



Transcript of Conference Call Presentation

Postsecondary Supports for Individuals with Disabilities: Latest Research Findings

presented by:

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MS. JOHNSON: Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition's national teleconference on postsecondary supports for individuals with disabilities, the latest research findings. I am Donna Johnson, and I am one of the project coordinators with the National Center here at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis.

Today's teleconference will focus on the National Center for the Study of Postsecondary Educational Supports' research on critical areas of support provision within postsecondary education for students with disabilities, and the implications of this research for policy and practice. The three critical areas that Dr. Stodden and Dr. Whelley are going to present today focus upon (1) the preparation for postsecondary education by students with disabilities, (2) coordination of related supports and services with educational supports, and (3) transition to subsequent employment and quality adult living.

I would like to give you some background information on both Dr. Robert Stodden and Dr. Teresa Whelley. Dr. Stodden is the director of the Center on Disability Studies and the National Center for the Study of Postsecondary Educational Supports at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. He is also a professor of special education at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and he is currently president of the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD). Previously, he served as

chairperson of the Department of Special Education at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and coordinator of the Career and Vocational Special Needs Training Programs at Boston College.

Over the past 25 years, Dr. Stodden has served as principal investigator/director of more than 100 research and training projects spanning the areas of secondary school transition, postsecondary education, and employment of youth with special learning and behavior needs. He has also been an invited speaker and presenter at many international and national conferences, focused on the preparation of employment of youth with special needs and disabilities, and has served as a consultant for several state departments and national initiatives.

Dr. Whelley completed her Ed.D. at Peabody College at Vanderbilt University in 1990. She is the research coordinator of the National Center of the Study of Postsecondary Educational Supports at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Dr. Whelley has family members who have disabilities, and she has worked with people with disabilities for 25 years. She has also worked in the area of transition from school-to-work for 15 years. Dr. Whelley's research interests include postsecondary education and disability, transition-to-work, families of people with disabilities, and people with significant cognitive disabilities.

DR. STODDEN: Thank you, Donna, and good morning everybody from Honolulu. What I am going to do is talk a little bit about the

importance of the study of postsecondary education and particularly, postsecondary educational supports for people with disabilities. Actually the vision or mission of our center focuses upon postsecondary education as one of the lifelong learning vehicles that is perceived as a major pathway for youth with disabilities, or persons with disabilities, to achieve an improved quality of life. The reason I am bringing this up is that I think there is continuous questioning of the value of postsecondary education for persons with disabilities, and whether postsecondary education actually equates quality employment within professional career areas and whether that, in turn, equates an improved quality of life.

So, behind everything we are going to be talking about today, and behind this whole area of study, is always the question of what the value or the outcome of the investment is in this area of study, and obviously the whole investment of supporting people with disabilities to access, retain, and succeed in postsecondary education. If you are interested in pursuing any and all kinds of background information related to this discussion, I want to give you our Web site, <http://www.rrtc.hawaii.edu>. Everything we are talking about is backed up with papers and various studies and findings briefs. We are going to talk about the framework around that NCSPE has applied to this area of study, and then I will talk about some of the overall issues related to this framework and the studies that are being done, and then some of the positive signs that I think should be real encouraging to further study in this area. We have been working in an organized framework or structure supporting sets of studies that are focused on major areas of issues. I think one of the things we noticed when we first initiated this was the need to review ways youth with disabilities were prepared in secondary school, how preparation for transition occurs, and how there are major breakdowns in that preparation and major barriers created as students move through secondary school and attempt or seek to transition and access into postsecondary school. There are many policy, procedure, and practice implications which result in barriers for youth with

disabilities and their families that often originate in secondary school preparation. Thus, one of the areas we have been looking at is the secondary school preparation of youth with disabilities. Second, we are looking at postsecondary education environments and attempting to ascertain what contributes to successful access, retention, and completion in postsecondary settings. Those seem to be the three critical areas of study, or at least things to look at— (1) whether kids can access, what all the issues around accessing are, (2) issues related to retention and moving forward through postsecondary education in a timely manner, and (3) then there are a number of issues around completing postsecondary education and transition on into professional employment.

The third area of study that we are looking at is what happens to youth with disabilities after they complete or leave postsecondary education. As I mentioned, there are real concerns around access to subsequent employment, particularly in professional areas that one might be trained in. There are real concerns and issues around looking at the transfer of supports, services, and technology in the workplace or lack of it, and how that impacts and creates barriers for youth with disabilities.

