4-30-2021

A Look into Transition Programs for First Year Students with Disabilities in Higher Education: How to Create a Transition Program to Support Student Success

Gillian R. Lazzarini

A Look into Transition Programs for First Year Students
with Disabilities in Higher Education: How to Create a
Transition Program to Support Student Success

Gillian Rose Lazzarini

Master's Project
Submitted to the College of Education
At Grand Valley State University
In partial fulfillment of the
Degree of Master of Education

College Student Affairs Leadership

May 2021

Abstract

Students with disabilities face a myriad of challenges to persistence and success in higher education (Weis et al., 2016). This is largely caused by the fact that there are different laws and policies that govern secondary education and higher education, which can result in an adverse impact on transition services for students with disabilities. Therefore, this project analyzes the transition from secondary education to higher education for students with disabilities and looks at transition programs as a tool to support student success. Students with disabilities often have issues building community, navigating support services and accommodations, as well as practicing self-advocacy (Connor, 2013; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002; McGregor et al., 2016). Therefore, it is imperative that transition programs are offered to students with disabilities to support their transition to higher education and provide resources for an equitable experience. The culmination of this project is the outline for a transition program for students with disabilities registered with the Accessibility Services Office at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, MI.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

Problem Statement

Students with disabilities face a myriad of challenges to persistence and success in higher education (Weis et al., 2016). This may not be surprising to most; however, it is puzzling, considering the increase in academic support programs and services offered to students with disabilities at higher education institutions (Hadley, 2007). Therefore, it is essential to analyze the transition from secondary education to higher education for students with disabilities to identify areas of weakness and define strategies to address the problem. Based on contemporary literature on the topic, the root cause of the transition dilemma is that the federal laws and policies governing K-12 education are different than the laws governing postsecondary education (Shaw & Lyman, 2013). Consequently, students with disabilities may have issues building community, navigating support services and accommodations, as well as practicing self-advocacy (Connor, 2013; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002; McGregor et al., 2016). Therefore, it is imperative that transition programs are offered to students with disabilities to support their transition to higher education and provide resources for an equitable experience.

Importance and Rationale

Higher education is now a goal for at least 80% of secondary education students with disabilities in the United States (Newman et al., 2009). This number has increasingly grown as federal laws and policies have increased access to educational opportunities and resources that help students with disabilities succeed. However,

there is a difference between the laws that protect students in secondary and postsecondary education. These laws (which will be described in detail in the next section) make the transition to higher education difficult for students and their families.

In fact, students with disabilities still graduate at a lower rate than students without disabilities (Gregg, 2009; Sanford et al., 2011). According to Gregg (2007) students with learning disabilities (LD) make up about 50% of students with registered disabilities in higher education; however, Gregg (2009) explains that only about 28% of students with LD will graduate college. This is because, "students with LD can evidence greater difficulties in many areas including: concentrating on the task at hand, selecting salient information in class, applying test strategies, and managing time" (Connor, 2013, p. 270). It does not stop there, theoretical frameworks, like crip theory, which the literature review will explore in more detail, explain that social factors, like community and relationships, are foundational to the success of students with disabilities (Abes, 2019).

One way that universities can support students with disabilities is to provide transition services in the form of an organized transition program for first year students. Typically, these programs are organized, staffed, and executed by disability support services offices on college campuses. There are different types of transition programs, but the most common types are 1) pre-college bridge programs that occur before the semester begins or during first-year orientation, and 2) semester long transition programs that provide mentorship and programming throughout the first

semester of college (Novakovic & Ross, 2015; Rothman et al., 2008). In general, these programs provide an overview of the university, an introduction to the disability support services staff, resources and services provided by the office, as well as information on topics like: independent living, study skills, self-advocacy, accommodations, and what to expect during the transition to college (Rothman et al., 2008).

Transition programs often result in a greater likelihood of academic success and persistence for students with disabilities (Rothman et al., 2008). Therefore, in an educational system where students with disabilities are less likely to succeed than their non-disabled peers, providing transition programs to students with disabilities can increase their likelihood of success by providing fair access to community, education, and resources (Gregg, 2009; Barber, 2012; Anctil et al., 2008; Connor, 2013).

Background

To begin to understand the history of transition programs, the reader must understand the laws and policies that protect students with disabilities in both secondary and postsecondary education. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) guide secondary education, while the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1972 guide post-secondary or higher education. IDEA mandates prescriptive practices like transition plans, individualized education (IEP) plans, and summary of practice (SOP). Whereas the ADA and Section 504 offer generalized provisions on equal access to education

(Shaw & Dukes, 2013). In short, ADA does not guarantee success, it simply guarantees access.

So, what does that mean? The implications for a student with a disability pursuing higher education are significant. The change in laws means a change in the environment, the expectations, the process, and the responsibility placed on students with disabilities. Keenan & Shaw (2011) refer to something called the "documentation divide" between secondary and postsecondary education. IDEA uses the IEPs and 504 plans, which do not usually suffice as comprehensive enough documentation for accommodations in a higher education setting (Shaw & Dukes, 2013). Further, IDEA no longer requires a reevaluation every three years, whereas postsecondary institutions typically require a recent psychoeducational evaluation in order to provide a student with accommodations (Shaw & Dukes, 2013). These discrepancies can make an already uncertain time in a student's life more convoluted and stressful.

This is especially the case when a student has not been sufficiently prepared via their transition plan. Transition services are mandated by IDEA and defined as,

> coordinated set of activities...based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, (including) instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990, Section 602(a), 20 U.S.C. § 1401a)

Transition services are significant, because they prepare students for their next steps after graduation, like higher education or a vocational program. These transition services should help students craft an individualized plan to meet their individualized goals, like higher education (Anctil et al., 2008). However, the transition services in secondary education for students with disabilities are significantly lacking (Hadley, 2007). Therefore, there is a need to provide students with disabilities transition programs in postsecondary education to help them persist and thrive and ultimately meet their educational goals.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this project is to develop a transition program for students with disabilities at Aquinas College using the tenets of crip theory and the framework of Disability Studies in Education (DSE). Both crip theory and DSE foreground the social model of disability, aim to deconstruct ableist norms, and approach education from the perspective of disabled individuals (Abes, 2019; Connor, 2013). The project focuses on three themes that benefit students with disabilities in transition programs: self-knowledge, skills building, and building a community of support, all of which lead to the development of self-advocacy.

First, the theme of self-knowledge is important, because for students to claim their disability identity and contest ableist norms, which crip theory and DSE advocate for, students must understand how their disability impacts their education, their life, and their sense of self (Abes, 2019; Connor, 2013; Test et al., 2005). Therefore, the transition program will provide individual education on disability,

disability law, accommodations, and personal identity, to help students strengthen their self-knowledge. Second, the theme of skills building, which includes executive functioning skills, soft skills, and personal development, lays the foundation for the content of the transition program. Students will learn about these skills within the context of college and their disability, while receiving support from their transition coach and learning about resources and services on campus. Third, the theme of community is drawn from crip theory's conceptualization of relationships, which should be formed from the perspective and needs of the students with disabilities, not the ableist norms of society (Abes, 2019). This means that the director of Accessibility Services and the transition coach will build a relationship with individual students to support their specific needs and goals. The culmination of these themes is the development of self-advocacy skills that students can use to advocate for themselves throughout education at Aquinas College and beyond.

In addition, the project creates a graduate internship opportunity for master's students that need to fulfill an internship or practicum requirement. Aquinas College is situated in the heart of Grand Rapids, Michigan, so it provides a convenient opportunity for master's students studying education, social work, or other programs, like rehabilitation counseling, at universities in the Grand Rapids, MI area. The graduate internship opportunity would require the student to serve as the transition coach for the transition program, so they would execute the program by meeting with students and supporting their transition. This experience would provide the graduate

intern with the opportunity to apply the tenets of crip theory and the framework of DSE to their practice and help them grow as a proficient professional.

Objectives

To reach these objectives a literature review will be completed to summarize research on transition services in secondary education, transition programs in higher education, and the importance of self-advocacy for students with disabilities. The objectives of this project are:

1. Design a semester long transition program for first year students registered with the Accessibility Services office at Aquinas College.

2. To create an internship/practicum experience for graduate students interested in working with students with disabilities, for example students working toward their Master of Education in College Student Affairs Leadership (CSAL) at Grand Valley State University (GVSU).

