arise on the basis of specific disabilities. These factors may include individual

cognitive and academic skills (Murray & Wren, 2003), study habits and motivation

(Murray & Wren, 2003), prior educational experiences (Wagner, Newman, & Cameto,

2004), family support and expectations (Wagner et al., 2005), financial resources

(Wagner et al., 2005), and as previously mentioned, college supports and

accommodations (Allsopp, Minskoff, & Bolt, 2005). In this investigation, my focus is on

gaining further understanding about one of these factors - college supports and

accommodations. I am particularly interested in examining faculty members' attitudes

and behaviors about providing accommodations for students with disabilities within

higher education settings.

The Role of Faculty in Higher Education and Disability

This next section takes a closer look at the role of college faculty. In many ways,

college and university faculty are the primary conduits through which students gain

access to knowledge in educational environments, and faculty are directly responsible for

determining how competent students are in their acquisition of that knowledge (Harrison,

2003; Utschig, Moon, Todd, & Bozzrog, 2011). A statement made by Walker over 25

years ago remains pertinent: "Support services can make it possible for the handicapped

student to enter the postsecondary setting physically, but only faculty can provide access

to knowledge and ways of knowing" (1980, p. 54). Thus, college and university faculty

create the context for the delivery of instruction, develop systems that support knowledge

acquisition, and develop systems that assess student understanding of that knowledge

(Oertle & Bragg, 2014).

As an increasing number of students with disabilities enter colleges and

universities, faculty will face greater demands to increase their understanding student's

individual needs, evaluate their attitudes towards students with disabilities, and develop

strategies to work with students with disabilities in ways that are effective (Garrison-

Wade, 2012). Developing further understanding about the attitudes and perceptions of

faculty is important because this information may be used to develop targeted

interventions that are designed to build natural supports for students with disabilities within community college or higher education contexts.

Research conducted in the 1980s and 1990s was instrumental in bringing attention to the issue of faculty attitudes and perceptions. Findings from those investigations suggested that faculty may have lower academic expectations for students with disabilities than for students without disabilities (Houck, Asselin, Troutman, & Arrington, 1992), and although college and university faculty are generally willing to provide students with minor accommodations (e.g., tape-recorded lectures or additional time during exams), they are less willing to allow major accommodations such as modifications or reductions of major course assignments (Farone, Hall, & Costello, 1998).

Thirty years on and not much has changed, based on the most recent research available, which was around 2011. While research of Izzo et al., (2008) shows faculty are attuned to increasing diversity in the student population, Zhange et al., (2011) shows that faculty are still not prepared to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Additionally, Hartman-Hall and Haaga (2002) studied faculty responses to requests for an accommodation. Research found that negative reactions from faculty negatively affected students' decisions to seek further assistance, whereas positive reactions from faculty led to greater willingness of students with disabilities to seek future assistance. This suggests that faculty play a crucial role in influencing students' decision to seek additional support for their disability (Hartman-Hall & Haaga, 2002). Zhang et al., (2011) concluded there are four factors affecting faculty's provision of accommodations for students with disabilities:

- Faculty knowledge of legal requirements

- Personal attitudes regarding students with disabilities

- Perceived institutional support

- Level of comfort in interacting with students with disabilities.

At this point, it is also important to consider the legal protections extended to students with disabilities in postsecondary settings and the potential impact of such legislation on faculty perceptions. According to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Subpart E:

> A recipient [postsecondary institution] to which this subpart applies shall make such modifications to its academic requirements as are necessary to ensure that such requirements do not discriminate or have the effect of discriminating, on the basis of handicap, against a qualified handicapped applicant or student. Academic requirements that the recipient can demonstrate are essential to the instruction being pursued by such student or to any directly related licensing requirement will not be regarded as discriminatory within the meaning of this section. Modifications may include changes in the length of time permitted for the completion of degree requirements, substitution of specific courses required for the completion of degree requirements, and adaptation of the manner in which specific courses are conducted.

Thus, in accordance with this Act, postsecondary institutions are required to adjust programs to ensure that they do not discriminate against students with disabilities, but they are not required to make adjustments that compromise the integrity of programs. Insofar as faculty are familiar with Section 504, they may feel conflicting pressures to

maintain the integrity of courses and programs while also providing for the unique

learning needs of students with disabilities (Scott & Gregg, 2000).

Another important point is that "Section 504 and the ADA ... are not prescriptive

special education laws like IDEA and result in varying services across institutions of

higher education" (Madaus & Shaw, 2004, p. 85). Yet another pressing point relates to

the availability, or the perceived availability, of contextual supports within higher

education contexts. Bourke et al. (2000) found that faculty who reported receiving

greater support from their departments scored higher on several items designed to assess

ease of implementing accommodations.

In summary, it is important to more fully understand faculty perceptions of

students with disabilities, the barriers to student learning and success, and how faculty

accommodate the needs of this population in postsecondary settings. Prior findings

suggest that university faculty are willing to provide accommodations to students with

disabilities, but interpretation of legal requirements as well as specific factors such as

academic discipline, faculty experience, and perceived availability of resources can affect

these perceptions. This investigation aimed to add to this area of research by addressing

several issues such as:

- the challenges of accommodating students with disabilities,

- effective strategies in assisting students with disabilities,

- and leadership support of faculty needs.

A major goal of this study was to add to the existing literature because the

majority of prior studies on these topics were conducted over a decade ago and do not

account for community college faculty perspectives. Hence, it is important to examine

feedback from faculty on their attitudes toward students with disabilities face and the

barriers faculty face in providing targeted support for their students. Only then can

meaningful training be put in place. Exploring faculty attitudes can provide a climate

assessment of the individual campus and insight into the attitudinal differences between

specific faculty groups.

Servant Leadership, Disability, and Higher Education

As servant leaders, faculty play a key role in helping vulnerable populations like

those students with disabilities. Teachers have the power to establish authentic

relationships with the students they serve by creating safe environments for learning

(Reason & Reason, 2012). Positive classroom experiences in college and university are

critical to successful inclusion of students with disabilities in the campus community.

Faculty relationships are known to have a pivotal effect on whether at- risk students, like

students with disabilities, are embraced in the college environment (Chickering, 1969).

In servant leadership, a concept popularized in the 1970s by Robert Greenleaf

(1982), desired values and characteristics include a strong service ethos, integrity,

humility, morality, empathy, and trustworthiness. One leads by serving others and by

inspiring and enabling others to exercise leadership responsibilities. Wheeler (2014)

postulates that servant leadership with its emphasis on the common good, empowerment,

involvement, and service to individuals and society, offers a better way of leading

colleges and universities. Wheeler (2014) disfavored and refuted highly bureaucratic and

task-oriented approaches, power and achievement orientations, and laissez-faire

approaches. In its place, he placed a greater emphasis on short-term-oriented or formal

leader-centered strategies, a more integrated, empowering approach, and servant leadership models.

Clearly, foremost in the servant leadership model is the strong calling to serve others. Other core attributes include authenticity, self-awareness, responsibility, moral courage, and wisdom (Greenleaf, 1982). Wheeler (2014) also clearly expanded on the phrase, "meeting the needs of others," to emphasize the servant leader's charge to encompass addressing the professional, personal, and spiritual needs of those served. In an academic setting, clearly this step entails identifying and meeting the needs of students including those with disabilities. The existing literature points to several implications for leadership, policy, and practice related to community college leaders' awareness and their handling of issues arising from disability laws and regulations (Madaus & Shaw, 2004). The problems faced by faculty arise from a lack of sufficient response from community college leaders to the inclusion and access needs of students with disabilities beyond individual accommodations. The lack of more recent research in this area prevents community colleges and their leaders from realizing the need to examine the broader access and inclusion issues for their students with disabilities. This study sought to fill that gap in the literature and provide information not only needed by the large Midwestern community college and its leaders, but also information that is useful to future planners and policy-makers regarding inclusion, holistic limitations, and access restrictions or students with disabilities at community colleges.

Conclusion

Despite the vast research on students with disabilities, little is known about the perspectives of faculty in higher education. According to the literature reviewed, the

overall experience of students with disabilities inside the classroom in higher education is

concerning due to faculty knowledge, awareness, and perceptions. Institutions of higher

education are seeing an increase in the number of students with disabilities who are

attending college. Students with disabilities have needs inside of the classroom that

exceed a typical student in higher education. Faculty provides the support inside of the

classroom necessary to meet both the university or college standards and the standards

addressed in the Americans with Disabilities Act. While IDEA governs all special

education and related services for students with federal-identified disabilities that impede

educational performance, it is not prescriptive in telling faculty how to carry out these

accommodations. Thus, one could argue that faculty dispositions toward students with

documented disabilities and/or their personal opinions about accommodations in higher

education might affect the goals of federally mandated disability laws. If such a

perception is legitimate, ignoring faculty dispositions would result in trite

accommodation provisions that may not fully serve the needs of students with disabilities

in post-secondary settings.

CHAPTER THREE: PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore faculty attitudes and behaviors about accommodating students with disabilities at a large community college in Midwestern America. While the Americans with Disabilities Act guarantees access to education, it does not offer clear guidelines to faculty on how to provide these accommodations. This study contributes to the ongoing exploration of barriers (institutional and personal) that may prevent faculty from accommodating students with disabilities on college campuses. The investigation also examines the strategies faculty found effective in assisting students with disabilities in higher education settings.

Research Question

The following research question guided this qualitative case study: how do faculty accommodate students with disabilities at a large, Midwestern community college? To address this purpose, three specific sub-questions were used to guide the study:

- What do community college faculty perceive as the challenges of accommodating students with disabilities?

- What strategies have community college faculty found to be effective in assisting students with disabilities?

- What are the community college faculty experiences with assistance from Disability Support Services?

Research Design

This holistic instrumental case study used interviews that captured anecdotal data of faculty dispositions about accommodating students with disabilities, a tool that then best informed recommendations about faculty professional development. An exploratory

qualitative design was chosen in order to gain a holistic understanding and meaning of this single case. This was accomplished through in-depth semi-structured interviews with the Director of Disability Support Services and current community college faculty who had experiences with students with various types of disabilities. Based upon the insights gained from these interviews, a number of common emergent themes were examined. Implications and recommendations for the Disability Support Services Department were provided. A single case study was chosen so as not to dilute the overall analysis.

The case study method is one that allows a specific case to be closely examined for information and themes. Yin (2003) defines the case study research method "as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p. 23). Thus, case studies enable detailed research to be conducted at a specific place and time where a social problem can be closely examined.

Given that this research study aimed to understand the specific and individual needs of faculty serving students with disabilities at a community college by looking at policies, practices, insights and suggestions, the instrumental case study method was selected (Creswell, 2013). Faculty serving students with disabilities enrolled in the two-year associate's program at the community college constituted the boundaries of this case study (Creswell, 2013). Extensive and multiple sources of information were collected to provide a detailed in-depth picture of the barriers faculty faced and strategies used in providing accommodations for students with disabilities. The Director of Disability

Support Services was also interviewed to gain understanding of the supports provided to faculty.

Participants/Data Sources and Recruitment

This study was conducted at a large-sized state community college in the Midwestern region of the United States. A purposeful sampling design was utilized through working in conjunction with the college's Disability Support Services department. Using purposive sampling, interview participants were recruited for their experience teaching on the campus under study. I attempted to achieve representation from across the core curriculum of undergraduate education.   Recruitment letters were sent via email to faculty members who previously or currently teach students with a documented disability. Ten of the faculty members were selected from those who responded to the letters as willing to participate in the study. These ten were then scheduled for interviews. I chose 10 participants as Creswell (2013) encourages a smaller participant pool for a bounded case study in order to thoroughly explore themes. The sample included a mix of three adjunct and seven permanent faculty members; three faculty members had been teaching for less than three years, one faculty member had been teaching three-seven years, and six members were teaching at the college for more than seven years. Participants included four male members and six female members. The sample also included faculty members from different subject disciplines so as to capture the different subject-specific challenges in accommodating students' needs. The subject areas included were: Business & IT, Career & Technical Education, Health Careers, Humanities & Arts, Math & Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences. Thus a

maximum variation as a sampling strategy was used to represent diverse multiple faculty perspectives. It was noted that saturation was reached with n = 10.

Data Collection Instrumentation

The study used semi-structured interviews to gather the perceptions and experiences of faculty teaching students with disabilities (see Appendix B). This format gave more depth and personal qualities to the faculty responses and also allowed me more flexibility in being able to add or omit questions during the interview. Interview questions followed the predetermined order of the Interview protocol (See Appendix A).

A pilot study was carried out with the help of a colleague at the community college to specifically pre-test the research instrument (Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). The pilot testing of the interview questions helped to detect possible flaws in the instrument (Watson, Atkinson, & Rose, 2007). This was achieved by pre-testing the instrument on one participant (faculty member) having the same characteristics as those intended in the main study. No flaws were reported in the survey instrument and the participating faculty member stated: "the questions were thoughtful and flowed in a comfortable manner."

Data Collection Procedure

I sent faculty an email thanking them for agreeing to be involved in the study and interview. Informed consent was obtained from the prospective participants. The consent forms and information sheets were subsequently sent via email, completed and returned. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with each of the participants in an accessible room within the community college setting at a time that was convenient for the participant. Each of the 10 interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes. With the

written consent of the participants, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed

verbatim. All participants were informed about the nature of the research, the right of the

participant to amend any transcribed work, to not respond to any questions that they felt

uncomfortable with, the right to terminate the interview at any time, and confidentiality

and anonymity should they participate in the interviews (Creswell, 2013).

The Director of Disability Support Services at the community college was also

interviewed to gain insight into the supports provided to faculty members in

accommodating students with disabilities. The director also discussed college disability

policies and faculty member training procedures for new and experienced faculty. I also

examined physical artifacts such as the college's disability-related documents (Letters of

Accommodation) and policies provided by the Director of Disability Support Services.

Yin (2009) states, "For case studies, the most important use of documents is to

corroborate and augment evidence from other sources" (p.103). He also states, "Because

of their overall value, documents play an explicit role in any data collection in doing case

studies" (p.103). Examining disability-related artifacts helped in the triangulation of

data. This aided the validity of my case study as the data were acquired from various

sources of evidence. Institutional Review Board (IRB) exemption was obtained from the

community college and Creighton University. Departmental approval from the Director

of Disability Support Services (DSS) at the community college was also favorably

granted.

Ethical Concerns

Since any research focusing on individuals with disabilities falls into the category

of vulnerable populations, I considered contextually-relevant factors (e.g., consent

capacity, risk/benefit ratios) to meet the goals of ethical research. At all stages of the

research process, I was mindful of the various issues that could arise in the context of my

research. According to Creswell (2014) issues can relate to:

1. The needs of participants

2. Ensuring ongoing consent

3. Handling relationships that develop during the research process

4. Unanticipated, distressing emotions

5. Unexpected revelations

In addition to the usual methods of preserving anonymity (e.g., avoiding

documenting names, phone numbers and other information that could lead to disclosure,

or confining such information only to me), I took steps to ensure participants the

opportunity to decline participation or discuss anonymity or data security issues, if they

were concerned about familiarity with members of the research team. A student's

disability status is regarded as sensitive personal information, and was guaranteed higher

standards of protection. Data collection and storage practices, whether paper, recordings

or electronic records, were adequately secured to safeguard confidentiality. I ensured that

electronic storage of material was password-protected. It was appropriate to retain only

records or data that were made anonymous. A protocol was included in the research

design on retention of data together with a process for disposal of original records which

could identify individuals (Creswell, 2014).

