An Examination Of The Implementation Of The Americans With Disabilities Act (Ada) In Mississippi Community Colleges

John Carter Arnold

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) IN MISSISSIPPI COMMUNITY COLLEGES

By

John Carter Arnold

A Dissertation
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Mississippi State University
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Leadership, and Workforce Development

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AMERICANS WITH
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Community colleges face great challenges in dealing with students with disabilities. The purpose of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) is to extend protection against discrimination to individuals with disabilities. Although the Americans with Disabilities Act is very general and does not address specific situations, the fact is clear that colleges are mandated to provide equal educational opportunities for students with disabilities. The problem of the study was to ascertain the extent to which the 15 community colleges in Mississippi have made efforts to provide equal access and equal educational opportunities in accordance with the ADA and with certain standards suggested in scholarly literature related to the topic of students with disabilities.

The research suggests that a large part of the effort that has been made by community colleges to accommodate disabled students is reflected in both the policy and procedure manuals and in the operation of the disability services offices. The researcher
studied the policy and procedure manuals and the operation of the disability services offices in the 15 Mississippi community colleges to examine the extent to which inclusions recommended by experts in the field are present. The study was divided into two parts. The first part was an examination of the availability and content of policy and procedure manuals to see if they contain what experts in the field consider necessary inclusions. The second part of the study included an examination of the background of the disability services administrators as well as a questionnaire to ascertain the disability services administrators’ perceptions about the operation of the disability services offices.

The results of this study indicate that although Mississippi community colleges have made some progress in implementation of the ADA, there are areas that are lacking. For example, 40% of Mississippi community colleges do not have readily available policy and procedure manuals. Additionally, none of the policy and procedure manuals contains all of the inclusions recommended by both experts in the field and by the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD).
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The origin of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) can be traced back to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which was instituted to protect the rights of all citizens and to prohibit discrimination based on race, color, or creed. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 extended this protection very specifically to individuals with disabilities. With all of these laws, Congress attempted to “level the playing field,” in order to give all Americans equal access and equal opportunity (Gordon & Keiser, 2000b). The Americans with Disabilities Act itself is very general and does not address specific situations. Duffy (2004) in the journal Disability Compliance for Higher Education confirms that problems with disability services in colleges are very common and widespread. In fact, the title of the article, “Higher Education Still Failing Students with Disabilities,” clearly implies the thesis of the article. A study by Wolanin and Steele (2004) for the Institute for Higher Education Policy reported that students with disabilities have not achieved the success and recognition in higher education that has been obtained by both minorities and women. The authors believe that until postsecondary institutions make a concerted effort to remove the barriers that inhibit
the handicapped from achieving academic success, their campuses will not be truly
diverse.

Thomas (2000), who is professor and chairperson of the Educational
Administration Department at Kent State University, believes that the efforts of
disability services personnel can make the disabled student’s transition into college
much easier. He says that the personnel of the disability office should make sure that
established guidelines for students to follow in documenting disabilities are easily
accessible and that personnel should keep abreast of new technologies that may assist
disabled students. Thomas warns that many disability offices suffer because of lack of
funding and because of the difficulty of hiring well-trained personnel.

Jarrow (1997) and McGuire (2000), both of whom have done extensive
research and writing in the field of implementation of the Americans with Disabilities
Act in postsecondary institutions, contend that much work remains to be done before
postsecondary institutions offer to students with disabilities the same opportunities
offered to students without disabilities. Jarrow, who has served as executive director
of the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) and president of
Disability Access Information and Support, admits that compliance with the ADA is
at best problematic. After extensive research, Jarrow developed a list of issues that
should be addressed in a college’s policy and procedure manual. McGuire, director of
the University of Connecticut’s University Program for College Students with
Learning Disabilities and co-author of Promoting Postsecondary Education for
Students with Learning Disabilities: A Handbook for Practitioners, contends that
issues of eligibility, acceptable accommodations, and equal access are extremely complex. Like Jarrow, McGuire has also developed a list of issues that should be addressed in a college’s policy and procedure manual.

Gordon and Keiser (2000a), co-editors of *Accommodations in Higher Education under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): A No-Nonsense Guide for Clinicians, Educators, Administrators, and Lawyers*, believe that the fact that the implementation of ADA presents problems is not difficult to understand. They say that in recent years both federal courts and the United States Supreme Court have changed the disability landscape in several ways. In addition to confirming the original concept of the law, courts have also become involved in the interpretation of “legally disabled.” The courts have generally supported the view that to be considered legally disabled, the degree of impairment must be substantial by comparison with the average person in the population. The authors say that a survey of clinicians that had submitted documentation on behalf of students seeking accommodations revealed that many of these professionals were very unclear on provisions of the ADA. They also say that many groups understandably become apprehensive when the topic of ADA is brought up and that various groups have different agendas that are certainly going to collide. The disabilities community wants to protect the rights of its members to receive accommodations. College officials are concerned about the possibility of diluting their academic missions. Testing organizations are concerned about compromising their testing standards. Gordon and Keiser say that implementation of the ADA is definitely a balancing of rights, the right of the disabled individual to gain
access and the right of the colleges and testing organizations to maintain academic integrity.

Wolanim and Steele (2004) contend that the two major pitfalls that students with disabilities seeking a higher education have to overcome are faculty attitudes and academic culture. Faculty attitudes present problems because faculty frequently resent being told what to do and may not actually understand their responsibilities to students with disabilities. The authors recommend that faculty should be provided with professional development opportunities related to teaching students with disabilities.

Gordon and Keiser (2000b) contend that in many ways proper implementation of the ADA is a bigger concern to colleges today than in the years immediately after the act was passed by the United States Congress in 1990. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 extended the protections against discrimination offered by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination based on race, creed, or color, to individuals with disabilities. Duston, Russell, and Kerr (1992) call the ADA a far-reaching statute that has very broad effects.

In an attempt to minimize challenges offered to postsecondary institutions by implementation of ADA, the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) has developed both Program Standards and Performance Indicators (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards). Goodlin, Shaw, and McGuire (2004) say that “in an era of decreasing funding and rising expectations for demonstrable outcomes, postsecondary professionals face a growing need to evaluate the effectiveness of their
program’s mission and activities using data-driven procedures” (p. 7). In 1999 AHEAD adopted 27 Program Standards, which a large number of AHEAD members had identified as essential in postsecondary disability services. According to Shaw and Dukes (2005), the AHEAD Program Standards represent essential service components that are absolute necessities for assuring postsecondary students with disabilities equal educational access. The standards give the disability services field a firm professional base for what should be done. Gorden and Keiser (2000a) call these guidelines “a positive step toward more uniform standards” (xii) that will permit those concerned with ADA “to refer to generally accepted criteria” in order to “allow the entire accommodations process to run more smoothly” (xiv). Additionally, in 2005 AHEAD established 147 Performance Indicators to augment the 27 Program Standards. These 147 Performance Indicators, according to Shaw and Dukes (2005), serve to indicate “best practices” in the field of postsecondary disability services.

Reasons for colleges’ growing concern today about the proper implementation of the act are two-fold. The first reason involves increasing numbers of disabled students enrolling in colleges. The growing number of lawsuits by disabled students is the second reason. The National Organization on Disability (1998) reported that in 1998 one out of every five people in the United States had a disability that impaired accomplishment of activities of daily living. Heath Resources Center (1996) reported that the number of freshman college students reporting disabilities in 1996 was 140,142, a number that represented over 9% of all freshmen. Stodden (2003) in a Position Paper written for the National Council on Disabilities says that students with
disabilities in 2003 made up 10% of all college students and that these students experienced college outcomes that were very inferior to the outcomes experienced by their non-disabled peers. A study by Reinhard (1992) shows that between 1980 and 1990 undergraduate enrollment of all students at two-year colleges grew at twice the rate of enrollment at four-year public colleges. The study also shows that along with this increase in general enrollment came an increase in the enrollment of disabled students. Prentice (2002) says that people with disabilities are the largest minority group in the United States and that of the students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions in 1997-98, fifty-five percent were enrolled in community colleges. Figures from the U.S. Department of Education (2002) indicate that almost 60% of students with disabilities who attend postsecondary institutions attend colleges that offer two-year degrees or some type of certification. Barnett and Li (1997) in a report for the American Association of Community Colleges analyzed data from 672 colleges and concluded that 71% of students with disabilities attend community colleges. A more recent article, “Study Shows Shortcomings of Higher Education’s Achievements” (2004), reports that 9-10% of all undergraduate college students, or about one million, have a disability and that students with learning disabilities make up the largest number of students with disabilities, approximately 40%.

No matter which reports are used, there is no doubt that enrollment of students with disabilities at community colleges is steadily increasing. Because of sheer numbers, community colleges face greater challenges in dealing with students with disabilities than do other postsecondary institutions (Jarrow, 1997). According
to Flick-Hruska and Blythe (1992), authors of *Disability Accommodations Handbook* for Metropolitan Community College in Kansas City, Missouri, the number of students with disabilities entering college will continue to increase. Reasons for this increase include mainstreaming in high schools, efforts by colleges to become more accessible to students with disabilities, and the perception of disabled students that postsecondary education will increase their opportunities for employment. Wolanin and Steele (2004) say that in 2004 about 9% of college undergraduates reported having a disability, a percentage that has tripled in the last twenty years. This percentage represents about 1.3 million students. Additionally, Wolanin and Steele report that the number of college freshmen with learning disabilities has increased by a factor of ten since 1976; and, in fact, of every 25 undergraduates one reports having a learning disability. Cocchi (1997) contends that students with learning disabilities are especially prone to choose community colleges as their entry point for higher education because community colleges offer decided advantages in such areas as location, cost, open enrollment policies, smaller class size, and support services. Scott (1990) says that increasing numbers of colleges are applying the concept of “otherwise qualified” to students with learning disabilities. Federal regulations concerning who is “otherwise qualified” are very broad, leaving much leeway for individual interpretation by institutions of higher learning. Although federal regulations are stated in very broad terms, Scott says that the spirit of the law, which is ensuring to individuals with disabilities equal educational opportunity, is extremely clear.
Sherry (2004), who holds the Ability Center of Toledo Endowed Chair of Disability Studies at the University of Toledo, believes that the number of students with disabilities entering higher education is going to continue to grow substantially. Additionally, Sherry believes not only that disabled students will enroll in larger numbers but also that more students with severe impairments will enroll, a possibility that makes servicing these increasing numbers an even more challenging task than it has been in the past for institutions of higher learning.

In addition to growing numbers, another reason for increased concern on the part of community colleges is because of the growing number of lawsuits in recent years. Legal challenges by students with learning disabilities are particularly on the rise. For example, in Fruth v. New York University, a student with a learning disability, which the school had determined to be covered by the ADA, challenged the school’s decision to rescind his acceptance. The student had not attended a summer orientation session required for students with learning disabilities. The court ruled that the university was within its rights to require the student to attend the summer session because his grades were lower than the required grade point average for admission to the university (Kaplin & Lee, 1995).

The ADA does not name impairments that are covered by the legislation (U.S. Department of Justice, 2002). In fact, the requirements of the ADA are quite unspecific, and the law contains no specifics on implementations of the ADA in educational settings. However, the fact that the framers of the ADA used the same terminology that had been used earlier in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of
1973 immediately made case law and precedents regarding Section 504 applicable to
the ADA. McGuire (2000) contends that the law is purposefully stated in broad terms
in order to be applicable to the many ways that people with handicaps can be
discriminated against. Notably, the ADA is not a funding statute, and, consequently,
it provides no federal funding to finance requirements of the law (Jarrow, 1997).

Proper implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act is necessary not
only to assure compliance with the law but also to assure that every student is
afforded equal opportunity to achieve success in college. It is important for
community colleges to assure that every qualified, disabled student is afforded the
opportunity for success in college and that securing this opportunity does not place an
undue burden on the student. A recent article in Disability Compliance for Higher
Education, “Making Disability Services Part of Campus Culture through Interaction”
(2004), suggests that colleges should strive to create a campus culture that promotes
and supports disability services. The report Higher Education Opportunities for
Students with Disabilities: A Primer for Policymakers by Wolanin and Steele (2004)
suggests that colleges have simply not done enough to assist students with disabilities
and that colleges must understand that the idea of inclusion needs to be pervasive
throughout the college. This report suggests that although not necessarily mandated
by law, colleges need to work to improve faculty’s understanding of disability issues,
to offer more assistance to disabled students in their transition to college, and to assist
students more with financial aid issues. Gugerty and Knutsen (2000), co-editors of
Serving Students with Significant Disabilities in Two-Year Colleges, a large research
report funded by the National Institute on Disability, echo the ideas of Wolanin and Steele. Gugerty and Knutsen headed a national project to discover, describe, and disseminate effective approaches that two-year postsecondary institutions had used to serve students with disabilities.

The establishment of a national organization to promote services to college students with disabilities was something of a milestone in postsecondary services for disabled students. In 1977 the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) was established to promote leadership and exemplary practices in the field of disability services in postsecondary education, to provide professional development, and to disseminate information. Today AHEAD is the leading professional organization committed to aiding disabled students in achieving full participation in postsecondary education. AHEAD produces many materials that reflect both topics and best practices in the field of disability services in higher education. *The Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, which reflects scholarship in the field, is published by AHEAD. The organization has also established a set of *Program Standards and Performance Indicators* as necessities of postsecondary disability services (AHEAD, 2004, About us).

The role of the disability services administrator (DSA) is of utmost importance in assuring that disabled students receive equal access to a college education. McGuire (2000) says, “The disability service administrator occupies a pivotal role in ensuring equal access within the context of reasonable accommodations” (p. 21). Further, McGuire contends that frequently the DSA is the
only professional on campus with the direct responsibility for overseeing any type of
disability related services. Jarrow (1999) says that one person’s being in charge of
disability services is extremely important. She believes that if too many people are
involved in the decision-making process for disability services, ensuring that
everyone has sufficient information may be difficult. Also, giving one person ultimate
responsibility for disability services reduces concerns about confidentiality. Jarrow
says that final decisions should be made by the DSA, not by the faculty.

Very little actual research had been done on DSAs until 2003 when AHEAD
created a survey for DSAs with three goals: to collect demographic information, to
learn more about the operation of disability offices, and to find practical information
to assist the DSAs. A total of 1,353 individuals who were DSAs completed the
survey, and from the survey conclusions were reached about who the DSAs were:
83% were women; 90% were Caucasians; average age was 45. The most common
needs reported by respondents were more resources and more support (Harbour,
2004).

Although researchers and writers in the field of disability services in
postsecondary education may differ in some respects (for example, the number of
students with disabilities enrolled in postsecondary institutions), they do agree that
postsecondary institutions simply have not done enough to promote equal
opportunities for disabled students. The consensus of these researchers is that until
more steps are taken to assure equality by colleges that many disabled students will
be denied equal access to a college education.
Statement of the Problem

In reviewing the literature written about implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act in two-year colleges, the researcher found a very consistent theme to emerge: Although two-year colleges have large numbers of students with disabilities, educating these students has proved to be a difficult task. ADA legislation, although not impairment specific, does require colleges to provide equal access and equal educational opportunities to disabled students, and scholarly literature related to the topic suggests that institutions need to determine essential standards for accommodating these students. The question arises whether efforts to accommodate students in Mississippi community colleges meet the requirements of the ADA and measure up to standards suggested by literature related to the topic of college students with disabilities. Therefore, the problem of this study was to ascertain the extent to which the 15 community colleges in Mississippi have made efforts to provide equal access and equal educational opportunity in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and with certain standards suggested in scholarly literature related to the topic of students with disabilities.

Purpose of the Study

Literature on the topic of students with disabilities suggests a large part of the effort that has been made by community colleges to accommodate disabled students is reflected in both the policy and procedure manuals and in the operation of the disability services offices in community colleges. Since these two factors are
significant in measuring the ADA efforts made by community colleges, the researcher studied the policy and procedure manuals and the operation of the disability services offices in the 15 community colleges in Mississippi to ascertain the extent to which the inclusions recommended by the experts in the field are present. In order to carry out this purpose, the researcher divided the study into two parts. The first part was an examination of the availability and the content of policy and procedure manuals to ascertain whether they contain what experts in the field consider to be necessary inclusions. The second part, which consisted of two sections, was an examination of the disability services offices. The first section consisted of a survey of the background of the disability services administrators (DSAs). The second section consisted of a questionnaire given to the DSAs for the purpose of ascertaining their perceptions of the operation of the disability services offices. AHEAD Program Standards and Performance Indicators and recommendations from experts in the field were used to compile the survey and the questionnaire.

**Research Questions**

The researcher examined the following questions to ascertain the extent of the implementation of ADA in the 15 community colleges in Mississippi:

1. What percentage of the community colleges in Mississippi have policy and procedure manuals for disability services readily available?
2. Do the policy and procedure manuals address the issues identified by Jarrow (1997), McGuire (2000), and AHEAD (2004) as necessary inclusions?

3. How can the qualifications of the disability services administrators in Mississippi community colleges be best described?

4. How can the duties of the disability services administrators in Mississippi community colleges be best described?

5. To what extent do the disability services administrators in Mississippi community colleges perceive that the disability services offices address the issues identified by experts in the field as necessities and address the Program Standards and Performance Indicators identified by the Association on Higher Education and Disability as necessities?

Justification for the Study

The fact is undeniable that community colleges are mandated to provide services for the disabled and that the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act at the community college level has presented very definite challenges. In response to these challenges, much research has been done but little specifically related to community colleges in Mississippi. Because of limited published research related to ADA in Mississippi community colleges, the research could minimize the challenges of ADA implementation in the state.
Population of the Study

Because the study was divided into two main parts, Part I and Part II, a distinction must be made between the populations in the two parts. Part I of the study has no population. Part I examined the policy and procedure manuals of each of the 15 Mississippi community colleges and was a document review.

Part II of the study consisted of an examination of the disability services offices. Since experts in the field (Gordon & Keiser, 2000; Jarrow, 1997; McGuire, 2000; Prentice, 2000; Wolanin & Steele, 2004) contend that the disability services administrator is the most significant person in ensuring equal access to disabled students, the population of this study included the individuals identified as disability services administrators or the individuals in charge of disability services at the 15 Mississippi community colleges. This study included all 15 community colleges in order to produce a holistic view of the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act in Mississippi community colleges.

Every person with the title of disability services administrator or with the responsibility for administrating disability services was contacted and asked to participate in the study. The participation by each disability services administrator was voluntary.

Delimitations of the Study

1. The study included community colleges only in the state of Mississippi.
2. The study did not include a review of physical facilities. Wolanin and Steele (2004) in their report for the Institute for Higher Education Policy contend that institutions of higher education have for the most part brought their physical facilities in line with government-mandated standards.

3. Questionnaires were employed in the study and were interpreted by the researcher and reviewed by community college personnel who were not included in the survey.

4. The study did not include the disability student population. This study was designed to include only an examination of the policy and procedure manuals, the disability services administrator, and his or her perceptions of the operation of the disability services offices.

5. The study examined the implementation of disability services in Mississippi community colleges at a specific point in time.

