Agenda for this Session

● Students with Disabilities Services at Heidelberg Update
● Statistics on Students with Disabilities
● Legal Issues
● Process and Practice
● Common Accommodations
● How You Can Help
● What To Tell Parents
● Questions
Heidelberg Update

- A search will be underway this semester for a full-time Disabilities Services and Counseling Coordinator

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Statistics

2011-2012:

11.1% of all undergraduate students reported having a disability

- 44% of students with disabilities were male
- 56% of students with disabilities were female


- “In the last decade, the proportion of undergraduates designated as learning disabled (LD) or as having ADD/ADHD has almost doubled, to reach more than 2 percent of the total U.S. undergraduate population, or 394,500 students.” (Vickers, 2010)
Heidelberg University must provide reasonable accommodations to insure equal access to our offerings for students with documented disabilities as long as the accommodations do not fundamentally alter the integrity of any course or program of study.

Laws that provide guidance regarding accommodations for students include:

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
The Americans with Disabilities Act (1990)

- Prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in employment, transportation, public accommodation, communications, and governmental activities. The ADA also establishes requirements for telecommunications relay services.
- Disability definition: “an individual must have an impairment that prevents or severely restricts the individual from doing activities that are of central importance to most people’s daily lives” (ADA Amendments Act of 2008)
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

- National law that protects qualified individuals from discrimination based on their disability.
- Applies to employers and organizations that receive financial assistance from any Federal department or agency.
- Includes hospitals, nursing homes, mental health centers, institutions of higher education and human services programs.
- Forbids organizations and employers from excluding or denying individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to receive program benefits and services.
- It defines the rights of individuals with disabilities to participate in, and have access to, program benefits and services.
Process and Practice

- Student obtains appropriate paperwork for the Office of Disability Services
- Students provide **current** documentation of disability
  - Verifies disability and suggest appropriate accommodations
  - IEP (sometimes...)
  - 504 Plan
  - Psychological Evaluation
  - All documentation must be completed and signed by a professional familiar with the student and their disability--physician, psychologist, rehabilitation counselor
- Paperwork is reviewed by the Disability Service Coordinator and/or team
Questions to Address Eligibility Determination and Reasonable Accommodations:

- Does the student meet the criteria of having a disability as defined by the ADA Amendments Act of 2008?
- What is the current impact of the impairment on the student’s ability to participate in the university’s educational programs and services (functional limitations)?
- What are possible accommodations, modifications, and/or adjustments that might remove the barriers?
- Without these accommodations, would the individual still have meaningful access to the program, service or activity?
- Would these accommodations compromise the essential elements of the curriculum?
- Would these accommodations require a fundamental alteration in the nature of the program, service, or activity?
Process and Practice

- Eligibility is determined
- The student meets with the Disabilities Coordinator to design and develop reasonable accommodations
- A letter/email is generated and distributed to faculty by the student
Accommodations

- **Purpose:** to provide equal academic opportunity and access to courses and programs for students with disabilities
- Should be determined as part of an interactive and collaborative process
- Need not be provided when the accommodation would result in a fundamental alteration of the program or impose an undue financial or administrative burden on the institution
Accommodations

- Students can provide you with notice of accommodations at any time during the semester.
- Implementation of accommodations begins at the time you receive notice—they are not retroactive.
- In the event that you have not been given reasonable notification of accommodations (usually within 10 business days of an exam) it is within your discretion to not grant the accommodation immediately, but you must grant the accommodation on any subsequent exams or assignments.
Accommodations

- Specific arrangements are to be made between faculty and student for each exam.
- Students are responsible for requesting academic accommodations for each semester they wish to receive them.
- Ultimately, all students are expected to meet the same academic requirements and should be assigned grades by the same standards, regardless of disability.
- We must strive to guarantee equal access for students with disabilities, however, we cannot guarantee success.
“Reasonable” Accommodations

We are required to make “reasonable” adjustments or modifications to practices, policies and procedures, and to provide auxiliary aids and services for students with disabilities, unless to do so would “fundamentally alter” the nature of the programs or result in an “undue burden”.

Providing accommodations do not compromise the essential elements of a course or curriculum, nor do they weaken the academic standards or integrity of a course.

Accommodations should provide a “level playing field” NOT an unfair advantage.
Accommodation Letters/Emails

- Will contain a description of the students' accommodations for that semester
- Will NOT contain any confidential diagnostic information due to FERPA laws
- Each student is advised that s/he does not need to share that confidential information
Faculty Ethical Standards

- Provide information to all students in your syllabus about obtaining accommodations
- Meet the needs of students in a timely manner
- If you suspect that an accommodation undermines the essential requirements or nature of the course contact the Disabilities Coordinator immediately to discuss options for modification to afford equal access
- Maintain confidentiality of information
- Refer students who have disclosed having a disability to you
- Do not ask a student what type of disability s/he has--they do not have to share this confidential information with you to receive accommodations.
Common Accommodations

- Extended time to take in class quizzes, tests, and exams
- Reduced distraction environment for testing
- Altered exam dates (no more than 1 exam in a 24 hour period)
- Breaks for quizzes, tests, and exams (usually 5 minutes for every 45 minutes of testing)
- Scantron (allowed to write on the test paper and/or have responses transferred to the scantron by a test proctor)
- Use of a computer for writing
- Spelling
Common Accommodations

- Note taking services (students may need assistance from the instructor in locating an appropriate in-class note-taker)
- Flexibility with attendance
- Computer access during class
- Copies of lecture notes/outlines/PowerPoints, etc. prior to class (not at the beginning of class)
- Audio record class
- Video record class
- Breaks during class
- Use of a calculator
- Paper formatted exams
- Alternative seating
How Can YOU Help Students with Disabilities in Your Classes?
Open Communication Can Make a HUGE Difference!

- During the first class, announce that if anyone needs special arrangements or consideration to come see you.
- If the student has not approached you, approach the student to ask if adjustments are necessary and to indicate that you are available to help.
- Meet with the student early in the term and then meet regularly. Give extra time outside of class.
- Encourage the student to stay in touch with you.
- Ask students if they require alternative ways to interact with the material.
- If necessary, recommend that the student go to a tutor for help.
- Contact the Disabilities Coordinator and/or request a meeting.
How Else Can You Help?

- Allow choice seating for students with a disability
- Ensure inclusiveness in the classroom and discourage stereotypical behavior
- Make important information more visual with handouts, PowerPoint slides, and online class notes
- Repeat questions asked by students so everyone can hear
- Provide alternative ways to demonstrate mastery of the subject
- Talk directly to students, not to their interpreter
- Be sensitive that students may feel stigmatized
How Else Can You Help?

- Avoid lecturing while you are writing on the blackboard--face the class to make comments
- Position students in a circle for better communication
- Understand that students with disabilities may require more time to complete readings and assignments
- Ask before erasing the board to ensure students have gotten the information
- Don’t make assumptions about the student’s ability to participate
- Be flexible and willing to make changes to your courses/teaching as necessary
- Be open to new ideas and suggestions
What to Tell Worried Parents

- The student’s disability will NOT affect their admission status
- College students DO NOT have an IEP
- Accommodations are possible, but they are different in college and are MUCH less involved than what students may be used to
- CURRENT documentation is necessary for accommodations--get a new evaluation your senior year.
- Students are not required to disclose their disability, but it is strongly suggested
- Suggest visiting the Disabilities Coordinator and give them contact information
Questions?
References and Resources