3. To forward crip theory and the framework of DSE and apply these theories to practice by supporting students with disabilities as they transition into higher education.

4. To provide student affairs professionals, or professionals in adjacent fields, like social work and counseling, working in disability services an adoptable transition program with practices that are grounded in research, crip theory, and DSE.

Definition of Terms

Americans with Disabilities Act**:** "The ADA is one of America's most comprehensive pieces of civil rights legislation that prohibits discrimination and guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to participate in the mainstream of American life -- to enjoy employment opportunities, to purchase goods and services, and to participate in State and local government programs and services. Modeled after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin – and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 -- the ADA is an "equal opportunity" law for people with disabilities" (American with Disabilities Act, 1991).

Compulsory able-bodiedness**:** is a central tenet of crip theory coined by McRuer (2006) that argues that "the system of compulsory able-bodiedness...in a sense produces disability" (p. 2).

Crip theory: is "a poststructural theory that critiques the dominant discourses that shape the meaning of disability" (Abes, 2019, p. 64)

Disability**:** "A person can show that he or she has a disability in one of three ways:

- A person has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental condition that substantially limits a major life activity (such as walking, talking, seeing, hearing, or learning, or operation of a major bodily function).

- A person has a disability if he or she has a history of a disability (such as cancer that is in remission).

- A person has a disability if he or she is subject to an adverse employment action and is believed to have a physical or mental impairment that is not transitory (lasting or expected to last six months or less) and minor (even if he or she does not have such an impairment)" (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission).

Disability Studies in Education (DSE): According to Connor (2013) "DSE has emerged over the last decade to provide new ways of theorizing about disability and educational issues...DSE consciously seeks[s] to expand the boundaries of how disability has been conceived within education, and develop[s] broader understandings of disability based upon the lived experiences of individuals" (p. 270-271).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2021) "the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law that makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children."

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: According to the U.S. Department of Education (2020) "Section 504 is a federal law designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education (ED). 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 . . . .'"

***Self-advocacy*:** Test et al. (2005) created a conceptual framework of self-advocacy based on various definitions of the term that includes four components: "knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, communication, and leadership" (p. 45). Within this framework, Test et al. (2005) explain that the first two concepts, knowledge of self and knowledge of rights, are the foundations of self-advocacy that lead to advocacy for an individual's own needs and eventually the needs of others.

***Social Model of Disability*:** Tugli et al. (2014) explain that the social model of disability "views disability as the creation of society" (p. 332), meaning the decisions that society makes, like the creation of laws, policy, and design, determine what it means to be disabled and how disability is perceived within society.

***Transition Services*:** are a "coordinated set of activities...based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, (including) instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation" (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990, Section 602(a), 20 U.S.C. § 1401a).

Scope of Project

This project will specifically address the need for transition programs for students with disabilities enrolled in postsecondary higher education institutions. It will analyze disability laws and policies that guide secondary and higher education

practices to explain how and why transition programs are necessary for students with disabilities. It will focus on best practices for transition programs backed by research and data, guidelines for implementation, and will provide resources for the Aquinas College Accessibility Services staff. The findings of this project are intended for the Accessibility Services office at Aquinas College located in Grand Rapids, Michigan, but could be adapted by other institutions.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

Due to the lack of transition services in secondary education, students with disabilities are more likely to encounter obstacles in their transition from secondary to post-secondary education than students without disabilities (McGregor et al., 2016; Rothman et al., 2008). Therefore, transition programs for students with disabilities can help them during their transition period (Connor, 2013). To further understand the impact of transition programs for students with disabilities in higher education, it is important to understand how the needs and expectations of students with disabilities differ from students without disabilities. A review of post-structuralism, crip theory, and Disability Studies in Education (DSE) will contextualize and critique how disability is situated within a system of compulsory able-bodiedness that extends to the higher education setting; therefore, illustrating the importance of transition programs for students with learning disabilities in higher education. After analysis of these theories, literature on the legislation, components of transition programs, and the importance of self-advocacy will be explored to provide support for the need of transition programs for students with disabilities in higher education.

Theory and Rationale

Post-structuralism

Post-structuralism is a theoretical lens that "reveals how the language and symbols, or discourse, of social institutions, such as government, education, and religion, construct and maintain power" (Lather, 2007 as cited in Abes, 2019, p. 65).

Post-structuralism deconstructs and exposes how said social institutions construct our reality, which may result in oppressive systems like ableism. Therefore, multiple theories fall under the umbrella of post-structuralism, like queer theory and crip theory. Crip theory is a post-structural theory because it challenges "dominant discourses that define who and what are normal and the fluid and contested nature of identity" (Abes, 2019, p. 65). Crip theory exposes ableist norms in dominant society and empowers individuals to claim their identity as a disabled person to subvert societal perceptions of what it means to be a person with a disability (Abes, 2019).

Therefore, post-structuralism provides the foundation for critical theories, like crip theory and queer theory. This is evident in the similarities between crip theory and queer theory. Sandahl (2003) studied and documented these similarities and found that these theories share a history as "both have been pathologized by medicine; demonized by religion; discriminated against in housing, employment, and education; stereo-typed in representation; victimized by hate groups; and isolated socially, often in their families of origin" (p. 26). This is significant, because post-structuralism contextualizes crip theory and helps us understand why crip theory exists and why it is important to consider in the development of a transition program for students with disabilities. The next section will highlight the tenets of crip theory that will serve as the theoretical foundation of this project.

Crip Theory

To begin, a central tenet of crip theory is the idea of compulsory able-bodiedness and able-mindedness. This is the idea that systems are made with the

assumption of able-bodies and able-minds, much like other majority identities, i.e. heterosexuality or whiteness (McRuer, 2006; Kafer, 2013; Abes, 2019). This means that societies are often ableist and determine who is and who is not valued as a member of that society or system. According to Abes (2019) "crip theory critiques the discourses of compulsory able-bodiedness and able-mindedness and the resulting disabled-nondisabled binary that deems disability abnormal" (p. 66). At its core, crip theory aims to expose ableism and its exclusive nature and practices.

So, what does this mean for student development theory and disabled students in higher education? Johnson and McRuer (2014) coined the term *cripistemology*, which Abes (2019) describes as "the critical, social, and personal knowledge production from the perspective of disabled people" (p. 67). Cripistemology embraces different ways of thinking and understanding, and distinctly embraces crip failure to uncover the failings of ableist systems (Mitchell, Snyder, & Ware, 2014; Abes, 2019). Therefore, by bringing attention to these inequities in the higher education system, crip theory sheds light on areas where students with disabilities may need additional support.

Equally important is the idea of *claiming crip* which refers to identifying as a person with a disability (Abes, 2019). Claiming crip as an identity is central to crip theory because it actively challenges the idea of compulsory able-bodiedness and able-mindedness. Kafer (2013) explains that claiming crip is "a way of acknowledging that we all have bodies and minds with shifting abilities, and wrestling with the political meanings and histories of such shifts" (p. 13). Claiming

crip is of particular importance to working with college students with disabilities, because it involves their own identity development, which can be a difficult and personal journey. Therefore, transition programs for students with disabilities can help students develop their own identity as a person with a disability by providing community, education, and the resources to support them.

Crip theory will be applied to specific sections below to explain how transition programs can be designed and implemented in ways that best serve the needs of students with disabilities. It is the responsibility of disability support services staff, faculty, and other student affairs stakeholders to provide an equitable experience for students with disabilities. Though success is not a guarantee in higher education, equal access to resources, like transition programs, that support success is guaranteed, and should be offered to combat ableist norms and systems in higher education.

Disability Studies in Education

Disability Studies in Education (DSE) is a theoretical framework that has emerged over the last twenty years to conceptualize new ways that disability is treated in education (Connor, 2013). DSE takes a more constructivist and human approach to disability in education. The mission of DSE,

> Is to promote understanding of disability from a social model perspective
> drawing on social, cultural, historical, discursive, philosophical, literary,
> aesthetic, artist, and other traditions to challenge medical, scientific, and

psychological models of disability as they relate to education. (American

Education Research Association, n.d.)

