3

Reasonable accommodations are just one aspect of what disability services can offer campuses, and emerging ideas from the field may have implications for all students.

Disability Services Offices for Students with Disabilities: A Campus Resource

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What will campuses look like in ten years? In fifty? The swing toward using technology in teaching methodologies will no longer be cutting edge but will be commonplace. Students will be even more diverse than they are today, from various racial, social class, and geographic populations. The globalization of education will bring students from around the world to classes, possibly without moving physically. Students with more diverse disabilities will have supports to be fully included in K–12 general education classrooms, and therefore will be college eligible (Wagner et al. 2005; Wolanin and Steele 2004).

Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are often the starting places for conversations about students with disabilities in higher education. Section 504 and the ADA provide mandates for protection from discrimination and provision of reasonable disability accommodations (e.g., sign language interpreters, conversion of printed text to digital text, extended time on tests) (see Heyward, this volume). These laws guide work with students with disabilities on campus, but it is not enough. It is a good starting point, but should not be the ending point. Colleges and universities are committed to meeting more than the minimum legal obligations to students of color, women, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) students. Likewise, there should be a commitment to doing more than meeting a legal obligation for students with disabilities as well.

This chapter strives to help campus administrators understand obligations to students with disabilities, some current best practices in disability service provision, and timely issues challenging disability services (DS) staff in the United States. It frames disability services as both a legal and ethical obligation. There is an inherent tension in deciding how much to let the law

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guide services, and how much to use DS resources to destigmatize disability and to create a campus that is inclusive and welcoming to all students.

Legal Compliance and DS Offices

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was the first law that pertained to access to higher education for students with disabilities, requiring colleges to provide disability accommodations and access, while protecting students from discrimination. This law was strengthened and broadened with the passage of the ADA in 1990 (and its reauthorization in 2008). The ADA mandates that places of public accommodation must provide protection from discrimination for and access to reasonable accommodations for otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities (see, e.g., Simon 2000).

There are a number of technical terms associated with these laws, with the three following terms being especially important for campus administrators and faculty to understand (for more information, see, e.g., Frank and Wade 1993; Madaus and Shaw 2004; Simon 2000; Wolanin and Steele 2004; see also Heyward, this volume).

Protection from Discrimination and "Essential Elements." Policies and procedures may not discriminate or seem to discriminate against people with disabilities, and must be flexible enough to not discriminate intentionally or unintentionally.

An example of unintentional discrimination would be an art class where students must stand at an easel while they draw or paint. The instructor may have good pedagogical reasons to have students stand and may believe that standing creates better art. Students may even prefer to stand. But this policy, on its face, rules out students with some types of disabilities, such as paraplegia, chronic fatigue, or balance issues. Masterpieces can and have been painted from seated or prone positions, so to implement and enforce this type of policy based on preference can seem discriminatory and therefore should be avoided.

Policies and procedures may, however, set technical standards for a degree program based on essential requirements for an academic or professional discipline. For example, a nursing program may require that a student have sufficient visual acuity to see changes in skin coloration of a patient. This is a requirement based in the core goals of a program and therefore is permitted, even if it rules out individuals with some types of disabilities.

The difference in these two examples is whether the policy or requirement is linked to the essential core learning objectives of the course or degree program. Policies that may discriminate must be justifiably linked to the essential elements of a class or program. If there is an accommodation that would mitigate a student's inability to meet a requirement, it must be considered.

Reasonable Accommodations. As one might guess from the term, reasonable accommodations are a judgment call. What *reasonable* means varies from class to class and person to person. What is reasonable for one student in a course may or may not be reasonable for another student in that same course, or for a student with the same disability in a different class. This is why accommodations are determined through a dialogue with students, DS staff, and instructors on a case-by-case basis.

An example will help elucidate how the determination of *reasonable* is contextually changeable. A student with a learning disability may request a calculator as an accommodation in classes. This may be a reasonable accommodation for the student when taking a chemistry class or a higher-level math class. However, for a student in a developmental math class where essential parts of the curriculum include learning and demonstrating concepts of calculation, the calculator may not be reasonable. Therefore, the DS provider and instructor must engage in a dialogue with the student to determine whether the calculator is reasonable. If it is not, then they must also determine other possible accommodations that can assist the student in meeting the essential elements of the class. In this example, other accommodations may include the use of a number line or three-dimensional manipulative (e.g., stacking cubes) to help the student with visualization of a concept and accuracy of calculation.

Unfortunately, faculty and staff are in a position of having to follow the mandates of law when they may or may not understand the nuances and complexities of it; past experiences or good intentions toward students with disabilities may not be enough (Doña and Edmister 2001; Jensen et al. 2004; Salzberg et al. 2002). The DS office on campus can support them in operationalizing mandates of Section 504 the ADA, as well as the commitment of the institution to students with disabilities. Instructors cannot be expected to know every detail about every type of disability, and DS staff cannot be expected to know every academic discipline on campus. Together, however, faculty and DS should be able to create a plan for students that is effective in meeting disability-related needs and the needs of specific academic disciplines.

