



# Navigating Work-Based Learning and Workforce Programs: Finding Effective Solutions

AHEAD in TX 2024

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# Learning Outcomes



1. Assess various work-based educational experiences or programs to identify challenges and opportunities to deliver equal access.
2. Understand the complexities of employment-focused courses and programs with hands-on and career-oriented elements requiring individualized approaches from Disability Resource Professionals.
3. Explore how workforce programs demand different approaches to inform effective decision-making practices, policies, and processes.
4. Identify proactive solutions using case studies and real-life scenarios to improve academic and campus for students.
5. Collaboratively brainstorm strategies to enhance support beyond basic compliance, leveraging resources to provide support, establishing partnerships, building networks, and utilizing organizational assets.
6. Envision Disability Services Resources as a central hub for campus partners aimed at promoting accessibility and inclusivity to minimize barriers to equitable access to campus resources, facilities, programs, and activities.

# What is a work-based educational experience or program?

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A job **training program** or a hands-on, employment focused **course** that combines classroom instruction with practical career-building experiences = focuses on workplace readiness skills.

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|-------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| ◆ Capstones       | ◆ Field Placement        | ◆ Community-Based Projects |
| ◆ Apprenticeships | ◆ Clinicals / Clerkships | ◆ Experiential Research    |
| ◆ Internships     | ◆ Job Shadowing          | ◆ Open Lab                 |
| ◆ Externships     | ◆ Service Learning       | ◆ Others.....              |

Designed to provide students with:

- practical knowledge
- Career / job skills
- experiences that align with their interests and potential career paths
- networking opportunities

# Internships and Work-based Experiences

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- Some workforce programs have the option to use a **Co-Op**, **Internship**, or a **Capstone** (not-experiential) course as a work-based learning opportunity.

Due to partnerships, some programs may have easy access to internships through the department.

- In some programs, internships are required by their **accrediting body**. The degree level may also determine the requirement (e.g., certificate vs. associate degree).

# Classroom and Academic Work-based Courses

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Cohorts with structured or guided curriculum, groups, programming sequence, and course availability.

Accommodations require an **individualized process** to analyze on a case-by-case, site-by-site basis involving collaborative effort to identify:

- ◇ Protocols
- ◇ Essential elements and technical standards of the program, curriculum or tasks.

## Examples of a Work Based Setting....

- ◇ Involve working with the actual equipment used at the workplace.
- ◇ Expectations based on abilities, skills, job performance, tasks, environment, behavior, safety, dress code, accreditations, licensing exams, ect.



# How are workforce programs different?

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- ◇ Growing support among government grants and funding due to workforce demands.
- ◇ Connected to local needs to respond to skills needed in the workforce demands and developments: a priority mission of community colleges, which are generally able to quickly respond to industry changes (e.g. the petroleum era).
- ◇ Business partnerships with the private sector and local companies to address their needs are very common. (e.g. Toyota / Collin College)
- ◇ Noncredit options respond to non-degree certifications required by some industries (e.g. Microsoft Office Specialist and Cisco Entry Network Technician certification).

# Challenges for Campus Community

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- ◇ Program Coordinators, Program Leads, Deans
- ◇ Student success support services (testing center, academic advising, counseling, etc)
- ◇ Mentors or Career Coach.
- ◇ Open labs as an option for tutoring or extra practice (mandatory vs. voluntary).
- ◇ Campus Life: activities, housing, campus resources

Problem: Unawareness of barriers imposed by programs, the importance of clear technical standards around functional limitations, limited resources, and the need to cross-collaborate with DR.

# Disability Resource Services: What Exactly does the law require?

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individualized process ~ communication ~ effective equal access

Standards set in *resolution agreements* from the Offices for Civil Rights (OCR) state that:

“**Accessible**” means a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally effective and equally integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use. **The person with a disability must be able to obtain the information as fully, equally and independently as a person without a disability.** Although this might not result in identical ease of use compared to that of persons without disabilities, it still must ensure equal opportunity to the educational benefits and opportunities afforded by the technology and equal treatment in the use of such technology.

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*South Carolina Technical College System* (OCR Compliance Review No. 11-11-6002), *the University of Cincinnati* (OCR Compliance Review No. 15-13-6001), and *Youngstown State University* (OCR Compliance Review No. 15-13-6002)

If the work experience is part of the academic program the institution is responsible for providing and paying for the accommodations.

