

# Postsecondary Disability Program Standards and Performance Indicators: Minimum Essentials for the Office for Students with Disabilities

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## Abstract

*The development and dissemination of Program Standards and Performance Indicators for disability services in higher education provides research-based direction for postsecondary institutions, consumers and governmental agencies with respect to the services necessary to provide equal access for college students with disabilities. Twenty-eight Program Standards and 90 Performance Indicators are presented. The implications of the specific Performance Indicators for services for students with disabilities in postsecondary education are discussed.*

Following the process described by Dukes (this issue), the Board of Directors of the Association on Higher Education And Disability (AHEAD), in November 2004, unanimously approved Program Standards and Performance Indicators for disability services in higher education. These Standards supplant those approved in 1999 and published in 2001 (Shaw & Dukes).

Program Standards and Performance Indicators indicate essential expectations for *all* postsecondary institutions in terms of minimum supports that must be available to provide equal access for students with disabilities. They do not limit institutions that wish to provide supports that are deemed necessary or appropriate for their population of students (e.g., remedial coursework at a community college) or unique elements that they choose to provide (e.g., summer transition program or diagnostic services). Specifically, they provide a benchmark to review when postsecondary institutions consider availability of appropriate supports, program evaluation, staff development or program development needs. In addition, they provide consumers a clear basis for reviewing programs and services offered by postsecondary institutions.

## Why New Program Standards

In the discussion of the Program Standards developed in 1999 Shaw and Dukes, (2001) note “given that postsecondary disability services is a rapidly developing field with a relatively short history these results have a limited ‘shelf life.’ All of the Standards will, therefore, need to be monitored and revised on an on-going basis to keep them abreast of state-of-the-art practice based on current research” (p. 88). The Standards were based on a large sample of postsecondary disability practitioners across North America. Although recognized for providing direction and support for postsecondary personnel (Brinckerhoff, McGuire, & Shaw, 2002), they were challenged as conventional wisdom rather than expert opinion. In addition, the field of postsecondary services for students with disabilities was evolving rapidly. The concept of self-determination (Field, Sarver, & Shaw, 2003) was redirecting basic elements of service delivery. Further, the increased availability and use of technology, a new focus on collaboration with faculty, and changing characteristics of college students with disabilities (e.g.,

students with ADHD, Asperger's Syndrome, and psychiatric disabilities) also quickly reduced the utility of the original AHEAD Program Standards. Perhaps most noteworthy, in a recent survey of 1,353 postsecondary disability service providers (Harbour, 2004), over 80% indicated that they still need information about best practices.

In the twenty-first century, evidence-based services have become the expectation. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002) requires public schools to meet specified outcomes or face serious consequences. In a similar vein, postsecondary institutions increasingly require that programs demonstrate accountability specified through appropriate benchmarks as a means of determining the distribution of their limited resources (Goodin, Parker, Shaw, & McGuire, 2004).

In response to the need to demonstrate outcomes and to better define the profession, several benchmarks or principles were developed in the 1990s. Standards that were adopted and promoted by AHEAD include Professional Standards (Shaw, McGuire, & Madaus, 1997), which identify the skills and knowledge required of service providers and define the profession as a whole; a Code of Ethics (Price, 1997), which frames guidelines for professional behavior; and Program Standards (Shaw & Dukes, 2001), which provide guidance to postsecondary disability service providers. The rapidly developing nature of disability services warranted an update of the original AHEAD Program Standards that

were based on research begun in 1997.

The new Program Standards provide updated internationally recognized benchmarks for the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) to use for initiatives such as program development and accountability measures and as justification for garnering additional resources. The Performance Indicators associated with these Standards provide clear direction regarding how to implement the Program Standards and offer a basis for program evaluation. An OSD that demonstrates that it fulfills these indicators can justifiably claim that it is state-of-the-art. An OSD that does not meet these benchmarks will need to seek additional resources to bring its services in line with these standards.

### **AHEAD Program Standards and Performance Indicators**

Twenty-eight Program Standards and 90 Performance Indicators (see Table 1) described below have been identified as essential regardless of type of school (two- or four-year), funding source (public or private), location (United States or Canada), or admissions policy (open enrollment or competitive). They provide a clear benchmark for postsecondary disability personnel and their institutions to assess the efficacy of their programs, identify policies and procedures to develop or revise, and specify the resources and training to allow personnel to provide equal access for students with disabilities in higher education.

