Research Year in Review Through a COVID-19 Lens

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Welcome to AHEAD's first Research Year in Review!

- Part of AHEAD's research agenda to
  - Conduct research
  - Influence a culture of collaboration between research and practice professionals

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.

Overview

I. **Big picture**: AHEAD's recent research on COVID response (Katherine Aquino)

II. **Online learning**: Applying research on cognitive flexibilty (Nicole Ofiesh)

III. **Service delivery**: Applying research on learning differences online (Manju Banerjee)

IV. **Wrap up/Q&A**

Investigating Perceived Difficulty and Procedural Variations for Disability Resource Providers During COVID-19

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Presenter Bios

- Katherine C. Aquino, Ph.D.
  - Assistant Professor, St. John's University
  - Research interests: Student transitioning in higher education, students with disabilities, post-traditional students
- Sally Scott, Ph.D.
  - Director of Research, AHEAD

Introduction

- Early March 2020: A call for investigation
- Grounded in research:
  - Barriers for students with disabilities in higher education
  - Potential obstacles of DR offices to support student experience
- Variation in experience and guidance
- Overarching inquiry: Climate, practices, and uncertainty during transition to online instruction/ work-from-home orders

Methodology

- Timeframe:
  - Development: March-April 2020
  - Collection: May-June 2020
- Survey design (Google Forms)
- Initial cycle of three-part data collection

Survey Instrument

- Survey Sections:
  - Professional role and place of employment
  - The transition to remote education across your campus
  - The change of operations for disability resource offices
  - Challenges and solutions
- EDUCAUSE COVID-19 QuickPoll
- Logic-based, closed- and open-ended questions

Participants

- N=605
- Qualifying criteria: Works at postsecondary institution
- Participants represented 48 of 50 U.S. states and 10 countries
- 94% of participants worked in disability resource offices

DR office communication strategies

- Top four strategies were the same for students and faculty:

	Reporting Use **With Students** (Participant %)	Reporting Use **With Faculty** (Participant %)
Individual E-mails	98	98
Phone Calls	89	80
E-mail Blasts	84	52
Teleconferencing	83	61

- And for students… multiple approaches!
  Social media/ DR Data management systems/ DRO websites/ newsletters/virtual lobbies/texting/instructional videos/chat

Participant Poll

During the shift to online support services, disability resource offices have needed to recreate communication channels with students. What DRO structures have you used for communicating with students?

Transition to Remote Education:
Most Frequently Reported Areas of Difficulty for Students

	Perceived Difficulty for **Students with Disabilities (Participant %)**	Perceived Difficulty for **General Student Population (Participant %)**
Having needed equipment/ devices	78	76
Access to network/Wi-Fi access	85	61
Access to needed technology support and/or training	71	65
Communication with instructors	74	63
Access to software, assistive technology programs	72	NA

A Note on Student Comparison

- When comparing to the general student population, survey participants perceived greater difficulty for students with disabilities during COVID transition for all categories except for **food and housing insecurity**.
    - Students with disabilities: 56%
    - General student population: 61%

Transition to Remote DR Operations:
Student Accommodation Requests

- New students registering for services
  - 36% of DR providers indicated there was an increase in new student DR service registration
- For previously registered students (pre-COVID):
  - 15% of participants indicated that accommodation requests **decreased** following online instruction transition
  - 31% of participants indicated that accommodation requests **increased** following online instruction transition

Transition to Remote DR Operations:
Top Challenges for Services

	Perceived Difficulty for Students (Participant %)
Providing disability documentation	63
Receiving testing accommodations	61
Discussing access barriers and solutions with students	59
Using assistive technology	58
Participating in an interactive accommodation development process	50

Transition to Remote DR operations:
Areas of Difficulty for DR Providers

	Perceived Difficulty for DR Providers (Participant %)
Needing technology support	58
Communicating with faculty related to inclusive course design	52
Communicating with students not registered, but may need services	51
Communicating with faculty related to classroom accommodations	48
Receiving institutional support for accessibility planning/needs (first 2-3 months)	47

Promising Practices

Themes	Examples
Increased Collaboration	I**nstructional design** (established COVID-19 teaching tips platform; summer workshops; captioning plan); **BIT teams** (referrals of new students); A**cademic Affairs** (fall policy development); surrounding **community** and local charities/businesses (for computers, Wi-Fi, other technology)
Communication Structures	Biweekly staff meetings via teleconferencing, virtual interpreter check ins, offering "accessibility checks" for instructors, student contact ("early and often")
New Student Services	Virtual academic coaching, extended office hours, weekly check-ins for time management
Modified Office Procedures	Online forms, virtual "front desk", remote interpreting, new DS data management system, texting to make appointments

What Lies Ahead?

