Faculty Perception of Attitude, Knowledge, and Accommodations for Students with Learning Disabilities

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of Attitude, Knowledge, and Accommodations

for Students with Learning Disabilities

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RUNNING HEAD: FACULTY PERCEPTION
Faculty Perception

Abstract

Ninety-three (48%) faculty members responded to the questionnaire concerning attitude, knowledge, and willingness to provide accommodations to students with learning disabilities. The variables included were gender, rank, professional position, interaction with students known to have a learning disability, and total years teaching at the college level. The results were analyzed by calculating percentages for each item in the questionnaire. The results indicated that the faculty's knowledge of students with learning disabilities was low; however, the faculty maintained a positive attitude. In addition, the faculty are more willing to provide classroom accommodations than out-of-class accommodations.
Acknowledgements

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Faculty Perception of Attitude, Knowledge, and Accommodations for Students with Learning Disabilities

The field of Special Education is continuing to grow. Twenty years ago a person was rarely identified with a learning disability, but today thousands of students have been diagnosed learning disabled (Gloeckler, 1988). Of these students hundreds have made serious plans to attend college (Scheiber and Talpers, 1987). As more and more students with learning disabilities enter college, faculty must be prepared to support and accommodate these students. The perceptions which college faculty have about students with learning disabilities are a clear sign of their awareness of special education.

Postsecondary education is a realistic option for all persons in the United States. In fact, exclusion from this opportunity is against the law. The Rehabilitation Act, Section 504, states "...no qualified handicapped student shall be excluded from participation in any program receiving financial aid" (1989, p. 146). Therefore, students with learning disabilities have the right to attend a federally funded institution, and the institution must provide services to help disabled
students (Haehl, 1989).

As a result of legislation, the number of students with learning disabilities entering college continues to grow. In 1982, 6% of the 188,000 college freshman in this country responded yes to having a learning disability (Haehl, 1989). According to Houck (1989), symptoms of learning disabilities are documented in 3.8% of the population of 4 year public universities and 11% of students in the 4 year nonsectarian colleges. With a growing awareness of persons with learning disabilities, these percentages are projected to increase. Today, the number of high school students with a learning disability preparing for college continues to increase.

Specifically, Haehl (1989) notes that 67% of high school students with learning disabilities are making plans for postsecondary education. Reported by Haehl (1989), 22% of the 234 students with learning disabilities surveyed expected to graduate from college and eventually obtain a professional degree. With more students with learning disabilities entering college, faculty must begin making the necessary accommodations.
Faculty Perception

A college is responsible for ensuring that accommodations exist at the college. These accommodations begin in the transition to college and continue while the student is enrolled. Houck states, "To promote effective transition into this complex setting, university personnel need knowledge of student attributes that may influence successful functioning in a college environment. At the same time, Learning Disabled students often need assistance as they confront personal strengths and limitations that may influence a successful adjustment and attainment of their personal and career goals" (1989, p. 61). In other words, Houck is emphasizing the importance of individualization.

The college, especially faculty, is responsible for being sensitive to each student's academic, physical, or social characteristics. Each student's strengths and limitations must be evaluated to develop the appropriate educational plan for the student. Selecting the appropriate plan is a difficult task for any college. As stated by Houck, "Selecting appropriate modifications for LD college students is often difficult due to the diversity and intensity of characteristics displayed by this population" (1989, p. 61). Once again, faculty
must place an emphasis on individualization. In the college setting, appropriate techniques for accommodating students will vary, depending on the disability. For example, Gajar (1989) stated, "PL 94-142 mandated an appropriate education for young adults up to 21 years of age.

Educational difficulties are not limited to elementary and secondary populations. Colleges and universities are faced with the responsibility of accommodating students with learning disabilities in their programs (Gajar, 1989). However, prior to accommodating disabled students, colleges must be aware of the common problems which disabled students encounter.

The literature provides a sufficient amount of research which identifies the common weaknesses for college students with a learning disability. The three common areas of academic difficulty are reading, math, and written language (Gajar, 1989).

First, Hughes and Smith (1990) noted reading as the number one problem for high school students with learning disabilities. Postsecondary education requires a significant amount of reading, placing the student with a learning disability at a disadvantage.
(Hughes and Smith, 1990). The result of Hughes and Smith’s (1990) research indicated that students with learning disabilities have the greatest difficulty with comprehension and reading rate. Chall (1987) reported a survey of students with learning disabilities at a community college. The results indicated the community college students average reading level was 8th grade (Chall, 1987). Furthermore, 20% of this group, read at or below the 5th grade level (Chall, 1987). This information is vital to a college faculty member in order to modify the instruction when appropriate.

