Is Assistive Technology Leveling the Playing Field for Students with Disabilities in Postsecondary Settings?

Megan A. Conway, Ph.D.
Tracie Ortiz, M.A.
Center on Disability Studies, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa
Overview

- About the speakers
- Purpose of the Study
- Importance of the Problem
- Methodology
- Results
- Recommendations
- Discussion
- Contact information
What is Assistive Technology?

- According to the Assistive Technology Act (2004), assistive technology is “any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of people with disabilities” (U.S. Congress, 2004, Section 3(3)).

- Assistive Technology Video from IST site
  Teaching All Students, Reaching All Learners, Including Students with Disabilities as Diverse Learners
Megan A. Conway, Ph.D.
Faculty of Disability Studies at UHM
Editor, Review of Disability Studies
Training Coordinator, SDDL Project

Tracie Ortiz, M.A.
PH.D. student in Educational Technology at UHM
Graduate Assistant for Disability Studies
Examine the status of assistive technology use by postsecondary students with disabilities.

- Does assistive technology provide equal access to technology and the curriculum?
- What factors affect the usefulness of assistive technology?
- What can institutions do to provide better access to technology and the curriculum?
Number of students with disabilities (SwD) in higher education increasing (2.6% in 1978 to 11.3% in 2006).

Use of assistive technology (AT) increasing.

BUT SwD still experience significant barriers in higher education.

AND SwD are still less likely to graduate from college than their non-disabled peers.
Methodology


Search yielded 19 relevant articles

Articles analyzed for common themes
Use of AT

Assistive technology does not level the playing field for students with disabilities

SwD cannot get onto the field.

Enrollment of SwD

Results: Overall Findings
Results: Finding One

- **Availability of Assistive Technology**
- **Circumstances that affect the usability of AT to access technology**
- **Complexity and design of devices**
- **Availability of training and technical assistance**
Results: Finding Two

- Design of the Curriculum
- Circumstances that effect the usability of AT to access the curriculum
- Complexity of Materials
- Types of Technologies Being Used
**Recommendations**

- **Universal Design for Learning**
  - U D L principles should be applied in higher education

- **Colleges and Universities**
  - Support the use of AT
  - Recognize its limitations

- **Research**
  - Examine strategies that eliminate AT barriers
Recommendations

**Universal Design for Learning**
- UDL principles should be applied in higher education

**Colleges and Universities**
- Support the use of AT
- Recognize its limitations

**Research**
- Examine strategies eliminating AT barriers
Flexible and intuitive to accommodate a wide range of learner needs.

Benefits both students with and without disabilities.

Applicable to everyday technologies.

No cost or little expense to incorporate.
Recommendations

Universal Design for Learning
- UDL principles be applied in higher education

Colleges and Universities
- Support the use of AT
- Recognize its limitations

Research
- Examine strategies for eliminating AT barriers
Colleges and Universities

- Include the provision of AT in open computer labs and libraries.
- Provide technical assistance in the purchase and use of AT.
- Comply with laws concerning accessibility of electronic and print media.

(Guyer and Uzeta, 2009; McNaughton and Bryen, 2007; Stumbo, Martin and Hedrick, 2009)
## Recommendations

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<th>Recommendations</th>
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<td>Universal Design for Learning</td>
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| Colleges and Universities | • Support the use of AT  
|                         | • Recognize its limitations                   |
| Research                | • Examine strategies that eliminate AT barriers |
More research is needed to determine:

1. How barriers can be overcome.
2. In what ways does UDL enhance and minimize the use of AT?
3. When AT is available, how does it affect other support services?
4. What are effective ways of supporting faculty?
Research in the area of Assistive Technology needs to go beyond...

“Here are the benefits of AT but here are the problems.“

TO

“These are the ways to truly level the field for people with disabilities.”
Discussion

- How do your experiences with AT match or contradict our findings?
- How do you think we can provide better access to technology and the curriculum for SwD?
- What other recommendations would you suggest for “equalizing the field” in postsecondary settings?
Contact Information

Megan Conway mconway@hawaii.edu

Tracie Ortiz tracier@hawaii.edu

Students with Disabilities as Diverse Learners Project www.ist.hawaii.edu