\*\*\* Must be reviewed on a case-by-case basis in a timely manner \*\*\*



## Accommodations: Work-based Course Formats

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- **In-classroom:** college is responsible for providing accommodations related to academic elements and should collaborate with DS to facilitate accommodations at all times.
- For **non-academic** (required/voluntary): college is responsible for providing accommodations upon request when services are offered on campus (e.g., open lab, optional certification exams, competitions, conferences, field trips, etc.).

# Accommodations: Internships/Work-experience

## Differences between Required vs. Voluntary

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- **For-credit internships:** college is responsible for providing accommodations related to academic elements and should collaborate with the employment site to facilitate employment-related accommodations.
- For **non-credit internships** (non-paid and paid): the employer is responsible for providing accommodations. If the intern is considered an employee, the intern is eligible for the same protections afforded other employees under the ADA.
- Overlap in coverage between classroom/academic accommodations vs. employment accommodations requires an individualized analysis on a case-by-case, site-by-site basis involving collaborative effort to identify:
  - Protocols
  - Essential elements of the internship/program/curriculum/task

In addition to the Career Center, we always encourage students to **talk to their department's internship lead or career coach** if your institution has those resources.

# Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

- ◆ WIOA (<https://doleta.gov/wioa/>).

Enacted in July 2014 to improve access to job training and education opportunities for people who have traditionally faced barriers to employment, through a variety of services that help achieve future gainful employment. It encompasses essential programs, such as literacy, employment, and training services for adults, dislocated workers, youth, families, and vulnerable populations.

- ◆ Administered jointly by the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education.

- ◆ VR/TWC: one of the many programs that assist with resources helping students with disabilities transition from high school to vocational training, college, and the workforce.

Allows VR agencies to fund auxiliary aids and services to enable equal participation in work-based learning and other pre-employment activities. These aides and services include real-time interpretation, transcription, note-taking, video-based telecommunication products, and screen reader software.

# Case Law

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## ◇ *Bennett v. Hurley Medical Center*

Granted summary judgment to the hospital that initially permitted a **nursing student intern** to use her panic attack alert **service dog** until staff and patients reported allergic reactions, then withdrew permission to bring the dog on two patient floors, offering to crate the dog off the patient floors during rounds.

The court held that the allergic reactions to the dog made the dog a **direct threat to other staff and patients**. The court never reached the question of whether the dog was, in fact, a service dog (although initially permitting its use, the hospital disputed the claim in litigation), holding that even if it was, it was a direct threat, entitling the hospital to bar it from the two floors.



# Proactive Solutions:

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Planning for accommodations and /or an accessible placement for SWD in work-based courses or programs doesn't have to be overwhelming!

- ◆ The best outcomes occur when service providers, placement coordinators, and disability resource professionals **collaborate** to ensure an accessible experience for the students.
- ◆ **Educate relevant campus partners**: do not assume that faculty or employers fully understand all laws governing the workplace and work-based courses or programs.
- ◆ Involve pre-enrollment activities, employer partnerships, and evaluations.
- ◆ Leverage the knowledge and expertise of state departments and workforce development regarding relevant laws and regulations.
- ◆ **Being informed, proactive, and flexible can go a long way toward a successful experience.**

—Who? What? Where? How? When? Funding, awareness/training, and communication. —



# Link Your Office Mission to the Institution's Through Simple Solutions:

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- ◆ Serve as an **ally** by partnering with students to serve as a resource to faculty and staff to ensure effective provision of accommodations.
- ◆ Monitor new programs to **identify potential areas of concern** for equal access.
- ◆ **Continuous self-assessment** (internal and external accessibility audit) to identify creative and effective policies, processes, and resources that may assist DR in reducing the barriers impacting the students' equitable access to campus facilities, programs, and activities.
- ◆ **Increase awareness** on creating and sustaining access to internal resources and referral information to campus partners; the student's right to an equitable educational journey expands beyond the classroom.

# Campus Education and Advocacy

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- ◆ Raise awareness around **timely requests** for work-based learning programs: campus/program orientation, cross-collaboration with program coordinators/career coaches, internship coordinators, etc.
- ◆ Identify additional **resources and partnerships**: local support networks and organizations (TWC).

# Grant Funding can assist with ...

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- ◆ Staff Recruitment
- ◆ Equipment Purchases
- ◆ Professional Development Opportunities
- ◆ Program Development for Specific Populations.

# Transition Programs

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Comprehensive transition programs or college career-readiness training tailored for students with intellectual disabilities and other specific functional limitations to prepare for gainful employment.

AKA CTP programs...