The second area of difficulty for students with learning disabilities is math. In research conducted by Vogel (1985), she reported that 62% of the students with learning disabilities studied had troubles with word problems and geometry (Hughes and Smith, 1990). Of this same group, 45% had difficulty multiplying (Hughes and Smith, 1990). Finally, in a study by Bireley et al. (1986), 25% of the subjects had problems with basic math skills and 67% had a deficit in higher math (Hughes and Smith, 1990). These percentages indicate a majority of the college students with learning disabilities have a deficit in math. More importantly, college students are
required to take a math course, where more abstract terms are likely to appear. To help these students, faculty should consider teaching specific organizational techniques to math solutions applicable in a variety of settings (Hughes and Smith, 1990). As a result, special considerations are needed for college students with learning disabilities. An informed college faculty member can make the appropriate modifications to help these students succeed.

The third area of difficulty is written expression. Blalock (1981) reported that 80 - 90% of college students with learning disabilities have problems writing. Vogel (1985) states that spelling is the most common deficit. Specifically, a study involving students with learning disabilities and students without learning disabilities was conducted by Vogel and Moran (1982). This studied involved both groups writing essays. The results indicated the students with learning disabilities had twice as many misspellings, which included letter reversals, than the students without a learning disability. Punctuation, grammar and sentence complexity were other areas where students with learning disabilities fell short.
At another large midwestern university, Cowen (1988) reported 76% of the students with learning disabilities studied have difficulties with spelling, punctuation, and grammar. In addition, all of Cowen’s subjects scored below the mean on the Written Language Cluster (Hughs and Smith, 1990). The percentage of college students with a learning disability in writing is high.

Writing is a valuable tool to postsecondary students. Therefore, assistance or guidance from college faculty is necessary. Instructing a student to complete a writing assessment is the most common technique used to detect a writing deficit (Hughs and Smith, 1990). If a problem exists, researchers at Wayne State University suggest several strategies such as structured teaching of basic writing skills or free writing in a journal to improve fluency (Hughs and Smith, 1990). Most importantly, whether the deficit be in reading, math or written expression, appropriate modifications are vital to the success of college students with learning disabilities. Faculty attitudes and knowledge can have an impact on students if the faculty are not informed about common academic deficits which plague college students with learning disabilities.
Specifically, faculty perceptions include attitudes, knowledge, and willingness to provide accommodations for students with a learning disability. Schmidt (1982) stated that success for a college student with a learning disability is dependent on the faculty’s willingness to accommodate the student (Levinson, 1986). The research offers many suggestions for supporting students with learning disabilities. College support services and tutoring programs are increasing at colleges (Dodd, et al. 1990). According to Dodd et al. (1990) these services include social, academic, and career counseling; faculty accommodations in instruction; and accommodations from college administration. Support services also promote a positive working relationship with college faculty (Marchant, 1990). These services provide a link between the student and the faculty.

Another common support service is the crossdisciplinary approach. As suggested by Shaw and Norlander (1985), this approach depends on service from counseling, higher education, and special education. All of these areas are vital to the successful development of students with learning disabilities.
In addition, faculty are an important component of higher education in the crossdisciplinary approach. Once a support service is utilized, the student and teacher must agree on appropriate accommodations. As stated by Vogel and Sattler (1981) faculty accommodations include untimed tests, avoiding complex test questions and the use of double negatives, allowing the use of a multiplication table or a calculator, and oral responses to exam questions. A college faculty member must be willing to set forth extra effort to implement these accommodations. In a survey by Bumba and Goodin (1986), three-fourths of the 586 faculty supported making academic adjustments for students with learning disabilities (Haehl, 1989). According to Bumba and Goodin (1986) the five academic adjustments are: "... (1) give Learning Disabled students priority in registration, (2) give Learning Disabled students extra time to complete tests, (3) extend deadlines for class projects, (4) give Learning Disabled students copies of instructors' notes, and (5) allow oral response to essay exams" (p. 147). The faculty involved with this survey agreed to provide students with learning disabilities these accommodations.
Dodd et al. (1990) cited another study by Anderson, Matthew, and Skolnick (1987) studying faculty willingness to support and accommodate students with learning disabilities. Of the 100 faculty responding, 64% were willing to provide instructional, examination, and additional academic accommodations (Dodd et al., 1990). Specific faculty accommodations included copies of lecture notes, tape-recording the lectures, modified testing procedures, proofreaders, and notetakers (Dodd et al., 1990). This research supports the faculty’s willingness to provide additional services to students with learning disabilities.

