

Amy Milsom, D.Ed., is an associate professor at Clemson University, Clemson, SC. E-mail: amilsom@clemson.edu

Lauren Dietz is a school counselor at the School Without Walls, Washington, DC.

Defining College Readiness for Students with Learning Disabilities: A Delphi Study

A Delphi study was used to examine the construct of college readiness for students with learning disabilities. An expert panel of 29 individuals with backgrounds in special education, postsecondary transitions, higher education, and/or counseling identified and rated the importance of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and other factors they believe to be important for students with learning disabilities to be successful in college. Suggestions for how school counselors can use the results to guide postsecondary transition planning interventions are provided.

School counselors play important roles in helping all students prepare for and transition to postsecondary education. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2006) suggested that through individual planning interventions, school counselors can help students and parents “best identify how to achieve success in school and in the future” (p. 1). With the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-476), the federal government formally recognized the importance of postsecondary transition planning for individuals with disabilities. That legislation required that all students with disabilities have a postsecondary transition plan in place by age 16 that addresses students’ transition goals and preferences as well as their present level of performance (i.e., strengths and needs).

Students with learning disabilities (LD) constitute nearly 6% of all school-age students between the ages of 13 and 16 (SRI International, 2000). The more than 1 million students identified with LD represent over 50% of all students receiving special education services, and school counselors are likely to have many students with LD in their caseloads. As such, increasing school counselors’ understanding of college readiness for students with LD becomes important.

Low college attendance and completion rates for students with disabilities reinforce the federal government’s emphasis on postsecondary transition planning. Current data reveal that within 2 years of

graduating from high school, approximately 10% of students with disabilities have attended 2-year or community colleges and just under 6% have attended 4-year colleges (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza, & Levine, 2005). Comparing these percentages to the approximately 12% and 28% of students in the general population who have attended 2-year and 4-year colleges, respectively (Wagner et al.), a higher education gap becomes evident, particularly at the 4-year college level. Furthermore, despite the fact that more students with disabilities are pursuing education at 2- and 4-year colleges, many do not complete their degrees. The U.S. Department of Education (as cited in Janiga & Costenbader, 2002) reported that since 1989 only 53% of students with disabilities either had completed their postsecondary degree or still were enrolled. As student advocates, school counselors might consider developing ways to monitor the types of services and resources that are both accessible to and provided to students with disabilities regarding college planning as well as the effectiveness of interventions they and others provide to assist those students in college planning and preparation.

WHAT IS COLLEGE READINESS?

Scholarly literature regarding college readiness traditionally has focused on academic readiness. More specifically, Conley (2007) indicated that “college readiness continues to be defined primarily in terms of high school courses taken and grades received along with scores on national tests as primary metrics” (p. 5). Our review of academic literature on college readiness and college transitions did, in fact, result in numerous articles addressing academic preparation as a focus of college readiness and potential for academic success in college (e.g., DeBerard, Spielmans, & Julka, 2004; Dounay, 2006; Hyslop, 2006). Nevertheless, many scholars and researchers acknowledged that a variety of factors can contribute to a student’s success in college.

Conley (2007) argued that due to the consider-

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able differences between college and high school settings, college readiness cannot be measured simply by high school success. That is, the ability to pass specific high school courses and/or earn a certain grade point average is not enough. Conley proposed that the construct of college readiness has many intersecting facets, including academic content knowledge and writing skills, academic behaviors including study skills, cognitive strategies such as critical thinking, and contextual skills including knowledge of college policies and expectations as well as coping skills. Additionally, researchers have found empirical support suggesting that variables such as motivation (Allen, 1999), college expectations (Jackson, Pancer, Pratt, & Hunsberger, 2000; Pancer, Hunsberger, Pratt, & Alisat, 2000), social support (Gall, Evans, & Bellerose, 2000), and self-efficacy (Snyder et al., 2002; Zajacova, Lynch, & Espenshade, 2005) also are associated with academic achievement in and successful transition to college.

The transition to college for students with learning disabilities has been a prominent topic in the special education literature since the early 1990s, and scholars have identified various skills and knowledge areas important for successful transitions. Many of the identified skills and knowledge areas are identical to those discussed above as relevant for *all* students transitioning to college, and include time management and study skills (Skinner, 2004) as well as rigorous high school courses (Dounay, 2006). Other characteristics described as important to college success for students with LD include knowledge of their disability (Kurtz & Hicks-Coolick, 1997; Skinner, 2004), knowledge of their rights and responsibilities as well as postsecondary school responsibilities regarding accommodations as outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-336; Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Skinner), and self-advocacy skills (Krebs, 2002; Lock & Layton, 2001; Skinner).

