



# Program

# Review

**Disability Services**

April 2009

Edition PR 2009-01

## **INTRODUCTION**

On September 25, 2008 the President of the United States signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Amendments Act of 2008, clarifying the definition of disability and expanding the eligible populations for services under the Act. The ADA Amendment Act prescribes the responsibilities of postsecondary institutions regarding disability services and student rights to those services. While the 2008 ADA Amendments Act will not require major changes to existing services available in Florida's postsecondary institutions, it is a reminder that Florida's colleges serve a vast and diverse population.

The purpose of this program review is to determine the scope and effectiveness of disability services in The Florida College System by: 1) describing services in the colleges and exposing barriers to those services; 2) describing current federal legislation and its impact on services for students with disabilities in postsecondary education; and 3) comparing trends in enrollment, remediation and completion rates of the general student population with the rates for students with disabilities. Finally, recommended improvements are proposed regarding disability service programs and related policy in The Florida College System.

During the 2008 Legislative Session, the Florida Community College System was re-designated The Florida College System. Some colleges dropped "community" from their name while others added "state"; however, all 28 institutions within The Florida College System are charged with serving their local communities. Throughout this document, the term "college" will be used to refer to all institutions within the system.

## **SERVICES OFFERED AT THE COLLEGES**

The number of students enrolling in a Florida college has increased from 717,561 in 1999-2000 to 796,932 in 2006-2007, and the number of enrolled students with disabilities has increased from 15,363 in 1999-2000 to 16,167 in 2006-2007 (Community College Fact Book, 2008). The data shows that annual overall student enrollment increased by 11% from 2000-2007, while enrollment of students with disabilities increased by 5% in the same time period.

Disability services are offered at each of the 28 colleges and are generally housed under the student services division. Students with various disabilities are served by the disability services offices on campus, including students with attention deficit disorders, health disorders, hearing impairments, visual impairments, psychological disorders, learning disabilities, speech impairments, and physical disabilities. The services offered include classroom accommodations, course substitutions, and waivers of the College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST).

Classroom accommodations include, but are not limited to: extended time on exams, flexible scheduling, note takers, sign language interpreters for the hearing impaired, texts in alternative format (e.g., Braille), environmental or building accessibility, and access to assistive technology, such as screen reader software, screen magnifiers, and closed captioning. These types of classroom assistance enable student learning and facilitates academic success. Classroom accommodations range in expense to the institution; textbooks in Braille, for example, can cost thousands of dollars, while there is no direct cost for allowing additional time on an exam. ADA requirements dictate minimum accommodations to be provided to students at postsecondary institutions and Florida Statute allows curricular modifications, such as substitute courses, for those identified as having a specific learning disability.

Course substitutions are addressed in section 1007.265, Florida Statutes (F.S.), which states that students with disabilities are “eligible for reasonable substitution for any requirement for graduation, for admission into a program of study, or for entry into the upper division where documentation can be provided that the person’s failure to meet the requirement is related to the disability and where failure to meet the graduation requirement or program admission requirement does not constitute a fundamental alteration in the nature of the program.” When a student requests a course substitution based on a documented disability, the request goes to a committee which decides whether the student’s documentation meets criteria for a course substitution. If the institution’s review committee rules in favor of a course substitution, the student takes an approved course substitution in lieu of the required course. According to a 2007 survey of college disability service providers conducted by the Division of Community Colleges, approximately 80% of all course substitutions are granted for general education mathematics courses, such as MAC 1105, College Algebra. Survey results indicated that colleges have a list of courses that are approved to substitute for program requirements, generally in the area of Accounting, Economics, Computer Science, Philosophy, and Psychology. In the Community College Annual Educational Equity Update, the Department of Education collects information on the number of students in career and technical education programs granted course substitutions, courses for which students were granted substitutions, and the specific courses taken as a substitution (Appendix A).