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Table 1

#### *AHEAD Program Standards and Performance Indicators*

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### **AHEAD Program Standards and Performance Indicators**

The Association on Higher Education And Disability (AHEAD) is pleased to offer these revised Professional Standards and Performance Indicators to the field. The standards reflect the maturation of the postsecondary disability services profession, describe the breadth of skills and knowledge required of personnel administering the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), and present a consensus among experts in the field regarding minimum essential services. These standards are intended to enhance service provision for college students with disabilities by directing program evaluation and development efforts, improving personnel preparation and staff development, guiding the formulation of job descriptions for OSD personnel, informing judges and requisite court decisions regarding appropriate practice and, lastly, expanding the vision of disability services at the postsecondary level.

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## 1. Consultation / Collaboration

To facilitate equal access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities, the office that provides services to students with disabilities should:

- 1.1 *Serve as an advocate for issues regarding students with disabilities to ensure equal access.*
  - Foster collaboration between disability services and administration as it relates to policy implementation.
  - Ensure key administrators remain informed of emerging disability issues on campus that may warrant a new or revised policy.
  - Foster a strong institutional commitment to collaboration on disability issues among key administrative personnel (e.g., deans, registrar, campus legal counsel).
  - Work with facilities to foster campus awareness regarding physical access.
  - Work collaboratively with academic affairs on policy regarding course substitutions.
  - Foster an institutional commitment to promoting student abilities rather than a student's disability.
  - Foster meaningful inclusion of students with disabilities in campus life (e.g., residential activities, extracurricular activities).
- 1.2 *Provide disability representation on relevant campus committees.*
  - Advise campus student affairs regarding disability-related issues (e.g., student discipline, student activities).
  - Participate on a campus-wide disability advisory committee consisting of faculty, students, administrators, and community representatives.
  - Participate on campus administrative committees such as a campus committee on individuals with disabilities.

## 2. Information Dissemination

To facilitate equal access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities, the office that provides services to students with disabilities should:

- 2.1 *Disseminate information through institutional electronic and printed publications regarding disability services and how to access them.*
  - Distribute policy and procedures(s) on availability of services via all relevant campus publications (catalogs, programmatic materials, web sites, etc.).
  - Ensure referral, documentation, and disability services information is up to date and accessible on the institution's web site.
  - Ensure that criteria and procedures for accessing accommodations are clearly delineated and disseminated to the campus community.
  - Ensure access to information about disabilities to students, administration, faculty, and service professionals.
  - Provide information on grievance and complaint procedures when requested.
  - Include a statement in the institutional publications regarding self-disclosure for students with disabilities.

Table 1 continued

- 2.2 *Provide services that promote access to the campus community.*
- Facilitate the acquisition and availability of a wide variety of assistive technology to help students access materials in alternative formats (e.g., JAWS for Windows screen reader, Kurzweil Voice Pro, Mountbatten Braille).
  - Provide information for the acquisition of computerized communication, text telephone (TT), or telecommunications devices (TDD) for the deaf.
  - Promote universal design in facilities.
  - Promote universal design in communication.
  - Promote universal design in instruction.
- 2.3 *Disseminate information to students with disabilities regarding available campus and community disability resources.*
- Provide information and referrals to assist students in accessing campus resources.

### 3. Faculty / Staff Awareness

To facilitate equal access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities, the office that provides services to students with disabilities should:

- 3.1 *Inform faculty regarding academic accommodations, compliance with legal responsibilities, as well as instructional, programmatic, and curriculum modifications.*
- Inform faculty of their rights and responsibilities to ensure equal educational access.
  - Inform faculty of the procedures that students with disabilities must follow in arranging for accommodations.
  - Collaborate with faculty on accommodation decisions when there is a potential for a fundamental alteration of an academic requirement.
- 3.2 *Provide consultation with administrators regarding academic accommodations, compliance with legal responsibilities, as well as instructional, programmatic, physical, and curriculum modifications.*
- Foster administrative understanding of the impact of disabilities on students.
- 3.3 *Provide disability awareness training for campus constituencies such as faculty, staff, and administrators.*
- Provide staff development regarding understanding of policies and practices that apply to students with disabilities in postsecondary settings.
  - Provide staff development to enhance understanding of faculty's responsibility to provide accommodations to students and how to provide accommodations and modifications.
  - Provide administration and staff training to enhance institutional understanding of the rights of students with disabilities.
  - Participate in administrative and staff training to delineate responsibilities relative to students with disabilities.
  - Training for staff (e.g., residential life, maintenance, and library personnel) to facilitate and enhance the integration of students with disabilities into the college community.
- 3.4 *Provide information to faculty about services available to students with disabilities.*
- Provide staff development for faculty and staff to refer students who may need disability services.