By drawing on the social model of disability, DSE deliberately contests the medical

model of disability, which has been the dominant model used in education due to its

prescriptive nature (Connor, 2013). In the social model of disability, it is the actions,

decisions, laws etc. of society that determines what makes bodies and minds more

valuable (Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2021). Therefore, per the social

model of disability, society can marginalize people with disabilities, but it also has

the power to amplify their voices and experiences to create a more accessible society

(Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2021).

Much like crip theory, DSE actively works to break down ableist norms to

deconstruct the perceptions and realities of disability in our society. In fact, Connor

(2013) explains that DSE can be used as a "framework in which to consider how

individuals with LD navigate societal expectations, practices, and norms that

oftentimes misunderstand, misrepresent, and marginalize them" (p. 271). Therefore,

DSE will be used in this literature review to foreground the social model of disability,

instead of the medical model, or other limiting models, that do not consider the power

and perceptions of society in the treatment of individuals, particularly students, with

disabilities. Student affairs educators have a choice to amplify and support the voices

and experiences of students with disabilities, and transition programs are one way to

support positive change.

Research and Evaluation

Transition from Secondary Education to Higher Education

The transition from secondary to higher education for students with disabilities can be daunting. However, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) grants students with a documented disabilities and an IEP, transition services by age 16 (Levinson & Ohler, 1998). These transition services are defined as,

coordinated set of activities...based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, (including) instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990, Section 602(a), 20 U.S.C. § 1401a)

These transition services should help students craft an individualized plan to meet their educational and career goals, like higher education or a vocational program. However, Levinson and Ohler (1998) point out that the experiences, objectives, and skills students with disabilities need to be successful "take years to nurture and develop" (p.63). The authors further claim that not all students with disabilities receive the same transition services. For example, student with learning disabilities (LD) may receive fewer transition services than their peers with non-LD disabilities, and LD students pursuing higher education receive even less attention (Levinson & Ohler, 1998).

Rothman et al. (2008) provide context for why transition services may be lacking for high school students. The authors explain that many school counselors do not feel prepared to provide transition planning and services to students. Rothman et al. (2008) state that "school counselors report very little training and limited coursework on competency standards pertaining to students with disabilities" (p. 74) which may add to the lack of transition planning and services. Considering this information, it is understandable to see how there may be a disconnect between student knowledge and preparedness when students with disabilities enter college.

Janiga and Costenbader (2002) surveyed disability coordinators at 74 institutions on their perceptions of how well-prepared students with disabilities were by their high school transition services. The authors found "little satisfaction" (p. 466) among the disability coordinators regarding the transition services provided to students in high school. The survey established that up-to-date documentation was the greatest strength of the transition services and that student self-advocacy was the greatest weakness (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). Interestingly, the survey found that "13.9% of the respondents stated that high schools should improve the *quality* of assessments" (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002, p. 466) in order to provide accurate accommodations for students with disabilities and provide better education about the impact of their disability.

In addition, Hadley (2007) states that "in order to help these students, high school counselors, parents and colleges should make sure that students with learning disabilities understand what constitutes a comprehensive learning disability and

continually assess existing programs" (p. 12-13). This is significant, because as the number of students with disabilities in higher education increases, all stakeholders need to be aware of what students need in order to persist and succeed in higher education (Hadley, 2007). The transition from secondary to higher education is difficult for students with disabilities, so the accommodations and disability support services (the offices that typically implement transition programs) that institutions offer may be the determining factor in a student's college choice process (Hadley, 2007).

Implications for transition programs. Though transition services are lacking for students with disabilities entering higher education, there is room for improvement. Authors Anctil, Ishikawa, and Scott (2008) developed a model of academic identity development to help students with disabilities persist in higher education through self-determination. The model incorporates the "themes of persistence, competence, career decision making, and self-realization," (Anctil et al., 2008, p. 164) all of which build on each other to culminate in persistence in higher education.

The major takeaway from the Anctil et al. (2008) model are the implications for secondary education that include "the importance of providing opportunities for students to (a) acquire self-knowledge about their disability, (b) autonomously practice self-advocacy with teachers, and (c) develop conflict resolution skills within the context of academic accommodation requests" (p.164). This model highlights areas that may not come naturally to students with disablities, or any student for that

matter. These social skills are imperative to persistence and success, and as we will see in the next sections, these skills and themes will be used to inform what topics should be included in the development of a transition program for students with disabilities.

Transition Programs

The first step in creating a transition program is analyzing the transition from high school to college, as seen in the previous section, and then identifying what the transition program should include. The literature identifies three specific areas of importance: self-knowledge, skills building, and a community of support (Ankeny & Lehmann, 2011; Connor, 2013; McGregor et al., 2016; Skinner & Lindstrom, 2003). The following section will explore why these areas are important to the creation of a transition program for students with disabilities and will explain how they can contribute to student success.

Self-knowledge. Students should be knowledgeable of their disability and the laws that protect them in order to be successful in higher education. In 2011, Ankeny and Lehmann (2011) conducted a study about students with disabilities and their experience participating in a community college transition program and found that "none of the participants could specify their particular disability" (p. 282). The authors continued to explain that some students could identify their weaknesses, but they could not articulate specifics of their disability. This is not uncommon.

However, Ankeny and Lehmann (2011) point out that "the individuals' lack of self-awareness extended beyond not understanding their disability; they were

thwarted in opportunities to get to know themselves by the attentiveness and 'assistance' of others" (p. 282). This is important to consider in building any type of transition or support program for students. Gaining self-awareness and self-knowledge requires the individual to experience and partake in their own learning and work to develop self-knowledge and awareness.

Further, Skinner and Lindstrom (2003) explain that it is important for students to understand their disability and how it impacts their learning. More specifically, Skinner and Linstrom (2003) state that "they should be aware of their academic strengths and weaknesses, accommodations that allow them to circumvent their learning problems, and other strategies" (p. 133). To facilitate this growth, Milsom and Hartley (2005) encourage disability coordinators to "help these students examine their disabilities and their educational histories, including successes and challenges" (p. 438) to help students understand their specific disability and how it impacts their education.

In all, the literature on this topic provides clear guidelines for transition programs. For example, transition program staff can work with students individually to assess the impact of their disability, then identify campus resources and other strategies to help them in addition to their accommodations. Similarly, organizing programs about disability awareness can provide education for students with disabilities and the wider campus community. Moreover, the greater opportunity in this area is helping students develop their own identity as a person with a disability. As crip theory explains, "claiming crip" or helping students develop their identity,

can empower students with disabilities and help them identify their needs and build the skills they need to advocate for themselves and reach their goals (Abes, 2019).

Skills building. Next, skills building, like the development of executive functioning skills and study strategies or more nuanced concepts, like self-efficacy, are important components of a transition program for students with disabilities. Connor (2013) states that "students with LD can evidence greater difficulties in many areas including: concentrating on the task at hand, selecting salient information in class, applying test strategies, and managing time" (p. 270). Some of these difficulties can be mitigated using academic accommodations, however, many skills can require time, coaching, and support from university staff.

That is one reason why transition programs can be so helpful, they can provide relevant transition support, like skills building, over a sustained period of time. For example, Johnson et al. (2007) analyzed a transition program called "Road to Success" that incorporated units that cover topics like goal setting, time management, mindset, and communication. Focusing on topics pertinent to transition can prepare students for their transition experience and may influence the development of other skills, like self-efficacy.

Development of self-efficacy, which Kim and Kutscher (2020) explain is "a person's confidence in their own ability to be successful (p. 310)," is crucial to persistence in college. This is because students with disabilities are often more likely to experience situations that undermine their self-efficacy. Hong (2015) conducted a qualitative analysis on the barriers faced by college students with disabilities and

found four major barriers. According to the analysis, the four barriers that students with disabilities faced were: "(a) faculty perceptions, (b) fit of advisors, (c) stressors, and (d) quality of support services" (p. 213). Therefore, transition programs can help students with disabilities mitigate these barriers through skills building, coaching, and getting feedback to enhance support services, like transition programs. Additionally, Kim and Kutscher (2020) suggest encouragement from and engagement with faculty, staff, and peers, can help develop self-efficacy in students with disabilities. So, developing programs and opportunities for students to meet with faculty and peers with disabilities could help build community and promote self-efficacy.