Conley's (2007) idea of college readiness as a multifaceted construct also seems to be shared by scholars who focus specifically on students with LD. For example, Synatschk (1995) identified a number of important academic abilities and personal attitudes for college success while Babbitt and White (2002) recommended that social skills, self-awareness, academic preparedness, social supports, and personal responsibility all be assessed when examining college readiness.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The construct of college readiness is complex, and there appears to be agreement that it is a multifaceted construct. Although the experience of planning for and attending college is similar for students with

and without disabilities, students with disabilities might face additional challenges (Brinckerhoff, 1996). Because the needs of students with LD might differ from those of students with other types of disabilities (e.g., physical accessibility needs such as ramps required for a student who uses a wheelchair would not be relevant for a student who has LD), limiting the scope of research to a specific type of disability is important. Much has been written regarding factors relevant to preparing students with LD for college, but research has been limited to examining a few factors at a time. The purpose of this study was to operationalize the construct of college readiness as it relates to students with LD by generating a comprehensive list of important college readiness factors.

METHODS

Participants

To operationalize college readiness as it relates to students with learning disabilities, choosing participants who would be able to provide diverse, yet informed, perspectives was critical. As such, purposive sampling was used for this study (Jenkins & Smith, 1994), and participants were identified based on their professional expertise and/or involvement in various aspects of postsecondary transition planning for students with disabilities. We recruited professionals representing the fields of special education, school counseling, college disability services, and academic affairs and retention. Some participants were identified based on their publication records (i.e., at least two refereed publications and/or books addressing college transitions for students with disabilities and/or college retention). Others were identified based on their involvement in the leadership of professional organizations related to college transitions (e.g., Council for Exceptional Children division on Career Development and Transition, Association on Higher Education and Disability) or their work in high school or college settings where they assisted students with learning disabilities transitioning to college. We identified 65 experts in these areas and invited them to participate in the study.

Of the 29 initial respondents (45% response rate), 22 individuals provided demographic information. Approximately 68% were female and 90% Caucasian. African American and multiracial participants each made up 4.5% of the respondents. The age of the respondents ranged from 28 to 72 and the average age was 50 years. Regarding the participants' educational background, 11 possessed doctoral degrees, and 11 had master's degrees from the fields of special education, higher education, school administration, school counseling, educational psychology, and

rehabilitation counseling. The respondents reported an average of 19 years of experience in their fields (range = 1 to 40 years). They held positions as directors of college disability services offices, professors, school counselors, researchers, higher education personnel and administrators, and special educators.

The 17 participants (26% response rate) who completed all three rounds of the study did not appear to differ in ethnicity, age, years of experience, or position from the initial respondents. More specifically, 57% were female, 95% were Caucasian, their average age was 49, and they averaged 18 years of experience. The only position not represented in the final group of participants was special educator.

Procedure

Because we wanted to gather input from individuals from a variety of fields who lived across the United States, Delphi methodology was a logical choice; it is particularly useful when feedback is desired from a group of individuals who, for geographic or financial reasons, cannot realistically meet in person (Stone Fish & Busby, 2005). Delphi has been described as “a method for structuring a group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem” (Linstone & Turoff, 1975, p. 3) and as a method to enable a group to reach consensus (Stone Fish & Busby).

Linstone and Turoff (1975) indicated that the Delphi process involves phases whereby information is gathered, feedback is provided, and individuals are afforded an opportunity to revise their original views. The typical process includes exploring the topic of interest, examining how group members view the issue and where they agree and disagree, and providing group members with final results (Linstone & Turoff; Stone Fish & Busby, 2005). A Delphi study of three rounds, or phases, was used in this study and is described in detail below. Incentives in the form of gift cards were offered to participants upon completion of each round of the study.

Round 1. Utilizing a Web-based survey, the 65 experts were sent an e-mail invitation to participate in the study as well as an informed consent form and information about the Delphi methodology to be used. In this first round, the participants were asked to list what they perceived to be critical knowledge areas, skills, attitudes, and other factors related to college readiness for students with LD. An e-mail reminder was sent one week later to the experts who had not yet responded. Round 1 yielded 29 total respondents for a response rate of 45%.