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## 4. Academic Adjustments

To facilitate equal access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities, the office that provides services to students with disabilities should:

- 4.1 *Maintain records that document the student's plan for the provision of selected accommodations.*
  - Create a confidential file on each student including relevant information pertaining to eligibility and provision of services.
  - Document the basis for accommodation decisions and recommendations.
  - Develop a case management system that addresses the maintenance of careful and accurate records of each student.
- 4.2 *Determine with students appropriate academic accommodations and services.*
  - Conduct a review of disability documentation.
  - Incorporate a process that fosters the use of effective accommodations, taking into consideration the environment, task, and the unique needs of the individual.
  - Review the diagnostic testing to determine appropriate accommodations or supports.
  - Accommodation requests are handled on a case-by-case basis and relate to students' strengths and weaknesses, which are identified in their documentation.
  - Determine if the student's documentation supports the need for the requested accommodation.
  - On a case-by-case basis, consider providing time-limited, provisional accommodations pending receipt of clinical documentation, after which a determination is made.
- 4.3 *Collaborate with faculty to ensure that reasonable academic accommodations do not fundamentally alter the program of study.*
  - Provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure program accessibility, yet do not compromise the essential elements of the course or curriculum.
  - Ensure an array of supports, services and assistive technology so that student needs for modifications and accommodations can be met.

## 5. Counseling and Self-Determination

To facilitate equal access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities, the office that provides services to students with disabilities should:

- 5.1 *Use a service delivery model that encourages students with disabilities to develop independence.*
  - Educate and assist students with disabilities to function independently.
  - Develop a program mission that is committed to promoting self-determination for students with disabilities.

## 6. Policies and Procedures

To facilitate equal access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities, the office that provides services to students with disabilities should:

- 6.1 *Develop, review and revise written policies and guidelines regarding procedures for determining and accessing "reasonable accommodations."*
  - Develop, review and revise procedures for students to follow regarding the accommodation process.
  - Develop, review and revise policies describing disability documentation review.
  - Develop, review and revise procedures regarding student eligibility for services.

Table 1 continued

- Develop, review and revise eligibility for services policies and procedures that delineate steps required for students to access services, including accommodations.
  - Develop, review and revise procedures to determine if students receive provisional accommodations during any interim period (e.g., assessment is being updated or re-administered).
- 6.2 *Assist with the development, review, and revision of written policies and guidelines for institutional rights and responsibilities with respect to service provision.*
- Assist with the development, review, and revision of policies and procedures on course substitutions, including institution requirements (e.g., foreign language or writing requirements).
  - Assist with the development, review, and revision of policy and procedures regarding priority registration.
  - Develop, review and revise policies and procedures that maintain a balance between “reasonable accommodation” and “otherwise qualified” while “not substantially altering technical standards.”
  - Develop, review, and revise policies regarding the provision of disability services (e.g., interpreter services).
  - Develop, review and revise disability documentation guidelines to determine eligibility for accommodations at the postsecondary level.
  - Assist the institution with the development, review, and revision of policies regarding the faculty’s responsibility for serving students with disabilities.
  - Collaborate with the development, review, and revision of policies regarding IT (e.g., alternative formats).
- 6.3 *Develop, review and revise written policies and guidelines for student rights and responsibilities with respect to receiving services.*
- Develop consistent practices and standards for documentation.
  - Develop, review and revise policies regarding students’ responsibility to provide recent and appropriate documentation of disability.
  - Assist with the development, review, and revision of policies regarding students’ responsibility to meet the Institution’s qualifications and essential technical, academic, and institutional standards.
  - Develop, review and revise policies regarding students’ responsibility to follow specific procedures for obtaining reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids.
  - Assist with the development, review, and revision of procedures a student must follow regarding program modifications (e.g., course substitutions).
  - Develop, review, and revise procedures for notifying staff (e.g., interpreter, notetaker) when a student will not attend a class meeting.
- 6.4 *Develop, review and revise written policies and guidelines regarding confidentiality of disability information.*
- Develop, review and revise policy articulating students understanding of who will have access to their documentation and the assurance that it will not be shared inappropriately with other campus units.
  - Develop, review and revise policies and procedures regarding privacy of records, including testing information, prior records and permission to release confidential records to other agencies or individuals.
- 6.5 *Assist with the development, review, and revision of policies and guidelines for settling a formal complaint regarding the determination of a “reasonable accommodation.”*
- Assist with the development, review, and revision of procedures for resolving disagreements regarding specific accommodation requests, including a defined process by which a review of the request can occur.
  - Assist with the development, review, and revision of compliance efforts and procedures to investigate complaints.
  - Assist with the development, review, and revision of a conflict resolution process with a systematic procedure to follow by both the grievant and the institutional representative.