Lastly, self-advocacy, which will be fully analyzed in the next section, is an important skill for students with disabilities to learn. The model of academic identity development outlined by Anctil et al. (2008) in the previous section, highlights the importance of practicing self-advocacy skills, communication skills, and conflict resolution skills. Transition programs can incorporate role-playing scenarios into their curriculum to help students build on not only their self-advocacy skills, but their communication skills and other soft skills, like eye contact and the ability to carry on a conversation. These skills will serve them throughout their education, as well as their future careers (Johnson et al., 2007).

Community of support. A quantitative study by McGregor et al. (2016) that surveyed 63,802 students found that "students with LD were less satisfied with the social experience, the academic experience, the monetary value of their experience, the general campus climate, or some combination of these" (p. 99) than non-LD

students. The same study found that students with LD interacted more with professors and "reported heightened perceptions of bias against people with disabilities on campus" (McGregor et al., 2016, p. 99). These findings are significant because they clearly illustrate how students with LD and other disabilities not only have a different college experience than non-disabled students, but they also feel marginalized. Therefore, exploration into community and support services is necessary.

Crip theory suggests a nuanced idea of relationships that focuses on "the perspective of disabled people rather than assuming a normative way of developing mature relationships" (Abes, 2019, p. 68). Migus (2011) explains the idea of *access intimacy*, "which is the sense that someone genuinely understands and cares about the access needs of a disabled person" (Migus, 2011, as cited in Abes, 2019, p. 69). Relationships are integral to the college experience and creating a community of support for students with disabilities should be a priority for all university stakeholders, but particularly disability support services.

Within a transition program, the integration of students, staff, and faculty should be explored. Rothman et al. (2008) state that "student success in higher education requires quality interactions with faculty, administration, and peers, as these relationships foster a sense of connectedness to the campus community" (p. 73). In support of that claim, Cheng (2004) explains that being accepted and integrated into the campus community can prompt students to develop and grow their own identity. Therefore, building a community of support that provides services, like transition programs, mentoring, tutoring, and workshops, to students with disabilities,

and connects them to resources on campus, can greatly impact their transition to college (Rothman et al., 2008).

Self-Advocacy

Previously discussed in Anctil et al.'s (2008) model for academic identity development, the practice of self-advocacy is essential to the persistence and success of students with disabilities in higher education. The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition further supports this claim, as they state "successful college students with disabilities are initiators, advocates, and active participants, which...is often the opposite expectation of high school special education recipients and special educators" (Stodden & Conway as cited in Anctil et al., 2008, p. 172). This is important, because it illustrates the disconnect between how successful students with disabilities should be prepared for higher education and how they actually are prepared. Further, this means that there is a correlation between a lack of transition services in high school and a lack of self-advocacy in higher education. To develop these self-advocacy skills, students need to "acquire self-knowledge about their disability and autonomously practice self-advocacy with teachers" (Anctil et al., 2008, p. 164) to be prepared for the independence that comes with higher education.

A study by McGregor et al. (2016) notes that "only 24.2 percent disclosed their LD status to postsecondary staff; 68.9 percent did not disclose because they did not perceive themselves as having LD; 6.9 percent perceived themselves as having LD but chose not to disclose" (p. 91). Further, McGregor et al. (2016) found that only 5.96 percent (3,804/63,802) of students surveyed reported having LD. Of those

students "only 33 percent...reported current use of accommodations" (McGregor et al., 2016, p. 99). Therefore, preparing students with disabilities and empowering them to be their own advocates is of the utmost importance.

Janiga and Costenbader's (2002) survey of disability coordinators shows, lack of self-advocacy is the greatest weakness among first-year students with disabilities. There are myriad reasons for this; Anctil et al. (2008) found that students with disabilities may lack knowledge of their disability or may lack experience advocating for themselves with teachers. Hartman-Hall and Haaga (2002) found that "the response a student receives to a request for assistance or accommodation for an LD, particularly from a professor, likely affects the student's willingness to seek help in the future" (p. 271). This is critical, because if a student with a disability does not have experience advocating for themself and they receive a negative response from a professor, they may not be prepared to navigate that conversation. The peril of this situation could be further compounded if the student does not fully understand their disability and the rights they have under Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADAAA (Weis et al., 2016). Therefore, students with disabilities need to enter higher education prepared to have these difficult conversations and advocate for themselves.

Based on this information we can presume that transition services in secondary education greatly influence, positively or negatively, a student's self-advocacy skills. Students with disabilities need to enter higher education prepared to have difficult conversations surrounding accommodations in order to advocate for

themselves. This preparedness would give students with disabilities the opportunity for personal growth and a greater understanding of their disability, along with increased self-esteem in regard to their disability (Hartman-Hall & Haaga, 2002). Hartman-Hall and Haaga (2002) conducted a study based on interviews with students with disabilities in higher education and found that only a "minority" (p. 263) of students use academic support services, including accommodations. The results of the study found that "if a student is met with a negative reaction to a request for help, he or she will be less likely to seek further assistance," (Hartman-Hall & Haaga, 2002, p. 271) while a student that receives a positive response would be more likely to seek help. Further, Hartman-Hall and Haaga (2002) state that "the findings suggest that how a student views his or her LD may also be an important factor in whether the student will persevere in seeking help after receiving a negative response," (p. 272) meaning the more negative the perception, the less likely the student will be to utilize academic support services. These findings demonstrate how important it is for students with disabilities to be prepared to be their own advocates and to understand that their disability is nothing to be ashamed of. Therefore, changes need to be implemented to ensure students with disabilities feel confident advocating for themselves and their rightful accommodations.

Implications for transition programs. To increase the use of disability support services and accommodations among students with learning disabilities, Hartman-Hall and Haaga (2002) suggest institutions "educate professors and college students about LDs and accommodations, as well as help them understand the impact

their reactions to students' requests for help or assistance may have on students' academic decisions" (p. 271). Increased education and awareness of disabilities and the accommodations legally provided for them, would make it more likely for a student with a disability to seek help for their disability. This is because educating professors, staff, and peers about disabilities, de-stigmatizes disabilities in the campus culture and promotes empathetic interactions (Hartman-Hall & Haaga, 2002). What this implies for transition programs, is that there is a need to connect students with faculty as well as providing opportunities for students to practice their self-advocacy and conflict resolution skills (Anctil et al., 2008; Rothman et al., 2008).

Further, the discussion around student self-advocacy is closely tied with the discussion around transition services. If students with disabilities do not receive proper support in high school, they may not be prepared to self-advocate in higher education. Therefore, this highlights the need for transition programs for students with disabilities in higher education. These programs would prepare students to be their own advocate and would provide tools and strategies for discussing their disability with professors, staff, and peers. The program would also build community among students with disabilities, create a more positive perception of disabilities, and potentially lend to the de-stigmatization of disabilities at the institution.

Chapter Three: Project Description

Introduction

Due to the lack of transition services in secondary education, students with disabilities are more likely to encounter obstacles in their transition from secondary to post-secondary education than students without disabilities (McGregor et al., 2016; Rothman et al., 2008). Therefore, transition programs for students with disabilities that provide community, support, and resources, help students during their transition period (Connor, 2013). Careful planning and implementation are essential to creating a transition program that meets the needs of students with disabilities entering college.

Aquinas College, the institution this project is focused on, is a small, Catholic, liberal arts institution that serves a small population of students with disabilities. As of 2021, Aquinas College enrolls 1,900 students (Aquinas College, 2021). In the Fall 2020 semester, there were 21 first-year students registered with the Accessibility Services office (Aquinas College, 2021). Therefore, the application of this transition program will be scaled to fit the needs of this size student population. For programs with more participants, the content of the program does not have to change; however, the number of staff may need to increase.

The purpose of this project is to create a transition program for first year students at Aquinas College that meets three objectives: community, self-knowledge, and self-advocacy. First, an accessible community of peers, faculty, and staff is required for students to create positive, supportive relationships that contribute to

their successful transition (Barber, 2012). Second, self-knowledge and awareness of a student's disability and their needs are essential for students to advocate for their disability and develop a positive identity (Anctil et al., 2008; Connor, 2013). Third, the development of self-advocacy skills is imperative to the use of academic accommodations, as well as academic success and persistence in higher education (Hartman-Hall & Haaga, 2002; Zhang et al., 2019).