Disability services offices also assist students with applications for waivers of the CLAST. The CLAST exam is designed to measure a student’s mastery of college-level communication and mathematics skills prior to beginning upper-division college coursework and must be taken before the awarding of the Associate in Arts degree. Section 1008.29(5), F.S., authorizes postsecondary institutions to grant waivers of the CLAST to students with disabilities who meet the established criteria. The statute states that students with “a specific learning disability such that the student cannot demonstrate successful completion of one or more sections of the college-level communication and computation skills examination and is achieving at the college level in every area except that of the disability, and whose diagnosis indicates that further remediation will not succeed in overcoming the disability, may appeal through the appropriate dean to a

committee appointed by the president or vice president for academic affairs for special consideration.” Waivers of the CLAST exam are typically granted after the student has attempted the exam utilizing test accommodations or other adjustments, such as tutoring, to measure the student’s proficiency in the academic area. According to the Florida Department of Education (2008), 287 students with disabilities enrolled in The Florida College System were granted a CLAST waiver in the 2007 academic year.

### **FEDERAL LAW AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

The law which governs disability services in the K-12 system is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Under the IDEA, schools are responsible for identifying and providing services to students with disabilities. Services for students with disabilities in the postsecondary system are governed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990). Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act states that "no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under" any program or activity that receives federal financial assistance. The provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act impact students at both the secondary and postsecondary level. The ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act require that individuals not be discriminated against in public services, including postsecondary institutions.

- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**

In 1975, the United States Congress passed Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. The goal of this federal legislation was to ensure access to an appropriate, free public education for all children, regardless of disability. The law was amended in 1997 and is known as the IDEA. Under the IDEA, school districts are responsible for identifying students with disabilities; providing free testing and evaluation, personal services, transportation; and developing an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) ([www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov), 2008). The school district will provide accommodations and modify curriculum when appropriate.

The IDEA stipulates that a free appropriate public education shall be made available to all children with disabilities between the ages of 3 and 21, children with disabilities shall be educated in the "least restrictive environment" (meaning with children who are not disabled) to the maximum extent possible, and ensure that teachers are adequately prepared and trained. School districts are also responsible for conducting evaluations of students to determine eligibility for special education services.

- **Americans with Disabilities Act**

The ADA is a civil rights law protecting persons with disabilities from discrimination. The ADA was signed into law on July 26, 1990. Title II of the ADA prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities in all

programs, activities, and services of public entities. A public entity, including postsecondary institutions, must ensure that individuals with disabilities are not excluded from services, programs, and activities. In contrast to the IDEA, which required schools to identify students with disabilities and ensure they are receiving appropriate services, postsecondary institutions are not responsible for seeking out and identifying students with disabilities. The student must self-identify to the college and request needed services. According to the ADA, state or local government programs must be readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. They may provide program accessibility through accommodations, the alteration of existing facilities, acquisition or construction of additional facilities, relocation of a service or program to an accessible facility, or provision of services at alternate accessible sites. Additionally, section 1000.05, F.S., prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, disability, or marital status at any public K-20 institution, including colleges. The colleges are also required to submit to periodic reviews to monitor compliance with the provisions of section 1000.05, F.S. In addition, section 282.602, F.S. requires that all electronic information and technology acquired after July 2006 be accessible to individuals with disabilities accessing government services, including public education.

- **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects qualified individuals from discrimination based on their disability in programs and activities that receive federal funds. The provisions of this law affect students in both secondary and postsecondary education. Section 504 provides: "No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States . . . shall solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." According to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, at the elementary and secondary educational level, a "qualified student with a disability" is a student with a disability who is: of an age at which students without disabilities are provided elementary and secondary educational services; of an age at which it is mandatory under state law to provide elementary and secondary educational services to students with disabilities; or a student to whom a state is required to provide a free appropriate public education under the IDEA. At the postsecondary educational level, a qualified student with a disability is a student with a disability who meets the academic and technical standards required for admission or participation in the institution's educational program or activity.