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## 7. Program Administration and Evaluation

To facilitate equal access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities, the office that provides services to students with disabilities should:

- 7.1 *Provide services that are aligned with the institution's mission or services philosophy.*
  - Develop a program mission statement and philosophy that is compatible with the mission of the institution.
  - Program personnel and other institutional staff understand and support the mission of the office for students with disabilities.
- 7.2 *Coordinate services for students with disabilities through a full-time professional.*
  - At least one full-time professional is responsible for disability services as a primary role.
- 7.3 *Collect student feedback to measure satisfaction with disability services.*
  - Assess the effectiveness of accommodations and access provided to students with disabilities (e.g., timeliness of response to accommodation request).
  - Student satisfaction data is included in evaluation of disability services.
- 7.4 *Collect data to monitor use of disability services.*
  - Provide feedback to physical plant regarding physical access for students with disabilities.
  - Collect data to assess the effectiveness of services provided.
  - Collect data to identify ways the program can be improved.
  - Collect data to project program growth and needed funding increases.
- 7.5 *Report program evaluation data to administrators.*
  - Develop an annual evaluation report on your program using the qualitative and quantitative data you've collected.
- 7.6 *Provide fiscal management of the office that serves students with disabilities.*
  - Develop a program budget.
  - Effectively manage your program's fiscal resources.
  - Seek additional internal or external funds as needed.
  - Develop political support for your program and its budget.
- 7.7 *Collaborate in establishing procedures for purchasing the adaptive equipment needed to assure equal access.*
  - Assist with the determination of the needs for assistive technology and adaptive equipment at your institution.
  - Advise other departments regarding the procurement of needed assistive technology and adaptive equipment.
  - Provide or arrange for assistance to students to operate assistive technology and adaptive equipment.

## 8. Training and Professional Development

To facilitate equal access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities, the office that provides services to students with disabilities should:

- 8.1 *Provide disability services staff with on-going opportunities for professional development.*
  - Provide orientation and staff development for new disability personnel.
  - Ensure that professional development funds are available for disability personnel.
  - Provide opportunities for ongoing training based on a needs assessment of the knowledge and skills of disability personnel.

Table 1 continued

- 8.2 *Provide services by personnel with training and experience working with college students with disabilities (e.g., student development, degree programs).*
- Ensure staff can understand and interpret assessments/documentation.
- 8.3 *Assure that personnel adhere to relevant Codes of Ethics (e.g., AHEAD, APA).*
- Refer to and apply a relevant professional code of ethics when dealing with challenging situations.

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*Consultation/Collaboration*

Collaboration has become increasingly important as students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions have more complex (e.g., multiple chemical sensitivity, Asperger's Syndrome) and hidden (e.g., ADHD, psychiatric) disabilities. Advocating for issues regarding students with disabilities (Standard 1.1) involves working with campus administrators and various campus agencies to foster understanding and inclusion of disability issues across the institution. A critical differentiation between these and the 2001 Standards (Shaw & Dukes) is self-determination. That is best exemplified by the current focus on advocating for *issues* versus the previous focus on advocating for *students*. Data suggest that fostering student self-advocacy and self-determination provides for positive outcomes (Field et al., 2003).

Providing disability representation on relevant campus committees (Standard 1.2) is clearly an essential element of services for students with disabilities. It is important to reiterate that the Program Standards do not require that this responsibility be housed solely in the OSD. A service may be provided through a disability access committee, the 504 or ADA office, or some other campus department(s). The point of the Standards is that the service should be provided and that both the institution and the individual or department responsible should be aware of that role.

