

To Disclose or Not Disclose A Disability, That is the Question:

An Analysis of Career Success Within
a Postsecondary Institution

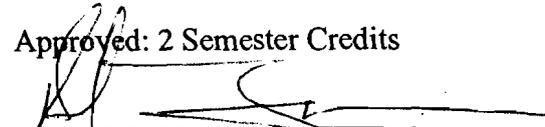
by

Michelle M. O'Connell

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Mr. Dave Swan, Advisor

The Graduate School

University of Wisconsin-Stout

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**The Graduate School
University of Wisconsin-Stout
Menomonie, WI**

Author: O'Connell, Michelle M.

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ABSTRACT

Increasing numbers of students with disabilities have entered post-secondary educational programs since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The increase in the number of students and their significant disability category has required a shift in the method of delivery of services and accommodations at postsecondary institutions. Under ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, schools and employers are required by law to make reasonable accommodations to allow otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities to learn and work equally to their nondisabled peers and be protected from discrimination based on their disability.

This is a study of students with disabilities entering into Chippewa Valley Technical College, a two year Wisconsin Technical College. This study was developed to determine the number of students with disabilities disclosing their disability, arranging and utilizing their accommodation plan, and identifying their career success upon program completion. This study includes looking at the nondisclosed disabled population to identify career success patterns when services and accommodations are not requested.

The purpose of the study is to identify if students with disabilities who disclose their disability and utilize their accommodations through SERVE, a postsecondary academic support lab, have at least an equal to greater completion and placement rate (career success) than those of their nondisabled peers or those who have not utilized SERVE.

A questionnaire was administered to three groups. Group A included all SERVE students (disclosed disabled students with accommodation plans) who completed their program training goal between June 30, 2004 and July 1, 2005. Group B included a random sampling of thirty disabled students who chose not to disclose their disability or request accommodations through the Disability Services Department, but identified themselves as being disabled to other postsecondary faculty or staff. Group C included 1,240 nondisabled 2004-2005 graduates to identify their success rates in relation to Group A and Group B.

Study results included that career success may be affected by the individual's decision to disclose their disability and develop an accommodation plan to compensate for his/her difficulties. Given these findings, the researcher concluded it is important for individual's with disabilities to develop an understanding of their disability, become a better self-advocate for individualized accommodations and/or compensatory strategies to meet their educational goals, and to disclose their disability in the Disability Services Department upon admittance into college. Additionally, it is likely that with today's availability of technology, students with disabilities will utilize and depend more on accessing assistive technology, and will need to be provided with resources to use these devices independently.

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Chapter I

Introduction:

Transition to postsecondary institutions is critical for students with disabilities' success. Ensuring that students with disabilities have "access to and full participation in postsecondary education" has been identified as one of the key challenges in the future of secondary education and transition for such students (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2003). About three of every 10 young people with disabilities have taken some type of postsecondary educational class since leaving high school. But only one in five is attending a postsecondary institution, according to the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 conducted by the Department of Education (Newman, 2005). This is about one half the attendance rate of their peers without disabilities in the general population (Disability Compliance For Higher Education, 2005).

Since the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the reinforcement of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, postsecondary institutions have encountered a continuous rise of students with disabilities. These laws protect students with disabilities from discrimination within the educational setting. Knowing who to contact, how to enroll and apply for financial resources, when to disclose their disability, what to expect academically, and where to go to receive accommodations to provide s/he with the tools for successful accomplishment of their career goal leading to competitive employment parallel to their peers became a priority. Disclosing one's disability status to those who can provide needed accommodations is an activity of self-advocacy, or self-determination, and part of individualized learning. Does a student with disabilities' success depend on early disclosure and use of accommodations for goal completion and competitive employment equal to their nondisabled

peers? Individuals with disabilities experience far less career success than their non-disabled peers; however, differences in achievement diminish significantly for those who participate in postsecondary education (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Yelin & Katz, 1994, as cited in Burgstahler, 2003).

Chippewa Valley Technical College's (CVTC) Disability Service Department is in the process of developing a new service delivery model for students with disabilities enrolled in SERVE for implementation in 2006-2007. CVTC has a 25 year history of transitioning students with disabilities from the community and local education settings into the college and then into the workforce. The purpose of this study is to identify if students with disabilities who disclose their disability and utilize their accommodations through SERVE have at least an equal to greater completion and placement rate (career success) than those of their nondisabled peers or those who have not utilized SERVE. In order to meet this researcher's objectives, data will be gathered in the following four main areas:

- 1) **all** CVTC students with disabilities disclosing their disability between June 30, 2004 and June 30, 2005
- 2) students with disabilities enrolled in SERVE, and utilizing an accommodation plan between June 30, 2004 and June 30, 2005
- 3) type of accommodations used by SERVE students
- 4) postschool outcomes data over the same one year time interval

In depth interviews will be conducted to these individuals to distinguish what type of accommodations were requested and if they were used during their CVTC enrollment. The study will look at previously enrolled students who completed their goals between June 30, 2004 and June 30, 2005 year. The data from the students using SERVE will be analyzed with data

reflecting the number of students with disabilities enrolled at CVTC between June 30, 2004 and June 30, 2005 not disclosing their disability to the Disability Services Department at Chippewa Valley Technical College. Additional data will be gathered from placement reports to identify any difference in these two groups with their postschool outcomes. The data provided by this research will attempt to justify the budgeting of new assistive technology to aid SERVE instructors in delivery methods in order to maximize instructor use of time and student learning. The information gathered is critical to support any shift in paradigm within the department. This study will address the concern of students requesting instructional help rather than utilizing the technology available to meet their learning needs. Data will also aid in identifying if the process of transitioning students with disabilities is effective for retention and career success.

Background:

According to Wisconsin Statewide Post High School Outcomes Survey of Individuals with Disabilities Final Report – (Kampa, 2004), “A greater percentage of students with disabilities are disclosing their disability status to someone at their place of postsecondary education, with the greatest increase in those disclosing their disability to a disability specialist”. Additionally, The Wisconsin Statewide Post High School Outcomes Survey, Executive Summary, Year 4, documents of the 331 students surveyed in 2003, 51% of the former students were attending or have attended some type of postsecondary education program and 7% of the former students started a postsecondary program then discontinued.

Nationally, many students with disabilities are significantly unemployed and underemployed, upon leaving high school, compared to their peers who do not have disabilities (U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2002). In Wisconsin, there are over 127,000 students, age 3-21, with disabilities and 450,000 adults of

working age with disabilities (WTCS-Factbook, 2005). Since a higher percentage of students with disabilities are entering postsecondary education programs, it is critical for CVTC to explore the impact on their outcomes as the technical college engages in new delivery methods and transition processes for these students.

Statement of Problem:

Not all students with disabilities disclose their disability prior to enrollment. Many students who develop accommodation plans do not utilize the services or accommodations recommended until it is too late. When students are in either of these situations, history documents little student success and many times the students will receive failing grades or withdraw from classes and have difficulty in being competitively employed. Chippewa Valley Technical College needs to evaluate the services provided to students with disabilities in the SERVE lab and identify if the current service delivery model is an effective means for students with disabilities to successfully complete their career goal and obtain competitive employment equal to that of their nondisabled peers.

A descriptive study will be completed utilizing a questionnaire with disabled disclosed students having attended and completed CVTC coursework leading to goal completion between June 30, 2004 and July 1, 2005. The purpose is to identify if there are comparable percentages for job placement with the disabled-disclosed, as the nondisabled or disabled-nondisclosed. Placement data will be used to draw conclusions about disabled's vs. nondisabled's career success. Other data will be drawn from surveys, direct telephone interviews, case management data, and follow up studies.

Research Objectives:

The purpose of this study is to determine if disclosing a disability and using an accommodation plan in CVTC's SERVE lab leads to significantly better career success than that of the nondisclosed disabled student, or minimally equal career success to that of the nondisabled graduate. This study will attain the following objectives:

- To determine if students who disclose their disabilities and obtain accommodation plans while attending a postsecondary institution graduate and obtain competitive employment equal to their nondisabled peer group.
- To identify the number of CVTC disclosed-disabled students receiving a certificate, diploma, associate degree, or completer in the year 2004-2005.
- To identify the type of accommodations commonly requested and used by SERVE students in 2004-2005.