Using the procedure outlined by Jenkins and Smith (1994), responses gathered during Round 1 were reviewed and condensed in an effort to eliminate redundancy. We independently examined the

responses, then discussed and compared for consensus regarding which responses to condense based on similarity or overlap. For example, 15 responses were collapsed under the factor *study skills*. Of these responses, five were “study skills” and the remaining ones included responses such as “general study skills,” “study skills as opposed to just doing homework,” and “solid alternative study systems/strategies.” Any responses for which there was no consensus to condense were kept as separate factors. This process resulted in condensing the initial list of 570 responses to 89 unique factors. The complete list of 89 factors is available from the first author; the top 62 factors are in Table 1.

Round 2. The 29 individuals who participated in Round 1 were sent an e-mail invitation to participate in the next round. The list of 89 college readiness factors generated in Round 1 was included in this survey. Participants were asked to rate each factor’s importance to college readiness for students with LD on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all important) to 7 (very important). A reminder e-mail was sent one week later to the individuals who had not yet responded. Round 2 yielded a total of 19 respondents (66% response rate).

Round 3. As in Round 2, an e-mail invitation was sent to the 29 individuals who participated in Round 1, inviting them to continue their involvement in the study. The list of 89 college readiness factors was provided again in this survey. Additionally, per Delphi methodology, the participants also were provided with the median response and interquartile range (IQR) for each factor, calculated from the ratings they provided during Round 2. They were informed that the IQR is the numerical difference between the middle 50% of ratings and that an IQR of 1.00 or less would suggest that the middle 50% of participants responded very similarly. They also were told that an IQR of 0.00 means that the middle 50% of participants all responded the same and that a larger IQR would indicate greater variation in responses.

The participants were asked to consider the statistical information provided and then re-rate each of the 89 college readiness factors using the same 7-point Likert scale as they did previously. After one week, an e-mail reminder was sent to the individuals who had not responded. The total number of respondents in Round 3 was 17 (a response rate of 59%).

RESULTS

Common guidelines for interpreting data gathered through Delphi methodology suggest retaining only those responses that receive a median rating of at least 6.00 and an IQR of 1.50 or less (Jenkins &

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Table 1. Final List of College Readiness Factors Including Median and Interquartile Range

Item	Median	IQR
1. Confidence; belief they can succeed	7	0
2. Knowledge of how to self-advocate (i.e., how to access help at college)	7	0.5
3. Willingness to self-advocate	7	0.5
4. Persistence/perseverance	7	0.5
5. Study skills	7	1
6. Time management skills	7	1
7. Self-determination skills (i.e., ability to develop action plan to achieve goals)	7	1
8. Self-discipline/self-regulation	7	1
9. Knowledge of personal strengths and weaknesses	7	1
10. Knowledge of whether the available college accommodations fit their individual needs	7	1
11. Knowledge that college is different than high school	7	1
12. Resilience	7	1
13. Social skills	6	0
14. Basic math skills	6	0
15. Writing skills	6	0
16. Awareness of social expectations at college	6	0
17. High self-esteem	6	0
18. Flexibility/adaptability	6	0
19. Optimistic attitude	6	0
20. Being proactive and/or planful	6	0
21. Family support	6	0
22. Computer/technology knowledge (e.g., how to use e-mail, how to search the Internet for information)	6	0.5
23. Reading skills	6	0.5
24. Having a sense of purpose	6	0.5
25. Adequate financial resources	6	0.5
26. Computer/technology skills (e.g., Internet, e-mail, word processing)	6	0.75
27. Critical thinking and problem-solving skills	6	0.75
28. Communication skills	6	1
29. Test-taking skills	6	1
30. Note-taking skills	6	1
31. Organizational skills	6	1
32. Self-advocacy skills	6	1
33. Ability to use assistive technology if relevant to disability	6	1

(continued on next page)

Smith, 1994; Stone Fish & Busby, 2005). By following those guidelines, we were able to retain only items having strong overall endorsement and minimal variation in participant ratings. A total of 66 out of the original 89 college readiness factors met those criteria. After examining the 66 factors, we dropped 6 because we believed they only could be answered by students already attending college (e.g., feeling that people on campus care; having an advisor or academic coach) and therefore would not be relevant for high school students. Removing those items resulted in a list of 60 factors (see Table 1).