So we have identified issues in those domains—preparation, access, retention, completion, and then transition to subsequent employment. We have moved to looking at four areas or clusters of studies across those three domains or settings. The first one relates to advocacy and self-determination and career development. The focus within this area is whether youth are prepared to advocate for themselves; what the requirements or needs to be an advocate for themselves related to access, retention, and postsecondary education; and what those requirements are as one attempts to move into professional employment.

The second area of study is looking at the types of services, supports, and accommodations that one receives in postsecondary education and other postschool environments. There is a lot of evidence that indicates that there are tremendous shifts in the use of terminology and the actual provision of such technology as one prepares in secondary school,

moves to postsecondary school, then moves into employment. And the value and role of each type of support is interpreted differently in each of those environments—the terminology, and then the actual provision of those things. That whole area of study is being looked at as a major barrier for youth with disabilities.

The third area of study across the three environments relates to interagency coordination and management of one's related services with educational supports. One of the things that's come forth significantly is that youth with disabilities are typically overwhelmed in postsecondary education with the whole effort of managing their educational and related supports and actually trying to coordinate them with their health services, transportation services, and all the related services and supports that they might have to deal with.

Again, looking at this area of study, there's very little preparation in secondary school concerning self-determination and support coordination by youth with disabilities. There's very little preparation in management strategies, even awareness, of what you would have to do as one enters postsecondary school. You typically find that no one does these things, your family does them, or you have to pick up the pieces and manage them yourself. As one moves on into subsequent employment, the level of responsibility for these types of activities seems to increase even more so. So, this appears to be a major barrier requiring study.

The fourth area to look at is the role of technology. The intent of looking at this area is partly the premise that technology is a major support for persons with disabilities both in postsecondary education and employment settings. It is probably the one thing that can contribute significantly to the success of youth with disabilities in these settings. Obviously we are very concerned with the lack of preparation often in secondary school of even awareness of technology, lack of preparation in its usage, and then there are issues around the transition or transfer of that technology to postsecondary education and then on into employment.

In a nutshell, that gives you an overview of the three settings or phases of study that we are looking at, and then the four areas of emphasis. This matrix reflects the needs and the clusters of findings yielded from the Centers Strategic Program of Research. I am trying to draw a picture of the landscape of postsecondary education and youth with disabilities, focused across the three environments of secondary school preparation, postsecondary educational support provision and transition to subsequent professional employment, while investigating issues across four areas of study.

I would like to look at some of the positive signs related to findings generated within this matrix. Obviously, a lot more youth with disabilities are moving into postsecondary education. About five years ago, IDEA directed secondary school personnel to focus on high expectations for youth with disabilities, increased involvement in the general education curriculum, as well as a number of things to try to raise the academic achievement bar, in particular in secondary school, for kids with disabilities. And that's now beginning to show up very positively for youth with disabilities, at least in very small steps when looking at the number of youth with disabilities that take the SAT and the ACT. There have been, over the last four years, significant increases in those numbers, which is a real positive sign, because those testing events are required for youth to participate in postsecondary education.

There is also an increase in the number of youth coming out of secondary school, youth with disabilities who graduate with a diploma, and there is some indication of a beginning decline in the high school dropout rate for youth with disabilities. So, on the preparation end, there are some overall trends that are supporting increased numbers of youth with disabilities who will pursue postsecondary education and lifelong learning.

Within postsecondary school, we have noticed a significant increase in the number of youth with disabilities participating in the freshman year, over the last ten years — and there are a number of reasons for this. Obviously the ADA has had an influence on providing supports in postsecondary

school settings and increasing the interest in postsecondary programs on the part of youth with disabilities. Some of the further definition of what an accommodation is, have increased the number of youth with disabilities who are seeking access and regularly attending postsecondary education. So, those figures have more than tripled. In the last ten years, they have almost doubled, indicating that a lot more youth with disabilities are proceeding towards and participating within postsecondary education.

We definitely have noticed that more youth with disabilities attend two-year postsecondary schools than four-year schools. And we have quite a bit of evidence now that two-year schools are actually a much friendlier places for youth with disabilities in terms of the range and depth of support provision that might be available. This probably isn't necessarily tied to just youth with disabilities. Most two-year schools have a more diverse range of supports drawing from a much more diverse population of potential attendees. But that also makes them a much more supportive place to obtain support, and a much friendlier place to be supported.

