Advancing Equity for Deaf Students: Insights from Deaf Disability Services Professionals

National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes
Facilitators: Lore Kinast & Kate Lewandowskii
Spotlight: Gregg Deal, Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Multi-disciplinary artist, activist, and “disruptor.”

The Duality of Indigeneity Mural
421 S. East Avenue, Baltimore, MD

Indigenous in Plain Sight
National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes

Learn: share information

Connect: create networks

Transform: provide strategies

... to improve continuing education and training for deaf people.
Deaf people are not all the same.
Differing Perspectives on College Experiences

Deaf students continue to report sub par accessible and inclusive experiences in postsecondary settings.

Disability services professionals responded confidently about access services compared to campuswide inclusion efforts.

Palmer et al., 2022
I constantly have to explain and prove my capabilities as a deaf clinician in my internship setting.

My first week, I had no accommodations.

There is limited social access, faculty are incompetent working with deaf students, and the low expectations / stigma of being deaf.

At this point, I’ve decided to stop talking to disability services because their answer is always no.
Systemic Factors

Policy

Practice

Resources

Relationships

Attitudes & Biases
Deaf Postsecondary Access & Inclusion Scale

Overall Score: 2.6
Panelists

- **Belén Chávez;** Access Consultant, University of Arizona
- **Rian Gayle;** Disability Services Director, Western Oregon University
- **LaShaundria Lawson;** Student Services Coordinator, University of North Texas
- **Allen Sheffield;** Associate Director, University of Michigan
Disability resource office needs major education and training for Deaf students. Their empathy and understanding are severely lacking.
Centering Deaf Students

• From your perspective as a DS professional, why might deaf students feel that DS offices lack empathy or understanding in providing access services?

• Share about “Deaf Tax.” What is it and why is it important for DS professionals to know about this?
Institutions that use a student-centered approach with a deaf lens can tackle the challenges to advance educational equity and ensure deaf students have the chance to thrive in all aspects of the college experience.
Qualified professionals who have experience working with deaf students, particularly those who are also deaf themselves, are few and far between.

Garberoglio et al., 2022.
www.nationaldeafcenter.org/dspodreport
Deaf Affirming Climate

- Why are you uniquely qualified for this position? How does your lived experience as a deaf person contribute to your work in this field?

- As deaf disability services professionals, what barriers do you experience in your capacity?
Deaf students who used more than one accommodation reported higher ratings about their college experience.

Palmer et al., 2019. ACCESS is more than accommodations: 2018–2019 deaf college student national accessibility report.
Accommodating Learning Environment

Approximately 20% of Deaf students said they never had an accommodation before.

Palmer et al., 2023. https://nationaldeafcenter.org/DPAIS23

- What do you know now, that you wished that you knew as a student?
Student Feedback

- The expectation that all deaf students are exactly alike and because I don't have a strong "deaf accent" that I must be able to hear and therefore am not considered deaf enough.

- Disability services office is patronizing. They don't listen to students and think they know best.
Many institutions are narrowly focused on meeting their legal responsibilities for providing accommodations but miss many opportunities to maximize student experiences.

Garberoglio et al., 2022. www.nationaldeafcenter.org/dspodreport
60% of Deaf students said they were likely to participate in campus student activities.

Palmer et al., 2023. https://nationaldeafcenter.org/DPAIS23

- What do you see are the challenges with providing access to campus activities?
A Deaf Student’s Experience

Not having access to campus life and activities because the access office needs two weeks notice for any interpreter needs, which means I miss out on accessing campus functions. Even if I planned ahead I still don’t get interpreters because a lot of functions are only a weeks notice. It’s very isolating.
Access is more than an accommodation or an afterthought; it’s a multidimensional framework that is woven throughout an institution. Access manifests in the actions, attitudes, and behaviors of leadership, faculty members, staff members, and students on campus.

Garberoglio et al., 2022. 
www.nationaldeafcenter.org/dspodreport
Deaf Affirming Climate

Only 58% of Deaf students shared they were likely to see a deaf faculty member on campus and 62% felt they were likely to have a supportive deaf peer they could talk with.

Palmer et al., 2023. https://nationaldeafcenter.org/DPAIS23

- Where and how do you draw support for yourself as a deaf DS professional?
How connected are you with other deaf DS professionals?

Why are there not more deaf DS professionals? How do we recruit and retain deaf college professionals?
Strong foundations create environments where deaf people are included, valued, and provided with equitable opportunities.
Enroll in the **Accessibility Practices Certificate for Deaf Students** Program!

Participate in the **DSS Forum** with your colleagues!

Access the DSS Professionals Portal for **FREE Resources**!

Check out NDC’s **Online Learning opportunities**!
Thank You!

Visit our website! Nationaldeafcenter.org

Contact Us! Help@nationaldeafcenter.org

NDC is a technical assistance and dissemination center funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs #H326D210002.