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## Secondary To Post-Secondary Education Transition: A Guide For Self-Advocacy And Self-Determination

Karleen T. VonKrosigk

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SECONDARY TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION TRANSITION: A GUIDE FOR SELF-  
ADVOCACY AND SELF-DETERMINATION

by

Karleen T. VonKrosigk  
Occupational Therapy Doctorate, University of North Dakota, 2022

A Scholarly Project  
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Occupational Therapy Doctorate

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Karleen VonKrosigk, 2022

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## APPROVAL

This scholarly project, submitted by Karleen T. VonKrosigk in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Occupational Therapy Doctorate from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisor under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

*Andrea Young*, OTD, OTR/L

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Signature of Faculty Advisor

13 April, 2022

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Date

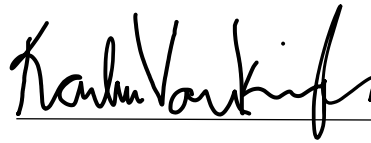
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Title: Secondary to Post-Secondary Education Transition: A Guide for Self-Advocacy and Self-Determination

Department: Occupational Therapy

Degree: Occupational Therapy Doctorate

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04/14/2022

Karleen VonKrosigk

Date

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## **Abstract**

**Introduction:** Post-secondary transitions encapsulate the stage of life between high school and adulthood where adolescents transition to college, technical school, work, or other options (Palmon et al., 2017). It is not uncommon for students to lack the skills and strategies needed for self-advocacy and self-determination, which are crucial to success throughout adulthood (Palmon et al., 2017). Upon reviewing current literature, it was identified that supportive transition services begin to diminish after secondary education ends (Kramer, 2015). A product that helps guide and support individuals transitioning to post-secondary education is beneficial and needed.

**Methodology:** Extensive research was completed through a literature review to determine current self-advocacy and self-determination education/training trends in post-secondary education settings. The information gathered was utilized to form the foundation of a self-advocacy and self-determination guide for college students. Additionally, the literature was carefully reviewed to support potential solutions or strategies to address the identified needs. The Model of Human Occupation (Kielhofner, 1985) is the guiding theory utilized to develop components of the final product.

**Results:** This product should serve as a resource to be provided by faculty at the community college to promote self-advocacy and self-determination for college students. The guide consists of five steps: self-assessment, goal setting, identification of barriers and potential strategies, and self-reflection on progress. The students themselves should utilize the guide independently to support their academic success at the college level.

**Conclusion:** The product will be distributed to students at the community college. The product aims to meet the needs of students transitioning to post-secondary education who present with



difficulties in self-advocacy and self-determination. However, the product can be used by any student who may struggle with academic performance and success. Recommendations for future development, occupational therapy practice implications, strengths, and product limitations have been identified for implementation and sustainability.

## **Chapter I: Introduction**

This introduction provides a brief outline of this doctoral experiential project (DEP). This project aims to develop a guide for students transitioning to post-secondary education or those already in college. Self-advocacy and self-determination will be the primary focus areas for the final product.

### **Background**

Post-secondary transitions encapsulate the stage of life between high school and adulthood when young adults transition to college, technical school, work, or other options (Palmon et al., 2017). Planning for such transitions is critical to ensure a smooth and successful adjustment for these students. Often, students with disabilities, psychological diagnoses, other health conditions, or a poor support system struggle with the post-secondary transition, impacting self-efficacy and success within the community (Kramer, 2015). In 2015-2016, approximately 19% of students enrolled in a post-secondary institution or curriculum had a diagnosed disability (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2018). Current evidence does not support whether this statistic has changed or not. Students with a diagnosed disability frequently face various challenges that may impact their access to accommodations, rights, and responsibilities in the post-secondary education setting (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2018). Universal access to self-advocacy and self-determination tools and resources can help to increase college retention and graduation rates (Palmon et al., 2017).

Upon reviewing current literature, it was identified that supportive transition services begin to diminish after secondary education ends (Kramer, 2015). Students typically have direct access to professionals who help to advocate for their needs and accommodations during elementary school, throughout their high school years. However, students are expected to

independently advocate for their needs and goals at a post-secondary level. It is not uncommon for students to lack the skills and strategies needed for self-advocacy and self-determination, which are crucial to success throughout adulthood (Palmon et al., 2017). A product that helps guide and support individuals transitioning from secondary to post-secondary education is beneficial and needed.