Next we examined the 23 items that did not meet the initial inclusion criteria and decided to retain the only 2 additional items that had a median of 6.00 even though they had an IQR of 1.75 (see Table 1, items 61 and 62). We decided to retain the first

(item 61: *knowledge of disability*) because it is a factor that has been identified in the literature as important to college success for students with learning disabilities (Kurtz & Hicks-Coolick, 1997; Skinner, 2004). We decided to keep item 62 (*internal locus of control*) because it had the same median and IQR as item 61, and we believed that if we kept one we should keep both. The remaining 21 items that were not retained had medians of 4 or 5 and IQRs of 2 or more. A total of 62 factors composed the final list of college readiness factors (see Table 1).

An informal examination of the final 62 items reveals possible groupings under which the factors could be organized. For example, factors such as confidence, resilience, coping skills, and strong work ethic reflect innate characteristics important to success. Academic skills (e.g., *basic math skills, writing*

Item	Median	IQR
34. Will have access to necessary supports at college (e.g., laptops, assistive technology software, books on tape)	6	1
35. Coping skills	6	1
36. Daily living skills	6	1
37. Ability to set goals	6	1
38. Accepts responsibility for actions	6	1
39. Knowledge of personal learning style	6	1
40. Knowledge of legal rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act	6	1
41. Knowledge of available supports from the college (e.g., through disability services or other campus offices)	6	1
42. Good general academic preparation	6	1
43. Knowledge that desired college major is a good match to their skills/abilities/interests	6	1
44. Logistics of college (e.g., how to register for classes, academic policies, graduation requirements)	6	1
45. Awareness of college academic expectations and standards	6	1
46. Awareness that disability is but one aspect of their identity	6	1
47. Transportation	6	1
48. Highly motivated	6	1
49. Strong work ethic	6	1
50. Independence—not easily influenced by others	6	1
51. Open-minded	6	1
52. Collaboration	6	1
53. Independence from parents	6	1
54. Support of friends	6	1
55. Mentors	6	1
56. Counseling support	6	1
57. Having goals for the future	6	1.5
58. Safety awareness	6	1.5
59. Self-acceptance	6	1.5
60. Belief that there is learning in failure	6	1.5
61. Knowledge of disability (e.g., their diagnosis, how their disability affects them)	6	1.75
62. Internal locus of control	6	1.75

Note. The numbers in the left column of the table do not indicate any ranking. They are used so that individual items can more easily be referenced.

skills) and broad study skills (e.g., *time management skills, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, note-taking skills*) could be grouped together to encompass more traditional college preparation focus areas. Skills to function autonomously is another possible grouping that might include factors such as *self-determination skills* and *accepts responsibility for actions*. Another grouping could focus on skills necessary to work effectively with others, including *social skills, communication skills, and self-advocacy skills*. Finally, knowledge of self and of college might be two final groupings. The former could include factors such as *knowledge of personal strengths and weaknesses* and *knowledge of whether the available college accommodations fit their individual needs*, while the latter might include factors such as *knowledge that college is different than high school* and

knowledge of legal rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

DISCUSSION

The large number and diversity of factors that were retained provide support for Conley's (2007) suggestion that college readiness is a multifaceted construct. Factors in the final list reflect a variety of areas including personal characteristics, academic skills and strategies, support systems, and knowledge areas related to self and college. All of these areas are ones that have been identified in scholarly literature related to college readiness and college transitions.

Interestingly, the most highly rated items (#1–12) have less to do with academic knowledge and skills and more to do with personal characteristics and

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attitudes. Of those 12 items, *confidence, persistence/perseverance, resilience, self-determination skills, and self-discipline/self-regulation* reflect positive personal characteristics that could benefit students in numerous aspects of their lives. Students who positively endorse those five factors might be described as individuals who are able to persevere in their pursuit of goals despite potential barriers or setbacks because they believe in their ability to achieve and because they are able to maintain a clear focus on those goals. These characteristics might describe students who do not have good enough grades or test scores to go straight to a 4-year college, but because they really want to become a teacher, they start by taking remedial classes at a community college and eventually are able to transfer to a 4-year college and obtain a bachelor's degree. Perhaps students who possess those characteristics would be able to attain their postsecondary educational goals not because they are the most talented, but because they do not give up easily. In fact, perseverance is one college readiness factor that has been endorsed both by college students with learning disabilities (Skinner, 2004) and by researchers (Raskind, Goldberg, Higgins, & Herman, 1999).