**Limitations of the Study**

1. Since the study included community colleges only in the state of Mississippi, the results can not be generalized to the other 49 states.

2. The researcher assumed that all respondents to the questionnaire gave truthful answers to the questions.

3. There is no assurance that a study conducted at a different time will produce the same results.
Definition of Terms

In order to clarify the meaning of terms used in this study, these definitions are provided:

1. ADA—Americans with Disabilities Act (Jarrow, 1997)
2. AHEAD—The Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD, 2004)
3. Disability—(A) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major activities of an individual; (B) a record of such an impairment; (C) being regarded as having such an impairment (ADA, Section 3,2)
4. Documentation of disability—verification of disability from a qualified source (U.S. Department of Education & Office for Civil Rights, 2002)
5. DSA—disability services administrator or any person serving in the capacity of administrator of disability services (McGuire, 2000)
6. Handicap—the same as a disability
7. Holistic—emphasis on the importance of the whole and the interdependence of its parts
8. Implementation—a method for accomplishing an end; putting into effect the Americans with Disabilities Act
9. Major life activity—functions such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working (Jarrow, 1997)

10. OCR—Office for Civil Rights (U.S. Department of Education & Office for Civil Rights, 2002)

11. Otherwise qualified—All requirements can be met with or without accommodations (Thomas, 2000)

12. Policy—a statement that tells what must be done (Jarrow, 1997)

13. Policy and procedure manual—the college’s official publication which explains operations of the disability services office (McGuire, 2000)

14. Procedure—a statement that tells how something is to be done (Jarrow, 1997)

15. Reality—“a multiple set of mental constructions...made by humans; their constructions are on their minds, and they are, in the main, accessible to the humans who make them” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 295); “people’s constructions of reality—how they understand the world” (Merriam, 1998, p. 203)


17. Up-coding—the practice of documenting a disability as more severe than in actuality it is (Wylonis & Schweizer, 2002)
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of the literature is presented in ten sections. The sections are the following: Legislation Concerning the Americans with Disabilities Act, Terminology of the Act, Colleges’ Obligations to Students with Disabilities, Policy and Procedure Manuals, Disability Services Administrator, Operation of the Disability Services Office, Learning Disabilities, AHEAD and the Development of Program Standards, ADA Related Studies, and Current Court Cases.

Legislation Concerning the Americans with Disabilities Act

The origin of the Americans with Disabilities Act can be traced back to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which was instituted to protect the rights of all citizens. This act prohibited discrimination based on race, color, or creed and has been extended since its passage to protect women, older citizens, and individuals with disabilities. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 extended this protection to individuals with disabilities. All of these pieces of legislation were designed to insure that certain “protected” groups were not discriminated against. With all of these laws, Congress attempted to “level the playing field” to give all Americans, regardless of disability, equal access and opportunity (Gordon & Keiser, 2000b). Wolanin and Steele (2004) contend that
students with disabilities are the latest of marginalized groups to move toward equal opportunity in education, opportunity already provided to low-income students, racial and ethnic minorities, and women. This opportunity for education of students with disabilities began with opportunities in elementary and secondary schools and today also includes opportunities in higher education.

In attempting to comply with law related to students with disabilities, college administrators actually have two major pieces of legislation to consider. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 states that

No otherwise qualified person with a disability in the United States...shall, solely by reason of ...disability, be denied the benefits of, be excluded from participating in, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

The Americans with Disabilities Act, Public Law 101-336, signed into law on July 26, 1990, is not simply a duplication of the 1973 act. According to Duston, Russell, and Kerr (1992), the Americans with Disabilities Act does far more than simply add “disability” to protected groups under federal law and has wide ranging new consequences for colleges and universities. Every program and activity of every public college is covered under ADA whether or not the program or activity receives federal funds. Thomas (2000) contends that between 1973 when Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act was passed and 1990 when the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed, colleges and universities had made only moderate progress toward making their campuses and their programs accessible to disabled students. After the passage of the ADA in 1990, Thomas says that colleges and universities have made
slow, but fairly steady, progress in making their programs and facilities more accessible, perhaps because of the broader coverage of the ADA and publicity surrounding the passage of the act, perhaps because of increases in the number of lawsuits and the growing number of students requesting accommodations.

By Congressional mandate, ADA Title II and Title III are overseen by the Department of Justice (DOJ), which maintains an ADA office. This office has numerous responsibilities, including providing technical assistance, investigating complaints, and filing lawsuits against non-complying entities. The Department of Justice Office of the ADA and the Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) maintain an interagency agreement. This agreement gives to the Office for Civil Rights the authority to offer technical assistance and to investigate complaints involving colleges and universities. When the OCR investigates a specific complaint against an institution, the group generally looks not only at the area of the institution that has occasioned the complaint but also at the institution’s total response to the law. One complaint opens the institution’s entire disability policy to very close scrutiny (Jarrow, 1997).

Frierson (2000) explains that the ADA includes five sections, or “Titles,” with sections applying to different areas—general employment, governmental units, public accommodations, transportation, and telecommunications. The intent of the law is “to prohibit discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities in programs, activities, and services” (p. 73). Frierson says that although the law requires the provision of auxiliary aids and accommodations for a disability, it allows for some
exceptions. Institutions are not required to provide accommodations and aids that would place an excessive burden on the institution. Also, the law does not require changes to essential program requirements. However, Jarrow (1997) says that in twenty years of case law the federal government has never allowed the cost of either an auxiliary aid or service to be used solely as the basis for denying an accommodations request. In determining whether an accommodation places an undue financial burden on the college, the government considers total revenue that the institution has at its disposal, not just the budget of one department.

Jarrow (1997) states that ADA is a federal anti-discrimination statute with the purpose of removing barriers for qualified persons with disabilities. The act was designed to assure that disabled individuals have the same opportunities as people without disabilities. The act does not give preferences to people with disabilities nor does it guarantee equal results. It does require that if a person’s disability creates a barrier, consideration must be given to whether reasonable accommodations can be made that will remove that barrier. The ADA intends to allow disabled individuals to compete using the same standards required of those without disabilities. The act does not set up required accommodations; rather accommodations must be considered on a case-by-case basis. Treloar (1999) says that possible accommodations may include substitution of nonessential courses for degree requirements, adaptation of course instruction, extended time for test taking, adaptive equipment, auxiliary aids and services. To this list of accommodations Thomas (2000) adds adjustments in time permitted to complete a degree, changes in the methods by which courses are
delivered, the use of tape recorders in the classroom, the provision of interpreters or readers, and the adaptation of classroom equipment. Furthermore, Thomas says that if accommodations are deemed to be necessary for a student, those accommodations must be provided in a timely manner. Jarrow (1997) emphasizes that accommodations are not a privilege for a student with a documented disability; accommodations are a right. Jarrow says that service providers must remember that to access one’s civil rights, one must simply be a member of the assigned/protected class. The recipient is not required to do anything to earn those rights.

**Terminology of the Act**

The American Council on Education (n.d.) says that a person with a disability includes any person who

- Has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities.
- Has a record of such impairment.
- Is regarded as having such impairment.

Thomas (2000) points out that only Section 504 uses the term “otherwise qualified”; the ADA says that a person with a disability should be “qualified.” However, there is no difference in the interpretation of the two terms. In short, with or without accommodations, the person must meet essential requirements of a program. A “qualified person with a disability” meets academic and technical requirements for admission to a postsecondary program.
Thomas (2000) contends that determining what constitutes a substantial limitation to a major life activity is difficult and at least four options exist according to case law. The first of these options emerged in 1997 from *Price v. National Board of Medical Examiners*. Three medical students with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder were not deemed to be disabled because their abilities exceeded those of most people in the general population.

A second approach was taken in 1997 by the district court in *Bartlett v. New York State Board of Law Examiners*. The court used the “comparable training” approach to determine that although the plaintiff could read as well as the average person in the population, her reading skills were deficient when compared to a typical law school student. The court held that the student was otherwise qualified and had been discriminated against because of her disability. The court ordered accommodations for the student to retake the examination and reimbursement for the tests that she had taken without accommodations provided.

A third option, somewhat similar to the second, emerged in 1998 in the case *Bowers v. NCAA*. The plaintiff had been declared academically ineligible to compete in intercollegiate athletics. The court determined that the student’s ability should be compared to the average unimpaired student, not to the population as a whole. In this context, the term “population” was interpreted to mean student population, not general population.

A fourth interpretation was used in the case of *Pazer v. New York State Board of Law Examiners* in 1994. The federal district court held that a difference in inherent
ability and performance may permit the inference of the presence of a learning disability even if the person’s ability meets or exceeds that of the average member of the population. However, the court also noted that each case had to be examined on its individual merits and that every low achiever would not qualify as disabled, an opinion supported in the case of Tatum v. NCAA in 1998 when the court ruled that a student’s substandard academic performance was due to lack of motivation and effort, not due to a disability. Thomas (2000) notes that inconsistent interpretations by lower courts have made the standard for “substantially limits” problematic at best.

Both Section 504 and the ADA exclude certain conditions from being considered a disability. Among these are compulsive gambling, kleptomania, pyromania, and sexual behavioral disorders. Some courts have held that obesity may be considered a disability under the ADA, and various federal agencies have determined that emotional or mental illness and specific learning disabilities can be considered disabilities (MCCCD Legal Services Department, 2003).

**Colleges’ Obligations to Students with Disabilities**

ADA is an anti-discrimination act, not entitlement, and a vast chasm exists between the accommodations a student might have received in high school and those he will receive in college (Gordon & Keiser, 2000a). In educating students with disabilities, elementary and secondary education is fundamentally different from higher education. Elementary and secondary education is mandated by law, and no student can be denied an elementary and secondary education. Higher education is
totally voluntary; consequently, unlike elementary and secondary schools, institutions of higher education can terminate students with disabilities for unacceptable academic performance. Also, to gain admission to an institution of higher learning, a student, whether handicapped or not, must be “college qualified.” Instruments that are used to determine whether a student is qualified for admission to an institution of higher learning must not be discriminatory (Wolanin & Steele, 2004).

The college student is an adult and must serve as his own advocate. The school has absolutely no obligation to seek out disabled students. The individuals seeking to declare a handicap must find the appropriate person at their school and declare their disability. Of course, the disability must be documented, generally by a licensed or certified professional with expertise relating to the disability. Documentation should generally include a statement regarding limitations imposed by the disability. The college has no responsibility for paying fees to procure documentation. Additionally, colleges do not have to suggest accommodations. The student should request specific accommodations, and the college then can agree to that accommodation or can deny that accommodation and suggest a substitute (Treloar, 1999).

Wylonis and Schweizer (2002) contend that documenting psychiatric disabilities presents definite problems. The authors say that fraudulent “up-coding” of diagnoses has become an endemic problem in the mental health industry, and the possibility exists that these practices are equally endemic among accommodations requests. They contend, “Unwavering insistence on careful, detailed documentation
is the only possible means of establishing the legitimacy of accommodation requests” (p. 167). To assure fairness, not only must the presence of a full-fledged mood or anxiety disorder be thoroughly documented but the functional impairment caused by the disorder also must be documented. Additionally, documentation should be provided concerning what accommodation is requested and of what help this accommodation will be.

McGuire (2000) contends that the most problems arise when documentation of a disability is questionable or incomplete. Further, McGuire suggests that if documentation is too problematic, there should be in place procedures for an independent, blind review by a qualified professional. Of course, the student must give signed consent for this evaluation.

Even when documentation of a disability is acceptable, the school has no obligation to provide any and all requested accommodations. The college’s responsibility is to provide reasonable accommodations that do not afford the accommodated student an unfair advantage, that do not require significant alterations to a program, that do not result in the lowering of standards, and that do not create undue financial burdens for the institution. Courts have found some requested accommodations to be unreasonable. In 1997, in the case Maczeczyj v. New York, the court ruled that a university did not have to develop a distance learning program for a student with social phobia. The Fifth Circuit Court ruled in McGregor v. Louisiana State University Board of Supervisors that a law school student’s request that he be allowed to be a part-time student, be allowed to take exams at home, and be allowed
to maintain a lower-than-required GPA would result in altering the school’s academic standards. However, most requests by students are within reason and are generally provided without controversy or court action (Thomas, 2000).

**Policy and Procedure Manuals**

Before community colleges take steps to assure compliance with the ADA, written policies and procedures should be developed. According to McGuire (2000), although neither the ADA nor Section 504 requires colleges and universities to have written policies and procedures in place, the Office for Civil Rights usually asks for this information when a complaint is filed. Consequently, postsecondary institutions can better defend themselves against complaints—and in some cases probably avoid them—if well-developed policies and procedures have been adopted. Some of the issues that should be addressed are these: confidentiality, required documents, procedure for document review, course substitution policy, assurance of non-discrimination treatment, grievance procedure, and responsibility for implementation of accommodations. Also, simply setting policies and procedures and having them approved is not sufficient. These policies and procedures must be widely disseminated by being published in all campus materials. Explicit instructions should be given about whom the student needs to contact.

Shaw and Dukes (2001) comment on the importance of developing policies and procedures. They believe that the development of written policies and procedures is definitely an on-going process and that policy review should be done regularly. The
authors contend that several factors make regular reconsideration of policies necessary: the newness of the field, the limited research, and the emerging judicial considerations. Shaw and Dukes comment that five AHEAD Standards relate to policy and procedures.

Jarrow (1997) also discusses the importance of written policies and procedures and says that for several reasons written policies and procedures are critical: First, the mere presence of policies and procedures demonstrates a good faith effort on the part of the college to accommodate disabled individuals. Second, reviewing policies and procedures can help to reveal gaps in compliance methods. Third, written policies and procedures can help to define responsibility and can protect college employees. Fourth, written policies and procedures can help individuals with disabilities by letting them know what protections and services a college offers.

Shaw and Dukes (2006) believe that the role of faculty in relation to disability services is changing and expanding. Although in the past faculty had limited roles in relation to disability services, their current roles are much broader. One of these roles may be in the development of policy and procedure manuals. Scott (1996) says that collaboration among all involved individuals in extremely important. Scott admits that with collaboration come very definite challenges, but she sees overcoming these challenges as definitely worthwhile. Jarrow (n.d.) says that developing written policies and procedures should be a shared task within the institution, that no one outside the institution should dictate policies. Those outside the institution can
suggest needed policies, but the task of actually developing policies should be done by responsible and dedicated individuals within the institution. Jarrow (1997) answers objections that some service providers may offer to the writing of formal policies and procedures. Service providers, according to Jarrow, sometimes hesitate to put policies and procedures into writing because they feel that written policies and procedures may serve to limit their actions and because they feel part of their accomplishments may be attributed to the fact that no one at the institution is aware of how they conduct their business. Jarrow says that neither of these objections is valid. If success has been based on personal working relations, a change in key players could produce problems. Also, the Office for Civil Rights would have serious objections to a casual, haphazard arrangement.

Taylor and Nicholson (2002) emphasize the importance of confidentiality, saying that all information relating to students is confidential and should not be discussed even with colleagues. Jarrow (1997) says, “Confidentiality of disability-related documents is very important within the disability community” (p. 27). Traditionally, people with disabilities have been excluded from opportunities because of their disabilities. Jarrow says confidentiality is extremely important. “If people don’t know that the person has a disability or the nature of that disability, such exclusions cannot occur. Hence, the emphasis is on confidentiality” (p. 27). AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) in Program Standards and Performance Indicators states that the institution should maintain a confidential file on each student with a disability.
Secondly, the policy and procedure manuals should contain a list of required documents to determine eligibility for accommodations. Gugerty and Knutsen (2000) state that a college has no obligation to provide an accommodation that is not specifically referenced in documentation provided by the student. McGuire (2000) says, “Once a student has self identified an institution has the right to require documentation of the disability. The responsibility for providing comprehensive and current documentation from qualified professionals, as well as the expenses involved, rests with the student” (p. 26). Leuchovius (1994) says that documentation, a responsibility of the student, must be both complete and current. The documentation should not only verify the disability but should also suggest accommodations. Furthermore, the documentation should be signed by a professional. Gorden and Keiser (2000b) say that evaluation and documentation should be done only by a qualified professional with extensive training in diagnosis and a terminal degree in the field. The documentation provided should be extensive enough for administrative review. The authors compare the process for a disabled student’s receiving accommodations to the procedure used to determine eligibility for Workers’ Compensation. Jarrow (1997) says that an institution should develop eligibility criteria that are “appropriate, comprehensive and legally defensible” (p. 31). The AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) Program Standards and Performance Indicators state that criteria and procedures for accessing accommodations should be clearly delineated and widely disseminated.
Not only should a list of required documents to determine eligibility for accommodations be in the policy and procedure manual but a procedure for document review also should be in place. McGuire (2000) emphasizes the importance of establishing written guidelines for documentation. These written guidelines “can be used as a benchmark against which a student’s documentation is compared” (p. 28). Jarrow (1997) says that document review is extremely important to assure that documents will trigger appropriate institutional responses. AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) Program Standards state that institutions must determine if a student’s documentation supports the need for requested accommodations.

According to McGuire (2000), a blind review of documents becomes necessary if a student’s documentation is questionable. “In those cases where documentation is problematic, the DSA should establish procedures for an independent, blind review by one or more qualified professionals” (p. 29). Of course, the student must give consent for this review.

The policy and procedure manual should also contain a statement of course substitution policy. AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) emphasizes the importance of the development, review, and revision of course substitution policy and procedures. These courses may include such items as foreign language requirements and writing requirements. Gugerty and Knutsen (2000) emphasize that decisions on course substitution must be made on a case-by-case basis and that these substitutions do not have to be made if a requested change would create a substantial change in course requirements. Jarrow (1997) say that a policy/procedure for course
substitutions should include an explanation of steps involved in considering course substitution requests, assignment of responsibilities, and a listing of needed information.

Assurance of non-discrimination in treatment of disabled students should be a part of a policy and procedure manual. AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Best practices) contends that a postsecondary institution should assure that individuals with disabilities will not be discriminated against. A non-discrimination statement should offer an assurance that disabled individuals will neither be excluded nor be given limited access to programs and activities. Additionally, freedom from harassment should be assured. McGuire (2000) also emphasizes that non-discriminatory treatment is important not only to assure that the student receives equitable treatment but also to assure that the institution does not put itself into a precarious legal situation.

A grievance policy should also be in place. AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) Program Standards and Performance Indicators state that the institution should provide easily accessible grievance and complaint procedures. Jarrow (1997) contends that there should be a “clear statement as to what actions should be taken by students if the agreed accommodations are not provided appropriately” (p. 9). McGuire (2000) also emphasizes the importance of a well-established grievance procedure. The establishment of this procedure protects not only disabled individuals but also the institution.
The policy and procedure manual should assign responsibility for implementation of accommodations. Jarrow (1997) says the policy and procedure manual should clearly state the authority for decision making and implementation of accommodations. Procedural statements should define roles and responsibilities for giving and receiving accommodations. AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) says that criteria and procedures for accessing accommodations should be clearly delineated and available to the entire campus community. McGuire (2000) emphasizes the importance of faculty’s understanding their responsibility for implementing accommodations.