Significance of the Study:

The study of people with disabilities and their transition to, status in postsecondary education, and career success is a fairly recent area of investigation; thus, large gaps in the knowledge base exist. Chippewa Valley Technical College's Disability Service Department is in the process of developing a new service delivery model for students with disabilities enrolled in SERVE for 2006-2007 implementation. Data will be gathered on all students with disabilities disclosing their disability, enrolled in SERVE, and utilizing an accommodation plan over a one year time interval. In depth interviews will be conducted to these individuals to distinguish what type of accommodations were requested and used during the June 30, 2004 to June 30, 2005 period. This data will be analyzed with data reflecting the number of students with disabilities enrolled at CVTC between June 30, 2004 and June 30, 2005 not disclosing their disability to the

Disability Services Department. Additional data will be gathered from placement reports to identify the relationship between these two groups with their postschool outcomes. The data provided by this research will attempt to justify the budgeting of new assistive technology to aid SERVE instructors in delivery methods in order to maximize instructor use of time and student learning. The information gathered is critical to support any shift in paradigm within the department. This study will address the concern of students requesting instructional help rather than utilizing the technology available to meet their learning needs. It will allow decisions to be made on the effectiveness of the SERVE lab in assisting students with disabilities toward their career goal. Data will also aid in identifying if the process of transitioning students with disabilities is effective in retention and career placement at Chippewa Valley Technical College.

Assumptions:

1. This study assumes the data received from the Student Services office at CVTC is accurate.
2. This study assumes students with disabilities are willing to respond honestly to a telephone interview if they don't respond to a mailed questionnaire.
3. Information acquired in this study will be used by Chippewa Valley Technical College's Disability Service Department to assist with development of a new instructional model.
4. The researcher will effectively tabulate and evaluate the data received and produce meaningful results.

Limitations:

1. This study will include 1 year old follow up data collected through written and telephone interviews by CVTC faculty and/or staff.
2. The design of the study only establishes relationships among variables.

3. Report findings are based on students enrolled in SERVE lab, and therefore will likely be a small sample.
4. Limited outcome data; lack of research on reported drop out or student withdrawal.
5. Additional research needed on length of competitive employment.
6. Limited resources and research material.
7. Specific disabilities were not taken into account when comparing competitive employment.
8. Outcomes will be based on return rate of questionnaires and telephone communications.

Definition of Terms:

Accommodation: reasonable change or adjustment to a job, school, or work environment that permits a qualified applicant, student, or employee, with a disability to participate in the application process, to receive an education, or to perform essential job functions (Peterson, M. & Elam, D.)

Accommodation Plan: A written contract of services to support an individual's documented disability.

Assistive Technology: Equipment, hardware, inventions, tools, or other helps for people with disabilities, aids to help people do the tasks of daily life.

Career Success: An individual who is a program graduate or certificate completor and meeting their individualized goal of employment in career area within six months after graduation.

Community College: Two year post-secondary institutions that offer certificate programs, Associate of Arts degree, Associate of Sciences degrees, plus many other programs. (Community College Web, 2003)

Completer: A two year post-secondary institution's term for a student who meets their goals without receiving an Associate degree or Vocational diploma.

CVTC: Chippewa Valley Technical College; a two year accredited college with a focus on vocational skills.

Disability/Disabled: Diagnosis of an individual's impairment meeting criteria of ADA or 504.

Disability-Disclosed: Diagnosis of an individual's impairment, meeting the criteria of ADA or 504, and submission of documentation to CVTC's Disabilities Services Department (SERVE).

Disability-Nondisclosed: Diagnosis of an individual's impairment, disclosed to CVTC faculty or staff member outside of the Disability Services Department, without a request for an accommodation or modification.

IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IEP: An Individualized Educational Program to meet a student's with a disability needs in the K-12 educational setting.

Education: A program of instruction or a series of experiences, planned to help learners grow in knowledge and/or skill. (Opening Doors, 2003)

Nondisabled student: An individual attending postsecondary education without disclosing a disability.

Postsecondary: After high school.

Postschool outcome: the result of where a person ends up after graduating or completing their formalized education/training. It may include transition to postsecondary education, out of school agency(ies), independent living skills, and/or employment.

Program Completion: Finishing a course, program, or personal goal.

SERVE: Special Education + Rehabilitative + Vocational Education: This is a lab at Chippewa Valley Technical College in Eau Claire, WI for enrolled students with documented disabilities to receive academic support, accommodations, and accessibility applicable to their training program.

Self-determination: acting as the primary causal agent in one's life and making choices and decisions.

Technical College: A school that offers work-related classes, trade skills, associate degree, vocational diplomas, and certificates related to employment and provides opportunity for to practice job-related skills and gain general knowledge for the workforce.

Transition: To change or move from one time of life, role, style, or place to another in a formal planned process.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Introduction:

“Globally, postsecondary institutions have had an increased number of individuals disclosing their disabilities and requesting accommodations from the Disability Services Departments.” Tom Heffron, Wisconsin Technical College State Consultant for disabilities, goes on to say, “unfortunately, there are triple this number of students who are identified on campuses as having disabilities, but do not disclose their disability nor receive accommodations.” (August, 2005). In 2003-2004, there were 13,029 disabled students enrolled in the Wisconsin Technical College system compared to 12,376 ten years earlier (WTCS-Factbook, 2005). During the past fifteen years much research in the area of special education and rehabilitation has focused on the process of transition from school to adulthood for students with disabilities (Rusch & Chadsey, 1998). Unfortunately, research does not signify the use of accommodations and transferring the use of these tools to the employment arena. Additionally, there is limited research on the transition of postsecondary students with disabilities to employment. Given the number of students with disabilities entering the postsecondary educational institutions, one must understand why students vary in their choice of disclosing their disability. This chapter will review literature discussing the laws governing students with disabilities, the definition of disability, disclosure trends, accommodations and accessibility plans, and conclude with students’ with disabilities postschool outcomes.

Laws:

There are various federal and state laws that help ensure equal access for individuals with disabilities. These laws include: Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA), and Carl Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990 (Perkins).

Signed into law on July 26, 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a wide-ranging legislation intended to make American Society more accessible to people with disabilities (ADA). ADA provides protection for individuals with disabilities and is supported by The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504 which states that “no otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall, solely by reason of his or her disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance or under any program or activity conducted by any Executive agency or by the United States Postal Service.”(Williams, O’Leary, 2000) These laws protect and guide individuals with disabilities on disclosure of their disability and discrimination. While Section 504 is intended to establish a "level playing field" - usually by eliminating barriers that exclude persons with disabilities – the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA) is “remedial - often requiring the provision of programs and services in addition to those available to persons without disabilities. Thus, Section 504 precludes hurdles to participation, whether physical - steps that prevent a person in a wheelchair from accessing a building - or programmatic - excluding a child with hepatitis from a classroom” (Rosenfeld, 1999). Postsecondary institutions are not bound under IDEA regulations - rather ADA and Section 504; however, having a collaborative effort in working with the students with disabilities and disclosing their disability early is essential for success.

In 1997, Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA) incorporated the term “transition” into the planning process for all students with Individualized Educational Programs (IEP). This forced the high school instructors into developing a transition plan for the student including a statement on postsecondary education. Although this law was in place for the K-12 system, the addition of the transition statement opened the doors for community participation, including postsecondary. This collaboration of service providers soon provided the needed link for postsecondary schools to identify potential students with disabilities prior to their enrollment; students’ documentation of their disability and reasonable accommodations are now shared in the presence of the student.

The Perkins Act was reauthorized and amended in 1998 to emphasize and mandate the following three approaches to vocational education: 1) integrating vocational and academic education so that students gain strong basic and advanced academic skills in a vocational setting. 2) providing students with strong experience in and understanding of all aspects of the industry they are preparing to enter, including planning, management, finance, technical and production skills, underlying principles of technology, labor, community, and health, safety, and environmental issues. 3) requiring that students in vocational education programs be taught the same challenging academic proficiencies that all other students are taught. As part of the amendment, the Act focused colleges on providing for equitable and successful participation of special population students, through equal access, nondiscrimination, and individualized services for success; meeting the same standards applicable to all students (Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act, 1998).

Definition of Disability:

The definition of a disability under Section 504 is much broader than the definition under the IDEA, and ADA has a completely different definition. The following will identify the differences between each law and how it defines “disability”.