I've also been noticing that in postsecondary education, persistence or retention has been improving, and those numbers over the last five years have gradually been inching up, so there are fewer dropouts within postsecondary education. Quite a bit of the data indicates, as it does with all other youth in postsecondary school, that the first year is the hardest year. The largest number of youth with disabilities who drop out typically drop out during or at the end of the first year. So, there is a lot of impetus to look at beefing up the support structure during the first year and/or assisting that that to happen in different ways.

We have just completed a two-year follow-up study on support provision to youth with disabilities in postsecondary school settings. It's a replication of a study that took place in 1998 and 1999. We are following up two-and-a-half years later to see what areas of support provision have increased or decreased during that time in postsecondary education. A full report will be

coming out on this. Some of the areas that show statistically significant improvement are the provision of assistive technology: there is also a significant increase in the kinds of things that students ask for, like note-takers, additional time on tests and assignments, assistance with examinations, tutors, translators, those kinds of things.

One of the findings I hadn't expected was a significant increase in the interest in providing internships for youth with disabilities through career placement and student support offices. I think this is a very important area, particularly related to the transfer from postsecondary education to professional employment. There is data out there indicating that all students use internships as a critical link to employment in professional areas, and that a lot of connections for employment are made through internships. In the past, probably because of lack of time and the tremendous amount of energy that has to be put into coordinating supports and staying afloat, youth with disabilities haven't participated in internships very regularly. My sense is this is really a good sign.

One area in which there was no significant improvement within the two-and-a-half years of follow-up, which I think is an important, was with postsecondary career placement offices that typically offer counseling, job placement, career assessment, etc. This is probably a very fertile area of work, to look at the role of university career placement offices, both university-wide, as well as in professional colleges and their support for persons with disabilities.

Another area where there was no significant change (and this is an area that currently a number of studies are looking at) is the transfer of supports from postsecondary education to employment; investigating how that actually works, and does it happen or not happen, those kinds of things. Coordination of educational supports with obtaining accessible transportation and health and medical services and things like that is another area in which there appears to be no growth or significant change in.

So, I am going to end at that point. I have talked a little bit about the framework for this area

of study, some of the issues that have been addressed, and some of the positive signs that hopefully will move this area of study forward. I will turn it over to Teresa.

MS.WHELLEY: Hello. I want to talk about the supporters of students in postsecondary education, and then I want to talk about self-determination as an issue. We are completing our studies and some of the scenes that are common throughout are that students not only need supports that we can buy and that need to be provided by universities or other agencies, but they need people in their lives who are supporters. One of the most important people is the disability support coordinator. And students have told us that this can be the most important support that they have, someone who can help them manage life on campus, kids accommodations, and manage this coordination function that Bob talked about. So disabilities support personnel are critical. Unfortunately, as part of our surveys, we have found that we have some issues with them. They are not specifically trained as a profession [insert appropriate text and clarify highlighted section]. They have inconsistent backgrounds educationally and years of experience in the field. We have AHEAD as a partner in the National Center for Postsecondary Ed Study, and they have promulgated a set of standards and ethics. These ethics and standards have not been implemented consistently across the country. That would be something we call for that would be helpful for students. The disabilities support personnel have a range of numbers of students that they see, are responsible for, and also have different funding structures for. They often have more than one job. They may be the ADA administrator for the college and need to look at space as well as helping students with their classes. So, there's some work to be done there.

The second supporter that is critical to students is the faculty. The faculty of the college has the most important relationship with the students, in that they are the teachers and the instructors and can be important guides to students. What we have found in recent studies is that the faculty doesn't have the range of teaching skills needed for people

who are different learners, and they also are often unaware of disability as an issue and are just innocently ignorant of the whole area. They need training and have called for training in both of those areas. This is an important relationship faculty and students have in college.

The third person that is a critical support in the college life of students with disabilities is the vocational rehabilitation counselor. This person can be a great support. And what we have found is that if the person has a long-term relationship with the student over time, that this is a great support and can help someone graduate and go into a job. Unfortunately, this isn't always the case, and sometimes minimal supports are offered and students don't get the supports they need to get through and to have a career in the area they want.

