

**SHORT TERM EVALUATION OF
THE INSTITUTE ON
DISABILITIES UNIVERSITY
AFFILIATED PROGRAM
UNIVERSITY OF NEW
HAMPSHIRE**

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Prepared by

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BACKGROUND

The following report presents the results of a short-term evaluation of the Institute on Disabilities, the University Affiliated Program at the University of New Hampshire. The on-site and telephone interview assessment provided an opportunity to focus on some of the major accomplishments of the Institute as well as to identify some issues for the consideration of Institute staff regarding future planning, program modification, and relationships with the multiple constituencies served by the program.

The report of findings is divided as follows: 1) a discussion of methods and assumptions employed by the evaluator; 2) an overview of themes from the interviews 3) a conceptual framework for understanding the organizational profile of the Institute; 4) a discussion of findings regarding particular program components; 5) recommendations for consideration of UAP staff.

METHOD

Objectives and Approach

The evaluation was based on the following objectives;

- To conduct a brief assessment of the major aspects of the UAP/Institute
- To provide information potentially useful to prepare for UAP review
- To suggest major themes for year 2 planning purposes
- To provide suggestions on possible administrative and management improvements
- To stimulate discussion among staff and to provide an opportunity for reflection

In order to carry out the objectives, the evaluator relied on a qualitative approach including the conduct of in-person and phone interviews based on an

inquiry guide (see Appendix). The design of the guide relied on a review of national materials regarding the evaluation of University Affiliated Programs (Davidson & Fifield, 1988; Fifield, Davidson, Garner, & Stark, 1989) and was informed by a knowledge of the context within which the UAP functions -- both nationally and in the state.

Approximately 25 interviews were conducted with staff persons at the Institute, faculty and administrators at the University of New Hampshire, state officials, advocates, and other developmental disabilities agencies. The on-site interviews were conducted over a two day period in Durham and Concord and were supplemented by phone interviews carried out over the next three weeks.

A presentation of the preliminary findings was made to the full staff of the Institute in Durham during the last week in August.

Limitations and Assumptions

As noted, this evaluation should be considered short-term and therefore more of a formative than summative assessment. The interview cohort is by no means exhaustive but rather provides a sample of the program's major constituencies and collaborators. Also, given the fact that many of the Institute's programs are very much "in progress," the evaluation does not address any concrete outcomes, except by anecdote, of the Institute's various activities.

Also, it is very difficult to extract those activities that are specifically linked with the UAP from those of the Institute as a whole. Therefore, the

following report touches on issues which go beyond the UAP and in many instances pre-date its existence.

OVERVIEW OF THEMES

Strengths of the Institute

A review of the material gained from the key informant interviews reveals a very strong picture of the Institute as an organization committed to the inclusion of children and adults with developmental disabilities in New Hampshire. This commitment is viewed by interviewees as taking many forms including empowering consumers and professionals with knowledge about programmatic and advocacy strategies, mounting systems change activities aimed at state level policy making, challenging people in the system to support higher levels of integration and community support, and securing multiple grants aimed at the documentation and assessment of best practices in individualized supports and integration into school and work.

The Institute is generally regarded as extremely enterprising with an extraordinary ability to attract grant funding to support its mission. This success is attributed to a highly competent and dedicated staff with an exceptional ability to conceptualize issues and to propose activities that capture the imagination of funders and that are on the "cutting edge" of policy and practice.

The Institute is further viewed by many of those interviewed as filling an important role in the state that people in state government in particular cannot play given political and organizational constraints. Some of those interviewed characterized the Institute as a "lightning rod" capable of advancing ideas and

taking stands that would be difficult for others in the system to espouse. According to some state officials interviewed, the perspective provided by the Institute gives them the ability to advocate for such strategies within the bureaucracy.

In sum, the Institute is seen as a positive force for change that now fills an important role in the overall constellation of resources for people with developmental disabilities in the state.