IDEA protects students with disabilities in the K-12 system and defines disability in an academia setting. According to IDEA, 2004 the term 'child with a disability' means a child--

“(i) with mental retardation, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance (referred to in this title as 'emotional disturbance'), orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities; and (ii) who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services.” (United States of America)

Section 504 is less discriminatory; it protects all persons classified as: "Handicapped person" by means of:

“(1) "Handicapped persons" means any person who (i) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, (ii) has a record of such an impairment, or (iii) is regarded as having such an impairment.

(2) As used in paragraph (j)(1) of this section, the phrase:

(i) "Physical or mental impairment" means (A) any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological; musculoskeletal; special sense organs; respiratory, including speech organs; cardiovascular; reproductive, digestive, genito-urinary; hemic and lymphatic; skin; and endocrine; or (B) any mental or psychological disorder, such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities.

(ii) "Major life activities" means functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.

(iii) "Has a record of such an impairment" means has a history of, or has been misclassified as having, a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

(iv) "Is regarded as having an impairment" means (A) has a physical or mental impairment that does not substantially limit major life activities but that is treated by a recipient as constituting such a limitation; (B) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits major life activities only as a result of the attitudes of others toward such impairment; or (C) has none of the impairments defined in paragraph (j)(2)(i) of this section but is treated by a recipient as having such an impairment." (US Department of Regulations)

ADA relates the definition of disability to that of the medical model. A person with a disability is one who has: (A) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual; (B) a record of such an impairment; or (C) being regarded as having such an impairment. The purpose of the ADA is to eliminate discrimination that confronts individuals with disabilities or perceived as having a disability. When accommodating a person who has an ADA "disability", one must take into consideration whether the person is "substantially limited in performing a major life activity when using a mitigating measure. This means that if a person has little or no difficulty performing any major life activity because s/he uses a mitigating measure, then that person will not meet the ADA's first definition of "disability." These students are provided accommodations in compliance with the law." (ADA, 1997).

Defining a disability and documenting it is a way for individuals with disabilities to protect their right to an appropriate education, obtain reasonable accommodations or modifications, and assure accessibility. Prior to any person, public entity, community agency, or institution being required to provide accommodations or modifications, accessibility, or appropriate educational plans, a person needs to disclose their disability and request services (Peterson and Elam, 2001).

The key reason for disclosure, from an applicant/student's perspective, is to inform the institution of their disability and to get reasonable adjustments made. The applicant/student will want to disclose the disability to explore the practical implications of their course of study. If barriers exist which prevent a student from having full access to the course for reasons related to their disability, and the barrier is not an essential function of the course or employment objectives, it falls to the institution to provide reasonable adjustments to remove these barriers.

Colleges and postsecondary education institutions require valid documentation of a disability. The confidential medical or academia assessments are used to 1) show the student's disability continues over time and 2) confirm the student needs accommodations. Valid documentation should be within three years of application to the school (Leuchovius, 2005).

Review of research shows that although there are benefits, which may encourage disclosure, other reasons exist which may incline the student against disclosing. "Many students with disabilities may, for example, have experienced stigma and embarrassment as the result of the responses of those to whom they have disclosed an impairment. Others may fear discrimination or believe that disclosing an impairment will not be of benefit to them" (Aune, B. and Baggett, D.,1998)

Accommodations and Accessibility Plans:

Accommodation and accessibility plans aid individuals with disabilities in obtaining a level playing field. Without disclosure and documenting a disability, an institution, employer or other public entity is not legally required to provide any support services. According to Lex Frieden's position paper titled *People with Disabilities and Postsecondary Education* (2003), many students do not continue in their postsecondary studies because they lack support to address and manage their disability needs. "They often experience a reduced level of disability services and accommodations in postsecondary education" (6).

Chippewa Valley Technical College's Disability Services Instructors are trained in the educational impact of a variety of disabilities. The instructors provide appropriate accommodations, services, teaching approaches, compensatory strategies, and changes or modifications in learning environments that enable students with disabilities to overcome or cope with their difficulties and express/demonstrate their abilities to perform essential functions of a program or course. Accommodation plans are developed collaboratively with the student and Disability Services Case Manager or Instructor. This plan is updated throughout the student's enrollment and affords him/her barrier free, equal access to all educational and other college-wide activities (internships, fieldtrips, events, etc.) offered at CVTC.

According to Wisconsin Technical College System client reporting database, CVTC reported 487 students with disabilities enrolled in 2004-2005 fiscal year. Of these 487 students, 158 of the students self-identified and received accommodation plans or accessibility services through the disability services department (CVTC-Disability Services Department, 2005). An additional 119 students with disabilities received transition services including, but not limited to, exploring career and employment options and technical college opportunities, understanding disability disclosure benefits, meeting documentation requirements, understanding financial aid and admissions procedures, and placating individualized needs.

Postschool Outcomes:

Fewer individuals with disabilities are employed when compared with those people without disabilities. Of those people with disabilities who are employed, “the vast majority work at low-paying, non-professional jobs, which lack prestige, come with no security, room for advancement, or significant medical or retirement benefits” (Stoddard, Jans, Ripple, & Krauss, 1998).

Goals 2000 (U.S. Department of Education, 1994) and programs such as The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) (Copple, Kane, Matheson, Meltzer, Packer, & White, 1992) illustrate a new awareness of the need for outcome-based education for all students. This new awareness has led to an emphasis on program evaluation and follow-up of students who have left the school. Although there is federal, state, and local recognition of the importance of transition services and outcome-based education, research indicates postschool outcomes for students with disabilities are still unfavorable (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Halpern, 1990; Haring & Lovett, 1990; Marder & D'Amico 1992; Thurow, 1993). According to the Executive Summary of Wagner, M., Newman, L., Cameto, R., et al, “about two-thirds of postsecondary students with disabilities receive no accommodations from their schools, primarily because their schools are unaware of their disabilities.” About 40 percent of postsecondary students with disabilities have disclosed to a Disability Services Department, 7 percent chose not to disclose to the same department, and about 50 percent of the students in the longitudinal study had a documented disability but did not consider themselves as “disabled” (Wagner, et al., 2005).

For the past 25 years, Chippewa Valley Technical College has collected data on placement and postschool outcomes of students with disabilities using services provided through the SERVE lab. Parallel to follow up studies done for the nondisabled populations, students with

disabilities are contacted within 6 months of graduation to document their career success. This data is then forwarded to the Wisconsin State Technical College Board for review and recommendations. Additional data supporting the accommodations requested has not been gathered. It didn't appear relevant to a student's success.

Chapter III

Methodology

Introduction:

Chippewa Valley Technical College has had an increase in number of students disclosing their disabilities to the Disability Services Department. Unfortunately, there are numerous other students with disabilities self-identifying to staff and faculty within the college, but never completing the process of disclosing, providing documentation of their disability, and developing an accommodation plan with an instructor or case manager in the Disability Services Department. This study will identify the career success of the disclosed students using an accommodation plan through the Disability Services Department (disabled-disclosed) compared to those who have disclosed a disability to staff or faculty members within the college, but have never documented their disability within the Disability Services Department (disabled-nondisclosed); thus, never having an accommodation plan. This study will then look at these two group comparisons to analyze their level of career success and compare it to their peers – the nondisabled population. Additional information will be provided, through the instrumentation, on type of accommodations requested on accommodation plans by SERVE students.

Subject Selection and Description:

There will be three subject selections. First, students with documented disabilities enrolled (disabled-disclosed) in SERVE and utilizing an accommodation plan will be sampled. These students are reported semiannually to the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) Client Reporting System. Numbers will reflect actual students graduating or completing an associate degree, technical diploma, or certificate of training at Chippewa Valley Technical College during the 2004-2005 fiscal year. Second, a random selection of disabled-nondisclosed students will be taken from Chippewa Valley Technical College's Student Services Department's Client

Reporting System. The process for selection of this sample will assure that no students are repeated in the count. The WTCS- Client Reporting System also includes this data within their annual report. Finally, students without disabilities will be identified and selected through CVTC's Student Services Department. All three subject selections will include students who have enrolled in a program or certificate, completed their goal, and exited Chippewa Valley Technical College during the 2004-2005 fiscal year.

