

Postsecondary Education
and Individuals With Disabilities:
Recommendations to New York State
for Strategies to Increase Access
and Opportunity



Report of the Task Force on
Postsecondary Education and Disabilities

March 2000

The Board of Regents and the State Education Department
The State University of New York
The City University of New York
Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities
Association of Proprietary Colleges

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Introduction

This pocketbook contains a summary of the report of the Task Force on Postsecondary Education and Disabilities. It includes background information on the work of the Task Force and the charge it received from the Board of Regents, Commissioner of Education and the leadership of the four higher education sectors: State University of New York, City University of New York, Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities and the Association of Proprietary Colleges. The Task Force's mission was to develop a set of strategies to enhance access to higher education for individuals with disabilities in New York State.

The summary contains the nine goals developed by the Task Force and the outcomes for each goal by which to measure success over the course of the next five years. The plan is an ambitious one and a standing committee has been appointed to oversee this process.

The full report of the Task Force on Postsecondary Education and Disabilities contains suggested strategies that cover a broad range of themes, including improving the preparation of high school students with disabilities and their families; providing training and professional

development for faculty; raising the level of disability awareness to top college administration levels; reflecting goals of universal design and access in college and university strategic plans; enhancing and developing new funding streams; and implementing regionalized approaches to assessment, career, educational counseling and assistive technology evaluation services.

To obtain a copy of the full report contact **The Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID), Postsecondary Education Unit, Room 1613, One Commerce Plaza, Albany, NY 12234 or call (518) 473-4381.**

SUMMARY

When I went to college in the 1960s, there was only one building I could go into with my wheelchair and I had every course for four years in that one building. The rest of the campus was off limits for me. If it was n't for my bud dies on the basketball team carrying me around, my college experience would have been pretty bleak. It was n't un til twenty-five years later when I re turned for a re union that I was able to see the rest of the cam pus on my own.

For the student who wrote this story, going to college in New York State held a promising future. At that time, he was the only student on campus using a wheelchair. He was able to overcome the barriers and the challenges he had to face to graduate. What about the thousands of high school graduates with disabilities who want the same opportunity today? Is New York State prepared to educate them and give them the freedom to participate fully in every aspect of campus life?

In the fall of 1998, the top leadership of the state's higher education sectors convened with the Board of Regents and the New York State Education Department to address this critically important

issue of enhancing access to higher education for individuals with disabilities in New York State. That leadership included the Chancellor of the Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Education representing the New York State Education Department; the Chancellors from both the State University of New York and the City University of New York; and the Presidents of both the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities and the Association of Proprietary Colleges. It was an unprecedented event, with an unprecedented mission: to charge the Task Force on Postsecondary Education and Disabilities with developing a global vision and strategies to enhance access and encourage full participation of individuals with disabilities in postsecondary education.

To accomplish this goal, the Task Force on Postsecondary Education and Disabilities developed a vision: all students with disabilities who have acquired knowledge and skills to benefit from a higher education experience will have full access and opportunity; and a mission: to develop a set of strategies for higher education to enhance full participation of individuals with disabilities. The vision and mission guided its research and deliberations for almost a full year. To accomplish its mission, the Task Force created individual focus groups to develop strategies in five key areas:

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- ❖ preparation and readiness for college-level study;
 - ❖ funding streams;
 - ❖ faculty education and instruction;
 - ❖ assistive technology and other supports; and
 - ❖ student success and employment.

In making its recommendations, the Task Force tried to avoid prescription and mandate. Rather, the recommendations include strategies that develop better information exchange, offer incentives and provide both the education and disabilities communities with broad assessment and evaluation tools that will both guide and gauge improvement in the entire area of full participation. While some of the recommendations will require additional funds to be effectively implemented, the Task Force has focused on enhancing and leveraging existing systems, mechanisms and programs, rather than creating new ones.

The recommended strategies cover a broad range of themes including: improving the preparation of high school students with disabilities and their families; providing training and professional development for faculty; raising the level of disability awareness to top college administration levels; reflecting goals of

universal design and access in college and university strategic plans; enhancing and developing new funding streams; and implementing regionalized approaches to assessment, career, educational counseling and assistive technology evaluation services.

The following nine goals developed by the Task Force represent the vision and strategies necessary to accomplish the critical work that has only just begun with the release of this report. The specific outcomes will allow New York State to gauge its progress in enhancing postsecondary opportunities. To make such progress, a full range of stakeholders needs to engage in this important work: educators, government officials, businesses, service providers, families and individuals with disabilities. The strategies outlined in the report will require thinking in a new, forward and comprehensive way about how to make postsecondary education a reality for all New Yorkers with the determination to succeed.

Goal One:

Individuals with disabilities, regardless of age, have access to learning opportunities that prepare them for college study and to the tools and resources needed to succeed in postsecondary education settings.

Outcomes:

Trend data over the next five years will indicate that the percentage of students with disabilities with high school diplomas, or the equivalent, admitted to postsecondary education institutions in New York State will increase.