Positive personal qualities can take someone a long way, but they certainly are not sufficient in and of themselves. The importance of self-knowledge as well as knowing how and when to ask for help also are reflected in the top 12 college readiness factors. *Knowledge of personal strengths and weaknesses and knowledge of whether the available college accommodations fit their individual needs* are consistent with literature highlighting the importance of self-knowledge (Skinner, 2004). If high school students accurately can assess their own needs and identify whether the college they are interested in can accommodate those needs, only then can they make informed choices about whether that particular college might be a good fit for them. Kurtz and Hicks-Coolick (1997) identified self-knowledge as an important component of self-advocacy. That is, in order to gain the most benefit from available resources, an individual must know that he or she needs help and how a particular resource might be helpful. Two more of the top 12 college readiness factors, *knowledge of how to self-advocate* and *willingness to self-advocate*, address the ability both to find and to use available resources. The fact that those two items were rated very consistently by the participants suggests that the two might work in combination. That is, a student who knows how to self-advocate but refuses to do so likely will not receive the help he or she needs. Likewise, a student who is very willing to ask for help but does not know how to do so or where to turn also probably will not receive the help he or she needs.

The remaining three college readiness factors in the top 12 reflected academic-related knowledge and skills—*knowledge that college is different than high school, study skills, and time management skills*. By helping students examine the ways in which college is different than high school, including the need to reexamine current study habits and time management skills, school counselors can enable students to proactively address requisite skills and knowledge for success. Having realistic expectations for college has been found to be important to college success (Jackson et al., 2000; Pancer et al., 2000), so examining and challenging students' existing beliefs could be a starting point for school counselors.

It seems noteworthy that of the top 12 college readiness factors, only one (*knowledge of whether the available college accommodations fit their individual needs*) might be considered unique to students with learning disabilities. An examination of the remaining 50 college readiness factors only reveals four additional factors (#33, 40, 46, and 61) that are unique to students with learning disabilities. These results suggest that the construct of college readiness mainly includes factors that are universally important. As such, large-scale interventions such as classroom guidance for all students could be used to target many college readiness factors, but perhaps would be most relevant for the academic and study skills as well as personal characteristics. Individualized or small-group interventions could be used to focus on factors specific to students with learning disabilities and on those related to personal strengths and weaknesses and future goals. Further discussion of school counseling interventions is presented in the Implications section.

The remaining factors in Table 1 had median ratings of 6, or *important*, and therefore warrant attention during postsecondary transition planning. The remaining factors represent a wide variety of areas; many of these factors fit the more traditional focus on academic skills, including basic math, writing, and reading skills. They also reflect the importance of various types of social support, including family and peers, and underscore the role that students' attitudes and beliefs might play in their college success. Finally, included in the remaining factors are specific areas of knowledge related to self and college that could be critical to the success of students with learning disabilities.

The relevance of school counselor involvement in addressing college readiness with students with learning disabilities is evident in that many of the 62 college readiness factors parallel various ASCA National Standards (ASCA, 2004). For example, common both to the college readiness factors and to the ASCA National Standards are time management, behaviors that lead to successful learning, per-

sistence, skills to ask for help, and accepting responsibility. Also in common are study skills, self-knowledge, goal setting, and future planning as well as critical thinking and problem-solving skills and communication skills. Most of the similar items fall under the academic standards, but many also fall under the personal/social standards, again providing support for Conley's (2007) description of college readiness as much more than academic readiness.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS

Knowing what factors are important to college readiness for students with learning disabilities is important, but school counselors must be able to identify student strengths and needs in those areas before they can determine what interventions to implement. Standardized instruments are regularly used during transition planning for students with disabilities, and school counselors might find some of the more commonly used instruments helpful in their work. For example, the Study Skills Inventory (Hoover & Patton, 1995) can be used by school counselors to assess areas such as listening, note taking, test taking, self-management, and time management. The ARC Self-Determination Scale (Wehmer & Kelchner, 1995) is useful in assessing areas such as autonomy and self-regulation. Finally, the Transition Planning Inventory (Clark & Patton, 2006) is a comprehensive instrument with numerous subscales and versions that can be completed by students, teachers, and parents. Although all of the subscales probably would not be relevant, school counselors might find the instrument helpful in assessing future educational plans, self-determination, communication skills, and interpersonal relationships. Other standardized instruments more familiar to school counselors also could be beneficial. For example, school counselors could use the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers, 1962) to assist students in gaining self-knowledge. Many of these instruments can be administered in large groups, and some are available at no cost, so it seems realistic for school counselors to be able to assess student needs in an efficient and economical manner.

