



# HELPING POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES SUCCEED

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## Road Map

1. What is a Learning Disability?
2. Diagnostic Criteria for SLD
3. Legal Considerations
4. Accommodations
5. Faculty Perspectives and Considerations
6. Universal Design Implications



# What is a Learning Disability?

- Neurological differences in brain structure and function that affect the brain's ability to store, process, or communicate information
- Etiology is unclear; genetics plays a part
- Imperfect ability:
  - Listening
  - Writing (spelling)
  - Speaking
  - Reading
- Occurs despite average to above average intelligence





# What is a Learning Disability? (cont.)

- Occurs across the life span
- Not due to any sensory impairment, mental retardation, psychiatric disabilities, cultural and instructional deprivation, or cultural differences (exclusion clause)

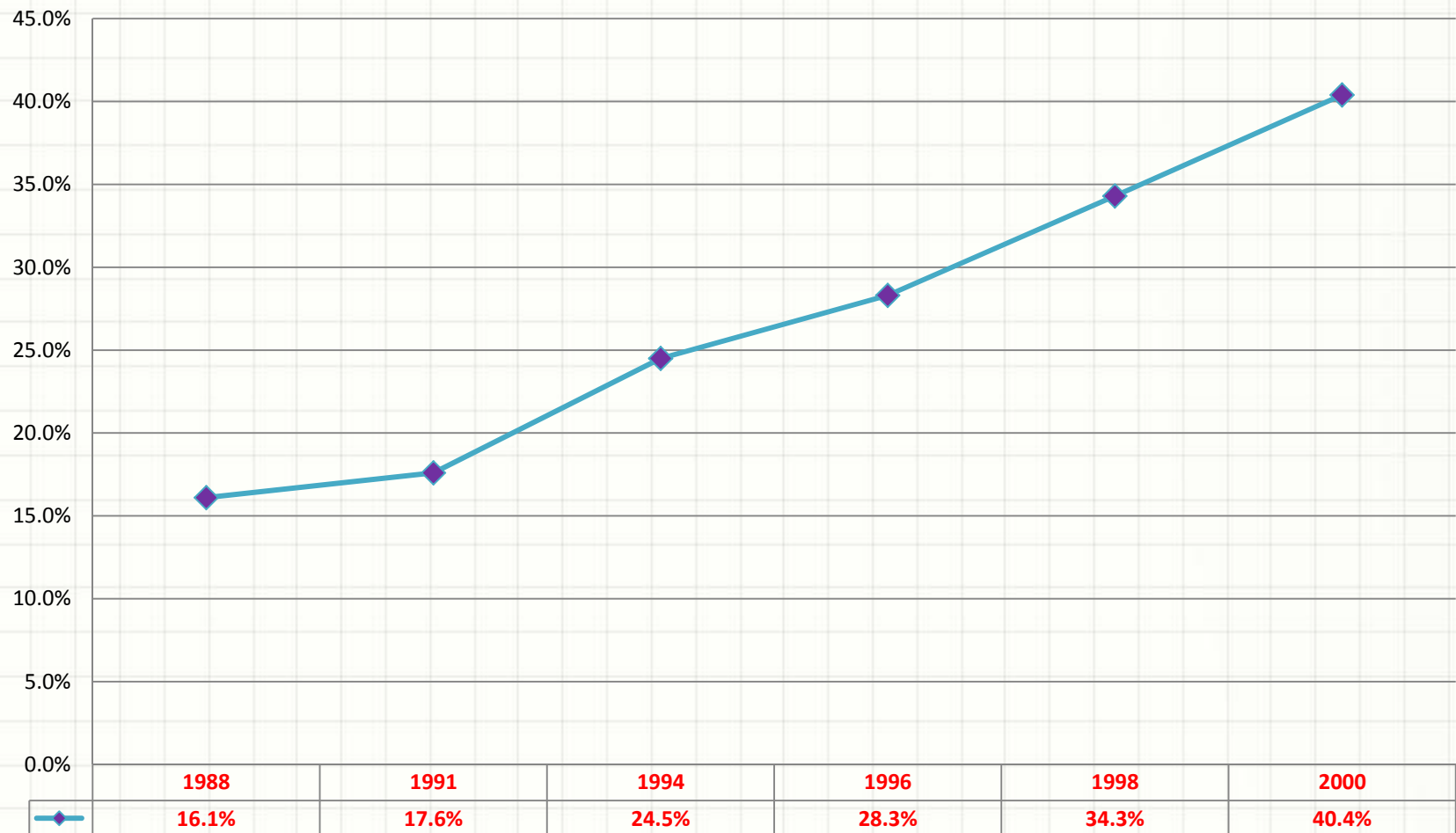


# Demographic Trends

- “Between 1988 and 2000, ‘learning disability’ was the fastest growing category of reported disability among students. By 2000, two in five freshmen with disabilities (40%) cited a learning disability”\*\*
- Henderson’s **2001** Biennial Statistical Profile of College Freshmen with Disabilities doesn’t break out ASD or ADHD as identified disabilities – but by **2011**, ASD has risen to a 2% percentage distribution of all disabilities among first-year students, with ADHD at 18% (vs 31% SLD)
- \*\* <http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/detail?accno=ED458728>



# Enrolled Postsecondary Students with LD as a Relative Percentage of All Disabilities



# Diagnostic Criteria for LD

## DSM-5 (May, 2013)

DSM-IV	DSM-5
Reading Disorder (dyslexia) Writing Disorder (written expression disorder) Math Disorder (dyscalculia)	Specific Learning Disorder
Negatively impacts academic achievement, work, or daily living	Negatively impacts academic achievement, work, or daily living
Rule out sensory impairment	Rule out <b>IDD, GDD</b> , sensory impairment
Generalized statement about poor achievement measured on tests	Specific characteristics of reading, writing, math

IDD: Intellectual Development Disorder