Second from last are families. Now, the role of families is dramatic as a student graduates high school and leaves the coverage under IDEA—the student's family is no more legally responsible for the student, but they switch from being a legal advocate to being an encourager of a student. So, we have found that students who are successful who graduate and are working professionals—all of those people have family members that are supportive. So in the preparation, we need family involvement of people going through postsecondary. During college, we need encouragers. One of the disabilities support providers put it this way: "Families need to be the rah-rah section." And then as people move through to employment, families still need to be supporters. The role changes as those environments change, but is still critical.

And then the last group is students that have graduated and are in professional careers, all of them have mentors. And mentoring is another relationship that's very common with typical students. It is common with other disenfranchised groups to have mentors that have helped them get into the mainstream and have professional lives or their dreams come true in whatever way. That's a typical experience for people. They have a mentor to help them grow and be. So, we also found in our study of students who are successful professionals

that they all had mentors. Mentorships are something that kids with disabilities need for support and encouragement.

The last area I want to talk about, and we will have some time for questions, is self-determination. Again, this is critical and it talks about the two to three environments that Dr. Stodden talked about. The first environment is in preparation. Students need to come to postsecondary education able to identify their disability and identify the accommodations that they need. This isn't a recipe that students can implement overnight. This is a growing sense of who they are and their own self-awareness about what their abilities are and what they are not. And it needs to evolve over time and it needs to be part of a young person's growth through elementary high school and then upon entrance into college.

I talked to a young man not long ago who was entering college and I asked him, "Well, what do you need?" He said, "I need a note-taker." And I said, "Why?" And he said, "Ask my mother." Well, that's just not going to work. She's not going to be there in college. So, people need to know why he needs a note-taker and what's going to happen. These kids need to know what accommodations they need, why they need them, and how to negotiate them. Then in college, students are responsible (under Section 504), to negotiate their own accommodations. It's a very important thing.

College is more sheltered than the real world of employment. The supports to students and people decrease in employment, and it's a competitive world of getting a job. Again, the students need to be sharp to negotiate their accommodations upon employment. So this changes as we go through the three environments as well.

Students are often overwhelmed by being in a college environment, and good self-determination skills can help mediate that. And I believe this is 1999 Office of Educational Statistics. Seventy (70%) percent of students with disabilities who graduate high school are not employed, and fifty (50%) percent of students who graduate postsecondary education have a job. So postsecondary education does make a difference.

But it's still not a statistic I am really proud of. So we have a lot of work to do in the transition and employment in supporting people in employment. I think that will leave us some time for questions.

MS. RHINE: This is Lisa Rhine calling from Nebraska. Are there any good models out there for self-determination? Are there any states that are doing a really good job of helping students learn at an early age how to be good self-advocates and, if so, how do we get a hold of those places?

MR. STODDEN: I will respond and, Teresa, you can respond too. There have been a number of projects that were funded by the US Department of Education over the last 15 years that developed various models, all the way from assisting kids in participating in their IEP meetings, to actually holding a special class in high school around self-determination, to integrating skills into academic classes, things of that sort. There has been a lot of effort to do this. If you take some of the questions we have come up with related to those efforts, most of them didn't really focus on what youth with disabilities really need to be able to advocate for themselves and to participate in postsecondary education. Even in employment under Section 504 in the ADA, I think people kind of looked at it within a secondary school context, and they looked at it in relation to IDEA and how self-determination applies to secondary school. As we know, when youth leave secondary school, they are no longer covered by ADA, and the requirements for their need to advocate and self-determine are very different under the ADA and under 504. And so my sense was that youth are not prepared for this transition, and those projects didn't look very often at those kinds of things.

The sense I am getting of the skills that youth need as they move towards postsecondary education and employment is a real global awareness of themselves, particularly their disability, and of the postschool environments that they might confront after high school, which would include postsecondary education. Hopefully, students will have had the opportunity in secondary school to gain some exploratory depth and understanding of themselves and their disability, and the support

needs that they have to function in various adult roles and environments, with postsecondary education being one of those environments.

This would mean somebody in tenth and eleventh grade would begin to have a picture of what postsecondary education looks like, and they would begin to have a real clear picture of their support and related service needs to access and succeed in that environment. I don't have a real sense that that's happening much anywhere, or that there are any programs or kinds of activities that focus on those types of skills and requirements.