Yet, Dodd et al. cited research indicating a lack of support by faculty for college students with learning disabilities. Of the 121 colleges and universities responding to the survey, 14 reported that the support services are nonexistent with the exception of a tutoring program (Barbaro, 1982). In addition, faculty are making no attempts to modify their instruction (Barbaro, 1982). Without modification in instruction, the students with learning disabilities are missing out on the benefits of support services. Barisa and Rogers (1990) also examined faculty perceptions of students with learning disabilities.
The results concluded that faculty are unsure of how to help students with learning disabilities (Barisa and Rogers, 1990). As a result, faculty are not able to provide the necessary accommodations. Others, do not understand the meaning of being learning disabled, therefore believing common myths or generalizations (Barisa and Rogers, 1990). Finally, some faculty view students with learning disabilities as lazy, or have little faith in the student's ability to succeed (Barisa and Rogers, 1990). A teacher's misconceptions of special education is a critical area to address when making accommodations for these students.

Faculty support and willingness to provide accommodations for students with learning disabilities are evident in the support services developed by two universities. First, Northern Kentucky University developed "remedial and compensatory techniques" used by the faculty for students with learning disabilities (Washington, 1981). Washington reported that this learning model had a positive impact on the students. Second, at Colorado State University a cooperative program between faculty and students was developed in 1978 (Neault, 1983). This program provided three services: Assessment
and Diagnosis, Remediation, and Advocacy (Neault, 1983). The faculty are an important component of each area, however their willingness to accommodate students occurs during the remediation stage.

In southwest Virginia, a small to medium sized co-educational college with approximately 3,200 students had reported 76 students with a learning disability. The major support service at this college is the Learning Center. This center provides tutoring sessions, assistance with the computer, and seminars in skills such as time management. In addition to these accommodations, faculty should be providing the necessary support and accommodations for students with learning disabilities. The faculty’s perceived attitude, knowledge and willingness to provide accommodations for students with learning disabilities will determine the extent to which services are available. This study was designed to determine the faculty’s knowledge and willingness to provide students with learning disabilities accommodations in college.
Method

Subjects

The subjects were faculty from a medium sized, 4-year Liberal Arts college in Virginia. There are approximately 193 faculty members at this institution of higher education. Of the 193 faculty, roughly, 123 are male and 70 are female. The college is grouped into three schools. These schools are the School of Business & Economics, the School of Education & Human Services, and the School of Liberal Arts & Sciences. The School of Business & Economics has approximately 24 faculty members. The School of Education and Human Services has approximately 49 faculty members. The School of Liberal Arts has roughly 120 faculty members. The faculty were ranked accordingly as Instructor, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor.

Instruments/Materials

A questionnaire was distributed to the faculty (See Appendix A). The questionnaire was field tested on several faculty members prior to being mailed to the entire faculty. The questionnaire had
several components. The first section was a faculty profile. The faculty profile included questions about the areas of teaching, years of college teaching, gender, and professional rank. The questions in the second section addressed common academic difficulties for learning disabled students, strategies which the faculty member had implemented, and the amount of exposure a faculty person had with learning disabled students. Using a Likert scale, the third section contained questions assessing faculty support and accommodations for students with a learning disability. Finally, the questionnaire encouraged written comments from the faculty member.

The questionnaire items for Part II were obtained from an unpublished manuscript, *Attitudes and Knowledge of Faculty and Administrators Towards Learning Disabled Students and Implications for Services*, by Rachel Mathews. The list of accommodations in Part III of the questionnaire were obtained from a checklist developed by the Coordinator of this college's Learning Center.

Procedure

The questionnaire was distributed to all faculty in the Spring of
1994. Participation in this questionnaire was completely voluntary.
The questionnaire was sent by Dr. Whitfield, a faculty member in the
Special Education Department, to minimize the bias a faculty member
might have in answering questions from a student or former student.
The percentage of faculty members selecting each response option
was computed in each section of the questionnaire. Information that
might identify a particular professor was not included in the results. A
summary of the results was sent to each faculty member.
Results

Instrument

One hundred and ninety-four questionnaires were distributed to the faculty. Forty-eight percent (N = 93) of the faculty responded to the questionnaire. The first section of the questionnaire included variables such as gender, rank, professional position, interaction with students known to have a learning disability, and total years teaching at the college level. The second section of the questionnaire assessed the faculty’s knowledge of and attitude toward students with learning disabilities. The third section of the questionnaire surveyed classroom, examination, and out-of-class accommodations for students with learning disabilities. The data was analyzed by calculating the percentage of faculty responses for each response option in all three sections of the questionnaire.

