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Educational Foundations  
and Special Services

FACULTY MEMBERS' PRIORITIES AND UNDERSTANDING REGARDING  
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (145 pp.)

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Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 expanded the legal protections for students with disabilities in higher education in the United States. Additionally, enhanced kindergarten through twelfth grade public special education services have improved the academic skills of students with disabilities and heightened their own expectations and those of their parents. As a result, more students with documented disabilities are entering the realm of higher education than ever before. Yet, access to postsecondary programs does not necessarily translate into academic success. The priorities and understanding of university faculty members—who provide academic instruction and take a leading role in determining campus climate—directly shape the educational experiences and success of college students with disabilities. Previous research has focused primarily on faculty members' knowledge of legal issues, general attitudes toward students with disabilities attending college, and willingness to make accommodations. This study expands the extant knowledge base by examining the priorities and understanding of faculty members at one 8-campus university system regarding university students with disabilities in the following areas: *Legal, Accommodations-Willingness, Accommodations-Policy, Universal Design for*

*Instruction, Disability Characteristics, and Disability Etiquette*. Three hundred and seven faculty members' ratings on the *Faculty Priorities and Understanding Regarding College Students with Disabilities Scale* indicated that accommodations policies and disability etiquette were highly important and were being addressed satisfactorily; that issues related to law, Universal Design for Instruction, and disability characteristics were important but were not addressed satisfactorily; and that issues related to willingness to provide accommodations were neither highly important nor addressed satisfactorily. An action agenda for remediating important weaknesses and maintaining areas of strength at this university was formulated based on the recommendations of a focus group of 20 faculty members from the same institution. The action agenda focuses on providing training from other faculty members and providing easily accessible, comprehensive information for working with college students with disabilities.