Disability as Diversity

An overview of Disability Services at Wheelock

Paul Hastings, Associate Dean of Student Success
What is a Disability?

- An individual with a disability is defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.

  – [www.ada.gov/cguide.htm](http://www.ada.gov/cguide.htm)
Some Broad Areas of Disability

- Physical Impairments
- Sensory impairments
- Mental Health Issues
- Learning Disabilities
- Alcohol or Drug Addiction
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law in 1990. The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public. The purpose of the law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else.

– https://adata.org/learn-about-ada
How are Students with Disabilities Protected?

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a federal law designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education (ED). Section 504 provides: "No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance . . . .”

- [http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html)
According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education, between 9 and 11% of the UG population in college has a documented disability.

Percentage distribution of undergraduate students enrolled in postsecondary institutions, by disability status and selected student characteristics: 2007–08
Office of Disability Services:

- Provides students with disabilities accommodations and support services to help them maximize their potential and reach their academic and professional goals.
- Provides equal access to the College's courses and programs and advocates for students with disabilities.

*Students must provide disability documentation, request services, and be otherwise qualified to meet the academic and technical standards of the programs*
The Numbers…

Academic Year 11-12
N= 245, (disabilities 11-12) at 3:1, Disability: Student

- Specific Learning Disability
- Psychological/ mental disorder
- Health impairment/ condition, including chronic conditions
- Sensory Processing Disorder(s)
- Executive Functioning Disorder
- ADD or ADHD
- Difficulty speaking or language impairment
- Cognitive difficulties or intellectual disability
- Hearing Impairment
- Mobility limitation/ orthopedic impairment

WHEELOCK
Disability Breakdown of Undergraduates
Fall 2015

- Learning Disability: 85, 47%
- ADD/ADHD: 52, 28%
- Psychiatric Disorder: 45, 25%
N1 = 319
(ODS students, 08-12 unduplicated)

N2 = 937
(diagnoses, 08-12)

- Specific Learning Disability, 36%
- Psychological/mental disorder, 18%
- Health impairment/condition, including chronic conditions, 15%
- Sensory Processing Disorder(s), 11%
- Executive Functioning Disorder, 9%
- ADD or ADHD, 5%
- Difficulty speaking or language impairment, 4%
- Other (<1%), 2%
Disability Services

Students with documented disabilities may be eligible to receive services under state and federal laws.

- These services may include:
  - Physical Access to Facilities
  - Testing Accommodations
  - Priority Course Selection
  - Access to all course Materials
    - Electronic Text Resources
  - Weekly Meetings with a Professional Learning Specialist
Some Challenges in Helping Students

- Students don’t always disclose their learning disability issues
- Students may attribute all their difficulties to their disability
- Students may not have a good understanding of their disability
- Students may not use the accommodations or supports
- Students may expect the same kind of support that they received in high school
- Students struggle without the help of their parents
The Hidden Disability

- Students with hidden disabilities can experience frustration and feel disenfranchised because others may not understand the challenges they face.
- A disability that may be visible in some situations may not be obvious in others.
- Some students may choose to share this part of their identity and others may not.
- Many students feel that only certain types of disability receive positive attention and regard from the general public (eg. Medical illnesses like cancer, blindness, autism, etc.)
Office of Academic Assistance and Disability Services

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