AN INGENIOUS WAY TO LIVE: DISABILITY & CONTEMPORARY COLLEGE STUDENTS

March 6, 2014
Student Affairs & Enrollment Management Professional Development Series

Presented by:
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Welcome & Overview

Welcome: Safe space. Questions are encouraged and invited.

1. Perceptions of students with disabilities
2. “Hot” topics
3. Access and inclusion
4. Wrap up/Q&A

“Disability is not a brave struggle or courage in the face of adversity... Disability is an art. It’s an ingenious way to live.”

Neil Marcus
PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
What comes to mind when you hear the words:

HANDICAPPED
RETARDED
SPECIAL
DISABLED
Words others have shared...

“dumb”
“deficient”
“sad”
“weird”
“different”
“pitiful”
“dangerous”
Where do these concepts come from?

• Historical perspectives
• Language
• Media sources
• What else...
Historical Perspectives

- Different “models” of disability have contributed to stereotypes:
  - Religious model
    - Punished for bad behavior
    - Paying for someone else’s sins
  - Charity model
    - Can’t take care of self (e.g. Jerry Lewis telethon) – burden on society
    - Where term “handicapped” is alleged to come from; translation of hand in cap for “handouts”
  - Civil Rights/Legislative model
    - Compliance based
  - Medical model
    - Fix it, cure it, make it go away

- Disability Studies scholars advocate for a social justice model of disability
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medical Model</th>
<th>Social Justice Model</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disability is a deficiency or abnormality.</td>
<td>Disability is a difference.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being disabled is negative.</td>
<td>Being disabled, in itself, is neutral.</td>
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<td>Disability resides in the individual.</td>
<td>The remedy for disability related problems is a change in the interaction between the individual and society.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The agent of remedy is the professional.</td>
<td>The agent of remedy can be the individual, an advocate, or anyone who affects the arrangement between the individual and society.</td>
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Language

- Handicapped
  - Society based, begging, less than
  - Used in other ways
    - Golfing: handicap
- Retarded
  - Medical term
  - “Let’s Get Retarded” Black Eyed Peas
  - “retarded” as slang
    - Tropic Thunder
    - The Hangover
    - Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story
- Special/Exceptional
  - Special Education
  - Isn’t that special?
  - Resegregating education
- Disabled
  - Person first
    - D/deaf
    - I am autistic vs I have autism
Theorizing Disability
Implications and Applications for Social Justice in Education
Susan L. Gabel & David J. Connor (2009)

SITUATING DISABILITY WITHIN A BROADER SOCIOLOGICAL CONTEXT AND IMPLICATING SOCIETY IN THE DISABLEMENT OF PEOPLE PROVES TO BE PROVOCATIVE AND RADICAL, PARTICULARLY WHERE SPECIAL EDUCATION IS CONCERNED.
“Disability” Stereotypes in Media

• Pitiable and pathetic: “I Am Sam”
• Object of violence: “Silence of the Lambs,” “American Psycho”
• Sinister and evil: Captain Hook from “Peter Pan”
• Curiosity: “Hunchback of Notre Dame”
• Super-human ability: “Daredevil”
• Own worst enemy: “Good Will Hunting”
Residents of Pine Crest presented a petition to Linden City Council Tuesday evening, April 4, to protest moving three mentally retarded people into a home in the neighborhood.

The petition, presented by spokesman Sylvan Mutschler, voiced concern over the purchase of a house by Arc of Fayette-Lamar, a non-profit company which provides residential services for developmentally and disabled people.

The house is zoned as single family dwelling. To have three unrelated people living there would put the house in violation of city ordinance as it would then be classified as group home, according to Mutschler.

Residents of the neighborhood said the company gave an impression of trying to sneak into the community instead of researching the zoning laws first.

One person said he was concerned over the danger of having mentally ill people living next door. There are many children who play unattended in backyards and in the streets of Pine Crest. In the past the people have enjoyed an atmosphere of relative safety.

Wade Reese, program director for the company, was at the meeting in order to answer the questions.

He said that it was not the intentions of the company to sneak in. The pretext for settling on this particular house had to do with time constraints and financial reasons. He explained the people just need a place to live and this was their cheapest option. He understood that Linden has had group homes in the past and he did not think at the time there would be a problem. If he had known there would be complaints, things would have handled differently.