- **Comparison- IDEA/ADA/Section 504**

Students who were eligible for services under the IDEA, 2004, are not automatically eligible for services under Section 504 and the ADA in college and university settings. In most cases, postsecondary institutions interpret Section 504 and ADA guidelines to mean that a specific diagnosis with a clearly established

functional limitation in a major life activity is required. A major life activity, as defined by the ADA, includes, but is not limited to: caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating and working. In K-12 education, however, school officials use a variety of terms to identify students that may not be readily familiar to college disability service providers. To document the need for accommodations, postsecondary service providers require a clear rationale and history of the use of accommodations. At the secondary level, once eligibility for special education is established, states or school districts may not require a label, or may allow the option of not specifying a disability category. The ADA recommends that the evaluation be no more than three to five years old. This can pose a barrier for students with disabilities as they enter postsecondary education because college disability service providers may request updated documentation including a clear diagnosis in order to develop an accommodation plan for students. The application of the provisions of these laws can pose a barrier to students as they transition to postsecondary education. (Appendix B: Primary differences between the ADA, IDEA, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.)

### **BARRIERS TO OBTAINING SERVICES IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION**

In order to obtain services at the postsecondary level, a student must self identify to the institution and present appropriate documentation of his/her disability. The process begins with a meeting between the student and a disability coordinator. During the meeting, the student submits documentation, discusses their accommodation history and learns about services available at the institution. Typically, documentation needs to be no more than three years old and must be comprehensive enough to establish that the student has "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities," (ADA, 1990).

Documentation requirements can pose a barrier for students wishing to receive services from the college. The IEP established for students in the secondary school system is generally not acceptable as the sole evidence of a disability for postsecondary service providers. Students with learning disabilities are often required to obtain an updated psychoeducational evaluation using measures appropriate to assess the abilities of adults rather than children ([www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov), 2009). The cost of the evaluation can be several hundred dollars and the burden of payment is often on the student or his/her family.

The transition from secondary to postsecondary is challenging for all students, especially for students with disabilities (Jarrow, 2003). Students are not always eligible for the same accommodations at the postsecondary level that they received at the secondary level. For example, colleges are not responsible for providing personal care attendants or substantially modifying the academic program. Students are expected to meet with representatives of the disability services office on a semester basis and seek support when needed. The fact that students must request assistance is in stark contrast from the secondary school experience where the school is responsible for ensuring assistance is provided.

Many colleges have programs in place to assist students with the transition and provide interaction with peers. For instance, Pasco-Hernando Community College (PHCC) hosts a student organization called People Accepting Challenges Together (PACT). According to PHCC (2008), PACT is a student organization founded specifically to address the needs of students with disabilities. PACT began at the West Campus of PHCC during the 1992-93 academic year. According to PHCC, "During the 1992-93 academic year, the disABLED [sic] Students' Club was instrumental in assisting the PHCC administration with a comprehensive assessment of the needs of students with disabilities at PHCC. The name of the club was changed to People Accepting Challenges Together in the spring of 1994."

### **STUDENT ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION IN FLORIDA COLLEGES**

The following postsecondary enrollment and performance comparisons include statistics for the years 2002-2007. Trends to be examined include: (1) The rate at which students with disabilities are enrolling in colleges; (2) The rate at which students with disabilities are requiring remediation at the college; and (3) The rate at which students with disabilities are receiving an award at the college. These data will be compared to the same rates for students without disabilities. In addition to the trend analysis, a cohort-based study of student success was conducted for 2001-2002 high school graduates enrolled in a college in Fall 2002. For purposes of this review, success is defined as 1) receiving an award (e.g., Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, Associate in Applied Science, Career/Technical Certificate), 2) transfer to one of Florida's state universities, or 3) still enrolled.