Instrumentation:

Questionnaires will be originally mailed through US Postal with a return date of three weeks from postmark. In the event students do not respond, this researcher will make individualized telephone contacts reiterating the questions from the questionnaire. The questionnaires disseminated will replicate those currently used for CVTC's nondisabled graduates/completers' placement reports. Questions will include the following: name, address, phone, social security number, program degree, present employment status, employer, title, job duties, wage, date employed, comments, *accommodations requested, *accommodations used while attending training, and *transferability of accommodation use to the employment industry. Since this survey is designed specifically for use in this study, no measures of validity or reliability have been documented.

Data Collection:

The Disability Services Department developed a database in 2001 to capture the number of students in SERVE with established accommodation plans, program and gender enrollments in response to state mandated reporting, enrollment status, and exit criteria. In 2004, this database was improved to capture the number of students with disabilities who may be in one of stages of the Disability Services Department's intake processes. This more accurately demonstrates the number of students disclosing their disability, requiring some type of service, and their enrollment status at CVTC. With approval and support by the Human Subjects Review

Board, Disability Services Department's database will serve as the baseline for information on disability-disclosed subject selections. Additional data will be gathered from CVTC's Student Services Department Client Reporting System. Student Services' Department obtains their Client Reporting Data from counseling staff, Financial Aid Officers, and Enrollment Specialists. Students in the disabled-nondisclosed group who self-identify to a staff or faculty person within this department will be randomly selected from the client reporting forms. The random selection will be gathered utilizing a systematic sampling process. The total number of SERVE graduates in 2004-2005 will be subtracted from the total number of students with disabilities reported through the WTCS's client reporting system (disabled-nondisclosed group). This number will be divided by the desired sample size (whatever is equal to the SERVE graduate sample) and a random number will be selected (3) to gather the sample by pulling every third individual's name who was in the disabled-nondisclosed group. Follow up studies/placement reports from the "nondisabled" group will be used for comparison on career success outcomes with the disabled populations using a stratified sampling.

Additionally, the disabled-disclosed group will be given an employment placement questionnaire parallel to that of their peers, but additional questions on the type of accommodations requested, an individual's use of his/her accommodation plan, and his/her satisfaction will be asked. This group of individuals will be individually given a graduate/completer follow-up questionnaire. Past SERVE graduates, the disabled-disclosed group, range on average between 20-30 students per year.

Data Analysis:

The researcher intends to base the study on the results of a questionnaire disseminated to both nondisabled and disabled-disclosed students graduating or completing their program goals at Chippewa Valley Technical College between June 30, 2004 and June 30, 2005. Data on the use and type of accommodations used by the disclosed-disabled will be tallied and systematically

arranged using a frequency distribution. The researcher will then examine the shape of the distribution and record it into a graphic form. Frequency charts will be created to demonstrate the relationship between the career success of the disabled disclosed, the disabled nondisclosed, and the nondisabled. Findings will be further described.

Limitations:

1. The random selection will include only a small portion of the total number of students within the technical college system.
2. The population size of the study could be limited due to unsuccessful attempts in contacting those students who have relocated or do not respond to the questionnaire.
3. This study may be limited by students not answering the questionnaire or returning it with inaccurate information.

Chapter IV

Results

Introduction:

Chippewa Valley Technical College has a history of successfully serving students with disabilities since 1974. All disclosed-disabled students were mailed a graduate questionnaire through the US Postal services (Group A). Students were given three weeks to complete and return the questionnaire. Students who didn't return their questionnaires were then telephoned during December, 2005 and January, 2006. During the same period of time, a systematic sampling of disabled-nondisclosed students' names was gathered (Group B). These students were also mailed a questionnaire through US Postal services. A follow up telephone call was made to those who didn't return their survey.

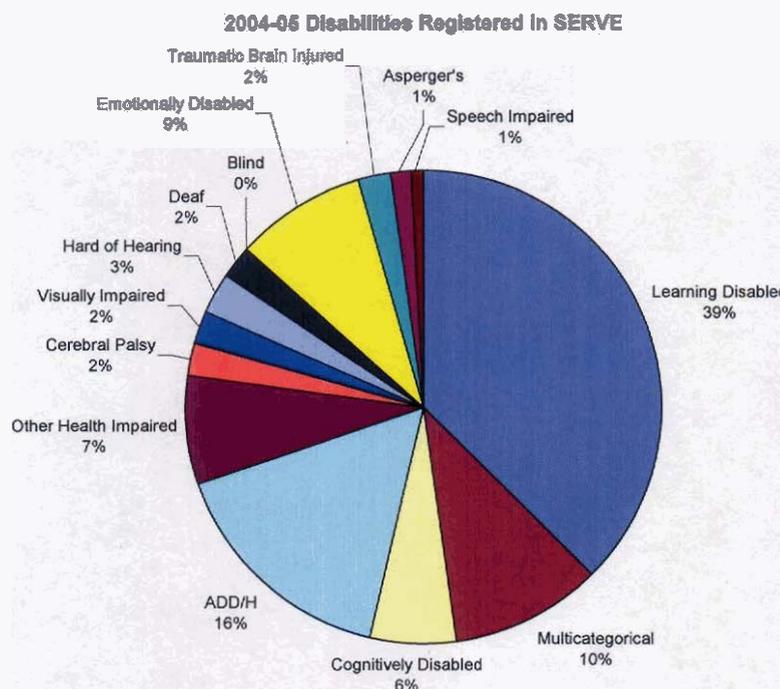
This chapter will include the results of this study. Demographic information and data analysis will be discussed. The chapter will conclude with the research questions under investigation.

Demographic Information:

According to Wisconsin Technical College System client reporting database, 487 students with disabilities enrolled at Chippewa Valley Technical College in 2004-2005 fiscal year. Between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2005, one hundred and fifty-eight (158) students with disabilities, or 32% of the total disabled enrolled, registered and developed accommodation plans through the Disability Services Department-Serve lab at Chippewa Valley Technical College. Disability Services had contact with an additional 219 students who may have explored the option of registering with SERVE, but did not follow through to complete the documentation process. Seventy-eight percent of all students with disabilities enrolled at Chippewa Valley Technical College contacted the Disability Services department between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2005.

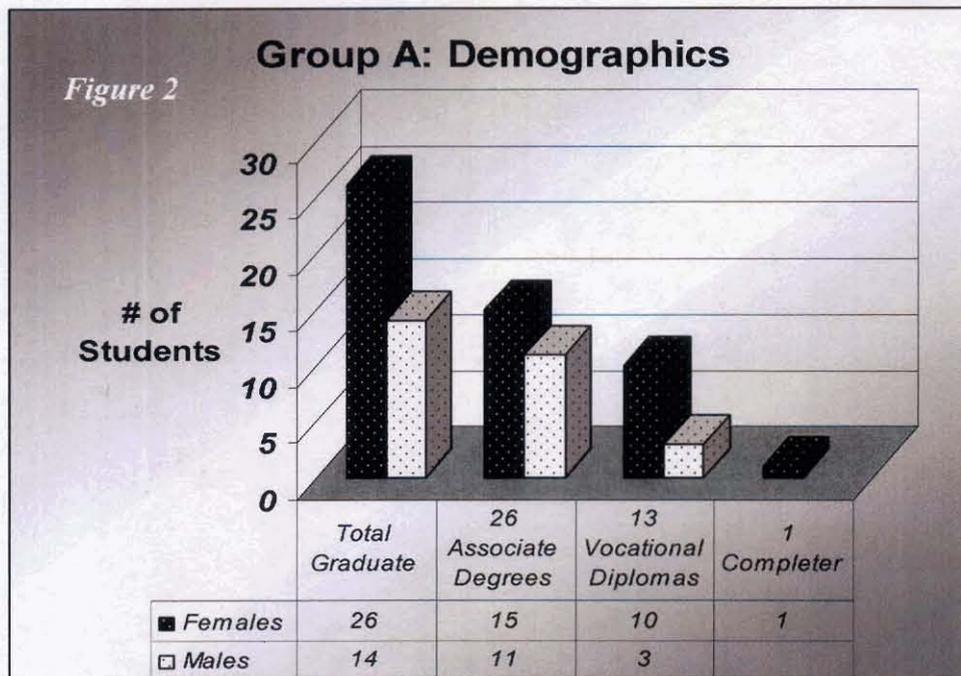
Figure 1 represents the category of disability served through the SERVE lab in 2004-2005 and is reported by category name and percentage of the total disabled-disclosed students served.

