Working with Students with Disabilities and the Accommodations Process

CTRL NOONTIME CONVERSATION
FEBRUARY 21, 2019
Agenda

1. ASAC Overview
2. Disability as a legal status and identity
3. Accommodations: what they are and how the ASAC determines them
4. Frequently Asked Accommodations Questions (FAAQs)
5. Universal Design for Learning Overview
6. Faculty Perspectives
7. Questions and discussion
Academic Support and Access Center (ASAC) Overview

Disability Support
- Accommodations and resources for students with registered disabilities
- Promote importance of accessibility to the wider AU community

Academic Support
- Academic coaching and content-based support (Writing Center, SI, tutoring, Math/Stats Lab, etc.) available to all students
- Specialized support for student-athletes
Who is a Person with a Disability?

The Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 defines the term "disability" as:

(A) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities

(B) a record of such an impairment

(C) being regarded as having such an impairment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hearing</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Walking</th>
<th>Lifting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seeing</td>
<td>Breathing</td>
<td>Caring for Oneself</td>
<td>Standing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Concentrating</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Sitting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>Eating</td>
<td>Thinking</td>
<td>Sleeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bending</td>
<td>Communicating</td>
<td>Performing Manual Tasks</td>
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## Categories of Disabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Spinal Cord Injury</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sensory</td>
<td>D/deaf or Hard of Hearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>Major Depressive Disorder, Anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Learning Disabilities, ADHD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>Allergies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental</td>
<td>Autism Spectrum Disorder</td>
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<tr>
<td>Temporary</td>
<td>Broken Bone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>Diabetes, Crohn’s Disease</td>
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How Prevalent are Disabilities?

In the U.S.:

1 in 5 (20%) Americans meets the ADA definition of having a disability.

At AU:

1 in 13 students (7.6%) has registered a disability with the Academic Support and Access Center (as of fall 2017).
What is the Difference between Visible and Invisible Disabilities?

**Visible disability**
- One’s disability is apparent based on outward traits or equipment
- For example, a person’s use of a wheelchair signals that they may have a disability

**Invisible disability**
- One’s disability cannot be easily detected by just looking at them
- For example, a person’s learning disability is not usually apparent based on external traits
# Experience, Identity, and Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Felt, embodied reality of disabled life (e.g. experiencing depression, being autistic, having a hearing impairment)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Feeling a strong connection with the experience that forms one's understanding of oneself and our location in society (e.g. Deaf culture, crip/mad pride, anti-psychiatry movement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>How we are described and describe ourselves (e.g. person with a disability v. disabled person; other pejorative terms such as &quot;handicapped&quot;/&quot;wheelchair-bound&quot;/&quot;suffering from...&quot;)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Disability-Related Accommodations

What are they?

- Modifications or adjustments to the tasks, environment or to the way things are usually done that enable individuals with disabilities to have an **equal opportunity** to participate in an academic program or a job (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Why are they required?

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination against “otherwise qualified” individuals with disabilities in any program or activity receiving federal assistance. Accommodations help provide equal access for all individuals.
Interactive 3-Step Process

To request accommodations at American University, students must register with the Academic Support and Access Center through an interactive three-step process:

1. Complete the Student Accommodations Questionnaire (SAQ)
2. Submit clinical documentation that supports the request for accommodations
3. Meet with an ASAC Disability Access Advisor for an intake appointment
Accommodations Considerations

Accommodations cannot fundamentally alter the nature of the program or activity.

Accommodations must be “reasonable” and “appropriate.”

Accommodations are not retroactive.
Categories of Accommodations

- Academic
- Housing
- Dining
- Physical Access
What is Universal Design for Learning (UDL)?

An educational framework that strives to make content, material, and learning environments accessible and effective for all students.

Rather than waiting for a student to request a modification, UDL encourages educators to design their classes, lessons, and material to be accessible for all students from the beginning.
Frequently Asked Accommodations Questions (FAAQ's)
Student Submits Test Request

- Students use online booking system to submit requests to take tests with accommodations in ASAC
- Requests must be submitted 7 days in advance of in-class test date
- Students can make late requests, but they are contingent on available space

Professor receives email

- Professors are asked to submit pertinent information about the test (e.g. length, materials allowed, delivery location)
- ASAC coordinates seats, proctors, extended time, test info, and test copies to administer the test in the ASAC

Student arrives on test day

- Except for a writing utensil and any additional materials allowed by the professor, students store all belongings outside the testing room
- Students are proctored by trained ASAC proctors the entire time

Student finishes their test

- Students check out with the ASAC testing office
- Tests are put into an envelope and sealed by an ASAC staff member
- Depending on information provided by the professor, tests are either held in the ASAC for professor pick-up or delivered by the student

ASAC Accommodated Testing Process
# Testing Data

## FALL 2018

<table>
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<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Required: 2267</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Administered: 2042</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finals Week</th>
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<tr>
<td>Required: 787</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administered: 692</td>
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403 unique students
367 unique professors

## 2017-2018 ACADEMIC YEAR

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>Required: 4264</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Administered: 3817</td>
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506 unique students
538 unique professors
Laptops for Lecture Notes

What if I have a policy in my syllabus prohibiting laptops in class?

• The accommodation creates an exception to such a policy.

How do I explain that only students with the relevant accommodation are permitted to use their laptops in class?

• Refrain from using the words “accommodation” or “disability”
• Alternate suggestion: “Only students who speak with me to make individual arrangements are permitted to use their laptops in class.”

What if a student is using their laptop inappropriately?

• Approach the situation like you would in any other case of unacceptable classroom behavior
• Contact student’s Disability Access Advisor in ASAC
Use of a recording device for class lectures

- Creates an exception to a syllabus policy prohibiting recording in class
- Students sign a document indicating their understanding that recordings are for their personal, academic use only
- Technologies provided by the ASAC
  - Livescribe Pen
  - Audio Notetaker
Extended Deadlines

Extended deadlines on assignments when existing deadlines are not integral to the goal of the course.

Student has responsibility for communicating in a timely fashion with the professor regarding the status or concerns about meeting assignment deadlines in order for reasonable adjustments to be determined.

The accommodation of flexible deadlines is not retroactive.

In considering future requests for extended deadlines as an accommodation, the reasonableness of allowing those extensions may be considered in conjunction with the planned progression of the course.
Flexible Attendance

Opportunity to meet with professor to discuss attendance and class participation requirements that may be impacted as a result of the student’s disability.

The accommodation of flexible attendance is not retroactive.

In considering future absences as an accommodation, the reasonableness of allowing those absences may be considered in conjunction with past absences.
ASAC Process for Attendance and Deadline Accommodations

1. Gather student’s self-report and documentation
2. Present student’s request at weekly documentation review meeting
3. Contact student with decision
4. If approved, review guidelines with student
Roles for Attendance and Deadline Accommodation Arrangements

**STUDENT**
- Submit accommodations letter to professors ASAP
- Schedule meeting with each professor
- Serve as the expert on their disability

**PROFESSOR**
- Read accommodation guidelines
- Respond to student’s request for in-person meeting
- Serve as the expert on course learning outcomes and essential requirements

Collaborate on written agreement
Faculty Perspectives

Dr. Tanja Aho
Dr. Sarah Irvine Belson
Dr. Christopher Tudge
Presenter Information

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For general information about accommodations and disability support, contact the Academic Support and Access Center:
asac@american.edu, 202-885-3360, Mary Graydon Center 243
Questions?