



College of Education, University of Hawai'i at Manoa



*Pacific Alliance for Supporting Individuals with Disabilities (IWD) in STEM Fields Partnership
(Pacific Alliance)
Background Information*

Individuals with Disabilities and Overall Educational Outcomes

Individuals with Disabilities (IWDs) experience poor postsecondary educational outcomes compared to their peers without disabilities (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). Only 37% of IWDs who graduate from high school enter any type of postsecondary education compared to 78% of students without disabilities (Zafft and Nott, 2006). Additionally, IWDs enrolled in a 2-year program are unlikely to transfer from a 2-year program to a 4-year program. The completion rate of IWDs is also low; only 16% of IWDs compared to 27% without disabilities enrolled in 4-year institutes of higher education (IHE) completed their degree program (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1999).

Individuals with Disabilities and STEM Programs and Workforce Nationally

The number of undergraduates with and without disabilities who choose STEM majors is similar, but IWDs are less likely to complete their degree program. Eleven percent or 580,000 of STEM undergraduates nationwide were IWDs, but that number drops to 7%, or 30,000 IWDs in STEM graduate fields (Burrelli, 2007). This drops further in the workforce where IWDs comprise only 2.7% of the science and engineering workforce (Isaacson, Lloyd & Schleppebach, 2007).

Individuals with Disabilities and STEM Programs and Workforce in Hawai'i

Although 77% of students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) in high school earn a diploma (Hawai'i Department of Education, 2008), and are increasingly participating in postsecondary education, the rates of completion and progression toward a higher degree and employment after graduation remain low. In 2007, only 18.1% of working age IWDs had bachelor or higher degrees compared to 30.4% of individuals of working age without a disability. Employment rates for IWDs in Hawai'i, regardless of education is only 44% in comparison to 80% for those without disabilities (Research and Training Center on Disability Demographics and Statistics, 2008).

However, Hawai'i's workforce is seeing STEM employment growing at 4 times the rate of low-tech jobs (Hawai'i Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism, 2007).

References

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