

## Appendix

### CEHD Grant Application Form

Submit this application form by one of the following due dates along with your proposal. Applications must be received, at [tate-center@wmich.edu](mailto:tate-center@wmich.edu), by 5:00p.m. on August 15, November 15, March 15, and June 15.

<b>Application</b>					
Applicant Name:	Wanda Hadley, PhD				
Title:	Assistant Professor				
Department:	Educational Leadership, Research & Technology				
Title of Proposal:	Students with Learning Disabilities' Transition from College				
Amount Requested:	\$1300.00				
Dates of Project:	Spring Semester 2015				
<b>Evaluation Guidelines</b>					
Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Undecided 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1	
The proposed research/creative activity is well conceived and organized.			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
			5	4	3
The proposed work will increase the likelihood that the applicant will secure external funding in the future.			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
			5	4	3
The methods and/or procedures are clearly stated and appropriate for the proposed activity.			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
			5	4	3
The plans for data analysis or evaluation critique are clearly stated and appropriate for the proposed activity.			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
			5	4	3
The costs for the proposed budget are clearly itemized and justified.			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
			5	4	3
This project has the potential to advance the scholarly/creative reputation of WMU.			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
			5	4	3

# Students with Learning Disabilities Transition from College

## Purpose of the Project

Students with disabilities, specifically learning disabilities, are the fastest growing at-risk population enrolling in colleges and universities. There is, however, concern about their persistence and graduation rates. This study will replicate my original study (see Hadley & Miller, 2005; Hadley, 2009) that researched the graduation and employment readiness of seniors with learning disabilities as they prepared for their future after graduation. This study will follow a cohort of college students with learning disabilities as they seek to clarify their career goals, plan for their life after graduation, analyze their core beliefs and values, and come to understand how those beliefs and values shape their behavior and possibly their career choices through the context of student development theory. The purpose of this project is to continue my line of inquiry about the transition experiences of students with learning disabilities through the voices of the students. Building on Chickering's (1969) and Chickering and Reisser's (1993) work through the lens of student development theory in multiple higher education environments might ultimately provide a better understanding of the population of college students with learning disabilities' persistence in college. There is very little research about college students with learning disabilities in the context of their perspective. This research can add to the body of knowledge (Evans, et.al, 2010). As with my previous research, this study will be submitted to conferences for presentations and afterwards, submitted for publication in refereed journals in the field. More specifically, some of the data will be presented at a follow-up poster presentation at the Postsecondary Disability Training Institute (PDTI) 2015 annual conference. I would like to bring attention to myself and Western Michigan University by developing a reputation as a scholar researching college students with learning disabilities transitioning to higher education. The support of this project will allow me to continue research that will lead to more funding, presenting, and publishing opportunities in this field.

## Background of the Study

Students with learning disabilities (LDs) continue to enroll in colleges and universities at an increasing rate (Walpole & Charles, 2011). Lovett and Lewandowski (2006) defined a learning disability as the difference between the student's ability and his or her academic achievement or performance. Learning disabilities are disorders that affect the way in which students with average or *above* average take in, retain, and express information. The ability may show up as a problem in reading (dyslexia), speech (dyspraxia), writing (dysgraphia) and mathematics (dyscalculia). Even though the number of students with LDs attending college continues to increase, they are less likely than their peers without disabilities to persist and graduate (Holzer, Madaus, Bray & Kehle, 2009). This study is to continue from my initial studies (Hadley, 2009; Hadley & Miller, 2005 and Hadley, Twale & Evans, 2003) that updates Chickering's (1969) and Chickering and Reisser's (1993) student development research. The initial studies reviewed students' academic adjustments through Chickering (1969) and Chickering and Reisser's (1993) *vectors of developing competence, managing emotions, developing autonomy, establishing identity, freeing interpersonal relations, developing purpose and establishing integrity*. This study will examine a cohort of students with LDs' experiences through Chickering and Reisser's (1993) final two *vectors of developing purpose and establishing integrity* as they prepare to transition out of college by graduating. The original Hadley and Miller (2005) study assessed the same group of graduating seniors with LDs at a Private Catholic University in the Midwest. In that study students expressed concern that their LD would be a problem for them academically and therefore chose employment *over* graduate studies. This study

proposes to assess the same group of graduating seniors with LDs at this Public White Institution (PWI) as they prepare to graduate and transition from the university.

