

PEC Newslinks

September
2005

Students in Transition : What's the Next Step?

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PEC Virginia

The transition from high school to the postsecondary educational environment is a challenge for any student. There are new places, new faces, and whole new ways of doing things. Not only that, but transitioning students suddenly find they must advocate for themselves instead of having programs and services planned for them. They will be expected to shoulder new responsibilities, new tasks, and face new situations.

Students who plan to live away from home for the first time may not be aware of independent living skills needed to insure success. New challenges in and out of the classroom may be quite demanding. Students are facing many crucial questions. How do I decide on my career goal? How do I choose the right college? How do I apply to college? What type of accommodations do I need? How do I get accommodation services? How will it be different from high school?

For students who are deaf or hard of hearing, the challenges are even greater. The reasons for this are complex, but it is enough to say that students may not have had as much exposure to a generalized knowledge of society. Appropriate counseling addressed to specific issues can overcome this knowledge gap to a large degree.

The first step in the process is for the student to determine his/her wants and needs. To accomplish this, the student must go through a process of self analysis.

Numerous methods are available which will help the student focus on specific fields. Interest inventory tests, vocational education, and aptitude tests are available through school counselors, vocational rehabilitation (VR), or from private testing agencies or psychologists.

The second step is to understand the nature of work in possible careers. This information can be found in a variety of ways. Any library has books (such as the Dictionary of Occupational Titles or DOT) which list jobs and describe what each job entails, along with the requirements for entering that field. Career and job fairs are good sources of information. They give the student an opportunity to meet prospective employers, discuss possibilities, and ask questions face to face. With some basic information in hand, the student can then make appointments for on-site visits. Visits to real work sites allow the student to ask workers who do the type of work being considered questions about the various jobs.

Decisions as important as choosing a career should not be made without consultation. Who should the student consult? A good place to begin is with the student's high school counselors and teachers. Vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors often have the most up-to-date information, as well as being able to guide a student in the proper direction. And, of course, the student's own parents and family are good sources of opinion, guidance, and information.

Choosing a college is a job in itself, and it's not accomplished overnight. Research into colleges needs to begin 2-3 years before high school graduation. If the student has determined a preferred career, college choice must start with finding colleges that offer curriculum tailored to that career. High school and college libraries usually have numerous catalogs from colleges both nearby and far from home. Browsing through these catalogs can give the student a general idea about a particular institution and can quickly identify schools of-

(See *What's the Next Step*, continued on page 2)

The Postsecondary Education Consortium serves the Southern region of the United States, and is a consortium of state outreach and technical assistance centers which are housed at postsecondary programs serving students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The mission of the PEC is to enhance learning environments that empower these individuals. PEC promotes quality programs and services through innovative practices and outreach

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PEPNet Conference Roots
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fering the student's preferred major. College and Career Programs for Deaf Students, a joint publication of Gallaudet University and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, can be a valuable resource in selecting a college.

There are many questions that must be considered before a college is selected. Does the college have a program and services for students who are deaf and hard of hearing? If so, when was the program established? Do they already have interpreters, free tutors, notetakers, and assistive devices? How are the notetakers and tutors selected? Are they trained? Are interpreters state-screened or nationally certified? How many deaf students are currently enrolled at the college? Does the college have deaf students every year or only once in a while? How

many deaf students have attended the college in the past? How did they like the college and the services it provided to them? What are the entrance requirements and costs of attending?

All of these questions should be asked to the college's representative or counselor when the student goes to visit the campus. If the college doesn't have a program for deaf students but the college is where the student wants to go, the student may have the additional burden of educating the college about needs and accommodations. The student may need to seek out qualified support services such as interpreters, tutors, and notetakers. Good advocacy skills on the part of the student will ensure that qualified services are sought and obtained.

Transitioning to Postsecondary Education? Do You Know Your Rights and Responsibilities?

U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Washington, D.C.

Excerpted with permission: U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. Revised May 2005.