MS. WHELLEY: I worked with people with significant cognitive difficulties. One of the lessons that we are learning from implementing self-determination with those people is that the people around them need to change. So, the issue is that in self-determination, we need to give people the empowerment, actually the ability to make choices and to act on them. And I think secondary schools contain completely different cultures than postsecondary schools, and the rules and guidance for how things are done are very different for students to achieve the outcomes that Bob is discussing is still lacking. So, things need to change in those schools so the students can think about and become those young adults that are quite able.

MS. HARMON: This is Wanda Harmon from Casey at the Oakland Community Outreach office. In our groups in the community, we deal mostly with youth who live in small group homes. And the support issue is what interested me. Many of these youth don't have support. They feel that they don't have support, and in reality they don't, and they have learning disabilities. Do you have any studies or anything you can refer me to regarding youth who live in small group homes in terms of their learning disabilities and support for them?

MR. STODDEN: We don't know that much about this group. I have met with John Emerson (phonetic) several times, at the Casey Foundation in Seattle, who is very interested in looking at this whole area because of the whole, real different support structures available to foster youth who are not necessarily linked to their families, and what is special about their situation and their needs to be

supported to make this transition and to access postsecondary education. So, we have had a number of discussions on it, but obviously you can't do everything in this arena, and that's one of the areas that is sort of on the table to take a look at as a critical need area.

MS. IZZO: I'm Gail Izzo from Alaska. Another area that I work in a lot is children who are in the juvenile justice system. And a great myriad of disabilities has come across my caseload. And I have been doing meetings myself and I know that this is a problem across the country. Has anyone had any excellent experience with getting kids into postsecondary education if they have been in some kind of a juvenile justice facility?

MR. STODDEN: Yeah, this is Bob Stodden again. This is an area that's on the plate that we haven't specifically studied, and has a whole arena of special issues tied to it. I agree it's a critical area of need for looking at somehow supporting youth that come out of the juvenile justice system. Postsecondary education should have some type of role in that, and could be a very viable environment for these kids. But there has been very little written in this area. I think in our literature reviews, there's very little written or very few studies have actually looked at this group of youth as they might proceed towards postsecondary education.

MS. WHELLEY: This is Teresa again. I want to add that we in Hawaii have a related Center called the National Technical Assistance Center for Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders, and they are studying youth with disabilities after they exit high school. One of the things they are finding out is that most students who are CLD, don't graduate, don't progress, don't fit in the educational structures, and have disabilities that keep them out. And then there is an overabundance of these students in the juvenile justice system. And so nationally, as we look at this, we need to look at so-called minority issues and how that works. And we are doing some work on that, and it's good work.

MR. STODDEN: There are five key things that limit one from access and retention and success in postsecondary education, and if you happen to be a person who possesses all five of these

characteristics, your chances of accessing and completing postsecondary education are significantly reduced. One characteristic is having a disability. Teresa referred to a couple of the other ones. One is being from a minority cultural ethnicity. So, having a disability and being from a minority cultural group, and/or being of a female gender, being first generation in your family to proceed towards higher education, and being in being in poverty—if you have one or more, or all five of those characteristics, you probably need a tremendous amount of support to access and succeed in postsecondary education.

We just had two additional things that might be added to that. Youth coming out of the juvenile justice system obviously have another mark, and then kids who are coming out of foster care and situations where they don't have an intact family will have additional challenges. Obviously there is critical a need for studies around this group of almost in terms of people attending, retaining, and succeeding in postsecondary education.

MS. BURNS: This is Judy Burns in Austin, Texas. I have a question around standardized testing and I don't know if other people are experiencing this. But in Texas, thanks to Ross Perott, we went sort of nuts on standardized testing a number of years ago. And many of our youth are exempt from the testing throughout high school, at least in the particular area of their disability if they are LD in that area. Once they get to college, we are having pretty close to no luck getting any accommodations made around that standardized testing.

MR. STODDEN: That shouldn't be that much of a problem in a postsecondary education setting.

MS. HAGENHOUR: Well, that's what I keep saying.

MR. STODDEN: Yes.

MS. BURNS: There's a test in Texas called the TASK, which is required of all youth who are entering a public college. And, you know, we have gotten around it a little bit by sending kids to private but that's pretty expensive, and our board doesn't like to do private colleges. So, yeah, we get nose-to-nose with people a lot who are not –

MR. STODDEN: So these are people who refuse to allow accommodations within their 504 Plan?