Figure 1

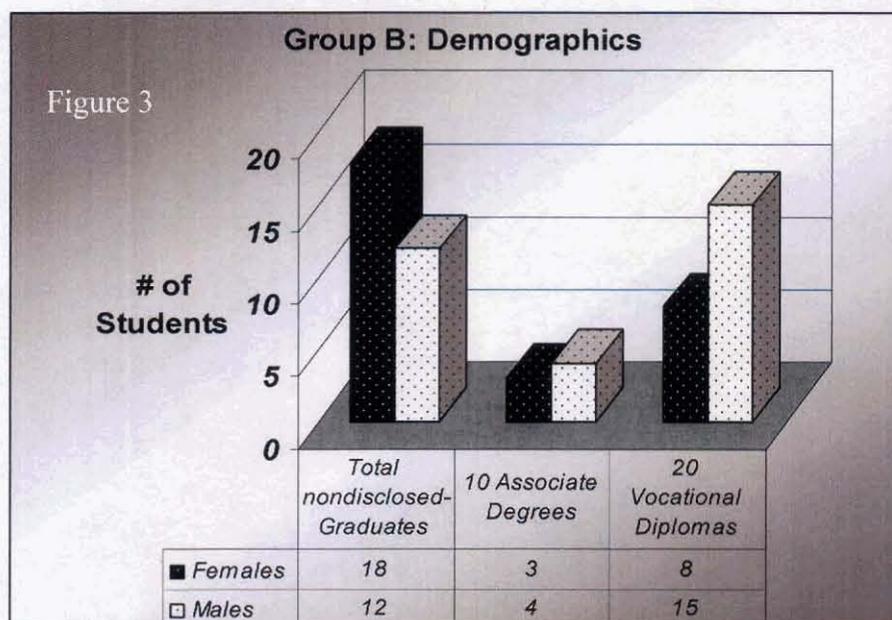


In the initial process of research for this study, two groups were identified. Group A represents the disabled-disclosed population graduating or completing their program goal. Group B represents the sampling of the disabled-nondisclosed population graduating or completing their program goal.

Group A consisted of 40 disabled-disclosed students graduating from 23 different program areas. Each student was provided a graduate questionnaire. Twenty-six were female, and 14 were male. Of the 26 Associate degree disabled-disclosed graduates, 11 were male and 15 were female. Of the 13 Vocational degree graduates, three were male and ten were female. One additional female was listed as a completer. *Figure 2* represents these demographics.

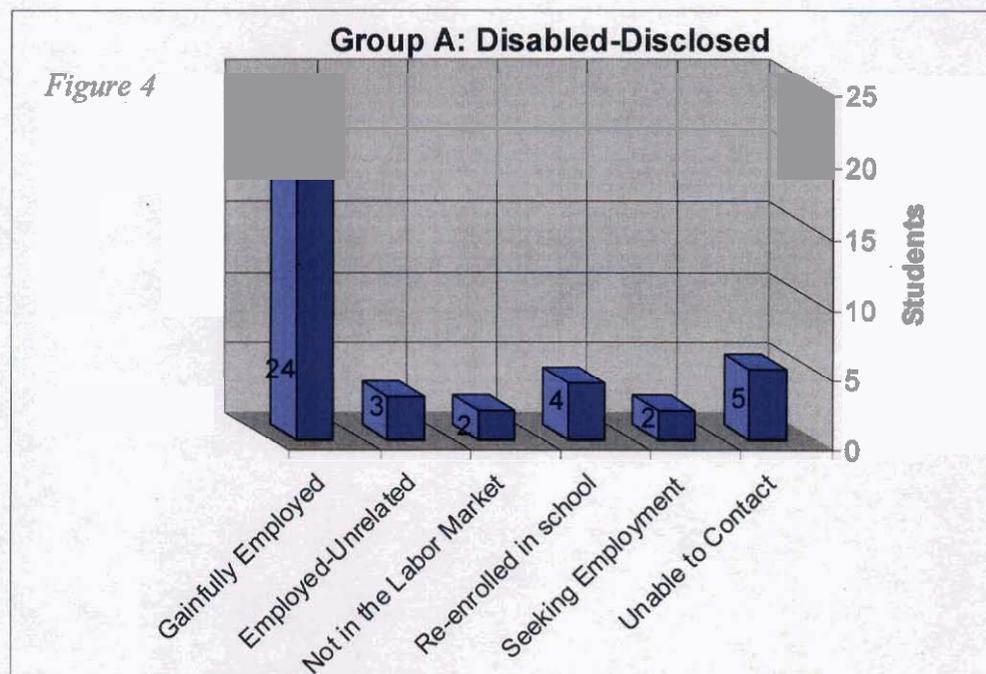


Group B consisted of 30 disabled-nondisclosed students graduating from 20 different program areas. Each student was provided a graduate questionnaire. Twelve were male and eighteen were female. Ten students graduated with an Associate degree and 20 with a Vocational diploma. Of the ten students graduating with an Associate degree, 4 were male and 3 were female. Of the 20 Vocational diploma graduates, 8 were male and 15 were female. **Figure 3** represents Group B demographics.



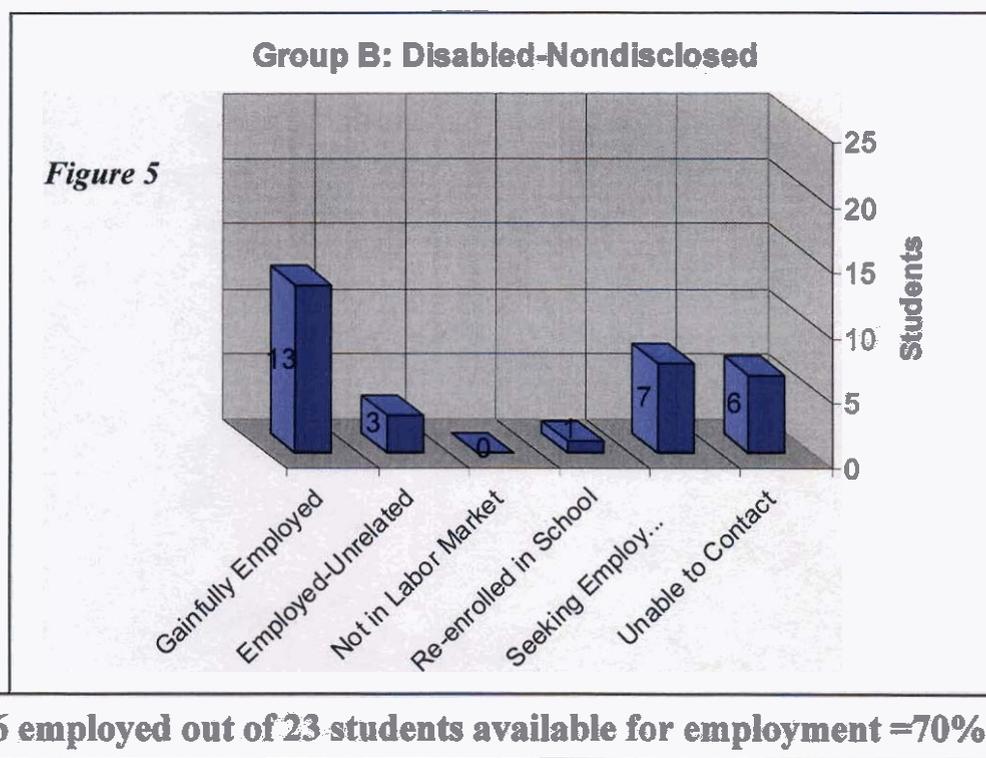
Data Analysis:

In 2004-2005, there were 158 students registered in SERVE with accommodation plans and enrolled in 48 different programs. Of the registered 158 disclosed students with disabilities, 40 students (5.73%) completed their academic goals between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2005 (Group A) in 23 different program areas. Twenty-six students graduated with Associate degrees, thirteen with Vocational diplomas, and one completed with a certificate. Twenty-four students reported being employed in a field directly related to their course of study. Three students reported being employed in an occupation not related to their field of study. Two students reported they were continuing to seek employment. Two students reported being on Workman's Compensation and unable to work. Four students reported re-enrollment for continuing their education. Five students were not able to be contacted through US postal mail or by telephone. Group A had a 93% placement rate based on the 27 students employed out of the 29 eligible for employment. *Figure 4* represents these findings.