More and more high school students with disabilities are planning to continue their education in postsecondary schools, including vocational and career schools, two- and four-year colleges, and universities. Students with a disability, will need to be well informed about their rights and responsibilities as well as the responsibilities that postsecondary schools have toward students. Being well informed will help ensure a full opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the postsecondary education experience without confusion or delay.

The Office of Civil Rights enforces Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Title II), which prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability. Practically every school district and postsecondary school in the United States is subject to one or both of these laws which have similar requirements.

Because both school districts and postsecondary schools must comply with these laws, students and parents might believe that postsecondary schools and school districts have the same responsibilities. This is not true; the responsibilities of postsecondary schools are significantly different from those of school districts.

Moreover, a postsecondary student has responsibilities in situations where a high school student does not. OCR strongly encourages every student to know his or her responsibili-

ties and those of postsecondary schools under Section 504 and Title II. Doing so will improve opportunities to succeed as students enter postsecondary education.

The following questions and answers provide specific information to help achieve success.

As a student with a disability leaving high school and entering postsecondary education, will I see differences in my rights and how they are addressed?

Yes. Section 504 and Title II protect elementary, secondary and postsecondary students from discrimination. Nevertheless, several of the requirements that apply through high school are different from the requirements that apply beyond high school. For instance, Section 504 requires a school district to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to each child with a disability in the district's jurisdiction. Whatever the disability, a school district must identify an individual's education needs and provide any regular or special education and related aids and services necessary to meet those needs as well as it is meeting the needs of students without disabilities.

Unlike your high school, your postsecondary school is not required to provide FAPE. Rather, your postsecondary school is required to provide appropriate academic adjustments as necessary to ensure that it does not discriminate on the basis of disability. In addition, if

your postsecondary school provides housing to nondisabled students, it must provide comparable, convenient and accessible housing to students with disabilities at the same cost.

May a postsecondary school deny my admission because I have a disability?

No. If you meet the essential requirements for admission, a postsecondary school may not deny your admission simply because you have a disability.

Do I have to inform a postsecondary school that I have a disability?

No. However, if you want the school to provide an academic adjustment, you must identify yourself as having a disability. Likewise, you should let the school know about your disability if you want to ensure that you are assigned to accessible facilities. In any event, your disclosure of a disability is always voluntary.

What academic adjustments must a postsecondary school provide?

The appropriate academic adjustment must be determined based on your disability and individual needs. Academic adjustments may include auxiliary aids and modifications to academic requirements as are necessary to ensure equal educational opportunity. Examples of such adjustments are arranging for priority registration; reducing a course load; substituting one course for another; providing note takers, recording devices, sign language interpreters, extended time for testing and, if telephones are provided in dorm rooms, a TTY in your dorm room; and equipping school computers with screen-reading, voice recognition or other adaptive software or hardware.

In providing an academic adjustment, your postsecondary school is not required to lower or effect substantial modifications to essential requirements. For example, although your school may be required to provide extended testing time, it is not required to change the substantive content of the test. In addition, your postsecondary school does not have to make modifications that would fundamentally alter the nature of a service, program or activity or would result in undue financial or administrative burdens. Finally, your postsecondary school does not have to provide personal attendants, individually prescribed devices, readers for personal use or study, or other devices or services of a personal nature, such as tutoring and typing.

If I want an academic adjustment, what must I do?

You must inform the school that you have a disability and need an academic adjustment. Unlike your school district, your postsecondary

school is not required to identify you as having a disability or assess your needs.

Your postsecondary school may require you to follow reasonable procedures to request an academic adjustment. You are responsible for knowing and following these procedures. Postsecondary schools usually include, in their publications providing general information, information on the procedures and contacts for requesting an academic adjustment. Such publications include recruitment materials, catalogs and student handbooks, and are often available on school Web sites. Many schools also have staff whose purpose is to assist students with disabilities. If you are unable to locate the procedures, ask a school official, such as an admissions officer or counselor.