The policy and procedure manual should clearly state the method by which a student with a disability can be considered a full-time student with less than the traditional full-time load. Stodden (2003) says that students with disabilities frequently take longer than students without disabilities to obtain a degree. Without a method in place for these students to be considered as full-time students although they are taking less than the traditional full-time number of classes, they may incur additional expenses since paying per credit hour is generally more expensive than paying for a full-load of classes. Jarrow (1997) says that one of the few “specifics” mentioned in Section 504 is giving extended time for a course or course of study. This “specific” has translated into the fact that disabled students are generally permitted to take a reduced course load and still be considered a full-time student. Being considered a full-time student is important because full-time status makes the
student eligible for specific benefits, such as financial aid. Jarrow says a written policy should exist stating how a part-time student can achieve full-time status.

Finally, a policy should be in place stating how the granting of an accommodation can be questioned by students, staff, or faculty. AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) says that information about disabilities should be available to students, administrators, faculty, and service professionals and that faculty should be informed of their rights and responsibilities. Gugerty and Knutsen (2000) agree that procedures should be in place for a faculty or staff member to question an accommodation; however, accommodations should be granted until the problem is resolved. Jarrow (1997) says that a clear procedure should be in place for students, staff, or faculty to question the granting of an accommodation. Jarrow contends that this policy/procedure should include steps required to challenge an accommodation, timelines, naming of responsibility for reconsideration of actions, and clarification of responsibility during the time that granting an accommodation is under question.

Disability Services Administrator

Community colleges need to have a disability services administrator (DSA) on staff. AHEAD (2004) Program Standards and Performance Indicators states that a full-time professional should coordinate services for disabled students. McGuire (2000) emphasizes the importance of the disability services administrator, saying that this person is frequently the only professional on campus with the responsibility for the operations of the campus office that is the “clearinghouse” for all disability-
related services. The functions of the DSA are many and may include these: determining eligibility, analyzing documents, determining reasonable accommodations on a case-by-case basis, and developing institutional policies and procedures. The job of the DSA is complicated by numerous factors, including the fact that students often present inadequate documentation from professionals who are often quick to provide consumers a diagnosis, especially learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder. Additionally, both students and professionals frequently view disability as an entitlement and request accommodations that are not related to the disability. In these cases it may become the job of the DSA to educate both students and their evaluators about basic assumptions of the ADA.

Duffy (2004) says that the disability services provider of necessity must deal with a wide range of issues and concerns including these: developing program policies and procedures, developing program services, establishing goals, evaluating program effectiveness, and compiling statistical data. Duffy suggests that the job of disability services provider is so diverse that there is no one prototypical educational experience to prepare a person for this position; however, he suggests that attending available training programs is an option.

McGuire (2000) says that a very important role of the DSA is to offer technical assistance to both faculty and administration. This assistance can include providing education about the requirements of the law, assisting in formulating technical standards for academic programs, and guiding the process for determining accommodations. If legal precedents have been set for a situation, the DSA should
have solid information to serve as a guide. In other cases, the DSA may have no precedent for guidance. In many instances, case law and governmental regulations offer scant assistance in dealing with real-life situations.

**Operation of the Disability Services Office**

Shaw and Dukes (2001) have written extensively about the operation of the disability services office in postsecondary institutions. Shaw is co-director of the Center on Postsecondary Education and Disability and professor of special education at the University of Connecticut. Dukes is a professor of special education at the University of South Florida. They contend that the disability services office should provide at least 27 specific services for disabled students. These services include serving as an advocate for students with disabilities, providing advocacy and self-advocacy training for students with disabilities, providing orientation packages created specifically for students with disabilities, providing admission information in alternate format, and using standards developed by the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) to determine required documentation. They also say that professionals in the disability services office should attend conferences regularly in order to stay abreast of new developments. The AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) *Program Standards and Performance Indicators* reiterate several of these suggestions made by Shaw and Dukes. The first Program Standard states that the disability services office should serve as an advocate for disabled students to assure equal access. Standard 5 references encouraging students to develop
independence. The dissemination of information in appropriate forms is the focus of AHEAD Program Standard 2. Program Standard 8 emphasizes the importance of professional development, and Standard 6 references the importance of standards for documentation.

Brinckerhoff, Shaw, and McGuire (1993) emphasize the importance of information about disability services being provided during student recruitment. They feel that the disability services office should work especially hard to foster independence in disabled students and to make the transition from high school to college as easy as possible for the disabled students. Career counseling is another task of the disability services office that is emphasized by Brinckerhoff, Shaw, and McGuire. AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) Program Standard 5 references fostering independence and promoting self-determination in students with disabilities.

Thomas (2000), who is professor and chairperson of Educational Administration at Kent State University, says that the work of the disability services office can ease the disabled student’s transition into college. He lists eleven steps that the disability services personnel can take to assist disabled students. These include establishing and publishing guidelines for students to follow in documenting disabilities, making efforts to keep abreast of new technologies that may assist disabled students, ensuring that sufficient staff is hired to work with disabled students, and providing in-service training for faculty and staff. Thomas says that for the disability services office to function well, the office must be provided with
sufficient resources. These items mentioned by Thomas are echoed by AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) Standards. Standard 2 includes the importance of a statement on self-disclosure and states that criteria and procedures for accessing accommodations should be clearly defined. Standard 2 also references the importance of using new technologies to aid disabled students. AHEAD Standard 3 calls for awareness training for faculty, staff, and administrators. Standard 7 emphasizes the importance of fiscal management, and Standard 4 calls for sufficient supports for disabled students.

Gugerty and Knutsen (2000), editors of Servicing Students with Significant Disabilities in Two-Year Colleges, suggest numerous steps that can be taken by the disability services office to aid students with disabilities. The authors recommend first that the mission and philosophy of the disabilities services office should be compatible with the mission and philosophy of the college. They consider some of the most important steps to be working with secondary schools in the district, maintaining a data base of statistical information on students served, giving disabled students interest and career tests, working closely with vocational rehabilitation services, and collecting information to determine future growth. The authors also believe that students should not have to suffer undue hardships waiting for permanent accommodations to be determined. They believe that policies should be in place for students to receive provisional accommodations during any period when permanent accommodations have not been determined. Additionally, they recommend that colleges participate in Disability Awareness Day and have a disability advisory
committee. AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) also considers these aspects of disability services to be significant. Standard 1 calls for fostering an inclusion of disabled students in campus life and references the necessity of having a campus-wide advisory committee. Standard 4 concerns the maintaining of meticulous records. Gugerty and Knutsen also recommend that the disability services office work to develop political support for the disability program. AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) in Standard 7 calls for the disability services office to work to develop political support for both the disability program itself and for the budget of the disability services program. Additionally, Standard 7 addresses collecting data to project program growth and future needs.

Flowers, Bray, and Algorzzine (2001), who are members of the Department of Administration, Research, and Technology at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, specialize in the area of making computer technology accessible to disabled students. They feel that within the offices of disability services or elsewhere on campus a dedicated, adaptive computer lab should be available for disabled students to use, and staff should be provided to help the students better utilize computer technology. AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) Standard 2 mentions the importance of assistive technology.

Wolanin and Steele (2004), authors of Higher Education Opportunities for Students with Disabilities: A Primer for Policymakers, believe that a significant part of the work of the disability services office should be making faculty aware of the implications of the ADA. Staff development programs related to ADA should be
presented regularly, and a resources guide related to ADA should be available to the faculty. These measures should serve to make faculty more responsive to proposed accommodations. Other measures emphasized by Wolanin and Steele are making sure the college has an established course substitution policy, providing non-academic support services for disabled students, and providing transition services to help students move from school to work. AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) Standard 6 references the importance of a course substitution policy, and Standard 1 mentions the importance of non-academic supports. Providing transition services is implied by Standard 5, which relates to self-determination.

Gordon and Keiser (2000a), editors of Accommodations in Higher Education under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): A No-Nonsense Guide for Clinicians, Educators, Administrators, and Lawyers, also emphasize the importance of the disability services office offering post-enrollment support services and doing careful follow-up on students. This idea is echoed by Jarrow (1997), who says that close follow-up should be a part of any disability services program. The follow-up should be continuous, beginning very early in the student’s academic career to see if accommodations are working. Jarrow also believes that the disability services office should regularly monitor students’ grades. Additionally, Jarrow suggests that the college should have a support group for students with disabilities and suggests that a student mentoring program is extremely effective. Another suggestion offered by Jarrow is that colleges should have a printed policy for dispute resolution, a suggestion echoed by AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) Standard 6.
AHEAD Standard 7 addresses the importance of follow-up procedures. Although AHEAD Standards do not specifically mention a support group or mentoring program, Standard 1 mentions the importance of an institutional commitment to promoting student abilities and fostering meaningful inclusions of disabled students in campus life.

Although differing in some of their suggestions, experts in the field of disability services in postsecondary institutions do agree that the operation of the disability services office is crucial to a college’s having an efficient, effective program in place to service disabled students.

**Learning Disabilities**

One of the greatest concerns of community colleges in implementing the ADA is dealing with students with learning disabilities, and there are compelling reasons why this is a major concern. According to Thomas (2000), the number of students reporting learning disabilities is rapidly growing. In 1991, only 24.9% of students declaring a disability reported a learning disability. By 1996, over 35% reported a learning disability. In many cases physical disabilities do not affect a student’s ability to perform in a particular college program; however, learning disabilities can affect performance in almost any program and also may frequently become a major consideration in admission decisions. In the postsecondary setting, a qualified student with a disability is one that can meet the admission, academic, and technical standards of a program with or without accommodations. In 1985 the
Supreme Court ruled that “reasonable accommodations” should not make “substantial” changes to a program (Thomas, 2000).

Lorry (2002) provides an excellent discussion of learning disabilities and what types of accommodations colleges are expected to provide for students with learning disabilities. The ADA protects individuals with learning disabilities from discrimination and permits them to request accommodations. To qualify under ADA as learning disabled, an individual must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Retardation is not a basis for LD diagnosis; and to be labeled as LD, a person must possess intellectual abilities within the average range. Generally a learning disability manifests itself in language deficiencies, usually reading.

Lorry (2002) states that there are four steps in determining if a learning disability is covered under ADA. First, it must be established that the individual possesses average intellectual abilities and has a cognitive deficit. Second, it must be shown that the person had difficulties with language skills as a child. Third, the fact that the learning disorder limits the person’s performance compared to the general population must be proven. Finally, how requested accommodations will aid the individual in overcoming effects of the disability must be documented.

Wolanin and Steele (2004) say that for several reasons students with learning disabilities have an especially difficult time navigating the academic landscape of higher education. Their disability is “invisible” and sometimes difficult for faculty to accept as legitimate. Frequently, faculty and administrators have insufficient
information about learning disabilities and are unsure about what they should do to accommodate students with learning disabilities. Faculty also may resent non-academic staff from the disability office dictating requirements to them. In short, faculty may perceive providing academic adjustments to students with learning disabilities as compromising academic standards. Many of the accommodations provided for learning disabled students of necessity involve direct participation by faculty, another reason for faculty resistance.

An article in *Disability Compliance for Higher Education*, “Institutions Should Be Flexible with Foreign Language Requirements” (2004), discusses another accommodation that faculty frequently resist accepting, the modifying or waiver of a foreign language requirement as a mandated course for completing degree requirements. The article quotes Daniel J. Reed, who is a professor of language at Indiana University and a language testing specialist. Reed contends that institutions should be flexible in dealing with learning disabled students and foreign language, perhaps offering foreign language courses taught at varied paces or allowing students to substitute culture courses for foreign language requirements. This article emphasizes the idea that if an institution holds fast to a foreign language requirement, the institution must be able to show that the decision was based on sound academic reasoning. This article cites the case *Guckenberger vs. Trustees of Boston University* in which the university faculty supported the school’s foreign language policy with the claim that learning a foreign language is important to a well-rounded education and that it promotes diversity on campus.
AHEAD and the Development of Program Standards

The Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) was organized in 1977 and is the premier association dedicated to promoting full participation of disabled individuals in postsecondary education. The organization uses various methods including conferences, workshops, and consultations to train higher education personnel to equip these professionals to work with disabled individuals and to address disability issues on their campuses (AHEAD, 2004, About us). Additionally, the organization produces and publishes materials that discuss topics and best practices in the field of disability and higher education. A wide variety of topics is discussed in this literature: program evaluation, legal principles, accommodations, accessibility, confidentiality, resources. AHEAD also publishes books, brochures, and booklets related to specific disabilities and accommodations for these disabilities: ADHD, chronic diseases, learning disabilities, hearing loss (Ahead, 2004, Publications).

AHEAD in an attempt to minimize challenges that colleges face in the implementation of the ADA has established Program Standards and Performance Indicators. Dukes (2001), writing about the development of AHEAD Program Standards, says that although during the past 20 years the number of college students with disabilities and the services offered to them have increased dramatically, little research has been conducted to identify postsecondary DSAs’ perceptions of essential service components. Consequently, in 1997 the Association on Higher Education and
Disability funded a study in which DSAs across America rated the importance of 62 service components across 12 categories, using a five-point Likert scale. The content was developed by one major researcher, Wendy Harbour, and an AHEAD Program Standards task force. The mission of this group was to identify service components considered essential for postsecondary students with disabilities. Dukes says that guidelines described by Gable and Wolf (cited in Gable & Wolf, 1993) were used in designing the survey: conducting reviews of the literature, developing lists of service components, conducting reviews of statements, preparing a pilot instrument, piloting and analyzing data from the pilot instrument, and revising the final instrument.

Dukes (2001) says that the final survey was mailed to a random sample of 800 DSAs. Seventy percent, or 563, of the surveys were returned. From the returned surveys, 33 items were rated 4.0 or higher on the Likert scale, indicating that they were perceived to be necessities for disability services in postsecondary institutions. After several reviews by the AHEAD Board of Directors, the board decided that the criteria for inclusion as an AHEAD Program Standard would be more demanding than the criteria used for the study. It was decided that the items included should not only have a rating of 4.0 but should also have this rating across four variables: two or four year institution, competitive or open enrollment institution, public or private institution, United States or Canadian institution. Using these more rigorous criteria, 27 items were included. These 27 items were approved by the AHEAD membership in 1999 at the annual conference in Atlanta, Georgia.
In 2005 AHEAD conducted another study to identify and validate “best practices” for disability services in higher education. Although the Program Standards developed earlier were recognized for providing direction for postsecondary programs, they were challenged on the grounds that they did not necessarily reflect opinions of experts in the field on best practices. Also, a survey of 1,353 postsecondary DSAs (cited in Harbour, 2004) indicated that over 80% of providers said that they needed more information about best practices. A study was undertaken by AHEAD to update the Program Standards by identifying performance indicators for each standard. Experts in postsecondary disability services rated the importance of Standards and Performance Indicators using a five-point Likert scale. The final instrument included 31 Standards and 129 Performance Indicators. The Association on Higher Education and Disability Board of Directors identified a panel of 12 postsecondary disability experts to participate in content validation of the survey. After adjustments were made to the survey, the final instrument consisted of 27 Standards across nine categories and 147 Performance Indicators. These Standards and Performance Indicators now serve to indicate minimum supports that should be available at all postsecondary institutions to provide equal access to disabled students. These Standards were developed to assist postsecondary DSAs in evaluating the effectiveness of their services (Shaw & Dukes, 2005).
ADA Related Studies

Dukes (2001) in the *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability* discusses the process by which AHEAD Program Standards were developed. The development of these Program Standards was undertaken to fill a gap in implementation of ADA in postsecondary settings. Little research had been done to identify DSAs’ opinions of the importance of various service components to provide equal access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities. The study, funded by AHEAD, the professional organization for postsecondary disability service providers, was designed to determine minimum essential service components of offices serving students with disabilities. The sample for the study consisted of 800 disability services practitioners. The design of the study followed guidelines described by Gable and Wolf (cited in Gable & Wolf, 1993): conducting a literature review, developing a list of service components, conducting a judgmental review of the statements, preparing and administrating a pilot instrument, and making revisions to the final instrument. The final survey instrument contained 62 items in 12 categories and 16 demographic items, which related to practitioner, program, and institutional characteristics. The final survey instrument was mailed to 800 disability administrators. Seventy percent of the surveys were returned. Using the Likert Scale, respondents rated items based on importance. Thirty-three items were rated 4.0 or higher. The results of the study were presented at the 1998 AHEAD Annual Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada. At this conference, no changes were made to the items. After additional review by the AHEAD Board of Directors, the decision was
made that the criteria for inclusion as an AHEAD Program Standard would be more rigorous than the original criteria. To be included, an item had to have a rating of 4.0 across these variables: two- or four-year institution, competitive or open enrollment institution, public or private institution, and location in the United States or Canada. Using these criteria, 27 items were designated as AHEAD Program Standards. These standards were presented at the AHEAD annual conference in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1999.

Shaw and Dukes (2005) discuss the formulation of 90 AHEAD Performance Indicators, which specify “best practices” for disability services in higher education. A study was undertaken to update the Program Standards and to identify Performance Indicators for each standard. A panel of postsecondary disability experts rated the importance of service components and performance indicators using a five-point Likert scale. After extensive review by experts, the final survey instrument consisted of 30 service components and 147 performance indicators. The survey was done using a Web site as a delivery method for the questionnaire. Fifty-five disability service professionals agreed to serve as expert panelists in the study. The expert panelists responded to the questionnaire, which had been divided into three rounds. For an item to be selected as a performance indicator, it had to have a mean rating of 4.2 or greater on a 5.0 scale. Additionally, 80% or more of the panel must have rated the item in either the same or adjacent category. Ninety of 147 proposed performance indictors were rated as essential. During round two of the survey, the same format was used. Items that participants agreed on were noted and did not have to be rated
again. Participants were asked to again rate items on which consensus had not been achieved. During round two, ten more performance indicators were identified as essential. Round three employed the same format that had been used during the previous two rounds. During this final round, no additional items were identified as essential. AHEAD used this research to develop revised Program Standards with 90 Performance Indicators showing how the standards can be fulfilled. These Program Standards and Performance Indicators specify minimum supports needed to provide equal access for students with disabilities. This research provides postsecondary disability professionals with a tool that can be used to evaluate their programs. Also, these Performance Indicators provide consumers with information regarding what they can expect from postsecondary disability services. Additionally, these standards can be used by governmental agencies for program development.