Areas for Further Examination

In addition to eliciting information regarding the strengths of the Institute, the evaluator also asked interviewees to comment on areas that they felt could be improved. One of the areas that emerged had to do with what some perceived to be the Institute's exponential growth. These interviewees were concerned that the Institute had not set boundaries regarding the number of projects that they could comfortably pursue and that the resources of the organization would be spread too thin.

The problem of rapid growth was also associated, for some interviewees, with problems of follow through and a lack of conscious attention to process and details. By trying to fight on all fronts simultaneously, some felt that the organization had not made sufficient time to establish a predictable administrative infrastructure. These individuals suggested that it was time to step back and reflect on the optimum size and organizational support required to make the Institute a more efficient and responsive agency.

Finally, some individuals interviewed felt that though the Institute had established itself as an energetic and progressive organization with an unswerving commitment to people with developmental disabilities, there were some in the state who felt left out of the collaboration or excluded because their views did not conform with the strict code of values held up by the Institute.

By and large, these areas of concern raised by interviewees are a reflection of an organization going through rapid change and expansion that has had little time to stand back and assess the effects of such growth and the steps that need to be taken to ensure that the organization can remain vital and effective in the future. The commitment to carry out this evaluation is evidence of an organizational commitment to take such steps.

OVERVIEW OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Traits of the Institute

The feedback derived from the interviews generates an interesting and provocative organizational profile that is validated both by internal as well as external perceptions:

- **Entrepreneurial** -- Institute staff are clearly interested in building and creating a dynamic organization that continues to build on programmatic and advocacy advances and are concerned about attracting new resources to expand and enhance their mission.
- **Extroverted** -- Institute staff are very outgoing and interested in influencing the system of services and supports within the state. They are externally oriented and are constantly engaging the system and individuals within it in an attempt to alter hearts and minds and to improve services and life chances for people with developmental disabilities.
- **Ideological** -- The Institute's endeavors are strongly value-based and motivated by an abiding ideology that permeates all aspects of the program.

- **Deductive not Inductive** -- Because of its strong ideological orientation, the Institute is an organization that interprets its environment and specific phenomenon based on principles growing out of its ideological and value base.
- **Outcome-oriented** -- Because of their strong commitment to system change to bring about the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities, the Institute staff are oriented to the outcomes of their enterprises and measure their success by how much a particular activity contributes to this end.
- **Visionary** -- The Institute is a highly conceptual organization able to communicate a vision and to lead others to support and implement that vision.

Alternative Profile

In order to address some of the general areas for improvement raised in the interviews, it is suggested that Institute staff spend some time thinking about those traits that are currently not part of the Institute profile and that form the picture of an organization at the opposite end of the spectrum. This exercise is not to suggest that the Institute should totally change its character but rather that staff think about ways of incorporating aspects of the alternative traits the overall organizational makeup.

- **Managerial** -- The Institute should concentrate on developing an administrative infrastructure to support its continuing entrepreneurial activities.
- **Introspective . . . reflective** -- Institute staff should take time periodically to step back and examine their accomplishments, to explore the internal health of the organization, and to think about their hopes for the future of the organization.
- **Pragmatic** -- Institute staff should spend some time exploring ways of tailoring some of their system change strategies to conform with some of the practical and political constraints of their environment.
- **Inductive not Deductive** -- Though Institute staff have been highly successful at translating important concepts and principles in the field, there is also a need direct some energies toward data based activities in order to flesh out the mission of the UAP/Institute.
- **Process oriented** -- In addition to a concern with the outcomes or impact of Institute activities, there is also a need for Institute staff to

spend more time concentrating on the process of carrying out projects in order to ensure that details are managed and commitments kept.

- **Consensus Builder** -- The Institute, but its nature, will always play a leadership role. However, staff should think about ways of periodically using its skills to build consensus and to assist others to build a vision rather than superimposing one in all instances.

ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT

There are several specific findings with respect to the management of the organization:

- **Growth** -- The Institute has grown dramatically over the past few years and the pace does not show any signs of letting up. To protect the coherence and integrity of the Institute, it will be important in the next phase of long-range planning to think about setting boundaries to this growth -- boundaries that are based on the mission of the organization and its goals for the future.
- **Communication** -- One thing that happens when organizations grow quickly is that the patterns of informal communication developed when the organization was small become strained and are inadequate to meet the needs of a more complex organization. The Institute's communication challenges are made even more difficult by the fact that staff is split between two cities and among three physical offices. The Institute should consider more frequent meetings with all staff and the development of a variety of communication vehicles to ensure that staff continue to feel connected to the overall enterprise.
- **Infrastructure** -- In order to continue to do the kind of challenging and important work going on at the Institute, it is important to develop an internal administrative infrastructure capable of monitoring budgets, developing personnel policies, standardizing reporting requirements, monitoring project progress and significant milestones, relating to the University and to external constituencies, and carrying out ongoing planning.
- **Follow-through** -- Institute staff need to develop systems whereby they can monitor progress on projects, reporting requirements, and commitments made of Institute resources. There also needs to be some systematic process for keeping key constituencies informed about Institute activities.
- **Planning** -- For the Institute to move to the next level of its development, it will be necessary to spend time planning for the future and thinking through organizational activities and configuration in light of the Institute's mission and purposes.
- **Governing Body** -- The Institute currently has numerous advisory and working boards and committees that have been developed to

support the program's activities. However, there is no one board that functions as a board of directors that can provide overall guidance and advice. It is suggested that Institute staff examine the possibility of creating such a group and that it be representative of the University as well as external constituencies.

- **Definition and Scope** -- As part of a strategic planning process, Institute staff should spend time clarifying the definition of the organizational role and the scope of its programs.

SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

With respect to the programs and services offered by the Institute, the following findings emerged:

Target Groups/Organizational Emphasis

In order to determine how the Institute is viewed by its major constituencies, the evaluator asked respondents to characterize their impressions of the Institute's contributions in the state. The following comments are representative of the responses:

- "[Institute staff] are working out there in the trenches"
- "The Institute supports models and demonstrations"
- "They are known as trainers"
- "They are advocates"
- "They are education-oriented"
- "They are not ivory tower researchers"

When asked to describe the major contributions that Institute services and programs have made, the following areas were highlighted:

- Consultation with families and professional on techniques for moderating challenging behavior
- Responsiveness to state agencies (e.g., development of manual on individualized supports, preparation of policy brief on area agency

system, development of training programs for special education personnel)

- Empowerment of New Hampshire families with members with developmental disabilities (e.g., family leadership training, support in the development of family support legislation, etc.)
- Significant systems change
- Increasing interest in inclusion and integration

Issues for Future Consideration

As Institute staff think about fleshing out the organization's mandate and mission, there are some activities and areas for enrichment that could be taken into account:

- Involvement of people with disabilities -- One area that is currently not addressed by the Institute is the development of ways to involve people with disabilities in a meaningful fashion
- Attention to other groups of persons with developmental disabilities -- The ostensible target group for current Institute activities appears to be people with severe and profound intellectual and/or behavioral challenges. During any future planning process, Institute staff should consider when and in what ways they can begin to address the needs of others disability groups.
- Attention to other age groups -- Institute is currently known for its work in education and particularly with respect to children. The recent addition of new staff at the Institute will make it possible to begin to think of programmatic, research and training interventions on behalf of adults.
- Documentation of process of system change -- As noted above, Institute staff are "working out there" bringing about changes in systems and attitudes. It is hoped that staff will not become so busy "doing it" that they won't take the time to document those strategies that are most effective in bringing about change and to disseminate this information both within the state and nationally.

TRAINING

Current Projects

One of the major functions of any University Affiliated Program, such as the Institute for Disabilities, is to carry out a significant program of training.

The Institute has clearly seen this mandate as central to its mission. Based on reports of those interviewed, the major successes to date include inservice training to a range of teachers and educational administrators around the state (through INSTEPP and the Systems Change Project), leadership training to families with members with developmental disabilities, participation in the curriculum of the University's Education Department, and training aimed at the provision of support to special education students making the transition from school to work (i.e., through the development of circles of support).