### **Facility and Population**

The population of focus for this product is students attending a community college located in Wyoming. The college is one of the largest community colleges in the region and offers a wide variety of programs and certifications to meet each student's needs.

The community college offers a variety of supports and services for students to help them navigate college life. Such services include advising, tutoring, career services, probation/suspension services, single parent programming, transfer information, and disability support services. For feasibility and usability, the primary population of focus will be students who seek and utilize Disability Support Services (DSS) at the college or any student who may be struggling but does not qualify for DSS services. However, the product should be shared with all college faculty as a resource to share with students across campus.

Students must meet specific criteria to be eligible to receive accommodations and services through DSS at the college. The college complies with the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Cleary & Persch, 2020). Therefore, students who self-disclose as a person with a disability to DSS and provide current and appropriate documentation regarding their disability are eligible to receive support through DSS. Overall, the proposed product will promote

academic success for all students at the college, including students who qualify for services through DSS or students who may need extra support but do not qualify for DSS services.

### **Project Significance**

Aside from disability-specific challenges, students may lack support and general background knowledge that increases the chance of success at the college level. Self-advocacy and self-determination skills allow students to feel empowered and control their future and educational outcomes (Palmon et al., 2017). Therefore, students with solid self-advocacy and self-determination skills are typically more confident disclosing their disability and requesting accommodations to support success at the college level (Palmon et al., 2017). However, it is not uncommon for students to lack literacy in self-advocacy and self-determination. Resulting in difficulty appropriately navigating challenges as they arise. Self-advocacy and self-determination must be actively taught and instilled in students to ensure successful participation in educational goals, ultimately leading to carry over throughout adulthood (Hall et al., 2021).

Occupational therapists are skilled at providing education and training that will promote participation in desired occupations. Typically, students who seek post-secondary education have a strong desire to be successful and obtain a degree or certification. The Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Process (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2020) suggests that the foundational belief of occupational therapy (OT) is embedded in the occupational nature of individuals and the positive relationship between occupation and health. Occupational therapists have a deep understanding of the mind-body-spirit connection and recognize the impact it has on participation and engagement in daily occupations such as educational participation (AOTA, 2020). Therefore, education is the occupation of focus for the

scholarly project which will promote academic success for students at the college. With the unique skills and capabilities occupational therapists exhibit in promoting self-advocacy and self-determination, they can provide a distinct value and outlook in post-secondary settings to support student success (AOTA, 2020).

### **Occupational Therapy Practice Theory**

Occupational therapists use various occupation-based theories to guide their clinical reasoning, uphold their professional identity, and support evidence-based practice. The OT practice theory selected to guide the development of this scholarly project is the Model of Human Occupation (MOHO). MOHO exemplifies the open system (i.e., student) and how individuals select and perform occupations based on barriers or supports within the physical or social environments (Kielhofner & Burke, 1980). Kielhofner and Burke (1980) emphasize that MOHO focuses on the three major components of a person: volition (motivation, values, interests), habituation (habits, roles, routines), and performance capacity (skills, performance, participation). MOHO (1980) was utilized in the development of a product to help students assess their performance skills in self-advocacy and self-determination, set personalized education goals, identify potential barriers to goal attainment and strategies to overcome those barriers, and self-reflection on their progress.

### **Project Outcomes**

It is anticipated that this product's outcome will help facilitate post-secondary transitions for students with a diagnosed disability and promote self-advocacy and self-determination. The product will act as a guide to self-advocacy and self-determination for college students. Overall, this product will help to promote the role of OT in the post-secondary education setting by using the conceptual framework MOHO (Kielhofner & Burke,

1980) to guide the development of the product. The product will be an evidence-based guide focusing on self-advocacy and self-determination that aligns with the needs and goals identified by the community college and DSS. The product will be a valuable resource for individuals served by DSS or students seeking further support to achieve success in college.