Finally, trust was an important aspect in gaining entry. I had the opportunity to

study this sensitive topic of disability and faculty perspectives because colleagues,

research site faculty, or administrators referred me to the appropriate avenues to recruit

participants. Although I did not attempt to create a generalizable sample, I did seek

diversity in my sample participants and strived to obtain gender and experience

differences. In a liberal environment where faculty values may conflict with institutional

values, discussions of college leadership and disability laws, even under promise of

anonymity and human subjects' protection, were at times contentious. Because the

faculty interviewed could face negative consequences if identified, I ensured their

anonymity. As a researcher, I acknowledged my ethical commitment to protecting the

integrity of the data. As St. John et al., (2013) advises "ethical practice comes down to

the individual researcher's own values and ethics" (p. 218).

Potential Researcher Bias

Since I have a disability and also work at the community college, I took care to

minimize any bias by continually reevaluating impressions of respondents and

challenging preexisting assumptions and hypotheses. Elaborating on a respondent's

answer puts words in their mouth, while leading questions lead to bias or are a result of

bias (Creswell, 2013). To minimize any bias, I asked questions that used the

respondents' language and inquired about the implications of a respondent's thoughts and

reactions. I avoided summarizing what the respondents said in my own words and did

not take what they said further. I avoided reporting bias by supporting themes with

participants' direct quotes. I also shared findings with the participants before publishing

them.

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Data Analysis

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For the purpose of this study, I employed a thematic data analysis approach to

gain a thorough understanding of the case including major themes. After I transcribed

the interviews, I developed a database and created a text file of field notes from

observations. Once a general understanding of the database was made, I conducted a

thematic text analysis and used open coding to code the data. I grouped together twenty-

five similar codes into five general themes. I used the assistance of MAXQDA software

to help me analyze, report, and visualize the codes and themes. These themes then

provided a detailed description of the case and its setting. The interpretive phase of the

data analysis yielded many lessons to improve services for this vulnerable student

population (Creswell, 2013).

Validation Strategies

In order to establish validity and credibility of the study, triangulation, member

checking, and peer debriefing were used.

Triangulation

Triangulating with multiple data sources (interviews and artifacts) helped me sort

through the data to find common themes by eliminating overlapping areas (Creswell &

Miller, 2000). This allowed me to rely on multiple forms of evidence rather than a single

incident or data point in the study.

Member Checking

Member checking consists of taking data and interpretations back to the

participants in the study (faculty members) so that they can confirm the credibility of the

information and the narrative account (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I convened a focus

group of the participants to review my findings. Throughout this process, I asked

participants if the themes made sense, whether they were developed with sufficient

evidence and whether the overall account is realistic. The group was in agreement with

the findings and concurred with the themes explored and the evidence provided. In turn, I incorporated participants' comments into the final narrative. In this way, participants added validity to both the data and the final narrative.

Peer Debriefing

A peer review or debriefing is the review of the data and the research process by someone who is familiar with the research or the phenomenon being explored (Creswell & Miller, 2000). By enlisting the support of a peer reviewer, I had a colleague challenge assumptions, and ask hard questions about methods and interpretations. The impartial peer examined the study's transcripts, findings and general methodology. Afterwards, feedback was provided to enhance conformability. The feedback was appreciative of the range of subject-specific challenges faculty faced in accommodating students with disabilities. The suggestion was made to include more data from DSS in terms of specific workshops/Professional Development support for faculty as well as any disability-related documents. Thus by seeking the assistance of a peer debriefer throughout my research endeavor, I added validity to the study.

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Reflections of the Researcher

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Throughout the postsecondary education literature, students have reported experiences with faculty they considered as non-accommodating and unapproachable, or well-intentioned in their responses to accounting for students' disabilities, albeit downplaying the need for accommodation within their respective courses (Quinlan, Bates, & Angell, 2012). When students encounter such difficulties with faculty, they may withdraw from a college or university or be less likely to seek accommodations in future courses, thereby damaging their chances of completing their degrees and/or

pursuing certain types of careers (Hill, 1996). Such a deleterious outcome should be a

rally call for higher education to ascertain faculty members' dispositions toward

embracing this subpopulation of college students and respond with professional

development opportunities aimed at thwarting any negativity. My study was both timely

and necessary given the ever-increasing number of high school students with disabilities

projected to enroll in college programs. As an educator and a person with a rare disease

and disability, I was particularly excited about this research study. I cherish my core

Jesuit values of justice and fairness and these form the backbone of this study.

Summary

Despite the vast research on students with disabilities, little is known about the

faculty members' perspectives in accommodating students with disabilities in higher

education. The purpose of this study was to assess faculty knowledge, awareness, and

perceptions as they relate to accommodating students with disabilities and the regulations

that mandate accessibility in higher education. The case study administered to faculty

members at a large community college in the Midwestern United States serves as the

foundation for future research on faculty attitudes and behaviors about providing

accommodations. In addition, the findings add to the existing disability literature and

provide important data to offices for students with disabilities as possible justification for

faculty development.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The previous chapters detailed the background, literature review, and the methodology of this qualitative case study. Chapter 4 will describe the findings obtained through the methodology outlined in Chapter 3. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore faculty attitudes and behaviors about accommodating students with disabilities at a large community college in the Midwestern U.S. In doing so, this study contributes to the ongoing exploration of barriers (institutional and personal) that may prevent faculty from accommodating students with disabilities on college campuses. The study was accomplished by gathering qualitative semi-structured interviews from 10 faculty members – adjunct and full-time from different subject areas - who agreed to participate in the study. Everyone asked to participate in an interview agreed.

The following research question guided this qualitative case study: how do faculty accommodate students with disabilities at a large, Midwestern community college? To address this purpose, three specific sub-questions were used to guide the study:

- What do community college faculty perceive as the challenges of accommodating students with disabilities?

- What strategies have community college faculty found to be effective in assisting students with disabilities?

- What are the community college faculty experiences with assistance from Disability Support Services?

The following sections of this chapter will present findings from the qualitative data.

Presentation of Findings

The personal interviews provided an in-depth and personal perception as to how faculty members accommodate students with disabilities, the challenges faculty members face, the support they receive from the community college leadership to effectively carry out their role in the classroom, and the strategies they found effective to address the needs of students with disabilities.

Review of Methods

A purposeful sampling design was utilized through working in conjunction with the college's Disability Support Services department. Using purposive sampling, interview participants were recruited for their experience teaching at the community college under study. The study aimed to have representation from across the core curriculum of undergraduate education and recruitment letters were sent via email to faculty members who previously or currently teach students with a documented disability. Ten of the faculty members were selected from those who responded to the letters as willing to participate in the study. These ten were then scheduled for interviews. The sample (see Table 2) included a mix of three adjunct and seven permanent faculty members; three faculty members had been teaching for less than three years, one faculty member had been teaching three-seven years, and six members were teaching at the college for more than seven years. Participants included four male members and six female members. The sample also included faculty members from different subject disciplines so as to capture the different subject-specific challenges in accommodating students' needs. The subject areas included were: Business and IT,

Career & Technical Education, Health Careers, Humanities & Arts, Math & Natural

Sciences, and Social Sciences.

Table 2

Description of Sample Participants

Subject Area	Faculty Position at the Community College	Gender	Experience at the Community College
Business & IT - Accounting	Full-Time	Female	Less than 3 years
Business & IT – IT	Full-Time	Male	More than 7 years
Business & IT – Business and Accounting	Full-Time	Female	More than 7 years
Career & Technical Education – Auto Collision	Full-Time	Male	3 – 7 years
Health Careers – Dentistry	Full-Time	Female	Less than 3 years
Humanities & Arts – English	Full-Time	Male	More than 7 years
Humanities & Art – Art	Adjunct	Female	More than 7 years
Math & Natural Sciences – Math	Adjunct	Male	Less than 3 years
Math & Natural Sciences - Math	Adjunct	Female	More than 7 years
Social Sciences - ESL	Full-Time	Female	More than 7 years

The Director of Disability Support Services at the community college was also

interviewed for forty minutes to gain insight into the supports provided to faculty

members in accommodating students with disabilities. DSS policies and artifacts like

Letters of Accommodation and the DSS webpage were also reviewed.

The Community College Case

The community college has been serving students with disabilities since the late

1970s and serves the largest number of students with disabilities of all the post-secondary

schools in the region. Students with disabilities who meet the academic and technical

standards for participation are eligible to request reasonable accommodations to achieve

equal access. Qualified students are accommodated when they disclose their disabilities,

provide relevant documentation and request accommodations. All college activities,

organizations, courses and academic and technical programs are open to all students.

College facilities are, as a whole, accessible to persons with physical disabilities via

ramps, automatic entrances and elevators. Accessible restroom facilities, parking spaces,

telephones and water fountains are also available.

The mission of Disability Support Services (DSS) at the college is to foster an

accessible environment where students are valued on the basis of ability, not disability

(The Community College, 2018). This is accomplished by providing qualified students

with the tools and support to ensure access to all programs and activities. The student

drives the process of requesting accommodations for a disability at the community

college. Accommodations are provided when the student identifies with having a

disability and provides required documentation. The DSS counselor engages in a

structured interview with the student to explore previous educational experiences, past

use of accommodations and what has been effective in providing access. However, if the

student is unable to clearly describe how the disability is connected to an educational

barrier and how the accommodation would provide access, the institution may need to

request third party documentation focused on making a connection.

Intake and Academic Accommodation Process

Students with disabilities are required to go through the following steps to receive

accommodations at the college:

1. Evaluate individual's request through interview with student

2. Provide appropriate disability documentation when needed

3. DSS counselor reviews documentation provided for history of accommodation

    use

4. DSS counselor and student together determine reasonable accommodations

5. Notification of Academic Accommodation letters emailed to faculty and student

6. Student and faculty discuss Academic Accommodations during first week of class

The identification and disclosure of any disability is considered confidential. The

information is released to other college employees, on a need to know basis, with a

"Consent Form/Release of Information" signed by the student.

The community college is a comprehensive, full-service public community

college supported by the taxpayers of four surrounding counties. The college's purpose

is to provide high quality educational programs and services, primarily in career

preparation and general education, to people of all ages and educational backgrounds.

The college is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. In 2016-17, the college

derived most of its revenue from state aid (26.7 percent) and property taxes (46.4

percent). The remainder came from tuition and fees (25.9 percent) and other sources

(less than 1 percent) (Community College, 2018).

Faculty, Students and Programs

For the year 2016-2017, the college employed 250 full-time faculty and 918 part-

time faculty. Enrollment was 25,080 credit students and 20,211 noncredit students. The

average student age was 26.7; 30.9% were full-time while 69.1% were part-time; 54.0%

were female and 45.3% were male. Nearly 40% were minority students and the average

class size was 14 students per class. The college offered more than 100 one and two-year

career programs in business administration, computer and office technologies, culinary

arts, industrial and construction technologies, nursing and allied health, social sciences

and services, and visual and electronic technologies, as well as academic transfer

programs.

Findings

For the purpose of this study, a thematic data analysis approach was used.

Following transcription of the interviews, a database was developed with a text file of

field notes from observations. Once a general understanding of the database was made, I

used an open coding process to begin the data coding process. Twenty-five similar codes

were grouped together into five general themes. MAXQDA software was used to help

analyze, report, and visualize the codes and themes. These themes then provided a

detailed description of the case and its setting. The five themes identified were related to:

Personal Challenges, *Institutional Challenges*, *Informational Challenges*, *Student Stigma*

and Lack of Advocacy, and *Support*.

The first theme is that faculty members' personal behaviors and attitudes are

barriers to providing accommodations to students with disabilities. *Personal Challenges*

are behaviors, perceptions, and assumptions that discriminate against persons with

disabilities. These challenges often emerge from a lack of understanding, which can lead

people to ignore, to judge, or have misconceptions about a student with a disability.

Personal Challenges revealed that the majority of faculty members in this study were

accepting of differences and willing to accommodate students with disability in their

classrooms. However, faculty members evidenced fixed attitudes towards

accommodating students with disabilities resulting from lack of planning time or a

willingness to change. Some faculty members also expressed concern about the fairness

of accommodations in some cases.

The second theme is that faculty face institutional challenges accommodating students with disabilities. *Institutional Challenges* related to the external institutional elements or structures are policies, procedures, or practices that unfairly discriminate and can prevent individuals from participating fully in a situation. *Institutional Challenges* are often put into place unintentionally. This includes advisors' lack of subject knowledge which leads students to be signed up for classes that lack adequate accommodations. The inability to alter course requirements also limited faculty's ability to accommodate students with certain cognitive disabilities.

The third theme is the informational challenges faculty face when accommodating students with disabilities. Informational Challenges relates to gaps in knowledge and/or lack of understanding about relevant factors for students with disabilities and/or accommodations. *Informational Challenges* includes a lack of communication of pertinent information. Faculty members highlighted that a lack of knowledge or awareness of particular disabilities due to student disclosure decisions often posed barriers to focused accommodations. Participants in the study mentioned lack of communication from Disability Support Services after the initial accommodation letters were sent out at the beginning of an academic quarter. They revealed that while Disability Support Services have always been receptive to providing support, instructors only reach out if there is a problem with a student. The theme also revealed a lack of communication between students and faculty with regards to sharing of disability-related information.

The fourth theme that impedes faculty from providing effective accommodations is the stigma surrounding disability and the lack of student advocacy. *Stigma and Lack of*

Advocacy refers to the social, academic, and psychological consequences of disclosing a disability, and the student's ability to articulate one's needs and make informed decisions about the supports necessary to meet those needs. Faculty members mentioned stigma surrounding disability as a primary reason for students' unwillingness to disclose a disability. Often this affected student's health, social relationships, and work performance as well as learning outcomes and retention. Interviewees also revealed that students rarely advocated for themselves and lacked the knowledge to access information to help them attain disability services.

The fifth theme is that faculty lack support to provide effective and timely accommodations. *Support* refers to services and training systems in place for faculty members to accommodate students with disabilities. The theme of *Support* highlighted the lack of knowledge of specific and focused strategies that could help faculty in accommodating disability in the classroom and online. Faculty members revealed a general lack of professional development and training in the area of accommodating students with disabilities. Participants in the study also spoke about the voluntary nature of training that resulted in a lack of experience with specific and focused support that in turn affected the level of accommodations faculty members knew to provide for students with disabilities. The instructors also revealed the generic nature of accommodations sent out by Disability Support Services; these accommodations often did not pertain to their specific subject area and were therefore found to be ineffective.

Table 3 shows each identified theme, the description of findings, and sample responses from the personal interviews. Quotes were selected carefully to be

representative of the entire database and reflect typical comments. The quotes illustrate

the theme, drawn from a variety of participants.

Table 3

Major Qualitative Themes, Descriptions, and Illustrative Quotes

Qualitative Themes	Description of Findings	Illustrative Quote from Interview
Personal Challenges	Barriers to accommodating students with disabilities related to the internal aspects of faculty attitudes and behaviors.	"I'm sure people can do it… but I don't know how to separate language difficulties from learning disabilities" (ESL Faculty Member). "How should I change my own behavior or should I change my behavior at all? That's something I never really know" (Math Faculty Member). "It is possible that some of us instructors have our own health-related issues. So it's not that we don't want to accommodate, it's just not practical all the time" (Instructor of Business). "Just because a student doesn't have a wheelchair or a cane, they may still have a disability. Hidden disabilities are a huge concern" (DSS Director).
Institutional Challenges	Barriers to faculty accommodating students with disabilities related to the external institutional elements or structures	"I can make the study-packets smaller. I think that's usually what helps. But I haven't been able to do that in certain courses as there's just so much material to cover" (Math Faculty Member). "Unfortunately, virtually none of the advisors seem to know what we do in this class" (Art Faculty Member). "Some of the things we do here, an interpreter may not understand" (CTE Faculty Member). "We've had science faculty figure out how to do things using a microscope for students who are visually impaired" (DSS Director).