Project Components

Program Structure and Planning

The transition program for first year students with disabilities at Aquinas College is called Access AQ and will be run by a graduate student intern that will serve as the program transition coach. To begin, each student will meet with the transition coach for an intake assessment, where the student and transition coach will determine the student's strengths and areas for improvement. During the intake session, the student will set one to three goals for their first semester of college. Additionally, each student will complete a pre-assessment survey to assess their comfortability with transition topics at the beginning of the program.

Then, each student will meet with the transition coach on a weekly basis for individual, hour-long sessions that cover the following topics:

- intake assessment and goal setting
- time management and academic self-regulation
- deep process learning strategies
- test taking strategies

- mindset and motivation

- disability and accommodations in higher education

- campus community and involvement

- self-advocacy

During these sessions (see Appendix A for sample meeting agenda) students will be presented with information about each topic, discuss their experience with each topic, and have time to ask questions about how to apply strategies to their practice. At the end of each session, there will be a goal check-in, where the student and transition coach will discuss any progress, challenges, or setbacks. In addition, each session will include a campus resource of the week to familiarize students with available resources and support services on campus

The program, Access AQ, will start the first week of the fall semester, so students have immediate support while they transition to their classes and familiarize themselves with campus. Then, they will meet with the transition coach for eight weeks on a weekly basis. Appendix B provides a sample calendar and schedule for the transition program. If there are too many students in the transition program, then the transition coach can choose to meet with students on an alternating, bi-weekly basis, instead of having weekly meetings. Therefore, half the students would meet during week one of the semester and the other half would meet during week two of the semester. This would result in an odd and even group of students that meet every other week with the transition coach and would allow for a more balanced caseload.

Another alternative would be hiring two or more graduate interns to support a larger transition program.

Depending on the semester and the university's policies, the program will either be held virtually or in-person. If the program is held virtually, the transition coach will send out private zoom links to each student for each individual meeting. During virtual meetings the transition coach can share their screen to present information for each module. If the program is held in-person, the transition coach will meet privately with each student in the transition coach office located on the lower level of the Wege building. In person presentations for each module would be presented on a computer.

Lastly, due to the capricious nature of student schedules, scheduling for each individual meeting will be done at the end of each session. The transition coach will have ten hours blocked off per week, so students will have multiple time slots to choose from. Therefore, students will not be locked into one timeslot, which will give them flexibility in their schedule and may help with program retention. Scheduling conflicts and issues will be handled on a case-by-case basis. The transition coach and director of Accessibility Services will coordinate make-up sessions when time permits.

Content Creation and Organization

To begin, the creation of content modules is necessary for the implementation of the program. As previously stated, the module topics are: intake assessment and goal setting, time management and academic self-regulation, deep process learning

strategies, test taking strategies, mindset and motivation, disability and accommodations in higher education, campus community and involvement, and self-advocacy. Appendix C provides an outline of content for each module. Each module will contain an agenda of the topics covered, module content, goal check-in, and a campus resource of the week. The resource(s) of the week are intentionally curated to help students as they progress through the semester. For example, resources that are more prevalent to student academic and personal wellbeing, like the tutoring center, counseling center, and health services, will be covered in the first weeks. While resources that are less time sensitive, like the Advantage Center, which provides career services, research opportunities, and study abroad, will be covered toward the end of the semester. Appendix C outlines the content for weekly modules along with the corresponding resource of the week.

Aquinas College uses a proprietary intake program called *Smart Goals for College Success* created by Transitions in Translation, LLC (Transitions in Translation, 2020). The Accessibility Services office at Aquinas College has an active license to the program materials, which are used to assess each student's strengths, areas for improvement, and goals for the semester. The transition program will continue to use these materials to determine the strengths of students that they can use to help them with their areas of weakness and to achieve their semester goals.

Lastly, the accessibility of the transition program content and materials are important because they should be accessible to all students and all disabilities. To ensure that the materials are accessible, they will be created with the seven core skills

of digital accessibility in mind. These core skills are: alternative text, contrast, headings, links, lists, tables, and video and audio (Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2021). It is the responsibility of the transition coach to ensure that all materials are compliant before presenting them to students. If there are accessibility barriers identified within the presentation materials, edits should be made immediately under the guidance of the director of Accessibility Services.

Graduate Internship

The program execution will be done by a graduate student intern. Historically, the Accessibility Services office at Aquinas College has had a Grand Valley State University (GVSU) practicum student each fall semester. GVSU is a large, public higher education institution in the Grand Rapids, MI area that has a Masters of Education (M.Ed) program. In the M.Ed program there is the College Student Affairs Leadership (CSAL) program that requires students to have two practicum/internship experiences, one in the summer between their first and second year, and the other during their second year fall semester. To continue the trend for having a GVSU CSAL graduate intern, the director of Accessibility Services will share the transition coach practicum opportunity with the program director of the GVSU CSAL program. Once a graduate intern has been hired by the director of Accessibility Services, the graduate intern will start their internship the third week of August and end their internship before finals week. The internship is not limited to GVSU CSAL students, but establishing that relationship will help ensure there is consistent talent for the position.

Training for the graduate intern will be conducted by the director of the

Accessibility Services office. Appendix D outlines the training topics that will be

covered. The graduate intern will have access to module materials, the intake

assessment, worksheets, resources, and helpful literature and websites about

accessibility and disability. Prior experience working with people with disabilities

will help, but will not be required for this learning opportunity. However, an interest

in learning about disability and accessibility is essential to success in this position.

Appendix E illustrates a sample job description for the Accessibility Services

Graduate Intern at Aquinas College.

As stated in the introduction, the goals of the transition program are

community, self-knowledge, and self-advocacy. The graduate intern will play a

crucial role in the attainment of these goals. Therefore, the graduate intern will be

required to become familiar with the tenets of crip theory and the framework of

Disability Studies in Education (DSE). Appendix F provides suggested reading

materials for the graduate intern, but the following provide some examples of how

these theories and frameworks inform the goals of the program. The need for

community is rooted in crip theory, which promotes relationships that provide access

intimacy and focus on the unique perspective of each student (Migus, 2011).

Disability Studies in Education (DSE) supports "the development of a positive

disability identity" (Connor, 2013, p. 271), so the graduate intern will help students

learn more about their disability and how to succeed despite it. Further, the

culminating goal of both crip theory and DSE is empowerment and self-advocacy,

which will require the graduate intern to coach, support, and advocate for students, while they gain confidence, knowledge, and grow into their own advocates (Abes, 2019; Connor, 2013).

Though the graduate intern's primary duty is to execute the transition program, the graduate intern will have the opportunity to customize their experience at Aquinas College through professional development opportunities. For example, the graduate intern will have the opportunity to collaborate with offices on campus, like the Advantage Center, which focuses on career development, internships, research, and study away. Other offices on campus include the Center for Opportunities, Resources, and Excellence (CORE), which includes programs, like TRIO Student Support Services, Peer Coaching, and ESL and Global Student Services (Aquinas College, 2021). In addition to collaboration with other offices, the graduate intern can partake in other Accessibility Services initiatives such as Disability Awareness month, which happens in October, or they can explore topics of interest within the field of disability and create their own program for students (see Appendix G for topic ideas).

Lastly, the graduate student intern will learn about the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD), which is "the leading professional membership association for individuals committed to equity for persons with disabilities in higher education" (AHEAD, 2021). As a part of their internship, the graduate intern may have the opportunity to attend local conferences and participate in webinars on disability related topics. The graduate intern can use the AHEAD website to

familiarize themself with current disability case law, language, news, and trends in the field. Access to AHEAD will enrich the graduate intern's work as well as their knowledge and professional development within the NASPA functional area of disability support services (NASPA, 2021).

Project Evaluation

To track the effectiveness of the program and the progress of the participants, a program evaluation must be conducted each semester the program is run. Because of the nature of the program, a pre- and post-assessment will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the program and its three objectives: community, self-knowledge, and self-advocacy. The pre-assessment survey (see Appendix H) will be given during the first session after the intake assessment has been completed. The post-assessment survey (see Appendix I) will be given during the last session after the student has completed the transition program.