### **Goals/Objectives**

The primary goal for product development is to identify barriers or limitations students may face concerning self-advocacy and self-determination skills. Development of an evidence-based product will be facilitated using information gathered from the students, staff, and administration at the college. The product will incorporate self-advocacy and self-determination skill identification, goal setting, and reflection to enhance participation in the occupation of education for students at the post-secondary level.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

- a. Disability is defined by the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 as “any person who has a documented impairment that substantially impacts one or more significant life activities” (Department of Justice, Office for Civil Rights, 2008, Ch. 5).
- b. The Department of Student Services (DSS) is a department at the college that is responsible for implementing and upholding requirements mandated by the Americans With Disabilities Act (1990) by providing reasonable accommodations and supports for students with disabilities.
- c. Post-secondary education is any education or training that takes place after high school. It could include "vocational and career schools, 2-year community colleges, 4-year colleges, universities, or graduate and professional degree programs" (Jirikowic et al., 2011, p. 1).

- d. Self-advocacy has many different definitions but includes four essential components: knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, effective communication, and leadership (Holzeberg et al., 2019). Self-advocacy refers to a person's ability to express their wants and needs and make educated decisions to obtain supports that will help them achieve their goals (Daly-Cano, Vaccaro, & Newman, n.d.).
- e. Self-determination is the intrinsic motivation (values, knowledge, beliefs) of an individual to make choices about their life to better their future (National Center for Learning Disabilities, n.d.).

## **Chapter II: Review of Literature**

Post-secondary education is a critical life stage that has impacts individuals of all ages and demographics. The college has the ability to provide opportunities that high school lacks. Statistics suggest that attending college allows individuals to attain and maintain work and increase overall wages. College is also a period of significant personal growth which enhances independence, social experiences, and a successful future. College students make up 10.4% of the population over 18 (The Postsecondary National Policy Institute, n.d.). Social and cultural advancements continue to bring talented students with various abilities to college campuses. Meeks and Jain (2018) suggest that approximately 11% of undergraduate and 8% of graduate students enrolled in post-secondary education throughout the United States present with some type of disability. Literature reveals that 55% of young adults with disabilities enroll in college after leaving high school and are more likely to enroll in two-year institutions, rather than four-year universities (Cleary & Persch, 2020). Historically students with disabilities tend to have strong self-direction but engage in fewer activities independently and require greater assistance when requesting or identifying accommodations to support academic success (Cleary & Persch,

2020). Approximately 3.2 million high school graduates (with or without a disability) begin college each year; however, the overall retention rate for full-time college students was 75.7 percent in 2020 (The Postsecondary National Policy Institute, n.d.).

Various factors impact the retention rates of college students, including social, financial, medical, and institutional influences. Additionally, self-advocacy and self-determination play a significant role in student success and outcomes. When a student transitions from secondary to post-secondary education, many challenges and barriers may hinder a student's academic success. The student must take on many new roles that can be overwhelming or difficult to navigate without an adequate skill set. This literature review will examine the identified gaps that impact post-secondary success and review relevant literature to support the need for self-advocacy and self-determination education and training for students at the post-secondary level.

### **Legislation**

Students age 21 and younger who have been identified to have one or more of 13 types of disabilities included under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are eligible to receive special education and related services through the public school system (Cahill & Bazyk, 2020). If a student meets specific criteria, they may benefit from an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and a specialized team of staff working together to ensure access to fair and equal education and help identify accommodations to promote successful participation in education (Cahill & Bazyk, 2020). If a student has a diagnosed disability but does not meet the criteria for an IEP, they are protected under Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to ensure they receive supports and resources needed to participate and engage in their education successfully (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2010).



Transition services provided as part of the IEP typically go into effect when the student turns 16 or younger if necessary, according to the IEP team. During each annual IEP update, the IEP must include specific criteria to promote successful transition into post-secondary endeavors (i.e., work, college). Once students transition to post-secondary education, they are no longer protected under IDEA but are instead protected under the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Cleary & Persch, 2020). Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is in place to ensure that students with a disability are protected from disability-related discrimination in post-secondary education (Cleary & Persch, 2020). The Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 ensures that students who have been diagnosed with a disability have the right to receive reasonable accommodations at the post-secondary institution of their choice (Cleary & Persch, 2020). It is expected that a student with a disability will seek out the disability support services (DSS) office on campus to receive support and accommodations to enhance their educational endeavors (Dirette, 2019). Unfortunately, various factors may cause students to hesitate to disclose their disability to DSS or advocate for their specific learning needs.