## Theoretical Framework

Chickering's (1969) and Chickering and Reisser's (1993) vectors of student development theory provide the theoretical framework for the study. Psychosocial theorist, Arthur Chickering has studied extensively students' transition to and adjustment in the college environment, but his work does not include students with LDs (Evans, et al., 2003). Chickering hypothesized that identity development during the college years involved the mastery of a series of developmental tasks, which he termed vectors. He proposed that the college environment can assist students in the identity formation process by creating specific conditions which can support resolution of developmental tasks. This study will focus on the final two Chickering and Reisser's vectors, *developing purpose* and *establishing integrity* to assess the students' readiness to graduate and transition from college. Additionally, the study will evaluate how the student's beliefs and values shape their career choices. *Developing purpose* is the student's increasing ability to assess personal interests and how those interests connect to their career goals. *Establishing integrity* has to do with the student's movement toward an increased congruence between behavior and values. This study will use qualitative methods so the students' experiences and feelings can be offered in response to the researcher's open-ended techniques of inquiry.

## Methods

Population and procedures. Qualitative methods are especially appropriate in an effort to understand the meaning the students have constructed to make sense of their world. According to Krathwohl (2009), among the features of qualitative research are small sample sizes, inductive analysis, descriptive findings, and data collected through interviews. Very little research exists that provides the point of view of students with learning disabilities by the student themselves (Dunn, 1995, Finn, 1998, Hadley, 2009, Hadley & Miller, 2005). Dyslexia or reading-related issues are reported to be the nature of the learning problems for the vast majority of college students with LDs (Hadley, Morrison & Hemphill, 2005; Morrison, Sansosti & Hadley, 2009). The researcher will interview and chose the first ten students who respond to a letter from the Director of the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) to volunteer to participate in the study. Students must meet the criteria of entering the university directly from high school and possess documentation defining their LDs as dyslexia or reading-related issues. Individual student artifacts, a focus group interview and semi-structured individual interviews will be the means for collecting the data for the study. *Student artifacts* will include class schedules, class syllabi, tutoring reports, and a portfolio of student activities such as clubs and/or organizations to which they belong, volunteer experiences, any work study and/or co-operative education working experiences. This information would be used to determine students' personal interests and how those interests are connected to their career goals. Students will participate in a focus group interview related to the vector of *developing purpose* where they will discuss their thoughts about their career future. The focus group will be two hours and audiotaped. Semi-structured individual interview sessions will be conducted to allow students to share feelings and views that might differ from the group. The students will respond to Chickering and Reisser's vector of *establishing integrity*. They will respond to questions regarding their beliefs and values related to their career plans and goals. The semi-structured individual interviews will be one hour and audiotaped. Gathering data from multiple sources and through multiple methods

ensures triangulation (Wiersma & Jurs,2009). In this proposed study,as in the previous study,during spring semester 2015, students will respond to a series of overarching and embedded research questions (Krathwohl,2009) related to their *developing purpose* and *establishing integrity*.

Data Analysis. The inductive analysis of going through the transcripts and giving meaning to words, phrases,and scenarios that continually emerged from the student responses (Patton, 2002) will be used to interpret the data. The researcher will use a coding scheme that selectively attaches meaningful tags to words,phrases, *events* and situations which were potentially important to the study's findings.The researcher will then speculate and theorize (Creswell, 2012) how the answers to the research questions do or do not fit with Chickering and Reisser's (1993) *vectors of developing purpose* and *establishing integrity*. To systematically cross check the codes from the interviews, inter-coder agreement (Creswell, 2009) and/or intra-rater reliability (Wiersma & Jur, 2009) will be conducted by having a second professional review the transcripts.

#### Timeline

Spring,2015: Before midterm exams,a letter inviting students to participate in the study will be sent out by the campus Director of Disability Services.The Director of Disability Services will serve as gatekeeper for the student information. The first 10 students meeting the study criteria will participate in the initial two hour focus group session that will address research questions about their *developing purpose*. After midterm exams,students will participate in a one hour semi-structured individual interview session about the *vector* of establishing integrity.

Summer,2015: Have recorded interviews transcribed. Analyze transcribed data. Begin write ups of data to share at the Postsecondary Disability Training Institute (PDTI) 2015 annual conference poster session.

Fall,2015:Conduct comparison analyses of data from previous university where study has been conducted. Prepare manuscript from data analyses and submit findings to refereed journal such as the Journal of College Student Development.

#### Budget

*(omitted)*

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