27 employed out of 29 students available for employment =93%

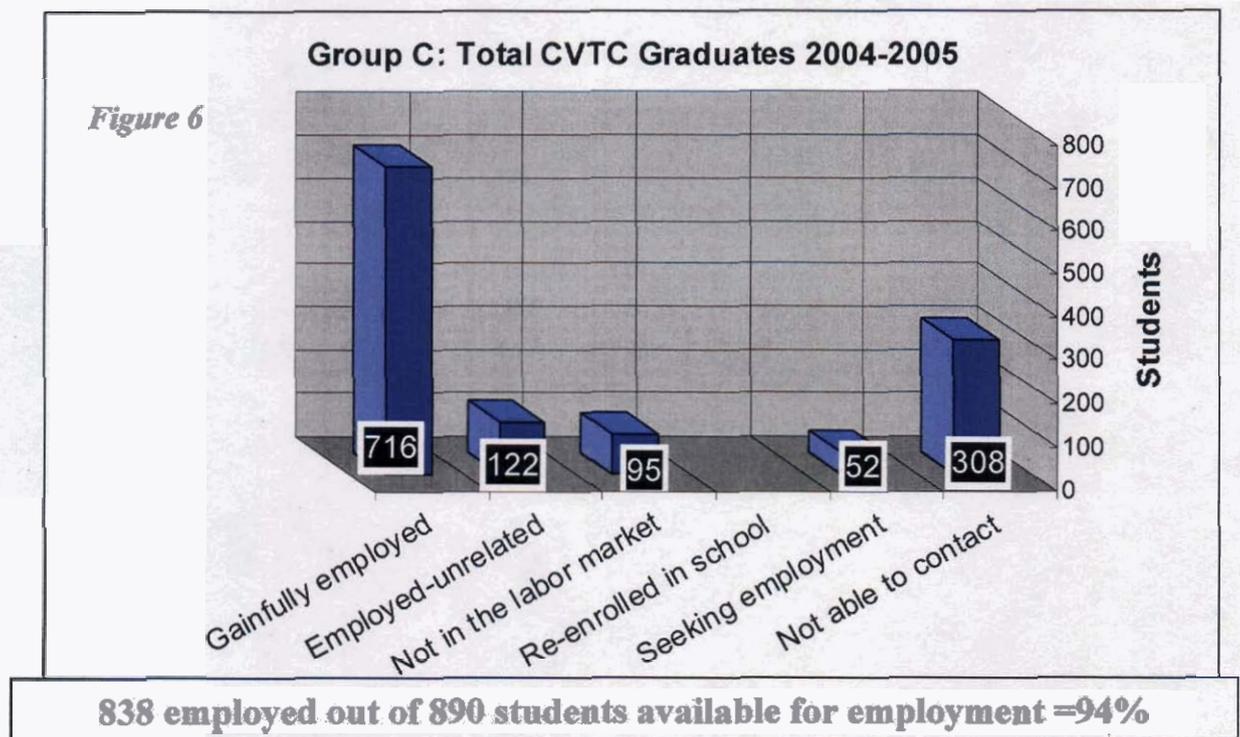
Group B findings indicated of the 30 disabled-nondisclosed students completing the questionnaire, 10 students graduated with an Associate degree and 20 with a Vocational diploma in twenty different programs. Thirteen of these students reported being employed in an occupation directly related to their field of study. Three students reported being employed, but in an unrelated occupation. One student re-enrolled into another course of study. Seven students reported continuing to seek employment and six students could not be reached for inclusion in the findings. Group B (*Figure 5*) had a 70 percent placement rate based on the 16 students employed out of the 23 eligible graduates.



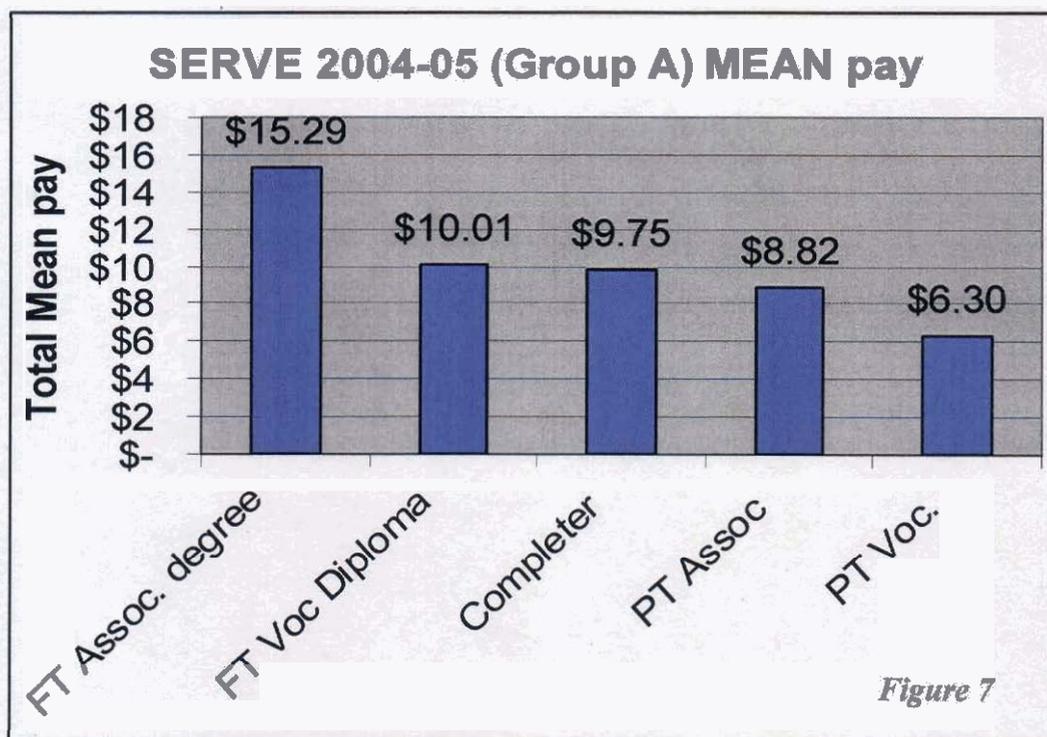
Group C represents all graduates between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2005 at Chippewa Valley Technical College. Group C data was requested from the Student Services Employment Specialist. The data (*Figure 6*) was gathered in the same manner as Group A and B; however

the study is a larger group size since it is based on 2004-2005 CVTC graduates, as a whole. Questionnaires and mailings were sent to 1,240 total graduates from 49 different programs.

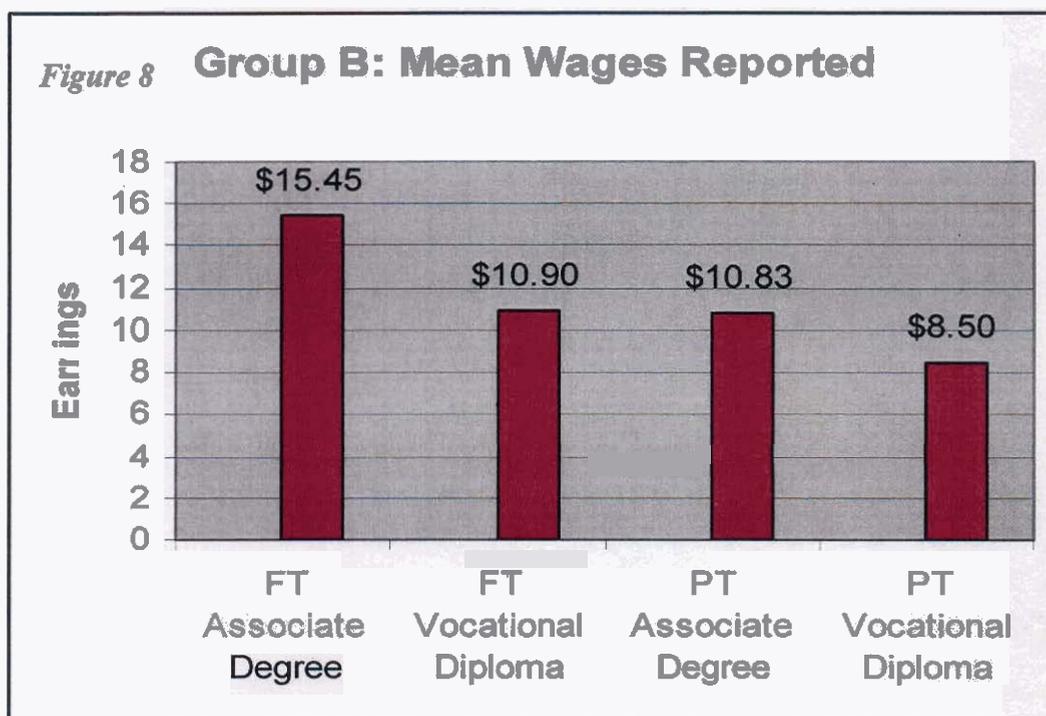
Of these 1,240 graduates, 932 responded or 75% of the total graduate population. The remaining 308 students were either unable to be located or did not provide information for the follow up study. Of the 932 respondents, seven hundred sixteen (716) indicated they were employed in a related field and 122 reported working in a non-program related position. Ninety-five respondents indicated they were not in the labor market and 52 stated they were still looking for employment. The college's overall graduation rate was 94 percent based on 838 students working out of the 890 students eligible for employment. (*Figure 6*)



