

Using Comprehensive
Postsecondary Transitional Support
Services to Enhance the Health,
Independence, and Employment
Success of Persons with Severe
Physical and/or Psychiatric
Disabilities: The University of Illinois
Approach

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Why Promote Students with Disabilities in Science fields?

- Win–Win situation
- Good for Science fields - Students with disabilities are a bright, capable untapped resource. They add to the diversity within the field.
- Good for Students with Disabilities as jobs within science fields tend to pay well and have good benefits (particularly health care benefits).

The Illinois Model: Overview

● Philosophy

- Legalistic compliance does not truly provide equal access to higher education.
 - Students with disabilities have needs that extend beyond those of other students (e.g. activities of daily living, health care).
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Many Disability Services based on “Accessibility”

- Operationally, actions which society **MUST** take in order to **PROVIDE** equal benefits, opportunities and access to persons with disabilities
- Legal compliance
- Compulsory
- Focuses on minimum requirements (which may meet the legal obligation and not serve the student, e.g., bus lifts)
- Reinforces an accommodation philosophy of “Say **NO** when we can, and yes when we have to.”

Illinois' Philosophy is on a "Need Based" Model

- Pertains to actions taken by society in order to take full advantage of every individual's capacity to contribute
- Focuses upon the societal benefit of action rather than obligatory standards
- Reinforces an accommodation philosophy of "Say YES when we can, and no when we have to."
- Directs attention away from stereotypical perceptions related to limitations and towards abilities

Illinois Model

- Holistic approach
- Intent of the supports has always been to optimize the postsecondary educational participation, rate of graduation, and employment of persons with severe disabilities
- Scholarly approach to service provision and program evaluation


Why Illinois is different?

- First provider of services to students with disabilities in the world – 1948
- Already had effective system in place for students with physical disabilities, then cognitive disabilities, and now psychiatric disabilities
- Has an excellent reputation on campus and support of the university from the President on down
- Within a college of health science not student services office that allows for interdisciplinary research

Barriers to Transitional Success

- Ineffectual preparation for independence from parents (laundry, self-advocacy, personal safety strategies, personal disability management strategies, executive skills, promotion of health and wellness)
- Limited or no work history
- Insufficient access to self-sufficient, successful role models with comparable disabilities
- Poor articulation between entitlements of IDEA and self-advocacy requirements of 504/ADA
- Inadequate IT and AT knowledge and skills

Educational Components

- **Transitional Supports: Illinois Students taking Effective Preparation (ISTEP)**
 - Developed for incoming students with disabilities to facilitate learning of knowledge and skills for self-advocating and disability management.
 - Online and in-person components
 - Funded by grant from Proctor & Gamble
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Educational Components

- *Academic Accommodations*
 - Nonexhaustive list of “typical” accommodations:
 - Priority registration
 - Extended time on exams
 - Take exams in a distraction-reduced environment
 - Not being penalized for missing class/assignments due to exacerbation
 - Substitutions and extensions
 - Note taking assistance

Educational Components

- **Career Preparation Supports**
 - Collaboration with Career Services Center and Private industry employers (Proctor & Gamble, Motorola, NASA, IBM) to increase skills, internship opportunities, and jobs
 - Federal program collaboration (AAAS Workforce Recruitment, Midwest STEM Alliance)
- Collaboration with the Office of Study Abroad

Information and Assistive Technology Supports

- **IT accessibility issues**
- **IT/AT services to individuals with disabilities**
 - Assessment
 - Essential function use of IT/AT
 - Accessible computing environments
 - Evaluating function and web accessibility
 - Supporting instructors in creating accessible instructional materials

Supports for Students with Severe Physical Disabilities

- **Current Transitional Residential Programs and Services**
 - Beckwith Hall Programming
 - Orientation services and supports
 - PA support services (Eriksson, 2005; McNeil, 2001)
 - Beckwith hall transition model
 - Transitional disability management program
 - Beckwith mentoring program
 - Transportation/accessibility

Supports for Students with Severe Physical Disabilities

- Specialized Health and Wellness Programming
 - Strength conditioning
 - Varsity sports (Hedrick et al., 1994)
 - Intramural sports
 - Kinesiology 111
 - Aquatics
 - Dietary consultation
 - outreach

