

Academic Advisors' Experiences and Needs Working with Students with Disabilities: A Case of Chiang Mai University

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Abstract

The purposes of this research study were to examine 1) advisors' experiences and needs working with students with disabilities, including awareness of disability issues, individuals' comfort levels when dealing with various types of disabilities, concerns about students' accessibility of advisement services, training on disability laws and service provisions, secrets to advisors' success, and sensitive issues, and 2) students' learning challenges; relationships with advisors, professors, and friends; managing finances; health issues; and anxiety. The research instruments included 1) a questionnaire for advisors and 2) an open-ended questionnaire for students with disabilities, and 3) focus group forms for advisors and for students with disabilities. Data was collected and analyzed using frequency, percentage, and interpretative analysis. Questionnaires were distributed to 66 academic advisors, and 62 students with disabilities at 13 faculties. The return rates were 74.2% (n=49) from advisors and 90.3% (n=56) from students. The results showed that only 20.4% (n=10) of the advisors had taken a college course dealing with disabilities, while 89.7% (n=44) had never received training on the Education for Persons with Disabilities Act (2008) or relevant laws. Some advisors also reported knowledge of students' disclosures of thoughts about suicide and self-harm. Most students reported having some difficulty in learning, making adjustments, accessing transportation, and having limited access to learning materials. The results suggested that improved advisor-student communication experience is vital in order to achieve and foster a better relationship which would ultimately lead to students' learning success.

Keywords: Academic Advisors, College Students with Special Needs, Higher Education

Introduction

Implementation of policies supporting special education has resulted in tremendous increase of the number of college students with disabilities in some of the developed countries, such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and the United States of America in the past two decades (The National Educational Association of Disabled Students, 2018; Kimball, Vaccaro, & Vargas, 2016; Kilpatrick et al., 2017; Hong, 2015; Griffiths, Worth, Scullard, & Gilbert,

2010). Special Education in Thailand has also received considerable attention and focus in the past 10 years. This is due to the heightened awareness of advocates and educators of the extensive and serious nature of the problem. Also, the laws, namely, the National Education Act of 1999 and the authorization of the Education Provision for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2008 (Ratchakitcha, 2019a,b) have all helped by mandating educational institutions to provide educational opportunities for individual students with disabilities. The

Office of the Higher Education Commission (2018) has reported that the number of students with disabilities attending four-year colleges and universities across the country has tripled from 1,048 students in 2014 to 3,075 in 2017. To effectively accommodate and better serve these students, especially in the university system, Yamnoon, former Secretary-General of the Higher Education Commission, (2010) has outlined four strategies to be used as guidelines for all higher education institutions in Thailand regarding students with disabilities. They include making higher education accessible, providing disability support services, conducting research and development relevant to individuals with disabilities, and preparing students for career opportunities after graduation. These four strategies can be best explained by the Transition Theory Framework. Chickering & Schlossberg (2001) indicate that this framework helps us to understand the transitional experiences of college and to explain the transition process of college students as: “moving in,” “moving through,” and “moving out.” Through this theoretical framework, a transition is defined as “any event that results in a change in relationships, routines, assumptions, or roles with the setting of self, work, family, health and/or economics” (Schlossberg & Goodman, 2005). The framework helps to assess the various coping strategies that students use to navigate their transitions into, moving through, and out of the university environment. The first stage in any transition can be considered as either moving in or moving out. As individuals move into a new situation, such as a new educational environment, “they need to become familiar with the rules, regulations, norms, and expectations of the new system” (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). According to Gamez (2017), once one learns the ropes of balancing their new activities with other parts of their lives, then they have transitioned into the “moving through” period. When an individual heads into the “moving out” phase, these experiences can be seen as endings.

In this connection, students with or without disabilities might have gone through similar transitions in other educational settings. Brinckerhoff, McGuire, & Shaw (2002) indicated that transition from schools into higher education

settings (moving in), presents a new set of challenges. Students are expected to function autonomously, meet higher academic standards, maintain a balance between personal freedom and obligations, glean vast amounts of information from various sources and, generally, function independently. In addition, Hong, Ivy, Gonzalez, & Ehrensberger, (2007) stated that the transition from high school to college can be a challenging experience for many students, but perhaps more so for those with any form of disability. With this enormous adjustment, the degree of success that students with disabilities experience for effectively “moving through” may be mainly predicated by the quality of academic advisement and quality of support services (Tee & Cowen, 2012; Hong, 2015; Gravel, 2012; Houman & Stapley, 2013; Kilpatrick et al., 2017; Young-Jones, Burt, Dixon, & Hawthorne, 2013; D’Alessio & Banerjee, 2016).