GDD: Global Development Disorder



# Diagnostic Criteria for SLD

- A. *Key characteristics: **persistent*** learning difficulties, despite targeted intervention, manifest by one or more of the specified symptoms
- B. *Measurement:* academic skills substantially below expected by age + impairment arising from low academic achievement
- C. *Age of onset:* early school years
- D. *Exclusion/inclusion:*
  - IDD/GDD
  - Uncorrected visual/auditory acuity
  - Other mental/neurological disorders
  - Psychosocial adversity
  - Lack of educational opportunity





# Diagnostic Criteria for LD

- Psychoeducational or neuropsychological evaluation report – Disability Documentation
- Guidelines for Documentation
  - **ETS Policy Statement for Documentation of a Learning Disability In Adolescents and Adults** [http://www.ets.org/disabilities/documentation/documenting\\_learning\\_disabilities](http://www.ets.org/disabilities/documentation/documenting_learning_disabilities)
  - **AHEAD guidance on documentation practices – conceptual framework**



# Legal Considerations in Determining Accommodations

- Guided by the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADA AA, 2008)
- Accommodation decisions are based on 4 basic determinations:
  - (1) Is there a disability under the ADA?
  - (2) What are the current functional limitations?
  - (3) Are the limitations significant enough to warrant accommodations?
  - (4) What are reasonable accommodations?



# Legal Considerations in Determining Accommodations

- Under the ADA, an individual with a disability is a person who:
  - (a) Has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities
  - (b) Has a record of such an impairment; or
  - (c) Is regarded as having such an impairment

<http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/fs-ada.html>



# Legal Considerations in Determining Accommodations

- An impairment that is episodic or in remission is a disability if it would substantially limit a major life activity, when active
- Need for accommodation must be considered based on comparison to “most people in the general population”
- Accommodation must “best ensure” ability to demonstrate knowledge (Enyart case)