The assessments will be used to measure the effectiveness of the program by measuring the growth of each student in terms of their sense of community, their self-knowledge, and their self-advocacy skills. The assessment will gather information on the goals each student made during their intake appointment, but this information will not be a part of the formal assessment. The survey will be a researcher-developed survey, which is important because it is intended to get specific feedback on the Access AQ transition program (Schuh, 2016). Therefore, the survey will include a series of questions in which the student will rate the truth of the statement from 1 to 5. One meaning they strongly disagree with the statement, five meaning they strongly

agree with the statement. Then there will be a series of open-ended questions designed to encourage students to give their own qualitative feedback in their own words.

Drawing on Abes (2019), Johnson and McRuer (2014), and Migus (2011), and the core tents of crip theory, including cripistemology, access intimacy, and centering the voices of students with disabilities, the evaluation is meant to see if students are able to build trusted relationships with people in the Aquinas College community. The program seeks to provide access intimacy, a type of relationship that Mingus (2011) as cited in Abes (2019) describes as "the sense that someone genuinely understands and cares about the access needs of a disabled person" (p. 69) to build a strong community and sense of belonging. Additionally, the assessment will gauge the program's ability to promote students' knowledge of their disability. Supported by Johnson and McRuer's (2014b) term cripistemology, which "embraces the multiple ways that minds produce and make sense of knowledge" (Abes, 2019, pp. 67), the assessment will evaluate each student's comfortability navigating college with their disability. Lastly, the assessment will evaluate each student's confidence in their ability to advocate for themselves, their disability, and their rights to accessibility and accommodations.

Project Conclusions

Students with disabilities often need more than just accommodations to persist in higher education. Students with disabilities need community, education, resources, and support to help them develop the academic and interpersonal skills necessary for

success (Abes, 2019; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002; Skinner and Lindstrom, 2003). Providing transition programs for students with disabilities can help students mitigate barriers to success by educating students on their disability, providing skills and strategies for academics, and creating an inclusive community where students feel safe and supported. This project was designed for the Accessibility Services office at Aquinas College; however, disability support services at colleges and university anywhere can adapt these materials to create a transition program of their own to help their students transition into success.

Plans for Implementation

Plans for implementation are set to begin in August of 2021. The job description for the graduate internship in the Accessibility Services office at Aquinas College will be sent to the students in the GVSU CSAL program in the beginning of May 2021. The director of the Accessibility Services office will then interview interested candidates in June of 2021 for the Fall 2021 semester.

References

Abes, E. S. (2019). Crip Theory: Dismantling Ableism in Student Development

   Theory. In Abes, E. S., Jones, S. R., & Stewart, D-L. (Eds.). (2019).

   Rethinking college student development theory using critical frameworks. (64

   – 71). Stylus Publishing, LLC.

American College Personnel Association & National Association of Student

   Personnel Administrators. (2015). *ACPA/ NASPA professional competency*

   areas for student affairs practitioners (2nd ed.). Authors.

American Education Research Association. (n.d.) Disability Studies in Education

   Special Interest Group 143. http://www.aera.net/SIG143/DisabilityStudiesin

   EducationSIG143/tabid/12121/Default.aspx

Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990. (1991). Pub. L. No. 101-336, §

Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act, Pub. L. No. 110-325 § 3406

   (2008).

Anctil, T. M., Ishikawa, M. E., & Scott, A. T. (2008). Academic identity development

   through self-determination: Successful college students with learning

   disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 31*(3), 164-174.

Ankeny, E. M., & Lehmann, J. (2011). Journey toward self-determination: Voices of

   students with disabilities who participated in a secondary transition program

   on a community college campus. *Remedial and Special Education, 32*(4),

   279-289.

Association on Higher Education and Disability. (2021). *Overview*. AHEAD.

   https://www.ahead.org/about-ahead/about-overview

Barber, P. (2012). College students with disabilities: What factors influence

   successful degree completion? A case study. *Disability and Work Research*

   Report. John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, Kessler

   Foundation.

Cheng, D. X. (2004). Students' sense of campus community: What is means, and

   what to do about it. *NASPA Journal,* 41, 216-234.

Connor, D. J. (2013). Sink or swim: Managing the academic transition to college

   for students with learning disabilities. *Journal of College Student Retention:*

   Research, Theory & Practice, *15*(2), 269-292.

   https://doi.org/10.2190/CS.15.2.g

Gregg, N. (2007). Underserved and unprepared: Postsecondary learning disabilities.

   Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 22(4), 219-228.

Gregg, N. (2009). *Adolescents and adults with learning disabilities and ADHD:*

   Assessment and accommodation. Guilford.

Hadley, W. M. (2007). The necessity of academic accommodations for first-year

   college students with learning disabilities. *Journal of College Admission,*

   (195), 9-13.

Hartman-Hall, H., & Haaga, D. A. F. (2002). College students' willingness to seek

   help for their learning disabilities. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 25*(4), 263-

   274. doi:10.2307/1511357

Hong, B. S. (2015). Qualitative analysis of the barriers college students with

    disabilities experience in higher education. *Journal of College Student*

    Development, 56(3), 209–226.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990, Section 602(a), 20 U.S.C. §

    1401a Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. (2021). *About IDEA*.

    https://sites.ed.gov/idea/about-idea/

Janipa, S. J., & Costenbader, V. (2002). The transition from high school to

    postsecondary education for students with learning disabilities: A survey of

    college service coordinators. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 35*(5), 462-8,

    479.

Johnson, M. L., & McRuer, R. (2014). Cripistemologies: Introduction. *Journal of*

    Literary and Cultural Disability Studies, 8(2). 127 – 147.

Johnson, M. L., & McRuer, R. (2014b). Proliferating cripistemologies: A virtual

    roundtable. *Journal of Literacy and Cultural Disability Studies, 8*(2), 149-169.

Johnson, D. R., Mellard, D. F., & Lancaster, P. (2007). Road to success: Helping

    young adults with learning disabilities plan and prepare for employment.

    Teaching Exceptional Children, 39(6), 26-32.

Kafer, A. (2013). *Feminist, crip, queer.* Indiana Universtiy Press.

Lather, P. (2007). *Getting lost: Feminist efforts towards a double(d) science.* SUNY

    Press.

Keenan, W. R., & Shaw, S. F. (2011). The legal context for serving students with

    learning disabilities in postsecondary education. *Learning Disabilities: A*

    Multidisciplinary Journal, 17, 55–61.

Kim, M. M., & Kutscher, E. L. (2020). College students with disabilities: Factors

    influencing growth in academic ability and confidence. *Research in Higher*

    Education, 62, 309-331.

Lather, P. (2007). *Getting lost: Feminist efforts toward a double(d) science.*

    SUNY Press.

Levinson, E. M., & Ohler, D. L. (1998). Transition from high school to college for

    students with learning disabilities: Needs, assessment, and services. *The High*

    School Journal, 82(1), 62-69.

Lovett, B. J., & Lewandowski, L. J. (2006). Gifted students with learning disabilities:

    Who are They? *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 39*(6), 515-27.

    Doi: 10.1177/00222194060390060401

McGregor, K. K., Langenfeld, N., Van Horne, S., Oleson, J., Anson, M., & Jacobson,

    W. (2016). The university experiences of students with learning disabilities.

    Learning Disabilities Research & Practice: A Publication of the Division for

    Learning Disabilities, Council for Exceptional Children, *31*(2), 90–102.

    https://doi.org/10.1111/ldrp.12102

McRuer, R. (2006). *Crip theory: Cultural signs of queerness and disability*.

    New York University Press.

Migus, M. (2017, August 6). Forced intimacy: An ableist norm [Blog post]. Retrieved

   from https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2011/05/05/access-intimacy-the-

   missing-link/

Milsom, A., & Hartley, M.T. (2005). Assisting students with disabilities transitioning

   to college: What school counselors should know. *Professional School*

   Counseling, 8(5), 436-441.

Mitchell, D. T., Snyder, S. L., & Ware, L. (2014). "[Every] child left behind":

   Curricular cripistemology and the crip/queer art of failure. *Journal of Literary*

   and Cultural Disability Studies, 8(3), 295 – 313.

NASPA. (2021). *Functional area profiles*. http://census.naspa.org/functional-areas

Novakovic, A., & Ross, D. E. (2015). College student for a day: A transition program

   for high school students with disabilities. *Journal of Postsecondary Education*

   and Disability, 28(2), 229-234.

Regents of the University of Minnesota. (2021). *Start with the 7 core skills*.