### **TRENDS REGARDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION**

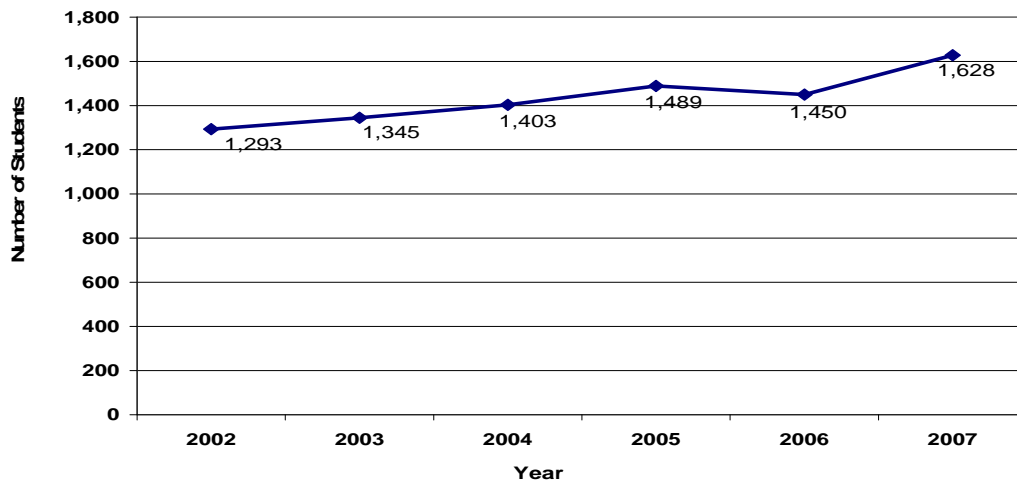
Figure 1 displays the number of students with disabilities who enrolled in a degree or certificate program from 2002 through 2007. The figure illustrates that the number of first-time-in-college (FTIC)\* students with disabilities enrolled in a college program increased 21% (1,293 in 2002 to 1,628 in 2007). An analysis of the data shows that the number of students with disabilities enrolling in a Florida college has increased at a

\*FTIC is defined as a student who is in their first semester of college after high school and has previously never enrolled in a degree program at any postsecondary institution. FTIC includes those students enrolled as dual enrollment students at a postsecondary institution while in high school.

considerable rate; however, the overall number remains low. Figure 2 displays the percentage of students with disabilities as a percentage of all students enrolled in colleges from 2002-2007. The figure shows that students with disabilities comprised 1.5% to 1.8% of the total college population during the 2002 through 2007 period. It is also important to note that this data only captures students who self-identify to the college; therefore, students who received services for a disability at the secondary level but who do not identify themselves as a student with a disability to the college are not included.

**Figure 1**

**Number of FTIC Students with a Verified Disability Who Enrolled in a Degree or Certificate Program**



**Figure 2**

**Students with Disabilities As a Percentage of All Students**

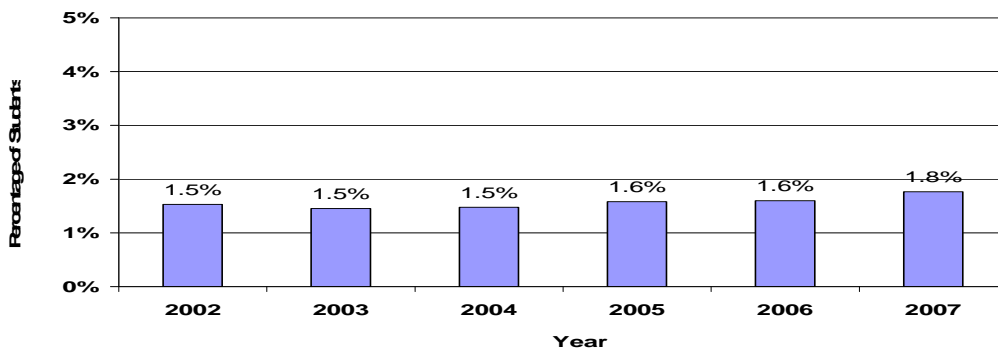


Figure 3 displays a comparison of the percentage of students with disabilities and those without disabilities enrolled at the college required to enroll in one or more remedial courses from 2002-2007. According to Florida State Board Rule 6A-10.0315, F.A.C. (Florida Administrative Code), students are required to enroll in remedial courses when they do not meet the minimum score requirement on an approved readiness assessment. State Board Rule 6A-10.0315, F.A.C., authorizes use of the SAT, ACT, or College Placement Test (CPT) for placement purposes. The percentage of FTIC students with disabilities who were required to enroll in a college preparatory course was 84% in 2001-2002 and decreased slightly to 82% in 2006-2007. During the same time period, the percentage of FTIC students without a disability who required remediation fluctuated slightly between 61% and 64%. There was little change in the percentage of students with disabilities and those without disabilities requiring remediation during the intervening period; however, students with disabilities required remedial courses at a higher rate than students without disabilities.

