“Why is it so hard?”
Advising and Supporting Students with Learning Differences

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Today’s Presenters

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Agenda

• Define Learning Differences

• Share strategies for advising students with learning differences

• Share strategies for accommodating students with learning differences

• Provide suggestions for building cross-campus collaboration between those offices who support this population of students.
Did you know???

- In 2015-2016, **19.4%** of undergraduate students in the US have a documented disability.

- Within this group, the most common diagnoses are:
  - **Specific learning disabilities** 31%
  - **Attention deficit disorder** 18%
  - **Mental health, psychological, or psychiatric conditions** 15%
  - **Medical health impairment or conditions** 11%

- **NLTS2 report findings**
  - 60% continued on to PSE within 8 years of leaving high school
  - More likely to have enrolled in 2-year colleges (44%) than in vocational, business, or technical schools (32%) or 4-year colleges or universities (19%)
  - Only **28%** identified themselves as having a disability and informed their postsecondary schools
  - **19%** who were identified as having a disability by their secondary schools were reported to receive accommodations or supports from their PSE institution
What is meant by Learning Differences?

• Hidden or unseen challenges to included diagnosed learning disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, medical challenges, and psychological disorders

• Problems/challenges occur both inside and outside the academic arena
Terminology

- **Dyslexia** - Connected to reading abilities
- **Dyscalculia** - Associated with difficulties in math
- **Dysgraphia** - Associated with disabilities in writing
- **Auditory Processing Deficit** - Characterized by a struggle to understand and use auditory information
- **Visual Processing Deficit** - A weakness in taking on and using visual information
- **Non-verbal Learning Disability** - Problems with sensory sensitivity, motor deficits, executive functioning, changing routines once established, and understanding concepts of time, distance, space and direction
- **Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disability** - A chronic condition including attention difficulty, hyperactivity, and/or impulsiveness
Raising Awareness of Invisible Disabilities
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Common Signs to Look For

• Frustration
• Fatigue
• Failure
Strategies for Academic Advisors:

• Ask probing and open-ended questions about their high school experiences.
• Include information about your campus’s Office of Accessibility in early conversations
• Help students identify their strong areas and their weak areas
• Be personable and approachable
• Provide students with a summary of your advising appointments
• Provide students with opportunities to practice planning
• Practice self-determination skills during meetings
• Make yourself and your office accessible
• Become familiar with the teaching styles of different instructors around campus
• Check your own “temperature” before appointments
Building Cross-Campus Collaboration

- Caucus meetings
- Campus professional development trainings
- University committee participation
- Graduate classes
- Get lunch
- Professional conferences
Office of Accessibility

What Happens Now?
Applying for Accommodations

- Steps to Receive Accommodations:
  - Online Intake Form
  - Medical Documentation
  - Meeting with Specialist
  - Collaborative Discussion
General Forms (provided by our office)

- ADHD
- Learning Disabilities
- Mental Health, Mobility,
- Sensory, and Other Health
- Conditions

- Other Accepted Documentation:
  - IEPs/ 504 Plans/ Education Plans
  - Letter from Doctor
  - Psychoeducational Evaluations
  - Provided by a licensed or otherwise properly credentialed professional
  - Includes a clear diagnostic statement that describes how the condition was diagnosed, provides information on the functional impact, and details the typical progression or prognosis of the condition.
  - Should be relatively recent in order to provide an accurate description of current functioning
  - Should address the major life activities (i.e., caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, learning, walking, reading, concentrating, thinking etc.) affected by the disability and how those functional limitations impact the student in an academic setting.
Confidentiality of Records and Release of Information

• **Records/ Documentation**
  • Our office is committed to protecting the confidentiality of student records in our possession. We retain student records in compliance with both state and federal law, in particular with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The information contained within a student’s file is property of the OA; however, a student can request to view his/her file in the presence of a Disability Specialist. If a student chooses to release their records to a specified individual, a “Release of Information” form should be completed and submitted to the OA. OA retains all records documenting a student’s requests for accommodations, as well as OA’s response to the request for 5 years after a student’s last day of attendance.

  • For more information or if concerns exist about the confidentiality of disability records, please contact OA and speak with a professional staff member.

• **Permission to Discuss Information**
  • Non-university: Parents, Guardians, Spouses, etc.

• **Academic and Administrative Purposes Only**
  • I hereby give the OA’s professional and administrative staff permission to confer (via written and/or oral communication) with my advisor, counselor, instructors, and/or administrators each semester, or as needed to secure appropriate accommodations for me. I understand there are specific but rare instances when information regarding the nature of my disability may need to be disclosed to an advisor, instructor and/or administrator in order to facilitate legitimate University processes, including but not limited to granting appropriate accommodations, addressing direct threats or investigating claims or charges.
Notifying Instructors

REMINDER: Your accommodations will be inactive until the meeting with your instructor occurs. Review your instructor’s syllabus for instructions on scheduling appointments to discuss accommodations. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your accommodation specialist at (334) 844-2096 or stop by the Office of Accessibility, 1228 Haley Center.
## Auburn University Statistics (Primary Disability)

### 2/28/2020
- Active Students: 2034 (roughly 6.8%)
  - ADHD – 1006
  - TBI – 41
  - Hearing Impairment – 35
  - Health Condition – 466
  - Learning Disabilities – 706
  - Physical Limitations – 107
  - Mental Health – 768
  - Speech – 6
  - Visual Impairments – 35

### 6/9/2021
- Active Students: 2117 (roughly 7.05%)
  - ADHD – 825
  - TBI – 25
  - Hearing Impairment – 38
  - Health Condition – 337
  - Learning Disabilities – 349
  - Physical Limitations – 86
  - Mental Health – 415
  - Visual Impairments – 22
Questions?

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