Academic advisement is universally available in higher education settings. Preece et al. (2007) stated that academic advisors have perhaps become the first and most frequently sort-after service providers, of whom students with disabilities have come to depend on and learn effective ways to manage their needs. They are also in the best position to assist students to receive the accommodations they need. Therefore, advisors need to be prepared to serve students with disabilities or refer them to appropriate service providers. However, many academic advisors, whose primary roles do not specifically include working with students with disabilities, may not be effectively prepared for these challenging tasks. Hence, to understand academic advisors’ experiences and needs, working with students with disabilities might be the first step in helping them to better serve students with disabilities. Currently, there is no research study conducted in Thailand to examine advisors’ experiences and needs while working with or supporting students with disabilities. Therefore, this study was undertaken to examine Chiang Mai University’s (CMU’s) academic advisors’ experiences and needs while working with students with disabilities.

Chiang Mai University was founded in January 1964, under a Royal Charter granted by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej. It is both the first provincial and largest public university in the northern region, with 21 faculties and three colleges (Chiang Mai University, 2019). Tongsookdee & Chaichompu (2016, 2017) reported that CMU has been actively supporting students with disabilities through the Special Education Program and the Center for Special Education Research and Services within the Faculty of Education from 2004-2008, and currently, through the CMU Disability Support Services (CMU-DSS) within the Student Development Division. The Disability Support Service, Chiang Mai University (2018) reported that there were five students with disabilities in 2005, and 62 students in 2017 enrolled in 12 faculties and one college. These undergraduate students were diagnosed with various disabilities which can be grouped as five categories from most to least, i.e., physical impairments (n=28), hearing impairments (n=15), visual impairments (n=14), autism spectrum disorders (n=4), and learning disabilities (n=1). Each student with disabilities, like their peers without disabilities in the same major, has an assigned academic advisor to help her or him in as many ways as possible to succeed in their learning experiences, including making the student feel welcomed to the university's learning environment.

In general, The Office of Educational Quality Development (OEQD, 2018) at Chiang Mai University frequently provides academic advisors with an up-to-date guideline manual. In the guideline manual, the CMU-OEQD (2018) indicated that, besides advisors' job descriptions, i.e., teaching, research, and services, they are also required to provide academic advising as an additional function. Academic advising provided by faculty members as part of their assigned roles and duties include advising their students on academic curriculum matters and career opportunities related to a specific major, mentoring, accessing various related services, engaging in students' activities that are vital

to student success and satisfaction from the time of enrollment (moving in) to the time of graduation (moving out). Unfortunately, there is insufficient information regarding advising students with disabilities in CMU's guideline manual for academic advisors. In this regard, based on information gleaned from research studies in literature and the extensive work of Preece et al. (2007) on advisement services for people with disabilities, the researcher of this study developed and administered a questionnaire to academic advisors of students with disabilities. The questionnaire sort to obtain information from advisors and students with the following two inter-linked research questions: 1) what were advisors' experiences and needs working with students with disabilities? 2) What were the learning challenges encountered by students with disabilities? The findings of this research would be beneficial to CMU's efforts to develop a guideline manual for CMU academic advisors in the near future.

Objectives

The purposes of this research study were to examine 1) academic advisors' experiences and needs working with students with disabilities, including awareness of disability issues, individuals' comfort levels when dealing with various types of disabilities, concerns about students' accessibility of advisement services, training on disability laws and service provisions, secrets to advisors' success, and other sensitive issues, and 2) students' learning challenges; relationships with advisors, professors, and friends; managing finances; health issues; and psychological issues.

Methods

The questionnaires were distributed to both current and past academic advisors of students with disabilities and current students with disabilities at 12 faculties and one college. The researcher contacted the CMU-DSS Office and formally requested names and

campus mailing addresses for all students with disabilities and their respective academic advisors. The study subjects were 66 academic advisors and 62 students with disabilities respectively. The research instruments included 1) a 31- item questionnaire for advisors; the response format was as follows: yes or no, multiple-choice, and check all that apply, 2) an open-ended questionnaire for students with disabilities, and 3) focus group forms with two different sets of questions for advisors and students with disabilities. Data was collected from March 5 to May 30, 2019, and analyzed using frequency, percentage, and interpretative analysis.