- 60% of participants were unsure of their institutional plans for the fall 2020 semester at the time of initial survey collection

Research Implications

- Realtime data allows for ongoing trend review
- Data from project can support DR providers through COVID transitioning
- Data highlights challenges in DR support and services and provides foundation for greater conversation and planning

Next Steps

- AHEAD report and infographic series
- Manuscript development
- Upcoming fall data collection
  - Expansion of qualitative question use

Thank you!

For questions or more information, feel free to contact us:

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Bridging Faculty-DS Relationships Through Empathy: Raising Awareness of Cognitive Flexibility in the Online Classroom Environment

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About Me:

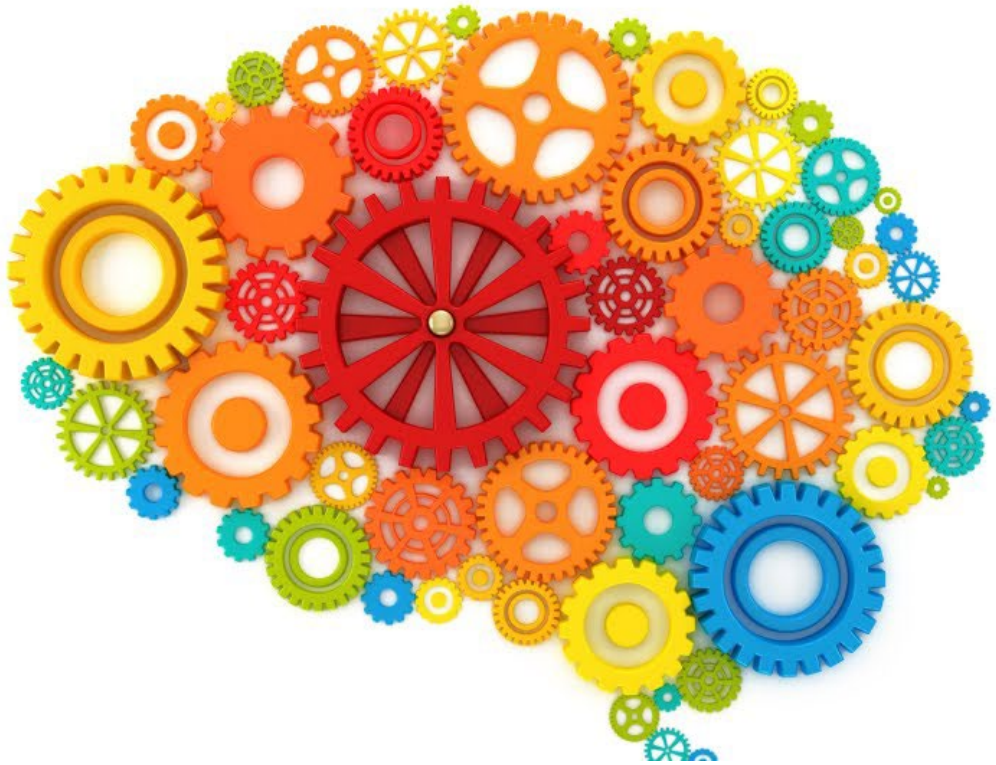
- Nicole S. Ofiesh, Ph.D.
  - Cognitive behavioral scientist formerly Executive Director of the Schwab Learning Center at Stanford University and founder of the UDL Innovation Studio
  - Co-founder and Chief Innovation Officer, Potentia Institute 21
  - Twitter: nicole_s_ofiesh
  - LinkedIn: Nicole S. Ofiesh

Cognitive Flexibility Defined

- "Cognitive flexibility is a critical executive function that can be broadly defined as the ability to adapt behaviors in response to changes in the environment."

  R. Cools, 2015, *Brain Mapping*

Who does this impact?



- Who is most susceptible?
- Students with disabilities: ASD, Generalized Anxiety Disorders, Personality Disorders
- General Learner Variability: Everyone impacted by adjustment to the online environment
  - CF is considered one of the critical executive functions

How does this show up?

Rigid thinking and inability to shift thinking, adjust or "move on."

Attention and focus is lost due to inability to follow along.

Why now?

- Unclear expectations about what to expect in a session, a week, midterms...and next quarter/semester (control)

How does this show up in the online classroom?