Informational Challenges	Relate to gaps in knowledge and/or lack of understanding about relevant factors for students with disabilities and/or accommodations.	"Unless students tell me they don't understand something, I don't have the opportunity really to try a different method" (Accounting Faculty Member). "The math center, which was a resource, didn't know she had an accommodation" (Math Faculty Member). "DSS counselors offer faculty a session on disability support services through our Institute for Faculty Excellence" (DSS Director).
Disability Stigma and Lack of Student Advocacy	The social, academic, and psychological consequences for a student of disclosing a disability, and the student's ability to articulate one's needs and make informed decisions about the supports necessary to meet those needs.	"I think sometimes a student with a disability is afraid to admit they need a little assistance somewhere" (Math Faculty Member). "Our students will just sit there and they could be drowning academically or drowning in other ways and not say a word about it" (English Faculty Member). "Students often don't want to be identified as having a disability. They don't want to be singled out or feel like they're being identified" (DSS Director).
Support	Support services, training systems in place for faculty members to accommodate students with disabilities and the role of Disability Support Services in supporting faculty.	"I am not trained to support persons on the Autism spectrum. I'm not trained in any of this stuff" (Art Faculty Member). "The Accommodation Letters are too generic and not helpful" (Accounting Faculty). "In theory faculty would say "yes, we should accommodate, we should make things accessible," but when they get a specific student in a specific class that needs a specific accommodation, occasionally we run into a challenge with how does that work in the classroom and that's where [faculty] need to pull on the expertise of the DSS counselors" (DSS Director).

The interviews revealed the faculty faced a number of challenges that posed significant barriers to their ability to effectively accommodate students with disabilities in their classrooms. While most of the participants interviewed at the community college were committed to supporting a diverse community that included students with disabilities and to meeting its obligations to such students under the law, several themes emerged that highlighted barriers to accommodation. The following section will explore these five themes in more detail starting with faculty challenges of accommodating students that includes personal barriers, institutional barriers and informational barriers.

Personal Challenges

The majority of faculty members had a very positive attitude towards providing accommodations for students with disabilities, "I think it's very important that everybody have an equal amount of same learning environment" (Dental Instructor). Faculty members espoused a keen sense of fairness and desire to ensure equal chance of success in education for students with disabilities. For example, a Dental Instructor said, "There are a lot of people who, because of disabilities, sometimes have to miss a class or parts of class, and I don't think that that should be something that's counted against them."

Almost all faculty members interviewed were clear about their role in creating inclusive classroom environments. The English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor stated, "My job is to provide an environment that offers everyone the same opportunities and the same chances to do the work and pass the class." *Personal Challenges* explores findings related to faculty members' lack of knowledge, concerns for academic rigor, concern for other students, and unwillingness to change.

Lack of knowledge. While faculty members evidenced nondiscriminatory, disability-related attitudes toward this student population, they described only a limited degree of disability-related knowledge. As an instructor explained, "I don't always know what the disability is and I understand there's a privacy issue, but sometimes knowing just what's on the sheet isn't enough to know how to handle a situation and specifically with autistic students" (Accounting Instructor). Faculty members also stated feeling unprepared to effectively navigate the diversity within accommodation needs. The ESL faculty member stated, "I'm sure people can do it, but I don't know how to separate language difficulties from learning disabilities." While some faculty expressed a basic understanding of disabilities, they highlighted the lack of knowledge pertaining to specific characteristics of those disabling conditions. An experienced Art faculty member noted:

> We can get by on a certain amount of compassion and experience, but [the student] needed way more help than I was trained to give. I am not trained to support persons on the Autism spectrum. I'm not trained in any of this stuff.

> Some faculty members voiced that the limited knowledge of specific disabilities,

especially the invisible disabilities (e.g. epilepsy or learning disabilities), brought about a feeling of uncertainly and apprehension when assisting students with disabilities. The ESL instructor said, "I had a student with epilepsy so I was always afraid or nervous for her that she would need help in the class, but she never did." The DSS Director said, "Before, individuals that have cognitive disabilities weren't seen as college bound. We're seeing more students with cognitive disabilities in the classroom now. So the needs are higher and they're more complex."

Participants also mentioned uncertainty and anxiety in the best way to approach students with disabilities in a sensitive manner. The adjunct Math instructor stated, "If students do not identify to me, I am not sure how to approach the conversation in a private and sensitive conversation. That's something I don't always know how to do." The ESL instructor said, "We need more training on how to identify learning disabilities and how to react to students with disabilities if you don't have any information about the disorder." The Director of DSS stated, "Our DSS counselors offer a session on disability support services through our Institute for faculty excellence program. We strongly encourage our adjunct faculty to attend it, but it's not mandatory."

Concerns for academic rigor. Some of the interviewees brought up issues of academic integrity and rigor. Participants mentioned not feeling comfortable with certain accommodations and questioned their fairness in certain situations. The experienced Math instructor said:

> The student wanted to do a page of the test and then have a break to study and then come back and take another page of the test. I had issues with that. When I approached [DSS] about it, [the counselor] said it was really up to me whether I wanted to do that. I just didn't know for sure whether or not I should have… because I felt it was more of an advantage for [the student].

The DSS Director said, "The college has academic advisors, so students with disabilities have plenty of access to individuals to help with their educational academic planning. Our job is to help support all those other nonacademic areas of their lives that may impact their ability to be a student."

Concern for other students. Many faculty members spoke positively about reactions of other students within the classroom to accommodations made for students with disabilities. Students were generally supportive of students with more visible disabilities, like blind or deaf students who had accommodations like sign language interpreters or scribes. However, there was more discomfort when students with learning disabilities made use of accommodations like a calculator. The Math instructor noted, "Everybody wants a calculator. So that's usually an accommodation that could perhaps cause concern for other students." Interviewees also revealed their lack of expertise in knowing how to educate students about disabilities and manage insensitivity from other students directed at students with more obvious disabilities. The Accounting faculty member stated:

> I have one student right now, he just talks a little bit slower and he's a really smart student and has great insights. But the other students kind of snicker because he's talking very slowly. So how do you sensitize the rest of the class? We are respectful and supportive but how do you address that in a way that doesn't end up making other people feel uncomfortable?

> Other personal challenges highlighted by participants in the interviews included striking a balance between meeting students' needs and managing other students' needs. They also voiced concern over their own health. The Business instructor stated, "As much as we want to help, we cannot allow [students with disabilities] to disturb the other students' learning process. So we try to accommodate everybody, including ourselves as instructors."

Unwillingness to change. Some of the interviewees revealed fixed mindsets and unwillingness to change and accommodate student's needs. An experienced Information Technology (IT) faculty member noted his resistance to modifying subject content or testing material for students with disabilities. This faculty said, "I don't think it would be fair, to tell you the truth, because the department says we have to cover this and this is what we have to test on. I don't see how I can change anything unless it's approved through the Dean's office." However, the IT faculty member added a willingness to work with the student to achieve a desirable outcome, "I would not change the material. I would look to change the strategy." The DSS Director stated, "It's not that faculty don't want to accommodate students with disabilities. I think it's just learning to change their perspective and think about how they deliver their content differently in the classroom."

Institutional Challenges

The interviews revealed another important challenge that impedes faculty members from providing accommodations relates to the availability, or the perceived availability, of institutional and contextual supports within college context: institutional challenges. Specifically, the findings related to faculty's lack of disability law knowledge and inadequate department support, technological limitations, subject-specific concerns, practical limitations, online versus traditional classrooms, role of advisors, staffing concerns.

Disability law knowledge. Many participants expressed a lack of institutional support in understanding legal requirements pertaining to providing accommodations. The ESL instructor noted, "I haven't received official or legal accommodation requests for something that would cause me to change my teaching strategies…but in terms of

noticing students who might need things done differently, then I would do that."

Interviewees also expressed frustration in not knowing what accommodations were

available, by law, to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The Art instructor

stated:

> If they can get a deaf kid an interpreter, couldn't they have got her a cutter? We
>
> don't know what disability services can offer. They've never said what kind of
>
> assistance they can offer. Could they send somebody to help [the student]
>
> manipulate the materials [because she can't use her hands]?

Lack of department support. Many of the interviewees expressed the personal

desire to make college education more accessible to students with disabilities but felt

their departments did not have similar concerns. The Dental instructor stated, "We can

rearrange classes and we can change; schools are getting rid of pre-requisite and doing

things that could help students with disabilities. I don't think those discussions happen as

often as they should here at the department." The adjunct Math faculty member also

shared, "The focus is on quality matters and universal design and more of a general "this

is what we need to do to make our course up to standard" but not much of the vision of

the department focuses on where we want to go for students with disability." The DSS

Director said, "Wherever we're asked to, we come out to talk to faculty. We present at

Academic Affairs day and we get disability information out there."

Other participants in the study stated the course design and subject content were a

huge deterrent to accommodating students with learning disabilities. The Math faculty

member expressed:

> If it were an option to change the course material for students with disability, I
> would be open to do things like test over one chapter at a time instead of two
> chapters. I can make the study-packets smaller. I think that's usually what helps.
> But I haven't been able to do that in certain courses as there's just so much
> material to cover.

The DSS Director stated: "We cannot make fundamental alterations to the course."

Technological limitations. Some participants also spoke of the limitations of publishers to provide more accessible course material for students with disabilities. For subjects like Math and Accounting, instructors expressed concern over the lack of options for students with disabilities to access subject material. The Math instructor noted, "For graphing, things that are highly visually-based, there's very little opportunity for variation and that's what I would like to see more of. That would be the biggest challenge."

Subject specific concerns. The interviewees also mentioned student anxiety and stress in certain subjects over others. The Math instructor found accommodating students with disabilities a little more challenging when students start off with anxiety towards the subject, "I think there's anxiety with Math and when you have a disability-related barrier too, some people tend to shut down." Subjects like English and modular versions of Math were more willing to be accommodating. While the English instructor stated, "we don't do timed tests, so there's little stress or anxiety for students," the Math instructor noted:

> I've given alternate versions of a test. For digital versions of the test, there's
> anxiety there because the question is marked all right or all wrong. So, I've gone

and done paper versions so there is more free-writing opportunities and students

get a sense that it's more than just the right answer that's important.

The Social Sciences instructor added, "I had one student that stuttered. He did not want

to present in front of the class. So he audio-taped his presentation and I listened to it that

way." Faculty members with greater experience teaching in multicultural environments

were evidenced to be more receptive to making specific accommodations for their

respective subjects. The ESL instructor stated, "I think when you teach people from all

over the world with lots of different academic backgrounds, you just get really flexible."

However, interviewees found students with physical disabilities often unable to

complete certain health courses. The Dental instructor noted: "Students realize there's 4-

handed and six-handed dentistry and if they are missing any limbs or fingers or dexterity,

then they aren't able to complete the course." Subjects that had considerable

memorization were also more difficult for students with learning difficulties, as the

Health Careers instructor pointed out, "If there's something learning disability-wise, it

would be hard. There's a ton of memorization, repetitive ideas, things like that. So that

would be a little more difficult, unfortunately." The Dental faculty member also added,

"Many of these classes have specific accreditation processes that don't allow us to

change course content. Students have to pass the material to get certified." The DSS

Director said, "We've had Science faculty that have figured out how to do things using a

microscope for students who are visually impaired."

Practical limitations. While interviewees seemed to be more accepting of

students who have noticeable disabilities, such as physical and mobility disabilities,

hearing impairments, and visual impairments, they expressed the inability of the program

to accommodate some needs. The instructor of Career and Technical Education (CTE) stated: "Some of the things we do here in CTE, an interpreter may not understand." He added, "Physical disabilities are tough to work around in this field [auto-collision]." While participants were willing to try and accommodate students with disabilities, practical concerns were a tangible barrier. The CTE instructor added, "If we had more space, maybe we'd be more wheelchair accessible. I think we could work to improve our program as far as accommodating those students." The DSS Director stated, "If we build services, students will come, but budgets are tight and we have to show there's a need."

Online versus traditional classroom. Another interesting point made by participants during the interviews was the accessibility of traditional classes versus online classrooms in subjects like Accounting and Math. The Accounting instructor noted:

> I have seen students that struggle with numbers. They have a really hard time getting the numbers to balance. But they can still display that they understand the concepts and that is part of the beauty of doing a class on campus versus online. On campus, I can see that they do understand the concept, and I can follow their problems through and find where the mistake is.

However, in subjects like Information Technology, faculty members found the online format more appealing to students with disabilities. The IT instructor stated, "I think it is more accessible to students with a disability because of the internet. I think students with disability are just as capable in IT as students without a disability." The DSS Director said, "We send staff to several conferences and one coming up is on digital access. We want to make sure we are providing students with disabilities access."

Concerns about advisors. Interviewees pointed out the importance of Advisors knowing the pre-requisites of the program and guiding students with disabilities into appropriate subject areas where learning outcomes have a higher probability of being positive. The Art instructor stated, "What am I supposed to do with the student? He doesn't like touching things. Then why was he put him in Ceramics?" The Art instructor also recalled:

> I've had students with pretty severe musculoskeletal issues and [the advisors] put them in a 3D design class where you're carving, chopping and cutting. The advisors have no idea how much students need to be able to lift, how well they need to see, and be able to use their hands.

The CTE instructor expressed similar opinions, "The student had a wheelchair, but couldn't get down to work on the cars and that's a requirement for this class."

Staffing Concerns. Interviewees also addressed the topic of being over-stretched, overwhelmed, and exhausted in having to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Art, in particular, had a higher percentage of students with disabilities enrolled. The instructor stated, "There have been times when I've had maybe 25 percent of my students who I've gotten a notice from disability office on." Others pointed out staffing concerns, "We have over 100 students registered in our program that's in our day and night programs and there are actually only two full time instructors" (CTE instructor). Many faculty members also expressed concern that the needs of other students in the classroom were being neglected as a result. The Art instructor opined, "At a certain point, the other kids in the class aren't getting as much as they should because

you're spending so much energy on one or two people." The DSS Director said, "We would always like more staff, but we have to look at budget and need."

Informational Challenges

Another major theme revealed during the interviews was *Informational Challenges*. Studies that examine how faculty members make decisions related to accommodating students with disabilities identified informational barriers as significantly impacting decision-making. Informational barriers relate to gaps in knowledge and/or lack of understanding about relevant factors for students with disabilities and/or accommodations (Sniatecki, Perry, & Snell, 2015). Two *Informational Challenges* emerged: 1) Communication Concerns and 2) Course Perceptions.

Communication concerns. Faculty interviewed were cognizant of the need to communicate with students with disabilities in order to provide inclusive learning environments. The Business instructor stated, "I communicate with students to make sure they understand what's going to happen in the classroom and to see if the student is comfortable with the accommodations." The study's participants expressed an eagerness to help students with disabilities and stressed the importance of positive and encouraging conversations between students and themselves. The Accounting instructor said, "A lot of times it's just talking things out with the student and knowing certain signs of anxiety and knowing how to talk with that student."

However, interviewees expressed concern over the breakdown in communication once classes were in session. The Business instructor stated, "Sometimes [students] don't know they have to communicate with DSS [Disability Support Services], especially if they have not already disclosed their disability." The instructor was also concerned with

the lack of updated information. She said, "Sometimes something more happens to the

student, and I need to understand if they need some more accommodations, but I don't

get that information." Participants also pointed out the need for information to be shared

by students as instructors often did not want to disrespect student privacy. Instructors

explained they were not always aware of the best way to approach students with

suspected disabilities to gain information; they were uncomfortable with asking students

questions to gain disability-related knowledge in a sensitive manner. The Accounting

instructor stated, "Certainly if [students] come talk with me, it would be easier for me to

1) Identify and 2) To provide them with that support without invading their privacy."

Others pointed to their helplessness in preventing students with disabilities from dropping

out or failing a class as a result of non-disclosure, "Unless [students] tell me they don't

understand something, I don't have the opportunity really to try a different method"

(Math Instructor).