The Accommodations Process

As seen in the previous examples, the accommodations process is part science and part art, but DS offices are responsible for guiding the institutional guarantee of reasonable accommodations from the ADA (Simon 2000; Wolanin and Steele 2004). By law, students are expected to request accommodations, so typically the accommodations process begins with them. To ask for accommodations, students have to disclose their disability, and the institution is permitted to require third-party documentation of that disability (Simon 2000; Wolanin and Steele 2004), which usually comes from a medical doctor, a psychologist or counselor, or a K–12 school psychologist

or special education department. In each case, the documentation should provide a clear diagnosis and the functional impact of the disability on college-related activities like participating in classes, doing homework, taking tests, working with others, and so on (see, e.g., Brinckerhoff, McGuire, and Shaw 2002; Shaw, Madaus, and Dukes 2009).

When the student first discloses his or her disability to DS, professionals engage the student in a discussion of how the disability may have an impact on the student in a college environment. The conversation focuses on the classroom, the co-curricular environment, and, if the campus has housing, the living environment. DS staff can guide students in considering access to all aspects of the campus, in and out of the classroom (Strange, 2000).

Typically, DS staff will sit down with students to have these detailed conversations when the students decide to attend the college, at the beginning of their first semester, or as soon as the student discloses the disability to the institution (which may or may not be at the beginning of their time on campus) (Getzel 2005; Goode 2007; Shaw et al. 2009; Wolanin and Steele 2004). In this conversation, the DS staff member establishes a relationship with the student, learns about his or her academic goals and experiences, discusses any pertinent disability history and impact of the disability, and takes requests for accommodations. In this conversation, the DS staff will listen to what the student says and verify it with the third-party documentation of the disability. Using the documentation and the student's report, the staff member will make accommodation recommendations, which are usually presented to faculty in the form of a letter about accommodations. The letters are usually given to students, who deliver them to their instructors and teaching assistants personally. Ideally, students use the letters to initiate conversations about their needs.

Consultations with DS Offices

Another major role of the DS office is to work with faculty and staff to ensure the campus commitment to students with disabilities (Salzberg et al. 2002; Shaw and Dukes 2001). This is done through campus training and one-on-one meetings with instructors and staff. Administrators, faculty, and staff should see the DS office as a resource for all aspects of access: the larger picture of accessible curriculum design and universal design on campus, as well as the smaller picture of problem-solving situations with individual students or specific course components.

Many DS professionals are experts on accessible curriculum design, with a great wealth of knowledge on how to think through courses and points of access for students. Although DS staff members cannot be expected to know about all the academic disciplines offered on campus, they can work with instructors to create accessible or universally designed

activities for students. DS may also be able to assist faculty in finding other state, local, or national resources for instructors.

DS staff are also always willing to consult with an instructor about the particular circumstances of a student in their class. If recommended accommodations are not appropriate or not working, instructors should arrange to meet with DS staff for a consultation. DS staff are there, in part, to take the administrative burden of accommodations off of instructors, including researching solutions to dilemmas and proposing alternatives to instructors. However, the professor is, as always, the ultimate authority on his or her courses and academic disciplines.

Current Issues in Provision of Disability Service

Alternative Media. With more and more students having print-related disabilities like dyslexia or visual impairments, as well as the increased use of electronic media and distance learning, access to educational material for students with disabilities is a hot topic (see, e.g., Edyburn, this volume). Technology has become both a path to access and a barrier to access for students with print-related disabilities like blindness, visual impairments, and print-based learning disabilities including dyslexia. Many students with print-related disabilities use computer software that enlarges text on the screen, reads the text aloud, types what the student is saying, or does some combination of these. Software packages such as Kurzweil and Jaws have given students increased access to electronic media. They can take an electronic document in Word, PDF, HTML, or other formats, and access the content independently. If these documents are formatted in the right way, they are seamless for users. Instructors should generally try to follow the standards set forth in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act for accessibility in the design of their electronic media (see the Section 508 website at http://www.section508.gov/ for more information).

However, electronic media without the proper formatting and markup can create additional barriers to students with print-related disabilities. Flash media and files of text that are saved as images can be entirely inaccessible. Faculty must be vigilant to ensure that their electronic resources are marked up in ways that increase access rather than limit it. DS staff and campus information technology (IT) personnel can assist with recommendations about accessibility of electronic resources and digital files.

Emergent Populations. Students with autism or Asperger's diagnoses are among the most recent groups of students to increase in number on U.S. campuses (Harbour 2008). This may be due to the increasing prevalence of autism spectrum disorders in the general population (Rice 2009). These students often can be highly successful academically but may struggle socially both in and out of the classroom (for first-person accounts of these issues, see Prince-Hughes 2002). Having Asperger's syndrome does not mean that students have below-average intelligence, so if they meet entrance criteria

for degree programs, students with this label can (and should be expected to) perform at the same level as their peers.