The Institute has also mounted several initiatives to create interdisciplinary training. Specifically, the Institute has collaborated with faculty at the Franklin Pierce Law School to present a class on the legal, bioethical, treatment and programmatic aspects of disability. The class was aimed at law students as well as medical students and special education students. An additional attempt was made to create a joint course for medical and special education students at Dartmouth exploring the medical aspects of disability. The course, however, attracted only a small number of medical students and transportation posed a problem for special education students. Finally, the Institute has attempted to reach out to other disciplines within the University to explore possible joint training opportunities. To accomplish a cross-disciplinary agenda, the Institute sponsored seminars on qualitative methods and other relevant topics. These seminars met with moderate success, but more needs to be done to forge collaborative arrangements directed at training.

Future Considerations

Some suggestions for future development in the area of training are as follows:

- In the next several months, begin to think about ways to make more systematic and self-conscious connections between research, demonstrations and development of training curricula
- Identify ongoing opportunities for interdisciplinary training both within the University and elsewhere.

DISSEMINATION AND PUBLICATIONS

For an organization such as the Institute that is committed to systems change and facilitating changes in attitudes and practice, the development of a comprehensive dissemination strategy is very important. Though currently energies are being spent on initiating projects and securing funding, in the near future, it will be important shift gears and to think about the ways in which the Institute's multiple projects can yield information that can be shared with others -- both within the state and nationally. Such a strategy should include the following elements:

- It should identify the target audiences for dissemination and the most appropriate vehicles for reaching these audiences
- It should describe the ways in which staff time will be allocated to ensure that dissemination materials are written and produced
- It should spell out the importance of creating teams for publications that cross projects
- It should explicitly link publications and dissemination to the interdisciplinary training agenda.

RESEARCH

Current Status

To date, the focus of Institute activities has been on organization building, developing training and systems change activities and creating demonstrations of best practices. Research has been only a small part of the Institute's program and is probably the most undeveloped area. Most of those interviewed described the Institute's activities in this area as "action research" or explorations aimed at influencing policy and practice.

Given the mission and orientation of the Institute, research should be viewed as a supportive activity and one that is one of the many tools at the disposal of the organization. Any long-term planning activity should address the role of research within the Institute's long-term future.

One way that research can be integrated into the larger program of the Institute is to devote research resources to the documentation of best practices, both with respect to program and support interventions as well as to successful system change approaches.

Since it may not make sense to develop strong quantitative research capabilities on the staff of the Institute, the possibility of collaboration with other disciplines at the University is attractive. Departments such as Sociology as well as specialized Centers within UNH may be appropriate.

Considerations for the Future

- Review potential forums and vehicles for research activities
- Explore quantitative research collaboration with other disciplines in the University

- Explore the appropriate role for research within the overall Institute program

INTERAGENCY RELATIONSHIP

In order function effectively within the developmental disabilities community in the state, the Institute needs to continue to maintain a dynamic collaboration with its sister agencies and other key actors around the state. There are some specific suggestions regarding such coordination that grew out of the interviews.

Developmental Disabilities Council

- Explore collaboration on developing strategies to enhance consumer involvement at various levels of the system as well as within the Council and Institute.
- Develop a relationship with the Council wherein they provide support for publications development as well as dissemination
- Strengthen compliance with Council grant "process" requirements.

Protection and Advocacy Organization

- Develop ways to capitalize on the experience of P & A advocates within the state as to gain access to the wealth of written material available through their office
- Conduct joint planning and priority setting sessions
- Coordinate around the development of particular advocacy strategies and interventions.

University of New Hampshire

- Clarify Institute's role and position within the University structure
- Include key individuals from the University family on the proposed governing body
- Identify ways of attracting hard money for overhead
- Develop ongoing and targeted collaborations with other University departments and centers.

