

Effectively Working with Students Living with Disabilities



Delayne Connor
**Associate Professor of Special Education &
Communication Disorders**

Jenn Manak
**Assistant Professor in Elementary & Early
Childhood Education**

**Leading for Change: Diversity Practices in Higher
Education 2014**

Case Studies



Effectively Working with Students Living with Disabilities

Case Study 1: Social Competence - Autism Spectrum Disorder or Learning Disabilities



Jack is one of 30 students in an introduction to sociology class. The professor, Dr. Azziz, sometimes engages in a sort of interactive lecturing, where he delivers information, but also verbally interacts with the class about the ideas. There is often a lot of lively class discussion.

Jack is a responsible student who has strong opinions and is generally prepared for class. He has a lot to say, and rather loudly inserts his frequent comments as Dr. Azziz is talking, often without raising his hand. He may also interrupt his classmates as they speak. Sometimes Jack's comments are oddly constructed and seem to be only tenuously tied to the topic. It is clear that the students find Jack a little odd, and sometimes intrusive and irritating. Dr. Azziz sometimes loses his place when Jack interrupts him or finds the class dynamics changed when Jack enthusiastically "talks over" him or other students.

1. How can Dr. Azziz assist Jack in exercising turn-taking rules and promote wider discussion among all class members?
2. How can your department (e.g., Student Affairs, The Academic Achievement Center) help support Jack in his wider experience at your institution ?

Case Study 2: Visual Impairment



Dr. Andrews teaches a course in European history to a class of 25 sophomores. Lily, one of her students, has low vision; that is, Lily can distinguish forms but sees them with blurred contours. Print in 12-point font is perceived as a kind of ink wash, the letters indistinct; but special lenses enable her to read very large font fairly well.

Dr. Andrews uses power point slides to support her lectures and incorporates photos and other images into her power point shows. She also accesses web sites, as she lectures, that include still and moving images. Additionally, Dr. Andrews is very animated, regularly using facial and body language to support or even substitute for oral language. Lily has expressed that she sometimes misses information, particularly regarding the images.

1. How can Dr. Andrews communicate information and meaning more successfully to Lily, and still communicate effectively to the rest of the class?
2. How can your department (e.g., Student Affairs, The Academic Achievement Center) help support Lily in her wider experience at your institution ?

Case Study 3: Evaluating Students with Learning & Cognitive Disabilities



Jeremiah is one of 25 students in Dr. Langer's introduction to cultural anthropology course. Dr. Langer requires his students to complete and submit various in-class writing assignments to formatively assess their understanding of course content. The professor's four exams also include a written component. In addition, students are required to write a 5-page research paper on a topic of their choice

Jeremiah regularly comes to class and contributes to class discussions; however, he has difficulty effectively communicating his understanding of the content in in-class writing assignments. Although Jeremiah has difficulty writing coherent, complete sentences on in-class assignments and exams, he submitted a research paper that earned an above average grade.

Dr. Langer provides Jeremiah with accommodations suggested by the Disability Resources office, including extended test time, digitally recording lectures, disregarding spelling on in-class assignments, and access to a note taker.

1. How should Dr. Langer evaluate Jeremiah's overall performance in his class?
2. How can your department (e.g., Student Affairs, The Academic Achievement Center) help support Jeremiah in his wider experience at your institution?

Case Study 4: Students with Psychological & Medical Disabilities



Dr. Graff teaches a course in art history to a class of 20 sophomores and juniors. It is the third week of classes and Dr. Graff has noticed that two of her students are frequently absent.

Ilsa, one of Dr. Graff's students, has a medical condition and is absent from class at least once each week. Ilsa reads the required readings, signs into the course's Moodle site regularly, and maintains close contact with her professor. Travis, another one of Dr. Graff's students, has severe depression and is also frequently absent from class. When he is present in class, he becomes noticeably nervous when the professor asks the students questions or engages the class in collaborative discussions.

Although Ilsa and Travis have different disabilities, they are both frequently absent from class.

1. How should Dr. Graff address this attendance issue? How can Dr. Graff best support each of these students when they are present in her classroom?
2. How can your department (e.g., Student Affairs, The Academic Achievement Center) help support Ilsa and Travis in their wider experience at your institution?

Universal Design



SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Universal Design defined



The design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

--Ron Mace



When we design learning and support environments with a full and natural range of students in mind, we reduce the need for accommodation.

UD provides a more supportive environment for everyone (close captioning).

Examples of Universal Design



Physical Environment

- Door handle instead of a door knob
- Door sensors
- Auditory, visual, and tactile signals in elevators



Learning Environment

- Use of electronic books that provide individualized supports such as translation, highlighted major ideas, narration, and music to illustrate mood.



Student Support Services

- Printed materials available in large print and electronic text
- Printed materials available from a variety of heights

Universal Design Video



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDvKnYog6e4>

Questions



**What questions do you have
regarding working with students
living with disabilities at your
institution?**