Group A was asked their wage/salary status. Out of the 27 employed Disabled-Disclosed students working, 18 students who received their Associate degree reported working full-time and two were employed part-time. Six students receiving their vocational diplomas reported being employed full-time whereas one student reported part-time employment. The average wage earned by Associate Degree graduates was \$12.06/hr while Vocational Diploma graduates earned \$8.16/hr. One student who “completed” their program goals without receiving an Associate degree or Vocational diploma reported earning \$9.75/hr. Figure 7 demonstrates the earnings reported by Group A.

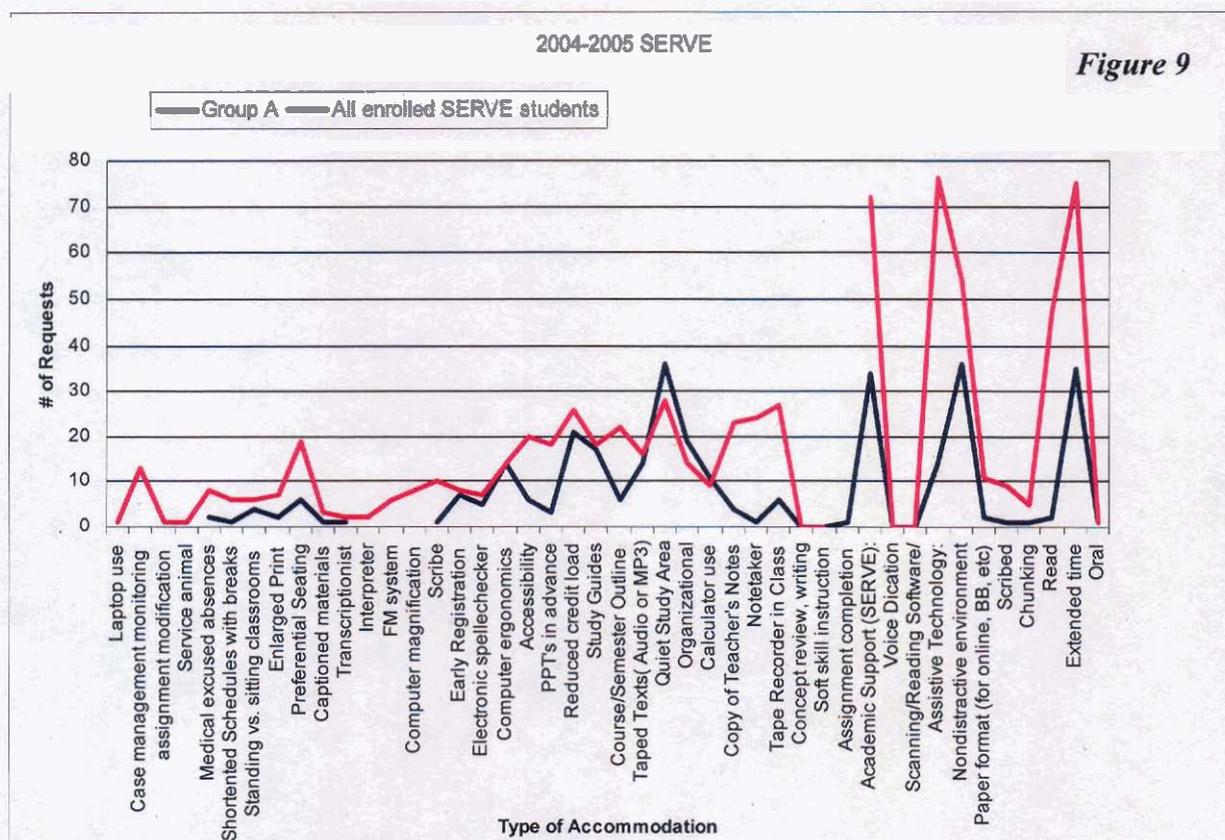


Group B had 16 students employed. Out of these 16 students, five students reported working full-time after receiving their Associate degree and two reported being employed part-time. The mean wage earned by Associate Degree graduates was \$13.14/hr. There were an additional five students working full-time after receiving their Vocational Diploma and one student working part-time. The mean wage for students who graduated with their Vocational Diploma was \$9.70. See Figure 8 for wage distribution.



Data from Group C was gathered through CVTC's Student Services Department. Data had been compiled into average hourly wage per program, but was not detailed enough to break out full-time vs. part-time employment. It also included individuals counted in Group A and Group B of this study. There was not a way for this researcher to create a nonduplicated mean wage for this group. The mean wage of all employed graduates responding to the questionnaire was \$14.04.

Students in Group A were asked to reveal the accommodations requested on their accommodation plan. *Figure 9* represents these findings, as well as the overall request for services from students enrolled in SERVE. As the viewer will note, academic support, assistive technology, and test accommodations were most frequently requested. A quiet study area was also a high need.



Analysis of the number of requests indicates in 2004-2005, 78 students out of the 158 enrolled in SERVE used assistive technology and 15 out of the 40 graduates used it. Assistive technology was not specified by type (such as voice dictation or scanning/reading software). It should also be noted that computer assistive technology programs are used at CVTC for creating all audio version of textbooks. This study did not discriminate Audio or MP3 requests as

assistive technology, rather, as a generalized accommodation. Ten percent (16 students) of the total registered 2004-2005 SERVE students requested audio materials on tape or MP3 files, and fourteen students, or 35 percent, of last year's graduates used this accommodation.

According to the data returned by the SERVE graduates (Group A), testing accommodations were utilized regularly. Ninety-three percent of Group A requested a nondistractive testing environment as compared to 34% of the 158 enrolled in SERVE.

Group A requested testing accommodations including: 85% requesting paper format (instead of online), 88% requesting a time extension, 5% requesting their tests read, and <5% requested a scribe, test chunking or oral tests. Close investigation of *Figure 7* demonstrates the individuality of a person's accommodations; therefore reinforcing why one accommodation "does not fit all" in a disability categorized group. Students need to continue to advocate for their individual needs, and the college is obligated to provide equal access to them.

Chapter V

Discussion

Introduction:

This study was developed to determine the number of students with disabilities disclosing their disability, arranging and utilizing their accommodation plan, identifying the type of accommodation requested on their accommodation plan, and identifying their career success upon program completion. This study includes looking at the nondisclosed-disabled population to identify career success patterns when services and accommodations are not requested. The purpose of the study is to identify if students with disabilities who disclose their disability and utilize their accommodations through SERVE, a postsecondary academic support lab, have at least an equal to greater completion and placement rate (career success) than those of their nondisabled peers or those who have not utilized SERVE.

A questionnaire was administered to three groups. Group A included all SERVE students (disclosed disabled students with accommodation plans) who completed their program training goal between June 30, 2004 and July 1, 2005. Group B included a random sampling of nonduplicated disabled students who chose not to disclose their disability or request accommodations through the Disability Services Department, but identified themselves as being disabled to other postsecondary faculty members. Group C included nondisabled 2004-2005 graduates. The findings from the three groups were analyzed to identify the career success rate of each group.

