

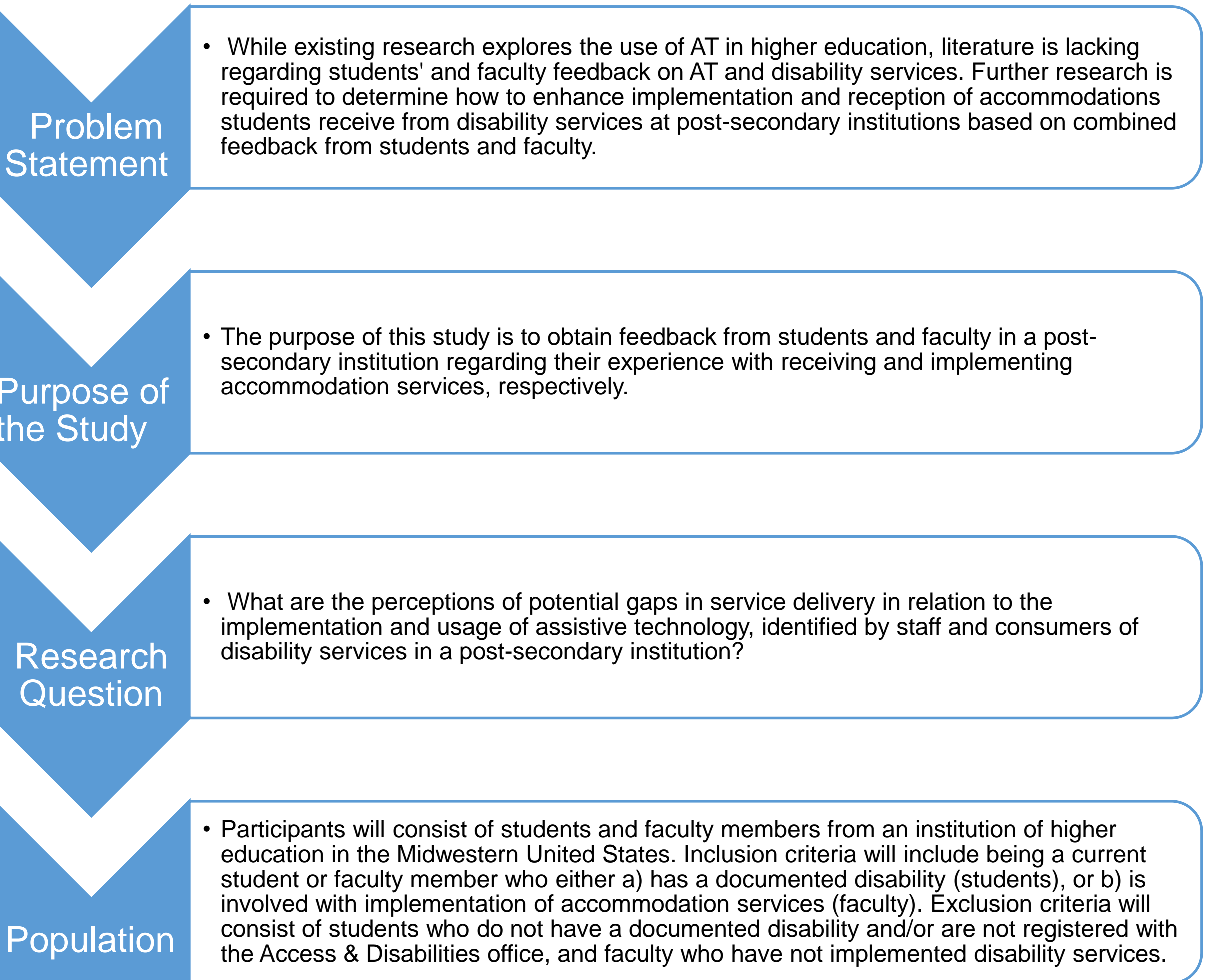


Elmhurst College, Master of Occupational Therapy Program

Background

- There are potential differences in the usage of accommodations, such as assistive technology (AT), between students in high school and those attending colleges and universities.
- "94% of high school students with learning disabilities receive some form of assistance (while) only 17% of college students with learning disabilities take advantage of learning assistance resources at their school" ("Support for College Students With Learning Disabilities," 2018).
- These differences could result from an increased need for students to display autonomy in higher education. This is an aspect of delivery that would need further investigation.
- Assistive technology (AT) is a common tool that students utilize to access, adapt, and participate in their education. The advancement of technology has helped develop a multitude of AT options to aid in student's learning. At the post-secondary level, it is up to the student and institution to develop accommodations that best suit the student's individual needs.
- Assistive technology (AT) is defined as: "Any item, piece of equipment or product system whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized that is used to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities." (Case-Smith & O'Brien, 2015, p. 526). Examples of assistive technology include: Speech to text, Screen Readers, E-text version of books, Captioning, and Hearing Aids.