Results

Of all the questionnaires distributed to 66 current and past academic advisors and 62 students with disabilities, only those duly completed were used in the study. Return rates were 74% from advisors and 90% from students. About 86%, 6%, and 8% of participating advisors were from the Humanities and Social Sciences, Sciences and Technologies, and Health Sciences faculties, respectively. The majority of advisors (57%) were female; 41% and 39% were aged 40–49 years and 50–59 years, respectively. About 51% possessed a Ph.D., while 60% and 45% had been teaching and advising students for more than 15 years, respectively. But a majority of them (50%) had advised students with disabilities for less than three years. Only 4% of academic advisors themselves had some type of disability. The number of advisees with and without disabilities ranged from none – 94, with a mean of 23.8

More specifically, 47% of the advisors had less than 20 advisees, while 43% of them had between 21–40 advisees all without disabilities. In contrast, about 87% of advisors currently had only one advisee with disabilities. About 77%, 4%, and 20% of participating students with disabilities were from the Humanities and Social Sciences, Sciences and Technologies, and Health Sciences faculties, respectively.

About 66% were female. About 27% of the students were sophomores, 19% were juniors, and 25% were seniors. Regarding the types of disabilities, about 45% of the respondents were in the physical impairments category, while about 46% were in both the hearing and visual impairments categories. Four students fell within the autism spectrum disorders category and one was in the learning disability category. Regarding advisors' level of knowledge and training skills in dealing with students with disabilities, the findings showed that less than 20% of advisors had taken a college course on disabilities, 22% had received training relevant to special education, and only 6% had had training on special education laws. Cumulatively, advisors had received some form of training in five of the nine classifications of disabilities that were studied. They included visual, hearing, physical impairments, autism, and learning disabilities. Even though advisors typically saw very few students with disabilities, 77% of them stated that they provided direct and indirect accommodations which included having informal talks with other classmates of the advisees with disabilities (56%), consulting with their respective professors (54%), providing them time on test extension (37%), and arranging their participation in the buddy system (34%) (Table 1).

Table 1: Number of Advisors and Ways They Provide Accommodations to Students with Disabilities

Advisors and Accommodations	N	%
Advisors providing accommodations	37	77.1
Advisors not providing accommodations	11	22.9
Ways of Providing Various Accommodations		
1. Having informal talk with other classmates of students with disabilities	23	56.1
2. Consulting with other lecturers/colleagues	22	53.7
3. Extending time on tests	15	36.6
4. Arranging buddy system	14	34.1
5. Providing note-takers	8	19.5
6. Using computer for tests	8	19.5
7. Having formal and informal talks to parents from time to time	7	17.1
8. Selecting appropriate time for class sessions	7	17.1
9. Adjusting the number of classes	6	14.6
10. Taking tests in separate setting	6	14.6
11. Providing Braille materials	5	12.2
12. Having informal talks with students' roommates	5	12.2
13. Contacting physicians	5	12.2
14. Having informal talks with dormitory manager	4	9.8
15. Having oral tests instead of writing	3	7.3
16. Contacting clinical psychologists	3	7.3
17. Providing DAISY	2	4.9
18. Others (Teaching materials, Language, Places, and Tutoring suitable for students with disabilities)	9	2.2

As far as potential barriers to effectively serve students with disabilities were concerned, 41% of the advisors reported lack of physical slope to potentiate students' access to buildings, while 60% reported an inadequate number of DSS staff available for consultations. Additional inadequacies preventing advisors from serving

students with disabilities more effectively were: lack of experience and self-confidence by 46%, inadequate knowledge and skills by 44%, and the inability to identify students at risk and to assist them properly by 48%, respectively. Also, about 44% of the advisors addressed that students with disabilities rarely asked for appointments (Table 2).