Faculty Profile

The faculty first responded to the faculty profile section. (See Appendix C for Figures 1-5.) In the category of gender, 53% (n = 49) of the respondents were male, 43% (n = 40) were female, and 4%
(n = 4) did not respond. As for faculty rank, 20% (n = 19) were instructors, 29% (n = 27) were assistant professors, 26% (n = 24) were associate professors, 19% (n = 18) were professors, and 5% (n = 5) did not respond. The faculty were asked to list the department in which they taught. This data was grouped into the three schools at the college. Of the responses, 27% (n = 25) were from the School of Education & Human Services, 48% (n = 45) were from the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, 13% (n = 12) were from the School of Business & Economics, and 12% (n = 10) did not respond. Ninety-seven percent (n = 90) of the faculty indicated interaction with students having a learning disability. Two percent (n = 2) of the faculty had no interaction with these students and nine percent (n = 8) did not respond. Of the 97% (n = 90) responding that they had interacted with these students, 82% (n = 76) indicated the interaction as a professional interaction and 54% (n = 50) indicated a personal interaction. Finally, the faculty profile assessed the total number of years the faculty had been teaching at the college level. Thirty-seven percent (n = 34) of the respondents had taught 0-10 years, 20% (n = 19) had taught 11-20 years, 27% (n = 25) had taught 21-30
years, 8% (n = 7) had taught 31-40 years, and 8% (n = 7) did not respond.

Attitude and Knowledge

The questions in Part II were categorized as "attitude" and "knowledge" questions. (See Appendix C, Figures 6-7.) Each question had three response options—Agree, Don’t Know, and Disagree. The percentages were calculated for the response options for each question.

First, the results of the "attitude" questions on Part II of the questionnaire were calculated. (See Appendix B, Table 1.) Eighty-six percent (n = 80) of the faculty responding agreed it was possible to teach persons with learning disabilities at the college level. Eighty-four percent (n = 78) of the respondents believed teaching students with learning disabilities could be very rewarding. Seventy-seven percent (n = 71) of the faculty responding agreed that it is acceptable to spend additional funds to make this college accessible to students with learning disabilities. Sixty-four percent (n = 59) of the respondents shared the belief that all of us are disabled to some
Only 5% (n = 5) of the faculty agreed that few students with learning disabilities will succeed in college. In addition, 5% (n = 5) of the faculty believed postsecondary educational standards should be different for students with learning disabilities. Eight percent (n = 8) of the faculty responding believed having students with learning disabilities in class takes away from the quality of education other students receive and support services for students with learning disabilities at the collegiate level tend to delay the development of self-reliance and independence. Eight percent (n = 7) of the respondents also believed people with a learning disability take more from society than they give back.

Of the faculty responding, only 12% (n = 11) feel uncomfortable around people with a learning disability. Fourteen percent (n = 13) of the respondents believed people with a learning disability should be exempt from some graduation requirements.

More specifically, 39% (n = 36) of the faculty responding did not know if the classroom environment was enriched by the presence of students with learning disabilities. Twenty-six percent (n = 24) of
the respondents did not know if students with learning disabilities should be considered handicapped. In addition, 29% (n = 27) of the faculty responding did not know if students with learning disabilities were often perceived as irresponsible.

Second, the results of the "knowledge" questions on Part II of the questionnaire were calculated. (See Appendix B, Table 2.) Ninety percent (n = 83) of the faculty responding knew where to refer students with learning disabilities for help at this college. And, 78% (n = 76) of the respondents knew that this college has special services for students with learning disabilities. Seventy-six percent (n = 71) of the faculty responding stated that an adapted education program for students with learning disabilities may not eliminate academic failure. Fifty-four percent (n = 51) of the faculty responding believed poor writing and spelling skills were frequent problems faced by students with learning disabilities.

Only 28% (n = 26) of the faculty stated that they know when to provide assistance to students with learning disabilities in the classroom. And, 43% (n = 39) of the faculty believed they knew how to offer assistance to individuals with learning disabilities in the
classroom. This result was important in evaluating the faculty’s perceptions of students with learning disabilities. Twenty percent (n = 19) of the faculty responding believed they could recognize a student with a learning disability.

The percentage of faculty members responding "don’t know" to the "knowledge" questions on the questionnaire was calculated. Thirty-three percent (n = 31) of the faculty responding did not know if students with learning disabilities in reading were slow readers with difficulties in comprehension. Of the faculty responding, 31% (n = 29) did not know if poor academic performance of students with learning disabilities was most likely a result of study habits. Finally, 28% of the respondents stated that students with learning disabilities at the postsecondary level were protected from discriminatory educational practices.