# Legal Considerations in Determining Accommodations

- Mitigating measures other than “ordinary eyeglasses or contact lenses” should not be considered in assessing whether an individual has a disability
- Short-term conditions that are expected to last 6 months or less do not qualify as a disability

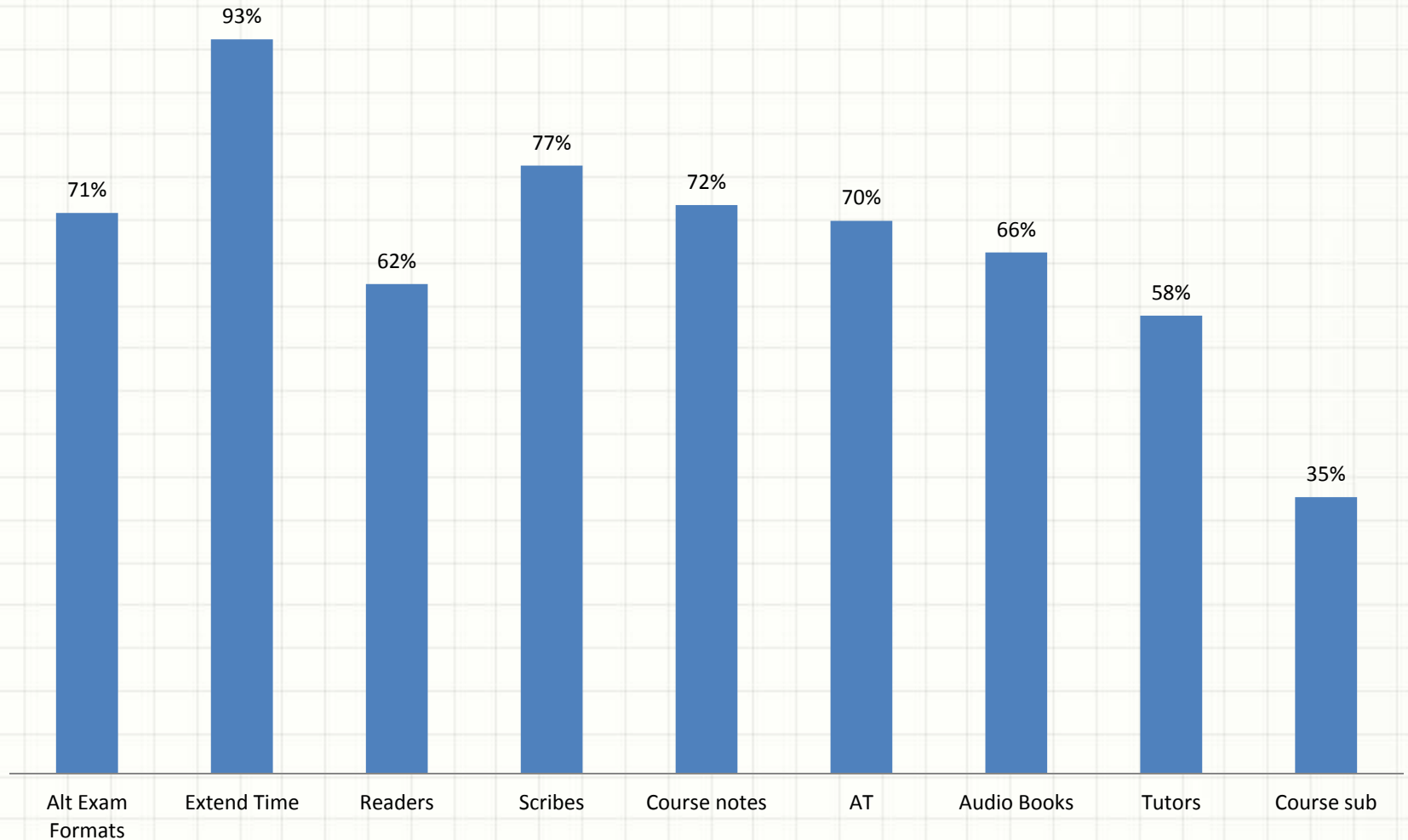


# Typical “Academic” Accommodations

- Extended time
- Note-taker/scribe
- E-Text or audio books
- Distraction-reduced exam room
- Priority registration
- Additional breaks during an exam
- Reduced course load
- Adjustment to attendance policy
- Foreign language substitution