Table 2: Barriers to Serving Students with Disabilities

Barriers	N	%
Physical Environment Barriers		
1. Lack of physical slope	20	40.8
2. No lift	18	36.7
3. Inappropriate walkways from one building to another	17	34.7
4. Inappropriate space in toilets for wheelchair use	14	28.6

Barriers	N	%
5. No assistive technology	12	24.5
6. Lack of ramps in buildings	8	16.3
7. Inappropriate lecture chairs	6	12.2
8. Inappropriate space for extra activities	2	4.1
Knowledge and Support Service Barriers		
1. Inadequate number of DSS staff and equipment	29	60.4
2. Lack of experience and self-confidence	22	45.8
3. Inadequate knowledge and skills	21	43.8
4. Unable to fully assist students with disabilities	17	35.4
Other Barriers to Serving Students with Disabilities		
1. Inability to identify students at risk	22	47.8
2. No appointment made by students	20	43.5
3. Heavy teaching load	15	32.6

Regarding advisors' working relationships with students with disabilities, an overwhelming majority of 85% reported them as warm relationships, 57% stated that they showed empathy, while 43% said that they owed their success of working with students with disabilities to the advice and assistance received from other colleagues who also worked with DSS staff. Relating to effective ways of improving the advisor's advisement skills, 55% of the respondents indicated that development of

manuals or guidelines on advising students with disabilities was needed, 49% asked for a universal design environment on campus, 47% of them reported making relevant information from DSS available online, 41% thought there was easy and fast-tracking of requested assistance from DSS office, and 31% were of the opinion that staff development training would be helpful. Only 6% of the respondents indicated that there was no need for any additional support to effectively provide advisement to students with disabilities (Table 3).

Table 3: Support Needs to Better Serve Students with Disabilities

Support Needs	N	%
1. Manual for academic advisors working with students with disabilities	27	55.1
2. Universal design environment on campus	24	49.0
3. Additional Information from DSS available online	23	46.9
4. Easy and fast-tracking of requested assistance from DSS	20	40.8
5. Staff development training on working with students with disabilities	15	30.6
6. More DSS staff	14	28.6
7. Increased budget	6	12.2
8. More sign language interpreters	5	10.2
9. No need for any additional support	3	6.1

The research findings also showed that 40% of advisors had dealt with a student without disabilities who had thought of committing suicide, while only 11% of them had encountered a student with disabilities who confided a similar thought. About 31% of advisors also reported that they have had students without disabilities who wanted to harm themselves, while only 6% of them reported of students with disabilities with similar tendencies. In so far as the respondents' level of confidence performing their advisory duties is concerned, 31% felt unsure of themselves when dealing with students without disabilities, while 35% felt unsure when helping students with disabilities. Some of the problems encountered within the university environment, by more than 89% of students with disabilities, included study-related challenges. These were: having poor study skills, executive skills, and time management skills; poor grades, feeling overwhelmed by busy class schedules and assignments, and being unable to meet the required academic standards; and having some anxiety attacks, especially during exams. Additional challenges included not having sufficient learning materials, e.g., large print reading materials for assignments; and being unable to maneuver through the physical environment, e.g., difficult walkways leading from one building to another, and insufficient university transportation, all of which negatively impacted their studies, social lives, and well-being while on campus. About 68% of the respondents reported health problems as major challenges while on campus. They included experiencing allergies, migraines, and physical tension symptoms, e.g., aches, pains, tense muscles, poor sleep, and frequent colds and infections. Approximately 63% of the respondents reported that the management of tuition related finances or financial support for college was also a major concern, since expenses for class activities, projects, and practicums were higher than their budgets could afford. Also, about 30% of the respondents indicated that developing good relationships with friends, professors, advisors, and administrative staff were difficult

hurdles to overcome on campus. The two issues that made it difficult to establish good relationships on campus were miscommunication and misunderstanding of each other. Also, about 25% of the respondents reported that ineffective management of family related matters was very challenging while they were on campus. They included such things as feeling lonely and homesick, as well as being concerned about parents' divorces, health, family income, and debt. Besides research findings from the questionnaires, the researcher collected data from two focus groups of seven advisors from six faculties, and six students with disabilities from five faculties. The participants addressed perceived problems with CMU's advising system for students with disabilities, and ways of improving it.