Interviewees also revealed students' unwillingness to communicate and work

together to solve problems. The Math instructor noted, "The student would never stick

around after class or talk to me so I could say something to him. He ended up dropping

the class. He just had a difficulty." A few faculty members did report that they did not

make the attempt to follow up with Disability Support Services about students with

disabilities in their classes unless there was a specific problem they could not handle on

their own. The IT instructor stated, "I honestly don't contact the DSS support very often

unless I have an issue." Other interviewees mentioned the lack of communication across

the campus that compounded efforts to effectively serve students with disabilities, "The

math center, which was a resource for students, didn't know the student had an

accommodation" (Math Instructor). The DSS Director added,

> If a student is using resource services [on campus] and there's a reason for those
>
> centers to be notified [about their accommodations], we would notify them. But
>
> as a general rule, we do not. We don't think everybody at the college share that
>
> [student's accommodation] information widely unless [students] are accessing
>
> services and they asked us to make that accommodation known. It is a question
>
> of [student] privacy.

Course perceptions. Another point made by participants was program

descriptions did not give the complete information for students with disabilities and led to

misconceptions about the course. For instance, the CTE faculty mentioned a student who

did not sign up for the Auto-Collision class because of his physical disability despite

other career options in the course being available to him. The instructor stated, "There

are different aspects of this job [Auto-Collision] that [the student with disability] could

do, for instance, being an estimator in the office, but he didn't know that." The instructor

in Health Sciences had similar experiences with student's perceptions of the dental

course:

> In Dental Assistance, there are a lot of jobs. You don't have to be a chair-side
>
> assistant. You can work in insurance or at the front desk. There are different
>
> positions if you have the basics of dental assisting. So being able to share that
>
> information with students is important.

The Dental instructor also pointed out the flaws in marketing certain courses to students

with disabilities without understanding the full range of options in the program: "All of

our pictures in our advertising and marketing of the dental program description show our students working with patients, but that is not the case. There are so many other branches of dental assisting out there."

Student Stigma & Lack of Advocacy

The interviews revealed the theme of *Student Stigma and Lack of Advocacy* as another challenge for instructors to successfully accommodate students with disabilities. The English instructor described the nature of students with disabilities at the community college:

> A student from middle and upper middleclass backgrounds will ask for things and expect to have it, but our students have no sense of entitlement. They will just sit there and they could be drowning academically or drowning in other ways and not say a word about it.

> Other faculty members agreed that there was a stigma associated with having a disability. The Math instructor noted, "I think sometimes a student with a disability is afraid to admit they need a little more assistance." Another cause of concern was students with disabilities coming in to the college from other countries. The ESL instructor pointed out the inability to help students who look like they have a learning disability, but did not even know what a disability was:

> "Students that went to school in another country up through high school and graduated there might not be part of disability support services. They might not be getting services in their country and may never have been identified as having a learning disability and then it's hard."

A few participants in the study also mentioned that online programs helped with stigma related to disabilities. On an online platform, students felt more comfortable in talking to faculty about their needs. The Math instructor said, "I think the online class makes it easier because students don't have to typically come out and say anything about their disabilities. It can remain private in some sense." The DSS Director said, "Students often don't want to be identified as having a disability. They don't want to be singled out or feel like they're being identified."

Faculty Support Systems and Strategies

The final theme evidenced was *Support* - the systems in place to assist faculty members in making reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. These systems of support include faculty professional development and training, the effectiveness Letters of Accommodation, and the role of Disability Support Services in supporting faculty.

Professional development and training. Interviewees expressed a lack of training in accommodating students with disabilities. Some adjunct faculty members spoke of the inability to attend any training sessions due to their work schedule. The adjunct Math instructor said, "I haven't taken any of the trainings. Nothing has worked in my schedule. The only training I received was 20 years ago during my Masters." Many of the other participants who had been at the community college for more than seven years could not remember the last time they attended a disability-related training session. "I can't remember attending a training, but I'm sure I did at some earlier point" (IT Instructor). The voluntary nature of the trainings and development meant that only new faculty were obligated to attend. The Accounting instructor stated, "When I started,

I went through the Faculty Development trainings. And in one of the weeks, they

brought in Disability Support Services and spoke specifically about accommodating

students. So that's the majority of my training, honestly."

Many of the faculty members openly expressed concern with their lack of

knowledge, and they desired improvement. The Health Careers instructor opined, "I

don't have any training in identifying or working with students with learning disabilities,

so I would want to improve that." Others expressed similar feelings in learning more

about students with disabilities and how to effectively work with these individuals. The

ESL instructor said, "If there are other things that I can do, other than what is legally

required for me to do, I would like to know." Some instructors also expressed

uncertainty over privacy issues and how much information DSS could share with faculty.

The Math instructor voiced such a concern, "I just don't know what somebody can release

due to privacy laws. And maybe that's the reason we don't get more information." The

DSS Director said, "Usually about the first time a faculty member has a student with a

disability in their class, they learn very quickly that they should have taken the faculty

training."

Letters of accommodation. The Letters of Accommodation begin collaboration

between students with disabilities and their faculty to ensure appropriate course

modifications are made. The letter is a document generated by Disability Support

Services that indicates a student has a documented disability and has been deemed

eligible for specific academic accommodations. The information on the letter is

confidential and should be treated as such (Weis, 2016). The majority of participants in

the study expressed frustration with the Letters of Accommodation. Many felt the

accommodation of 'extended time' and 'note-taking' were the most-cited accommodation

provided in the letter. The Art Instructor said, "Most of the time the accommodations are

usually extended time or copy of notes." Faculty members wanted to know how the

'extra time' needed to be applied in the actual classroom setting. The Business Instructor

stated, "So do [students] need extra time for lectures or do they need extra time for tests

because the way it reads is just 'extra time.' So how do you approach students and ask

what they specifically need extra time for?" Other participants felt the generic nature of

the accommodations in the letter did not provide enough detail to help them plan

effective subject-specific strategies. The ESL instructor said. "What we get is more of a

generic version of what the disability is, and I would like to have more details to plan

better."

The instructor in Health Sciences expressed the desire to have a breakdown of

accommodations for both lab and lecture classes. She said, "In the lab, you can't record

because recordings are only audio. So is there something else I can do to accommodate

students in the lab? Getting to know more about the actual disability will be more

beneficial." Interviewees also mentioned that a long list of accommodations that do not

pertain to their subject is often time-consuming and shows disrespect of an instructor's

time and efforts. The Business Instructor said, "I think DSS is listing all the potential

accommodations that students need without taking into consideration whether the student

is online or on campus. It takes time to go through and find the right accommodation for

our subject." The DSS Director stated, "In theory faculty would say "yes, we should

accommodate and we should make things accessible," but when they get a specific

student in a specific class that needs a specific accommodation, occasionally we run into

a challenge with how does that work in the classroom and that's where [faculty] need to

pull on the expertise of the DSS counselors."

Strategies Faculty Found Effective in Accommodating Students with Disabilities

While the findings explored the challenges faculty face in accommodating

students with disabilities at the community college, there were some faculty members'

who demonstrated the effective use of various strategies to accommodate student's

individual needs. These faculty members evidenced an awareness of their role as a

critical resource in the college's efforts to accommodate students with disabilities.

Interviewees spoke about their ongoing efforts to "level the playing field" (DSS Director)

for students with disabilities, while maintaining the rigor of the college's academic

standards and intended learning outcomes. The ESL instructor said, "My role is making

sure everybody has equal access to the materials I provide and the best chance they can at

learning the material." The Math instructor stated, "It is finding the best way for students

to learn and to give them the time to learn."

Open communication. One of the strategies faculty members noted as being

particularly useful in assisting students with disabilities was opening up communication

opportunities. "A lot of times it's just talking things out with the student and knowing

when certain signs of anxiety was at its highest and knowing how to talk with that

student" (Dental instructor). "I communicate with [the student] to make sure they

understand what's going to happen in the classroom and to see if the student is

comfortable with that" (Accounting instructor). The Business instructor noted, "I have

the role of a mentor so I'm open for conversation if [students] want to approach me."

Trying new approaches. Other faculty members spoke about trying out new approaches and strategies to accommodate student's individual needs. "I did look up a couple of different medical approaches like breathing exercises or things like that just because I was interested in seeing how it could help my students who have anxiety issues" (Dental instructor). A few faculty found that giving alternate versions of the test helped students with disabilities. The Accounting instructor noted, "I gave [the student] the option of taking the test during the time allotted during the class or taking the test down at the testing center." Another instructor noted,

> "For digital versions of the test, there's anxiety because the question is marked all right or all wrong. So I always go back and give points. So I've given paper versions of a test so there is more free-writing opportunities and students get a sense that it's more than just the right answer that's important" (Math instructor).

The adjunct Math instructor also noted that some students with specific learning disabilities needed extra support, "I did have to spend several hours outside of class time or after class, specifically helping [the student] one-on-one." A few faculty members also spoke about providing students with disabilities different options for accessing subject content delivered in class. The Business instructor said, "I will provide [students] the outline so they're not having to write down all of the information. So, hopefully, that makes it easier for them." Almost all the interviewees spoke about using extended time as a strategy to accommodate students' needs, "Usually I am already starting with a way bigger time window than needed so students with the accommodation of extra time are already taken care of" (Math instructor).

Helping with disclosure. A few faculty members also spoke about specific positive strategies used to help students who do not self-disclose a disability. The Business instructor said, "I don't suggest, "I think [the student has] ADD. I am not a doctor nor is it my place to discuss [a diagnosis]. Instead, I suggest [the student] to go talk to DSS because they are the professionals who can guide them through the process and figure out what is best for [the student]." Other faculty members spoke about taking active measures to help with disclosure. The Art faculty member mentioned having students fill a form at the beginning of class that gives information to help ascertain the kind of focused support individual students may need, "The form asks the student if they have a learning or physical disability that might need some accommodation."

Class preparation. In smaller classes where there are more adult students enrolled, faculty members noted that "students jumped in and did their best to be supportive and help [students with disabilities" (Art instructor). Faculty members also highlighted the use of simple strategies of planning ahead to help in making accommodations effective, "I had a student who had sign language interpreters and so I had making sure that person had space and that the student could see the board and see the interpreter" (ESL instructor). The Dental instructor also noted that using class preparation time as a full-time faculty helps to plan for accommodations, "I have a lot of planning time. I have office hours that I use to see how I can deliver my lesson differently for students."

Disability Support Services and Faculty

In addition to interviews with faculty members, a 40-minute interview with the Dean of Student Advocacy and Accountability and Director of Disability Support

Services, physical DDS artifacts were also examined. With over 20 years of experience

in Student Affairs, the director is in charge of career assessment/development, academic

advising, learning support services, disability support services, student

conduct/adjudication, behavior/threat intervention, student activities, student leadership

programs, academic counseling services, education and prevention programming, and

civil rights compliance (Title IX, Title VI and ADAAA).

The interview highlighted DSS's desire to provide meaningful collaboration

between faculty and DSS counselors. Once a student needing an accommodation has a

documented disability and the appropriate accommodations are determined, DSS

communicates that disability to the appropriate faculty via an accommodation letter. The

department employees four fulltime Disability Counselors, one part-time Counselor and

one part-time Advocacy Counselor, one fulltime Student Accessibility Specialist, one

part-time temporary Counselor (works up to 24 hours a week) and two part-time

temporary instructional assistants. The DSS staff works with faculty daily addressing

student needs and fostering relationships with faculty members and building credibility

with them.

The director discussed the need for faculty members to communicate with DSS

when challenges arise. She stated, "I think that occasionally faculty run into a challenge

with how a particular accommodation works in class. That's when they need to pull on

the expertise of the DSS counselors." The DSS office offers trainings for all staff, but

stressed the importance of faculty reaching out. The director noted, "We strongly

encourage our adjunct faculty to attend the trainings sessions, but it's not mandatory to do

so." Understanding faculty needs and actively working with them is critical to the work

of Disability Support Services in ensuring academic success for students with disabilities.

The interviewee also expressed the opinion that faculty need to be more proactive to

students' needs. She said, "We're not expecting faculty to make a diagnosis, but if they're

concerned about a student, they need to make a referral to Disability Support Services or

the Advocacy Counselors."

Similarly, the director acknowledged the stigma facing students with disabilities.

She stated, "Students don't want to be identified as having a disability. They often have

had a bad experience in K-12 and think they can do without accommodations in college."

The director also spoke about Advocacy Counselors working with students with

disabilities to address issues of advocating for their needs, "We have trained counselors

to help with life adjustments." On examining relevant disability-related documents and

policies, it was evidenced that the community college has a long history of being

responsive and engaged in providing disability related services to provide access to all

programs and activities. The procedures memorandum (Disability Support Services,

2017) has guidelines for accommodating students with disabilities:

> Any student with a documented disability is eligible to receive services from the
>
> College's Disability Support Services (DSS) administrative unit. The purpose of
>
> accommodations and modifications is to reduce or eliminate any disadvantages
>
> that may exist because of an individual's disability. The law does not require
>
> institutions to waive specific courses or academic requirements considered
>
> essential to a particular program or degree. Rather, the mandate is to modify
>
> existing requirements on a case-by-case basis in order to ensure that individuals
>
> are not discriminated against on the basis of their disability.

DSS counselors work with each student requesting services to create an

individualized plan to address their specific accommodation needs. Common

accommodations/educational adjustments for DSS students include: note takers, testing

accommodations, alternate format texts/materials, readers/scribes, sign language

interpreters, assistive technology, academic/executive function coaching, and

chairs/tables. In addition, DSS counselors work with students to resolve disability related

issues impacting academics, make referral to other services and agencies (Learning and

Tutoring Center/Student Success Center, State Vocational Rehabilitation Office,

Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, etc.), and provide training for students,

faculty, staff and community members on disability related issues (Disability Support

Services, 2017). DSS served 1,463 unduplicated students with disabilities in 2016-17

(see Table 4). The numbers only reflect those that have disclosed a documented

disability, and not all students at the community college with disabilities. The college

serves the largest number of students with disabilities of any college in the Midwest.

Table 4

Number of Community College Students by Disability Type at the Midwest Community College

Number of Community College Students by Disability Type (2016-17)	
Autism Spectrum	82
Attention Deficit (ADHD)	211
Behavior Disorder	288
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	37
Intellectual Disability	62
Other Health Impairment	151
Orthopedic Impairment	102
Pregnant (medically complicated)	15
PTSD	38
Specific Learning Disability	356
Speech Impairment	30
Visual Impairment	22

Table 4: Disability Type. Adapted from Community College Institutional Research: 2016-2017

With a wide range of disabilities present in the college campus, the Disability Support Services department is the college's agent for ensuring that students with disabilities are able to access and participate in all aspects of campus life, including learning.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the study, which were based on an analysis of data from interview transcripts, documents, and field notes. Faculty members felt they needed more disability-specific training and resources to assist students with disabilities. Participants expressed frustration with personal, institutional and informational challenges that sprung from lack of knowledge, preparation and attitudes towards

accommodating students with disabilities. Faculty members also acknowledged the

stigma surrounding disability and the need for greater support from Disability Support

Services in order to improve their ability to assist students with disabilities in the

classroom. Chapter five further discusses the findings in relation to implications,

conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This case study was designed to add to the existing body of knowledge about faculty attitudes and behaviors towards accommodating students with disabilities in the community college. Over the last 50 years, postsecondary institutions have become more diverse with the increased access and inclusion of historically marginalized groups (Peña, Stapleton, & Schaffer, 2016). More specifically, while students with disabilities exemplify some of the most dramatic changes for higher education, colleges and universities are challenged to provide reasonable accommodations and easy access to learning environments for a variety of different disabilities. Although students with disabilities are underrepresented in higher education, their access to higher education has grown since the passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA; Garrison-Wade & Lehman, 2009). The U.S. Government Accountability Office (2009) reports that 1 in 10 college students in the United States has a disability.