Shaw and Dukes (2005) contend that the Program Standards developed by AHEAD provide a research-based direction for entities concerned with disability services in postsecondary institutions. The authors say that some common myths about disability services have definitely been challenged by the development of these standards. Then they discuss briefly implications of the Standards. The Standards under Consultation/Collaboration/Awareness make the point that specific services should be provided and both the institution and the department have responsibilities. The focus in the second category, Information Dissemination, is open communication throughout the institution regarding disability access. Necessary elements of communication include institutional publications, access to communication for
disabled individuals, and provision of information about available resources to students. The third category, Faculty/Staff Awareness, addresses providing training and disability services for college faculty, administrators, and staff. The fourth category, Academic Adjustments, focuses on the provision of appropriate academic adjustments for disabled students. This category includes the necessity of having a policy to determine accommodations and making academic adjustments on an individual basis. The next category, Instruction Interventions, contains only one standard, which says that students with disabilities should be provided with instruction in learning strategies. The sixth category, Counseling and Advocacy, also contains only one item. The focus of this category is that disabled students should be taught self-advocacy skills. The seventh category, Policy and Procedures, contains five standards dealing with accommodations, rights and responsibilities of both students and institutions, and appeal procedures. The eighth category, Program Development and Evaluation, contains five sections. This category includes the following: providing services based on the institution’s mission, employing of a full-time disability professional, collecting of student feedback, collecting of data to monitor the use of disability services, and reporting program evaluation to administrators. The final category, Training and Professional Development, indicates that postsecondary institutions need to provide disability services staff with opportunities for professional development. This category also includes the fact that experienced professionals should be hired by the college to work with students with
disabilities. The final standard in this category states that programs and personnel should adhere to the AHEAD Code of Ethics. Parker, Shaw, and McGuire (2003) say that because of decreased funding and rising expectations for worthwhile outcomes, there is growing need for program evaluation for postsecondary disability services. The authors admit that there is a small but increasing number of resources to help postsecondary professionals respond to concerns about program evaluation. The authors contend that the AHEAD Program Standards provide a useful framework for program review. They point out Standard 8, which relates to program development and evaluation, as particularly useful and relevant. This standard encompasses providing services based on the institution’s mission, coordinating services through a full-time professional, collecting student feedback, collecting data to monitor use of disability services, and reporting program evaluation data to administrators.

**Recent Court Rulings**

Admittedly, the criteria governing implementation of the ADA are vague. Perhaps it would be useful to consider some current rulings of the Office for Civil Rights, the entity that generally investigates complaints involving ADA cases. These reviews of findings are given in the LRP booklet *Community Colleges and the ADA: How to Make Sure OCR Doesn’t Come Knocking on your Door*, edited by Jaquays (1999).
One problem administrators may face is the impossibility of securing interpreters for every hearing-impaired student. San Diego Community College with an annual enrollment of approximately 175 hearing-impaired students took the unprecedented approach of prioritizing services with the recognition that not all students requesting interpreting services would receive them. In a May 1999 resolution agreement, OCR implicitly acknowledged that not all students requesting services would receive them. The 504 coordinator at the college made several recommendations: conduct an outside review of provisions for hearing-impaired students, limit the outsourcing of interpreter services and improve services, explore the use of enhanced real-time captioning, hire an interpreter services coordinator and a scheduler. OCR recommended that other colleges take similar steps when faced with a shortage of interpreters: submit the system to review by an outside agency, increase wages for interpreters, advertise widely for interpreters, seek student input on solutions to the problem.

Glendale Community College was investigated by the OCR when a student contended that her denial for admission into a teaching program was because of her disability. OCR concluded that the student did not meet admission requirements for the program; however, the school was reprimanded because its admission forms asked prospective students if they had a disability, handicap, or health problem. The case was closed when the school submitted a plan of correction. Community Colleges & the ADA states, “The less you know about an applicant’s disability status, the better” (p. 8).
In 1999 a student with dyslexia at the Community College of Vermont alleged that the college did not provide him with appropriate accommodations. OCR found that the student had not provided acceptable documentation of his disability and pointed out that under Section 504 and the ADA, if a student does not provide medical documentation, the institution has no obligation to provide accommodations. In another case related to a learning disability, a student with a remote memory deficiency at Cumberland Community College asked to take weekly tests in all courses rather than having to take midterm and final exams. The college denied her request. OCR ruled that the college violated neither Section 504 nor Title II of the ADA. A psychological examination had indicated that the student had limitations in memory but did not indicate that the problems required weekly testing instead of the use of midterm and final exams. In the investigation OCR did find that the college had only an informal procedure for responding to requests instead of a written policy. The college did violate the ADA and Section 504 because its publications were insufficient in stating a nondiscrimination policy.

At Okaloosa-Walton Community College, a student with a learning disability alleged that the college did not provide accommodations for her for an algebra course she was taking. OCR found that the student had taken the algebra exam with her class but had failed. The college permitted her to retake the test under conditions that she specified; however, the student scored lower on the second test than she had on the first. Although the college offered to permit her to take the test again, she chose not to take it again. OCR determined that the college did not violate Section 504 or the
ADA; however, the investigation did uncover the fact that the college had committed a violation because its application for admission included a question about disability.

A student with a learning disability at Pima Community College alleged that she had been discriminated against because she was not permitted to take an open-book test for one of her courses. The college had offered extended testing time, a separate testing site, and a test reader. Also, the student had been given the choice of taking either a short answer or multiple-choice test. The college denied the request for an open-book test on the basis that both mastery and recall were necessary to understand the course concepts, and these could not be measured using an open-book format. OCR found that the college was not in violation of Title II of the ADA or of Section 504 since appropriate accommodations were made available.

These cases make one point very clear: Each case is individualized, and complying with governmental regulations is no easy task. In short, a community college must prepare itself for the growing disabled population and their diverse needs.

**Summary of Literature**

Wolanin and Steele (2004) contend that students with disabilities are the latest marginalized group to move toward equal opportunity in education. Two major pieces of legislation, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), have made this move toward equal opportunity possible. Jarrow(1997)) states that the ADA is a federal anti-discrimination statute with the
purpose of removing barriers for qualified persons with disabilities to assure that
disabled individuals have the same opportunities as people without disabilities. The
ADA requires that if a person’s disability creates a barrier, consideration must be
given to whether reasonable accommodations can be made that will remove the
barrier. Significantly, the act does not set up required accommodations; accommodations must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Experts in the field of ADA implementation in postsecondary institutions
(Gordon & Keiser, 2000; Jarrow, 1997; McGuire, 2000; Prentice, 2000; Wolanin &
Steele, 2004) agree that implementation of the ADA in these institutions has not been
an easy task. The law itself is in many ways not specific. However, the
implementation can be made less challenging if the institution has a written policy
and procedure manual and a disability services administrator (DSA) on staff.

The policy and procedure manual is necessary for several reasons. Jarrow
(1997) says that policy and procedure manuals are critical to demonstrate a good faith
effort on the part of the institution to accommodate disabled individuals, to define
responsibility, and to inform disabled students of their rights and responsibilities.
Although policy and procedure manuals are not required by the ADA, Jarrow says
that the Office for Civil Rights would have serious objections to an institution’s not
that if a complaint is filed, the Office for Civil Rights usually asks to see the college’s
policy and procedure manual.
The presence of an administrator in charge of disability services (usually called the disability services administrator, or DSA) is crucial also. McGuire (2000) says that this person is frequently the only professional on campus with responsibility for operating the campus office that is the “clearinghouse” for all disability-related services. The functions of the DSA may range from determining eligibility to determining reasonable accommodations to developing institutional policy and procedures. Duffy (2004) says that the disability services provider must deal with a wide range of issues and concerns and that the job is so diverse that there is no one prototypical educational experience to prepare a person for this position; however, he suggests that attending training programs is an option.

Experts in the field of ADA implementation in postsecondary institutions (Gordon & Keiser, 2000; Jarrow, 1997; Thomas, 2000; Wolanin & Steele, 2004; Wylonis & Schweizer, 2002) agree that proper implementation of ADA in postsecondary settings presents definite challenges. Proper implementation is essential not only to provide disabled students with equal access but also to prevent the colleges’ being involved in legal issues. A large step forward has been made by the Association on Higher Education and Disability with the development of Program Standards and Performance Indicators. The Standards and Indicators serve to provide information on minimum supports that should be available at all postsecondary institutions to provide equal access to disabled students (Shaw & Dukes, 2005).
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Jarrow (1997) and McGuire (2000), both of whom have done extensive research and writing in the field of implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act in postsecondary institutions, contend that much work remains to be done before postsecondary institutions offer to students with disabilities the same opportunities offered to students without disabilities. Thomas (2000) agrees that in many cases services offered to students with disabilities are inadequate and that colleges seldom employ experts who are truly knowledgeable about disability accommodations. Jarrow, McGuire, and Thomas contend that two extremely important considerations in the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act at postsecondary institutions are a thorough policy and procedure manual and the employment of an effective disability services administrator.

Additionally, the research (Gordon & Keiser, 2000; Jarrow, 1997; McGuire, 2000; Prentice, 2000; Wolanin & Steele, 2004) suggests a large part of the effort that has been made by community colleges to accommodate disabled students is reflected in both the policy and procedure manuals and in the operation of the disability
services offices. These two factors are significant in measuring the ADA efforts made by community colleges. The researcher studied the policy and procedure manuals of the 15 Mississippi community colleges to ascertain both the availability and the presence of inclusions recommended by the experts in the field. Also, the researcher studied the operation of the disability services offices to ascertain the duties and qualifications of the disability services administrators and to ascertain the extent to which the disability services administrators perceive that the disability services offices address issues considered to be necessities by experts in the field and referenced in the Program Standards and Performance Indicators cited by the Association on Higher Education and Disability. To organize this information, the researcher divided the study into two sections. The first section was an examination of the presence and the content of policy and procedure manuals to determine if they contain what experts in the field consider to be necessary inclusions. The second section was an examination of the disability services administrators’ backgrounds as well as the administrators’ perceptions of the operation of the disability services offices.

**Research Questions**

The researcher examined the following questions to ascertain the extent of the implementation of ADA in the 15 community colleges in Mississippi:
1. What percentage of the community colleges in Mississippi have policy and procedure manuals for disability services readily available?

2. Do the policy and procedure manuals address the issues identified by Jarrow (1997), McGuire (2000), and AHEAD (2004) as necessary inclusions?

3. To what extent can the qualifications of the disability services administrators in Mississippi community colleges be best described?

4. How can the duties of the disability services administrators in Mississippi community colleges be best described?

5. To what extent do the disability services administrators in Mississippi community colleges perceive that the disability services offices address the issues identified by experts in the field as necessities and address the Program Standards and Performance Indicators identified by the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) as necessities?

**Design of the Research**

The design of the research was a study of the 15 Mississippi community colleges. All 15 Mississippi community colleges were included in an attempt to produce a holistic view of the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act in Mississippi community colleges. Usually, a study implemented in this manner is employed to create external validity or generalizability; however, in this study the limited population of the disability services administrators (DSA) necessitated that all 15 community colleges be included in order to produce a holistic view.
Because of the holistic nature of the study, the researcher attempted to capture the “reality” of ADA implementation by examining all 15 Mississippi community colleges’ policy and procedure manuals and the disability services offices. Using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the researcher examined the ADA policy and procedure manuals and the operation of the disability services offices. The study relied primarily on the use of qualitative methodologies for the instrumentation and data collection procedures, but the study does incorporate some quantitative methodologies in analyzing the data. To examine the ADA implementation, the researcher chose to use survey research. This study employed three sources of data gathering: a document review, a survey, and a questionnaire.

Merriam (1998) contends that internal validity deals with how accurately the findings of a study capture reality; thus, internal validity depends on the meaning of reality. Also, a basic assumption of qualitative research is that reality is constantly changing. People are the primary instrument of collecting and analyzing data in qualitative research, and interpretations of reality are made through their observations. Merriam suggests six strategies that can be used to enhance internal validity: triangulation, member checks, long-term observation, peer examination, collaborative modes of research, and clarifying the researcher’s biases. The researcher incorporated into the research strategies of Merriam that were appropriate. Triangulation, member checks, and peer examination were used.

Two threats to internal validity in the study were response rate and truthfulness of responses. Since the study used a survey and a questionnaire as
instruments, the researcher increased the response rate by employing strategies suggested by Dillman (1978). Dillman contends that sending a cover letter, sending a small token of appreciation, sending a pre-contact letter, and sending a follow-up letter to the target population will aid in increased response rates. The researcher incorporated these four suggested strategies in the data collection methodologies. Also, the truthfulness of the responses to the survey and questionnaire could impose a threat to the internal validity of the study. The researcher employed the use of members check, contacting some of the population and reviewing the information with them, to reduce the threat to internal validity. After member checks were completed, the researcher assumed that all responses were as truthful as could be obtained.

There is much contention about the reliability factors in qualitative research; however, Merriam (1998) offers suggestions for assuring reliability in this type of research. She contends that although reliability is based on the assumption that a study can be repeated and will yield the same results, qualitative research attempts to explain and to examine the world as people experience it. Since this type of research involves interpretations, there is no way to repeat measures and establish reliability as it is established in quantitative research. Instead, efforts should be made to assure that results are consistent and dependable. In other words, are the results consistent with data collected? Merriam suggests three techniques that can be used to ensure dependable results: the clarification of the investigator’s position, triangulation, and
the maintaining of an audit trail. The researcher incorporated these suggestions into the study.

Experts in the field of ADA implementation in community colleges (Gordon & Keiser, 2000; Jarrow, 1997; McGuire, 2000; Prentice, 2000; Thomas, 2000; Wolanin & Steele, 2004) contend that both policy and procedure manuals and operation of the disability services office have extremely important roles in effective implementation of the ADA. Therefore, the research was divided into two specific parts: (1) policy and procedure manuals and (2) operation of the disability services offices. Part I of the study examined the availability of policy and procedure manuals and the content of policy and procedure manuals. The examination of the policy and procedure manuals was a document review to ascertain to what extent the community colleges have included in the policy and procedure manuals the necessary information suggested by the experts in the field.

Part II of the study was an examination of the disability services offices. The examination of the disability services offices was divided into two sections: the background information and the duties and qualifications of the disability services administrator (Section I) and the disability services administrators’ perceptions of the operation of the disability services office (Section II).

Both of these sections expanded on earlier research. Section I expanded on research done earlier by Shaw and Dukes (2001), Brinckenhoff, Shaw, & McGuire (1993), Flowers, Bray, & Algozzine (2001), Jarrow (1997), Gordon & Keisler (2000), Gugerty & Knutsen (2000), Thomas (2000), Wolanin and Steele (2004), and Harbour
(2004). Harbour for her study, *The Final Report: The 2004 AHEAD Survey of Higher Education Disability Services Providers*, surveyed 1,353 disability services professionals to collect personal demographic information, to learn more about current staff positions, to collect compensation information, and to collect information pertaining to the DSAs’ campuses and disability services offices. The researcher used the first two sections of Harbour’s and AHEAD’s survey to collect background information. Permission was granted to the researcher by both Wendy Harbour and AHEAD to use this material.

Section II of Part II expanded on research done by Thomas (2000); Wolanin and Steele (2004); Gugerty and Knutsen (2000); Shaw and Dukes (2001); Jarrow (1997); Gordon and Keisler (2000); Flowers, Bray, and Algozzine (2001); and AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards). After extensive research, in 1999 AHEAD established 27 Program Standards for postsecondary disability services providers (Dukes, 2001), and in 2005 AHEAD undertook another study which resulted in the establishment of 147 Performance Indicators for postsecondary disability services (Shaw & Dukes, 2005). A survey conducted by Harbour (2004), which gathered extensive information about service providers, had indicated that over 80% of service providers felt that they needed more information about best practices.

Although Part II expanded on previous research in both Section I and Section II, the sections in the previous research were not combined in this manner. Because of this fact, the researcher employed a pilot study.
The design of the research included examining documents from each Mississippi community college and examining the DSA population at a single point in time through survey research.
An Examination of the Implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in Mississippi Community Colleges

Part I of the Study

Part II of the Study

Operation of the Disability Services Office

RQ 1
What percentage of community colleges in Mississippi have policy and procedure manuals for disability services available?

RQ 2
Do the policy and procedure manuals address the issues identified by Jarrow, McGuire, and AHEAD as necessary inclusions?

There is no population for this research question. It is a document review.

Instrumentation- A yes or no check list will aid in ascertaining the availability of the documents.

Procedures- Collect the manuals and mark the availability check list.

Data Analysis- Calculate the average availability percentage for the community colleges.

Report data in narrative form.

RQ 3
To what extent can the qualifications of the disability services administrators in Mississippi community colleges be best described?

The population will consist of the people identified as DSAs in each community college.

Instrumentation- An eleven-item yes or no check list will aid in ascertaining whether the documents have the necessary inclusions.

Procedures- Review the manuals and mark the inclusions check list.

Data Analysis- Describe the characteristics of the DSAs. The researcher will calculate the mean and the mode for certain questions.

Report data in narrative form.

RQ 4
How can the duties of the disability services administrators in Mississippi community colleges be best described?

Instrumentation- A 17-item survey administered by the researcher will aid in ascertaining the background, duties, and qualifications of the DSAs.

Procedures- Contact and survey the DSAs. Review the data.

Data Analysis- The researcher will calculate the mean and the mode.

Report data in narrative form.

RQ 5
To what extent do the disability services administrators in Mississippi community colleges perceive that the disability services offices address the issues identified by experts in the field and address the Program Standards and Performance Indicators cited by AHEAD?

The population will consist of the people identified as DSAs in each community college.

Instrumentation- A 29-item Likert scale questionnaire will aid in ascertaining the perceptions of the DSAs.

Procedures- Contact and survey the DSAs. Review the data.

Data Analysis- The researcher will calculate the mean and he mode.

Report data in narrative form and chart certain information.

Figure 1: Design of the Study
Part I: Policy and Procedure Manuals

Merriam (1998) states that there are both limitations and strengths in using documents in research. Frequently, documents may be in a form that is difficult to use. Additionally, problems can arise in determining the authenticity and accuracy of documents. However, despite these limitations, Merriam contends that documents offer decided advantages for obtaining data. Many documents are easily accessible and contain information that would otherwise be difficult to gather. Documents also offer the advantage of stability since the presence of the researcher does not alter what is being studied. In short, documents are objective forms of information. Merriam says additionally that the use of documents “can ground an investigation in the context of the problem being investigated” (p. 126).

Jarrow (1997) says that for several reasons written policies and procedures are critical: The development of and adherence to written policies and procedures demonstrate that the institution is making a good faith effort to help persons with disabilities. Review of policy and procedure manuals can help the institution to identify omissions in the written instrument and to recognize needed institutional changes. Institutional personnel can be protected by policies and procedures that clearly assign authority and responsibility. Clearly written policies and procedures are important to inform individuals with disabilities of actions they need to take to receive accommodations.

The researcher reviewed the policy and procedure manuals for two main reasons: to ascertain if all community colleges in Mississippi actually have a policy
and procedure manual and to analyze the content of the policy and procedure manuals. The review of the policy and procedure manuals was the primary source of data gathering and provided information to use in data analysis. Information derived from reviewing and analyzing the content of the policy and procedure manuals was used to answer Research Question 1 and Research Question 2.

**Instrumentation**

Polit and Beck (2004) contend that check lists are an effective instrument to use. They have the advantage of being both efficient and easy to understand. Because of their obvious advantages, the researcher opted to use check lists for this section of the research.

Research Question 1 asks to what extent the community colleges in Mississippi have policy and procedure manuals for disability services in place. The instrumentation (See Appendix A) used for Research Question 1 was a yes or no check list to record whether the community colleges have accessible policy and procedure manuals. The check list was designed to include all 15 Mississippi community colleges. Each community college was assigned a code name to help ensure privacy and confidentiality. Only the researcher had access to the community colleges’ identity. The identity was needed so that the researcher was able to determine who the participants were and was able to keep the data organized. The instrument was designed to be both efficient and easily understood.