**Figure 3**  
**Fall 2002 FTIC Comparison of Students with Disabilities and Those without a Disability Required to Enroll in Remedial Courses**

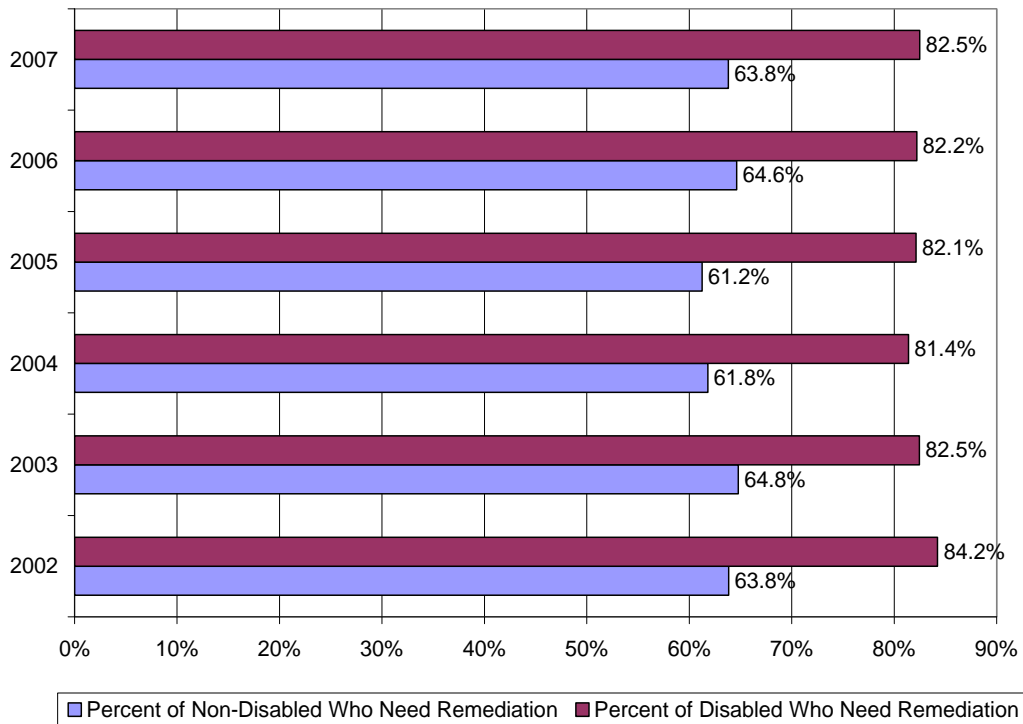
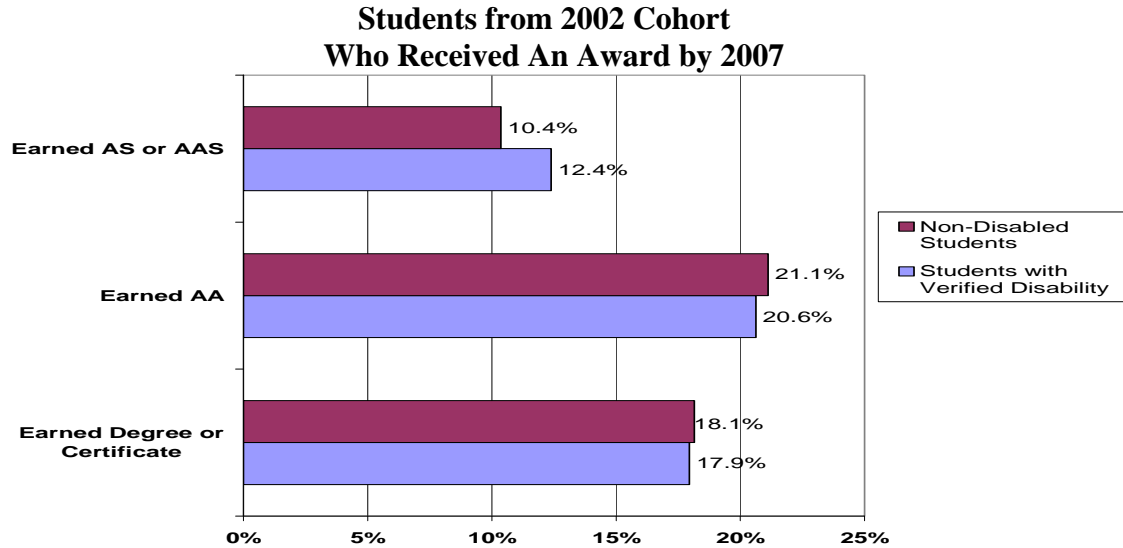