   Accessible U. https://accessibility.umn.edu/what-you-can-do/start-7-core-

   skills

Rothman, T., Maldonado, J. M., & Rothman, H. (2008). Building self-confidence and

   future career success through a pre-college transition program for individuals

   with disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 28*, 73-83.

Sandahl, C. (2003). Queering the crip or cripping the queer: Intersections of queer

   and crip identities in sole autobiographic performance. *GLQ: A Journal of*

   Lesbian and Gay Studies, 9(1-2), 25-56.

Skinner, M. E., & Lindstrom, B. D. (2003). Bridging the gap between high school and college: Strategies for the successful transition of students with learning disabilities. *Preventing School Failure, 47*(3), 132-137.

Schuh, J. H., Biddix, P., Dean, L. A., & Kinzie, J. (2016). Assessment in student affairs (2nd ed.). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Transitions in Translation. (2020). *Transitions in Translation*. http://www.transitionsintranslation.com/#destination-college

Tugli, A. K., Klu, E. K., & Morwe, K. (2014). Critical elements of the social model of disability: Implications for students with disabilities in a South African institution of higher education. *Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi/Journal of Social Sciences*, *39*(3), 331–336.

U.S. Department of Education. (2020, January 10). *Protecting students with disabilities*. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. *Disability discrimination: Definition of Disability.* https://www.eeoc.gov/disability-discrimination

Zhang, D., Roberts, E., Landmark, L., & Ju, S. (2019). Effect of self-advocacy training on students with disabilities: Adult outcomes and advocacy involvement after participation. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 50*, 207-218.

Appendix A

Sample Meeting Agenda

Access AQ - Transition to Success!

Week 1 Meeting Agenda

INTRODUCTIONS
- Welcome
- Meet your transition coach
  - Who are they?
  - What can they do for you?
  - How to contact them.
- Student introduction
  - Where are you from?
  - What is your intended major?
  - Why did you choose Aquinas College?
  - What are you most looking forward to this semester?

WEEKLY TOPIC: INTAKE ASSESSMENT & GOAL SETTING
- Complete intake assessment
- Set three SMART goals for the semester

RESOURCE OF THE WEEK: ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES
- Have you met with the director for a needs assessment?
- Accommodations and accommodation letters
- Testing center
- Assistive technology
- Housing accommodations

SCHEDULE NEXT BI-WEEKLY MEETING

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, CONCERNS?

Created by Gillian R. Lazzarini, 2021

Appendix B

Sample Transition Program Calendar

Fall 2021 - Access AQ Calendar

	Week	Topic	Important Deadlines
1	8/30 - 9/3	**Intake Assessment**	**9/3:** Last day to add/drop a class with no financial penalty
2	9/6 - 9/10	**Time Management & Academic Self-Regulation**	**9/6:** Labor Day, no classes or meetings
3	9/13 - 9/17	**Deep Process Learning Strategies**	**9/17:** Last day to drop a first quad class w/no academic penalty
4	9/20 - 9/24	**Test Taking Strategies**	
5	9/27 - 10/1	**Mindset & Motivation**	**Disability Awareness Month!**
6	10/4 - 10/8	**Accommodations in College**	**10/8:** Mid-term grades due
7	10/11 - 10/15	**Mid-terms - No meetings**	**10/15:** First quad ends
8	10/18 - 10/22	**Mid-term Break - No meetings**	**10/18:** Second quad begins **10/20 - 10/21:** Mid-term break **10/22:** Last day to drop a semester long class with no academic penalty
9	10/25 - 10/29	**Campus Community & Involvement**	**10/29:** Last day to drop second quad class with no financial penalty
10	11/1 - 11/5	**Self-advocacy**	
11	11/8 - 11/12	**Transition Coach Office Hours**	**11/12:** Last day to drop second quad class with no academic penalty
12	11/15 - 11/19	**Transition Coach Office Hours**	
13	11/22 - 11/26	**Thanksgiving Break**	

14	11/29 - 12/3	**Transition Coach Office Hours**	
15	12/6 - 12/10	**Final Exams**	**12/10:** Second quad ends
16	12/13 - 12/17	**Winter Break**	**12/15:** Final grades due by 4pm

Created by Gillian R. Lazzarini, 2021

Appendix C

Outline of Transition Program Module Topics and Content

Module 1
Topic: Introductions, Intake Assessment, and Goal Setting
Resource of the week: Accessibility Services
- Introductions
  - Transition coach
  - Student
  - Ice breaker
- Intake Assessment
  - What is it?
  - Why we use it
  - Complete intake
    - Student can give a copy of the intake to a parent/guardian to complete in order to gain a broader understanding of the students strengths and challenges
- Goal Setting
  - Review SMART Goals
  - Establish 2 - 3 SMART goals for the semester
  - How can you use your strengths to help you overcome your challenges?
- Pre-assessment

Module 2
Topic: Time Management and Academic Self-Regulation
Resource of the week: Peer Tutoring
- Time management
  - What is it?
  - Why is it important?
  - What are the challenges?
- Time management strategies
  - Planners/calendars
  - Phone apps
  - Homework organizer
  - Semester organizer
- Activity: create a weekly time management schedule
- Academic self-regulation
  - What is it?
  - Stages of self-regulation
  - How do you academically self-regulate to achieve your goals?
- Goal check-in

Module 3
Topic: Deep Process Learning Strategies
Resource of the week: The Writing Center
- Bloom's Taxonomy
  - How we learn
  - How do academic expectations change from high school to college?
- Shallow versus deep processing
  - Passive learning
  - Active learning
- The learning process
- Reading/Note-taking/Study Strategies
  - Take breaks
  - Use different strategies, like:
    - Ven diagrams
    - Matrices
    - Concept maps
    - Flashcards
    - Create practice questions
    - Mnemonics
    - Study groups
  - Cornell notetaking method
  - Experiment with strategies and find what works best for you.
- Goal check-in

Module 4
Topic: Test Taking Strategies
Resource of the week: The Health Center
- Study strategies, examples are:
  - Study guide
  - Practice problems
  - Study groups/tutoring
  - Create test questions
  - Explain concepts to others
  - Flash cards
  - Review notes
- Try a 7-day study plan, studying 1 - 2 hours a day, instead of cramming before the test
- Test taking strategies
  - True or False
  - Multiple choice
  - Short answer
  - Essay

- Revisit your strategies and mix them up
  - Try something different if you are not performing as well as you would like on exams
- Test anxiety strategies
  - Write out your worries and tear up the paper
  - Take a walk before the test to clear your mind
  - Mindfulness and breathing exercises
- Testing in a virtual learning environment
  - Plan ahead
  - Find a quiet place with minimal distractions
  - Use your accommodations
- Goal check-in

Module 5
Topic: Mindset and Motivation
Resource of the week: The Counseling and Wellness Center
- Mindset
  - Fixed
  - Growth
  - What is your mindset?
  - Does it change or depend on the subject?
  - How does mindset impact you?
- Mindset and Motivation
  - Mindset can impact motivation
  - Motivation does not always come naturally, sometimes you need to create it within yourself
- Motivation
  - What motivates you?
- Examples of motivation strategies
  - Goal setting
  - Building on successes
  - Incentives and rewards
  - Break large tasks into smaller tasks
- Goal check-in

Module 6
Topic: Disability and Accommodations in Higher Education
Resource of the week: Academic Advising
- Disability and the Law
  - What is a disability? What laws protect disability?
  - What does disability mean to you?
  - Is disability a part of your personal identity?
  - How does your disability impact you?
  - Social model of disability

- Accommodations
    - What are accommodations?
    - What makes an accommodation "reasonable"?
    - Do you use accommodations?
    - If so, how do they help?
- Goal Check-in

Module 7
Topic: Campus Community and Involvement
Resource of the week: The Advantage Center
- Aquinas College Advantage Center
    - Experiential learning opportunities
        - Internships
        - Research
        - Study abroad
    - Career development/exploration
        - Explore resources, like PathwayU
    - Service learning
- Registered student organizations
    - Are you involved in any student organizations?
    - What are your interests?
    - You can start your own!
- Think about the opportunities you can pursue today that will help you achieve your future academic and career goals
- Goal check-in

Module 8
Topic: Self-advocacy
Resource of the week: end of semester reflection
- What is self-advocacy?
    - What does it mean to you?
    - What does it not mean to you?
    - How do you self-advocate?
    - What do you self-advocate for?
    - Why is it important?
- Framework of self-advocacy
- Self-advocacy practice/scenarios
- Self-advocacy tips and tricks
- Post-assessment

Created by Gillian R. Lazzarini, 2021

Appendix D

Outline of Graduate Intern Training

The director of Accessibility Services at Aquinas College will be responsible for training the graduate intern that will serve as the transition coach for the Access AQ transition program. Outlined below are training topics that should be covered during the graduate intern training.