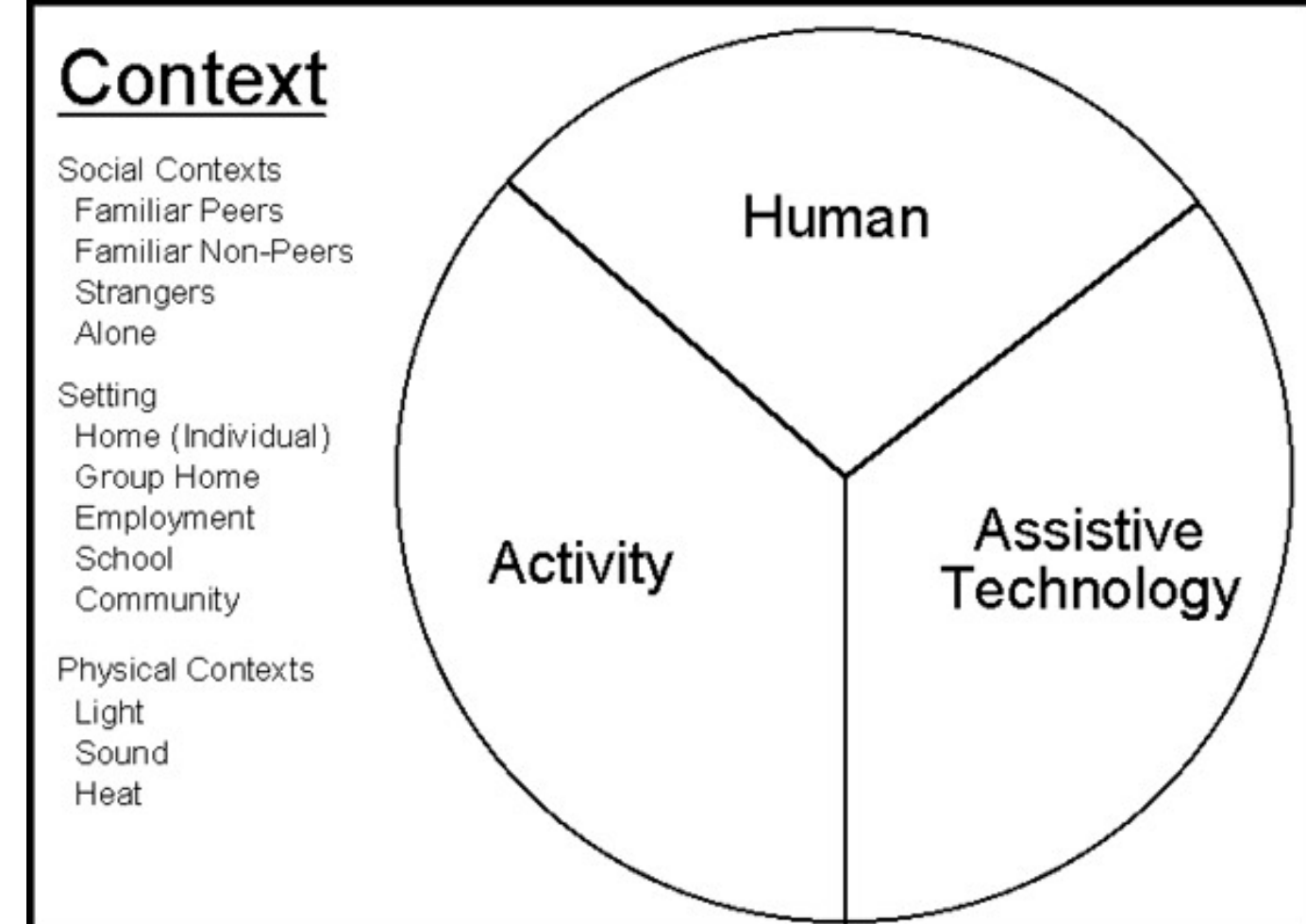
Introduction



Theoretical Foundations

Human Activity Assistive Technology (HAAT):

- Model used as an interpretive framework for examining faculty and student perspectives in the context of a dynamic educational environment



Literature Review



Implementation of Assistive Technology

- Adequate training results in students who are better equipped and more willing to use their device (Lersilp, Putthinoi, & Chakpitak, 2015).
- QOL, increase in campus-community participation, and better outcomes are improvements students make when they're familiar with AT device use (Jacobs, et al., 2017; Schreuer & Sachs, 2014; Woods-Grove, Hua, Ford, & Nail, 2017)

Individualized Accommodations

- Students' accommodations need to be individually tailored. GPA and participation in student experience is improved with a uniquely tailored accommodation plan (Schreuer & Sachs, 2014).
- Perelmutter, McGregor, & Gordon (2017), found "assistive technology interventions can be helpful for adolescents and adults with learning disabilities, but interventions need to be carefully compared, and customized to the individual."