Accommodating students with disabilities in higher education has been a focus policy makers have struggled to address for years. Current U.S. law has not been fully successful in helping higher education students with disabilities. Students with disabilities experience great difficulty transitioning from high school to higher education due to differences in laws implemented at each level (Ochoa, 2007). Unlike in K-12 education, where students are minors with parents advocating and supporting them, higher education students in the first year of college are seen as legal adults expected to advocate for themselves. Students in higher education must self-disclose their disability,

provide documentation, and request accommodations and services (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2009).

But while higher education institutions are required to provide "reasonable accommodations tailored to an individual student's needs to allow equal access to higher education" (Government Accountability Office, 2009, p. 13), they "are not required to provide accommodations that would fundamentally alter the nature of a program, lower or waive essential academic requirements, or result in undue financial or administrative burdens" (p. 4). Despite this, U.S. lawmakers mandate a procedure assuring each student entering higher education with a disability is identified and receives an individualized education plan like in the K-12 system (Arscott, 2013; Thomas, 2000).

Equally important to note is most higher education faculty members are not required to complete special education courses or a teaching internship prior to teaching in higher education. In fact, faculty members often have little or no experience working with students with disabilities prior to working in higher education (Government Accountability Office, 2009). Thus, gaining additional information about experiences faculty members had in providing reasonable accommodations and how faculty can be better supported to work with these students is critical to higher education and the workforce. Limited research has been conducted regarding faculty attitudes and behaviors towards accommodating students with disabilities in higher education and this research has focused on the barriers faculty face in providing focused support for these students. Further research is needed examining faculty members' challenges to assist students with disabilities (Baker, Boland, & Nowik, 2012), as well as working with students with disabilities within community colleges (Street et al., 2012).

A study examining faculty's work with students with disabilities at a large Midwestern community college has not been completed. Therefore, a qualitative approach, which is beneficial in gaining a holistic understanding and meaning of this single case, was used to provide an initial look at faculty perceptions and to lay the foundation for future studies. As recommended by Yin (2003), interviewing provides an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of interviewees (faculty members) that cannot be teased out through a quantitative study.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore faculty attitudes and behaviors about accommodating students with disabilities at a large community college in Midwestern America. While the Americans with Disabilities Act guaranteed access to education, it does not offer clear guidelines to faculty on how to provide these accommodations. This study contributes to the ongoing exploration of barriers (institutional and personal) that may prevent faculty from accommodating students with disabilities on college campuses.

Aim of Study

The growing population of students with disabilities presents new challenges for community colleges, yet innovations by educators to address the needs of these students can improve education not only for students with disabilities, but potentially for all students in the classroom (Heward, 2013). The study's findings and conclusions contribute to the body of knowledge and provide insights and recommendations for faculty and administrators at the community college to better serve students with disabilities. The study aimed to provide community college leaders with a list of

recommendations to support faculty to better help them meet these students' unique

needs, and to determine what their professional development needs were to ensure higher

levels of success for this large subpopulation of students. Based on the results of the

study, recommendations for program modifications as well as focused professional

development for faculty were made.

Discussion of Findings

Together the accounts of these faculty experiences paint a broader picture

regarding the support faculty needs for effective delivery of reasonable accommodations,

issues surrounding students with disabilities at the community college, and the potential

unmet needs of some students with disabilities in this college. All study participants had

experiences working with and accommodating students with a wide range of disabilities,

though these experiences and training were varied. All faculty members discussed their

legal requirement to accommodate students with disabilities, resulting from Section 504

(1973) and the ADA (1990) which mandates access to higher education, in addition to

knowledge of formal procedures to provide services to students with disabilities on the

campus. Additionally, a climate of general support in the provision of services to

students with disabilities emerged through the interviews. Despite participants'

awareness of the legal requirements to accommodate students with disabilities and

availability of support at the community college, several challenges emerged through the

faculty members' discussion of their experiences.

Disability Law Knowledge and Faculty Preparation

The study's findings show, in most cases, faculty members are supportive of students with disabilities and have favorable attitudes toward them. However, faculty members at the community college are often unprepared for working with students with disabilities. The participants expressed their lack of experience and training to understand and accommodate specific disabilities. Additionally, while respondents found physical disabilities easier to identify and accommodate, invisible disabilities - like learning difficulties - were found to be more challenging, especially in ESL students. These findings are consistent with literature. For example, Murray and colleagues (2008) suggested that although faculty and staff were willing to provide supports, they often perceived themselves to be lacking adequate knowledge and skills to implement such supports. Furthermore, faculty are often willing to provide more comfortable learning environments to students with disabilities as they gain greater experience of specific disability triggers that exacerbate symptoms (Leyser et al. 2003).

The study's findings suggested faculty members who are knowledgeable of the laws regarding accommodations are more willing to provide accommodations. Unfortunately, this demonstrates some faculty members at the community college may still not know the clear requirements of the law that recognizes disabilities and offers accommodations, so they may attempt either to deny requests for accommodations or be less than supportive in implementing them. Several studies indicate that postsecondary faculty members have limited knowledge of the legal responsibilities to provide accommodations to students with disabilities (Rao, 2002; Villarreal, 2002; Barazandeh, 2005). Without a proper understanding of the legal requirements surrounding students

with disabilities, faculty members evidenced uncertainty in providing reasonable

accommodations for their students.

The majority of participants in the study also spoke about not knowing the best

way to approach students with disabilities to accommodate their needs. Faculty members

were often unsure how to sensitize classrooms and other students to the challenges that

students with disabilities face in an educational environment and their needs for

accommodations. The study's findings stress the importance of removing the barriers of

attitudes developed due to lack of awareness. Greater sensitivity from faculty members

providing accommodations is one way of removing the barriers of the teaching system in

colleges. Sources indicate that greater disability awareness on the part of faculty

members, as well as other students without disabilities in the classroom, would ease the

uncertainty faculty feel in approaching students with disabilities and accommodating

their needs (Smith, 2000; Avramidis et al., 2000).

Academic Rigor and Faculty's Ethical Dilemma

The findings also addressed faculty member's concerns of academic integrity

when accommodating students with disabilities. Faculty members perceived

accommodations, such as certain examination accommodations and modifying course

requirements, as unfair to students who do not have disabilities. Furthermore, some

faculty members were reluctant to provide accommodations such as "additional time on a

test" especially when the manner in which the additional time is to be used is not

specified. This finding is consistent with other sources (Dodd, Rose, & Belcourt, 1992;

Houck et al., 1992; Vogel et al., 1999; Bourke, Strehorn, & Silver 2000; and Vasek,

2005), which show how faculty attitudes and behaviors towards accommodating students

with disabilities can help or hinder students with disabilities. However, the data from this study further highlights the importance of clear instructions in the Accommodation Letters sent out to faculty members who provide accommodations to students with disabilities. Faculty members are more likely to make accommodations for students with disabilities if accommodations are more specifically explained to them. Thus, this finding indicates that a faculty member's beliefs regarding the efficacy of and the need for accommodations can affect the provision of accommodations. This is supported by Bento (1996) who found that "ethical dilemmas emerged when the requested accommodation benefited the disabled student, but implied negative consequences for other members of the class" (p. 497). Clarity in how accommodations are administered, especially where tests are concerned, is linked to mitigating faculty member's "ethical dilemmas" in providing accommodations to students with disabilities.

Faculty Role, Beliefs and Attitudes

The study's findings showed that faculty members' identified lack of time and fixed mindsets as the greatest obstacles to providing help and accommodations to students with disabilities (Berry & Mellard, 2002; Sweener, et al., 2002). Faculty members were more willing to provide accommodations that are not time intensive. However, altering how lessons are delivered in the classroom to accommodate students with disabilities is often a time-consuming process. Thus, it can be evidenced that faculty are less likely to change their methods of delivering subject material if adequate planning time is not allocated to accommodate students with disabilities. This finding elucidates one of the reasons why faculty members are unwilling to modify lessons to accommodate students with disabilities.

Interviewees also discussed the stresses found in accommodating students with disabilities and the actual day-to-day class requirements. Some faculty members spoke about personal health concerns that hindered their ability to meet every student need in a timely manner. The expectations, goals and directives; the severity of the disability and the student's needs; student behavior and discipline problems; and institutional requirements – rules, regulations, and paperwork cause stress for faculty, and can eventually lead to faculty members' unwillingness to provide reasonable accommodations. Sources point to burnout as the stress that arises from the interpersonal demands in the work environment and is a pattern of emotional overload and exhaustion (Gersten et al., 2001; Maslach, 2003; & Cramer et al., 2015). In fact the study's findings showed that 'compassion fatigue' (Maslach, 2003) or the key dimensions of the burnout syndrome - emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of accomplishment - were felt by many of the faculty members. Without the right supports, faculty are often stressed to provide accommodations to students with disabilities and manage the needs of the rest of their class.

Technological Limitations

The findings of the study also suggest that technological limitations often impede faculty members' ability to make effective accommodations for students with disabilities. The Math instructor pointed out that publishers are still not catering to students with disabilities and videos often have poor audio and blurry subtitles. Publishers have been hesitant about widespread distribution of electronic versions of textbooks due to copyright violation concerns (Ogilvie & Eggleton, 2011). In the United States, the 1976 Copyright Act allows people with perceptual disabilities to convert materials into

alternative formats without violating copyright, but it does not require publishers to provide digital source files (Richert, Brunson, Bridges, & Reid, 2015). Additionally, many e-books in certain subjects are incompatible with assistive technology due to digital protection measures.

Subject-Specific Challenges

Similarly, it was revealed that certain subjects like English and Business were more conducive to providing accommodations for students with disabilities, but more technical subjects like Health Careers and Career & Technical Education struggled to accommodate students with physical disabilities. In fact, faculty in the fields of education and liberal arts have the most positive views regarding effectively accommodating students with disabilities, whereas faculty in science, engineering, commerce, and industry tend to struggle with accommodating students with disabilities (Rao, 2002). The findings further suggest that accommodating students with learning disabilities in a subject like Heath Careers is often challenging as these subjects are regulated by external certification criteria and are content heavy. It may be inaccurate to describe faculty attitudes as negative; rather faculty they may lack adequate knowledge of the nature and needs of students with disabilities and the support services available to these specific students (Aksamit, Morris, & Leuenberger, 1987; Matthews, Anderson, & Skolnick, 1987; Nelson et al., 1990).

Another area of particular concern was Art. While Art faculty can help meet the learning and expression needs of students with disabilities, there needs to be a considerable shift in how the community college views Art to address the learning needs of this sub population. The Art faculty expressed concern that the subject was taken to be

a catchall for any student with a disability regardless of the subject's challenges to

accommodating them. Art is seen as an "easy" subject that solves the problem for

advisors looking to place students with disability. However, art curricula that address

disability needs to be a priority with more focused support needed for Art faculty to help

increase student access, independence, and retention in Art. Sources have indicated that

Art continues to be a challenge for students with disabilities without the right structural

supports in place for faculty (Derby, 2011).

Another interesting finding was the accessibility of traditional classes versus

online classrooms in subjects like Accounting and Math. In traditional Accounting

classrooms, faculty are able to guide students with disabilities and see where errors are

made in calculations. Similarly, while modular math classes can be taken online and

provide students the opportunity to work at their own pace, traditional Math classrooms

allow instructors to provide more hands-on guidance and support. Thus we see, without

proper implementation and guidance based on best practices, online learning will require

special attention to ensure students with disabilities receive all the educational benefits

afforded by technology in an equally effective and equally integrated manner.

Student's Disability Knowledge, Stigma and Advocacy

The findings also bring to light the significant gaps in information. It was clear

from the discussions with participants that faculty believe many students with disabilities

did not know what support services were available, what their legal rights were, or how

to respond to the questions posed to them regarding accommodations. Students with

learning disabilities and attention deficits have the most difficulty explaining their

limitations or selecting the accommodations they needed. This made it challenging for

faculty members to gain students' input on how accommodations could best benefit them. So while faculty members have an idea of the accommodations in place for a specific student, the effectiveness of the accommodation is stymied by the lack of student input. In cases where students do not self-disclose, this can be a significant roadblock for faculty to accommodate students with disabilities. Sources show that students with learning disabilities have the most difficulty in expressing their needs (Hong, 2015). Participants in this study reported that student's self-disclosure to an instructor can lead to increased instructor efficacy in making reasonable accommodations. Instructors experienced a positive turning point in their relationship with a student when they learned more about the student. Without appropriate knowledge, faculty are ill-prepared to make decisions about how to effectively implement accommodations in their classrooms and at times faculty question the legitimacy of requested accommodations or if the accommodations are enough (Dowrick et al., 2005; Docan-Morgan, 2011).

The findings also highlighted the stigma associated with disability. Participants shared that students with disabilities often did not communicate their needs or advocate for themselves. Faculty members shared that they believe students with disabilities often lacked the academic, personal, and social skills needed to integrate themselves into higher education environments. They were less likely to develop a sense of empowerment; and less likely to be aware of their own strengths, interests and limitations. Students avoided having to advocate for themselves with the faculty member about needing any kind of academic adjustments because they did not want to be regarded as "less capable" of making it through the class. Faculty also shared that students were unwilling to disclose disabilities because of stigma. Sources have shown

that social stigma surrounding disability continues to be a strong challenge to students with disabilities seeking accommodations and support from faculty (Brinkerhoff et al., 2002; Hartman-Hall & Haaga, 2002; Madaus, et al., 2002; Hong et al., 2007; Denhart, 2008; Hong, 2015). Participants in the interview pointed out that students needing accommodations are creating a greater disability for themselves and putting themselves at a greater disadvantage when they do not disclose their disability and seek services. It is the responsibility of the student to make an appropriate and timely request for an accommodation, and without self-identification, institutions are not required to provide accommodations or meet reasonable requests (Newman & Madaus, 2015).

Faculty Experiences with Disability Support Services

Communication between faculty and the office of disability services was also evidenced as a critical factor in effective accommodations. Faculty members considered Disability Support Services staff to be in a unique position to address misconceptions held by faculty, as well as to reinforce the legal obligations that instructors have with regard to the provision of accommodations for students with disabilities. Timely and continuous communication between DSS staff and faculty members ensures a feeling of tangible support in times of doubt and uncertainty. Sources show that offices for disability support are critical to the provision of reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities (Jensen et al., 2004; Dowrick et al., 2005; Docan-Morgan, 2011).

Throughout this study, it was identified that Disability Support Services plays a critical role in improving faculty supports for accommodating students with disabilities. Faculty members stressed that an effective disability services support system can be an extremely valuable resource in deliberating accommodation issues. It was clear that time

spent engaged in disability training was an important predictor of attitudes and

perceptions such that faculty and staff who had spent a greater amount of time in training

and had previous disability-related experience had the most positive attitudes and

perceptions regarding college students with disabilities. However, one of the biggest

challenges the community college faces is how to increase attendance for those faculty

who could most benefit from additional training. The college's DSS director mentioned

that training was not mandatory and it was up to faculty members to seek out support.

The important finding here is that without strong communication channels, faculty who

need additional support are not receiving timely and appropriate training resources. This

is particularly concerning for adjunct faculty who find it difficult to schedule training

during their teaching sessions. Existing literature indicates that without disability-

training, faculty members lack the support needed to make reasonable accommodations

for students with disabilities. (Dowrick et al., 2005; Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Cook et al.,

2009; Murray et al., 2009).

Summary

Faculty awareness and knowledge regarding accommodations is a significant

barrier for students with disabilities. Without appropriate knowledge, faculty are ill-

prepared to make decisions about how to effectively implement accommodations in their

classrooms and support students with disabilities in a sensitive and respectful manner.

