STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, students with disabilities report one or more of the following conditions: a specific learning disability, a visual impairment, hearing loss, deafness, a speech impairment, an orthopedic impairment, or a health impairment. Research has found that students with disabilities, registered or not, are an increasing subpopulation at postsecondary institutions. In 2012, approximately 11% of all enrolled undergraduate students reported having a disability. In the same year, 30% of full-time undergraduate students reported having a disability and 8% of part-time undergraduate students reported having a disability.

Although students with disabilities in higher education are protected by state, federal, and local laws which prohibit discrimination and mandate access to appropriate services and resources, postsecondary institutions still face challenges in supporting this population.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- An increasing number of students with disabilities pursued higher education in academic year 2011–2012.
  - 11% of all enrolled undergraduates reported having a disability.
  - 21% of undergraduates who identified as a veteran reported having a disability.
  - 16% of undergraduates ages 30 and older, 11% of undergraduates ages 24 to 29, and 9% of undergraduates ages 15 to 23 reported having a disability.
  - 8% of Asian students, 10% of Hispanic students, 11% of White students, 12% of African-American students 14% of Native American students, and 15% of Pacific Islander students reported having a disability.

ENROLLMENT

- During the 2008–2009 academic year, 88% of postsecondary institutions reported that they enrolled students with disabilities.
  - 79% of institutions enrolled students with an attention deficit disorder (ADD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); 76% enrolled students with a mobility limitations or orthopedic impairments; and 76% enrolled students with a mental illness, psychological, or psychiatric condition.
  - 11% of all enrolled undergraduates reported having a disability.
  - In 2012, 44% of undergraduate students with a disability attended a 4-year institution.
  - In 2012, 46% of undergraduates with a disability attended a 2-year institution.
CHALLENGES

According to a report by the Government Accountability Office in 2009, challenges faced by postsecondary institutions in serving students with disabilities include:

- Lack of resources and services to accommodate a broad range of students with disabilities;
- Lack of awareness and experience among faculty members regarding legal requirements and best practices in supporting students with disabilities; and
- Students with disabilities who were unaware of their rights, and the responsibility of their institutions to accommodate them;
- Student awareness of the accommodations and services available to them at their institution.

SOURCES


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