

Academic success and perception of academic success differences amongst students with visible and non-visible disabilities

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Federal guidelines require colleges and universities across the country to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. Many institutions of higher education provide these accommodations through their offices of disabilities. Students with disabilities are expected to voluntarily seek their accommodation within their respective institutions and disclose their disabilities. However, there is often stigma, lack of knowledge, and other barriers that prevent this from happening. The term Disability refers to a range of possible impairments of the body and or the mind, which result in added difficulty or impairment in performing some or all activities. Not all disabilities manifest in the same ways for everyone, and as such, it can be challenging for colleges and universities to find adequate accommodations for all students. This can result in inconsistencies in accommodations. Challenges in finding appropriate accommodation for all types of disabilities have the potential to disproportionately affect academic success by creating additional barriers. We are particularly interested in visible (e.g. Paraplegia, Blindness with an assistive cane or dog) and non-visible disabilities (e.g. Dyslexia, Attention Deficit Disorder, ADD; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD). If we compare the academic success of students with visible disabilities and their perceived academic success to that of students without visible disabilities, would we find any differences?. And what factors are potentially contributing to it?. This research aims to answer these questions by distinguishing how visible versus non-visible disabilities impact academic success. We also discuss best practices aimed at improving the perceived academic success of students with disabilities. We first establish what the perceived academic success is for students with both visible and non-visible disabilities at colleges and universities and second consider how the unique experiences of both groups shape their perceptions of academic success.