The Higher Education Act (HEA) is a federal law that governs higher education programs at the federal level. This law aims to increase the educational resources of colleges and expand financial assistance for students enrolled in post-secondary institutions (The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers [AACRO], n.d.). Within the post-secondary education setting, the HEA oversees student-aid, federal-aid, and provides oversight for teachers, ultimately determining the programs and resources available to students (AACRO, n.d.).

### **Post-Secondary Transition**

Post-secondary transition is an overarching term that encapsulates the transition for high school students from secondary education to any post-secondary education, such as four-year colleges, trade or technical programs, community colleges, or apprenticeships (Van Havermaet & Bielski, 2017). The transition process from secondary to post-secondary education can be intimidating and complex for many students. Students have a robust support system of staff, family, and friends throughout primary and secondary education who offer continuous support and structure as students' progress academically (National Center for Learning Disabilities, n.d.). It is not uncommon for a student's support system to deteriorate during the post-secondary transition. The student becomes more responsible for ensuring their educational needs are met. Despite navigating the already unfamiliar environment, students may feel isolated, stressed, and helpless when advocating for their needs as a student (National Center for Learning Disabilities, n.d.).

Hatfield, Falkmer, Falkmer, & Ciccarelli (2018) revealed that an online transition planning program helped students and parents feel more confident about the transition to post-secondary education and future outcomes. Findings by Hotez et al. (2018) support the feasibility and efficacy of implementing a transition program for students with mild Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Findings suggested that this type of program helped foster self-advocacy skills for students as they transition from secondary to post-secondary education. Overall, students felt more confident in their ability to identify and ask for support (Hotez et al., 2018).

Ultimately literature supports the feasibility and efficacy of post-secondary transition planning for students with disabilities to foster confidence and skills needed for successful education participation in college. However, gaps in the literature fail to support the efficacy of

transition programs for students with mild or invisible disabilities or students who may not have a diagnosed disability but struggle to achieve success in the post-secondary setting.

### **Self-Advocacy and Self-Determination**

Self-advocacy is the term that refers to a person's ability to accurately and appropriately express their wants and needs and make educated decisions in order to obtain supports that will help them achieve their goals (Daly-Cano, Vaccaro, & Newman, 2015). Individuals with solid self-advocacy skills are typically better equipped to seek, evaluate, and use relevant information to promote overall health and well-being. However, it is not uncommon for students who transition to post-secondary education to lack the necessary and appropriate skills to effectively advocate for their educational needs (National Center for Learning Disabilities, n.d.).

Literature consistently supports the efficacy and effectiveness of self-advocacy education programs for college students with a diagnosed disability. Over recent years there has been a push to promote self-advocacy skills for transition-age youth, as self-advocacy allows students to take ownership of their education and increase their independence and success in post-secondary education (Holzberg, Test, & Rusher 2019). Hall Pistorio, Kearney, Eshman, Thomas, & Carey (2021) suggest that self-advocacy is a skill that should be actively taught to students who are at transition age to ensure post-secondary success. Students who receive self-advocacy education can maintain the skills over time and apply those skills throughout life.

Self-determination is the intrinsic motivation of an individual to make choices about their life to better their future (National Center for Learning Disabilities, n.d.). Self-determined students can identify their strengths and interests, make choices, and freely pursue their goals. Self-determination requires foundational skills that involve critical thinking, goal setting, and

problem-solving to make a positive choice about the future (National Center for Learning Disabilities, n.d.).

Schillaci, Parker, Grigal, & Paiewonsky (2021) found that students who participated in a college readiness program demonstrated increased self-determination skills. Overall, these students demonstrated increased awareness of their goals, strengths, and the power they have in using their strengths to achieve their goals. Literature suggests that when designing the programming for an intervention with the desired outcome of self-determination some interventions may be more successful than others (Schillaci et al., 2021). It was noted a combination of direct instruction and occupation-based resources resulted in increased self-determination as an outcome (Schillaci et al., 2021).

High self-determination in students with disabilities is positively associated with academic outcomes in the post-secondary transition. Similarly, self-determination is a necessary component in promoting independence for this population of students. Students who participated in programs to improve self-determination skills demonstrated increased awareness of their goals, strengths, and the power they have in using their strengths to achieve their goals.