- The graduate intern training session should be held at least one week prior to the start of the Fall 2021 semester.
  - The training should be scheduled for three hours and include:
    - A campus tour
    - Introduction to Aquinas College and Accessibility Services
    - Overview of office/university procedures and guidelines
    - Job responsibilities and expectations, specifically highlighting:
      - Transition program content
      - Program schedule
      - How to handle student information
      - Confidentiality
      - What to do if there is a student issue/emergency
    - Brief explanation of professional development opportunities
    - How to access work email
    - Schedule weekly staff check-in day and time
    - Exchange contact information
    - Time for questions

Created by Gillian R. Lazzarini, 2021

Appendix E

Sample Graduate Intern/Transition Coach Job Description

Purpose
The purpose of the Graduate Intern/Transition Coach position in the Accessibility Services office at Aquinas College is to provide transition support to first year students with disabilities. The Graduate Intern/Transition Coach will implement the Access AQ program, an eight-week transition program, that supports students with disabilities as they navigate through their first semester of college. The program includes the following topics: intake assessment and goal setting, time management and academic self-regulation, deep process learning strategies, test taking strategies, mindset and motivation, disability and accommodations in higher education, campus community and involvement, and self-advocacy. See Appendix B for the Fall 2021 Access AQ calendar.

Job Responsibilities
The Graduate Intern/Transition Coach is responsible for the following:
- Program Administration
  - Schedule individual meetings with program participants
  - Send follow-up email correspondence after each meeting
  - Send meeting reminders to students each week
  - Follow-up and schedule make-up sessions on a case-by-case basis
  - Reply to student emails within 24 - 48 hours, depending on schedule
- Programming
  - Work with the director of Accessibility Services to brainstorm passive programming for social media
  - Plan and implement Disability Awareness Month programs and activities
- Professional Development
  - Educate self on disability news and trends in higher education.
  - Read AHEAD website and materials.
  - Participate in conference and webinar opportunities.
  - Participate in informational interviews with other Aquinas College offices.

Professional Competencies
The Graduate Intern/Transition Coach will interact with the following ACPA and NASPA (2015) professional competency areas for student affairs educators:
- Law, Policy, and Governance (LPG)
- Leadership (LEAD)
- Social Justice and Inclusion (SJI)
- Student Learning and Development (SLD)
- Advising and Supporting (A/S)

Qualifications
- Must be a graduate student fulfilling a graduate internship or practicum requirement.
- Must be interested in learning about disability and accessibility in higher education.
- Must demonstrate willingness to work with students with disabilities.

Benefits
- Professional development in disability support services and other functional areas through conferences, webinars, and informational interviews.
- Immersive internship or practicum experience.

To apply, email a cover letter and resume to Accessibility Services at Aquinas College: accessibility@aquinas.edu.

Created by Gillian R. Lazzarini, 2021

Appendix F

Suggested Readings for Graduate Intern

Abes, E. S. (2019). Crip Theory: Dismantling Ableism in Student Development

Theory. In Abes,E. S., Jones, S. R., & Stewart, D-L. (Eds.). (2019).

Rethinking college student development theory using critical frameworks. (64

– 71). Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act, Pub. L. No. 110-325 § 3406

(2008). Anctil, T. M., Ishikawa, M. E., & Scott, A. T. (2008). Academic

identity development through self-determination: Successful college students

with learning disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals,*

31(3), 164-174.

Association on Higher Education and Disability. (2021). *AHEAD Statement on*

Language. AHEAD. https://www.ahead.org/professional-resources/

accommodations/ statement-on-language

Connor, D. J. (2013). Sink or swim: Managing the academic transition to college

for students with learning disabilities. *Journal of College Student Retention:*

Research, Theory & Practice, *15*(2), 269–292.

https://doi.org/10.2190/CS.15.2.g

Regents of the University of Minnesota. (2021). *Start with the 7 core skills*.

Accessible U. https://accessibility.umn.edu/what-you-can-do/start-7-core-

skills

Zhang, D., Roberts, E., Landmark, L., & Ju, S. (2019). Effect of self-advocacy

    training on students with disabilities: Adult outcomes and advocacy

    involvement after participation. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 50*, 207-

    218.

Appendix G

Disability Awareness Month Programming Ideas

Disability Awareness Month happens every October across the United States. To increase disability awareness and educate the campus community on disabilities, Aquinas College has participated through passive programming on their social media channels. Below, past Disability Awareness Month passive programming ideas are listed along with future programming ideas.

Past Passive Programming Topics
- What is neurodiversity?
- What is the difference between neurotypical and neurodivergent?
- Spectrum of neurodivergent brains
- Skills and strengths of neurodivergent brains
- How to support a neurodivergent community

Future Programming Ideas
- How to create an accessible campus community
  - What is accessibility?
  - Types of accessibility, like physical and digital accessibility
  - Basics of physical accessibility
  - Basics of digital accessibility
    - Can provide accessibility guidelines for social media, PowerPoint presentations, and media in the classroom/university events
    - Can provide guidelines for reporting barriers to access in physical spaces on campus
    - Can present an in-person or virtual workshop on accessibility basics, including the 7 core skills of accessibility (Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2021)
- Bring in campus or community speakers
  - Can be done both in-person and virtually
  - Invite faculty or local community leaders to speak about disability in higher education
  - Can focus on a theme like, awareness, education, or social justice

Created by Gillian R. Lazzarini, 2021

Appendix H

Sample Access AQ Participant Pre-Assessment

This is a sample researcher-developed survey that will act as a pre-assessment survey and can be given to each student during their intake appointment.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree   3 = neutral   4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, I am knowledgeable of the diagnosis, symptoms, and impact of my disability. ___
2. On a scale of 1 to 5, I know how to set goals and adjust as needed. ___
3. On a scale of 1 to 5, I am familiar with campus resources and know how to access them. ___
4. On a scale of 1 to 5, I have effective executive function strategies, study strategies, and self-advocacy skills. ___
5. On a scale of 1 to 5, I know all the support services available to me through the Accessibility Services office. ___
6. On a scale of 1 to 5, I feel comfortable talking to faculty and staff about my accommodations. ___
7. On a scale of 1 to 5, I am comfortable talking to friends and peers about my disability. ___
8. Did you receive transition services for your disability in high school?

   _____

9. Did you have an IEP or 504 Plan in high school? _____
10. Do you have documentation of your disability from a healthcare provider?

    _____

11. What are your strengths? _____
12. What are your weaknesses? _____
13. Is there anything else you would like to share? _____

    _____

Created by Gillian R. Lazzarini, 2021

Appendix I

Sample Access AQ Participant Post-Assessment

This is a sample researcher-developed survey that will act as a post-assessment survey and can be given to each student during their last meeting of the semester.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree   3 = neutral   4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, I am knowledgeable of the diagnosis, symptoms, and impact of my disability. ___
2. On a scale of 1 to 5, I know how to set goals and adjust as needed. ___
3. On a scale of 1 to 5, I am familiar with campus resources and know how to access them. ___
4. On a scale of 1 to 5, I have effective executive function strategies, study strategies, and self-advocacy skills. ___
5. On a scale of 1 to 5, I know all the support services available to me through the Accessibility Services office. ___
6. On a scale of 1 to 5, I feel comfortable talking to faculty and staff about my accommodations. ___
7. On a scale of 1 to 5, I am comfortable talking to friends and peers about my disability. ___
8. Which module topics were the most helpful? _____

    _____
9. Would you recommend Access AQ to a peer? _____
10. Was the format of the meeting conducive to your learning style? If not, what would you change? _____

    _____
11. What have you learned about yourself this semester? _____

    _____

Created by Gillian R. Lazzarini, 2021