- ◆ Not required to have a high school diploma or GED.
- ◆ Listed as a degree, certificate, or non-degree program.
- ◆ Qualifies for Federal Pell Grant and other federal funding.
- ◆ Requires integration with regular academic credit courses and work-based training.

ELEVAR: University of North Texas

Aggie Achieve: Texas A&M University

E4Texas: University of Texas at Austin

VAST Academy: Houston Community College

LifePATH: Lone Star College

STEPS: Austin Community College



# Advantage of having these options are ...

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- ◆ Option for students that aren't "otherwise qualified"
- ◆ Specifically created to attend to the educational needs of a particular growing population.
- ◆ Service to the community provides individual and educational options to students beyond continued education courses that offer limited value to a career pathway.



# Resources

- ◆ Internships in Higher Education: Promoting Success for Students with Disabilities, Lori W. Briel and Elizabeth Evans Getzel, <https://dsq-sds.org/article/view/254/257>.
- ◆ Recruiting Students with Disabilities to Your Internship (DO IT), <https://www.washington.edu/doi/recruiting-students-disabilities-your-internship>.
- ◆ Direct Threat “Affirmative Defense”. Just What Is the Trier of Fact Supposed to Determine? <https://www.understandingtheada.com/blog/2015/06/15/direct-threat-affirmative-defense-just-what-is-the-trier-of-fact-supposed-to-determine/>
- ◆ ADA/Rehabilitation Act Applies to Externship, Internship, and Practicum Sites. <https://www.understandingtheada.com/blog/2016/06/06/ada-rehabilitation-act-externship-internship-practicum-sites/>

# Resources for SWD Seeking Internship Opportunities:

- ◇ <https://www.nccsdclearinghouse.org/career-page-for-students.html>
- ◇ <https://www.aaas.org/> <http://www.aaas.org/programs/entry-point>
- ◇ <https://www.limeconnect.com/#who-we-are>
- ◇ <https://www.dol.gov/agenciew/odep/program-areas/employers/workforce-recruitment-program>
- ◇ <https://www.viscardicenter.org/services/servies-for-businesses/>
- ◇ <https://www.aapd.com/summer-internship-program/>

## Background

A student enrolled in a video production course is exhibiting objectionable behavior during class lectures. Despite receiving class notes at the end of each session and completing his coursework at home through the Canvas learning management system, he regularly arranges two chairs to sleep in during lectures.

The professor acknowledges that the student meets the course requirements based on the submitted work but expresses concerns about the student's lack of engagement and performance in the classroom setting. They have also noted that on the few occasions that the student attended the open lab, the student required a lot of individualized assistance that involved repetition and hands-on support.

These behaviors have raised questions about the student's academic integrity and his ability to fulfill the course's practical and participatory expectations.

# Case Study: Addressing Engagement and Performance in a Video Production Course

**Outcome Goal:** Create an accessible learning environment for the student.

**Issue:** (1) participation barriers/accessibility needs, and (2) conduct/behaviors  
Is the student's academic experience is substantially similar to his peers? **How?**

- Duty to address the professor's concerns regarding academic integrity and the student's disruptive classroom behavior. **Does your role involve this responsibility?**
- **What other challenges can you identify?**

**Objectives for Disability Resources: Which ones are reasonable?**

1. Review the underlying reasons for the student's behavior: **related to a disability or other factors? New barriers or disabilities to report?**
2. Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the student's **barriers**.
3. Collaborate — student, faculty, and campus support services— to **identify potential strategies. Refer to resources.**
4. Consider **potential accommodations** to **temporarily modify barriers** within the course structure or delivery without compromising learning objectives or academic standards.
5. **What other objectives should be considered?**

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## Case Study: Addressing Engagement and Performance in a Video Production Course (cont'd)

**Approaches to Consider: which ones are practical approaches?**

1. **Accommodations:** adjusted seating arrangements, structured breaks during lectures, ....
2. **Assistive technology** or tools to maintain focus.
3. **Campus support or resources:** tutoring, counseling, skills workshops, ...
4. Establish **communication** channels between the student, the Disability Resources office, and the professor to confirm and document its implementation/effectivity and adjust if needed.
5. **What other approaches should be considered?**

**Address academic integrity concerns and student conduct:**

train faculty about implications of going above and beyond approved accommodations without engaging in gatekeeping practices.

**Clarify required vs. courtesy "in the spirit of the law".**

# Contact Information

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## PowerPoint Link:

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:68a81f8d-ab49-3aba-9e9b-2f56db08331c>