### **Role of Occupational Therapy in Post-Secondary Education**

Occupational Therapy (OT) is a profession that aims to promote and enhance successful participation in all aspects of daily life. Occupational therapists are skilled and capable of providing transition services and programming for students in secondary and post-secondary education (Van Havermaet & Bielski, 2017). For years occupational therapists have been valued and utilized as a supportive service in the public school system to enhance special education services. However, OT programs and services to support students at the post-secondary level is almost obsolete. Occupational therapists are valuable team members who provide holistic

conceptualization when addressing transition-related services. Occupational therapy practitioners working with students in transition may address many different skills. These areas may include self-determination and self-advocacy skills, social skills, and activities of daily living (ADLs) in the college context. Additionally, occupational therapists may also assist Disability Support Services (DSS) in identifying necessary accommodations, help with accessing assistive technology to support education, help students organize and manage accommodations and supports available, and help students manage/adjust to daily roles and routines (Dirette, 2019).

Despite the prominent value of OT in post-secondary education and transition services, there are currently a limited number of occupational therapists working with students in post-secondary settings and programs across the country (Dirette, 2019). There is a definitive need to develop the role for occupational therapists in this area and continue to research the benefit of OT practice in these settings.

### **Occupational Therapy Framework**

The Model of Human Occupation (MOHO) was selected as the model used to guide the development of this scholarly project (Kielhofner, 1985). MOHO emphasizes the person-environment interaction and supports that human occupation is motivated, patterned, and performed through volition, habituation, and performance capacity (O'Brien, 2017). Volition refers to how a person chooses to participate in occupations due to enjoyment or satisfaction and what is important or meaningful (Kielhofner & Burke, 1980). For example, a student's volition may significantly impact their desire to seek post-secondary education and influence their ability to advocate for accommodations that will help support college success (Kielhofner & Burke, 1980). Habituation is a term that represents how an individual chooses to act or behave, resulting in patterns and routines that become part of everyday life. Roles provide individuals with identity

and expectations (i.e., student, parent, sibling, peer, friend). Habits and routines bring structure and familiarity to everyday life (Kielhofner & Burke, 1980). Performance capacity refers to the skill set that a person possesses, which allows them to carry out meaningful tasks and activities (Kielhofner & Burke, 1980). Barriers to performance may include physical, psychosocial, environmental, contextual, or other factors.

Environmental considerations (social or physical) are another essential aspect of MOHO that can increase or hinder the occupational participation of individuals transitioning from secondary to post-secondary educational settings (Kielhofner & Burke, 1980). Many contextual factors can significantly impact a student's success in post-secondary education. For example, an individual returning to college later in life may face various contextual challenges that are different from a student who transitions to post-secondary education immediately after high school. A person's behavior is influenced by an interaction of the four factors discussed prior, and a single component alone does not account for failure or success. In order to accurately understand individual success or failure, it is vital to assess the person and their interaction with the environment (O'Brien, 2017).

### **Chapter III: Methods and Activities**

This scholarly project aims to provide a guide for self-advocacy and self-determination to support successful engagement and participation in college for students with disabilities. This product aims to address the gaps in the literature concerning students with a disability who are transitioning to college. The product focuses on self-advocacy and self-determination skills required for academic success in the post-secondary setting. The occupational model, Model of Human Occupation (Kielhofner, 1985), is the guiding theory utilized for product development. The use of MOHO specific terminology and OT jargon was limited to ensure the product

materials were written and portrayed in a way that students and college faculty will easily understand.

Extensive research was completed through a literature review to determine the current trends regarding self-advocacy and self-determination education/training in post-secondary education settings. The information gathered was utilized to form a foundation of a self-advocacy and self-determination guide for college students. Additional literature was reviewed to capture a greater understanding of the needs of students who are transitioning to post-secondary education. Literature was carefully reviewed to support potential solutions or strategies to address the identified. Pertinent information and resources were combined to develop the components of the product.

A thorough literature review was conducted by searching various online databases using the Harley E. French Library of Health Sciences, Chester Fritz Library, and Goodstein Foundation Library. Journal articles were collected through multiple databases, including EBSCOhost, SAGE Journals, CINAHL, PubMed, Springer, and Wiley Online Library. Relevant literature was also gathered from the American Journal of Occupational Therapy (AJOT), and a variety of valuable resources were retrieved from the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). Relevant literature and resources were utilized to determine information that would help support the purpose of the project and promote the role of OT in the post-secondary setting.

