

AN EXAMINATION OF THE EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT
CONCERNS OF POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: RESULTS
OF A TRI-REGIONAL SURVEY (153 PP.)

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The purpose of this study was to (a) examine the employment concerns of postsecondary students with disabilities and (b) develop strategies for improving their post-graduation employment outcomes. Utilizing an established methodology grounded in the ideals of Participatory Action Research, the researcher surveyed a total of 208 students with various disabilities in four states, representing seven colleges and universities regarding their views on employment concerns. Once data from the survey were collected, the researcher convened focus groups of university faculty members, student service professionals, rehabilitation professionals, and students with disabilities to assist in the interpretation of results and the formulation of strategies for improving career services for students with disabilities.

Survey respondents identified nine “strengths” in employment policies and practices, which can be categorized into three themes: expectations, access and accommodations, and job-seeking and technical skills. Survey respondents identified eight “weaknesses” in employment policies and practices, which can be categorized into three themes: health insurance, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Social Security.

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted on respondents’ importance ratings of the 40-item employment concerns scale. Results indicated that importance ratings comprised three relatively distinct factors: employment preparation and career establishment, legal rights and self-advocacy, and career mastery. Another exploratory

factor analysis was performed on respondents' satisfaction ratings for the 40-item employment concerns scale. Results indicated that satisfaction ratings comprised only one meaningful factor, consisting of all 40 items.

A 2 X 2 multivariate analysis of variance revealed no statistically significant differences in respondents' tri-factorial importance ratings based on the type of institution respondents attended or the type of disability they reported. A 2 X 2 analysis of variance revealed no statistically significant differences in respondents' single-factor satisfaction ratings based on type of institution or disability type.

Focus groups identified 117 recommendations to improve the career establishment prospects that await postsecondary students with disabilities after graduation. These recommendations cluster into five themes: information, research, services and curriculum, self-advocacy and self-determination, and involvement of key stakeholders. These findings indicate the need for a stronger commitment to research, services, and advocacy regarding the employment and career development of postsecondary students with disabilities.