When should I request an academic adjustment?

Although you may request an academic adjustment from your postsecondary school at any time, you should request it as early as possible. Some academic adjustments may take more time to provide than others. You should follow your school's procedures to ensure that your school has enough time to review your request and provide an appropriate academic adjustment.

Do I have to prove that I have a disability to obtain an academic adjustment?

Generally, yes. Your school probably will require you to provide documentation that shows you have a current disability and need an academic adjustment.

What documentation should I provide?

Schools may set reasonable standards for documentation. Some schools require more documentation than others. They may require you to provide documentation prepared by an appropriate professional, such as a medical doctor, psychologist or other qualified diagnostician. The required documentation may include one or more of the following: a diagnosis of your current disability; the date of the diagnosis; how the diagnosis was reached; the credentials of the professional; how your disability affects a major life activity; and how the disability affects your academic performance. The documentation should provide enough information for you and your school to decide what is an appropriate academic adjustment.

Although an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 plan, if you have one, may help identify services that have been effective for you, it generally is not sufficient documentation. This is because postsecond-

(See: Rights and responsibilities continued on page 4.)

To receive more information about the civil rights of students with disabilities in education institutions, contact:

Customer Service Team
Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Education
Washington, D.C.
20202-1100

Phone:
1-800-421-3481

TDD:
1- 877-521-2172

Email:
ocr@ed.gov

Web site:
www.ed.gov/ocr

(Rights and responsibilities continued from page 3.)

Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education: Know Your Rights and Responsibilities published by and available from the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Washington, D.C., 2005. This publication is available in its entirety at www.ed.gov/ocr/transition.html.

“Putting is like wisdom...partly a natural gift and partly the accumulation of experience.”

—Arnold Palmer



ary education presents different demands than high school education, and what you need to meet these new demands may be different. Also in some cases, the nature of a disability may change.

If the documentation that you have does not meet the postsecondary school's requirements, a school official must tell you in a timely manner what additional documentation you need to provide. You may need a new evaluation in order to provide the required documentation.

Once the school has received the necessary documentation from me, what should I expect?

The school will review your request in light of the essential requirements for the relevant program to help determine an appropriate academic adjustment. It is important to remember that the school is not required to lower or waive essential requirements. If you have requested a specific academic adjustment, the school may offer that academic adjustment or an alternative one if the alternative also would be effective. The school may also conduct its own evaluation of your disability and needs at its own expense.

You should expect your school to work with you in an interactive process to identify an appropriate academic adjustment. Unlike the experience you may have had in high school,

however, do not expect your postsecondary school to invite your parents to participate in the process or to develop an IEP for you.

What if the academic adjustment we identified is not working?

Let the school know as soon as you become aware that the results are not what you expected. It may be too late to correct the problem if you wait until the course or activity is completed. You and your school should work together to resolve the problem.

May a postsecondary school charge me for providing an academic adjustment?

No. Furthermore, it may not charge students with disabilities more for participating in its programs or activities than it charges students who do not have disabilities.

Students with disabilities who know their rights and responsibilities are much better equipped to succeed in postsecondary school. We encourage you to work with the staff at your school because they, too, want you to succeed. Seek the support of family, friends and fellow students, including those with disabilities. Know your talents and capitalize on them, and believe in yourself as you embrace new challenges in your education.

PEC Director Don Ashmore Takes a Swing at Retirement

Whenever I see or hear or read anything about golf, I think of Don Ashmore. Not only is he an avid (and skilled!) golfer, he also likes to include metaphors about golfing into everyday life and educational activities. Golf is truly a passion for him. When I read this quote from Arnold Palmer, it made a lot of sense to me – maybe some of Don's philosophy is starting to rub off on me after all the years we've worked together! Don is definitely someone who has used his natural abilities along with the accumulation of experiences to position himself as a respected resource and leader within our community.