Additionally, various occupational therapy textbooks and government-based websites such as the National Center for Learning Disabilities and The Postsecondary National Policy Institute, were utilized to locate information. Various terms were used to search for literature on the topic, including post-secondary education, college students with disabilities, occupational

therapy role in post-secondary education, self-advocacy, and self-determination. Each peer-reviewed article and resource was assessed for pertinent information relating to students with disabilities transitioning to college. Articles of particular relevance focused on post-secondary transitions and self-advocacy/self-determination education or training. Research articles were primarily chosen between the years of 2016-2021 to ensure reliability and validity of the information.

There was limited literature on AOTA and AJOT regarding occupational therapy's role on college campuses and post-secondary transitions. The majority of the research articles were obtained from alternate journal sources. The research revealed that individuals with disabilities demonstrate difficulties with self-advocacy and self-determination at the college level, significantly impacting academic success. Additionally, research indicated that evidence-based education and training in self-advocacy and self-determination effectively improved these skills for students with a diagnosed disability.

An informal needs assessment was completed by observing student meetings and interactions with the DSS counselor and other student success center staff. Ethical considerations were prioritized when observing DSS meetings (i.e., consent from the student, professional behavior, confidentiality of student information), and no personal information was recorded during student observations. Informal interviews with the student success center staff helped to understand the needs of the college and other stakeholders. It was identified that there is a lack of resources available to promote and enhance self-advocacy and self-determination for college students. Many students lack the knowledge or skills to take ownership of their education and independently promote academic success.



The product was designed for a community college in Wyoming and the students', primary stakeholders. The product was designed to be implemented by the DSS counselor or other individuals qualified to provide services for students with a diagnosed disability. Students should utilize the product as a resource for self-advocacy and self-determination to promote academic success in college. These skills will enable young adult students to take ownership of their education and engage in the new context of college.

This step-by-step guide will help facilitate success in college as students identify current strengths and areas of growth, set goals, and reflect on their progress. The product is designed so that students can utilize the resource independently. However, this product would also be an excellent resource for advisors, course instructors, or counselors to introduce to students as a tool to support academic achievement and success. Each student will demonstrate a different skill set and require a different level of support to utilize the product effectively. The product should be available to students in various formats, such as hardcopy or PDF versions.

#### **Chapter IV: Product**

This product, a *Self-Advocacy and Self-Determination Guide*, serves as a resource to be provided by faculty at the college to promote self-advocacy and self-determination for college students. The students may utilize the guide independently to support their academic success at the college level.

This product will be used as a guide for students, faculty, advisors, or counselors to promote self-advocacy and self-determination for students. The guide includes five steps: self-assessment, strengths/areas of growth, goal setting, obstacles and strategies for success, and reflection on progress to enhance decision-making and autonomy in college. Occupational Therapy is a holistic profession with a unique role in supporting individuals in various

occupations (i.e., desired or meaningful activities), such as post-secondary education.

Occupational therapists are skilled in evaluating the person and environment, adapting or modifying a task or the environment, and making recommendations to support successful outcomes.

Occupation-based models and theory guide practice and help support evidence-based practice. The occupation-based theory used to guide the development of this product is the Model of Human Occupation (Kielhofner, 1985). Components of MOHO are evident throughout the guide.

### **Step One: Assess Self-Advocacy and Self-Determination Skills**

A Likert scale questionnaire was created to help students better understand their skill level in self-advocacy and self-determination. After reading each statement, the student will circle one number that best describes their skill level. Responses to this questionnaire will help the student identify their strengths and areas of growth which will be beneficial for the next step.

### **Step Two: Determine Strengths and Areas of Growth**

Open ended short answer questions designed to promote self-awareness of the student's abilities. The responses to these questions will help the student to understand their specific strengths and areas of growth. Answers to these questions will help with goal setting and goal development in the next step. The student may use their responses to the questionnaire in the first step or what they already know about themselves to answer the questions.

### **Step Three: Determine Personal Goals**

Students will use the information gathered from the previous steps to select areas of improvement. Then they will write short-term or long-term personalized goals. Using the

S.M.A.R.T. method (Sames, 2015) to write goals the student will set realistic and reasonable goals. A table is provided to assist with goal development and organization.

