

Self-Managing and Receiving Mentorship Contributes to Feelings of Campus Integration for Undergraduates with Learning Disabilities

Sharon Medina, MOT, Nicolas Harrington, Claudia Luna, Consuelo Kreider, PhD, OTR/L

BACKGROUND

- Students with learning disabilities (LD) experience difficulties managing needs and accessing supports related to their academics and health/wellbeing.
- These difficulties can hinder campus integration which includes peer and faculty interactions, academic development, faculty concern for teaching, and commitment to goals.
- Purpose: Describe experiences of campus integration of undergraduate students with LD using the 5-factor Institutional Integration Scale model.

METHODS

Design and Setting

- Qualitative data was used as part of a larger four year multi level study aimed at developing, refining, and testing a model of support for undergraduates students with LD.

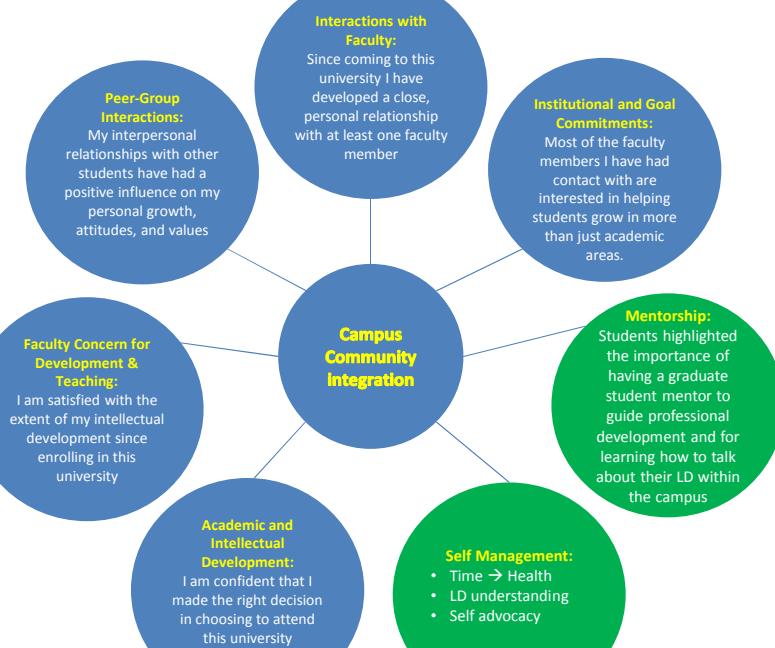
Participants

- Undergraduate participants with LD (N=52) were recruited through disability resource center. Thirteen undergraduates contributed to discussions included in analysis. Participants met monthly and engaged in focused discussions where LD related campus experiences and strategies were shared.

Analysis

- Transcripts from 8 group discussions from the first academic year (fall & spring) of the study were analyzed using the five-factor conceptual model of campus integration from the Institutional Integration Scale (IIS).
- Categories measured in the IIS are peer interactions, faculty interactions, academic development, faculty concerns, and commitments to goals.
- Open coding was used to identify data pertinent to campus integration and the five IIS categories. Axial coding was then used to discern properties of each construct.
- Rigor was enhanced through use of constant comparison of emerging ideas to the data, multiple coders, and regular discussions of evolving understandings.

RESULTS



DISCUSSION

- Health related topics such as stress, sleep schedules, medication management, and exercise routines needs were identified as an important aspect of institutional integration for students with LD. Students' highlighted how these health needs influence all areas of daily life.
- Having a mentor whom they met with regularly surpassed professional development support and included emotional support, insight about time management, and interpersonal skills which facilitated students' ability to integrate to campus.
- LD related time constraints impacted students' ability to balance school demands, health needs, and peer interactions.
- In regards to their communication with faculty students described both positive and negative experiences regarding classroom accommodations.
- Institutional commitments included students' desire to help integrate younger students with LD to campus.

DOMAIN

Academic and Intellectual Development	"There is nothing I have done that has helped me become faster at thinking its finding short cuts and finding ways around things to help me out." —Participant 1
Faculty Concern for Development and Teaching	"Sometimes professors....not everyone thinks that ADHD is real , so they think it is just made up and they think it's just an excuse for people to be slackers , cause that seems to be the stigma that's attached to people with ADHD." —Participant 2
Peer-Group Interactions	"If I sit down and study, I'm going to be studying for a long time. And it becomes kind of like this decision where you have to decide between friends or academic or sleep ." —Participant 3
Interactions with Faculty	"I have had both experiences...I feel like every person with accommodations can relate to both sides of the story because it is a common thing and I don't think professors are thinking in their mind, Oh I am going to blow this guy off...I have definitely had good and bad experiences and the ones that have the better experience is where they're patient they have their social soft skills that they use to respect my privacy and make it a comfortable environment . And the other is there is no patience there is no social grace and that would sum it up ." —Participant 4
Institutional and Goal Commitments	"I feel like I am really... goal driven , like once I am actually invested in something even if it's like detrimental to me sometimes like I will stick with it." —Participant 5
Mentorship	"My mentor seems to really care too, because the few times that I have met with her, were near exams, so she was helping me kind of go through holistic ways to approach test anxiety ... And I just felt really comfortable with her and telling her like about everything so that was good." —Participant 3
Self Management	"Another thing that can really exacerbate the problem (LD symptoms) is lack of sleep ... I think that that shows up extra for people with learning disabilities because it's kind of hitting you from both ends. On the one hand you are sleep deprived because it took you longer to do something and possibly even because... this task is going to take me so long made you put it off longer. And then once you've gotten so upset and so sleep deprived, you have even less time on the other end to benefit..." —Participant 1

CONCLUSION

- Campus integration is multi-faceted, requiring consideration of LD-related needs.
- Participating in a comprehensive model of support may impact students with LD campus integration.
- Findings explicate links between education and health for students with LD.

