

# **Student-to-Staff Ratios: Caseload Benchmarking and Budget Advocacy for Disability Services**

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We ask you to join us in creating a culture that reflects...

Access and Inclusion  
and  
Civility and Respect

...consistent with the AHEAD Statement of Civility during  
our conference and in all aspects of our organization.

# Learning Goals

- Understand how to use national data as a benchmark.
- Identify 7 strategies for using data in budget advocacy.
- Apply data & budgetary advocacy strategies at your institution.

# Summary of Relevant Literature

- Caseload is a ratio measure of work calculated by dividing the number of students by the number of staff.
- AHEAD data indicate average caseload of 164 students and stated that “no single number reflects a ‘typical’ case load for DS professionals” (Scott, 2017, p. 13).

# Depiction of the Problem

- At least 25% of disability practitioners reported that their institutions are not AHEAD members (Brown, 2017).
- Benchmarking is important in advocating for new positions or defend against budget cuts.
- Using student-to-staff metrics as a sole rationale to justify budget confuses caseload with workload.

# Purpose and Methods

- Promote the use of more nuanced and varied metrics.
- Disaggregate nationally representative data.
- Data collection methods:
  - One-stage stratified random sample
  - N=1,245
  - Response rate = 38.8%; Return rate = 41.9%
  - AHEAD membership varied by institution type

# Average Caseload Findings

- One practitioner was 154.9 students (SD=110.9;  $n=144$ );
- Two or three practitioners averaged 140.7 students (SD=85.4  $n=132$ )
- Four or five practitioners averaged 126.6 students (SD=72.6;  $n=58$ ).
- Six or more full-time professionals carried an average caseload of 135.2 students (SD=71.6;  $n=44$ ).

# Implications for Practice

- Socially Just Staffing
- Seven Strategies
- Tailor to Institution



# Track and Project Trends Over Time

- Current caseload is often not meaningful unless paired with historical data.
- Also track operational space:
  - Number of testing accommodations administered.
  - How much space students in private testing rooms require.

# Define Current & Aspirational Scope

- Foundation for contextual evidence that demonstrates the limitations of budgets driven solely by caseload.
- Scope of work includes services provided and DRC operational hours.

# Know & Connect with Your Institution's Strategic Plan

- Data collected by the DRC, including caseload metrics, should be tied to, and evaluated through the lens of the strategic plan.
- Diversity and inclusion are common goals frequently found in strategic plans.

# Use Student Satisfaction Data to Support Budgetary Requests

- Opportunity to center the students' voices.
- Use in conjunction with longitudinal data about service use (e.g., private testing accommodations).

# Track Service Hours per Accommodation

- Metrics should take into consideration the complexity of accommodations & the robustness of existing resources.
- Upper level administration may view enrollment growth as increasing staff service hours additionally.
- However, enrollment growth increases service hours exponentially.
- It is imperative to highlight how institution specific resources influence DRC staff time and avoid discrimination.

# View the DRC Annual Report as a Grant Application

- Technique to demonstrate the need for space & staffing.
- Clear, concise, & use data to tell a story.
- Track overtime hours worked & the amount of time from accommodation request to implementation.

# Finance the Unpredictable, as Predictable

- Use data to forecast trends.
- Provide evidence of how DRC resources are spent.
- Engage in ongoing budgetary discussions to address unexpected accommodations.

# Constantly Educate Your Audience

- Invite administrators to attend DRC sponsored events.
- With permission, sharing student stories that highlight the way the DRC works to support institutional strategic priorities.
- Tailor educational materials to match the specific constituent.
- Send quarterly updates on legal guidance to the directors of relevant areas.



# Applying Strategies and Covid-19

- Track & Project– Physical distancing and testing space
- Student Satisfaction– Learning from spring experiences
- Finance the Unpredictable– Changes in cost/needs due to Covid-19

# Reflection

Pick one strategy -- How could you use this at your institution?

- Track/Project Trends
- Define Scope
- Strategic Plan
- Student Satisfaction
- Service Hours/Accommodation
- Report as a Grant
- Finance the Unpredictable
- Educate Audience

# Discussion

- Tell us about your institution type/size
- Which strategy did you pick
- How did you apply it

## Wrap Up

- Goal is to foster socially-just staffing practices.
- Not all strategies are feasible or useful for all campuses.
- Use nuanced caseload benchmarks in combination with additional data-driven tools.

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# Session Evaluation

- [Link to Session Evaluation Form](https://tinyurl.com/AHEAD2020-SessionEval)  
[tinyurl.com/AHEAD2020-SessionEval](https://tinyurl.com/AHEAD2020-SessionEval)
- Your feedback helps shape future programming.
- Thank you for attending!