The justification of this instrument lies in the fact that if policy and procedure manuals are not available, students with disabilities may not be informed of actions
they need to take to receive accommodations. Additionally, Jarrow (1997) says that a college’s having written policies and procedures is of extreme importance. First, developing and adhering to written policies and procedures serves to indicate that the institution has made a sincere effort to serve its disabled students in an equitable manner. Second, an institution’s reviewing written policies and procedures can help to identify deficiencies in ADA implementation. Third, if policies and procedures clearly specify authority and responsibility, institutional personnel who are operating within the scope of the written policies and procedures are protected. Perhaps most importantly, written policies and procedures aid disabled individuals by explaining actions they must take to request an accommodation or support. McGuire (2000) says that although written policies and procedures are not required by the ADA, the Office for Civil Rights usually asks for this information when a complaint is filed. Consequently, the presence of well-developed policies and procedures can help postsecondary institutions defend themselves against complaints.

Research Question 2 asks to what extent the policy and procedure manuals address the issues identified by Jarrow (1997) and McGuire (2000) as necessary inclusions. Additionally, the included issues are considered significant by AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards). The policy and procedure manuals were evaluated using both McGuire’s (2000) and Jarrow’s (1997) issues that should be addressed in a college’s policy and procedure manual.

Before community colleges take steps to assure compliance with the ADA, written policies and procedures should be developed. Some of the issues that should
be addressed are these: confidentiality, required documents, procedure for document review, course substitution policy, assurance of non-discrimination in treatment, grievance procedure, and responsibility for implementation of accommodations. Also, simply setting policies and procedures and having them approved is not sufficient. These policies and procedures must be widely disseminated by being published in all appropriate campus materials. Explicit instructions should be given on whom the student needs to contact to receive accommodations (Jarrow, 1999; McGuire, 2000).

Jarrow (1997) also discusses the importance of written policies and procedures and says that for several reasons written policies and procedures are critical: First, the mere presence of policies and procedures demonstrates a good faith effort on the part of the college to accommodate disabled individuals. Second, reviewing policies and procedures can help to reveal gaps in compliance methods. Third, written policies and procedures can help to define responsibility and can protect college employees. Fourth, written policies and procedures can help individuals with disabilities by letting them know what protections and services a college offers.

Jarrow (n.d.) says that developing written policies and procedures should be a shared task within the institution, that no one outside the institution should dictate policies. Those outside the institution can suggest needed policies, but the task of actually developing policies should be done by responsible and dedicated individuals within the institution. Jarrow (1997) answers objections that some service providers may offer to the writing of formal policies and procedures. Service providers,
according to Jarrow, sometimes hesitate to put policies and procedures into writing because they feel that written policies and procedures may serve to limit their actions and because they feel part of their accomplishments may be attributed to the fact that no one at the institution is aware of how they conduct their business. Jarrow says that neither of these objections is valid. If success has been based on personal working relations, a change in employees could produce problems. Also, the Office for Civil Rights would have serious objections to a casual, haphazard arrangement.

Jarrow (1997) says, “Confidentiality of disability-related documents is very important within the disability community” (p. 27). Traditionally, people with disabilities have been excluded from opportunities because of their disabilities. Jarrow says confidentiality protects the disabled. “If people don’t know that the person has a disability or the nature of that disability, such exclusions cannot occur. Hence, the emphasis is on confidentiality” (p. 27). AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) in Program Standards and Performance Indicators states that the institution should maintain a confidential file on each student with a disability.

Secondly, according to McGuire (2000), the policy and procedure manuals should contain a list of required documents to determine eligibility for accommodations. McGuire says, “Once a student has self-identified an institution has the right to require documentation of the disability. The responsibility for providing comprehensive and current documentation from qualified professionals, as well as the expenses involved, rests with the student” (p. 26). Jarrow (1997) says that an institution should develop eligibility criteria that are “appropriate, comprehensive and
legally defensible” (p. 31). The AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) Program Standards and Performance Indicators state that criteria and procedures for accessing accommodations should be clearly delineated and widely disseminated.

Not only should a list of required documents to determine eligibility for accommodations be in the policy and procedure manual but a procedure for document review should also be in place. McGuire (2000) emphasizes the importance of establishing written guidelines for documentation. These written guidelines “can be used as a benchmark against which a student’s documentation is compared” (p. 28). Jarrow (1997) says that document review is extremely important to assure that documents will trigger appropriate institutional responses. AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) Program Standards state that institutions must determine if a student’s documentation supports the need for requested accommodations.

According to McGuire (2000), a blind review of documents becomes necessary if a student’s documentation is questionable. “In those cases where documentation is problematic, the DSA should establish procedures for an independent, blind review by one or more qualified professionals” (p. 29). Of course, the student must give consent for this review.

The policy and procedure manual should also contain a statement of course substitution policy. AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) emphasizes the importance of the development, review, and revision of course substitution policy and procedures. These may include such items as foreign language requirements and writing requirements. Jarrow (1997) says that a policy/procedure for course
substitutions should include an explanation of steps involved in considering course substitution requests, assignment of responsibilities, and a listing of needed information.

Assurance of non-discrimination in treatment of disabled students should be a part of a policy and procedure manual. AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Best practices) contends that a postsecondary institution should assure that individuals with disabilities will not be discriminated against. A non-discrimination statement should offer an assurance that disabled individuals will neither be excluded nor given limited access to programs and activities. Additionally, freedom from harassment should be assured. McGuire (2000) also emphasizes that non-discriminatory treatment is important not only to assure that the student receives equitable treatment but also to assure that the institution does not put itself into a precarious legal situation.

A grievance policy should also be in place. AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) Program Standards and Performance Indicators state that the institution should provide easily accessible grievance and complaint procedures. Jarrow (1997) contends that there should be “a clear statement as to what actions should be taken by students if the agreed accommodations are not provided appropriately” (p. 9). McGuire (2000) also emphasizes the importance of a well-established grievance procedure. The establishment of this procedure protects not only disabled individuals but also the institution.

The policy and procedure manual should assign responsibility for implementation of accommodations. Jarrow (1997) says the policy and procedure
manual should clearly state the authority for decision making and implementation of accommodations. Procedural statements should define roles and responsibilities for giving and receiving accommodations. AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) says that criteria and procedures for accessing accommodations should be clearly delineated and available to the entire campus community. McGuire (2000) emphasizes the importance of faculty’s understanding their responsibilities for implementing accommodations.

The policy and procedure manual should clearly state the method by which a student with a disability can be considered a full-time student with less than the traditional full-time load. Jarrow (1997) says that one of the few “specifics” mentioned in Section 504 is giving extended time for a course or course of study. This “specific” has translated into the fact that disabled students are generally permitted to take a reduced course load and still be considered a full-time student. Being considered a full-time student is important because full-time status makes the student eligible for specific benefits, such as financial aid. Jarrow says a written policy should exist stating how a part-time student can achieve full-time status.

Finally, a policy should be in place stating how the granting of an accommodation can be questioned by students, staff, or faculty. AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) says that information about disabilities should be available to students, administrators, faculty, and service professionals and that faculty should be informed of their rights and responsibilities. Jarrow (1997) says that a clear procedure should be in place for students, staff, or faculty to question the granting of
an accommodation. Jarrow contends that this policy/procedure should include steps required to challenge an accommodation, timelines, naming of responsibility for reconsideration of actions, and clarification of responsibility during the time that granting an accommodation is under question.

The instrumentation (See Appendix B) used for Research Question 2 was a yes or no check list devised to record whether the community colleges’ manuals contain Jarrow’s (1997) and McGuire’s (2000) lists of issues, issues that are also addressed by AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004,Program standards) Program Standards and Performance Indicators. The instrumentation was created through careful review of the literature. The check list is a compilation of both Jarrow’s (1997) and McGuire’s (2000) research of the ADA suggested implementations. The researcher noticed a consistent theme emerging from the authors’ writings on policy and procedure manuals—the eleven items were necessary inclusion in an ADA policy and procedure manual. Jarrow and McGuire contend that a policy and procedure manual should address these concerns. The AHEAD category that supports each inclusion is also listed.

1. A statement concerning confidentially (Jarrow, 1997; McGuire, 2000) (AHEAD, Category 4)

2. A list of required documents to determine eligibility for accommodations (Jarrow, 1997; McGuire, 2000) (AHEAD, Category 4)
3. Procedure for document review (Jarrow, 1997; McGuire, 2000) (AHEAD, Category 4)

4. A statement of course substitution policy (Jarrow, 1997; McGuire, 2000) (AHEAD, Category 6)

5. Assurance of non-discrimination in treatment (McGuire, 2000) (AHEAD, Category 1)


7. Responsibility for implementation of accommodations (Jarrow, 1997; McGuire, 2000) (AHEAD, Category 3)


9. Statement showing institution’s understanding of its responsibility (Jarrow, 1997) (AHEAD, Category 1)

10. Policy governing method by which a student with a disability can be considered a full-time student with less than the traditional full-time load (Jarrow, 1997) (AHEAD, Category 6)

11. Policy stating how the granting of an accommodation can be questioned by students, staff, or faculty (Jarrow, 1997) (AHEAD, Category 6)

To strengthen the validity of the instrumentation, the researcher used a check list, which employed the use of triangulation, to evaluate Research Question 2. To triangulate the check list, the researcher used multiple sources; both Jarrow’s (1997)
and McGuire’s (2000) research and AHEAD Program Standards were used to compile the check list.

Additionally, the researcher assumed that the policy and procedure manuals are current and authentic and represent the information given to students. Since the policy and procedure manuals have been approved by the community college, the researcher assumed that the documents have been checked for accuracy by the issuing college.

The extensive research done by Jarrow (1997) and McGuire (2000) along with AHEAD Program Standards can support the check list’s reliability. Because these check-listed items have been researched by experts in the field to explain what a policy and procedure manual should include, the researcher contends that the literature written by Jarrow and McGuire as well as AHEAD will support the compilation of the eleven-item check list and will ensure the reliability of the eleven-item check list.

**Procedures**

Research Question 1 was addressed by the researcher’s collecting data by acquiring the ADA policy and procedure manuals from each of the 15 community colleges in Mississippi. The first step of the research involved contacting the Mississippi State Board for Community and Junior Colleges to obtain the name of the director of disability services at each of the 15 community colleges in Mississippi. The State Board supplied 16 names; one community college designates two directors of disability services. The researcher contacted each of the DSAs, asking that a copy
of the college’s policy and procedure manual be sent to him. Additionally, if a manual was not available, the researcher asked that he be sent this information. After policy and procedure manuals were acquired, the researcher used a yes or no check list to record whether the 15 Mississippi community colleges have easily accessible ADA policy and procedure manuals.

For Research Question 2, which asks if policy and procedure manuals address the issues identified by Jarrow (1997) and McGuire (2000) and supported by AHEAD Program Standards, the researcher collected data by marking a check list which was derived from Jarrow’s and McGuire’s previous research. The check list recorded whether the community colleges have incorporated each topic listed by Jarrow and McGuire as necessary inclusions in the policy and procedure manuals. Data was generated by reviewing content of the ADA policy and procedure manuals of each of the 15 community colleges. The researcher reviewed each of the policy and procedure manual’s content and compared it to the eleven-item check list. If the policy and procedure manual contains a necessary inclusion, then the item was checked as yes.

To strengthen the internal validity and reliability of the study, the researcher employed peer examination. Community college personnel, who are familiar with disability services, were asked to review the eleven-item check list for each community college to ensure that the items were marked correctly and that the researcher had not misinterpreted information. The researcher had these individuals randomly select check-listed items and evaluate the accuracy of the items that were checked.
Data Analysis

Research Question 1 and Research Question 2 employed the use of the check lists to provide a straightforward and uncomplicated method of analyzing data. For Research Question 1, the ADA policy and procedure manuals from each of the 15 community colleges were reviewed and analyzed for availability. The data analysis of this research question was quite simple: There was a yes or no marked for the availability of the policy and procedure manuals. A percentage based on the availability of the policy and procedure manuals was calculated for the 15 Mississippi community colleges as a whole.

For Research Question 2, the researcher used the check list derived from Jarrow’s (1997) and McGuire’s (2000) previous research to determine whether the necessary items were included in each community college’s policy and procedure manual. From this information, the items included in the check list were categorized by numerical order and percentages were calculated for each item. Also, an overall inclusion percentage for each Mississippi community college was calculated. To do the calculations, the researcher added the items included and divide by the total number of items. The percentages can be used to ascertain whether the 15 community colleges in the state of Mississippi offer these items in their policy and procedure manuals.

To strengthen the internal validity of the study, the researcher employed peer examination. The researcher had peers randomly select check listed items and evaluate the accuracy of the items that were checked. The reliability depends upon the
ability for the results to be replicated. Replication was checked by gathering the policy and procedure manuals and asking other community college personnel to read through the check list and mark which policy and procedure manuals contain each item.

**Part II: Operation of the Disability Services Office**

This part of the research was divided into two sections. Section I of Part II examined the disability services administrators’ characteristics. Section II of Part II examined the disability services administrators’ perceptions of the disability services offices and the issues the offices address. The researcher chose these two aspects of the study because experts in the field state that in order to produce a realistic view of the disability services office, one must examine these two aspects. McGuire (2000) says, “The disability service administrator occupies a pivotal role in ensuring equal access within the context of reasonable accommodations” (p. 21). Further, McGuire contends that frequently the DSA is the only professional on campus with the direct responsibility for overseeing any type of disability related services. Jarrow (1999) says that it is extremely important for one person to be in charge of disability services. She contends that if too many people are involved in the decision-making process for disability services, it may be difficult to ensure that everyone has sufficient information. Also, giving one person ultimate responsibility for disability services reduces concerns about confidentiality. Jarrow says that final decisions should be made by the DSA, not by the faculty.
Section I of Part II addresses Research Question 3 and Research Question 4. The researcher with a 17-item survey ascertained the qualifications, duties, and background histories of the disability services administrators in the 15 Mississippi community colleges. Examining the disability services administrators not only gave a narrative inquiry to the position but also provided a better understanding of the reality of the job (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Section II of Part II addresses Research Question 5, which asks to what extent do the disability services administrators in Mississippi community colleges perceive that the disability services offices address issues considered significant by experts in the field as well as AHEAD Program Standards and Performance Indicators. The researcher examined the disability services administrators’ perceptions of the operation of the disabilities services office by employing the use of a questionnaire created by using opinions of experts in the field as well as AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) Program Standards and Performance Indicators. The researcher was given permission to use the AHEAD material.

Although Part II of the research is divided into two sections, the population for both sections is the same. Consequently, the researcher combined both the survey and questionnaire into one document when it was administered to the participants.

Population

Since Jarrow (1997) and McGuire (2000) contend that the disability services administrator is the most significant person in ensuring equal access to disabled students, the population of Part II of the study included the people identified as
disability services administrator, or the person in charge of disability services at each
of the 15 Mississippi community colleges. In this study the limited population
necessitated that all 15 community colleges were included in order to produce a
holistic view of the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act in
community colleges in Mississippi.

Every person with this title or responsibility was contacted and asked to
participate in the study. Fourteen of the colleges had one person with this title; one
college had two. The participation by each disability services administrator was
voluntary.

**Instrumentation**

say that the greatest advantage of survey research lies in its flexibility and broadness
of scope: This type of research can focus on a wide range of topics and can be applied
to many populations. Polit and Beck contend that information that can be obtained by
direct questioning can also be gathered in a survey. Marshall and Rossman (1999)
give both advantages and disadvantages of using surveys but do say that there are
definite advantages to survey research when qualitative data are needed on a
particular population or problem. They also emphasize that questions on the survey
must be carefully structured and should be scrutinized for characteristics such as bias
and clarity. Additionally, Marshall and Rossman say that the strengths of surveys
include their convenience and accuracy.
For Section I of Part II, which addresses Research Question 3, the qualifications of the disability services administrator, and Research Question 4, the duties of the disability services administrator, the instrumentation used to collect data was a single survey. The questions used in the survey were based on suggestions from Shaw and Dukes (2001), Brinckerhoff, Shaw, and McGuire (1993), Flowers, Bray and Algozzine (2001), Jarrow (1997), Gordon and Keiser (2000), Gugerty and Knutsen (2000), Thomas (2000), and Wolanin and Steele (2004). Additionally, the survey items were based on a study done by Harbour (2004). Harbour for her study, *Final Report: The 2004 AHEAD Survey of Higher Education Disability Services Providers*, surveyed 1,353 disability services professionals to collect personal demographic information, to learn more about the current staff positions, to collect salary and compensation information, and to collect information pertaining to the DSAs’ campuses and disability services offices. The survey instrumentation Harbour used was a modified survey instrument of the AHEAD 1993 survey, which requested salary information from its 886 respondents. The AHEAD Board of Directors modified the 1993 survey and expanded its possibilities to include three main goals: to collect demographic information, to learn more about the administration of disability services offices, and to find information to guide DSAs in their work (Harbour, 2004).

The items for the survey were compiled after the researcher carefully studied documents by experts in the field of implementation of ADA in postsecondary settings. The researcher made a list of common ideas and then compiled the survey by
using items that were common to most of the experts. A portion of the survey that Harbour used was also employed.

The survey (See Appendix C) that was used to collect data consists of 17 questions relating to the disability services administrator and was designed to ascertain the educational background of the administrator, the training of the administrator, the duties of the administrator, the qualifications of the administrator, and the amount of time the administrator spends dealing with students with disabilities. The questions related to these topics were created as open-ended questions, fill-in-the-blank questions, and multiple choice questions. The survey questions were designed to incorporate each respondent’s individuality and to create the “reality” of the respondents’ position as a DSA.

The survey was mailed to the DSA at each the 15 Mississippi community colleges. No identifying information was used in the research except by the researcher. Participants were asked to give their names and the community college at which they work solely for the use of the researcher. This information was needed so the researcher could record what colleges’ DSAs participated, to aid in increased response rates, and to conduct member checks to ensure responses had not been misconstrued.

Harbour (2004) contends that with any survey instrument that involves self-selected participants concerns of validity and reliability of data arise. She states that in her survey instrument that the participants were not randomly selected and that the sample of DSAs may not truly be representative. The researcher does not anticipate
this exact problem because the 15 Mississippi community colleges’ DSAs will be represented. Harbour also states that validity issues could arise because of the lack of centralized information about disability services. She says that no organizations in the United States currently collect statistics about all disabled students in higher education. Generally data is collected only for specific disability services personnel and for their immediate supervisors. Since the disability services offices are so diverse nationally and since there are no specifications in ADA itself, many disability services offices may not offer the same disability services. Harbour states that the survey is useful in representing a snapshot of the current state of the disability services offices despite these issues and concerns.