Figure 4 highlights the percentage of students with disabilities and those without who were FTIC in 2002-2003 and received an award (Associate in Science (AS), Associate in Arts (AA), Associate in Applied Science (AAS), or career technical certificate) by 2006-

2007. The figure demonstrates that students with disabilities in the 2001-2002 FTIC cohort earned awards at the same rate as their non-disabled peers.

Figure 4



To gain further insight into how students with disabilities are progressing from high school to postsecondary education, the cohort of 2001-2002 Florida public high school graduates was followed. The students in the 2001-2002 graduating class were tracked for progress at the college through 2006-2007. Chart 1 shows that there were 13,951 students receiving services for a disability from a Florida public high school who graduated in 2002 and a total of 145,027 students without disabilities who graduated in the same year. Of the students with disabilities, 15% enrolled in the college system. Chart 2 displays the number of these students who identified themselves to the college as an individual with a disability and elected to receive services from the institution, and the number of students who received services for a disability in high school but did not receive services from the college. Chart 3 displays the number of students from the 2002 high school graduating class and the number who did not enroll in a Florida college, the number who did enroll, and of the students who did enroll, those who sought services from the institution.

Students with disabilities from the 2001-2002 graduating class who went on to receive services from the college comprised 24% of the 2,061 disabled students who enrolled in a college in Fall 2002. More than 1,560 students, or 76% of students who received disability-related services in high school, did not seek services in college. According to Lynch and Gussel (1996), students with disabilities, particularly those with hidden disabilities, may be reluctant to disclose that they have a disability because they fear being stigmatized, while other students are not aware that they must disclose to the institution in order to receive services.

The data show that of the 494 students who self identified to the college, 22% had earned an award by 2007. Looking at this same group of students, 21% were still enrolled and 2% had transferred to the state university system (SUS) as of 2007. Of those students who did not receive services from the college, 17% had earned an award, 19% were still enrolled, and 3% had transferred to an SUS institution by 2007. The data show that the number of students who did not request services from the institution is considerably greater than that of students who did request services; however, the percentage of students in both categories who received an award, were still enrolled, or transferred to the SUS by 2007, differed by only a few percentage points. Students who were not using services were succeeding at similar rates than those who were receiving services. This finding requires further study to understand if there are significant differences between those students who sought out services from the college and those who did not. Did the students who did not request services acquire skills to compensate for their disability while in high school? The data also demonstrate that only 40% of those students who began in 2002 had earned an award, were still enrolled, or transferred to the SUS by 2007.

**Chart 1 2001-2002 High School Graduates**

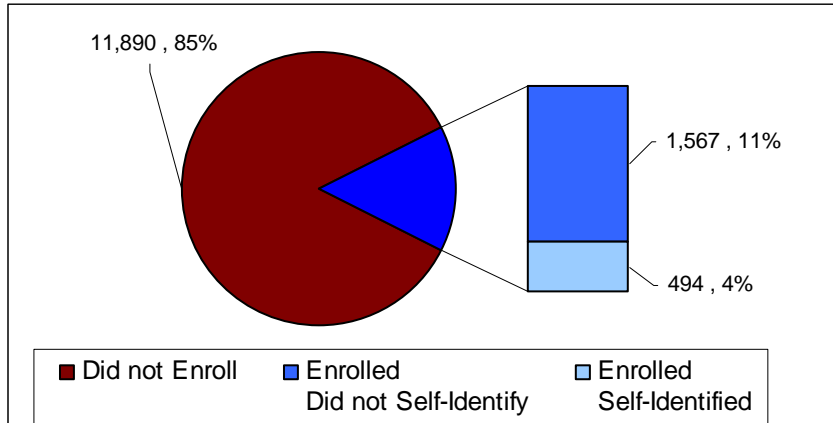
Students with a disability	13,951
Students without a disability	145,027