MS. BURNS: Well, no, they will do accommodations, but they want them to be working toward passing this test. I have a young lady right now who is going to graduate from high school, and her reading and writing skills are there, and she's not going to major in anything that's going to require a lot of math. I would like to get her exempted at least from the math portion. I haven't been told no yet, but I haven't exactly been told yes. And we have gone all the way to our—there is a statewide level—what do they call it—college board of higher learning or something. I don't know what they call it themselves, but that's who has the final say. And, you know, they are pretty snippy. So I don't know. I just wondered if you had experienced that.

MS. WHELLEY: I had a little experience too. What's the purpose of the test?

MS. BURNS: Good question. I think the purpose is to be sure that some base-line academic skills are there to start college.

MS. WHELLEY: To start?

MS. BURNS: Yes. Well, start and advance beyond the 15 hours. I think the real issue is you can't accumulate more than 15 hours until you've passed the test for that section.

MS. WHELLEY: Well, there is a movement of inconclusive education for students with significant cognitive disabilities across the country and it's inclusive, and that means it's not developmental and it isn't one class before the other. And so there are strategies that those people have used not to take those screening tests. And my experience—what I have heard from these people, is the purpose of the test is for placement in math—or placement in English or—well, we are not doing that. You know, I am going here to take three courses in horticulture and I am going to become a landscape architect. I am not taking math and I am not taking English and I am not going to get a degree.

So that's one strategy. And another strategy I have heard used is a copy of what they do at MIT. Students at MIT typically audit courses before they

actually take them, because they are so difficult they don't want to fail them, they don't want to pay for them. So they audit them. They try, they stay in what they can and they try it again.

MS. BURNS: That's a good idea.

MS. WHELLEY: Very exclusive school. Very difficult classes. So the point is, I think there are different strategies that one can use and if the test is standard, makers have the standards for a reason, my sense is if you reject the reason, it's hard to get what you want, it's a negotiation.

MS. BURNS: Okay. That's helpful. That auditing idea especially is very helpful.

MS. WHELLEY: Yeah. It's worked.

MS. JOHNSON: Any other questions for Bob or Teresa?

MS. GUERTIN: I have a question. This is Jan Guertin from Juno, Alaska. On the assisted technology, are you finding you have state colleges that are using that more readily than even three years ago? And is that being provided by the college that is saying they are offering it? Is it up to care providers and/or families to actually support by buying the equipment?

MR. STODDEN: Well, it's shown to be a significant increase over two-and-a-half years ago as a support provided, so this would be provided typically by disability support offices, as an assistive device. So this may not, you know, be computers and things like that, but all sorts of assistive devices to support someone access to learning. So, there is a significant increase in the provision of those things.

MS. GUERTIN: Are there pockets of areas also within the United States where colleges are doing it better than others?

MR. STODDEN: We are going to be looking at that. That's part of a secondary analysis. We will be doing breakout or secondary analysis for public/private types of institutions, two-year, four-year institutions, and also regional distribution of postsecondary education programs. So, we will have a better idea if there is regional or state differences concerning certain types of disability support programs in community colleges that are public in nature located in a certain part of the country.

A lot of community colleges are funded either locally by local communities or by their state, and often have a fairly different funding structure than four-year schools typically. Thus, one area we were actually looking at is some of the funding structures and how that may impact the types and level of supports provided, including technology. It's obviously a funding issue for a lot of schools, as I think as most of you are probably aware, disability supports in higher ed are not funded on the same basis they are in secondary ed like IDEA, where it's mandated and required. In postsecondary education, typically support offices receive a state allocation that has absolutely no connection to the number of students they might be serving, or the types and needs that those students might be having.

So, there is obviously a disincentive for postsecondary education disability service offices to advertise their services or to seek out additional students to enroll in their school, because it often becomes a burden on a budget that they may or may not have any opportunity to change..

MS. JOHNSON: Any additional questions?

MS. CEMCI: This is Julia Cemci in New York. I had a question. We are doing a pretty good job with our transition and our access, but we are trying to focus now on the persistence piece, the retention, and persistence to graduation. And we would like to identify best practices. Do you have any sources or any states that are doing a really good job that we could look to?

MR. STODDEN: I don't know if there would be any difference by states. There are certain institutions of higher education that do a better job with this than others.

MS. WHELLEY: The OPE study.

MR. STODDEN: Okay. One of the things I think HEATH might be doing is looking at assembling a list of four-year and two-year schools that do a good job of providing supports and services according to a specific disability. So, LD youth obviously are going to attend certain schools that have a better support base than go to a different school without any special supports for LD students.