To address Research Question 5, Section II, the examination of the disability services administrators’ perceptions of the operation of the disability services office, a questionnaire (See Appendix D) was administered to every person designated as a disability services administrator at the 15 Mississippi community colleges. The questionnaire, which employs the use of the Likert Scale, was used to ascertain if the administrators of the disability office address issues considered by AHEAD to be necessities of disability services. The items included in the questionnaire relate directly to issues identified by experts in the field and to Program Standards and Performance Indicators considered by AHEAD to be necessities of disability services in postsecondary settings. These Program Standards and Performance Indicators were developed by AHEAD by using, according to Shaw and Dukes (2005), the Delphi technique, which is a “method for the systematic solicitation and collection of
judgments on a particular topic through a set of carefully designed sequential questionnaires interspersed with summarized information and feedback of opinions derived from earlier responses” (cited in Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975, p. 10).

The questionnaire employed a standard five-point Likert scale. The following scale was used: 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-no opinion, 4-agree, 5-strongly agree. This questionnaire helped determine to what extent the DSAs perceive that the disability offices address issues identified by experts in the field and by AHEAD Program Standards and Performance Indicators. AHEAD categories are indicated beside each question. The survey and questionnaire were combined and mailed to participants.

Weiss (1998) suggests that the researcher should access the reliability of instruments used by first administering these instruments to his or her own population. According to Teijlingen and Hundley (2001), a pilot study can give a warning about where the project could fail and whether methods and instruments used are inappropriate or too complicated. The pilot study can also identify logistical problems that might occur later. The authors suggest that some pilot study procedures to improve the internal validity of a questionnaire are these: administer the pilot study in the same way that it will be administered in the main study, ask the people that take the pilot study to provide feedback and to identify problem areas, note the time taken to complete the questionnaire and make a decision as to whether the time required is reasonable, eliminate unnecessary or ambiguous questions, access whether
each question gives an adequate range of responses, see that all questions are answered, re-word problem questions, and if necessary revise the instrument. If substantial revision is made, another pilot study should be done.

The researcher did incorporate these suggestions made by Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) and Weiss (1998) to strengthen both reliability and validity. Following this suggestion, a pilot study was conducted. The pilot study consisted of the cover letter, survey, and questionnaire in their entirety. The researcher did not select the participants for this study. Instead the researcher sent the materials to community college instructors working in other states and asked them to distribute the materials to people working in the disability services area and to ask them to complete the survey and questionnaire and return the materials to the researcher in enclosed, self-addressed envelopes. The participants were also asked to provide feedback and to identify problem areas. Problem areas identified related only to the letter that accompanied the survey, and the researcher reworded the cover letter to more clearly reflect the purpose of the survey. Participants found no problems with the actual survey and the questionnaire.

Also, the reliability and validity of both the survey and questionnaire were strengthened by using triangulation. The researcher used multiple sources in designing both the survey and the questionnaire. The 17-item, background survey was based on questions Harbour (2004) asked in compiling her Final Report: The 2004 AHEAD Survey of Higher Education Disability Providers. The 29-item questionnaire was compiled by using AHEAD Program Standards and Performance Indicators
Additionally, the standards and performance indicators used were recommended by experts in the field of disability services (Jarrow, 1997; McGuire, 2000; Gugerty & Knutsen, 2000; Thomas, 2000; Flowers, Bray, & Alzonnine, 2001; Shaw & Dukes, 2001; Wolanin & Steele, 2004).

**Procedures**

For Section I in Part II, Research Question 3 and Research Question 4, the 17-item survey, and for Section II, Research Question 5, the 29-item questionnaire using the Likert scale, were combined into one document to help increase the response rate. To increase response rates on the survey and questionnaire, both instruments were administered at the same time. Also, for both the survey and the questionnaire, the researcher employed specific methods to reduce disability services administrators’ non-response. The researcher increased the response rate by employing strategies suggested by Dillman (1978). Dillman contends that sending a pre-contact letter, sending a cover letter, sending a small token of appreciation, and sending a follow-up letter to the target population will aid in increased response rates. The researcher incorporated these four suggested strategies into the data collection methodologies.

The researcher first sent a pre-contact email to each DSA explaining the purpose of the survey and questionnaire and respectfully requesting the participation of each. Next, a cover letter was emailed to each DSA. The cover letter reiterated the purpose of the survey, asked the DSA to complete the survey, gave instructions on how to complete the survey, explained that participation is voluntary and that answers
given will be confidential, and explained that the results of the survey and questionnaire will be sent to the participants.

A follow-up letter was emailed to the non-respondent along with the information needed to complete the survey. This follow-up letter resulted in receiving responses from all 16 DSAs, a 100% response rate.

After the survey and questionnaire were returned, the information collected was reviewed by the researcher. To strengthen the internal validity and reliability, the researcher conducted member checks by contacting some of the people who were used in the data collection. The researcher reviewed with these participants the responses and data given by them to ensure that data were not misconstrued.

Data Analysis

Polit and Beck (2004) define descriptive research as research with the objective of creating an accurate account of the characteristics of people, situations, or groups. The purpose of descriptive research is “to observe, describe, and document aspects of a situation as it naturally occurs…” (p. 192). Merriam (1998) says that descriptive case studies are useful “in presenting basic information about areas of education where little research has been conducted” (p. 38). For Section I, Research Questions 3 and 4, which address job qualifications, duties, and background information of disability services administrators, the researcher described the people serving as DSAs in the 15 Mississippi community colleges. The survey was mailed to participants. After the surveys were returned, the researcher then compared the data of the survey and described the data by using descriptive statistics. The mean and the
mode were calculated for questions for which these calculations were appropriate. Calculating the mean gave a single value that is the average, or most typical, response from all of the DSAs. The mode was used on the nominal data collected. For example, a mean cannot be calculated for the gender of the respondents. The researcher calculated the mode or the frequency of each response of gender. Additionally, the researcher reviewed the written responses from the participants and summarized the responses.

For Section II, Research Question 5, the 29-item questionnaire generated measured responses. For Research Question 5, the analytical methodology involved descriptive statistics. Because Question 5 used a standard five-point Likert scale, the data was already ranked by magnitude—1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. The researcher collected the data to ascertain how the DSAs’ perceptions could best be described. To describe the DSAs’ perceptions, the researcher organized the data and calculated the mean and the mode. Data acquired from these tests provided the disability services administrators’ perceptions of disability services.
CHAPTER IV
RESEARCH RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This chapter contains a brief review of the problem and purpose of the study along with the results for the five research questions. The problem of the study was to ascertain to what extent the 15 community colleges in Mississippi have made efforts to implement the Americans with Disabilities Act in order to assure equal access and equal educational opportunities for disabled students.

The research (AHEAD, 2004; Barnett & Li, 1997; Jarrow, 1997; McGuire, 2000; Wolanin & Steele, 2004) suggests a large part of the effort that has been made by community colleges to accommodate disabled students is reflected in both the policy and procedure manuals and in the operation of the disability services offices. Since these two factors are significant in measuring the ADA efforts made by community colleges, the researcher studied the policy and procedure manuals and the operation of the disability services offices in the 15 community colleges in Mississippi to examine the extent to which the inclusions recommended by the experts in the field are present. To obtain this information, the researcher divided the study into two parts. The first part was an examination of the availability and the content of policy and procedure manuals to determine if they contain what experts in the field consider to be necessary inclusions. The second part was an examination of the disability services offices. This second part included an examination of the
background of the disability services administrator (DSA). Additionally, the researcher surveyed the DSAs to ascertain their perceptions of the operation of the disability services offices. AHEAD Program Standards and Performance Indicators and recommendations from experts in the field were used to compile the survey and the questionnaire to obtain the needed information.

The results and findings of each research question are both summarized and described statically. The researcher will first list each research question and then describe the results and findings.

**Research Question 1**

What percentage of the community colleges in Mississippi have policy and procedure manuals for disability services available?

When the researcher sent the DSAs the surveys, a request was made that the DSAs provide the researcher with the policy and procedure manual for disability services for his/her college. This request resulted in the researcher’s receiving nine responses with seven community colleges responding that they did have readily available policy and procedure manuals. Two community colleges responded that they did not have a policy and procedure manual. A second request gleaned two additional manuals and the information that four other colleges have no policy and procedure manual. A total of 9 community colleges have readily available policy and procedure manuals. Sixty percent of the community colleges in Mississippi have policy and procedure manuals readily available.
Research Question 2

Do the policy and procedure manuals address the issues identified by Jarrow (1997), McGuire (2000), and AHEAD (2000) as necessary inclusions?

The policy and procedure manuals were carefully reviewed to determine if they contain the eleven inclusions recommended both by AHEAD and by experts in the field of disability services. The following table (Table 1) shows the inclusions in the policy and procedure manuals.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMM. COLLEGES</th>
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<th>TOTAL</th>
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<td>1. Community College A</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Community College B</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>6/11</td>
<td>55</td>
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<td>3. Community College C</td>
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<td>4. Community College D</td>
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<td>5. Community College E</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>6/11</td>
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<td>6. Community College F</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>8/11</td>
<td>73</td>
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<td>7. Community College G</td>
<td>Y</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Community College H</td>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Community College I</td>
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<td>10. Community College J</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<td>5/11</td>
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<td>12. Community College L</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td>13. Community College M</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td>73</td>
</tr>
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<td>15. Community College O</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
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</table>

Of the nine Mississippi community colleges with policy and procedure manuals, none contains all of the inclusions recommended by both AHEAD and experts in the field. However, of the community colleges that have readily available policy and procedure manuals, all include the following information: a statement concerning confidentiality (1), a list of required documents (2), assurance of non-discrimination in treatment (5), responsibility for implementation of accommodations.
More than half, approximately 55%, of the community colleges that have readily available policy and procedure manuals include a grievance policy (6). Two of the policy and procedure manuals, 22%, include a policy stating how the granting of an accommodation can be questioned by students, staff, or faculty (11), and 22% include a procedure for document review (3). The least included categories, with only 11% inclusion, are a statement of course substitution policy (4), procedure for a blind review of questionable documentation (8), and a policy governing a method by which a student with a disability can be considered a full-time student with less than the traditional full-time load (10).

Research Question 3

How can the qualifications of the disability services administrators in Mississippi community colleges be best described?

To help understand the qualifications of the disability services administrators in Mississippi community colleges, the researcher included on the survey three demographic questions: gender, age, and ethnicity. Nine females (56%) and seven males (43%) currently hold the title of DSA or the equivalent. The average age of the DSAs is 47 years of age. The most frequently occurring age is 38, with three respondents being that age. Fourteen of the sixteen respondents, 87.50%, are Caucasian, and two of the sixteen respondents, 12.50%, are African American.

The survey sent to the DSAs asked six questions pertaining to qualifications: years of experience in current position, years of experience working with disability
services at the college level, other work experience in education, number of years of supervisory experience, highest degree obtained, and professional certifications held.

Respondents were asked to report the number of years working in their current position. The DSAs’ average reported number of years in their current position is six years, with the median being three years. The least amount of years reported is half a year, which was marked by two respondents. The greatest number of years is 20 years, which was marked by one respondent.

In response to being asked the number of years of experience working with disability services at the college level, the DSAs reported an average of 6.16 years of experience. The largest frequency is 3 years of experience, with three DSAs giving this response. Of the respondents, one reported no years of experience working with disability services at the college level, and one respondent reported 20 years of experience.

Respondents were also asked to report the number of years they had worked in higher education. The average work experience in higher education including disability services is 14.87 years. Two respondents reported working in higher education for 15 years, the most frequently given answer. One respondent reported working in higher education for 0.50 years, the least amount of experience in higher education reported, and one reported 33 years, the greatest amount.

Respondents also gave other work experience that they had accrued. Seven respondents had worked in elementary or secondary education; two had worked in elementary or secondary education with disabled children. Four had worked in
counseling, psychological services, social services, or other mental health services. Two had worked with allied health services and medical professions. Six had worked in student affairs or academic affairs in higher education, and seven had taught in higher education. Two had worked in the business field.

The average number of years of supervisory experience of respondents was 8.56 years. The least number of years reported is no years of supervisory experience, and the greatest number of years reported is 32 years of supervisory experience.

In response to the question asking the highest degree completed, ten of the respondents reported a Master’s degree (62%), four reported a Ph.D. (25%), and one reported a Bachelor’s degree (6.25%). One does not hold a college degree (6.25%). Only one of the respondents is not employed full-time. This respondent is employed less than 20 hours per week.

When asked about certifications/special trainings, eight of the respondents listed either a professional certification or a special training received. These included certified mental health nurse, special education certification, test administrator certification, disaster evacuation for persons with disabilities training, on-line counselor training, interpreter for the deaf certification, rehabilitation counseling certification, high school preparation and college preparation for students with disabilities training, ADA coordinator training, and OCR coordinator training.

The survey also asked the respondents if they were members of AHEAD. Five respondents are members of AHEAD, and eleven are not. Therefore, 31.25% of the DSAs are members of AHEAD.
Also, the respondent was asked if he/she considered himself/herself to be a person with a disability. Three of the sixteen respondents, 18.75 %, answered yes to this question.

The typical DSA in Mississippi community colleges is a Caucasian female, who is 47 years old. This person has worked with disability services at the college level for 6.16 years and has worked in higher education for 14.87 years. This person had also worked in elementary or secondary education, holds a Master’s degree, and has 8.56 years of supervisory experience. The typical DSA is not a person with a disability and is not a member of AHEAD.

**Research Question 4**

How can the duties of the disability services administrators in Mississippi community colleges be best described?

Four questions on the survey related to the duties of the disability services administrators. These questions asked for the following information: job title, minimum education required for the job held, number of hours a day spent working with students with disabilities, and other duties performed. The following were the reported job titles: disability coordinator, special populations coordinator, ADA/504 coordinator, dean of students and ADA coordinator, vice president for instruction, vice president for student services, vice president for administration, dean of students and director of disability support services, chairperson of health sciences. One respondent said that a Bachelor’s degree is the minimum requirement for the position of disability services administrator; one person said that a college degree is not
required for the position of disability services administrator. All others reported that a minimum of a Master’s degree is required.

The average number of hours respondents reported working with students with disabilities is about three hours a day, with the least amount of time reported being no hours and the greatest amount of time reported being seven hours.

Other duties performed by the DSAs are extremely extensive and varied. Only one DSA reported that all of his/her duties are directly related to disability services. The most frequently reported other duty was dean of student services with three respondents reporting this duty. Two reported holding the position of vice president. Other reported duties were these: academic chairperson, director of enrollment, adviser, counselor, civil rights compliance officer, recruiter, and instructor.

The typical DSA in Mississippi community colleges has a variety of duties, many not related to disability services; consequently, this person devotes only about three hours a day to working with students with disabilities.

**Research Question 5**

To what extent do the disability services administrators in Mississippi community colleges perceive that the disability services offices address the issues identified by experts in the field as necessities and address the Program Standards and Performance Indicators identified by the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) as necessities?
This question was addressed through the use of a 29-question survey. The survey used a five-point Likert scale with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being no opinion, 4 being agree, and 5 being strongly agree. Each question and response will be described on the following pages.

1. The disability services office at my college has sufficient staff to service our student population. (Thomas, 2000) (AHEAD 4)

Figure 2: Availability of Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Twelve of the sixteen respondents answered this question with either a 4 or a 5, indicating that they agreed or strongly agreed that the disability services office at their college has sufficient staff to service the student population. Four people answered with a 1 or a 2, indicating that they disagree or strongly disagree. The average response was a 3.69. The mode is a 4.

2. Instructors at my college are responsive to proposed accommodations for students with disabilities. (Wolanin & Steele, 2004) (AHEAD 3)

Figure 3: Responsiveness of Instructors

All respondents answered this question with either a 4 or a 5, indicating that they agreed or strongly agreed that instructors at their colleges are responsive to
proposed accommodations for students with disabilities. The mean is 4.69. The mode is 5.

3. The mission and philosophy of the disability services office is compatible with the mission of the college. (Gugerty & Knutsen, 2000) (AHEAD 7)

Figure 4: Mission of Disability Office Compatible with College Mission

Fifteen respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the mission and philosophy of the disability services office is compatible with the mission of the college. One respondent had no opinion. The mean response is 4.69. The mode is 5.
4. My college has a student orientation package created specifically for students with disabilities. (Shaw & Dukes, 2004) (AHEAD 2)

![Graph showing the distribution of responses to the statement about student orientation packages.](image)

Figure 5: Student Orientation Package

Five of the responding DSAs agreed that their college has a student orientation package created specifically for students with disabilities. Four respondents had no opinion on this question, and seven either disagreed or strongly disagreed that their college has a student orientation package. The mean is 2.81. The mode is 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

103
5. My office is provided with sufficient resources to carry out our work.

(Thomas, 2000) (AHEAD 7)

Figure 6: Availability of Resources

Twelve of the sixteen respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that their office is provided with sufficient resources to carry out their work. Four respondents had no opinion on this question. The mean is 4.19, the mode is 5.
6. Documentation is confidential. (Gugerty & Knutsen, 2000) (AHEAD 4)

Figure 7: Confidentiality of Documentation

Fifteen of the sixteen respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that documentation is confidential. One respondent had no opinion. The mean is 4.81. The mode is 5.
7. My college has a student mentoring program for students with disabilities. (Jarrow, 1997) (AHEAD 1)

Figure 8: Student Mentoring Program

Eight of the respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed that their college has a student mentoring program for students with disabilities. Two respondents had no opinion on this question, and two either agreed or strongly agreed that their college has a student mentoring program for students with a disability. The mean is 2.25. The mode is 1.
8. My college has an established course substitution policy. (Wolanin & Steele, 2004) (AHEAD 6)

Figure 9: Course Substitution Policy

Eight respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that their college has an established course substitution policy. Three respondents agreed that their college has established a course substitution policy. Five had no opinion. The mean is 2.44. The mode is 3.
9. A resource guide for faculty is available. (Gorden & Knutsen, 2000) (AHEAD 3)

Figure 10: Resource Guide for Faculty

Twelve respondents agreed or strongly agreed that a resource guide for faculty is available. Two respondents strongly disagreed, and two offered no opinion. The mean is 3.88. The mode is 4.
10. Policies are in place for students to receive provisional accommodations during any period when permanent accommodations have not been determined. (Gugerty & Knutson, 2000) (AHEAD 6)

Figure 11: Policies for Provisional Accommodations

Ten respondents agreed or strongly agreed that policies are in place for students to receive provisional accommodations during any period when permanent accommodations have not been determined. Two respondents disagreed, and four offered no opinion. The mean is 3.94. The mode is 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. My office collects information to determine projected growth and future needs. (Gugerty & Knutsen, 2000) (AHEAD 7)

Figure 12: Collection of Information to Determine Growth

Six respondents agreed that their office collects information to determine projected growth and future needs. Seven respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, and three had no opinion. The mean is 2.94. The mode is 4.
12. My office does follow-up on students. (Gordon & Keiser, 2000a) (AHEAD 7)

Figure 13: Follow-Up on Students

Ten respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their office does follow-ups on their students. Four either disagreed or strongly disagreed, and two offered no opinion. The mean is 3.50. The mode is 4.
13. Post-enrollment support services are provided. (Gordon & Keiser, 2000a)

(AHEAD 7)

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**Figure 14: Provision of Post-Enrollment Support**

Six respondents agreed that their office provides post-enrollment support services. Seven disagreed or strongly disagreed, and three had no opinion. The mean is 2.75. The mode is 4.
14. My college has a support group for students with disabilities. (Jarrow, 1997)

(AHEAD 1)

Figure 15: Support Group for Students

Two respondents agreed that their college has a support group for students with disabilities. Eleven either disagreed or strongly disagreed, and three had no opinion. The mean is 2.00. The mode is 1.
15. Non-academic support services are provided. (Wolanin & Steele, 2004)

(AHEAD 1)

Figure 16: Provision of Non-Academic Support Services

Eleven respondents agreed or strongly agreed that non-academic support services are provided. Three either disagreed or strongly disagreed, and two had no opinion. The mean is 3.69. The mode is 4.
16. Staff development programs related to ADA are presented at my college regularly. (Wolanin & Steele, 2004) (AHEAD 3)

Figure 17: Presentation of ADA Staff Development Programs

Nine respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that staff development programs related to ADA are presented at their colleges regularly. Four either disagreed or strongly disagreed, and three had no opinion. The mean is 3.25. The mode is 4.
17. A resource guide related to ADA is available to the faculty. (Wolanin & Steele, 2004) (AHEAD 3)

Figure 18: Resource Guide for Faculty

Eleven respondents agreed or strongly agreed that a resource guide related to ADA is available to the faculty. Two disagreed, and three had no opinion. The mean is 3.94. The mode is 5.
18. My office maintains a data base of statistical information on the students serviced. (Gugerty & Knutsen, 2000) (AHEAD 4)

Figure 19: Maintaining of Data Base on Students Serviced

Eight respondents agreed that their office maintains a database of statistical information on the students serviced. Four either disagreed or strongly disagreed, and four had no opinion. The mean is 3.19. The mode is 4.
19. My office actively develops political support for the disability program.