He also stressed to the audience that they were in no danger and that the people, other than giving strange looks or constantly staring, would pose no problem.

Once they moved in, the three would receive 24 monitoring by one or more employees. There would also be frequent visits from family. The residents of the house would not be allowed to leave the premises without stringent supervision, he pointed out.

Mayor Pat Vice discussed the rezoning process with Reese and told him that in order to continue he would have to initiate a request for rezoning. If the request made it through a planning committee, it would be presented to the city council. Vice said the process would take no longer than thirty days to get approved.

Reese is scheduled to meet with City Administrator Cheryl Hall in order to initiate the request.
How do perspectives and stereotypes apply to contemporary college students with disabilities?

- Society focuses on individuals who “succeed” in overcoming disability, rather than focus on majority who live with theirs.

- Disability is a challenge to overcome, to be “normal.”

- People feel better about the condition of persons with disabilities, when they don’t have to “accommodate” them.

- Construct that disability can be overcome if only the person would “try hard enough.”

- A false sense of disability has been developed through “Hero” or comedic-relief roles often played by non-disabled actors.
Cartoon depicting janitor shoveling snow off of steps for students without disabilities, telling student using wheelchair that he'll have to wait for the ramp to be cleared. Example of concept of Universal Design.
“HOT” TOPICS
Growing student populations

• Veterans
  • With Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
  • With Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBIs)
  • With Hearing Impairments
  • With Physical Disabilities

• Students on the Autism Spectrum

• Students with Comfort Animals vs. Students with Therapy Animals

• Students with Celiac or other food related diagnoses
Examples of student concerns

- Access
  - Physical
  - To alternative format
- Treatment/discrimination
  - Being “outed”
- Inconsistent experiences
- Asked for documentation or diagnostic information
- Disregarded for not “looking” disabled
Legal “hot” topics - examples

- Availability of alternate format of text in a timely manner
- Captioning
- Comfort animals
- Discrepant treatment
- Gluten-free food/diet
- Standardized testing
- Federal mandates (e.g. ADA amendments)
- State mandates (e.g. Illinois Information Technology Accessibility Act)
ACCESS AND INCLUSION
Barriers: Real and Perceived

• Perceptions are reality.
• Attitudinal: People with disabilities are “less than...”
• Physical: People with disabilities cannot do ________.
• Content: Inaccessible materials, services, programs.
• Financial: Cost of service animals, assistive technology, medication, travel to doctors, reduced course load, etc...
• Restrictive/Rigid Processes: For example, mandatory attendance policy not tied to essential elements of course.
Examples of Barrier Reduction

• Attitudinal/Societal Barriers
  • Remove assumptions about students’ abilities
  • Be transparent with expectations

• Physical/Environmental Barriers
  • Review classroom/program locations and set up
  • Review out of class experiences and access across campus

• Content Barriers
  • Printed materials - ensure alternate formats are available and factor in length of time to convert or create
  • Multimedia sources – ensure media is captioned, screen readable, and factor in lag time when using speech to text, font, presentation materials...

• Review policies and procedures for unnecessary barriers
  • Attendance policies not connected to essential elements
  • Requiring disclosure of disability within set period of time
Retention: Increase Access & Inclusion

• Barriers, old models, and uninformed expectations do not lead to inclusive or accessible environments.

• Use of accommodations has not consistently been shown to be an indicator of retention.

• Students feeling supported, heard by faculty, being held to a consistent and fair standard, and connecting with peers has been shown to be an indicator of retention of students with disabilities.
Leadership in Action

• Be cognizant of terminology

• Advocate for diversity

• Review existing systems, policies, procedures

• Identify barriers within organizations

• Take actions that increase accessibility
Leadership in Action

• Support the recruitment and retention of individuals with disabilities.

• Integrate disability and social justice.

• Create supportive and safe environments.

• Identify barriers for access and inclusion, and seek to reduce those barriers.
Universal Design

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. Also applied to learning (UDL) and instruction (UDI).

- **UD – 7 principles**
  1. Equitable use
  2. Flexibility in use
  3. Simple and intuitive use
  4. Perceptible information
  5. Tolerance for error
  6. Low physical effort
  7. Size and space for approach and use

- **UDL – 3 principles**
  1. Multiple means of representation
  2. Multiple means of expression
  3. Multiple means of engagement

- **UDI – combination of principles from UD and UDL**
WRAP UP – Q&A