On May 31, 2005 our colleague Don Ashmore retired from the University of Tennessee where he served as the Director of the Postsecondary Education Consortium (PEC) since 1999. Since he joined the project in 1983, Don worked closely with Bill Woodrick, former PEC Director, in building the capacity of PEC as well as establishing and supporting other projects, including the UT Center on Deafness. When Don retired, he was also the Director of the Center on Deafness and the principal investiga-

tor for several other projects related to deafness, education, interpreting, and rehabilitation.

Don's legacy, however, is greater than the projects within the university. As a determined professional, he worked hard to develop networks between and among various agencies and organizations. Most notably, he worked closely with the state coordinators for deaf services from vocational rehabilitation offices across the southern region as they met to figure out ways to address issues and concerns. He urged the incorporation of SERID. As one of the PEPNet regional center directors, he strived to improve access in higher education for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Don always reminded us to look at “the big picture” and challenged us to use as many tools from our professional tool box as possible.

Thank you, Don, for all of your contributions over the years. We will miss you, and we wish you a relaxing, enjoyable retirement with plenty of blue skies and smooth putting greens.

Marcia Kolvitz, Ph.D., Director
Postsecondary Education Consortium

Project Access: Its a Class Act. Helping Teachers to Learn from Students.

Karen M. Black

“Slow down!” That’s what a deaf RIT student recently told college professors attending a workshop designed to teach them how to modify their techniques for the deaf students in their predominantly hearing classrooms.

Erin Vlahos, a fifth-year Math major, was eager to provide first-hand experience to this group of professors from universities and colleges throughout the northeastern United States.

“Listening to the students gave the professors a chance to hear what we’ve struggled with throughout our lives, and it also helped them better understand how to improve,” she explains. Like slowing down lectures and PowerPoint® presentations.

“Pause between new subjects. Take a sip of water or coffee,” Vlahos suggests. “When you do that, it gives everyone a chance to catch up and absorb the material, and it gives interpreters and deaf students a chance to catch up.”

“And easy on the laser pointer,” she adds. “Don’t try to play cat and mouse chase....hold the pointer still for a few more seconds so that everyone can see what and where you are pointing.”

The workshop was part of Project Access, a grant program funded by the U.S. Department of Education that NTID is leading to help professors incorporate some basic strategies to foster better learning for mainstreamed deaf and hard-of-hearing college students. Project Access implements the principles of Universal Design, a concept that recommends tactics to enhance the learning potential of all students.

NTID faculty members Susan Foster, Gary Long and Rosemary Saur have led the efforts to conduct four workshops for 60 faculty and other professionals from across the country, as well as to establish a resource Web site, called Class Act.

Lori Hutchison, supervisor of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Unit of the Hiram G. Andrews Center (HGAC) at the Commonwealth Technical Institute in Pennsylvania, sent three faculty members to the workshops, which included a train-the trainer segment.

“For me, it was a dream come true to have Project Access provide in-depth training to our instructors so that they, in turn, could provide

the same to all the faculty of HGAC,” she says. “The firsthand experience that these instructors were able to share was invaluable, and in one way or other, they continue to be a resource for their colleagues. Having fellow instructors present this material was very effective because they were able to share their challenges and successes.”

“I have been using specific strategies I learned at the Project Access workshop like pacing, line of sight, and working with the interpreter,” says Lance Marks, a Vocational Rehabilitation instructor with HGAC. “And the Class Act Web site is an excellent resource for any instructor.”

Another RIT/NTID student, Biochemistry major Annemarie Ross, also presented at the workshop, to explain some of the differences between deaf and hearing students.

“Some of us have to make more of an effort to maintain the same skill level as others, simply because of our hearing loss,” she explains. “Grades can suffer due to communication barriers in the system, and many of these can be fixed by working with faculty members who strive to improve their skills.”

Attendee Mandi Lowstetter, deaf education instructor, also at HGAC, thought having the students give their perspective was beneficial to everyone.