# NCES Data (2008 - 2009): Percent of Universities Providing Selected Accommodations or Services by Type



# Typically Not Considered to Be Postsecondary Accommodations

- Rephrasing or re-clarifying test questions
- Modifying course requirements for individual needs
- Changing “essential elements” of a program of study
- “Unlimited time” for test taking
- Study skills training





# Accommodations and Perceived Stigma

- Student orientation
- Faculty and staff training
- Disability services/accommodation statement on syllabus
- Website information
- Open House sessions

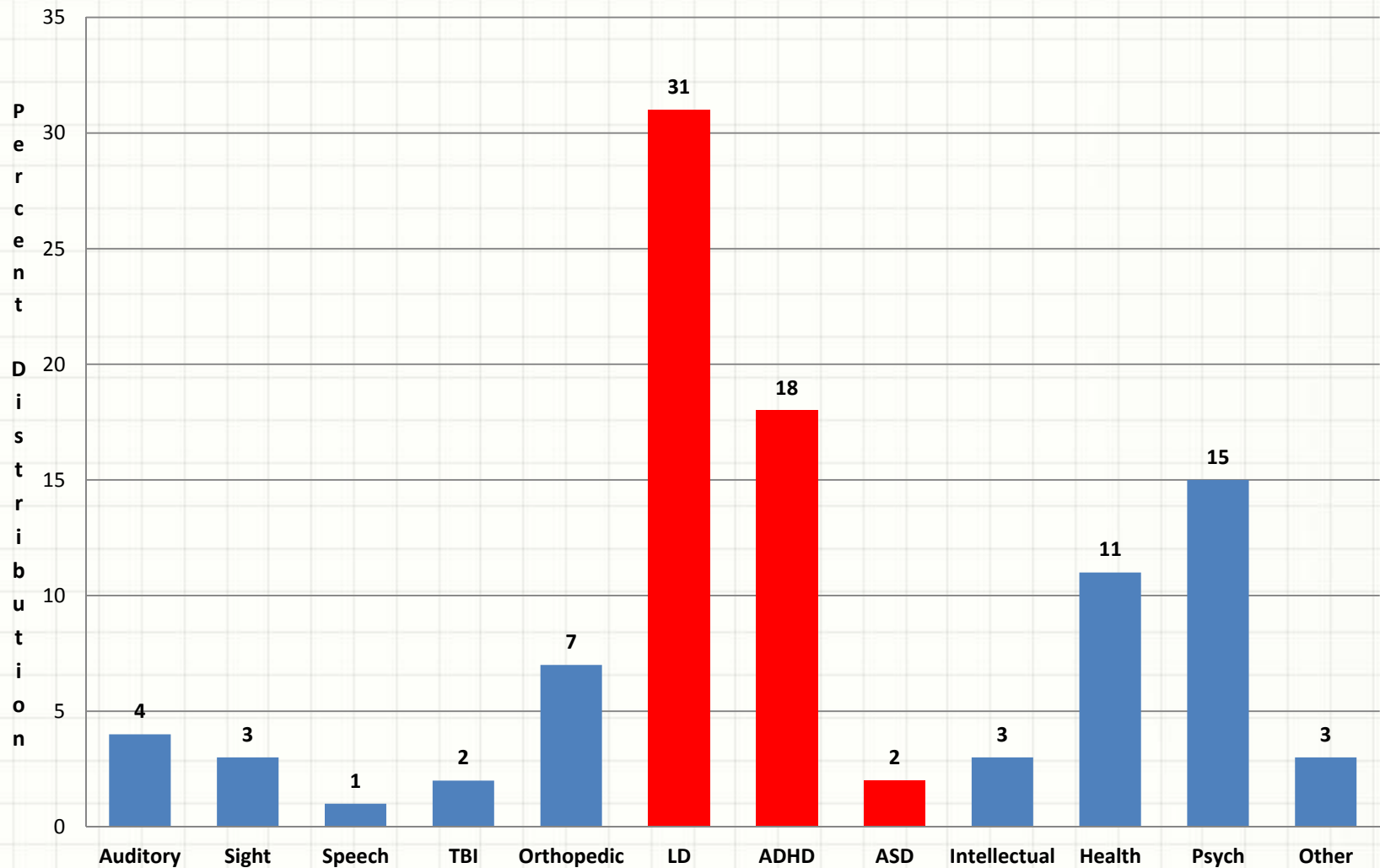


# Faculty Considerations

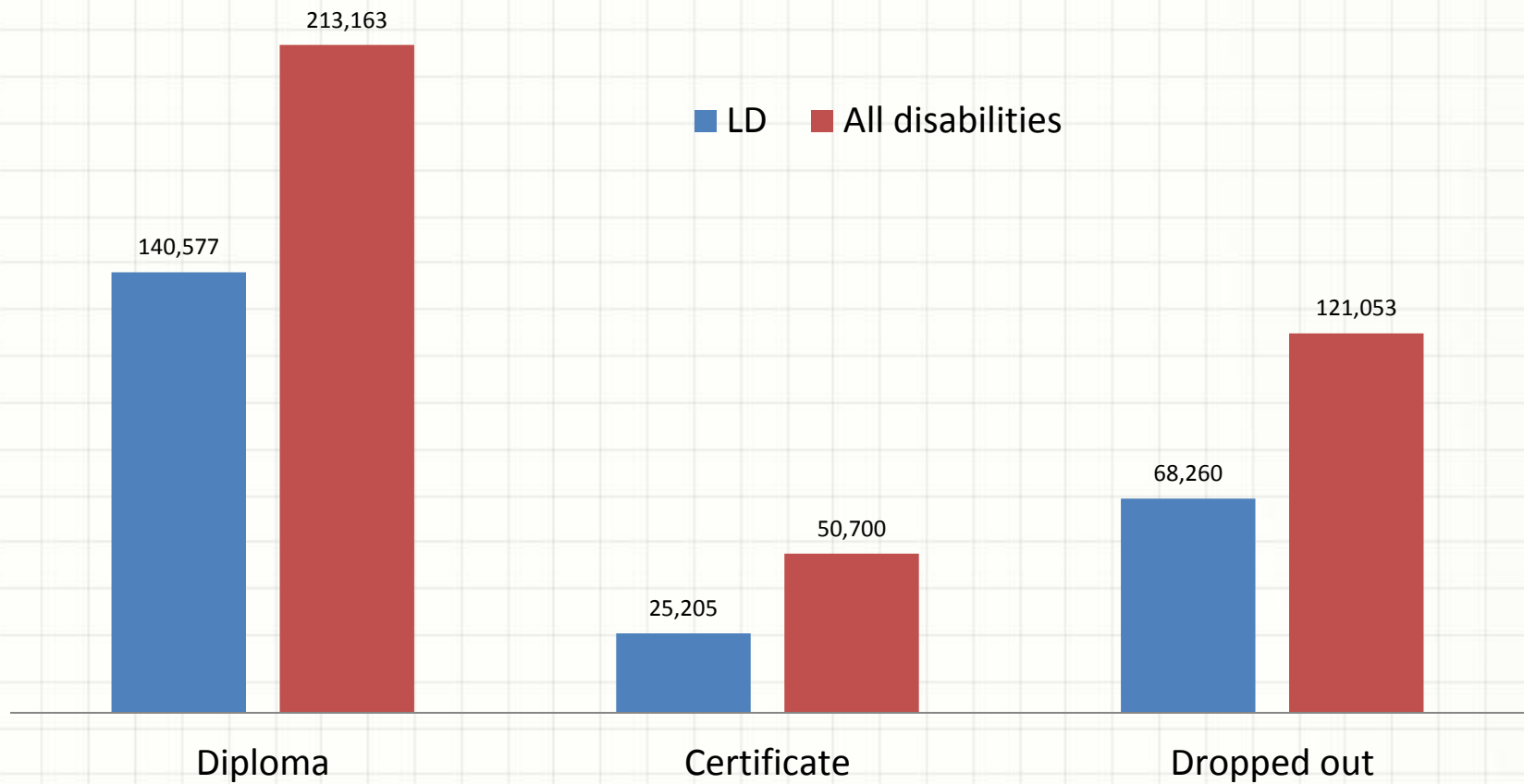
- In 1992, Houck *et al.* found that university faculty were willing “to make certain course related accommodations for students with learning disabilities and believed that such accommodations are fair to other students”
- In 2012, Cole found that university students with LD “do not disclose at expected levels [...] even in favorable circumstances,” and “experiences with faculty seem to influence why some students disclose more deeply while other students disclose at a surface level”