New faculty training and in-service training related to disabilities would therefore be a

strong recommendation for community college leadership to improve faculty members'

effectiveness and willingness to provide accommodations to students with disabilities.

Proposed Solution and Recommendations

Results from this study suggest that, in general, faculty at the community college

have positive attitudes toward college students with disabilities and believe that these

students can be both successful and competitive in higher education. While some faculty

members used positive strategies to address the needs of students with disabilities, there

was still a reported lack of knowledge regarding policies and procedures related to

reasonable accommodations, students' failure to disclose a disability, lack of subject-

specific accommodations and resources, and inadequate collaboration and

communication between Disability Support Services and faculty, that needed to be

addressed. The following table highlights the findings and recommendations of this

study.

Table 5

Findings and Recommendations

Findings	Proposed Recommendation
Personal Challenges related to faculty members' concerns for academic rigor, concern for other students, and unwillingness to change.	**Sharing of Best Practices** -DSS Workshops and training -Sharing best practices in approaching students with disabilities -Managing other nondisabled students in the classroom. -Increasing faculty knowledge of disability legal mandates. **Improving Personal Beliefs and Attitudes** -DSS to train faculty to understand social and psychological needs of students with disabilities. -Faculty to form relationships with DSS staff and students. -DSS staff to reach out to the faculty and not wait until a problem arises. -Design activities to increase faculty members' personal level of comfort.

	-Include interested faculty members to assist with design and development of such programs.
Institutional challenges related to faculty's lack of disability law knowledge and inadequate department support, technological limitations, subject-specific concerns, practical limitations, online versus traditional classrooms, role of advisors, and staffing concerns.	**Department Support** -Department-led focused strategies and accommodations -Discuss challenging scenarios and problem-solve collectively. -Subject-specific instructional strategies -Peer-led training, discussing best teaching strategies -Department chairs to support efforts to improve accommodation. -Working with DSS to build subject-specific resources -Collaboration between DSS advisors and faculty. -Collaboration with community partners (occupational therapists) -Systemic changes in course accreditation
Informational Challenges related to Communication Concerns and Course Perceptions.	**Communication and Collaboration** - Among departments - DSS to provide faculty feedback - Between advisors and faculty - Between faculty, DSS and other resource areas on campus (the Math Center, Library, and Writing Center) - Between community partners - Faculty awareness of the role of DSS Advocacy Counselors.
Disability Stigma & Lack of Student Advocacy	**Student Identification and Disclosure** -Encourage students to self-identify prior to arrival on campus -Information about available services made widely available -Available services sufficiently visible in college -Available services shared with faculty members -"Bill of Rights" to be posted in conspicuous places **Disability Stigma & Advocacy** -DSS to engage students via informal and formal education about disabilities. -Advocacy programs visibly encouraged on campus -Establish cultural committees led by an interested faculty member and students with disabilities. -Advertising campaigns and marketing material to include images of students with disabilities.

	-DSS to make faculty aware of the role of DSS Advocacy Counselors. -Faculty to establish a climate of respect for students with disabilities
Support related to faculty professional development and training, Letters of Accommodation, and the role of Disability Support Services in supporting faculty.	**Letters of Accommodation** -Negotiation between faculty, student, and DSS -Clear distinctions between online and traditional classroom accommodations. -Faculty updates for any accommodation -Case study accommodation scenarios **Resources** -DSS to develop a library of resources. -Bigger facility for CTE for wheelchair accessibility. -A handbook to provide information regarding disabilities and available accommodations. -Instructional assistants to work with faculty.

Sharing Best Practices

The findings from this study suggest that faculty could benefit from workshops and other training opportunities for enhancing their work to accommodate students with disabilities, particularly those with specific learning or invisible disabilities. Faculty participation in such offerings would be robust as many faculty members expressed eagerness to improve methods to accommodate students with disabilities. In particular, respondents expressed strong interest in attending workshops focused on best practices and subject-specific strategies in working with students with disabilities, best practices in approaching students with learning disabilities, and increased knowledge of disability legal mandates. It would be beneficial for faculty to be directed in different instructional strategies focused not only on specific learning disabilities, but also for different subject areas. Previous research has also provided evidence that faculty training has a significant impact on attitudes toward and perceptions of students with disabilities and that faculty

have interest in learning how to work more effectively with these students (Brockelman et al., 2006; Murray et al., 2008; Lombardi et al., 2011; Lombardi & Murray, 2011).

The community college should consider implementing more comprehensive training for new and adjunct faculty, perhaps as part of their orientation program. This proactive approach would better equip faculty for working with students with disabilities and may have significant implications for improving the provision of reasonable accommodations. While DSS professionals could play a significant role in advocating for and planning such opportunities, it is imperative to include faculty input in designing these trainings. Also, without administrative support, implementation will be challenging, particularly in getting faculty to take advantage of these offerings. Therefore, it is important for DSS to work with department deans and administration leaders to ensure disability-related trainings are scheduled into Professional Development programs, and faculty members are offered a financial incentive for completing them. A further step would be to make such trainings mandatory. DSS staff would do well to schedule training sessions department-wise to give focused strategies and accommodations to faculty members, discuss challenging scenarios and problem-solve collectively.

Department focused peer-led training would also be a strong recommendation. Sharing what works in other classes and discussing best teaching strategies among peers during department meetings can lead to greater disability-knowledge for faculty members. Collaboration between the DSS and individual departments may be beneficial in facilitating this process. One of the problems faced by the community college is knowing how much time to allocate to faculty trainings. It is recommended DSS plans

for one large training event to last 2 to 4 days, while at the same time organize the

training content so that it could be delivered in small modules online or in print materials.

With this strategy, consistent messages will be delivered across multiple formats. This

strategy is beneficial because a wide range of faculty may access the resources according

to their time and needs, and DSS providers will not have to duplicate efforts in creating

resource materials. Following-up with faculty who participated in training is equally

important in making sure faculty members have access to campus resource contact

information in case they have questions in the future.

Another approach is to include disability as an aspect of diversity training and

related activities. Faculty members could be made aware that "they are not simply

fulfilling some legislative mandate, but embracing and fostering diversity on their

campuses" (Barnard et al., 2008, p. 174). In this way, becoming more informed about

disability-related issues may be viewed by faculty as a means of making the institution

more inclusive for all students, not just those with disabilities. For example, the

University of Texas Students Program Safety Education Services has developed an online

training module on the topic of Disability Advocacy. This training module is designed to

provide an introduction to understanding disability as an aspect of diversity and to

provide practical considerations for working with people with disabilities. Having such

programs in place at the community college would help faculty develop a greater

sensitivity and awareness of working with students with disabilities.

At the same time, it is important to note that professional development is effective

only if something happens as a result. Too often, faculty are caught up in daily activities

and do not find time to attend training sessions that are often voluntary in nature. It is

important to have few mandatory training sessions for all faculty to become acquainted with disability laws, accommodation processes and any updates to new strategies to better serve students. Leaders can use the following strategies to make sure a staff development event is meaningful and effective:

l. Require faculty to do something. For example, if the workshop theme was "strategies to help students with a learning disability," ask each faculty to implement at least one new strategy during the next semester. This strategy will "make something happen" now and hopefully will motivate faculty to try new methods in the future without being required to do so.

2. Use positive peer pressure. Community college leaders or DSS can emphasize the importance of a staff development event by featuring its concepts regularly in faculty meetings. Participating teachers can tell what they have attempted in the classroom and what they have learned from new methods. The enthusiasm of those who are trying new things can be contagious, and the recognition given those who are doing something innovative and effective can inspire others to improve. Faculty meetings also provide a forum for addressing problems that inevitably arise in implementing a new strategy.

3. As part of the follow-up process, DSS will want to ask faculty about their progress, and develop assessment standards and instruments to measure the impact of new instructional techniques on students with disabilities' achievement.

Improving Personal Beliefs & Attitudes

In this study, faculty members demonstrated different levels of expertise and awareness about students with disabilities. Some instructors were receptive to the needs of students in this study, while other faculty members did not know how to respond.

Many of those who were receptive had previous experiences with disabilities and were very willing to accommodate. In contrast, some faculty members who did not know how to respond and lacked support in addressing the situation were not as sympathetic to these students' needs. In such examples, students ended "having to drop" classes as faculty members were unable to address their specific needs. Therefore, in addition to trainings to provide understanding of the academic, social, and psychological needs of this student population, efforts should be made to encourage faculty to form relationships with DSS staff and students.

Collaboration across the community college can ensure commitment to the success of students with disabilities and can assist Disability Support Services staff and faculty members to better meet the needs of students with disabilities while helping to foster an environment conducive to academic success. Additionally, Disability Support Services assists faculty in complying with ADA regulations and civil rights while maintaining institutional academic standards. When faculty members have an understanding of the needs of students, they are able to create accommodations that allow students to succeed academically while maintaining the rigor of the curriculum. Forming relationships with faculty and staff can foster partnerships to successfully meet the needs of students across campus. Thus, faculty can improve personal attitudes and seek out timely interventions when they face personal challenges.

Improving the personal beliefs of faculty can also be done by raising faculty members' level of comfort with having and teaching students with disabilities. DSS can focus more on activities that are concentrated on improving instructional strategies and increasing faculty knowledge of disability types, especially invisible disabilities.

Specifically, DSS staff need to reach out to the faculty and not wait until a problem arises for the faculty members to approach DSS. The DSS office should engage in activities involving (a) the assessment of faculty needs and concerns, (b) the design of faculty in-service training to address these needs, and (c) the evaluation of the outcomes of the training. DSS staff should also increase interactions with those faculty, staff, and administrators who have the power and networks to affect other faculty. Activities around the campus and in and around the community at large can also be designed to increase faculty members' personal level of comfort for interacting with and teaching students with disabilities so that any fears, myths, or misunderstandings of accommodating students with disabilities will be eliminated. Including interested faculty members to assist with design and development of such programs will foster stronger relationships between DSS, faculty and students.

Department Support

The support of efforts to improve the community college's services offered to students needing accommodations is bolstered by Department support. Department leaders must understand the legal and ethical responsibilities of making accommodations so they can instill in faculty the importance of this service. If a department leader chooses to make a priority of meeting the needs of students with accommodations, the faculty members are likely to mirror that behavior. DSS, in collaboration with departments and faculty, and importantly, students with disabilities, should consider future policy development that ensures inclusive practices across all departments of the community college. This practice should ensure that relevant learning materials are available to students with disabilities, and consideration is given to differing modes of

academic delivery and differing forms of inclusive assessment. Department chairs should

work with faculty and DSS to determine and develop subject-specific resources

especially for subjects like Art, CTE and Math. One staff person from DSS can work

with a department representative to plan for and purchase adaptive software and hardware

to meet student subject-specific accommodation needs. Partnerships with community

occupational therapists and disability vendors like Assistive Technology Partnerships

need to be explored further. Each department should appoint an Access and

Accommodation Resource Coordinator to help faculty and students address issues of

access and accommodation in instructional settings. Collaborative disability-related

awareness and training events can be coordinated through these department

representatives on a regular basis. Also departments can work with accreditation offices

to explore options for course completion options for students with learning disabilities.

Relevant disability issues should be discussed by Department heads and addressed in

curricula.

Communication and Collaboration

Another way the community college could better support faculty serving students

with disabilities is to encourage collaboration among departments. As noted in this

study, participants lamented the lack of communication and disjointed services for

students with disabilities. Through collaboration, professionals could draw upon

collective wisdom on campus to better meet student needs. Giving faculty feedback on

things they are doing right and areas for improvement would help build collaborative

partnerships between DSS and faculty. It is also imperative for other resource areas on

campus, such as the Math Center, Library, and Writing Center, to know the student has

accommodations, so there can be a uniform and college-wide support of students with disabilities. This can be done if faculty refers a student to a campus resource. Faculty then connects with DSS and DSS makes the proper assessment for sharing of student information with resource centers on campus.

More effective collaboration between advisors and faculty is also recommended. DSS Advisors need to look at what specific courses like ART and CTE have to offer for students with disabilities. This would give DSS Advisors a greater understanding of the type of courses students with disabilities will be better accommodated in, the resources available and any possible supports faculty may need. In this way, students with disabilities are given a better chance at succeeding. Collaboration with various community partners could be another possible avenue to pursue. Occupational therapists could analyze what Art classes have to offer to accommodate students with disabilities. The therapists could then communicate with DSS and offer suggestion on how a particular student can be accommodated and what resources would need to be in place.

Clear communication and collaborative connections between DSS staff, administrators, students and faculty will help facilitate this work. DSS should act as a touchstone for faculty to refer to and addresses the common questions that need to be answered, as well as details that are helpful to planning for the operation of specific disability programs. Effective collaboration generally focuses on shared resources, shared responsibility, shared effort to build trust and collegiality, and shared work to ensure equal access to high-quality education for all students (Yatsko & Lake, 2016, p.4).

Student Identification and Disclosure

DSS should review how students at the community college are expected to learn about available services. To this end, the following suggestions are made:

1. Students should be encouraged to self-identify prior to arrival on campus. Knott and Taylor (2014) acknowledge that students are often reluctant to disclose their disability for a wide variety of reasons. Cultural change is needed and higher education institutions should be more proactive in encouraging students to disclose. A starting point could be at community college open days and recruitment fairs, an idea also discussed by Mortimore (2013).

2. Information about available services should be made widely available to potential students and persons in contact with such students (e.g., high school counselors, career/vocational counselors, rehabilitation workers). DSS should develop pamphlets, brochures, and/or advertisements describing the types of services available and how to access such services. These materials should be distributed to high schools and various disability-related community agencies. Similar information should be sufficiently visible in the college calendar and in any brochures describing the college and its programs and shared with faculty members.

3. Faculty members could collaborate with DSS to be part of recruitment teams that visit high schools to solicit applications from qualified applicants (e.g., as part of "career awareness" days). At the time of initial contact, the faculty member and DSS staff could discuss with the students and the Special Education Coordinators/Service Providers/Transition Services in the schools the types of

specific arrangements that might be needed (e.g., wheel-chair accessible bathrooms) and how they might be obtained (i.e., who to contact). During this initial contact, it is important that there be a frank discussion of the types of services that will or will not be available at the community college.

4. For students with disabilities on campus who do not self-identify, special efforts should be made to ensure that faculty members know where to refer students for assistance. Information on services from DSS and how to access them should be made more readily available in various on-campus publications (e.g., online student portals like MYHUB, faculty newsletters, instructors' handbooks). West et al. (1993) suggested that the students' "Bill of Rights" be posted in conspicuous places such as classrooms. Posting of such a document in places where faculty tend to congregate (e.g., faculty lounges) would increase awareness of faculty to the need for early referral.

Disability Stigma and Advocacy

While the director of DSS spoke of advocacy programs to help support students with disabilities and to change stereotypes surrounding disability, it was clearly evidenced that faculty were unaware of such programs and their impact on student's self-disclosing or advocating for accommodations. Thus, it is recommended that faculty collaborate with DSS in engaging students via informal and formal education about disability advocacy programs. Advocacy programs must be visibly encouraged on campus by educating individuals or groups about disability topics to reduce stereotypes and stigma. This could involve willing students sharing stories and being publicly open about their disabilities. Self-awareness has positive effects on students with disabilities

seeking help. More specifically, the results of focus groups, as well as of direct

interviews, indicate that student advocacy is critical for the academic success of students

with disabilities (Getzel & Thoma, 2008; Marshak, et al., 2010).

These interactions could provide self-advocacy suggestions to students who

receive negative or indifferent responses to their requests for accommodations. Such

suggestions help to ensure that students actually receive the accommodations by

reminding the faculty members that DSS may become involved if a request is dismissed

out of hand or otherwise ignored. Thus, better education about disabilities and the

reasons for accommodations will ensure students know what and how to ask for them,

and faculty members can support accommodations and know that they will not

necessarily lead to the dilution of the academic quality of courses.