“I have begun asking my own students what they would tell their teachers,” she says. “Most of it was identical to the Students’ Top Ten List for Teachers on the Class Act Web site. But the most beneficial piece of information I received is to not be afraid to use the Universal Design approach to teaching, because it just might benefit more students than the student I intend to assist,” she adds.

In addition to the Top Ten list, professors who visit the Class Act Web site (www.rit.edu/classact) will find ready-to-use classroom handouts, a place to network and share information, and videotaped faculty and student input. Organized into teaching, communication, support services and environment categories, professors may use the site for strategies and tips to address the challenges they face, and ultimately foster better learning for deaf, hard-of-hearing and hearing students.

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NTID Focus,
Fall/Winter 2004,
p. 14.

Do Parents Transition Too? Workshops Help Parents Understand the Process.

Lisa Rimmell

Knoxville Center of the Deaf

Deaf and hard-of-hearing students who decide to attend a postsecondary institution must make many decisions before leaving the secondary school environment. A transition plan must be established for these students to help ensure their postsecondary success. Parents play a critical role in the development of transition plans; however, they often are unprepared to assume this role, and may not have the information and tools they need to assist their child through the transition phase.

Parents must guide their son or daughter through the experience of deciding where to live, establishing financial independence, and achieving goals for the future. The time of transition is intimidating for most students; but for students who are deaf and hard of hearing, the nature of their disability presents unique challenges to the transition process. Language and communication may cause difficulties, and deficits in the areas of life skills, role expectations, and work ethic can complicate transition efforts.

Parents often want to participate fully in the transition process, but they may lack the information and tools necessary to do so. Students who are deaf or hard of hearing must receive guidance from parents during the transition process in order to achieve success in a postsecondary environment. With proper guidance and training, parents will be equipped to (a) provide information regarding postsecondary education including legislation relevant to transition, (b) develop skills to help students choose an appropriate postsecondary institution, (c) acquire tools for preparing students for college success, and (d) establish appropriate boundaries to foster student independence.

Transition planning must address both short and long-term goals. Students and parents work in conjunction with professionals such as teachers and counselors to develop transition plans. Such extensive planning is necessary, since many students with disabilities are at a significant disadvantage when compared to their peers. According to the results of the National Longitudinal Transition Study released in 1993 (Edmonson & Cain, 2002), students with disabilities were more likely than students without disabilities to experience poverty, and to become unemployed or remain underemployed. Additionally, students who have a disability have

fewer opportunities to live independently and may not be fully integrated into their community. Transition planning offers a student the opportunity to explore postsecondary options and can impact on future employability. Equal participation by students and parents is necessary to ensure the success of the transition process.

Parents should allow students to make decisions during transition planning meetings and should reinforce students' decision-making skills and parents must recognize that students who are deaf and hard of hearing face unique challenges during the transition process; challenges including communication and language issues, lower academic achievement levels, struggles related to literacy skills, and poor self-advocacy skills (Garay, 2002). Comparisons with hearing peers often cause a student who is deaf or hard of hearing to experience anxiety and stress. Problems with role expectations, work ethic, life skills, and an uneducated public may make success more difficult for students who are deaf and hard-of-hearing. Communication barriers may make such skills as budgeting, paying bills, and using ATM machines problematic. These skills often are learned through incidental learning, and may be overlooked by parents of deaf and hard-of-hearing children (Starnes, 2001). Students who have a disability might not be taught how to advocate for accommodations, which may limit their opportunity to participate in empowering experiences (Powers et al., 2001). Parents may have low expectations for student success or may be unaware of options and accommodations available.

The time of transition is significant for both parents and students, but schools often do not provide assistance for families during the transition process. Parents often are unaware of a transition plan, or their legal rights regarding their involvement in the transition planning process. Parents may depend on teachers or counselors to make decisions during the transition process. Consequently, this leads to low parental participation in the transition planning process (Gallivan-Fenlon, 1994). Parents must be taught how to work appropriately with teachers and counselors, since they tend to become less involved in their child's education the older s/he becomes. Additionally, parents of students who are deaf and hard of hearing may

be accustomed to abdicating decision-making to school professionals, and they may not have the appropriate knowledge of their child's skills and abilities (Starnes, 2001).