# 2011 NCES Data – How Large is the Current Challenge?

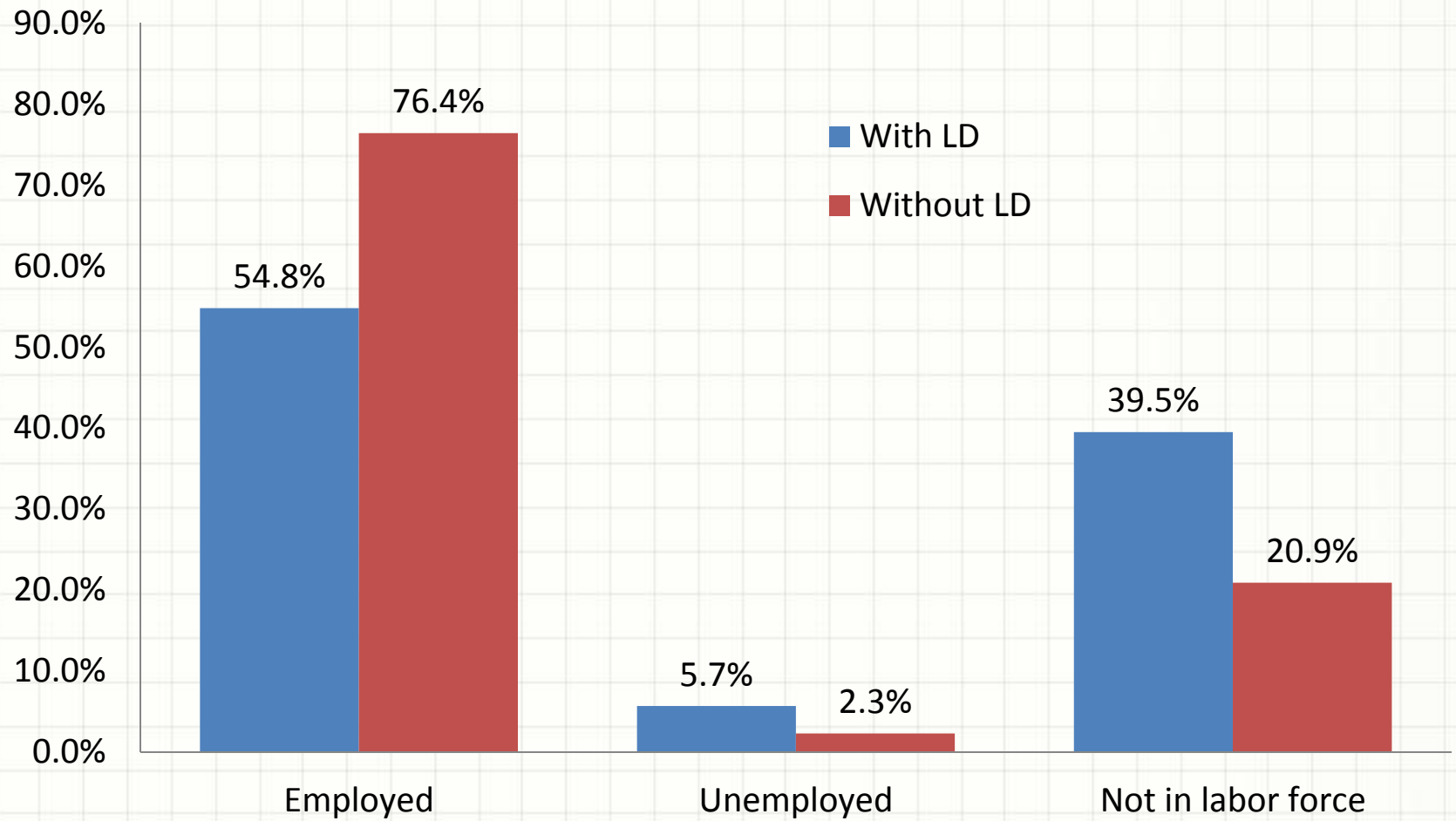


# What are the Stakes? High School Outcomes for Students with LD vs. All Disabilities (2003 – 2004)





# What are the Stakes? Employment Status of Working Age Adults (2003 – 2004)



# Resources for Further Investigation

- Raue, K., and Lewis, L. (2011). *Students with Disabilities at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions*.  
<http://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv47518>
- Cortiella, C. (2011). *The State of Learning Disabilities*. New York, NY: National Center for Learning Disabilities.  
[http://illinoiscte.org/PDF/research\\_and\\_reports/state\\_of\\_learning\\_disabilities.pdf](http://illinoiscte.org/PDF/research_and_reports/state_of_learning_disabilities.pdf)
- Gerber, P.J. (2012). The Impact of Learning Disabilities on Adulthood: A Review of the Evidenced-Based Literature for Research and Practice in Adult Education. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 45(1), 31-46  
<http://ldx.sagepub.com/content/45/1/31>  
(subscription required)



# Universal Design: A “One-Size Fits All” Solution?

- Because educators cannot legally query students about their diagnosis – and given the rising number of diagnosed post-secondary students – universities are moving to a **Universal Design for Instruction** model
- UDI serves a broad spectrum of learners within a diverse, inclusive environment
- UDI is not a panacea, but an approach, requiring discipline and depth of understanding