Trend data over the next five years will indicate that the percentage of returning adults with disabilities admitted to postsecondary education institutions will increase.

Goal Two:

New York State's colleges and universities commit to expanding access and opportunity for qualified students with identified disabilities, and that commitment includes a powerful push toward the ongoing development of positive campus-wide and faculty-wide attitudes toward the capabilities of students with disabilities.

Outcomes:

The percentage of New York State's institutions of postsecondary education that have a specific and formal planning component addressing universal design and access by the next comprehensive plan cycle will increase.

The percentage of college and university students who self-report as having one, or more, disability (ies) will increase over the next five years.

The percentage of individuals who achieve their personal educational goals, by completing a certificate program, specific coursework, two-year, four-year or postgraduate study, will increase over the next five years.

Trend data over the next five years will indicate that the percentage of students with disabilities who transfer from two-year into four-year institutions will increase.

Goal Three:

Faculty and staff have ready access and the incentive to utilize the resources they need that will enable them to teach and work more effectively with students with disabilities.

Outcomes:

The percentage of universities and colleges that include professional development and technical assistance to faculty and staff in the area of teaching and providing services to students with disabilities in their planning and assessment processes will increase over the next five years.

The number of faculty and staff who report favorably that they had access to professional training courses will increase over the next five years.

Goal Four:

Students with disabilities and institutions of postsecondary education work together to ensure that campus-wide technology meets universal design standards, and that students have ready access to the full range of appropriate assistive technologies they need to be successful in their coursework and general fields of study.

Outcomes:

The number of colleges and universities that have a formal component in their overall campus technology plans that addresses universal design and access will increase over the next five years.

The percentage of students who report favorably on access and accommodation around campus technology, and in being able to acquire special technologies they need in order to successfully complete coursework and participate in campus life will increase over the next five years.

Goal Five:

College students with disabilities have access to the full range of strategies, programs and counseling aimed at developing knowledge and skills to assist them in achieving post-academic success, including satisfying careers and jobs.

Outcomes:

The percentage of college students with disabilities who obtain employment through the career counseling services and programs will be the same as for students without disabilities.

The number of career counseling/placement offices that specifically recruit companies onto campuses that express interest in hiring individuals with disabilities will increase over the next five years.

The percentage of students with disabilities, either in traditional or nontraditional postsecondary education settings, who participate in internships, mentoring programs, clinical practice, field studies or other work experiences outside of class work will increase over the next five years.

The percentage of college students with disabilities who report going on to satisfying jobs and ca-

reers will in crease over the next five years.

Goal Six:

The New York State postsecondary education community fosters the development of regional collaboratives and partnerships offering a full range of services and technical assistance to students with disabilities, their families and secondary and postsecondary education institutions.

Outcome:

The number of secondary and postsecondary education institutions that report a specific regional resource or partnership to which they can turn for technical advice and assistance on working with and teaching students with disabilities will increase over the next five years.

Goal Seven:

Accreditation and review bodies continue to develop and enhance standards, policies and procedures for the comprehensive assessment of institutional effectiveness with regard to access to and diversity of programs and services to students with disabilities.

Outcomes:

Issues of access are included in the oversight criteria used by accreditation and review bodies operating in New York State.

The percentage of programs and institutions that are reviewed favorably with regard to universal design and access will increase over the next five years.

Goal Eight:

Institutions of postsecondary education, families and students with disabilities have access to a broad array of financial tools to promote success in college.

Outcomes:

Passage of the specific legislative initiatives outlined in the report will be achieved.

Endowment and private sector contributions to postsecondary education institutions that are earmarked for disability services will increase over the next five years.

Services, programs and facilities at postsecondary education institutions that are aimed at increasing educational opportunity for students with disabilities will be expanded and enhanced statewide over the next five years.

Trend data over the next five years will indicate that the number of colleges and universities that avail themselves of the “Fund for Improvement of Disability Services” grants will increase.

Goal Nine:

New York State, through the Board of Regents, establishes a standing Steering Committee made up of leadership of the four university sectors, the State Education Department and leaders in secondary education to guide ongoing research, policy development and assessment.

Outcome:

The Committee will be named within six months of the formal adoption of the Task Force Report.

In March 2000, the Board of Regents appointed the standing Steering Committee to oversee, develop and guide the implementation of the intent of the Task Force report. The Steering Committee is responsible for monitoring progress on the goals and outcomes in the report; collecting and evaluating data on students with disabilities; developing the capacity to measure more meaningful outcomes for students with disabilities; analyzing factors contributing to the success of stu-

dents and developing the strategies to achieve the goals and reach the outcomes in the report.

The report of the Task Force on Postsecondary Education and Disabilities contains comments from a panel of national experts in various fields, a panel of College Presidents representing the four university sectors and the Task Force Steering Committee. The members of these groups are listed in the full report along with background information, supporting data and charts and definitions of terms used in the report.

It is the fervent hope of the Task Force that this report will become the roadmap by which individuals with disabilities in New York State will significantly expand their educational and career horizons.

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