

The background is a blue gradient with abstract, overlapping shapes in various shades of blue, creating a modern and professional look. The text is centered and reads:

Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders in College

University Community: “What is happening?!!!”

More students coming to universities with psychiatric, developmental and traumatic injury issues.

Once a condition is identified and meets criteria for disability, the issue of accommodation appears.

People who would have dropped out or never attempted higher ed are coming and staying.

Inclusion and Providing Services

- University is committed to fostering inclusion.
- “Fighting for inclusion also involves assuring that all support systems are available to those who need such support. Providing and maintaining support systems is a civic responsibility, not a favor.”
- “We were all born "in". Society will immediately improve at the point we honor this truth!!”

Shafik Asante

The Laws

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- Americans with Disabilities Act 1990.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act Amendment Act of 2008.

"504"

- *"No otherwise qualified person with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of . . . disability, be denied the benefits of, be excluded from participation in, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."*

504, continued . . .

- A “person with a disability” includes:
 - any person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities.
 - Test anxiety is excluded.
- An “otherwise qualified person” is:
 - one who meets the requisite academic and technical standards required for admission or participation. The term “otherwise” means that the person qualifies despite their disability.

504 continued . . .

- Accommodations need not be made if the institution can demonstrate that doing so would “create an undue administrative or financial burden.”

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

- Extends the definition and rights of persons with disabilities.
 - The ADA includes public and private institutions and other services.
 - Makes clearer the inclusion of “invisible disabilities,” (i.e., learning disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and psychiatric disorders).
- Requirement for “reasonable accommodations” helps protect institutions from unreasonable demands.

Reasonable Accommodations

- Institutions are not required to make fundamental or substantial alterations to a course or its content.
- In other words, as an instructor, you are not required to provide a specific disability-related accommodation IF you can demonstrate that the recommended accommodation substantially alters essential course content or structure.

The Laws - Key Terms

- Disability -- impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities . . .
- Reasonable Accommodation
 - Modifications that enable a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of that position.
 - Does not impact core requirements of a course
 - Does not incur undue administrative/financial burden.

Students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders

“I’m not sure how to describe it,
but there is a student in class
who I think is one of yours.”

Developmental Disabilities

- Autism “Spectrum”
- Asperger’s
 - The essential features of Asperger's Disorder are:
- Qualitative impairment in social interaction, as manifested by at least two of the following:
 - marked impairments in the use of multiple nonverbal behaviors such as eye-to-eye gaze, facial expression, body posture, and gestures to regulate social interaction
 - failure to develop peer relationships appropriate to developmental level
 - a lack of spontaneous seeking to share enjoyment, interest or achievements with other people, (e.g.. by a lack of showing, bringing, or pointing out objects of interest to other people)
 - lack of social or emotional reciprocity

Asperger's cont. . .

- Restricted repetitive & stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests and activities, as manifested by at least one of the following:
 - encompassing preoccupation with one or more stereotyped and restricted patterns of interest that is abnormal either in intensity or focus
 - apparently inflexible adherence to specific, nonfunctional routines or rituals
 - stereotyped and repetitive motor mannerisms (e.g. hand or finger flapping or twisting, or complex whole-body movements)
 - persistent preoccupation with parts of objects

Asperger's cont. . .

- The disturbance must cause clinically significant impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.
- In contrast to Autistic Disorder, there are no clinically significant delays in language (eg: single words are used by age 2 years, communicative phrases are used by age 3 years).
- There are no clinically significant delays in cognitive development or in the development of age-appropriate self-help skills, adaptive behavior (other than in social interaction), and curiosity about the environment in childhood.
- The diagnosis is not given if the criteria are met for any other specific Pervasive Developmental Disorder or for Schizophrenia.

After high school:

- 66 young adults with autism spectrum disorders who had recently exited the secondary school system.
- Analyses indicated low rates of employment in the community,
- The majority of young adults (56%) spending time in sheltered workshops or day activity centers.
- Young adults with ASD without an intellectual disability were three times more likely to have no daytime activities compared to adults with ASD who had an intellectual disability.

Issues that arise:

- These students are probably an exception.
- Parents:
 - Parents very involved and are committed to student's success.
 - "He is my life's work."
 - Parents may expect a level of involvement less compatible with university policies and procedures.
- Class disruption:
 - Outbursts
 - Tangential or unusual questions or comments
 - Distracting behavior - getting up walking around

Issues that arise:

- Denial, Bargaining, Anger, Depression, Acceptance
- Student complaints
- One I didn't expect but should have: Witchhunts
 - Be careful of your own resentment/confusion

Suggestions

- Parents:
 - Decide the level of acceptable involvement and hold to it. Set limits firmly and compassionately. Avoid hostility. Report unacceptable parent behavior to your chairperson and to Disability Services.
- Class disruption:
 - Give direct feedback without hostility. This will also make the class feel that you do not shut down all discussion.
 - Meet with student privately and discuss. These students can be very sensitive and may begin to cry. Don't be deterred but set rules that will help him/her "do the right thing." Directness is typically accepted well, anger or annoyance is keenly felt.
 - Seek consultation.

Suggestions

- Student Complaints:
 - Let student know that you are aware of issues in class and that they are being addressed. Tell them that their concerns are being taken seriously.
- Witch Hunts
 - Encourage students to understand that they are a part of a larger university community and that there all kinds of people who come here.
 - Those people are entitled to their privacy just as the students themselves are. Encourage them to not pry into the lives of other students. You might also ask what they plan to do with the information and use that as a springboard for discussion.

Working with Asperger Students

- Observe the student first. Don't prejudge based on "warnings" from other faculty or students" (but keep them in mind!)
- State rules of conduct in syllabus. Enforce rules of respect in class.
- Be direct but not hostile.
- Do not stand too close! (Don't make my mistake . . .)
- Allow student to compose themselves when upset.
- Do not personalize lack of social responsiveness.
- Gently give feedback for intrusive behavior.
- Make clear your expectations for each assignment.
- Try to inform student if there will be changes in the sequence of events in class. This can be done by informing all students.
- Feel free to call Disability Services with questions or to strategize.

General Rules for Interacting with Students with Disabilities (actually anybody)

- Avoid identifying the student (verbally or non-verbally).
 - “Don here needs a notetaker. (I wish I had one in college!)”
 - Non-verbally (e.g., pointing, gesturing toward)
- Avoid singling student out.
 - “Don as a wheelchair user, what is your take on this?”
- “Handicapped” is out, currently. Instead, “person with disability.”
- Check your own visceral responses: pity, denigration, idealization.

General Rules for Interacting with Students with Disabilities cont . . .

- Try not to exclude. The entire point of the law is to make inclusion of persons with disabilities a priority. Try to think of ways the person can participate. It is not a “favor” to allow someone to opt out.
 - Alter task to make accessible.
 - Allow observation.
 - Try to make substitute or altered participation as close to the intended experience as possible.
 - Example: Meeting in an inaccessible room.
- Don't assume limitations - let student tell *you* or, if possible, let the student try.
- In conversation, don't avoid disability if it is directly relevant.