Satisfaction

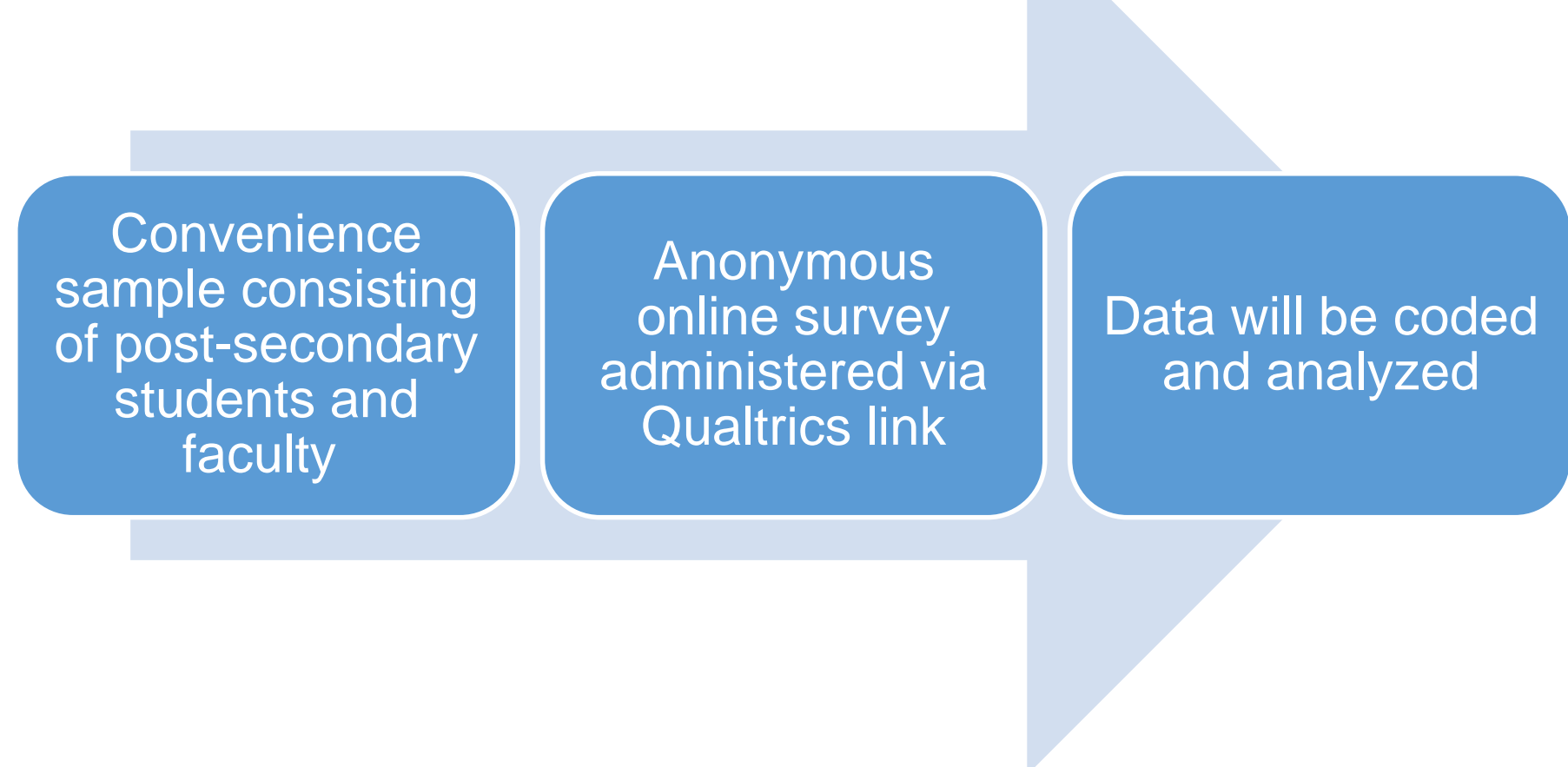
- Hadley (2017) found that a participant was accustomed to having a professional note-taker and much more hands-on accommodations during high school. This indicates why a student may be dissatisfied with the accommodations they are receiving in college because their high school accommodations were more involved or elaborate.
- Another study discovered that most students disclosed visiting student disability services only to establish their accommodations, leaving many other services unused (Abreu, Hillier, Frye, & Goldstein, 2016). Further, these students recommended expanding the office's location, hours, availability of the staff, and increased awareness of available services.
- For students to make the most out of the services provided to them, the reviewed literature emphasizes the need for faculty expertise as well as understanding students' perspectives.