**Chart 2**

<b>2001-2002 High School Graduates with a Disability who Enrolled in a College</b>				
	<b>Student Count</b>	<b>Received an Award<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Still Enrolled</b>	<b>Enrolled in SUS</b>
Students that have a verified disability and receive services from the college	494	110(22%)	103(21%)	11(2%)
Student received services for a disability in HS but did not receive services from the college	1,567	259(17%)	292(19%)	44(3%)

Chart 3

**Percentage of Students with Disabilities from the 2002 High School Graduating Class who Enrolled in a College AND Self-Identified to the College**



**BARRIERS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Research shows that community college is the postsecondary option of choice for most students with disabilities (Savukinas, 2003). Therefore, it is important to understand the barriers experienced by students with disabilities as they enroll in a Florida college. Disability service coordinators were surveyed regarding barriers experienced by students with disabilities once in college. The barriers cited most frequently included attitudes of faculty and staff not familiar with working with students with disabilities, access to texts in alternative format, and student advocacy skills. Research (Lynch & Gussel, 1996) shows that attitudes of faculty and administrators can impact student success. Faculty may hesitate to accommodate students because they lack an understanding of the students' needs or familiarity with campus services. Factors which have been found to influence faculty attitude include faculty member age, academic discipline, experience teaching students with disabilities, years of teaching experience, and professional rank (Johnson, 2006).

Access to texts in an alternative format was also cited as a barrier to students with disabilities. Students with learning disabilities and those with visual impairments typically take advantage of texts in alternative format. Alternative formats include, but are not limited to, compact disc (CD), digital format, portable document format (PDF), and Braille. Often, colleges will request alternative texts through an organization called Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFBDB) or through the book publisher. Disability center directors reported that depending on the type of text requested, this process can take up to several weeks. For example, math books may take much longer to convert to

an alternative format or may not be available in alternative formats due to the nature of mathematical concepts which are often depicted graphically.

Another barrier frequently cited by postsecondary disability service providers is lack of self-advocacy skills among students with disabilities. Disability center coordinators reported that students come unprepared to explain their disability and how they can benefit from specific accommodations. Students with disabilities move from a high-school environment that allows them to be relatively "passive" regarding their disability to a college environment which expects them to be relatively "active" regarding their disability. Many college students find interacting with faculty intimidating. Students with disabilities are no different and they often have increased interaction with faculty because they must disclose their accommodation needs with instructors in addition to addressing general questions about course material.

College disability services staff were asked what colleges can do to better serve students with disabilities. Factors most frequently mentioned included improved faculty understanding of working with students with disabilities and application of universal design. Coordinators indicated that faculty are often not aware of the instructional methods which can benefit not only students with disabilities but all students. These methods are encompassed in the concept of universal design. Universal design is defined by Burgstahler (2007) as "the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design". Universal design principles can be applied daily in the classroom environment. For example, using multiple instructional methods such as lectures, collaborative learning options, hands-on activities, web-based communications, educational software, and field work to deliver course material is an example of universal design. Another example of applying the concept of universal design includes making information resources, such as lectures or class notes, accessible in a variety of formats. If instructors were to post lecture notes and other class materials on the web and ensure they were ADA compliant, the practice could potentially benefit all students.

### **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The data show that while students with disabilities are equally successful in college compared to their peers (see Figure 4), they do not enroll in college at the same rate. Students with disabilities comprise about 2% of the total college population. The 2002 high school cohort data show that students with disabilities comprised 9% of the graduating class but only 1% of FTIC college students enrolled in the same year. It is possible that there were intervening factors which impacted the enrollment of students with disabilities such as lack of information concerning college access, insufficient funding to cover expenses, no desire to attend college, decision not to disclose to the college, or postponement of college enrollment. Further research should be done to assess if this is a pattern and, if so, why students with disabilities are not enrolling in colleges. Are these students attending other institutions such as technical centers? Are

they going directly into entry-level careers? Are these students being discouraged from attending college?