Often, students identified as having Asperger's may need more direct communication than faculty are used to providing. For example, an instructor may be used to simply skipping over a student's raised hand if that student is dominating the conversation. A student with Asperger's may need the instructor to explicitly say that other people need to have a turn, but the larger conversation can continue after class. Students with Asperger's may also prefer a routine and have a difficult time coping with changes or surprises. These students typically love and excel in classes that follow a predictable pattern. Instructors can help students cope with change by being explicit about it. They can say, for example, "Typically, we start class with a full class discussion, but today we are going to try something different and start class in small groups instead." This acknowledgment of change in routine is a simple accommodation that can help a student to not get overly frustrated with an unpredictable class day.

There is also an increasing movement to create spaces for individuals with intellectual disabilities (historically identified as having "mental retardation") on campus as well (for more information, see Grigal and Hart 2009). With the most recent reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in 2008, the U.S. Department of Education is now offering grants and work study to students with intellectual disabilities who are participating in campus-based transition programs before they graduate from high school. Depending on the campus or campus program, students may audit for-credit courses, learn independent living skills on campus, or explore some combination of these, often with aides or nondisabled student peers offering support (Grigal and Hart 2009). While many open-enrollment community colleges have had students with intellectual disabilities for decades, this movement remains controversial, as many professionals argue that this emerging population of students will compromise academic standards. However, initial research suggests that inclusion of students with significant disabilities can often exceed expectations of faculty and staff, do not demand any significant modification of course material for nondisabled students, and can contribute toward a positive classroom experience for everyone involved (see, e.g., Causton-Theoharis, Asby, and DeClouette 2009). Providing higher education opportunities to all people is a logical step toward a society committed to the inclusion of all people.

As was true at many times in the history of the United States, when we are at war or have just concluded a war, the access to education for returning veterans improves. With new GI Bills allowing more veterans to enter education, we are seeing this population increase on our campuses (Madaus, Miller, and Vance 2009). Many of these returning soldiers have physical and mental combat-related disabilities. The military culture teaches these students to be self-reliant and work hard, which can make them excellent students. However, they may have difficulty admitting the need for

assistance—especially students who have psychiatric disabilities (Burnett and Segoria 2009; Madaus et al. 2009). However, the incidence of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is estimated to be as high as 20 percent in the returning veteran population (Roehr 2007). Students experiencing PTSD may have high absenteeism from classes or difficulty focusing and staying on task. These students are used to being tough under pressure and getting the job done. They can be frustrated by the civilian world and how it operates as well as frustrated by the new limitations of their body and mind. With appropriate supports—physical, social, and psychological—however, most are able to be successful students.

Universal Design. One solution for including all students with disabilities in a way that reduces stigma and the need for accommodation is to implement universal design (UD). UD is the design of environments, whether they be physical or curricular, to be accessible to the greatest diversity of individuals as possible. UD is a process of imagining the greatest diversity of your student body, with regard to race, class, gender, sexual orientation or identity, religion, ability, and age—and designing for that, rather than the historic practice of designing for a "typical" or "average" student and then making adjustments for every student who is "different" (Bowe 2000; Burgstahler and Cory 2008; McGuire, Scott, and Shaw 2004; Rose and Meyer 2002). UD creates an inclusive environment for all students and reduces the need for accommodations or specialized circumstances.

One of the shifts with UD is in how one thinks about accommodations. For example, in the past, a sign language interpreter was seen as an accommodation for a student who is deaf. Universal design does not do away with the need for interpreters, but it does change thinking about them. The "problem" shifts from the deaf student to the entire class. The class of nonsigning, nondeaf students has a communication problem with some people; class members communicate through sign or speech. Seeing the situation this way creates the need for an interpreter to facilitate *everyone's* communication. So the interpreter is there for the instructor, the deaf student, and the hearing students. Likewise, some disability accommodations, like class notes or choices about assignments (e.g., doing a presentation or a paper), may support all students' learning, encouraging creative and inclusive pedagogy while removing the stigma of accommodations as "special" considerations (Ben-Moshe et al. 2005; Rose et al. 2006).

Thinking of Disability as Part of Campus Diversity. Campus conversations about diversity are starting to include disability. With disability studies programs increasing on campuses, and the disability rights movement having a history and politics that are increasingly well known through mainstream books and media (e.g., Shapiro 1994), campuses are moving to embrace disability as diversity. Seeing disability as diversity is easier if disability is situated in culture and context rather than the person who has a disability (Linton 1998; Taylor, this volume). Then the problem, for example, is not that a person using a wheelchair cannot walk, but rather that

designers of a campus space failed to put in adequate ramps and elevators. The solution is no longer focused on an individual but is systemic. This is a similar evolution to the shift in pathological thinking about race and gender over the years.

When campuses include disability in their conversations about diversity, they start to see that including individuals with disabilities as students, faculty and staff enhances the campus. This leads to creating a more inclusive environment.

Conclusion

Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act give a framework for starting to discuss services for college students with disabilities. Institutions have the opportunity to challenge themselves to push past legal compliance to a place of inclusion and integration of students. With proper staffing of DS offices in support of students, newly emergent populations can thrive as well, and campuses can start to explore how disability can be celebrated as a part of campus diversity that ultimately fosters access for all students.

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