

ADA-Audio Conference Series:
**Best Practices in Accommodating Students
with Autism Spectrum Disorders, Intellectual
Disability and other Emerging Groups within
Postsecondary Education**

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Welcome

- Presenter background:
 - Adjunct Professor with the Elmhurst Life Skills Academy at Elmhurst College
 - Faculty Access Consultant with the Disability Resource Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago
 - Holds a master's in Adult & Higher Education
 - Ph.D. candidate in Disability Studies and master's candidate in Special Education at UIC
 - Research focuses on serving college students with disabilities

Presentation Overview

- Current status of college students with disabilities
- Models for serving students with disabilities
- The Law and “the law” in serving students
- Emerging groups
 - Autism Spectrum Disorder/Asperger’s Syndrome
 - Traumatic Brain Injury
 - Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
 - Injured Veterans
- Utilizing Universal Design to reduce barriers
- Future best practices for serving students

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Abbreviations

- ASD- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- AT- Assistive Technology
- I/DD- Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities
- LD- Learning Disability
- P-21- Preschool through age 21 education
- TBI- Traumatic Brain Injury
- UD- Universal Design

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Status of College Students with Disabilities

- U.S. Census Bureau (2008) reports that 19% of Americans have a disability
- 1995-1996 academic year, about 6% of college students identify as having a disability (Horn, Berktold, and Bobbitt, 1999)
- 2003-2004 academic year, nearly 11% identify as having a disability (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman, 2007)

- Notice any trends here???

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Status of College Students (con't)

- Problems with current statistics:
 - Federal law states that students must self-identify to receive services (unlike P-21 where schools are required to seek out students needing academic intervention)
 - There is a lack of consistent disability categories across studies or Federal student surveys
 - No national benchmarks or readily available tools for regular follow-up studies

- New programs for students with I/DD... where do they fit?

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Models of Disability

- Individualistic- provide accommodations that work to mediate limitations by equaling the academic playing field
- Universal- work to make physical and technological aspects readily accessible to all, therefore reducing the need for individual accommodations
- Social- work to reframe culture by removing sociocultural barriers that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating

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Intent versus Spirit of the Law

- Like all legislation, there is a discrepancy between what was intended and how the law actually works
- Both the ADA and Rehabilitation Act sections relating to students are good examples
- With limited budgets, underprepared service providers, inaccessible university spaces, and rising costs for serving students with disabilities...sometimes the reasonable accommodation is not always the *best* accommodation
- Students have a severe lack of understanding about their rights to services under the Law

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Emerging Student Groups

- Autism Spectrum Disorder/Asperger's Syndrome
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- Injured Veterans

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ASD/Asperger's Syndrome

- Autism and Asperger's are often viewed as the extremes on a continuum
- Autism is associated with cognitive, verbal, and social delays and/or limitations
- Asperger's generally has little cognitive or verbal delay
- Characteristics also include: problems socializing and repetitive patterns or interests (APA, 2000)
- Growing numbers of students with Asperger's Syndrome are entering higher education

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Asperger's Accommodations

- Generally, no accommodations are necessary because Asperger's is a social functioning disorder
- When comorbidity exists with LD, accommodations include:
 - Extended time for assignments or exams
 - Assistive technology
 - Alternative formats
 - Breaks (especially sensory)
 - Assistance for required out-of-class activities

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Asperger's Practices

- Realize that the student may not look at or posture toward another individual
- Be aware that social relationships may be difficult; especially those assumed to be at the college-level
- "Teach through" repetitive mannerisms or patterns
- Utilize partnerships to strengthen social behaviors that are appropriate for the college setting
- Understand that most people with Asperger's have only social functioning problems but no cognitive deficits

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Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

- An acquired, sudden injury in which an individual's head hits another object or an object pierces the brain
- TBI also occurs along a spectrum

- TBI can affect any or all of the following functions:
 - Cognitive
 - Sensory
 - Communication
 - Behavioral

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TBI Accommodations

- Extended time for assignments and/or testing
- Use of notes, book, dictionary, calculator for exams
- Note taking or voice recording for lectures
- Assistive technology
- Alternate formats
- Breaks during class or exams
- Assistance during orientation or out-of-class activities
- Adapted athletics

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TBI Best Practices

- Utilize documentation when collaborating with the student to determine classroom accommodations
- Realize that TBI spans a number of functional areas, and not all may be affected
- Work with the student to determine if previous accommodations have been successful
- Frequent contact with instructors is beneficial in ensuring that the accommodations are effective
- Disability Services staff should keep in mind that students with TBI may have exacerbation of symptoms at any time

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Intellectual/Developmental Disability

