

# Addressing broad-range needs of college students with learning disability: A comprehensive program providing personal, interpersonal and environmental supports at the University of Florida

Consuelo M. Kreider, MHS, OTR/L, Roxanna M. Bendixen, PhD, OTR/L, William C. Mann, PhD, OTR/L University of Florida Department of Occupational Therapy, Rehabilitation Science Doctoral Program

## Introduction

College students with disabilities face wide-ranging challenges to participation and academic success (MacLeod et al., 2009; Quick, et al., 2003). Needs for support extend beyond the classroom and academic accommodations.

To better understand these broad-range needs, we conducted in-depth individual interviews and focus groups. Participants described:

- needs for self-advocacy
- juggling time, communication, health, social and daily life demands
- reliance on support from health providers
- need for disability training on UF campus.

In response, University of Florida Department of Occupational Therapy spearheaded development of a cross-campus, multi-level program for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) students with learning disabilities (LD). The program capitalizes on occupational therapy's unique understanding of person, task and environment in providing support for college students with LD.

## Pilot Investigation

- N = 22; IRB approval; Written consent
- 2 Focus groups: student group & faculty & staff
- 14 Individual in-depth interviews
- 2 Dynamic interview guides (student & faculty) - Participants led dialogue to topics of saliency

**"It's not enough to have ramps. It's not enough to have length of the test extended. You know there are other kinds of things that have to be done."**

**"...it's up to you...it's mainly the student's responsibility"**



**"...everything that affects you in school affects you in your daily life too"**



## CS<sup>3</sup>LD: Comprehensive Support of STEM Students with Learning Disability

### Conceptual Model:

Personal, interpersonal, and institutional level factors interact to affect academic and health & well-being outcomes.

**Institutional:** Partnership Council; inter-disciplinary, multi-level, cross-campus collaboration between academic & student service units (e.g. Student Health Services).

**Interpersonal:** Multidisciplinary mentorship teams.

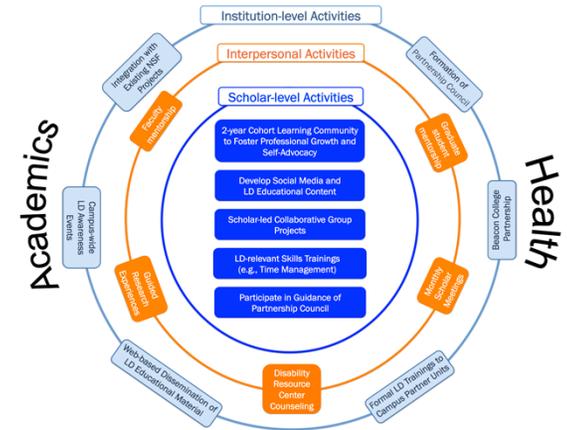
**Personal:** Cohort Learning Community to facilitate self-efficacy and self-advocacy through LD-related learning activities, group discussions, and social media initiatives.

- ❑ 4-year project; National Science Foundation, Directorate for Education and Human Resources, Research in Disability Education



- ❑ Health & STEM: Principal Investigators from Occupational Therapy, Health Education & Behavior, Engineering, and Agricultural & Life Sciences

**Discussion:** For academically successful students, the need for disability related supports extend beyond the classroom to areas of **health, social** and **daily life**. OT interventions can begin to address these broad-range needs before the transition to college.



### References:

- MacLeod, A. & Green, S. (2009). Beyond the books: Case study of a collaborative and holistic support model for university students with Asperger Syndrome. *Studies in Higher Education*, 34(6), 631-646.
- Quick, D., Lehmann, J., & Deniston, T. (2003). Opening doors for students with disabilities on community college campuses: What have we learned? What do we still need to know? *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, 27, 815- 827.