#### **Step Four: Identify Potential Obstacles and Strategies for Success**

This step allows students to identify potential obstacles or barriers that may impact goal attainment. The student will then identify potential strategies for success to overcome obstacles that may arise. Being proactive and identifying obstacles and potential strategies to overcome those obstacles can help students combat feelings of hopelessness or self-doubt when challenges arise.

#### **Step Five: Monitor Progress**

Reflection is an essential part of the learning process and helps individuals to better understand their personal achievements. Through self-reflection, students will better understand what works well for and what doesn't to make changes and adjustments as needed. This step was developed to promote reflection of personal educational goals and progress made toward goal attainment.

### **Chapter V: Summary**

There is limited literature supporting occupational therapy in post-secondary educational settings, specifically college campuses. The aim of this scholarly project, *Secondary to Post-Secondary Education Transition: A Guide for Self-Advocacy and Self-Determination*, is to provide college students with an occupation-based guide to enhance self-advocacy and self-determination and promote success in the college setting. The literature review in chapter two, along with interviews and observation, indicated the need for resources for self-advocacy and self-determination for college students with disabilities and the general college population. The product, a *Self-Advocacy and Self-Determination Guide*, was developed to meet the need

identified by the facility and be a sustainable resource for students to utilize independently or with minimal assistance to promote academic success in college. The occupation-based theory MOHO (Kielhofner, 1985) was selected to guide the development of an occupation-based guide designed to help students enhance their skills in self-advocacy and self-determination.

### **Strengths**

This product was developed to meet the needs of a community college in Wyoming using current and relevant literature in post-secondary transitions and occupational therapy practice. Occupational therapy practice theory helped guide product development and supported the importance of self-advocacy and self-determination in college. Although the product was developed through an occupation-based lens, anyone skilled in supporting students academic success in college could help implement the product. It is also intended that the product will help enhance the student experience and will not require extensive implementation and monitoring by faculty and staff at the college. Very little time, energy, and resources will be needed to ensure the successful implementation of this product which will help promote the product's sustainability over time.

### **Limitations**

Upon completion of the final product, limitations were identified. The resource was developed for students who are able to read and understand English at an eight-grade reading level. Therefore, it may be difficult for a student with more significant needs to utilize and implement the product effectively without guidance from an advisor or counselor. Students who speak English as a second language may have difficulty with comprehension of the materials. Additionally, the product's effectiveness is directly related to the students' motivation to consistently utilize and update the resource as they continue their educational pursuits. Limited

skills and motivation may be a barrier to successful implementation and overall effectiveness and the developed materials.

### **Recommendations**

Several recommendations are to be made for further development, implementation, and utilization of the *Self-Advocacy and Self-Determination Guide*. It is recommended to closely monitor student satisfaction with the guide and make changes to the product to enhance usability for the product's sustainability. Students may also benefit from peer or group mentoring or training to successfully utilize the product. Recommendations for further program development would be to create a mentoring program for students who struggle with self-advocacy and self-determination and utilize this product to guide students through the college experience. The final recommendation includes research to more clearly understand or identify the role of occupational therapy in college settings. This research would help expand the scope of practice for occupational therapy and support the implementation of occupation-based programming to address the occupational needs of college students.

### **Implications for Practice**

Through an informal interview, it was determined that there is limited understanding of the role of occupational therapy in the post-secondary setting, specifically on college campuses. Continued advocacy is needed to promote the role of occupational therapy in the college context. Occupational therapy is a professional skilled at addressing the needs of individuals in a variety of settings and contexts. The scope of practice for occupational therapists at this facility is undefined. However, there is a significant area for opportunity to support occupation-based practice. Occupational therapists are able to support students enrolled in post-secondary education by helping to identify reasonable and appropriate accommodations, advocating for

universal design, and equal access to the campus environment and activities. Occupational therapy practitioners also provide education about strategies to promote purposeful routines and habits that will support organization, time-management, problem-solving, and other skills required for successful academic participation (Jirikowic et al, 2011). Occupational therapy offers a unique and valued role which would complement the interprofessional team at the college to better serve students and promote successful academic involvement and achievement.

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**Appendix A**  
**Full Product**