Parents who are involved in the transition process often have many concerns that professionals can help address. Some parents may need training to help foster self-determination skills in their children. An emphasis on self-determination benefits both the student and the parent as the student learns to transition to an adult role. As students develop self-determination skills and learn to advocate for themselves, traditional parent-child roles will need to be redefined. This role shift may be difficult for the parents. Training can facilitate a smoother transition and help parents and students develop skills for coping with these types of role shifts (Field, 1996). Parents should be taught how to guide deaf and hard-of-hearing students instead of making all of the decisions for them. If parents do not allow students to make decisions, students may not develop the skills necessary for success in the postsecondary environment. The goal of parent training is to teach them how to support their students advocating for their own services in the postsecondary arena.

Parents also must assist deaf and hard-of-hearing students in learning to request accommodations at the postsecondary institution of their choice. The procedure for obtaining support services is dramatically different upon exiting the secondary school environment. The parents and the student may be frightened at the prospect of changing from a structured system where services are provided, to one where the student must now advocate for him or herself and request services.

Upon entering a postsecondary institution, students must demonstrate eligibility for services and accept responsibility for requesting them (Edmondson & Cain, 2002). When visiting the support services office or going on a college interview, parents frequently ask the questions on behalf of the student rather than encouraging the student to do so. Training during the transition period can help parents understand the student's need to assume these responsibilities. At the postsecondary level, students must inform the appropriate personnel of their disability, provide documentation, and propose appropriate accommodations that will help them succeed in their programs of study (Stodden, 2001). Parents must be made aware of policies and procedures when guiding their deaf or hard-of-hearing student in the choice of postsecondary training, and should support their student in transitioning to the independence required for their ultimate success.

In response to the need for parental training, four workshops have been developed to address concerns and needs during student transition. The first three workshops have been designed specifically for parents of deaf and hard of hearing students. The fourth workshop facilitates parent/student interaction and discussion. Ideally, this workshop would be taught to both parents and students, but it can be modified for use with parent-only groups. Each workshop is preceded by a facilitator's instruction sheet that contains information needed to lead the session. For more information about this project, parent training workshops, or the training manual, contact Lisa Rimmell at <lrimmell@yahoo.com>.

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PEPNet Proudly Announces the 2006 Biennial Conference: Roots & Wings

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

**Hyatt Regency
Louisville, Kentucky**

April 5-8, 2006

We hope you will join us in Kentucky, April 5-8, 2006, for the PEPNet Biennial Conference: Roots & Wings. The PEPNet conference offers an opportunity to bring a variety of professionals together including administrators, counselors, interpreters, tutors, service providers and staff and faculty members from developmental studies as well as college-level courses. Interested secondary-level faculty and staff and adult service providers from rehabilitation agencies and centers for independent living may also participate. At the biennial conference, we strive to address issues and concerns expressed by direct-service personnel, and we expect informative concurrent

sessions designed to promote new strategies in service delivery. The upcoming conference theme, Roots & Wings, emphasizes the strong history our conference participants have in providing effective services to students who are deaf or hard of hearing, and also their creativity in developing new strategies and resources to address the needs of a rapidly changing population of students. Themes will include topics in transition, teaching English to students who are deaf and hard of hearing, innovative practices and service models, hot topics sessions, successful curriculums, technology, communication skills, efficient service delivery, and many other areas of interest.



Funded by the Postsecondary Education Consortium at The University of Tennessee College of Education, Center on Deafness through an agreement with the U.S. Department of Education, Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Grant Number H324A010003.

The University of Tennessee is an EEO/AA/Title VI/ Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA institution in the provision of its education and employment programs and services.
PA# RO1-1810-011-001-04.

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