Creating Welcoming Learning Environment: Supporting Universal Design in Learning

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Objective

To be able to increase accessibility for students with disabilities in the educational environment through your areas of influence.
Areas of Influence

- Advising
- Instruction
- Educational Environment
- Physical Plant
Why Does it Matter?

- 45% of disabled vs. 73% of non-disabled attend college
- 16% of disabled vs. 25% of non-disabled graduate
- 15 to 37% of disabled vs. 57 to 66% of non-disabled use career counseling services (NCES)
- Retention and graduation rates are declining and literature in the area has begun to find that strategies that are successful in supporting students with disabilities benefit other at risk students as well (Reiff, 1997)
- Advising services on college campuses are one of the most important aspects of student academic experiences (DO-IT, 2011)
Two Ways of Looking at Disability

• A disability is a result of a problem that a student has.

• A disability is a result of attitudes and the design of the environment.
Relative Participation by Department

- Health Prof.
- Science
- Business
- Engineering
- Pharmacy
- Humanities
- Nursing
- Architecture
- Ag and life sci
- Education
- Fine Arts
- Social & Beh Sci

Legend:
- Disabled
- All students
Almost one-third of college graduates with a variety of disabilities reported being discouraged from pursuing their preferred major.

(Silver, Strehorn, and Bourke, 1997 from Aune, 2000).
Different Disabilities and Why Does it Matter? (NCES, 2010)
Most Common Accommodations

• Alternate exam formats
• Extended exam time
• Tutors
• Readers, classroom note takers, or scribes
• Registration assistance
• Adaptive equipment or technology
• Textbooks on tape
• Course substitutions or waivers
  – (NCES, 1999)
Inclusive Educational Environment: Not Fragmented by Disability
Vision for Universal Design

• An emphasis on provision of effective services and teaching instead of legally mandated accommodations.
• Everyone takes advantage of the same product and are included right away
• Alternate formats will be standard
• People with disabilities will not need to continually advocate for their needs
• Approval for accommodations will be unnecessary
• Disability has significant representation in faculty, staff and students

(Scott, Loewen, Funckes & Kroeger, 2008)
Principals of Universal Design
(Burgstahler, 2008)

Equitable use

Flexibility in use

Simple and Intuitive

Perceptible information

Tolerance for error
Ideas for Implementing Universal Design in Advising and Teaching

• Ensure physical space is accessible to all
• Ensure communication methods accessible to all: online, in person, hand-outs and forms
• Provide information prior to meeting with student
• Be a facilitator for student instead of a helper
• Continually check for understanding
Question 1

• What do you already do in your practice that you think might be aligned with UD?
Question 2

What student struggles do faculty talk to you about?
Question 3

• How have you responded to concerns from faculty identified in question 2?
Model for UD Development from Program in 15 Community Colleges in Massachusetts
(Behling & Hart, 2004)

• Core Team members pick at least one area to become an expert in:
  – Course curriculum
  – Instruction
  – Assessment
  – The environment

• Core Team
  – Create local expertise
  – Build trust and support networks
  – Become mentors

• Important Considerations
  – Initiate UD from within
  – Listen to the participants' needs
  – Emphasize the benefits to all students
  – Gain administrative support
  – Development a network of peer mentors
Positive attitudes toward disability are not enough there must be actual concrete support (Aune, 1997).
References


BDO-IT: A Project to Help Postsecondary Campus Services Administrators Work Successfully with Students Who Have Disabilities: http://www.washington.edu/doit/Brochures/Academics/admin.html


Stevenson, M (2010). If they Can’t Stand the Heat ...’: Supporting the Academic Development of Higher Education Students with Anxiety and Depression Disorders The Open Rehabilitation Journal, 2010, 3, 41-46

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Handouts