This isn't a regional directory or anything of that sort. It's not real scientific from what I know. But there is definitely a difference between institutions, and there are different models of supports in different institutions. And this information is not readily available to families and youth with disabilities, which I think is a real issue because there is a demand for that kind of service.

Right now, we get a lot of calls and I know AHEAD gets a lot of calls and I think HEATH gets a lot of calls from parents asking, "Here's my child's disabilities, and here's how they do, and can you recommend the best school in the northeast?" or something like that. That's not part of our current work scope to provide that kind of information, but I think it really needs to be somebody's job, and it could be a good business. I know we have talked to several people around the country who have done related kinds of things and how they might actually establish something like that and make it work.

MS. CEMCI: Thank you. Can I clarify the Web site address?

MR. STODDEN: Yes. It's <http://www.rrtc.hawaii.edu/>.

MS. WHELLEY: It's about to be changed, but by June 1st it will be much more user friendly. Seriously, we are working on it right now.

MR. STODDEN: I wanted to mention something also that some of you may be interested in. We are currently working with a whole lot of other organizations to conduct a national summit on postsecondary education on July 8th, which is the day before the AHEAD conference in Washington D.C. And this is a day-long summit looking at different data sets/findings and implications for federal policy, for priority setting within the federal agencies, and then for practice in the field. The Summit will be held at the Washington Press Club in DC. So, if you are going to the AHEAD Conference or to the OSEP Project directors meetings in Washington DC, this is an easy add-on kind of thing. And if you are interested in that, you can go to the Web site and there is an application—there's information and an application process for that.

MS. JOHNSON: Is there one more question for Bob or Teresa?

GWEN: This is Gwen from El Camino College in California. I just have a quick question regarding funding sources. You talked about the discrepancy within the structures of the different systems: secondary, postsecondary, and then transitional. In either your study or Teresa's study, have you looked at or considered different user's funding sources, and the way their user may be trained or not trained on how to utilize their funding source (that they are on SSI or a fixed income and through the secondary system may not have any knowledge of that source or how to manage it), which then affects how they enter the postsecondary system?

MR. STODDEN: We haven't actually looked at that from a research perspective. Teresa has been working on a paper on service coordination and case management that includes the movement of those types of funding sources to postsecondary education and employment. So, we don't have data specifically on that, except data that indicates this is a major problem in the transition. Of course, a support package in one environment doesn't automatically just translate to the next setting. People who are responsible in one setting as it moves to the next setting completely shift or no longer have any responsibility for it, and that movement creates issues for persons with disabilities who are often left with responsibility for that movement.

GWEN: It also seems like it would also impact the movement of families from an advocate to an encourager to a supporter position.

MR. STODDEN: Yeah. Teresa, do you want to comment on that?

MS. WHELLEY: Yeah. We are doing another study, I think a more targeted study. And actually El Camino is one of our sites. So we will be there sometime in late summer. We are not looking at the individual, which is what you are calling the user, this is student with disability.

GWEN: Correct.

MS. WHELLEY: We're looking at the institution and what they have through the smaller study, what institutions do with funding. And it's

very different. So, there is Federal funding available. It goes to institutions of a higher education. Some colleges get federal/grant funds. Some college use general funds. Some colleges get state funds. Some colleges get specific grants, and some of these TRIO grants and some of these funding structures change. So the context of how the supports are funded, like who funds them, is critical in determining what supports one has. I know, I've lived in New Hampshire and in New Hampshire, vocational rehabilitation pays for peer tutors. In New Hampshire I was a disability support provider. They don't pay in Hawaii. They don't in Tennessee. I know California has a centrally controlled system of funding allocation that's based on a quota of persons with disabilities out of their chancellor's office. Very different.

One part of resource management is looking at what the individual knows, but also it's very overwhelming to the individuals and they often give up and say, "I can't handle this, I'm leaving." So, we need some people in the field to work on the structures around them to make them aligned and more accessible to people. So that's the other side of the problem.

GWEN: Thank you.

MS. WHELLEY: You're welcome.

MS. JOHNSON: Well, I just want to thank Dr. Stodden and Dr. Whelley for presenting this information and thank all of you for joining us on the call. We will have a transcript of the teleconference posted on the National Center's Web site, and I will give you the address for that. It's <http://ici.umn.edu/ncfet>.

(Conclusion of teleconference)

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