The responses to the "attitude" questions were overwhelmingly positive toward students with learning disabilities. Eighty-four percent (n = 78) of the faculty believed teaching students with learning disabilities was very rewarding. Seventy-seven percent (n = 71) of the faculty believed it was acceptable to spend additional funds to make
this college accessible to students with learning disabilities. Only 8% (n = 7) of the faculty believed support services for students with learning disabilities at the postsecondary level tend to delay development of self-reliance and independence.

Conversely, the faculty's response to the knowledge questions were different. For example, only 28% (n = 26) of the faculty responding knew when to provide assistance to students with learning disabilities. Only 65% (n = 60) of the faculty responding knew that students with learning disabilities at the postsecondary level are protected from discriminatory educational practices by federal law. Thirty-three percent (n = 31) of the faculty responding did not know if students with learning disabilities in reading were often slow readers with difficulties in comprehension. The faculty responded positively to the "attitude" questions, but their response to the "knowledge" questions was disappointingly low.

Accommodations

In Part III of the questionnaire faculty were asked if they agreed or disagreed with providing specific classroom, examination, and out-
of-class accommodations. (See Appendix C, Figures 8-10.) The percentages were calculated for each group of accommodations on the questionnaire.

The first group of questions on Part III of the questionnaire identified the faculty's willingness to provide classroom accommodations. (See Appendix C, Figure 8.) Ninety percent (n = 84) of the faculty responding agreed to allow students with learning disabilities to tape record lectures and request a special seating location. Eighty-seven percent (n = 81) of the faculty responding agreed to provide oral and written assignments to students with learning disabilities. Eighty-four percent (n = 78) agreed to provide students with learning disabilities the use of a scribe or notetaker. Of the faculty responding, 82% agreed to provide students with learning disabilities extended time for completing assignments, and the use of adaptive equipment such as an overhead projector. Yet, only 73% of the faculty responding agreed with providing students with learning disabilities the use of an interpreter in the classroom.
The second group of questions on Part III of the questionnaire identified the faculty's willingness to provide examination accommodations. (See Appendix C, Figure 9.) Ninety-three percent \( (n=86) \) of the faculty responding agreed to provide an individual testing room to reduce distractions during examinations. Ninety-one percent \( (n=85) \) of the faculty responding agreed to provide extended time on examinations. Eighty-seven percent \( (n=81) \) of the faculty responding agreed to allow students with learning disabilities the use of a word processor. However, only 65% \( (n=60) \) of the faculty responding agreed to provide students with learning disabilities the examination in an alternative format.

The third group of questions on Part III of the questionnaire identified the faculty's willingness to provide out-of-class accommodations. (See Appendix C, Figure 10.) Of the faculty responding, 90% \( (n=83) \) agreed to allow students with learning disabilities to receive additional diagnostic assessment. Sixty-nine percent \( (n=64) \) of the faculty agreed to provide special housing arrangements. Sixty-two percent \( (n=57) \) of the faculty responding agreed to provide a reduced academic course load. Only 31% \( (n=29) \)
of the faculty responding agreed to allow course substitutions or waivers for students with learning disabilities. Faculty were more willing to provide classroom and examination accommodations than out-of-class accommodations.

Faculty Comments

Finally, the faculty responding to the questionnaire were asked to provide additional comments. Twenty-six percent (n = 24) of the faculty respondents completed the additional comments section. The results were separated into two groups--comments related to attitudes & knowledge about learning disabilities and questionnaire semantics. The following is a summary of the faculty’s responses.

First, the faculty commented on their attitudes and knowledge of students with learning disabilities. Six of the respondents believed faculty should make appropriate accommodations to insure student success. However, these same respondents were concerned about waiving academic requirements. They believed academic standards should not be lowered for the benefit of the student with a learning disability. This group of faculty believed the key to success was
appropriate accommodation, not exemptions or waivers.

Two of the faculty stated that they relied on the services from the college's learning center. The faculty members frequently discussed necessary accommodations which challenged the student appropriately. These respondents were pleased with the help they received. Yet, one respondent believed the feedback from the learning center was negative.

In addition, other interesting responses were stated. One faculty member believed the college was not "consistent in philosophy and practice...because not all faculty are receptive to individuals less than perfect." Another faculty member stated, "...a college has standards--students need to measure up or go into another line of endeavor...We need to attract more students at the upper end of the IQ scale." In addition a professor stated, "There must be a realization that 'too much help' can be as damaging as no help at all. Not all LD's can be helped or encouraged to continue in certain academic areas."

One faculty member had encountered many students with learning disabilities. In most cases this person was more than willing
to provide accommodations. In other cases, this faculty member believed the student with learning disabilities created "unreasonable demands and occasionally lacked the motivation needed to pursue his/her studies".