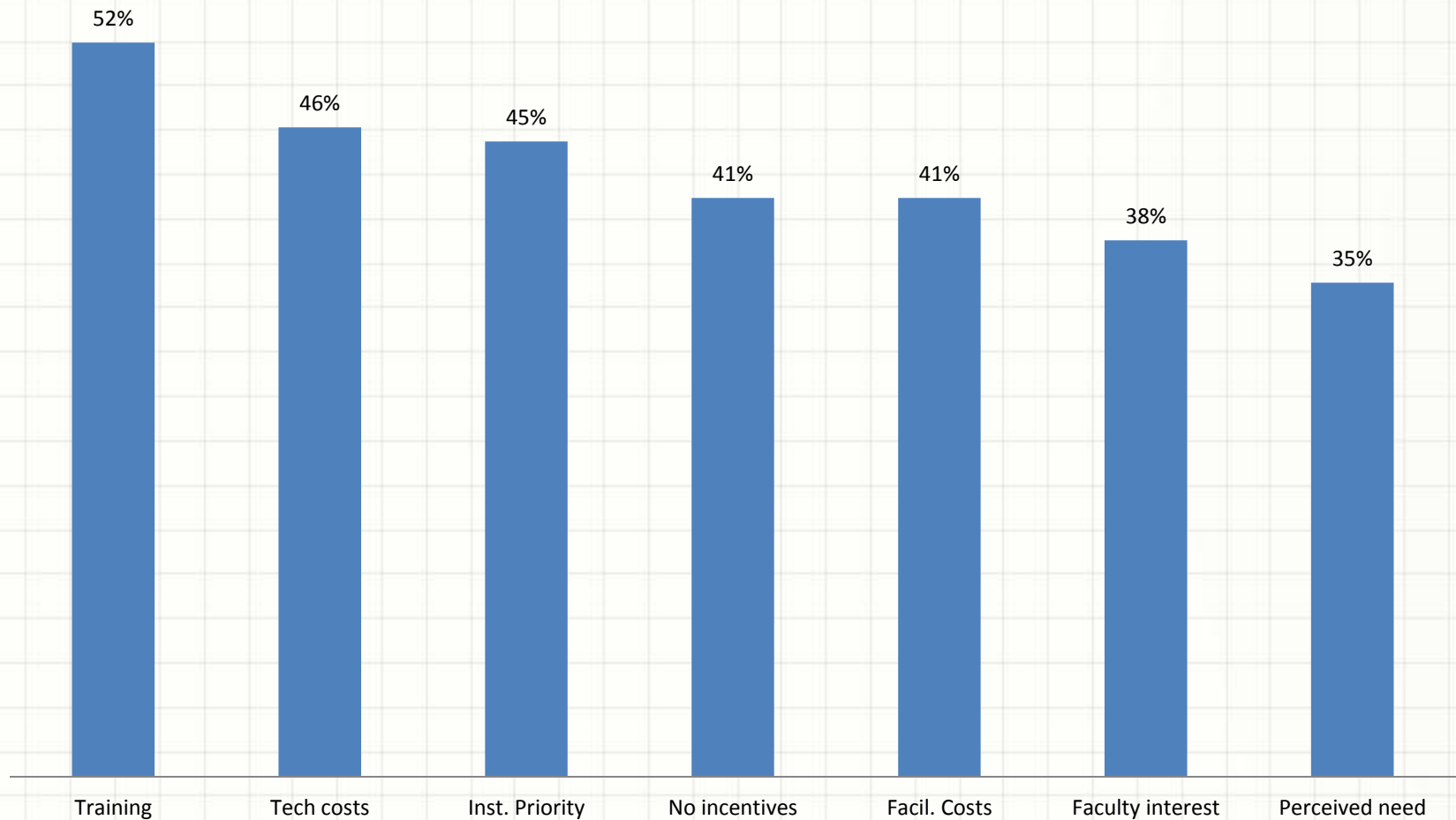


# Universal Design for Increased Accessibility for All

- Universal Design is “the design of products and environments to be usable to the greatest extent possible by people of all ages and disabilities” (Story, Mueller, & Mace, 1998)
- Example: a ramp for wheelchairs that also helps someone carrying a heavy suitcase or pushing a stroller
- The seven Guiding Principles of UD were adapted as eight Universal Design **of** Instruction principles [UDI] by Burgstahler in 2007; and as nine Universal Design **for** Instruction principles by Scott, McGuire & Embry, 2002



# NCES Data (2008 – 2009): Barriers to Universal Design Implementation





# Universal Design – Increased Accessibility for All – Resources

- Rose, D. H. & Meyer, A. (2002). Teaching every student in the digital age: Universal design for learning. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- CAST Inc. – [www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org)
- University of Connecticut's Faculty Ware – <http://www.facultyware.uconn.edu/home.htm>
- University of Connecticut Universal Design for Instruction in Postsecondary Education – <http://www.udi.uconn.edu/>
- University of Washington's Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology (DO-IT) Center – <http://www.washington.edu/doit>
- Access-Ed Project – <http://access-ed.r2d2.uwm.edu/>
- Universal Design and Access to Higher Education – [http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/extension/ped/northeastADA/publications/Article\\_60.html](http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/extension/ped/northeastADA/publications/Article_60.html)



Thank You!

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