*Information Dissemination*

The focus of this category is communication across the institution regarding disability access. The three elements of communication related to institutional publications (Standard 2.1), access to communication for individuals with disabilities (Standard 2.2), and providing information to students about available resources (Standard 2.3) are essentially the same as the 2001 Standards. However, Reviewing the Performance Indicators demonstrates how much has changed. The changes specified by the Performance Indicators include a focus on electronic communication and assistive technology. Indicators for Standard 2.2 discuss universal design in communication, facilities, and instruction that were not considerations just five years ago. Universal design changes

the content of communication from merely accommodating students with disabilities to creating physical, curricular, and instructional environments that are accessible to all, including individuals with disabilities (Getzel, Briel, & McManus, 2003; Scott, McGuire, & Shaw, 2003).

*Faculty/Staff Awareness*

Shaw and Scott (2003) have noted that college faculty is pivotal players in ensuring equal educational access for students with disabilities. Faculty members' roles have changed as the expectations for and demands on faculty have evolved over time (Salzberg et al., 2002). While faculty were once merely expected to acknowledge that accommodations must be permitted for students with disabilities, typical activities and expectations now reflect a much broader ownership of disability issues on campus.

In spite of the major changes that have recently occurred regarding the perceived role of college faculty, the four Standards in this section are virtually identical to the previous Standards. They focus on understanding the needs of students with disabilities and being aware of the services available from the OSD. Based on the deliberations of the expert panel, OSD personnel would seem to be reticent to broaden their responsibilities beyond providing accommodations to include involvement in instructional issues that they perceive primarily as the purview of faculty. This is an appropriate reminder that these Standards are reflective of what is minimally essential for the OSD, not a listing of all the activities that disability services personnel might decide to provide.

*Academic Adjustments*

This category addresses the determination and provision of appropriate academic adjustments in order to provide equal access for students with disabilities. It includes having a plan to document the provision of accommodations (Standard 4.1) and determining appropriate academic adjustments (Standard 4.2). Standard 4.3 is an update of a similar standard from the 2001 Standards. In the discussion at that time we commented that the idea of OSD having the "final responsibility for de-

termining effective academic accommodations” (Shaw & Dukes, 2001, p. 84) was already out-of-date. This study led to the modification of this Standard, which now indicates that collaboration to determine reasonable accommodations is considered best practice. The Performance Indicators for these Standards, which deal with issues of confidentiality, case management, documentation review, and provisional accommodations, provide productive direction for how to fulfill these expectations.

### *Counseling and Self-Determination*

Use of a service delivery model that encourages students with disabilities to develop independence (Standard 5.1) is the sole service component in this category. Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, and Wehmeyer (1998) provide a clear and compelling definition of self-determination:

Self-determination is a combination of skills, knowledge and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior. An understanding of one’s strengths and limitations together with a belief in oneself as capable and effective are essential to self-determination. When acting on the basis of these skills and attitudes, individuals have greater ability to take control of their lives and assume the role of successful adults in our society. (p. 2)

The focus of this Standard on self-determination is broader than “advocacy,” which was used in the 2001 Standards. The Performance Indicators relate to fostering independence in students and developing a program mission that promotes self-determination. Research on self-determination for students with disabilities demonstrates that it fosters successful outcomes in terms of grade-point average, graduation, and self-efficacy (Field et al., 2003; Parker, 2004).

### *Policies and Procedures*

Five Standards in the Policies and Procedures category (6.1-6.5) deal with critical issues regarding “reasonable accommodations,” student rights and responsibilities and institutional rights and responsibilities. These cover topics such as disability documentation, course substitutions and appeal procedures. In essence, the Standards are the same as those from 2001. However, there are 23 Performance Indicators that specify the activities necessary to fulfill the standards. For example, Standard 6.2, which deals with institutional rights and responsibilities with respect to service provision has seven indicators, including the need to specify requirements for foreign language or writing, priority registration, balancing “otherwise qualified” while “not altering technical standards,” identifying documentation guidelines, speci-

fying faculty responsibilities as they relate to students with disabilities, and information technology needs. Brinckerhoff et al. (2002) stated that policy is not static; rather, it is a dynamic process. They go on to note that OSD professionals must regularly review their policies and procedures to ensure that they evolve as the field responds to new developments and emerging “best practices.”