Limitations:

This study was completed for use at Chippewa Valley Technical College in Eau Claire, WI. The college is a two year college and is one of the few technical colleges recognized for their strength in serving students with disabilities. Since the population is unique to this school, the data should not be looked at as transferable to other all college locations. Each accommodation plan is developed based on the uniqueness of the disability that is documented. The accommodations are requested by the student and are supported through their individual documentation. Additionally, the sampling size is small. Group A consists of 40 students, Group B consists of 30 students, and Group C consists of 1,240 students. The population size of the study was limited even more by the unsuccessful attempts in contacting some of the graduate students who either relocated or didn't respond to the questionnaire. Group A had 13% that didn't respond, and an additional 20% of those that responded were either not working or not available for work. In Group B, 20% did not respond to the questionnaire and 27% of those that responded were either not working or not available for work. Group C had 25% of the questionnaires not returned. An additional 12% of the respondents in Group C were either not working or unavailable for employment.

Conclusion:

Although it is clear that Group A, the disabled-disclosed students, had a higher career success rate (93%) than the sampling of Group B, the disabled-nondisclosed (70%), one can not assume this is directly related to the students disclosing and receiving accommodations to equalize the playing field. Career success variables could be based on prior work experience, aptitudes, availability of transportation, or flexibility in location, to name a few. Since there has been limited research on the outcomes of the disabled vs. the nondisabled at a postsecondary technical college, additional information needs to be gathered to provide a well-rounded view of

what assists students in becoming successful in finding jobs after they reach their educational goals. When looking at the employment mean for the three groups, it appears it is better not to disclose your disability when seeking employment. Students who did not disclose their disability and did not receive services while attending CVTC, also received no assistance from the Disability Services Department in connecting him/her with external placement agencies. In spite of not having access to placement specialists, the mean wages for Group B was higher than that of Group A. Neither Group A's nor Group B's mean wages closely to that of the total CVTC graduate population (Group C).

From the limited research in this study, Chippewa Valley Technical College continues to provide beneficial services to the disabled-disclosed students. Graduates with disabilities who disclose and request accommodations have equal-to-higher percentages for placement outcomes as their nondisabled and disabled-nondisclosed peers. Their mean wage distribution is encouraging for students deciding between a one-year vs. two-year degree program.

Recommendations:

A number of unanswered questions arose through this study. It is felt by this researcher that additional research should be done to identify the amount of time the disclosed-disabled students used the academic support services (SERVE) or accommodations requested. Future research could include whether the students are using the same accommodations in their employment setting. Additionally, this researcher would find interest in knowing why the disabled-undisclosed (Group B) did not disclose their disability to the Disability Services Department. If these students had documented their disability, would their career success rate have gone up? Since this research is based on graduates 6 months after they leave CVTC, it

would be beneficial to have long-term follow up data, including their length of employment, to validate students' job retention. Students with disabilities need to be trained about the laws that protect them. When attending postsecondary institutions, they need to be prepared to request specific accommodations and verify their need with documentation supporting the request. CVTC needs to take a look at the disabled-nondisclosed group and seek reasons why this group does not request accommodations. Through the exploratory investigation process, one might determine ways to increase retention and improve long-term career success for these individuals.

Finally, Chippewa Valley Technical College needs to look at restructuring their service delivery model to improve technology use. This could open the door for trained professional faculty to use their expertise while educating the student on independency issues. With over 50% of the students currently requesting accommodations and utilizing assistive technology in the SERVE lab, it is essential for faculty to be trained to teach utilizing it. This may involve more training for the seasoned faculty who are used to delivering services in an alternate format; however, through the flexibility in learning new technology and the creativity in providing educational opportunities, the pressure of how to meet the students' demands with minimal faculty will be diminished. Students will become more independent in providing their own accommodations and the instructors will become proctors, specialists, and case managers. Students would develop the self-advocacy skills necessary to make them more marketable in the community and their self-confidence would be enhanced.

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Stout Solutions • Research Services
152 Voc Rehab Building

University of Wisconsin-Stout
P.O. Box 790
Menomonie, WI 54751-0790

715/232-1126
715/232-1749 (fax)
<http://www.uwstout.edu/rps/>

To: Michelle O'Connell

Cc: Dave Swan

From: Sue Foxwell, Research Administrator and Human
Protections Administrator, UW-Stout Institutional
Review Board for the Protection of Human
Subjects in Research (IRB)

Subject: **Protection of Human Subjects in Research**

Your project, "*To Disclose or Not to Disclose a Disability, That is the Question; an Analysis of Career Success within a Postsecondary Institution*" is **Exempt** from review by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. The project is exempt under Categories 2 and 3 of the Federal Exempt Guidelines and holds for 5 years.

1) Informed consent will be sought from each prospective subject or the subject's legally authorized representative, in accordance with, and to the extent required by §46.116.

Reviewer Comment: If minors are involved obtain parental consent.

(2) Informed consent will be appropriately documented, in accordance with, and to the extent required by §46.117

Reviewer Comment: Please indicate that by completing the questionnaire that participants are providing their consent.

Please copy and paste the following message to the top of your survey form before dissemination:

This project has been reviewed by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46

Please contact the IRB if the plan of your research changes. Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and best wishes with your project.

***NOTE: This is the only notice you will receive – no paper copy will be sent.**

2004-2005 Disability Services Graduate Follow-Up

SERVE students only

Associate Degrees:

- Criminal Justice, FT, Hutchinson Technology, \$11.20
- *MP, Supervisory Management, no contact
- Health Information Technology, St. Louis Chiropractic, \$9.00
- LPN, FT, Marshfield Hospital, \$15.64
- Electrical Power Distribution, FT, New Holstein Utilities, \$23.37
- Paralegal, Part time – unrelated, \$7.00
- *LA, Nursing, no contact
- Criminal Justice, FT, ParMar Securities, \$8.50
- CNS, Disabled due to injury/workman's comp.
- CNS, PT, Menards, PC Repair, \$10.45
- *Electromechanical, no contact
- Hotel/Restaurant MGMT, San Fransisco Entertainment, FT, \$30,000/yr
- Nursing, Baldwin Hospital, FT, \$24.56
- Nursing, Luther Hospital, FT, \$25.00
- Nursing, LE Phillips, FT, \$14.80
- Accounting, FT, Bauer Built, Acct., \$11.50
- CIS-Programmer, Not employed, Not looking
- Accounting, FT, UWEC, \$9.00
- Accounting, FT, Hawaiian Electric Co., \$10.00
- Accounting, FT/Temp, Manpower, \$9.10
- * Civil Engineering, no contact
- Nursing, FT, Bloomer Medical Center, \$23.50
- Surgical Tech, Baldwin Medical Center, FT, \$23.00
- Admin Asst., FT-Temp, Mayo Health, \$10.45
- Criminal Justice, FT, Aurora Residential, \$10.60
- Hotel/Restaurant, FT, Bayfield Resort

Vocational Diploma

- Welding, FT, Meyer Mfg. Corp, \$13.45
- Childcare, FT, Hand in Hand, \$7.60
- Office Assistant, Northern Cheese, FT, \$8.20, continued ed. in Agriscience
- Child Care, Color My World, FT, \$7.00
- Child Care, Unemployed-Seeking
- Marine/Outdoor Power Products, continued education into EMT/volunteer firefighter
- Child Care, FT, Manager/unrelated, \$7.00
- Child Care, PT, McDonald's, \$6.30
- *Child Care, no contact
- Child Care, continued education into Associate degree Child Care
- Child Care, continued education into Associate degree Child Care
- Office Assistant, Not employed-seeking
- HVAC, FT, Gene's Heating and Cooling, FT, \$35,000/yr

Completer Menards, accounts payable, FT, \$9.75

2004-2005 Disability Services Follow-Up Report

Student Graduate Outcomes

26 Associate

13 Vocational

1 Completer

40 Total (23 different programs)

24 Gainfully Employed in Related Field

3 Employed in Unrelated Field

2 Unemployed-Seeking

2 Not in labor market (workman's comp)

4 Continuing with Education

5 Unable to Contact

40

29 Students Employable

27/29 = 93% Placement