Finally, one professor strongly believed that students provided with proper accommodations will succeed. This faculty member has a learning disability and was provided with the appropriate accommodations in order to succeed in college. This faculty member had not heard any objections from peers.

The next group of comments related to the questionnaire's semantics. Two faculty members believed Part III of the questionnaire did not provide enough choices. Five faculty members believed the questions were too vague and ambiguous. Many questions carried "implications that could lead to a variety of answers". One respondent believed the surveyor had a "hidden agenda". Two of the respondents stated the instrument was a "good questionnaire".
Faculty Perception

Discussion

The faculty responding were genuinely willing to support students with learning disabilities. They had a positive attitude, but lacked general knowledge concerning learning disabilities. For example, 86% (n = 80) of the faculty responding believed it was possible to teach students with learning disabilities effectively. Yet only 28% (n = 26) knew when to provide assistance to students with learning disabilities and 43% (n = 39) knew how to offer assistance to students with learning disabilities. In addition, 77% (n = 71) of the faculty responding believed it was acceptable to spend additional funds to make this college accessible to students with learning disabilities.

A lack of knowledge often results in unnecessary or false stereotypes. As mentioned earlier, one faculty member stated, "...We need to attract more students at the upper end of the IQ scale." The vast majority of learning disabled students, especially those who would attempt college, have an average or above average IQ. A person with a learning disability has a deficit in a basic psychological process, specifically in the area of written or spoken language (Houck,
1984). A specific learning disability is independent from his or her IQ.

For the most part, faculty responding were willing to provide accommodations to students with learning disabilities. An overwhelming number of faculty responding were willing to provide classroom and examination accommodations. Ninety-three percent (n=86) of the faculty agreed to provide an individual testing room to reduce distractions. The faculty responding also agreed, by 90% (n=84), to allow students with learning disabilities to tape record lectures and request a special seating arrangement.

Other faculty responding had reservations about providing out-of-class accommodations. Fifty-seven percent (n=62) of the faculty did not agree with providing course substitutions or waivers. Only, five percent (n=5) of the faculty responding believed postsecondary education standards should be different for students with learning disabilities. And, only 14% (n=13) of the respondents believed people with a learning disability should be exempt from some graduation requirements. These three percentages support the faculty’s belief in maintaining academic standards. In addition, the faculty stated that providing course substitutions or waivers was sacrificing college
Legislation is another important consideration, especially for colleges receiving federal financial aid. Only, 65% (n = 60) of the faculty members responding agreed that students with learning disabilities were protected from discriminatory educational practices by federal law. Unfortunately, 28% (n = 26) did not know about the law and 4% (n = 4) did not think there was a law at all. The Rehabilitation Act, Section 504, states, "...no qualified handicapped student shall be excluded from participation in any program receiving financial aid" (1989, p. 146). As a result, colleges receiving financial benefits from the government are required to provide appropriate accommodations to students with learning disabilities.

A limitation of this study was the use of descriptive statistics. The results are useful for this college and can not be generalized beyond this sample.

In addition, the questionnaire had limitations. For example, the experimenter had to assume all the respondents answered the questions honestly. Also, the faculty profile included too many demographic questions, increasing the chance of identifying the
respondent. Part III of the questionnaire needed more response choices than simply "agree" and "disagree". Perhaps a 4-5 point Likert scale could be used, with a separate "don’t know" response category.

There are many suggestions for future studies. First, studying perceptions and accommodations is a lot to complete in one academic year. If the researcher chooses either to study perceptions or accommodations, then a more in depth study could be completed. For example, the researcher could include the calculation of mean scores and standard deviations for each item if a different response format is developed.

Second, interviewing a randomly selected group of faculty in addition to surveying faculty might produce more valid results. Personal interviews may provide more in-depth information.

Third, the cover letter could have explained that this study was a research project developed by a college student and a faculty member. Faculty might be more willing to complete a survey if it is a "joint" thesis project.
Finally, many question items from Part II of the survey were difficult for faculty to interpret. Two faculty members stated that the questions from Part II of the questionnaire were too "open-ended" and ambiguous. As a result, the responses to the questions in Part II of the questionnaire were often "it depends". This response was not one of the choices on the questionnaire. Other faculty members were unclear about the meaning of terminology used in the questionnaire. For example, faculty were unsure of the researcher's interpretation of "disabled" or "handicapped". Specifically, one faculty member stated that providing a definition of learning disability on the questionnaire would have been helpful.

In evaluating the results of this study, the importance of faculty education is necessary. This research indicated that the faculty's attitude was positive, but they lacked basic knowledge. A series of in-services or faculty development seminars encourages education in the field of learning disabilities and might eliminate myths and unnecessary stereotypes about students with learning disabilities.
References


Faculty Perception


Mathews, R. (date). Attitudes and Knowledge of Faculty and Administrators Toward Learning Disabled Students and Implications for Services. Unpublished manuscript.


