



Higher Education Consortium  
for Special Education



## Recommendations for the Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act April, 2007

### 1. Preparing special education K-12 teachers

- There is an alarming shortage of special education teachers, with 98% of school districts reporting special education teacher shortages. (President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002)
  - ⇒ ***Highly qualified special education teachers are critical to the successful participation by students with disabilities in the statewide assessments and adequate yearly progress mandated by The No Child Left Behind Act.***

**HECSE and TED Recommend:** Target a portion of Title II funds to partnerships between institutions of higher education and K-12 schools in priority shortage areas, including special education.

### 2. The critical shortage of special education faculty in institutions of higher education

- Our nation produces 30% fewer doctorates in special education than we did 20 years ago, and fewer of those are becoming faculty at institutions of higher education.
- One third of special education faculty openings remain unfilled each year
- 20% of unfilled special education faculty openings are eventually eliminated
- In 2002, only 213 doctorates in special education were produced in the United States
  - ⇒ ***The nation's training and research infrastructure as a result is being greatly diminished.***

**HECSE and TED Recommend:** Targeting financial aid packages, both loans and grants, to attract more students into special education doctoral programs. Developing incentive packages, including loan forgiveness, for those who become special education faculty at institutions of higher education. Prioritizing graduate students preparing to be special education teacher educators under the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GANN) program in Title VII.

### 3. Access to Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities

As a result of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and its predecessors since 1975, students with disabilities have made significant strides toward fulfilling Congress' expectation to be fully integrated into adult life. In fact, they have the same life objectives (i.e., employment success, community participation, and economic security) as students without disabilities (Henderson, 2001). Further,

- A college education has become a minimum requirement to successfully compete in the global marketplace. (US Department of Labor)

- The percentage of full-time college freshmen with disabilities increased from 2.3% in 1978 to 9.8% in 1998. (Henderson, 1999)
- Students with disabilities “who enroll in a two-year program with the intention of transferring to a four-year school do not, and students with disabilities are less likely to persist in earning a postsecondary degree or credential than peers without disabilities.” (U.S. Department of Education, November, 2000, p. 16)
- “Students with disabilities who elect to continue their education at the post-secondary level … face significant barriers to achieving their goals” (President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002, p. 48)
- Students with disabilities who graduate from college exhibit similar labor market outcomes as their counterparts without disabilities. (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999)
  - ⇒ ***Improved access to postsecondary education and strategies to enhance graduation rates of students with disabilities must become a priority.***
  - ⇒ ***“Support higher education faculty, administrators and auxiliary service providers to more effectively provide and help postsecondary students with disabilities to complete a high quality postsecondary education.”*** (President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002, p. 45)

**HECSE and TED Recommend:** That Congress increase the authorization to 20 million dollars for Part D, Title VII of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended by the HEA in 1998 to fund **Demonstration Projects to Ensure Quality Higher Education for Students with Disabilities.**

In addition, since there are almost no data on outcomes regarding adults with disabilities as related to post-high school educational experience or the efficacy of types of interventions, **HECSE and TED Propose: A Study on Access to Higher Education for Students with Disabilities**, to assess obstacles and make recommendations to enhance outcomes for students with disabilities in postsecondary education.

**HECSE and TED Recommend:** A trial of **Transition Savings Accounts** and **IRAs**, as well as **Individual Development Accounts**, that provide tax incentives to encourage and support investment in transition and postsecondary education activities by students with disabilities.

#### 4. Using technology to enhance access

- Section 674 of IDEA-2004 supports “research, development, and dissemination of technology with universal design features, so that the technology is accessible to the broadest range of individuals with disabilities without further modification or adaptation” (§674(b)(2)(B)).
- Section 674 also requires the Secretary to provide “free educational materials, including textbooks, in accessible media for visually impaired and print disabled students in elementary schools and secondary schools, postsecondary schools, and graduate schools” (§ 674(c)(1)(D)).

**HECSE and TED Recommend:** Incorporate into HEA provisions that parallel the textbook and technology accessibility measures in IDEA-2004; and extend the duties of the National Instructional Materials Access Center, as specified in §671(e)(2), to postsecondary students.