One of the important issues in stigma reduction is modifying the community

beliefs and culture through establishing cultural committees, advertising campaigns, and

selecting an ambassador – an interested faculty member working with students with

disabilities - to participate in such programs. Also, media plays an undeniable role in

reducing or increasing stigma. The community college needs to work with DSS to use

the capacity of media for proper training and modifying wrong beliefs under the

supervision of specialists and experts. Marketing material, especially for course

programs, needs to include images of students with disabilities to dispel any social stigma

around having a disability. DSS also should make faculty aware of the role of DSS

Advocacy Counselors so that faculty members may direct students with disabilities to get

timely guidance in fitting into the educational environment.

A direct approach is simply for faculty members to invite students with accommodation needs to speak with them after class or during office hours. As the findings indicate, a few faculty members have found it very useful to include a statement on their syllabi advising students to see them early in the quarter or before a certain date and reminding them of their responsibility to register with Disability Support Students. But of course, despite efforts to encourage early communication, there may be students who wait until they are in crisis before identifying themselves as having a disability. It is not at all uncommon for a student to want to begin college without accommodations and to wait until right before an exam is given or after it is returned to discuss his/her needs (Patrick & Wessel, 2013). Faculty should not presume that a student is simply using their disability as an excuse for poor performance, but faculty members should discuss other factors that may be affecting the student's performance including those that may or may not relate to their disability.

Faculty can also act to establish a climate of respect for students with disabilities - things which will likely help all students. Positive actions and words of encouragement are also helpful in creating an inclusive environment. For example, faculty can select a larger font or print size for syllabi, and other written material they distribute to students. They can highlight the academic resources available for their students, including their office hours, study space, tutoring services, review sessions, workbooks or study guides. Additionally, faculty can inform students that the Disability Support Services is available to help students improve upon their learning skills and strategies, and to refer students to resources both within and outside the college.

Letters of Accommodation

Accommodating students with disabilities is not intended to be a rote process of student notice and faculty subservience. As King and Jarrow (1990) noted, "whether or not an accommodation is made is negotiable" (p.8). Thus, for effective and timely accommodations to be made, it is important to allow all involved parties to voice their perspectives on what is a reasonable accommodation in a particular circumstance. It has been suggested that weighing accommodation requests should be viewed as a "thought process," (Scott, 1990) balancing the essential requirements of a course or program with the individual needs of a student with a disability. Brinckerhoff, Shaw, and McGuire (1993) have characterized this interaction as best occurring as a "negotiation" between faculty, student, and the institutional provider for disability services. Whether viewed as a thought process or a negotiation, faculty members at the community college who are concerned that a requested accommodation will compromise the academic standards of a course or program should actively participate in a discussion with a student and DSS of what is reasonable. DSS must educate faculty at the campus to inform them of the possibility of such negotiations and discussions that better serve students with disabilities.

DSS should also make clear distinctions between online and traditional classrooms. Information on how learning is affected by a particular disability is important in establishing understanding for faculty and the need for specific accommodations for students with disabilities. Faculty members need to know how a particular disability affects what the student can do in a particular class. Also, if there are any changes to the student's medical situation that affects accommodation, timely information regarding such updates need to be communicated to faculty members. A

major critique of the accommodation letters was the challenges in transferability to the classroom. Oftentimes, faculty know they must incorporate inclusive instructional practices but are not sure of how to go about this process. Faculty may even have positive attitudes toward disability-related themes and inclusive instruction but are not actually embedding the principles into their teaching practices (Cook et al., 2009; Lombardi, Murray, & Gerdes, 2011) because faculty do not foresee how accommodations could actually look for students with disabilities. The findings of this study suggest using case study scenarios to help illustrate what accommodations actually look like in practice. Scenarios would provide ready examples that allow for faculty to visualize their own classrooms. Scenarios could be described in a newsletter or website content, or they could be used as part of a workshop activity.

Resources

The community college might also consider developing a library of resources to assist faculty in better accommodating students with disabilities and/or to develop a peer mentorship program where faculty who have significant experience with students with disabilities can assist those with less experience (Lynch & Gussel, 1996). The study's findings also show that it would be helpful for DSS to look ahead and problem-solve probable challenges such as providing students with visual impairment access to graphing in Math. Having the resources lined up will allow subjects greater accessibility to students with varying needs.

The study also found that barriers to accommodating students with disabilities also related to physical accessibility of a program or course. More resources are needed to tackle this problem. Particular focus is needed on subjects like Art and CTE to assess

how these courses could accommodate students with physical disabilities. A bigger

facility for CTE would be allow greater wheelchair accessibility. A think-tank working

alongside DSS and subject faculty should come up with a practical plan to accommodate

students with disabilities in their program. Furthermore, while the DSS director

identified the most common disabilities appearing in the campus student population (see

Table 4), it was not evidenced that this information was shared with faculty members.

Results from this study suggest both faculty and students would benefit if a handbook

were available to provide information regarding disabilities and available

accommodations. A handbook on common disabilities, along with various data related to

the disabilities and academic accommodations, would provide a valuable resource to

faculty members and students. The handbook can be a successful tool in advocating for a

useful and positive change within a campus community.

　　　Another important resource to improve would be to hire more instructional

assistants to provide individualized tutoring to students with disabilities. Studies show

that tutoring college students with disabilities is a successful tool for the advancement of

these students, at least from the student's perspective (Michael, 2016). Also, good

guidance and preparation of tutors are a key factor in the success of tutoring students with

disabilities. Faculty at the community college should be informed of the role of the

instructional assistants. Faculty should play an important role in working with DSS

instructional assistants to better support students with disabilities. Student feedback from

instructional assistants to faculty members would encourage a greater collaborative effort

towards the success of students with disabilities.

In summary, the most important finding is that faculty knowledge of legal responsibilities and whether they believe they have support from the institution are the two important predictors of whether they are willing to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. In addition, faculty member's personal beliefs and attitudes regarding the education of students with disabilities and willingness to provide accommodations are dependent on students' self-disclosure and advocacy efforts as well as easy access to resources. This study's findings show faculty are more willing to provide accommodations for students with disabilities if they have the knowledge, guidance, and resources to do so.

Policies Influencing the Proposed Solution

The community college has a procedures memorandum in place to ensure that all employees and students at the college are treated fairly and in accordance with the provisions of the ADA. The college memorandum that is on the website and sent to all faculty has clear guidelines for accommodating students with disabilities, so the proposed solution would seek to bolster the policies in place at the community college to further support faculty in effectively serving students with disabilities. New college policies should also be made to include student advocacy initiatives and services.

The policies pertaining to how accommodations are made for students with disabilities in the community college would have to be revisited by the college leadership team and DSS. It would serve students with disabilities well to have a collaborative "thought process," (Scott, 1990) balancing the essential requirements of a course or program with the individual needs of a student with a disability. This could be done by having a negotiation between faculty, student, and DSS staff, whether it be in written format or part of a formal discussion process. In this way, faculty members are an active part of the accommodation process and therefore have a better understanding of how the accommodation will be applied in the classroom setting. Any challenges to accommodating a student with disabilities in a specific subject or course can be minimized.

The community college will need to develop written policies to ensure the provision of necessary services and equipment, and training of staff. Accurate records should be maintained by DSS to track accommodations made by faculty for students with disabilities. If there are delays, the cause should be noted (e.g., increasing number of

requests by students vs. lack of knowledge to provide the accommodation), and actions

should be taken by DSS to rectify the situation (e.g., more focused training for faculty,

peer mentoring etc.). Finally, while there are college wide policies developed to assure

students with disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations as mandated by law,

sterner action should be taken for faculty members who do not comply with these

policies. Faculty members who repeatedly are unwilling to make the necessary

accommodations should be reprimanded, and appropriate corrective measures should be

determined (West et al., 1993).

Financial/Budget Issues Related to Proposed Solution

Inadequate funding is often cited as the prime reason for delayed and diminished

disability support services at postsecondary education levels. Often, accommodation

decisions are made based on budgetary considerations rather than on an assessment of the

actual needs of students with disabilities.   At the postsecondary level, the funding

structure is highly complex, with some programs containing eligibility requirements and

restrictions that affect the provision of timely services for students with disabilities.

DSS Staff should lobby the administration of the community college to ensure

that operating budgets are sufficient to hire necessary staff and to provide equipment

required to meet the accommodation needs of students with disabilities. The DSS

director mentioned the lack of funding for the department, especially to hire instructional

assistants to help provide individualized support for students with disabilities. Financial

remuneration for DSS instructional assistants were some of the lowest incomes offered

by the college. In times of funding cuts, DSS staff should act proactively to ensure that

the retention and academic success of students with disabilities are not jeopardized. If it

is necessary to supplement the number of paid staff by volunteers, DSS staff should

ensure that volunteers are trained in the area of working with individuals with disabilities.

It has been suggested by Salend, Salend, and Yanok (1985) that special education faculty

can become involved in advising students and training faculty.

Some services may be available in the community at no cost (or minimal cost) to

the community college. DSS staff should strive to avoid duplication, and where

appropriate, use existing services to the maximum extent possible, in an attempt to reduce

the demands on their limited resources. For example, the campus has a Learning and

Tutoring Center (LTC) that offers tutoring for all students. DSS would find it beneficial

to collaborate with the LTC staff to provide targeted support to students with disabilities

as well. Also, an increasing number of campus programs are turning to partners and

advocates in their local communities for assistance. Community support comes in many

forms—volunteered time, money, equipment, or advocacy. Private sector support and

corporate partnerships are rapidly growing in scope and frequency, often where sustained

goals can be advanced (Rund & Scharf, 2000). Private foundations and nonprofit

organizations also have discovered that campus disability programs can be beneficial

groups with which to associate because gifted funds are prudently managed, easily

accounted for, and used to produce tangible results (Rund & Scharf, 2000). The

community college can avail of private grants and community support to fund the

proposed solution.

Ultimately, the continuing increase in prevalence of college students with

disabilities shows that more and more faculty will teach students with diverse learning

styles and abilities. Regardless of available funding, DSS staff will face the challenge of

providing a variety of resources to faculty. The findings from this study show there are

effective and efficient ways to support faculty increasing disability awareness and

adopting inclusive instructional practices. As such, DSS ought to focus their outreach

efforts on empowering faculty with the education and resources they will need to support

college students with disabilities.

Implementation of the Proposed Solution

The knowledge and data gained from this study will be shared with the

community college leadership, Disability Support Services, and faculty. The goal is to

provide the results of this study in written form before the winter quarter of 2018. While

many parts of the recommendations require smaller adjustments that can be implemented

within the span of a few quarters, the larger systemic recommendations suggested may

take a couple of years to be implemented. The hope for this study is that it will provide

ways to help the community college increase student success and retention by providing

faculty members the knowledge and resources to provide effective accommodations for

students with disabilities. The proposed solutions for implementation will be discussed

with the administration. The discussion will include the possibility of implementing

faculty training and student advocacy workshops.

Change Theory

Any strategy of change must simultaneously focus on changing individuals and

the culture or system within which they work. To successfully change and improve

support to faculty who accommodate students with disabilities, the community college

needs to bolster its disability support system. DSS staff and faculty roles and

relationships need to change; traditional rules under which learning happens within the

classrooms need to be revamped. The Burke-Litwin model (Burke, 2014) suggests causal

linkages that hypothesize how effective change occurs. Change is depicted in terms of

both process and content, with particular emphasis on transformational as compared with

transactional factors. Transformational change occurs as a response to the external

environment and directly affects organizational mission and strategy, the organization's

leadership, and culture. In turn, the transactional factors are affected - structure, systems,

management practices, and climate (Filej, Skela-Savic, Vicic, & Hudorovic, 2009).

For the Burke-Litwin model of change to be successful, long term ad

transformational, the community college, Disability Support Serves in particular, would

need to aim at creating more collaborative processes to effectively deliver

accommodations to students with disabilities. They would need to (a) set a vision, (b)

develop implementation plans, (c) use staff members (faculty and professionals) in

systematic ways to create inclusive environments for delivery of accommodations, (d)

create and develop teams who work collaboratively to meet the range of student and

faculty needs, (e) provide ongoing learning opportunities for faculty members, (f)

monitor and adjust the service delivery, and (g) purposefully work to develop a climate of

confidence and efficacy for faculty to accommodate students with disabilities.

At the group level (Burke, 2014), constant analysis and discussion between DSS

and faculty would keep the goal of change on track and this would assist with inter group

dynamics and help with the transition of new faculty to the new model. The goal would

have to be clear: improve faculty knowledge and provide resources to improve

accommodations for students with disabilities. At the larger system level (Burke, 2014),

changing faculty attitudes and perspectives towards accommodating students with

disabilities would create a broader environment of inclusion which could positively

impact student retention, persistence and course completion.

Leadership, including DSS and the college management, could benefit from

practicing Lewin's three-stage model of the change process (Burke, 2014). First, the

unfreezing step would be to get ready to change; the community college would prepare to

move away from the current manner in which accommodations are made for students and

shares with faculty. The next step, the moving or transition step would be the hardest as

faculty, students, and even certain members of management, would be unsure or even

fearful. During this phase, leadership should allow teachers to develop their own

solutions to aid the change initiative. Open and clear communication would provide

clarity of the desired change and the benefits to stakeholders so they do not lose sight of

objectives. The final step of refreezing would establish stability once the changes have

been made. The changes would then be accepted and become the new culture of the

college; new relationships would be formed and faculty and students could become

comfortable with their new roles and routines (Burke, 2014).

For example DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and

Technology) at the University of Washington has, since 1992, worked to increase the

representation of individuals with disabilities in postsecondary education and

employment. In 1999, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary

Education (OPE) funded DO-IT Prof (Grant #P333A999042), which created professional

development materials and trained faculty and academic administrators nationwide to

more fully include students with disabilities in their courses. In 2002, OPE funded DO-

IT Admin (Grant #P333A020044), which expanded DO-IT Prof efforts to train student

service administrators and staff. Project team members further identified the critical need

to systematically change policies, procedures, and practices in order for both universal

design and reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities to be embraced at an

institutional level.

The change process will have to be systemic and look to refine professional

development and resources for faculty and college administrators, complement them with

the identification, validation, and application of campus-wide accessibility indicators to

document institutional change toward more accessible campuses and programs for

students with disabilities. The Community College leaders should:

- Develop and deliver professional development and technical assistance for faculty

  using multiple delivery systems.

- Develop and validate campus accessibility indicators and use pre-post checklists

  to document institutional changes in policies, procedures, and practices that lead

  to campuses that are more inclusive of students with disabilities.

- Develop an Accessibility Task Force that includes a faculty member to provide

  guidelines and information on possible accreditation modifications that would

  lead to more accessible courses and programs that help students with learning

  disabilities succeed in college.

- Develop programs to train, encourage and empower faculty to take action around

  disability issues.

- Encourage visibility of people with disabilities (even if their disabilities are not)

  on campus by including them in positions of power or authority.

Leader's Role in Implementing Proposed Solution

O'Toole's eight commonalities of successful change (Burke, 2014), uses a model of distributed and transformative leadership style to develop systems and effective leadership that the community college could utilize to achieve educational equity and excellence for all students. In this change model, noted management theorist James O'Toole proposes a vision of leadership rooted in moral values and a consistent display of respect for all followers. As O'Toole demonstrates, values-based leadership is not only fair and just, it is also highly effective in complex educational environments such as community colleges.