Overall, all students rated the effectiveness of the advisement system as good with a mean score of 7.2. They also agreed that advisors always kept the appointments they had scheduled with them, were good listeners, and provided them with useful advisement both on their education and life adjustments. Moreover, both advisors and students with disabilities agreed that poor communication was their main concern. Students, in particular, viewed any ineffective and insincere communication as having short and long-term negative impacts on them. One student from the School of Law said, "...Not having a one-on-one conversation with my advisor led her (advisor) to think that I was okay with my studies. In fact, I was terrified of my poor midterm exam scores, but I was afraid to ask for help." "... I often felt bad about bothering her..." another student added. This sentiment was echoed by another student who said, "... True, I did not want to dump my problems on my advisor." Great opportunities for developing effective communication are afforded to all parties working with students with disabilities during the individual service plan (ISP) meeting. At this meeting, parents, a student with disabilities, an advisor, and DSS staff usually meet for the first time to discuss and set a study plan and reasonable accommodations for the

individual student with disabilities. One student commented that “...After the meeting, the advisor seemed to have learned and understood more about my limitations and needs, he showed more interest in my learning, asked me general questions about my life, and even requested from one of my professors to extend test time for me...” Also, the advisors commented that they felt more comfortable and confident in advising students with disabilities after they had participated in the meeting and understood more about the individual student’s disabilities, limitations, needs, and effective ways to help her or him in both learning and life adjustments. In addition, students with disabilities requested more reasonable accommodations, especially appropriate transportation during the weekend to enable them to participate in various campus activities. On the other hand, the advisors mentioned two concerns they had; one about communication with DSS staff and the other about students’ self - determination. They recommended the enhancement of communication between them and the DSS personnel to discuss and agree on “how” and “how much” reasonable and realistic accommodations should be provided to students with disabilities. In terms of the development of the students’ self-determination, one advisor observed that “... During the practicum, where they had to communicate with patients, I noticed that my advisees didn’t wear hearing aids which meant that they guessed a lot of things that they had to do. It was unacceptable for the profession. They also missed several appointments with the speech therapist.” This observation was also echoed by other advisors and added that “...We might have to consider improving the way we recruit future students.” In addition, the advisors were unanimous in urging the DSS office to place greater emphasis in developing students’ self-determination to cover areas such as self-advocacy, self-awareness, and self-regulation. They also commented that low expectations and/or providing too much help to students with disabilities might actually cause them to rely

heavily on others instead of developing a strong sense of confidence and self-reliance. At the end of the focus group, all advisors agreed that the DSS office is unknown to many faculty members and staff on campus, and therefore should try its best to make itself more visible. Hence, they rated their experiences with the DSS office with a mean score of 5.6

Discussion

The experience of serving students with disabilities at CMU for over 15 years, has informed the researcher of the amount of progress that has been made thus far. However, many challenges still remain. It is hoped that the findings from this research would shed some light on some such challenges, particularly, in the area of advising students with disabilities. Also, such critical self-examination would immensely benefit CMU’s DSS efforts to develop a better advising atmosphere between advisors and students with disabilities and, thereby, improve available support services for them. Among the many challenges identified by a substantial proportion of both advisors and students with disabilities included physical accessibility barriers on campus. Such barriers included inaccessible buildings, toilets, walkways, ramps, and slopes, and limited spaces for wheelchairs. Students with disabilities often felt embarrassed when they arrived late for classes due to inaccessible walkways or limited spaces on transportation vehicles. Consequently, advisors were unable to serve students who have mobility impairments and/or those in wheelchairs, appropriately and in a dignified manner. Health issues were a concern to many students with disabilities, particularly, as the number of students with various forms or groups of disabilities continue to increase. Therefore, it is significantly important to have knowledgeable, committed, and effective advisors, and a good support service system to effectively accommodate these students. It is worth remembering that the research findings indicated that less than one fourth of advisors had taken any college course

on disabilities or received any training relevant to special education and laws. This being the case, it would be safe to conclude that the majority of advisors are ill-equipped to effectively serve students with disabilities. In this connection, an understanding of the legal and accommodation strategies would undoubtedly help advisors to put that knowledge into practice. The study findings have also identified ways in which advisors could improve themselves in order to better serve students with disabilities while, at the same time, fulfilling their other professional obligations. They include up-to-date manuals or guidelines on advising students with disabilities, additional relevant information in writing or online, easy and fast-track assistance from DSS, and staff development training. In addition to the aforementioned knowledge and training, any successful advisor is expected to establish and nurture a warm relationship, be empathetic to advisees, and willing to receive assistance from other colleagues who work with DSS personnel. The researcher is convinced that all the recommendations outlined above can provide a greater opportunity for CMU students with disabilities to survive the "Moving Through" transition.

