



Access at the Crossroads: Learning Assistance in Higher Education: ASHE Higher Education Report, Volume 35 Number 6

David R. Arendale

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Winner of the 2011 Hunter R. Boylan Outstanding Research/Publication Award. This competitive award, presented by the National Association of Developmental Education, recognizes significant research and scholarly contributions through its impact upon the field of developmental education and recognition of significance by experts in the field.

Learning assistance often operates at the crossroads of the institution where academic affairs, student affairs, and enrollment management converge. This report investigates the effectiveness of learning assistance for supporting academic affairs with better-prepared students for academically rigorous courses, working with student affairs to achieve higher student development outcomes, and supporting enrollment management programs to increase persistence rates.

This report explores difficult questions confronting learning assistance:

1. What is the obligation of colleges for providing assistance for its students?
2. Is learning assistance a civil rights issue for historically underrepresented students attending postsecondary education?
3. What is the history of learning assistance for serving previous generations of students, even at the most prestigious public and private institutions in the United States?
4. Are learning assistance needs better met by high schools and two-year institutions?
5. Do learning assistance activities benefit the postsecondary institution and society?

Although it has a presence in most postsecondary institutions, the expression of learning assistance is quite diverse through credit and noncredit activities. The preferred term used in this report is "learning assistance," because it is commonly used and most inclusive of the various approaches and activities of the field.

This is the sixth issue in the 35th volume of the Jossey-Bass series *ASHE Higher Education Report*. Each monograph in the series is the definitive analysis of a tough higher education problem, based on thorough research of pertinent literature and institutional experiences. Topics are identified by a national survey. Noted practitioners and scholars are then commissioned to write the reports, with experts providing critical reviews of each manuscript before publication.

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