Once student needs are identified, school counselors must, in collaboration with other school personnel, determine how to approach intervention. Much of the existing literature on college readiness offers information about what factors help students to be successful in college (e.g., Foley, 2006), but limited literature provides ideas for how to help students obtain those factors. Several authors provide suggestions for interventions at the postsecondary level (e.g., Brinckerhoff, 1994; Pancer et al., 2000);

however, school counselors need tools and interventions to use with students in preparation for their transition. Although effectiveness research in this area is limited, and in many cases dated, school counselors are encouraged to seek and implement evidence-based interventions when possible. For example, researchers specifically examining postsecondary transitions for students with learning disabilities have found that student participation in seminars and experiential activities targeting self-knowledge, self-advocacy skills, and knowledge of postsecondary school, via individual planning and/or small-group interventions, resulted in student gains in those knowledge and skill areas (see Aune, 1991; Milsom, Akos, & Thompson, 2004; Phillips, 1990). School counselors can turn to these resources for ideas, but they also should consider collecting effectiveness data on interventions they implement and then sharing successful interventions with others.

An important consideration for school counselors is to identify how their efforts to address college readiness fit with their existing school counseling program. By connecting their work to their roles outlined in the ASCA National Model® (2005) and to student competencies outlined in the ASCA National Standards (2004), school counselors can garner support for time and resources spent on helping students with disabilities address college readiness factors. Furthermore, because nearly all of the 62 college readiness factors did not appear to be unique to students with learning disabilities, school counselors might consider addressing college readiness via large-scale initiatives such as classroom guidance where all students could benefit.

As suggested by ASCA (2005), rather than assume sole responsibility for addressing college readiness-related content, school counselors can collaborate with teachers to disseminate information and teach skills. For example, college readiness factors such as time management and study skills can be addressed starting in ninth grade by school counselors coming into classrooms to present consistent information to students. Teachers then can be asked to reinforce the use of planners or other strategies and to monitor their use. Small-group interventions can be used to target students with disabilities in order to address disability-specific college readiness factors (see Milsom et al., 2004), and individual planning sessions should be considered in order to help students who may need more personal attention (see Aune, 1991). Finally, informational workshops addressing postsecondary transition issues for students with disabilities can be conducted in an effort to foster parent and family support.

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for college. Conley (2007) encouraged high schools to adapt their curricula to ensure that all students are receiving challenging coursework and are accepting increasing responsibility for their learning. As such, school counselors should disaggregate school data in order to ensure that students with disabilities are not underrepresented in advanced courses. Conley also suggested that students be provided with guidance through the college admissions process; each student should know how to find colleges appropriate for his or her learning style. Again, school counselors can ensure that all students are provided opportunities to learn about college options and assisted in making postsecondary school decisions.

Another place where school counselors can advocate for students is during Individualized Education Program (IEP) team meetings. With their knowledge of college and career planning, school counselors can be important members of IEP teams (Millsom, Goodnough, & Akos, 2007), providing recommendations to the team regarding how and when various college readiness factors might be addressed. They also could help the team determine how to monitor student progress through the use of data.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Delphi studies are useful for acquiring expert opinions on various topics. For this study we made every effort to identify and involve individuals who had extensive experience and/or expertise in various aspects of college transition planning for students with disabilities. Our participants were able to provide diverse perspectives, and we believe our final participants were similar to our original sample. Nevertheless, our response rate was low and it is possible that the final list of factors might have differed with the involvement of nonrespondents or a different group of experts.

Furthermore, our results simply reflect the opinions of the experts. Data must be gathered in order to examine whether or not the identified factors actually can be used to predict college success and also to determine which combination(s) of factors might best predict college success. Also, research could focus on identifying ways to objectively measure the individual college readiness factors. Finally, longitudinal studies involving pre and post measures could be used with students who are tracked as they progress from high school to college.

CONCLUSION

This study provides justification for school counselors to take a comprehensive approach to postsecondary transition planning with students with learning disabilities. School counselors are encouraged to

use the list of factors as a starting point to guide their work during postsecondary transition planning for students with learning disabilities. They might find that all students, not just those with learning disabilities, can benefit from interventions targeting many of the factors. What is lacking, however, is empirical support for interventions that can be used by high school counselors and teachers to address the college readiness factors. School counselors are strongly encouraged to collect data that can help to inform their and others' future work with students with learning disabilities. ■

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