    (Gugerty & Knutsen, 2000) (AHEAD 7)

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![Figure 20: Development of Political Support](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>16</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
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</table>

Two of the respondents agreed that their office actively develops political support for the disability program. Nine either disagreed or strongly disagreed, and five had no opinion. The mean is 2.31. The mode is 2 and 3.
20. My college has a printed policy for dispute resolution. (Jarrow, 1997)

(AHEAD 6)

Figure 21: Printed Policy for Dispute Resolution

Thirteen of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that their college has a printed policy for dispute resolution. Two disagreed, and one had no opinion. The mean is 4.31. The mode is 5.
21. My college has a campus-wide disability advisory committee. (Gugerty & Knutsen, 2000) (AHEAD 1)

Figure 22: Disability Advisory Committee

Eleven respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that their college has a campus-wide disability advisory committee. Four either disagreed or strongly disagreed, and one had no opinion. The mean is 3.63. The mode is 4.
22. Members of my staff attend professional conferences regularly. (Shaw & Dukes, 2001) (AHEAD 8)

Figure 23: Professional Conferences

Eleven respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that members of their staff attend professional conferences regularly. Four disagreed, and one had no opinion. The mean is 3.88. The mode is 5.
23. A dedicated adaptive computer lab is available for disabled students.

(Flowers, Bray & Algozzine, 2001) (AHEAD 2)

Figure 24: Adaptive Computer Lab

Five respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their college has a dedicated adaptive computer lab available for disabled students. Six disagreed or strongly disagreed, and five had no opinion. The mean is 3.06. The mode is 2 and 3.
24. My school participates in Disability Awareness Day. (Gugerty & Knutsen, 2000) (AHEAD 1)

Two respondents strongly agreed that their school participates in Disability Awareness Day. Nine either disagreed or strongly disagreed, and five had no opinion. The mean is 2.44. The mode is 2 and 3.

Figure 25: Participation in Disability Awareness Day

Number of Responses | 16
Mean                | 2.44
Mode               | 2, 3
25. My office has established guidelines for documenting disabilities. (Thomas, 2000) (AHEAD 2)

Figure 26: Guidelines for Documenting Disabilities

Thirteen respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their office has established guidelines for documenting disabilities. One disagreed, and two had no opinion. The mean is 4.19. The mode is 5.
26. Standards developed by the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) are used to determine required documentation. (Shaw & Dukes, 2001) (AHEAD 6)

![Figure 27: Use of AHEAD Standards to Document Disabilities](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>16</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eleven respondents agreed or strongly agreed that standards developed by the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) are used to determine required documentation. One disagreed, and four had no opinion. The mean is 3.88. The mode is 4.
27. Advocacy and self-advocacy training is provided. (Shaw & Dukes, 2001)

(AHEAD 5)

Figure 28: Advocacy and Self Advocacy Training

Six respondents agreed that advocacy and self-advocacy training is provided. Five disagreed or strongly disagreed, and five had no opinion. The mean is 3.06. The mode is 3 and 4.
28. Staff follows up regularly with students to see if accommodations are working. (Jarrow, 1997) (AHEAD 7)

Figure 29: Follow-Ups

Fourteen respondents agreed or strongly agreed that staff follows up regularly with students to see if accommodations are working. One disagreed, and one had no opinion. The mean is 4.06. The mode is 4.
29. Staff does regularly monitor students’ grades. (Jarrow, 1997)(AHEAD 7)

Figure 30: Monitoring of Students’ Grades

Six respondents agreed or strongly agreed that staff does regularly monitor students’ grades. Five disagreed or strongly disagreed, and five had no opinion. The mean is 3.06. The mode is 4.
In summary, of the 29 areas about which the DSAs offered their perceptions concerning the operation of the disability services offices, there were seven areas for which the mean was 4.00 or above, indicating agree or strongly agree. There were 14 areas for which the mean was 3.00 to 3.99, indicating no opinion, and there were eight areas for which the mean was 1.00 to 2.99, indicating strongly disagree and disagree. For the following seven areas, the means indicated that the DSAs agreed or strongly agreed:

- (6) Confidentiality of documentation: mean = 4.81
- (2) Responsiveness of instructors to proposed accommodations for students with disabilities: mean = 4.69
- (3) Compatibility of the mission and philosophy of the disability services office with the mission of the college: mean = 4.69
- (20) Presence of a printed policy for dispute resolution: mean = 4.31
- (5) Provision of the disability services office with sufficient resources: mean = 4.19
- (25) The presence of established guidelines for documenting disabilities: mean = 4.19
- (28) Regular follow-ups to see if accommodations are working: mean = 4.06
For the following 14 areas, the means indicated that the DSAs had no opinion:

- (10) Policies for provisional accommodations: mean = 3.94
- (17) Availability of a resource guide related to ADA for faculty: mean = 3.94
- (9) Availability of a resource guide for faculty: mean = 3.88
- (22) Attendance of staff at professional conferences: mean = 3.88
- (26) Use of standards developed by AHEAD to determine required documentation: mean = 3.88
- (1) Presence of sufficient staff: mean = 3.69
- (15) Provision of non-academic support services: mean = 3.69
- (21) Presence of a campus-wide disability advisory committee: mean = 3.63
- (12) Follow-ups on students: mean = 3.50
- (16) Staff development programs related to ADA: mean = 3.25
- (18) Maintaining of a data base of statistical information on students serviced: mean = 3.19
- (23) Availability of a dedicated adaptive computer lab for disabled students: mean = 3.06
- (27) Provision of advocacy and self-advocacy training: mean = 3.06
- (29) Regular monitoring of students’ grades by staff: mean = 3.06
For the following eight areas, the means indicated that the DSAs disagreed or strongly disagreed:

- (11) Collection of information to determine projected growth and future needs: mean = 2.94
- (4) Availability of a student orientation package for students with disabilities: mean = 2.81
- (13) Provision of post-enrollment support services: mean = 2.75
- (8) Presence of a course substitution policy: mean = 2.44
- (24) School participation in Disability Awareness Day: mean = 2.44
- (19) Development of political support for the disability program: mean = 2.31
- (7) Presence of a student mentoring program for students with disabilities: mean = 2.25
- (14) Presence of a support group for students with disabilities: mean = 2.00
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the problem, a summary of the finding, and the conclusions from the study. Recommendations for future research are also included.

In reviewing the literature written about implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act in two-year colleges, the researcher found a very consistent theme to emerge: Although two-year colleges have large numbers of students with disabilities, educating these students has proved to be a difficult task, perhaps in part because the ADA legislation is not impairment specific. According to the research (AHEAD, 2004; Gordon & Keiser, 2000a; Jaquays, 1999; Jarrow, 1997; McGuire, 2000), institutions need to determine essential standards for accommodations. With the increasing numbers of disabled students along with the non-specific nature of the ADA legislation, community colleges may be facing a formidable task in providing equal access and equal educational opportunities to disabled students. Therefore, the problem of this study was to ascertain the extent to which the 15 community colleges in Mississippi have made efforts to provide equal access and equal educational opportunities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and with certain standards suggested in scholarly literature related to the topic of students with
disabilities. The research (AHEAD, 2004; Barnett & Li, 1997; Jarrow, 1997; McGuire, 2000; Wolanin & Steele, 2004) suggests a large part of the effort that has been made by community colleges to accommodate disabled students is reflected in both the policy and procedure manuals and in the operation of the disability services offices. Since these two factors are significant in measuring the ADA efforts made by community colleges, the researcher studied the policy and procedure manuals and the operation of the disability services offices in the 15 community colleges in Mississippi to examine the extent to which the inclusions recommended by the experts in the field are present. To obtain this information, the researcher divided the study into two parts. The first part was an examination of the availability and the content of policy and procedure manuals to determine if they contain what experts in the field consider to be necessary inclusions. The second part was an examination of the disability services offices. This second part included an examination of the background of the disability services administrators (DSA). Additionally, the researcher surveyed the DSAs to ascertain their perceptions of the operation of the disability services offices. AHEAD *Program Standards and Performance Indicators* and recommendations from experts in the field were used to compile the survey and the questionnaire to obtain the needed information.

Based on information collected, the researcher offers the following conclusions and recommendations:
Part I: Policy and Procedure Manuals

Conclusions

Experts in the field of disability services (Jarrow, 1997; Gordon & Keiser, 2000a; McGuire, 2000; Prentice, 2000; Thomas, 2000) contend that the policy and procedure manual has an extremely important role in effective implementation of the ADA. McGuire (2000) says that postsecondary institutions can better defend themselves against complaints—and in some cases probably avoid them—if well-developed policies and procedures are in place. Jarrow (1997) contends that the mere presence of a policy and procedure manual demonstrates a good faith effort on the part of the college to accommodate disabled individuals. Additionally, she says that written policies and procedures can assist individuals with disabilities by letting them know what protections and services a college offers. AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) recommends that the disability services office should publish policies and procedures on available services in all relevant campus publications.

The researcher determined that only nine, or 60%, of the Mississippi community colleges have readily available policy and procedure manuals. Forty percent, or six colleges, do not have a policy and procedure manual. Although not mandated by law, a policy and procedure manual is an absolute necessity not only to protect the college from potential legal problems but also to inform disabled students of what assistance they can expect from the institution.
Of the nine Mississippi community colleges with policy and procedure manuals in place, none contains all of the inclusions recommended by both AHEAD and by experts in the field. Only one, or 11%, of the nine policy and procedure manuals contains a statement of course substitution policy, a procedure for a blind review of questionable documents, or a policy governing a method by which a student with a disability can be considered a full-time student with less than the traditional full-time course load. These three items were the least included. Only two of the policy and procedure manuals, or 22%, include a policy stating how the granting of an accommodation can be questioned by students, staff, or faculty, and only two manuals include a procedure for document review. Five, or 55%, of the community colleges that have readily available policy and procedure manuals include a grievance policy. Four do not contain a grievance policy.

**Recommendations**

Nine of the 15 Mississippi community colleges have made efforts to implement ADA by having readily available policy and procedure manuals and by representing some of the inclusions recommended by AHEAD and by experts in the field; however, efforts made currently by Mississippi community colleges are not sufficient. Each Mississippi community college would benefit by implementing the following recommendations:

1. Every community college should have a readily available policy and procedure manual for disability services. Having this manual is necessary not only to inform students of their rights and
responsibilities but also to protect the college from possible legal problems. Community colleges that do not have a policy and procedure manual readily available need to compile one immediately. Additionally, once a policy and procedure manual is established for the community college, it should be widely distributed and available to students, faculty, and staff.

2. All eleven recommended inclusions should be in each policy and procedure manual. Each Mississippi community college should review the eleven inclusions made by AHEAD and by experts in the field and should revamp the policy and procedure manuals to reflect these inclusions. The most frequently omitted inclusions are these: procedure for document review, a statement of course substitution policy, procedure for a blind review of questionable documents, and a policy governing a method by which a disabled student can be considered a full-time student with less than the traditional full-time course load.

Part II: Qualifications and Duties of the Disability Services Administrator

Conclusions

This study also investigated the qualifications and the duties of the disability services administrator. One of the questions asked related to certifications held and special training. Eight of the respondents, 50%, listed either a professional
certification or a special training received. Duffy (2004) suggests that the job of
disability services provider is so diverse that there is no one prototypical educational
experience that will adequately prepare a person for this position; however, he
suggests that attending available training programs is an option.

Additionally, the answers to questions related to the duties of the disability
services administrator revealed that only five DSAs in Mississippi community
colleges, or 31.25%, are members of the Association on Higher Education and
Disability. AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, About us) is the premier professional
association dealing with disability services in postsecondary education. AHEAD
offers to its members training and information through publications, workshops,
conferences, and consultations.

The researcher asked the DSAs the number of hours a day that they devoted to
working with disabled students. The answers to this question revealed a very serious
shortcoming in the implementation of disability services in Mississippi community
colleges. Every community college in the state should employ a full-time disability
services administrator. Experts in the field (Jarrow, 1997; McGuire, 2000; Duffy,
2004) emphasize the numerous duties of the disability services administrator, and
AHEAD (2004) Program Standards and Performance Indicators recommends that
services for students with disabilities should be coordinated through a full-time
professional whose primary role is responsibility for disability services. Only one
DSA reported that all of his/her duties relate directly to disability services. The DSAs
in Mississippi community colleges have duties that are extremely extensive and
varied: dean of student services, vice-president, academic chairperson, director of enrollment, adviser, counselor, civil rights compliance officer, recruiter, and instructor. The DSAs reported on an average working with disability services about three hours a day, with the least amount of time reported being no hours and the greatest amount of time reported being seven hours.

**Recommendations**

Although there is no prototypical job description for a DSA in Mississippi community colleges, each Mississippi community college should employ a DSA who best serves not only the needs of the college but also the needs of the disabled student population. Consequently, the qualifications and duties of the DSAs in Mississippi community colleges vary greatly. In spite of differences in qualifications and duties, all DSAs in Mississippi community colleges could benefit from the following recommendations:

1. Disability services personnel should be afforded opportunities to attend appropriate training programs.
2. All disability services administrators in Mississippi community colleges should become members of AHEAD.
3. All community colleges in Mississippi should employ a full-time disability services administrator, a person that can devote the entire work day to assisting students with disabilities.
Operation of the Disability Services Office

Conclusions

To ascertain the DSAs’ perceptions of the operation of the disability services offices, the researcher used a 29-question survey which employed a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being no opinion, 4 being agree, and 5 being strongly agree. AHEAD Program Standards and Performance Indicators and recommendations from experts in the disability services field were used to compile the survey. No one item on the survey had a mean of 5.00, which indicated strongly agree. Twenty-one items had a mean between 3.00 and 4.81. Eight items had a mean of 2.99 or below. In this section the researcher has chosen to address those items with a mean of 2.99 or below.

Item 4: My college has a student orientation package created specifically for students with disabilities.

Eleven of the 16 respondents answered this question either strongly disagree, disagree, or no opinion. AHEAD (2004) Performance Standards and Performance Indicators emphasizes the importance of information dissemination to disabled students. Shaw and Dukes (2001) are even more specific in their recommendations, saying that every college should have a student orientation package created specifically for students with disabilities.

Item 7: My college has a student mentoring program for students with disabilities.

Only three of the DSAs surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that their colleges have a student mentoring program for students with disabilities. Thirteen strongly
disagreed, disagreed, or had no opinion. Although AHEAD (2004) *Program Standards and Performance Indicators* does not specify the establishment of a student mentoring program, Standard 1 calls for consultation, collaboration, and inclusion. Jarrow (1997) believes that a student mentoring program can do much to help disabled students to succeed in college.

Item 8: My college has an established course substitution policy.

Thirteen DSAs strongly disagreed, disagreed, or had no opinion on whether their colleges have an established course substitution policy for disabled students. AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) emphasizes the importance of the development, review, and revision of course substitution policy. Jarrow (1997) says that a policy/procedure for course substitution is extremely important and should include an explanation of steps involved in considering course substitution requests.

Item 11: My office collects information to determine projected growth and future needs.

Nine DSAs strongly disagreed, disagreed, or had no opinion on whether their colleges collect information to determine projected growth and future needs. AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) Standard 7.4 includes the importance of a college’s collecting data to determine projected growth and future needs. Gugerty and Knutsen (2000) agree that DSAs need to plan for the future by determining projected growth and future needs.

Item 13: Post-enrollment support services are provided.
Thirteen DSAs strongly disagreed, disagreed, or had no opinion on whether their colleges offer post-enrollment support services. Gorden and Keiser (2000a) contend that post-enrollment support services are important to assure that disabled students can make the transition from college to life after college. Jarrow (1997) agrees that post-enrollment services can be of significant value to disabled students.

Item 14: My college has a support group for students with disabilities.

Thirteen DSAs strongly disagreed, disagreed, or had no opinion on whether their colleges have a support group for students with disabilities. Although AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) does not specifically reference a support group, Standard 1.1 states that the colleges should foster and promote meaningful inclusion of disabled students in campus life. Jarrow (1997) says that a support group can help students with disabilities adjust to college life.

Item 19: My office actively develops political support for the disability program.

Only two DSAs agreed or strongly agreed that their office actively develops political support for the disability program. Fourteen strongly disagreed, disagreed, or had no opinion. AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) under the section “Program Administration and Evaluation” states specifically that the office that provides services to students with disabilities should develop political support for the disability services program. Gugerty and Knutsen (2000) believe that developing political support for the disability services office is extremely important.

Item 24: My school participates in Disability Awareness Day.
Only two DSAs agreed or strongly agreed that their colleges participate in Disability Awareness Day. Gugerty and Knutsen (2004) contend that a college’s participating in Disability Awareness Day is important and helps raise awareness about the concerns of disabled students. Additionally, AHEAD (AHEAD, 2004, Program standards) emphasizes the importance of campus awareness of and support for students with disabilities.

Recommendations

Each Mississippi community college DSA should review the operation of the disability services office and should implement the items he/she perceives to be lacking in sufficient implementation. The survey instrument can be used as a starting point to strengthen the operation of the disability services office. The following recommendations are based on the means of the survey items and are suggested as general guidelines:

1. Every Mississippi community college should create a student orientation package specifically for students with disabilities.
2. Every Mississippi community college should establish a student mentoring program for students with disabilities.
3. Every Mississippi community college should have in place a course substitution policy for students with disabilities.
4. Every Mississippi community college disability services office should have in place a method for determining projected growth and future needs.
5. Every Mississippi community college should make post-enrollment services available to disabled students.

