# Non-cognitive factors that support postsecondary persistence in deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) students

What is postsecondary persistence?

Persistence in postsecondary settings refers to the likelihood that a student will remain in school, particularly past the first year of enrollment. Although DHH student enrollment in postsecondary settings has seen a significant increase, students continue to face obstacles to completion of their postsecondary degree goals, with high rates of attrition. Facilitating successful persistence is thus a critical issue in increasing education and work options for individuals who are DHH.

Postsecondary Enrollment and Completion Rates for DHH Young Adults 2000-2010 (NLTS2)
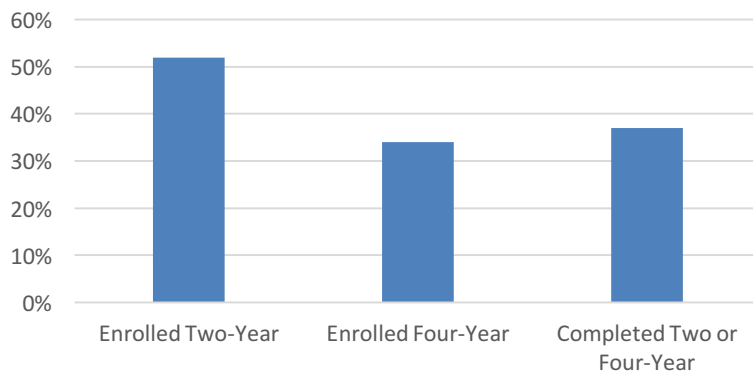
"Giving increased attention to personal factors, as well as metacognitive skills, may provide the necessary boost for more deaf students to persist and succeed in college" [1]

Evolving Model of Persistence

- Although academic preparation is one predictor of postsecondary success, "non-cognitive" variables such as motivation, interest, and study habits affect persistence and graduation rates.[13, 17]

- Although certain cognitive factors, such as English literacy skills, have been found to predict college enrollment in DHH individuals, but not completion or graduation.[8] Thus, there is a need to explore "non-cognitive", individual factors within DHH students.[10, 9]

- From 1990-1998, approximately 80% of deaf students with 9th to 12th grade level literacy levels withdrew from NTID/RIT. This finding indicates that there are deaf students who have adequate academic skills but due to other factors, may still be likely to drop out of college.[4]

Factors Influencing Persistence in Postsecondary Settings

- **Students who persist have positive academic experiences[5, 11]**
  - Spend informal mentorship time with faculty
  - Participate in study groups, with both deaf and hearing peers
  - Collaborate with their academic advisor

- **Students who persist have strong social skills to support academic achievement[3, 19]**
  - Ability and willingness to become involved in social activities
  - Capacity to cope with frustration and to deal with conflict
  - Ability to follow directions and stay on task

- **Students who persist have high levels of social integration, meaning that they feel satisfied with social experience and being able to adjust life away from home.[11]**
  - Participate in social events in the first year predicts later persistence
  - School clubs, sports, and fine art activities are important activities and structures.
  - Interaction with other deaf peers may have a positive impact on persistence[17]
  - However, too many extracurricular activities may be overwhelming [15]

- **Students who persist have clear goals and strategies[14]**
  - They are authentic with themselves, they know who they are
  - They have the desire to achieve educational goals at a particular school or program
  - They have "grit" and are "creative advocates", especially in challenging conditions.

Strategies to support persistence for students who are deaf or hard of hearing

- Focus on ways to support both academic and social integration.
- Administer personal factors assessments to first year students to help predict academic progress and persistence.[1,2]
- Emphasize the importance of determining a direction and purpose in pursuing higher education.[11]

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