- Most of these disabilities fall onto a spectrum in terms of severity or increasing limitation
- Often, I/DD displays cognitive deficit comorbid with LD
- General categories include (APA, 2000):
 - Mental Retardation
 - Motor skills disorders
 - Communication disorders
 - Pervasive developmental disability (Autism, Rett's, Asperger's)
 - Down Syndrome

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I/DD Accommodations

- Extended time for assignments and/or testing
- Use of notes, book, dictionary, or calculator on exams
- Answer directly on exam copies; no answer sheet
- Note taking or voice recording
- Assistive technology
- Orientation assistance
- Verbal description or physical manipulation
- Adapted athletics

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I/DD Best Practices

- I/DD ranges from significant impairment to only a slight level of cognitive difficulty
- Many of the accommodations and AT options that serve students with LD also benefit students with I/DD (for example: tracking and text-to-voice software)
- Frequent contact with instructors is helpful in ensuring that accommodations are effective
- Students are enrolling in specialized college programs designed to meet the needs of students with I/DD

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I/DD Programs

- Colleges are adding both separate programs and support initiatives for students with I/DD
- One example is the Elmhurst Life Skills Academy (ELSA):
 - Students completed high school and read at a third-grade level
 - Classes are tailored to meet individual needs
 - ELSA students are involved in many student activities
 - Students take academic (Geography), life skills (cooking), career, social issues, and fine arts courses
 - The students are integrated into many aspects of college life
 - The end goals are providing skills and collegiate experiences that will benefit the individual throughout their life

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Injured Veterans

- Returning war veterans can have any number of injuries
- Because of broad access due to financial support, more injured veterans are attending college
- A recent sample (Vance and Miller, 2009) of veterans served in higher education found:
 - Psychological- 34% (males) and 11% (females)
 - Acquired health condition- 16% and 4%
 - Learning disability- 9% and 7%
 - Physical/mobility- 8% and 1%
 - Hard of Hearing- 5% and 1%

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Accommodations for Veterans

- Extended time for assignments and/or testing
- Note taking or voice recording for lectures
- Assistive technology
- Possibly alternate formats
- Classroom relocation or accessible furniture
- Breaks during class or exams
- Assistance during orientation or out-of-class activities
- Adapted athletics
- Housing or parking accommodations

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Best Practices for Veterans

- Coordinated campus services are vital
 - Financial
 - Disability Services
 - Psychological and counseling
 - Career counseling
- A welcoming environment which provided respect and resources for veterans
- Provide services and coursework during the evening to accommodate veterans' schedules

(Vance and Miller, 2009)

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Utilizing Universal Design

- UD is based on architectural principles and has been expanded to technology and education
- Increase access and inclusiveness
- Work to remove unnecessary barriers
- Provide for multiple means of representation
- Allow for multiple methods of assessing learning

- UD takes a *proactive* rather than reactive approach

(Scott, et.al., 2003)

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Future Best Practices

- Asperger's:
 - Institutions need to become more aware and be able to work across the campus to provide social supports
 - Assess accommodations for Asperger's students with LD
- TBI:
 - Utilize more AT to allow students with TBI to continue pursuing education after injury
 - Provide flexible accommodations that meet changing needs
 - Develop guidelines for reintegration/continuation after injury
 - Better assessment should lead to targeted accommodations

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Future Best Practices (con't)

- I/DD:
 - Utilize more AT to ensure access to materials
 - Allow for flexibility in assessment of learning
 - Incorporate more UD into lectures and assignments
- Veterans:
 - May have physical injuries *and* psychological needs
 - Disability Services should maintain on-going contact with the student to determine if the VA can provide supports
 - Staff across campus should prepare to work together to meet veterans': accommodation, financial, and personal needs

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Future Best Practices (con't)

- Disability Service Providers Practices:
 - A more standardized process and set of criteria for providing accommodations are needed on a national scale
 - Comprehensive and systematic training in this field for Service Providers is necessary
 - Large-scale and institutional assessment must be done
- Faculty Practices:
 - Increase awareness of disability issues and incorporate these into the curriculum (like other underrepresented groups)
 - Utilize UD and take a larger responsibility in providing some student accommodations

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Questions and Discussion

- The next approximately 30 minutes will available for questions and discussion
- Please jump-in and share your experiences in providing exceptional services to these groups
- I can discuss generally how the institutions within which I work have served these emerging students

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Additional Resources

- Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD)
 - <http://www.ahead.org/>
- Curriculum Transformation and Disability
 - <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/CRDEUL/books-ctad.html>
- DO-IT Center, University of Washington
 - <http://www.washington.edu/doi/>
- Think College (students with I/DD)
 - <http://www.thinkcollege.net/>
- Veterans Best Practices (from AHEAD)
 - http://www.ahead.org/publications/jped_veterans

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THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!!!

Please feel welcome to contact me with additional questions at:

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