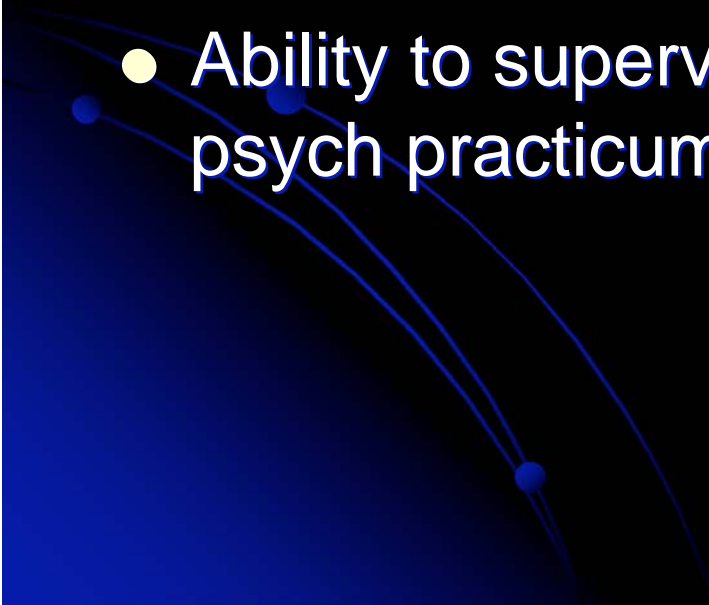
Special Focus on STEM

- Need to increase student experiences at the secondary and postsecondary levels so that science and math excites them and they want to go into stem fields.
- Technology is available to make accessible, just need to get the information to the appropriate people and educate teachers and professors
- Increase internship/externship experiences to increase employment/professional opportunities
- Promote independence so can go anywhere for jobs/graduate school.
- Mentoring/role models
- Financial support

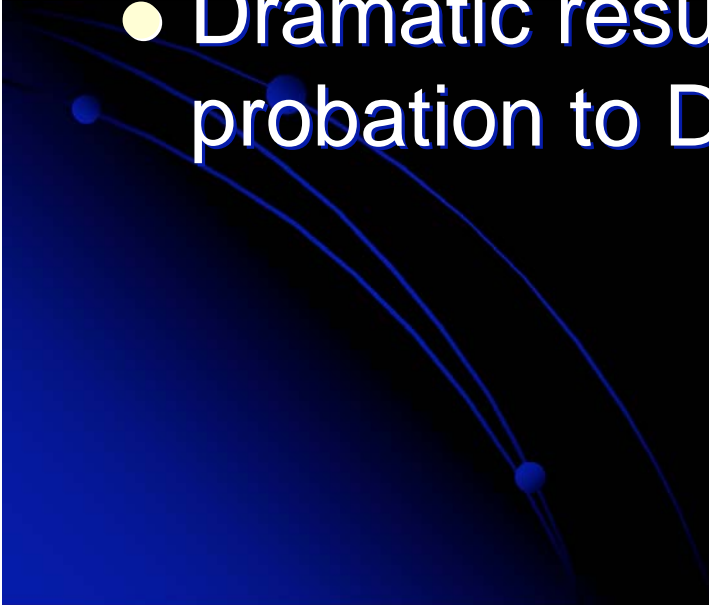
Supports for Students with Psychiatric Disabilities

- Clinical psychologist as case manager
- Neuropsychological Testing
- Coaching
- Individual therapy
- Support groups
- Stigma

Clinical Psychologist/Mental Health Service Provider

- Better access to other mental health agencies to coordinate services
 - Better understanding of psychiatric disabilities
 - More confident/capable in interacting with students with psychiatric disabilities
 - Ability to supervise clin psych or counseling psych practicum students to increase services
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Neuropsychological Testing

- Free to UIUC students experiencing academic difficulties with no prior diagnoses
 - Diagnose, Refer for services
 - Dramatic results, students going from probation to Dean's list in one semester
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Academic Coaching

- Monthly, Biweekly, Weekly, Twice per week
- In-person, phone, email
- Organizational strategies, structure, short-term and long-range planning
- Provides external structures/supports to help students stay on track

Individual Therapy

- Ongoing therapy critical to success of students with psychiatric disabilities
- University only provides short-term (6-8 session limit)
- Off campus therapy may be too costly or students do not have transportation
- Free, individual therapy with no session limits.

Support Groups

- Provide support
- Increase social interactions of students with psychiatric disabilities



Stigma

- Education to include in-services, literature, one-on-one interaction
- Overall campus philosophy of diversity has to come from the Chancellor on down, disability must be included in diversity issues and must be a priority for campus
- Counseling center supports and services. Build relationships with campus agencies. Continue to work with to seek answers. Creative solutions to stop gaps in services.

Special Focus on STEM

- These students are in strong numbers in STEM fields, we just have to support them (retention, graduation, employment).
- Education about hidden disabilities to reduce stigma.
- Education about accommodations.
- Mentoring/role models
- Financial support

Illinois Model: Outcomes

- According to the 2004 Harris poll, only 35% of people with disabilities are employed compared to 78% of the nondisabled population.
- Income of Illinois graduates with disabilities from 1952 to 1992 was found to be equal to peers without disabilities when matched by gender, age, major, and year of graduation.
- Study of alumni with spinal cord injuries who graduated between 1978 and 2002 found that 92% had worked for pay in past 5 years and 78% were currently employed for pay.
- Study of Beckwith Hall residents who graduated between 1981 and 2003 found that 89% of graduates with severe disabilities were employed following graduation or entered graduate school



Midwest Alliance in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

www.stemmidwest.org

**Promoting access for students with
disabilities to Science, Technology,
Engineering and Math (STEM)**

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MIDWEST Goals

- Increase the quantity and quality of students with disabilities in STEM
- Access to STEM courses
 - Universal design: individual adaptation of course material, assignments and tests
 - Online course development
- Access to campus research
 - Research internships
 - Grant supplements

Opportunities

- Research internships
- Grant supplements supporting students and new staff with disabilities
- Making accommodations for existing students and staff with disabilities



Questions????



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