Academic advisors are the first to encounter all new incoming students from diverse backgrounds and abilities. These students may bring with them different strengths and weaknesses. Many students with disabilities in this study stated that they were from low-income families with single parents and health problems. It is also possible that these students bring with them great anxiety from home and are expected to face new challenges on campus. This was confirmed in the findings which showed that there were some students who had thought of committing suicide or harming themselves. In addition, about one-third of the advisors reported that they had felt unsure or uncomfortable advising both students with or without disabilities. In this connection, it is important for advisors to have adequate information and basic skills on how to handle students' suicidal and self-harm tendencies. Also, the collaborative and

multidisciplinary team of advisors, counseling personnel, and DSS staff are essential for monitoring and preventing any worse situations from happening to those students who are most at risk. Such a collaborative effort with people of different expertise could increase the advisors' level of confidence in advisement and enhance communications among all involved, including DSS personnel.

It is important to note that, in general, academic advisors are not expected to be disability experts, but they are supposed to provide professional support and advice to students with disabilities in collaboration with DSS personnel. The DSS office at CMU has provided a wide range of services to support students with disabilities for over 15 years. Its support services include a pre-college program for freshmen with disabilities, orientation, assistive technology, academic coaching or tutoring, accommodated exams, sign language interpreters, Braille materials, and more. The DSS office also writes to all professors of these students, as well as to faculty deans to inform them about each student's limitations and various accommodations that she or he receives. For example, sign language interpreters, words to Braille services, test readers, or referral to meet physicians or other paraprofessionals. Such information is invaluable to first-time advisors of students with disabilities, and equally so, to those advisors who may not be familiar with the various disabilities, limitations, and needs of individual student's learning and life adjustments. Therefore, more direct and precise communication between DSS personnel and academic advisors is strongly needed. The presence of the academic advisors at the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and Individual Service Plan (ISP) meetings and the availability of handbooks for both advisors and students with disabilities can help begin to form the necessary connection between the two and the wider academic community. Also, information about an individual student's profile, limitations, and needs; reasonable accommodations provided by DSS; and roles and responsibilities of DSS personnel; made

available in writing and online, with limited access, could immensely assist advisors, professors, and other administrative personnel to effectively and efficiently improve students' experiences during the "moving through" transition.

Limitation

Although this research study demonstrated several potential benefits for academic advisors, DSS personnel, and students with disabilities, there were few limitations that needed to be acknowledged. First, the sample has been purposefully selected from one university, and therefore limits the generalization of the findings to other universities whose culture and DSS system of operation might be different because of nature of various services offered to students with disabilities there. Secondly, the number of students with disabilities and academic advisors participating in the two focus group discussions was small, and therefore the transferability of the outcome was limited. However, if the participants of the focus groups consist of a larger number of students representing all five types of disabilities, and academic advisors from more faculties, generalizability of the findings to similar populations in another setting might be possible. Future research study should include more institutions of different sizes in order to provide broader views involving a large sample.

Conclusions

Despite increased access to higher education, students with disabilities are as less likely to remain enrolled and successfully earn a degree than students without disabilities due to their various limitations. This research study is a good first step in the effort of exploring key

issues regarding academic advisors' experiences and needs while working with students with disabilities and, at the same time, students' learning challenges; relationships with advisors, professors, and friends; managing finances; health issues; and psychological issues. Since there was no other research study conducted elsewhere in Thailand, this one may serve to encourage other universities to undertake similar effort. In addition, the researcher is strongly convinced that the more the various challenges facing students with disabilities are understood, the more efficient and sustainable ways can be developed to solve and manage them. Therefore, the CMU-DSS office should play its most important role of coordinating, collaborating, and communicating with all relevant parties, including academic advisors in accordance with the laws, university policies, and recommendations from advocates of students with disabilities. The researcher is also convinced that all educators, advisors, and relevant professionals do genuinely care about all students' education. Therefore, the DSS office is entrusted to ensure that all students with disabilities have equal opportunities to learn using the most effective pedagogic approaches available to date, and in the least restrictive environment. However, for this to happen, CMU must equally honor its commitment by actively providing institutional support and clearly articulating its mission regarding students with disabilities. That is to say, developing and disseminating clear, concise, and equitable policies; and judiciously increasing the funding for various programs. Most importantly though, is that students' academic success on campus is dependent on each individual's qualities, the likes of which are the student's strong sense of self-determination and involvement.

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