Other State Agencies

To improve communications with relevant state agencies, Institute staff should play a more prominent role in state directors group.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations reflect specific suggestions growing out of the interviews and the previous analyses:

- Convene key individuals to develop long-range strategic plan
- Convene full staff every quarter
- Designate a full-time associate director for administration and management
- Work toward consolidating two offices in one building on campus
- Think about ways to enhance communication between Durham and Concord offices
- Don't get too far ahead of the troops
- Think about drawing lines and recognizing limits
- Build in time for reflection
- Develop a foundation within the University
- Concentrate on development of internal procedures and policies
- Set some outer limit on growth
- Find ways to include key constituencies and collaborators in priority-setting
- Clarify role of Dartmouth and improve integration of this key collaborator in the Institute/UAP
- Consider the creation of an overall governing board
- Develop a strategy to link demonstrations/training/research/dissemination

REFERENCES

- Davidson, P.W. & Fifield, M.G. (1988). *Guidelines for the development maintenance of quality university affiliated programs*. American Association of University Affiliated Programs for Persons with Developmental Disabilities, Silver Spring, MD.
- Fifield, M.G., Davidson, P.W., Garner, H., & Stark, J. (1989). *Handbook for conducting university affiliated program site reviews and self-assessments*. American Association of University Affiliated Programs for Persons with Developmental Disabilities, Silver Spring, MD.

INQUIRY GUIDE

SITE VISIT REVIEW

**University Affiliated Program
University of New Hampshire**

Management

1. Nature of linkages with other parts of the University (administration, other departments, representation on university committees, etc.)
2. Ways in which the university uses the UAP to promote its mission and the ways in which the UAP affect the university environment.
3. How is the UAP viewed? As a training laboratory, a community service program, or as a research center?
4. How do faculty members perceive the importance of the UAP
5. How does the UAP accommodate its multiple constituencies? How does it determine its priorities? How often are priorities reviewed?
6. What measures are employed to assess performance in the various programs?
7. What is the nature of the planning process? Are plans adhered to?
8. What formal procedures are in place to maintain contact with multiple constituencies (DD Council, other training entities, P & A, etc.)
9. What do you think the UAP is known for? What should it be known for?
10. What procedures are in place for problem solving and conflict resolution?
11. How does the UAP solicit staff input and participation in decision-making?

12. Are roles within the UAP clearly defined and are the channels of communication clearly articulated?

Exemplary Services

13. What are the exemplary services or intervention practices?

14. In what ways do these activities fill existing gaps?

15. What is the relationship of these activities to training, research, technical assistance and dissemination?

16. How does the UAP define exemplary?

17. Describe the balance between on campus and off-campus services

18. Describe the nature of the persons served in these programs

19. What client outcome measures do you employ and what is the relationship of these criteria to independence, integration and productivity?

20. To what extent are these services interdisciplinary?

21. What role do trainees play in the services?

Interdisciplinary Training

22. What are the disciplines of the trainees and what is the level of their skills when they come in?

23. Describe the nature of the training and the knowledge and/or skills received.

24. Please discuss the level of support available to trainees and the types of practical experiences that they are exposed to.

25. What are the goals and objectives of the training?

26. How is the program viewed by faculty in other departments?

27. How are student progress and outcomes monitored?

28. What type of follow-up is conducted?

29. Is there a core interdisciplinary curriculum?

Technical Assistance

30. How do you determine what types of TA you will carry out and what types of activities are you currently conducting?

31. Are there formal agreements and expectations?

32. In what ways do you use written materials to support technical assistance?

33. How do you assess the outcomes of TA

34. Do you have a specifically assigned responsibility within the organization?

Dissemination of Information

35. Is there a dissemination plan and who has responsibility for implementing it?

36. How do you measure the success of dissemination activities?

37. How does dissemination take advantage of other UAP activities?

Research Activities

38. Please characterize research activities?

39. What are the sources of support for research?

40. How are research priorities determined?

41. Do what extent are research activities taking advantage of other UAP activities such as clinical, training, or exemplary service programs?