

# Introduction to the Symposium on Supporting Students with Disabilities in Postsecondary Education

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The passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, along with the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997, lead to an expanding social awareness of people with disabilities seeking access to postsecondary education and other life-long learning opportunities. While data indicate a consistent positive correlation between level of education and valued career or employment prospects, participation by adults with disabilities in postsecondary education remains low in comparison with non-disabled peers. Even with reasonable access to higher education, people with disabilities encounter significantly more barriers than other students resulting in slower progress and less satisfactory grades and graduation rates.

In 1998, increasing interest in these issues led to the funding of the National Center for the Study of Postsecondary Educational Supports (NCSPEs) based at the University of Hawaii at Manoa with collaborators in locations on the US Mainland. The strategic program of research currently underway within the national center has begun to shed new light upon the barriers faced by individuals with disabilities seeking to access and participate in postsecondary education programs. This special edition of *Disability Studies Quarterly* describes a sample of emerging work supported by and related to the efforts of the national center. An editorial team has reviewed each of the papers in this edition and several distinguished persons with disabilities provided critical comment and reaction.