March 21, 1994

Dear

Attached is a faculty questionnaire about support and accommodations for students with learning disabilities. The purpose of the questionnaire is to survey the perceptions of Longwood College Faculty in regards to support and accommodations for students with learning disabilities. This information will be used to gain valuable insight into the faculty's understanding of students with learning disabilities.

Though the cover letter is personalized, the questionnaire is completely anonymous. After finishing the questionnaire, place it in the enclosed envelope, and drop it in campus mail. This procedure insures that you will not be identified.

Please complete and return the questionnaire by Friday, April 15th. Thank you for your time and effort. Your willingness to participate in this study will benefit Longwood’s educational development.

For informational purposes, a summary of the results will be mailed to each faculty member. Should you have any questions, please contact me at extension 2204.

Sincerely,

Patricia Whitfield, Ph. D.
Longwood College Faculty Questionnaire

Part I: Place a check on the appropriate line.
1. _____ Male _____ Female
2. _____ Instructor _____ Assistant Professor
   _____ Associate Professor _____ Professor
3. List the Department in which you teach: __________________________
4. I have interacted with persons known to have a learning disability?
   _____ Yes _____ No
   If yes, check type: _____ Professional _____ Personal
5. Total years teaching at the college level: ____________

Part II: Read each statement below and circle ONE number which represents your opinion. Use the following scale: 1--Strongly Agree
         2--Agree
         3--I Don’t Know
         4--Disagree
         5--Strongly Disagree

1. Classroom environments are enriched by the presence of students with learning disabilities. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I believe teaching students with learning disabilities could be very rewarding. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I feel uncomfortable around people with a learning disability. 1 2 3 4 5
4. All of us are disabled to some degree. 1 2 3 4 5
5. People with a learning disability take more from society than they give back. 1 2 3 4 5
6. People with a learning disability should be exempt from some postsecondary graduation requirements. 1 2 3 4 5
7. Few students with learning disabilities will succeed in college. 1 2 3 4 5
8. Having students with learning disabilities in the classroom takes away from the quality of education other students receive. 1 2 3 4 5
9. It is acceptable to spend additional funds to make this college accessible to students with learning disabilities. 1 2 3 4 5
Faculty Perception

1--Strongly Agree
2--Agree
3--I Don’t Know
4--Disagree
5--Strongly Disagree

10. Students with learning disabilities should not be considered handicapped.

11. Students with learning disabilities are often perceived as irresponsible.

12. Poor writing and spelling skills are frequent problems faced by students with learning disabilities.

13. This college has special services for students with learning disabilities.

14. To be realistic, postsecondary education standards should be different for students with learning disabilities.

15. Poor academic performance of students with learning disabilities is most likely a result of study habits.

16. I can recognize a student with a learning disability.

17. I know when to provide assistance to students with learning disabilities in my class.

18. Support services for students with learning disabilities at the postsecondary level tend to delay development of self-reliance and independence.

19. An adapted education program for students with learning disabilities may not eliminate academic failure.

20. It is possible to effectively teach persons with learning disabilities at the college level.

21. I know how to offer assistance to individuals with learning disabilities in my class.

22. I know where to refer students with learning disabilities for help at this college.
23. Students with learning disabilities at the postsecondary level are protected from discriminatory educational practices by federal law.  

24. Students with learning disabilities in reading are often slow readers with difficulties in comprehension.

Part III: Check ONE response for each statement.

I agree or disagree with providing the following classroom accommodations for students with learning disabilities.

1. Tape record lectures

2. Use of a scribe/notetaker

3. Special seating location

4. Use of an interpreter

5. Extended time for assignments

6. Assignments given both orally and in writing

7. Adaptive equipment/aids (ie: overhead projector)

I agree or disagree with providing the following examination accommodations for students with learning disabilities.

1. Use of a reader/scribe

2. Extended time

3. Individual testing room to reduce distractions
4. Use of a word processor
5. Alternate formats (ie: essay, oral, etc...)  
6. Adaptive equipment (ie: overhead projector)

I agree or disagree with providing the following out of class accommodations for students with learning disabilities.