Collaboration

- Faculty involvement in their students' accommodations and collaboration with disability services within schools is an essential component for the best outcomes for promoting equal opportunities within the classroom.
- One study found that students with learning disabilities who received accommodations for school, reported more contact with faculty outside of class time (McGregor et al., 2016).
- A study in Texas found that teachers reported needing more education regarding the use of assistive technology, ongoing support, and to recognize the importance of assistive technology devices. Teachers stated that they did not have the proper resources to obtain this knowledge about the technology being used (Ajuwon, Kalene Meeks, Griffin-Shirley, & Okungu, 2016).
- These studies emphasize the need for effective collaboration to exist along with proper training across staff in order for better understanding and implementation of service delivery.

Methods

This Participatory Action Research study utilizes a convenience sampling of post-secondary students and faculty members. An anonymous online survey will be administered to students and faculty who have received (students) or implemented (faculty) educational accommodations. Data from open-ended responses will be coded and analyzed using an approach resembling content analysis described by Krippendorff (2004). Approval to complete this study has been received through the Elmhurst College Institutional Review Board (IRB). Informed consent will be obtained from participants upon beginning the survey.



Discussion & Implications for OT Practice

Strengths:

- This study allows for inter-professional collaboration between MOT students and the faculty at Access and Disability Services.
- Explore student and faculty perspectives on a holistic level to better understand best practices for accommodating students and faculty members, and to enhance user experiences.
- Results of this study will help determine appropriate next steps for student and faculty training regarding the use of assistive technology.
- The study will contribute to the limited but growing body of research exploring the use of assistive technology in post-secondary settings.

Challenges:

- The method of data collection and the timeframe of the survey administration window may limit responses.
- This survey uses convenience sampling which can limit the generalizability of results

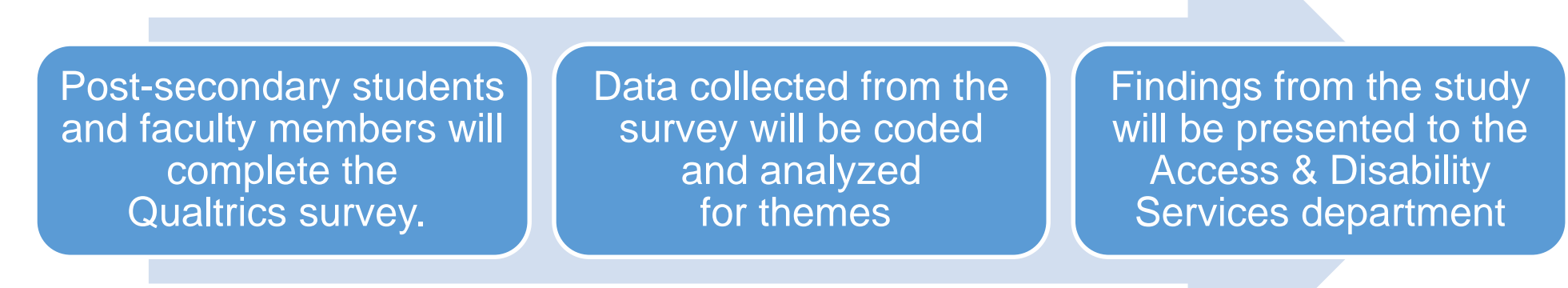
Implications for OT

Implications for occupational therapy (OT) practice include assuming a role towards the facilitation of a feedback system to advocate for further development in implementation of assistive technology to enhance post-secondary disability services. The findings of this study can help determine areas of improvement regarding assistive technology as an academic support, integrating the goal of OT strategies and accommodations for students with disabilities. It can also lead towards future research opportunities towards implementing training modules associated with assistive technology. Inter-professional collaboration is essential for occupational therapists working in an educational setting. Continued research in this area can contribute valuable feedback related to service delivery and usage to improve academic outcomes, which is the primary goal across all educational settings.

Conclusions

This study aims to provide better insight on the experiences of both students and faculty on their usage and guidance in accommodations provided. This includes assistive technology and aiding disability services in enhancing their delivery to achieve the most meaningful and effective student outcomes in academia.

Next Steps:



Key References

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