- Any change: with content or topics and activities
- Misses overall concept (shifting)
- Making connections between class and overall point (rigidity does not allow for application)
- Overly attentive to details

Students have gone from stressed to stressed with no structure

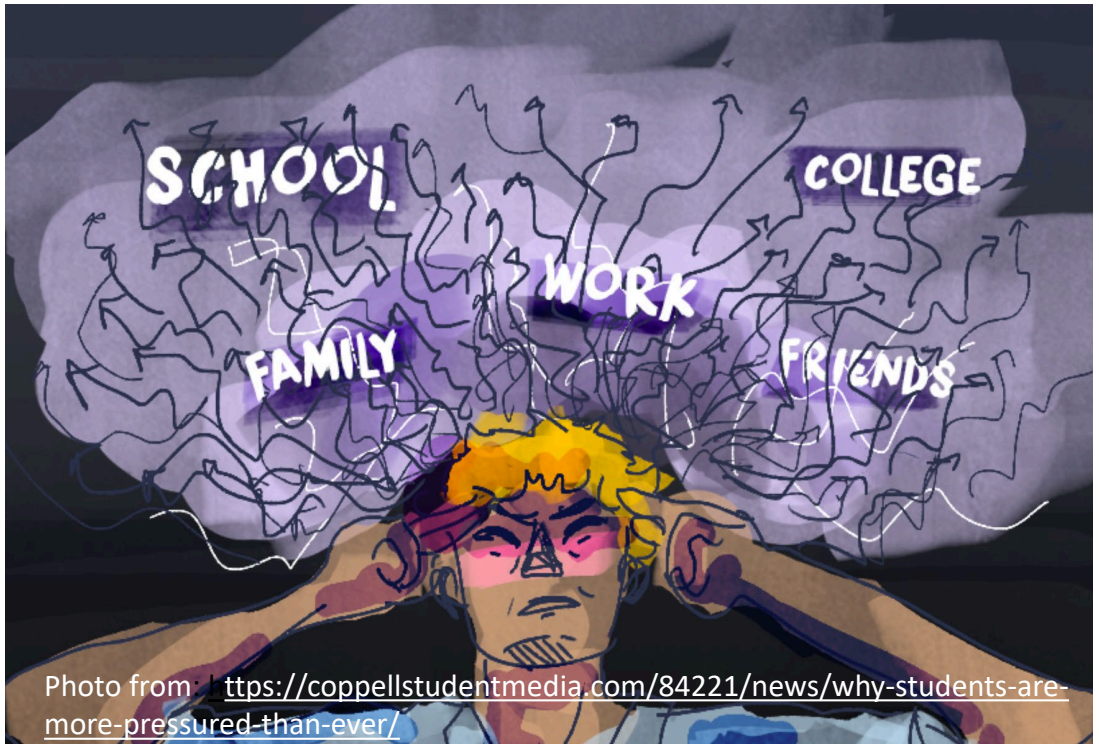


Photo from: https://coppellstudentmedia.com/84221/news/why-students-are-more-pressured-than-ever/

You may have seen any of these characteristics *worsen* recently.

- Disoriented with a feeling of loss of control
- Rigid/inflexible thinking
- Disengagement from school and goals
- Feeling like options for success are restricted
- Unable to focus/attend and follow directions
- Missing many details and increase in small errors

Let's poll online.

What do you see?

How to engage faculty and students with disabilities:

Brain science

Empathy

Practical suggestions

Help them to see and feel the student experience

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Tip 1: Build empathy.

- Build empathy by helping faculty to understand that as a result of the pandemic many students with disabilities are experiencing atypically high states of anxiety and this causes them to have an extraordinarily hard time with cognitive flexibility.
- Means rigid thinking.
- For many of these students this was an element of executive functioning that was already a vulnerable area.

Tip 2: Use terms that faculty can visualize.

Explain to faculty what cognitive flexibility looks like and it's impact (use definition and examples in earlier slides).

Explain to faculty that by giving all students a sense of control it will significantly reduce rigid thinking.

Tip 3: Suggest five simple techniques to:

Give faculty the support to give students a sense of control over their environment;

Help students to know what to expect next; give certainty where there is certainty and scaffold ambiguous processes.

…and, DSPs **can use these same techniques** in counseling and work with students, except encourage and prepare the student to self advocate along the same lines.

Be clear about behavioral expectations and what materials they need.

Explain what features of the online learning environment will be used.

Be clear about how the students will or will not be able to participate in the class. Give questions ahead of time so that students can prepare answers.

Technique 1 for faculty guidance.