When leaders in the community college truly believe that their prime goal is the welfare of their followers, they get results. By encouraging change and self-reevaluation in faculty members, community college leaders foster an atmosphere of open-mindedness and fresh thinking, in which assumptions can be challenged and goals reassessed. Grounded in the ideas of moral philosophy, the community college encourages growth and will be affected by individuals who have the stature and the courage to lead morally. Leadership will need to target certain vulnerable groups of faculty members to manage their feelings of insecurity during the change process. They would have to provide faculty enough psychological safety to allow the change target to accept the information, feel the survival anxiety, and become motivated to change (Schein, 2010). Mentoring, coaching, and scaffolding help build confidence, reduce anxiety, and thus create genuine motivation to learn and change.

The connectors (the select faculty who are experienced with accommodating students with disabilities), mavens (DSS – the ones with all the information) and

salesmen (the ones who share the success of the inclusive classroom experience with others) all have to become part of a team that creates a story for the college's inclusive model (Burke, 2014). The leaders in the community college would have to commit to cultivate collaborative communities that generate input from all levels of the organization on issues related to faculty support and accommodating students with disabilities. Fullan (2001) asserted the need to establish a "moral purpose" and the community college leadership could provide the rationale for the change initiative: better support faculty to effectively accommodate students with disabilities. Building trust, respect, and rapport are integral in changing culture. In alignment with Fullan (2008) and Kotter (2012), the leaders of the community college could propose a set of components for more inclusive change. This includes: developing a sense of urgency, creating a vision of what effective accommodations look like, holding gatherings about the work that needs to be done to support faculty, creating a vision of student results, effective supervision, professional development needed to sustain the change in accommodations and finally, collecting data and establishing accountability opportunities.

Leadership would need to work together to implement the college's mission and vision, renew their commitment, and restructure systems for goal accomplishment. The change initiative would encourage faculty members and motivate them to meet the innovative changes the school leaders envision (Burke, 2014). Leadership needs to target certain subjects such as Art and CTE to help support them with focused strategies and resources. DSS can help by balancing the amount of threat produced by any discomforting data with enough psychological safety to allow the change target (faculty and students with disabilities) to accept the information and become motivated to change

(Schein, 2010). Mentoring, coaching, and scaffolding could help build confidence,
reduce anxiety, and create genuine motivation to learn and change.

Implications

Practical Implications

Several practical implications emerge from this research. First, student self-
disclosure significantly impacts instructor efficacy making an accommodation; the more
a student discloses, the more efficacy an instructor possesses making that
accommodation. Instructors have indicated many reasons they are uncertain whether
they can meet accommodation needs; however, those reasons may not be the primary
concern. Instead, the amount of student self-disclosure could be influencing an
instructor's perceived ability to make an accommodation. For instructors, this means that
faculty should not be influenced by a lack of information from students, as that lack of
information may cause their uncertainty in making an accommodation. As indicated, this
can be solved by better faculty training and awareness. Instructors have both an ethical
and legal responsibility to students needing accommodations. Since legal requirements
mandate accommodations be made, an instructor has the responsibility to meet those
requirements. An instructor must seek out the information needed to make an
accommodation in order to comply with the law and to meet the needs of the student,
whom the instructor is there to serve. However, fear of violating the law, displaying a
lack of knowledge or being in uncomfortable situations with students with disabilities,
could stymie faculty from taking definitive steps to accommodating students. Simply
stating that faculty do not have the information to make an accommodation is not
acceptable.

Another finding was that instructors expressed empathy and flexibility in wanting to provide accommodations but felt challenged to actually do so. This finding could be explained by a social desirability bias in the interviews, as instructors usually want to say that they are flexible, empathetic, and able to make accommodations. However, when presented with actual scenarios to reduce subject content or provide alternate testing procedures, they felt less able to make the accommodation or unsure if they were able to legally do so. Past research suggests that overall, faculty have positive attitudes and perceptions of students with accommodations; however, faculty feel they lack the necessary information to successfully make accommodations (Murray, Wren, et al., 2008; Trimmis & Bessas, 2016). In this study, instructors may have answered the interview questions bearing in mind their overall positive attitude and their understanding that they should accommodate students. However, on specific questions pertaining to curriculum and content modifications, they may have realized they do not have an understanding of the student's accommodations and what can be legally allowed. Similarly, another explanation could be that instructors did hear enough information regarding the accommodation, but it is still not an accommodation they are willing to make. By fostering a greater awareness of the effectiveness of diverse accommodations and educating faculty members regarding the legal mandates in place to support students with disabilities, DSS offices can help create a more inclusive environment where faculty feel confident in accommodating all kinds of students.

School leaders and administrators, especially department chairs, also need to support efforts to improve the services offered to students needing accommodations. Leaders need to understand the legal and ethical responsibilities of making

accommodations so they can impress upon faculty the importance of this service. If a

department chair chooses to make a priority of meeting the needs of students with

accommodations, the department's faculty members are likely to mirror that behavior.

Current inefficiencies in the services offered to students needing accommodations cannot

be mapped to a single entity; however, instructors need to understand that they are

ultimately the responsible party. While students need to know their personal needs and

legal rights, as they may provide instructors with key information needed to make an

accommodation, every student deserves access to higher education regardless of an

instructor's comfort making an accommodation. Some students require accommodations

that enable them to learn at the same level as their peers. While instructors make the final

decision as to whether or not those accommodations are enacted, they are influenced by

administrators, disability service offices, and the students requesting the

accommodations. This study supports the sentiments of Quinlan et al. (2012) that

students should be expected to disclose their individual needs for learning, but at the

same time, a student's effort to receive an accommodation should be met with effort from

faculty.

Besides engaging with faculty, DSS staff can take on additional roles to make the

campus environment more universally accessible and welcoming to students with non-

apparent disabilities. First, DSS should work more closely with College Success

Navigators, and Enrollment Specialists and present at freshman/transfer orientation about

services available for students with non-apparent disabilities. While DSS staff can

explain the formal disclosure process through which students can secure

accommodations, faculty members can be present to answer subject based

accommodation questions. In this way students do not see faculty as a separate entity

from DSS staff but rather as a collective unit geared towards student success. Having this

knowledge could help foster a level of comfort for students with disabilities with the

faculty. This would create a climate that normalizes the experience of accessing DSS and

reduce stigma about doing so.

And finally, ensuring faculty attend important professional development

workshops and trainings is a practical challenge that many educational facilities face

especially if there is no formal built-in PD structure. Without proper planning and

foresight, disseminating important disability-related information will not be continuous,

involved and comprehensive.

Limitations

There are limitations to this study that can be addressed through future research.

All of the instructors interviewed were from the same institution. Results from other

institutions may vary if those institutions have different requirements or training for

dealing with students needing accommodations. Future research should consider a more

diverse sample and be conducted at different community colleges. Replication studies

could garner more robust data and facilitate comparison among community colleges in a

multiple case study. Another limitation inherent to this study is the possibility of social

desirability bias in the interviews, as instructors usually want to say that they are flexible,

empathetic, and able to make accommodations, but may not display these behaviors in

the classroom when an actual accommodation is requested. Respondents may have

answered according to what they think is right, rather than what they do or believe.

Future research may be needed to collect more objective data. In addition, this study did

not include any intervention or training programs to examine whether changes may occur

in knowledge, personal beliefs, perceived support, and provision of accommodation as a

result of training. Future research is needed to develop innovative programs and

interventions and to investigate the effects of them on faculty members' provision of

accommodations and services to students with disabilities. More evidence-based

strategies for colleges and universities to implement can be developed from such

research.

Implications for Future Research

This study provides evidence of a variety of problems or challenges encountered

by faculty. Faculty report struggles to balance their teaching and nonteaching

responsibilities; and challenges in understanding issues of organizational rules and

regulations serving students with disabilities. Problems faced by faculty include the

sense of isolation – the feeling of being alone to accommodate students with disabilities

with little to no say in the happenings of the college rules and regulations as well as little

support from the administrators (Tallent-Runnels et al., 2006). For the college

administrators, this issue poses a challenge to overcome, and the practice of servant

leadership seems to be a solution (Arenas et al., 2009). Within the college's academic

modality, the focus needs to be on best practices to include improving the experiences of

faculty (Keengwe & Kidd, 2010). One way of improving the experience is by fostering

community among educators by way of a servant leadership specific pedagogy. This

study shows the importance of opening up a dialogue between faculty, DSS and

administrators in order to empower the role of faculty as leaders within the college. It is

important to build a bridge between servant leadership practices and faculty development

programs with the hope of strengthening community (Eib & Miller, 2006).

Implications for Leadership Theory and Practice

Originally coined by Greenleaf (1970), the theory of servant leadership is that of

servant first; that the servant leader is one who desires to serve others. An important role

of faculty in the college as servant leader is striving to build inclusive communities. The

faculty serves the student regardless of disabilities. Hayes (2008) identified the strengths

associated with the practicing of servant leadership as it related to student outcomes.

Furthermore, Hayes (2008) identified that the educator who takes on the persona of the

servant leader left an impression on the students themselves and improved the overall

academic environment. Faculty members are servant leaders when they create

comfortable environments for students to self-identify and seek support from DSS.

Significant insights have been drawn from the findings of this case study on the

challenges faculty face in accommodating students with disabilities. The results show

that greater knowledge of disability laws and mandates, resources for faculty,

collaboration and leadership initiatives from the college will lead to efficient provision of

accommodations. Building a strong faculty development program is important in

empowering faculty and supporting them with resources to adequately support students.

A reduction and eventual elimination of the challenges faculty members face in

accommodating students with disabilities will help in improving collaborative learning

environments for all students. Faculty as servant leaders must take an active role in the

organization, discovering the weaknesses of the existing systems, and inviting others to

participate in the development of a community that shares power and a collective vision.

As students with disabilities continue to grow in presence in community colleges, leaders will face greater responsibility to provide faculty with the resources and education to support this vulnerable population (Wagner et al., 2005). Leaders must be able to anticipate the needs of their faculty, empower them with knowledge, and encourage them to collaborate in providing effective accommodations for students with disabilities. The present study is valuable for community colleges to gain a better understanding of the challenges faculty face in providing accommodations and ways to improve leadership support of faculty. By understanding the role leadership plays in fostering higher commitment levels in faculty, leaders will be able to create a more inclusive college environment centered on caring for all students with disabilities and the faculty serving them.

Summary of Study

This case study was designed to explore faculty attitudes and behaviors about accommodating students with disabilities at a large community college in the Midwestern United States. The study centered around the concept that college and university faculty are the primary conduits through which students gain access to knowledge in educational environments, and faculty are directly responsible for determining how competent students are in their acquisition of that knowledge and ways of knowing (Harrison, 2003; Utschig et al., 2011). Disability Support Services can make it possible for students with disabilities to enter the postsecondary setting physically, but only faculty can provide access to knowledge in the classroom. Thus, college and university faculty create the context for the delivery of instruction, develop systems that support knowledge

acquisition, and develop systems that assess student understanding of that knowledge (Oertle & Bragg, 2014).

Examining the challenges faculty face in providing supports and accommodating students with disabilities is important because it improves student success and retention. The qualitative case study was guided by three research questions:

- What do community college faculty perceive as the challenges of accommodating students with disabilities?

- What strategies have community college faculty found to be effective in assisting students with disabilities?

- What are the community college faculty experiences with assistance from Disability Support Services?

Chapter Four outlined the results of the study which focused on exploring faculty attitudes and behaviors about accommodating students with disabilities at the community college. Data indicated that while faculty members evidenced a positive stance on accommodating students with disabilities, but a lack of knowledge, information and resources, sustained support from departments, and students' failure to self-disclose often led to do ineffective accommodations. The data also suggested that more specific subject-based accommodations are needed to support students with disabilities. The semi-structured interviews indicated that the commitment levels of faculty could be harnessed by stronger collaborative measures by Disability Support Services and the college leadership.

The implementation of specific disability-focused workshops and training would help support faculty to better accommodate the varying needs of students with

disabilities. Collaboration between the Disability Support Services and individual

departments would be beneficial in facilitating this process. In our current academic

environment, there is increasing pressure for positive changes in student retention,

learning and outcomes, accountability, and evidence-based practices (Ouellett, 2004;

Tinto, 2004; Graham, 2005; McGuire et al., 2006; Orr & Hammig, 2009; Schelly, Davies,

& Spooner, 2011). My hope is that a clear path can be created to help faculty foster

inclusive environments for students with disabilities and give them a greater chance at

success.

Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to take the time to speak with me today. You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by Neena Nizar for a dissertation that is being done to fulfill requirements for a Doctorate degree in Educational Leadership carried out at Creighton University. The research study is aimed at exploring faculty attitudes and behavior about accommodating students with disabilities at X Community College.

You do not need to answer questions you do not want to and all responses will be strictly confidential, meaning I will not share your responses with anyone and anything included in my research will not identify you as the respondent. I will be recording our conversation today and taking notes.

Data from this study will be used to inform professional development and better the higher education experience for students with disability.

Confidentiality

There is no identifying information in the interview. All analyses and reporting of data will be done at the group level. Data collection and storage practices, whether paper, recordings or electronic records, will be adequately secured to safeguard confidentiality. Any electronic storage of material will be password-protected and destroyed after six months of project submission.

Voluntary Participation

There is no cost to you beyond the time and effort required to complete the procedure(s) described above. Your participation in this research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. Refusal to participate in this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. If you agree to be in the study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time and your responses won't be recorded.

If you agree to participate, please indicate this decision by signing below. If you have any questions about this research project, please contact me at: Neena Nizar, Supervisor, Learning & Tutoring Center, X Campus, X Community College. If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact the IRB Office, X College.

□ I agree

□ I decline

Researcher Signature: _____   Date: _____

Appendix B

Interview

Accommodating Students with Disabilities: A Case Study of Faculty Attitudes and Behaviors at a Community College		
Interviewer:		
Interviewee:		
Date:	Time:	Place:

Interviewer Introduction
Purpose of study: The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore faculty attitudes and behaviors about accommodating students with disabilities at a large community college in Midwestern United States.
Obtain Informed Consent
Any questions before we begin?
Record Session

1. a. How long have you been teaching at the

university/post-secondary level?

□ Less than 3 years

□ 3 to 7 years

□ More than 7 years

b.   Are you □ adjunct OR □ fulltime?

2. Which subject area do you teach in at the

college?

□ Business & IT

□ Career & Technical Education

□ Health Careers

□ Humanities & Arts

□ Math & Natural Sciences

Sample Probes; use as-needed:

1. Can you tell me more?
2. Can you give me a specific example of that?
3. Can you explain your answer?
4. Can you elaborate a bit more about…?
5. What was the outcome?
6. Is this typical for you?
7. What exactly did you say?
8. I'd like to hear more about…

□ Social Sciences

3. What kind of professional development training have you received in regards to accommodating students with disabilities?

4. How would you define the term 'disability'?

5. Describe what you consider to be your most essential role in providing accommodations for students with disabilities?

6. How knowledgeable are you about your students' disabilities?

7. What more would you like to know about you students' disabilities in order to accommodate their needs?

8. Can you provide an example of how a student approaches you regarding his/her disability?

9. How often do you discuss the nature of your student's disability (i.e., characteristics, symptoms) with Disability Support Services?

10. a. How do you go about providing the accommodations you receive related to your student's disability?

b. Can you provide an example of an accommodation you made for your student?

c. Can you provide an example of an accommodation you were not able to make for your student?

11. a. How likely are you to adapt your instructional strategies and course materials to meet the accommodation needs of students with disabilities?

b. If you have, can you provide an example of a time you adapted your instructional strategies and course materials to meet the accommodation needs of students with disabilities?

12. What challenges have you encountered in implementing accommodations for

    students with disabilities?

13. What do you think you could do better to support students with disabilities?

14. What more can Disability Support Services do to assist your everyday

    instruction?

15. What else is important for me to know?

Appendix C

Excerpt from MAXQDA Code Report

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