Students with Disabilities: The Role of Collaboration Between Faculty and the Disability Services Center

Julie Alexandrin, PhD, Associate Professor School of Education and Human Development
Joanne Benica, Director, Disability Services Center
Cynthia Curry, Adjunct Faculty and Consultant School of Education and Human Development
Learning Outcomes

• Know the basics of the Americans with Disabilities Act and how it applies to higher education

• Understand faculty responsibilities, in coordination with the Disability Services Center, to provide a range of reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities

• Demonstrate a basic understanding of the concept of Universal Design
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines a person with a disability as someone who:

- has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities;
- has a record of such an impairment; or
- is regarded as having such an impairment.

The ADA was updated with amendments (ADAAA) in 2009 to reestablish the broad definition of disability in response to a narrowed view in court decisions.
Enrollment in Postsecondary Institutions

Undergraduates with Disabilities – 6%

- Learning disabilities and ADHD - 46%
- Mobility - 14%
- Medical - 12%
- Psychiatric - 8%
- Hearing - 6%
- Blindness and visual - 4%
- Speech and language - 1%
- Other - 9%

Source: An Institutional Perspective on Students with Disabilities in Postsecondary Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, Postsecondary Education Quick Information System, August 1999
Faculty Responsibilities

- Maintain student confidentiality
- Consult with disability support staff when you have questions
- Educate oneself on equal access
- Arrange for approved and requested accommodations
You receive a letter from the Disability Services Center outlining what is viewed as a reasonable academic accommodations based on a student’s documented disability. The appropriate accommodations are listed and include duplication of class presentations, extended time on exams, and a note taker in class.
Case Example #2

Sarah hands you a letter from the Disability Support Services office. The letter only includes the necessary accommodations and the nature of the disability is not obvious to you. The accommodation reads:

“An opportunity to talk to professor about class attendance and participation requirements that may be impacted as a result of the student’s condition.”
Case Example #3

Sophia has a documented learning disability. The documentation supports a variety of accommodations including extended time on tests, books in electronic format, and recording lectures. Sophia’s English professor says she doesn’t have time to sit with Sophia all those extra hours and refuses to allow her class to be recorded.
Case Example #4

Sarah has a learning disability and Attention Deficit Disorder, documented by the Disability Services Center, that impacts attention, processing speed, reading and writing. She lets you know that her verbal skills are strong, as are her visual-spacial abilities, but producing materials quickly can be a problem and her writing generally needs significant proofing. Your graduate class is undertaking a group project. The project includes a written proposal, collection and analysis of field samples, and a 15-page group paper with class presentations of findings.
Case Example #5

John appears to have a difficult time interacting with you and other students in the classroom. He sits alone and does not participate or talk to anyone and you don’t see him taking notes. He has turned in thoughtful, lengthy, reading responses on Blackboard each week. You get a letter in your mailbox from Disability Support Services indicating the student may have difficulty with presentations. Individual and group presentations are part of your course.
“Universal Design is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. UDL provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone—not a single, one-size-fits-all solution but rather flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs.”
Faculty Resources

• The Faculty Room at D0-IT
  http://www.washington.edu/doit/Faculty/Strategies/Universal/


• McGuire, Joan M., Sally S. Scott, Stan F. Shaw, *Universal Design for Instruction*, 2003
Questions?