Use as many feelings, pictures and sounds as possible to illustrate complex points. Feelings, pictures or sounds are worth gold because they are experiential. Students remember experience more than words.

Say, "If you are a good storyteller, tell a story of your research." Pair stories with key technical or concept words.

Technique 2 for faculty collaboration.

Build in executive functioning into the course by setting up the priorities for students' attention (rather than assume they will know). "Pay attention to this most.."

Explain how they will be assessed (rubrics or scoring criteria ahead of time).

Technique 3 for faculty collaboration.

Suggest giving students multiple ways to participate…groups or alone, chats, discussion boards, polls, electronic bulletin boards, Flipgrid videos, etc.

Technique 4 for faculty collaboration.

The online environment is a new neighborhood. It's like a physical move. Help faculty to understand they are the "facilitator" of community rather than the "encourager" of community.
They can scaffold students' ability to meet in groups or alone (e.g., build in break out rooms) more than usual. Validate their own and students' experiences, fears, questions. Suggest they update students on school-based news through words, videos and other methods.

Technique 5 for faculty collaboration.

Thank you.

Research Year in Review – AHEAD 2020

Online and Learning Differences: What Does Past Research tell us about Current Online Practices

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Presenter Information

Manju Banerjee, Ph.D. is Vice President of Educational Research and Innovation at Landmark College in Putney, VT.

She has over 35 years of experience in the field of LD and ADHD.

Her current area of research interest is online learning for students who learn differently.

Overview of Past Research – Pre COVID-19 Online

- **National Center for Education Statistics** (NCES, 2018)
  - **16.6%** of college students were exclusively online
  - **18.7%** taking at least one online course
  - **35.3%** taking any distance education course; **64.7%** no online courses

- **Face-to-face learning is valued more than online – why?**
  - Research comparing f2f and online is mixed; online + f2f (hybrid) is best *(Arias, Swinton, & Anderson, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2010)*
  - Completion rate of f2f is significantly higher than online *(Bawa, 2016)*

Past Research Highlights

1. Online learning places different demands on learning than f2f

Madaus, McKeown, Gelbar, & Banerjee (2012)

• Course navigation	• Following directions	• Instructor feedback

2. Exacerbates executive function difficulties

Miyake & Friedman (2012)

• Self-directed behavior towards goals	• Impulse control/self-regulation	• Independent problem-solving (computer literacy)

Overview of Past Research (cont.)

3. Synchronous sessions result in cognitive overload

Dahlstrom-Hakki, Alstad, & Banerjee (2020)

• **Synchronous places greater demands on attention**	• **Synchronous is preferred for increased social presence; but not performance**

4. Internet based reading is different from reading in a textbook

Wolf (2020); Hechinger Report (2020)

• **Search, skim and scan approach**	• **Loss of deep reading**

Poll question

Which offices and departments are DS personnel collaborating with the most following this pivot to online/remote learning?

What Have We Learned from the Rapid move to Online?

- Strong ethic of caring for students' well being
- Equitable access has meant greater flexibility
- Focus on student success = academics **and** affect
- **Best practices** for online support services are still emerging

"Digital pedagogy is an emerging field -- may always need to be -- and not something hastily discovered in the aftermath of a crisis."

Implications for Practice – Student Support Personnel

Practice	Examples
1. DS personnel awareness of online course design	*Asynchronous* - scaffolding for cognitive access; course map with interactive modules with microunits - Videos - 2-3 minutes only - Navigation – simple and intuitive - Directions – repeated with built-in redundancy - Reduced text per screen - Online readiness and digital literacy *Synchronous* – structured for variable processing speeds; 6-8 students
2. Flexibility in disability service protocols	*Disability documentation* *Student intake*

Implications for Practice – Student Support Personnel (cont.)

Practice	Examples
3. Rethink traditional accommodations	Note-taker; timed-tests vs. take-home; reader; accommodations for video conferencing
4. Increased need to address student anxiety	Predictable routine and non-threatening online support environments Non-directive coaching approach
5. Focus on personalized learning	Student agency; affordances of technology

Implication for Practice (cont.)

New generation of online teaching and learning is a **teams-based holistic approach** to student success instead of siloed services provided by different offices such as disability services, tutoring or academic coaching, reading/writing labs and so on.

Question and Answers

Dr. Banerjee can be contacted at
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For more professional development opportunities see:
https://www.landmark.edu/research-training/professional-learning

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Wrap up and Session Evaluation

- Access Session Evaluation at: tinyurl.com/AHEAD2020-SessionEval
- Your feedback helps shape future programming.
- Thank you for attending!