6. Every Mississippi community college should establish a support group for students with disabilities.

7. Every Mississippi community college disability services office should work to develop political support for the disabilities program.

8. Every Mississippi community college should participate in Disability Awareness Day.

The following 14 recommendations are included because the research indicated that these items, with means between 3.00 and 3.99, could be critical to the success of the operation of the disability services offices in Mississippi community colleges:

1. Every Mississippi community colleges should have a dedicated, adaptive computer lab for students with disabilities.

2. Every Mississippi community colleges should have sufficient staff in the disability services office to service the student population.

3. Every Mississippi community colleges should provide a resource guide for faculty.

4. Every Mississippi community colleges should have policies in place for students to receive provisional accommodations during any period when permanent accommodations have not been determined.
5. Every Mississippi community colleges should provide non-academic support services for students with disabilities.

6. Every Mississippi community colleges should do follow-ups on disabled students.

7. Every Mississippi community colleges should present staff development programs relate to ADA regularly.

8. Every Mississippi community colleges should provide a resource guide related to ADA to the faculty.

9. Every Mississippi community colleges should maintain a data base of statistical information on the disabled students serviced.

10. Every Mississippi community colleges should have a campus-wide disability advisory committee.

11. Every Mississippi community colleges should provide opportunities for disability services personnel to attend professional conferences regularly.

12. Every Mississippi community college colleges should provide advocacy and self-advocacy training for disabled students.

13. Every Mississippi community colleges should regularly monitor grades of disabled students.

14. Every Mississippi community colleges should provide a resource guide to the faculty.
Recommendations for Future Study

The field of disability services is one that offers definite opportunities for further study. Based on findings from the review of the literature and from this research, the researcher offers these suggestions for future studies:

1. A follow-up study should be done in 3-5 years to ascertain what changes, if any, have occurred in the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act in Mississippi community colleges.

2. The study should be expanded to include the disabled student population to ascertain if these students perceive that the disability services offices provide needed services.

3. A study should be conducted to determine to what extent instructors in Mississippi community college are familiar with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

4. A study should be conducted to determine to what extent administrators in Mississippi community colleges are familiar with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

5. A study should be done to determine whether colleges that have a student mentoring program and a support group for students with disabilities have a higher completion rate for disabled students than colleges that do not provide these services.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

CHECK LIST: AVAILABILITY OF POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUALS
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APPENDIX B

CHECK LIST: INCLUSIONS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES’ POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUALS
### Policy and Procedure Manual Inclusions

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1. A statement concerning confidentiality (Jarrow, 1997; McGuire, 2000) (AHEAD, Category 4)
2. A list of required documents to determine eligibility for accommodations (Jarrow, 1997; McGuire, 2000) (AHEAD, Category 4)
3. Procedure for document review (Jarrow, 1997; McGuire, 2000) (AHEAD, Category 4)
4. A statement of course substitution policy (Jarrow, 1997; McGuire, 2000) (AHEAD, Category 6)
5. Assurance of non-discrimination in treatment (McGuire, 2000) (AHEAD, Category 1)
7. Responsibility for implementation of accommodations (Jarrow, 1997; McGuire, 2000) (AHEAD, Category 3)
9. Statement showing institution’s understanding of its responsibility (Jarrow, 1997) (AHEAD, Category 4)
10. Policy governing method by which a student with a disability can be considered a full-time student with less than the traditional full-time load (Jarrow, 1997) (AHEAD, Category 6)
11. Policy stating how the granting of an accommodation can be questioned by students, staff, or faculty (Jarrow, 1997) (AHEAD, Category 6)
APPENDIX C

DSA BACKGROUND INFORMATION, DUTIES AND QUALIFICATIONS SURVEY
Name: ____________________________________  Date: ________________

Name of Community College: __________________________________________

Directions: Please mark the response that best describes your position in each category.
Questions pertaining to DSA:
Background information

1. How many years of experience do you have in your current position?
   Number of years ______

2. How many years of experience do you have working in the field of Disability Services at the college level?
   Number of years ______

3. How many years of experience do you have working in higher education (colleges and universities)? Include your years of experience working in DS offices.
   Number of years ______

4. Besides your current job, do you have other work experience in these fields? If a job was a combination of two or more categories, please choose the category that best fits. Please check each category that pertains to your experience and list how many years of work experience you have in this field.
Have you worked in these fields? How many years?
   ___ Elementary/primary or secondary (K-12).  _____
   ___ Elementary/primary or secondary (K-12) education with disabled children.  _____
   ___ Vocational or rehabilitation services.  _____
   ___ Counseling, psychological services, social Work or other mental health services.  _____
   ___ Allied health services and medical professions.  _____
   ___ Student affairs or academic affairs in higher Education  _____
   ___ Teaching in higher education.  _____
   ___ Business.  _____
   ___ Law or legal services.  _____
5. How many years of supervisory experience do you have?
Number of years______

6. Are you a member of the Association on Higher Education and Disability?
    _____Yes    _____No

7. What is the highest (most advanced) degree you have completed at this time? Do not include degrees that are in progress.
    _____I do not have any degrees at this time.
    _____High School Diploma, G.E.D. or other certificate for Completion of secondary level education
    _____A.A., A.A.S., or other Associate’s degree
    _____B.S., B.A., B.I., or other Bachelor’s degree
    _____M.A., M.S., M.S.W., M.Ed., or other Master’s degree
    _____Ph.D., Ed.
    _____Other: Please specify degree.)________________

8. Which certifications/special trainings do you currently hold? List up to five professional certifications/special trainings for your field and the certifying agency.
Certification/Special Training    Certifying Agency
1._________________________ ________________________
2._________________________ ________________________
3._________________________ ________________________
4._________________________ ________________________
5._________________________ ________________________

9. What is your gender? Choose one:
    _____Male    _____Female

10. What is your age? Enter age here._______

11. What is your ethnicity? Check one:
    _____African-American or Black
    _____Asian-American, Asian, or from Indian sub continent
    _____Caucasian
    _____Hispanic or Latino
    _____Mexican or Chicano
    _____Multi-ethnic
    _____Native American, Alaskan Native, or from indigenous or Aboriginal Group
    _____Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
12. Do you consider yourself a person with a disability? Choose one:
   _____Yes         _____No

In this part of the survey, you will be asked questions about your current position.

13. What is the job title(s) you use to describe your job? Please list your job title:______________________________.

14. Are you employed full-time or part time? Please check one.
   _____Full-time (100%)—40 hours per week
   _____Part-time (75%)—approximately 30 hours per week
   _____Part-time (50%)—approximately 20 hours per week
   _____Less than half time—less than 20 hours per week

15. What is the minimum educational level required for your job?
   _____No degree is required.
   _____High School Diploma, G.E.D. or other certificate for Completion of secondary level education
   _____A.A., A.A.S., or other Associate’s degree
   _____B.S., B.A., B.I., or other Bachelor’s degree
   _____M.A., M.S., M.S.W., M.Ed., or other Master’s degree
   _____Ph.D., Ed.D., J.D., or other Doctorate degree
   _____Other: (Please specify degree.)_____________________

16. What percentage of time on a daily basis do you feel you devote to working directly with students with disabilities? Please list:__________.

17. Do you have other duties or positions at your college that are not directly related to disability services administrator?
   _____Yes         _____No

If yes, please list them below:

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

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APPENDIX D

PERCEPTIONS OF DSA QUESTIONNAIRE
Name: __________________________________________ Date: __________________

Name of Community College: ________________________________________________

Directions: Please circle the appropriate response.

The questionnaire will use the following scale: 1-strongly disagree; 2-disagree; 3-no opinion; 4-agree; 5-strongly agree.

1. The disability services office at my college has sufficient staff to service our student population. (Thomas, 2000) (AHEAD 4)  
   1 2 3 4 5

2. Instructors at my college are responsive to proposed accommodations for students with disabilities. (Wolanin & Steele, 2004) (AHEAD 3)  
   1 2 3 4 5

3. The mission and philosophy of the disability services office is compatible with the mission of the college. (Gugerty & Knutsen, 2000) (AHEAD 7)  
   1 2 3 4 5

4. My college has a student orientation package created specifically for students with disabilities. (Shaw & Dukes, 2001) (AHEAD 2)  
   1 2 3 4 5

5. My office is provided with sufficient resources to carry out our work. (Thomas, 2000) (AHEAD 7)  
   1 2 3 4 5

6. Documentation is confidential. (Gugerty & Knutsen, 2000) (AHEAD 4)  
   1 2 3 4 5

7. My college has a student mentoring program for students with disabilities. (Jarrow, 1997) (AHEAD 1)  
   1 2 3 4 5

8. My college has an established course substitution policy. (Wolanin & Steele, 2004) (AHEAD 6)  
   1 2 3 4 5

9. A resource guide for faculty is available. (Gorden & Knutsen, 2000) (AHEAD 3)  
   1 2 3 4 5

10. Policies are in place for students to receive provisional accommodations during any period when permanent accommodations have not been determined. (Gugerty & Knutsen, 2000) (AHEAD 6)  
    1 2 3 4 5

11. My office collects information to determine projected growth and future needs. (Gugerty & Knutsen, 2000) (AHEAD 7)  
    1 2 3 4 5

12. My office does follow-up on students. (Gordon & Keiser, 2000a)  
    1 2 3 4 5
13. Post-enrollment support services are provided. 
   (Gordon & Keiser, 2000a) (AHEAD 7)

14. My college has a support group for students with disabilities. 
   (Jarrow, 1997) (AHEAD 1)

15. Non-academic support services are provided. 
   (Wolanin & Steele, 2004)(AHEAD 1)

16. Staff development programs related to ADA are presented 
    at my college regularly.  (Wolanin & Steele, 2004) 
    (AHEAD 3)

17. A resource guide related to ADA is available to the faculty. 
   (Wolanin & Steele, 2004) (AHEAD 3)

18. My office maintains a data base of statistical information on 
    the students serviced.  (Gugerty & Knutsen, 2000) 
    (AHEAD 4)

19. My office actively develops political support for the disability 
    program.  (Gugerty & Knutsen, 2000)  (AHEAD 7)

20. My college has a printed policy for dispute resolution. 
    (Jarrow, 1997) (AHEAD 6)

21. My college has a campus-wide disability advisory 
    committee.  (Gugerty & Knutsen, 2000) (AHEAD 1)

22. Members of my staff attend professional conferences regularly. 
    (Shaw & Dukes, 2001) (AHEAD 8)

23. A dedicated adaptive computer lab is available for disabled 
    students.  (Flowers, Bray & Alzonnine, 2001) 
    (AHEAD 2)

24. My school participates in Disability Awareness day. 
    (Gugerty & Knutsen, 2000) (AHEAD 1)

25. My office has established guidelines for documenting 
    disabilities.  (Thomas, 2000) (AHEAD 2)

26. Standards developed by the Association of Higher Education 
    and Disability (AHEAD) are used to determine required 
    documentation.  (Shaw & Dukes, 2001) (AHEAD 6)

27. Advocacy and self-advocacy training is provided. 
    (Shaw & Dukes, 2001) (AHEAD 5)

28. Staff follows up regularly with students to see if accommodations 
    are working.  (Jarrow, 1997) (AHEAD 7)
29. Staff does regularly monitor students’ grades. (Jarrow, 1997)
APPENDIX E

TABULATION SHEET FOR DSA QUESTIONNAIRE
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APPENDIX F

QUICK REFERENCE TO DSA MEAN, MODE, AND OUTCOME
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APPENDIX G

APPROVAL LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE MISSISSIPPI
ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES
May 3, 2007

Mr. John Arnold
Itawamba Community College
602 West Hill Street
Fulton, MS 38843

Dear Mr. Arnold:

This letter is to confirm that the Mississippi Association of Community and Junior Colleges Presidents' Association unanimously approved your request to conduct research in the 15 member colleges on your dissertation subject "An Examination of the Implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in Mississippi Community Colleges." Enclosed is a copy of the January 23, 2007 official minutes of the Presidents' Association meeting wherein written approval is noted on page three of the document.

Congratulations on your approval, and please let me know if further information is needed.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

David C. Cole, Ph.D.
President, MACJC
Presidents' Association
APPENDIX H

PERMISSION TO USE AHEAD MATERIAL
Hello,

Consider this email reply to be official permission for you to use the information as indicated.

Thank you for contacting us about this.

Richard Allegra
Associate Executive Director
AHEAD

-----Original Message-----
From: ARNOLD595@aol.com [mailto:ARNOLD595@aol.com]
Sent: Sunday, April 9, 2006 10:08 PM
To: ahead@ahead.org
Subject: Request to use AHEAD material

To: AHEAD
From: John Arnold, Community College Instructor, Ph.D Student, AHEAD Member
Subject: Request to use AHEAD material
Date: April 9, 2006

I would like to request permission to use the AHEAD Program Standards and Performance Indicators. I am writing my dissertation for my Ph.D in Community College Leadership at Mississippi State University. The dissertation focuses on disability services in community colleges in the state of Mississippi. As part of the dissertation I would like to use the AHEAD Program Standards and Performance Indicators to assess the extent to which these standards and indicators are used in community colleges in Mississippi. The material will be cited in this way: AHEAD. (2004, October 1). Program standards and performance indicators. Retrieved April 1, 2006, from the AHEAD Web site at http://www.ahead.org/resources/index.htm.

The AHEAD material used will not be sold.

If you need additional information, please email me. My email address is arnold595@aol.com

I appreciate your consideration of this request.
Subject: RE: Requesting permission to use AHEAD material—John Arnold, AHEAD member
Date: 6/7/2006 9:35:53 P.M. Central Standard Time
From: wendy_harbour@gse.harvard.edu
To: stephan@ahead.org, ARNOLD595@aol.com
CC: richard@ahead.org

Definitely not a problem at all!

FYI. I used the survey data for my Qualifying Paper at Harvard. I think the results were more statistically complex and useful than the information in the final report — still working on articles for publication, however. I'm attaching a copy of my Qualifying Paper (the only thing missing are the appendices, which you don't need). You should feel free to cite or use in any way that's useful. If you have any other questions, let me know! I'll be out of town this weekend, but will be back Monday night and will answer email then.

Good luck!
Wendy

P.S. I'm sending a copy of this to another person at AHEAD (Richard Allegra), since he hasn't seen the Qualifying Paper yet, either...

---Original Message---
From: Stephan Hamlin-Smith [mailto:stephan@ahead.org]
Sent: Tuesday, June 06, 2006 7:04 PM
To: ARNOLD595@aol.com
Cc: wendy_harbour@gse.harvard.edu; 'Stephan Hamlin-Smith'
Subject: RE: Requesting permission to use AHEAD material—John Arnold, AHEAD member

Dear John,

I have cc'd Wendy Harbour on this email so that she can be included in this question. I certainly am not opposed to your request, "however" AHEAD does not "own" the material outright — it is shared intellectual property with both the author and the Harvard University. To that end, I'll ask that you and Wendy correspond directly knowing that I'm ok with the request, pending her approval.

Thanks very much,
Stephan

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The AHEAD 2006 Conference -- July 17 - 22 -- at the Town and Country Resort -- San Diego, USA --
www.ahead.org/training2006.php
--------------------------------------------------------
Stephan J. Hamlin-Smith
Executive Director
AHEAD
P.O. Box 540666
Waltham, MA 02454
tel/fax: 781-788-0003
fax: 781-788-0033
stephan@ahead.org

From: ARNOLD595@aol.com [mailto:ARNOLD595@aol.com]
Sent: Tuesday, June 06, 2006 4:45 PM
To: Stephan@ahead.org
Subject: Requesting permission to use AHEAD material—John Arnold, AHEAD member

Stephan,

My name is John Arnold and I am a Ph.D. candidate at Mississippi State University. I am writing my dissertation, which deals with the implementation of ADA in Mississippi

Thursday, June 08, 2006 America Online: ARNOLD595
APPENDIX I

IRB LETTER OF APPROVAL
April 30, 2007

John C. Arnold
2524 Wendover Dr.
Belden, MS 38826

RE: IRB Study #06-309: An Examination of the Implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act in Mississippi Community Colleges

Dear Mr. Arnold:

The above referenced project was reviewed and approved via expedited review for a period of 4/30/2007 through 11/15/2007 in accordance with 45 CFR 46.110 #7. Please note the expiration date for approval of this project is 11/15/2007. If additional time is needed to complete the project, you will need to submit a Continuing Review Request form 30 days prior to the date of expiration. Any modifications made to this project must be submitted for approval prior to implementation. Forms for both Continuing Review and Modifications are located on our website at http://www.msstate.edu/dept/compliance.

Any failure to adhere to the approved protocol could result in suspension or termination of your project. Please note that the IRB reserves the right, at anytime, to observe you and any associated researchers as they conduct the project and audit research records associated with this project.

Please refer to your docket number (#06-309) when contacting our office regarding this project.

We wish you the very best of luck in your research and look forward to working with you again. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Christine Williams at cwilliams@research.msstate.edu or by phone at 662-325-5220.

Sincerely,

[For electronic submissions]

Christine Williams
IRB Compliance Administrator

cc: Arthur D. Stumpf
APPENDIX J

LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS
Dear __________

I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Community College Leadership Program at Mississippi State. My dissertation deals with the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act at Mississippi community colleges. Would you please help me by completing the enclosed questionnaire? Since I am dealing with such a limited population, every survey is extremely vital to my research. The president of _________________ has agreed to my asking you to complete this questionnaire.

No college will be identified by name in my paper, and the only people that will have access to any identifying information will be Dr. Arthur Stumpf, the director of my dissertation, and me. If you have questions about the project, feel free to contact me at 662-680-8711 or to contact Dr. Stumpf at 662-325-1850.

When I complete my dissertation, I will send you my findings, information that hopefully will be both interesting and useful to you. Additionally, I will enter the names of participants into a drawing for material from AHEAD. I have enclosed a small monetary “thank you,” hopefully sufficient to treat you to lunch.

Enclosed with the questionnaire is a self-addressed, stamped envelope for you to return the completed questionnaire to me. Also, please send me a copy of your policy and procedure manual for disability services or the Web address if I can access it from there.

Thank you very, very much for your time and effort.

John Arnold
APPENDIX K

CONSENT FORM
Consent Form

The results from the enclosed questionnaire, which deals with the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act along with the requested demographic data about the disabilities services administrator, will be used in the dissertation An Examination of the Implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in Mississippi Community Colleges. I will mail all participants the findings from the research, information that will hopefully be both interesting and useful to participants.

No institution will be identified by name in the dissertation. The population will be small; however, only Dr. Arthur Stumpf, the dissertation director, and John Arnold, the researcher, will have access to the actual questionnaires.

Participation is voluntary, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty. The participants can refuse to answer any questions.

If you have questions about this research, you may contact Dr. Arthur Stumpf, dissertation director, at XXX-XXX-XXXX or John Arnold at XXX-XXX-XXXX. To obtain information about human participation in research, you may contact the Office of Regulatory Compliance at Mississippi State, 662-325-5220.

I agree to participate in this research by completing a questionnaire.

________________________ __________________
Name Date