1. Additional diagnostic assessment  
2. Reduced course load  
3. Priority to schedule classes  
4. Special housing arrangements  
5. Course substitution or waiver

Additional Comments:

Thank you!
Table 1
Faculty Response to Attitude Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude Questions</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>DK</th>
<th>DA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Classroom environments are enriched by the presence of students with learning disabilities.</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I believe teaching students with learning disabilities could be very rewarding.</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I feel uncomfortable around people with a learning disability.</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. All of us are disabled to some degree.</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. People with a learning disability take more from society than they give back.</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. People with a learning disability should be exempt from some graduation requirements.</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Few students with learning disabilities will succeed in college.</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Having students with LD in class takes away from the quality of education other students receive.</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. It is acceptable to spend additional funds to make this college accessible to students with learning disabilities.</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Students with learning disabilities should not be considered handicapped.</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Students with learning disabilities are often perceived as irresponsible.</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. To be realistic, postsecondary ed. standards should be different for students with learning disabilities.</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Support services for students with LD at the collegiate level tend to delay dev. of self-reliance &amp; independence.</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. It is possible to effectively teach persons with learning disabilities at the college level.</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A = Agree    DK = Don’t Know    DA = Disagree
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge Questions</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>DK</th>
<th>DA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. Poor writing and spelling skills are frequent problems faced by students with learning disabilities.</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=51</td>
<td>n=24</td>
<td>n=14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. This college has special services for students with learning disabilities.</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=76</td>
<td>n=11</td>
<td>n=3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Poor academic performance of students with learning disabilities is most likely a result of study habits.</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>n=29</td>
<td>n=44</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. I can recognize a student with a learning disability.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=19</td>
<td>n=18</td>
<td>n=51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I know when to provide assistance to students with learning disabilities in my class.</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=26</td>
<td>n=27</td>
<td>n=33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. An adapted education program for students with learning disabilities may not eliminate academic failure.</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=71</td>
<td>n=18</td>
<td>n=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I know how to offer assistance to individuals with learning disabilities for help at this college.</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=39</td>
<td>n=29</td>
<td>n=21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I know where to refer students with learning disabilities for help at this college.</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=83</td>
<td>n=1</td>
<td>n=7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Students with LD at the postsecondary level are protected from discriminatory educational practices.</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=60</td>
<td>n=26</td>
<td>n=4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Students with learning disabilities in reading are often slow readers with difficulties in comprehension.</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=52</td>
<td>n=31</td>
<td>n=7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A = Agree         DK = Don't Know         DA = Disagree
FACULTY PROFILE RESPONSES - GENDER
N=93

PERCENTAGES
MALE  53
FEMALE  43
DID NOT RESPOND  4

N = 49
40
4
FACULTY PROFILE RESPONSES - RANK
N=93

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asst Professor</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assoc Professor</td>
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<td>Professor</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Respond</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
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FACULTY PROFILE RESPONSES - SCHOOLS
N=93

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUC/HUMAN SERVICES</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIBERAL ARTS</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUSINESS &amp; ECONOMICS</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DID NOT RESPOND</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12%</td>
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</table>

Figure 3
FACULTY PROFILE RESPONSES - INTERACTION
WITH LEARNING DISABLED (N=93)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>DID NOT RESPOND</th>
<th>PROFESSIONAL</th>
<th>PERSONAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>PERCENTAGE</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>54</td>
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</table>
FACULTY PROFILE RESPONSES - COLLEGE LEVEL TEACHING YEARS (N=93)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DID NOT RESPOND</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FACULTY RESPONSES TO ATTITUDES QUESTIONS
N=93

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION #</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>DON'T KNOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>42</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% of responses:

AGREE: 38% 38% 21% 21% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14%
DISAGREE: 38% 38% 21% 21% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14%
DON'T KNOW: 38% 38% 21% 21% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14% 14%
FACULTY RESPONSES TO KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONS
N=93

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION #</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>19</th>
<th>21</th>
<th>22</th>
<th>23</th>
<th>24</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>70</td>
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<td>%</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<td>76</td>
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<td>90</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>44</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
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<td>%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>48</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON'T KNOW</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33</td>
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</table>
FACULTY RESPONSES TO CLASSROOM ACCOMMODATIONS (N=93)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tape Record Lectures</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screennotetaker</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Seating</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreter</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Deadlines</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral &amp; Written</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive Equipment</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage responses indicate the number of faculty members who agree or disagree with the accommodations.
FACULTY RESPONSES TO EXAMINATION ACCOMMODATIONS (N=93)

Figure 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reader/Skimmer</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Time</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Testing</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Processor</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternate Formats</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive Equipment</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>60%</td>
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</table>

Total respondents: 93
FACULTY RESPONSES TO
OUT-OF-CLASS ACCOMMODATIONS (N=93)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADTL DIAGNOSTIC ASST</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REDUCED COURSE LOAD</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHEDULE PRIORITY</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COURSE WAIVERS/SUITS</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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