A review of the survey of disability center directors revealed several findings regarding improving the success of students with disabilities in college. These factors include:

- Faculty do not always have an understanding of the needs of students with disabilities and the simple steps they can take to assist them in the classroom. According to the survey results, services for students with disabilities are typically not part of new faculty orientation. Including information on services for students with disabilities in new faculty orientation can provide faculty with information on their responsibilities under the ADA and instructional techniques which benefit not only students with disabilities, but students without disabilities as well.
- Colleges should look into adopting universal design principles which can be applied to the overall design of instruction as well as to specific instructional materials and strategies. Using universal design does not eliminate the need for specific accommodations for students with disabilities. For example, a college may need to provide a sign language interpreter for a student who is deaf. However, utilizing universal design concepts in course development and planning ensures broad access to the content for most students and minimizes the need for special accommodations. An example of utilizing universal design would be captioning course videos, which provides access to deaf students and can also benefit students for whom English is a second language, and students with learning disabilities. Delivering course content in multiple ways, such as visually and auditorily, can benefit students with a variety of learning styles and cultural backgrounds. The Florida College System may want to encourage instructional affairs leaders to work with faculty on adopting universal design principles in the classroom. The new provisions of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA), passed in 2008, calls on teacher preparation programs to better integrate technology into their curricula and instruction consistent with the principles of universal design. In addition, in order to apply for grants for undergraduate teacher preparation programs, colleges and universities will need to demonstrate how they will increase the percentage of teachers who are prepared to use technology effectively and consistent with the principles of universal design, particularly if they are teaching in high-need schools. The HEOA also calls for the establishment of a National Center for Information and Technical Support for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities which will be charged with providing information on universal design and its applications to postsecondary institutions.
- Access to texts in alternative format was also noted as a barrier to students with disabilities. The process for obtaining books in alternative formats can

take several weeks, placing students with disabilities at a disadvantage. The Florida Legislature may want to consider adopting a statewide center similar to that in Georgia where a library for alternative media has been established. The state of Georgia funds the Georgia Alternative Media Access Center which keeps a database of alternative texts used throughout the state's postsecondary institutions. The institution can sign up for the service and request access to specific texts in the library based on the needs of students. Developing a program such as the Center can reduce the cost of alternative texts for colleges by reducing the need to replicate materials and, hence, paying the additional cost for the same or similar book. More information on the Georgia Alternative Media Access Center can be found at <http://www.amac.uga.edu/>.

- The Summary of Performance (SOP) is required under the reauthorization of the IDEA of 2004 and must be completed prior to graduation. Secondary and higher education leaders, as well as the Florida Legislature, may wish to explore how this requirement under the IDEA can be used to provide postsecondary institutions with the documentation needed to adequately serve students. The cost of obtaining updated documentation can be prohibitive to students who have limited financial resources.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

While students with disabilities have continued to increase their enrollment in Florida's colleges, the increase in enrollment has not kept pace with the number completing high school or students that received services in high school are not receiving them in college. The data demonstrate that students with disabilities consistently completed their degrees, enrolled at the SUS, or remained enrolled at the same rate as their non-disabled peers. Targeted communication to high school students with disabilities may improve the number enrolling in colleges. Additionally, adopting strategies such as universal design and faculty awareness may improve the success rates of not only college students with disabilities, but those without as well. The Florida Legislature may also wish to address policy barriers for students with disabilities. The ADA gives postsecondary institutions the right to request updated documentation from students upon enrollment. For those students who must be reevaluated for a learning disability or other hidden disabilities, the cost can be prohibitive and prevent some from pursuing higher education. The SOP is required under the reauthorization of the IDEA of 2004. The SOP must be done prior to graduation and the purpose is to provide a summary of the student's academic achievement and recommendations for assisting the student to reach post high school goals, including higher education. Secondary and higher education leaders, as well as the Florida Legislature, may wish to explore how this requirement under the IDEA can be used to provide postsecondary institutions with the information needed to adequately serve students.

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