### *Program Administration and Evaluation*

The first five Standards in this category are very similar to the 2001 Standards. They involve providing services consistent with the institution’s mission and monitoring the effectiveness of disability services and supports. However, there are two new Standards of note. Standard 7.6 states that the OSD should “provide fiscal management of the office that serves students with disabilities.” This is the first Standard to specifically indicate that the OSD should have a program budget and that the OSD administrator has a fiscal management role. This is an acknowledgment of the reality that the average OSD budget is over \$230,000 (Harbour, 2004).

Performance Indicators include the need to effectively manage program fiscal resources, the need to seek additional external and internal funds, and the need to develop political support for the OSD program and budget. The fact that 92% of postsecondary disability service providers specified a need for “more resources or money for resources” (Harbour, 2004, p. 48) underscores the relevance of this indicator. Standard 7.7 indicates that OSD personnel should collaborate in establishing procedures for purchasing adaptive equipment needed to assure equal access. Consensus could only be reached on the idea of “collaboration” while suggestions that OSD personnel *select* or *buy* adaptive equipment were not seen as necessarily within the expertise or purview of disability personnel.

Standards 7.3-7.5 all relate to data collection and evaluation. These Standards reinforce the reality that our limited research base, the consistent threat of litigation, and the constant struggle for access to limited institutional resources, all make it critical that evaluation data be collected, organized, and disseminated to all relevant constituencies. Goodin et al. (2004) in their recent AHEAD publication provide extensive information and examples of program evaluation methodology for disability services that can be used by professionals to enhance their ability to implement the Performance Indicators for program evaluation purposes.

### *Training and Professional Development*

This last category of the Program Standards shares content with both the AHEAD Professional Standards and the AHEAD Code of Ethics. Performance Indicators related to professional development indicate that the OSD should have a staff development budget so that a personnel needs assessment can be conducted and orientation and staff development for disability personnel can be conducted. In addition, there is a specific Performance Indicator related to understanding and interpreting assessments and documentation. This may have been influenced by the intense scrutiny disability documentation is undergoing at this time. For example, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) now specifies that a Performance Summary, not a comprehensive psycho educational evaluation, will be provided to students graduating from high school. This will require new efforts to collaborate on transition documentation guidelines between secondary and postsecondary personnel, which will eventually require new Performance Indicators to be developed in this area (Shaw, Parker, & Madaus, 2005).

The final Standard (8.3) specifies that programs and related personnel must adhere to relevant codes of ethics. Given the challenging ethical and professional dilemmas faced by disability professionals on a regular basis, this formally puts them and their supervisors on notice that ethics are a necessary criterion of program efficacy. As noted, the “many challenging decisions regarding eligibility, service delivery and confidentiality must be dealt with in an ethical manner. In addition, this category has linked the trinity of standards (i.e., program, professional, ethics) into one comprehensive presentation of the role and responsibility of postsecondary disability services” (Shaw & Dukes, 2001, p. 88).

### **Conclusion**

The AHEAD Program Standards and Performance Indicators represent service components that are fundamental for ensuring equal educational access for postsecondary students with disabilities. They establish parameters for essential services that institutions of higher education must provide to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The Standards help postsecondary disability professionals evaluate the effectiveness of their programs and services and shift planning from a reactive (i.e., court ruling, administrative decision) to a proactive approach based on data that provide evidence-based services and supports. This will result in enhancing the status of both disability programs and personnel in the higher education disability community.

The Standards also provide consumers with a baseline regarding what to expect from postsecondary disability services, a format for evaluating potential colleges, and a clear expectation of what may or may not be available at specific institutions (i.e., special classes, preferential treatment). In addition, governmental agencies (e.g., Office for Civil Rights, state and provincial higher education agencies) now have a standard that can be used for program development. The Performance Indicators will be particularly helpful in directing judicial proceedings regarding appropriate practice. Thus, it is our hope that judges and other court officers will be able to apply these acknowledged “best practices” rather than making those determinations without input from experts in the field.

These Program Standards and Performance Indicators, in conjunction with the previously developed Professional Standards (Shaw et al., 1997) and Code of Ethics (Price, 1997), give the field a firm professional base for what it should do, and informs personnel who they should be and how they should act. Postsecondary disability personnel are encouraged to compare their policies and procedures to these Performance Indicators by implementing a formal needs assessment and then developing a process, budget, and timeline for program and staff development.

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