

Supporting Students with Invisible Disabilities in the Classroom



The Enforcers:

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Invisible Disabilities, Inclusive Strategies:

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Accommodations for Invisible Disabilities:

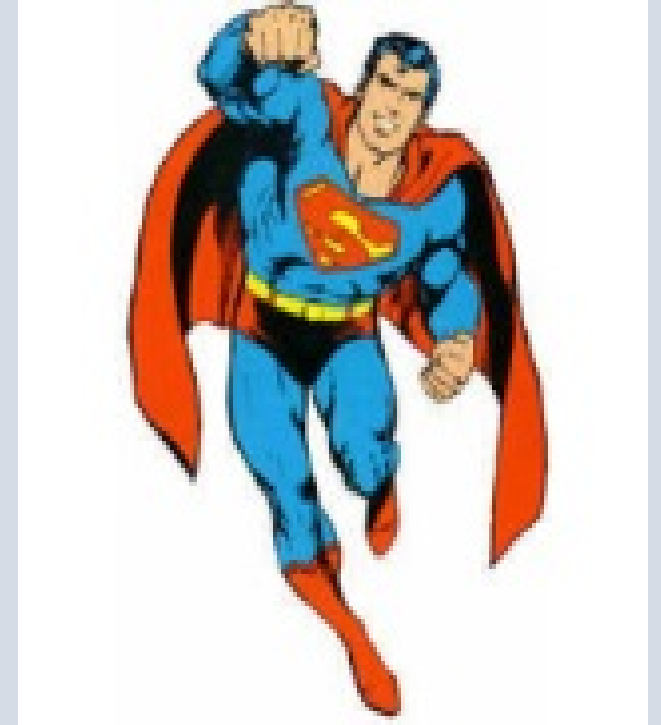
Katrina Durham, M.S. Director of Disability Services Fitchburg State University

Purpose of Presentation



STUDENT SUCCESS

The Enforcers



Laws and regulations protecting persons with disabilities

Entitlements



Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 1990

- Anti- discrimination Law



The Purpose of the ADA

Is to insure that individuals with disabilities can participate in the mainstream of American life.

The ADA applies to private as well as publicly financed business and services covering employment, transportation and communications.



INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA) 1990 amended 2004



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The **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** is a four-part (A-D) piece of American **legislation** that ensures students with a **disability** are provided with Free Appropriate Public **Education** (FAPE) that is tailored to their **individual** needs.

Parent Involvement

*The Foundation for
Student Success*

PARENTS

+ TEACHERS

SUCCESSFUL KIDS



*Gallatin Co.
School Dist.*



- PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS FOR CURRICULA OR TEACHING CHANGES
- Individual Education Plan (IEP)
- A contract between student/family and school system to insure that the agreed upon



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Key Concepts



- Reasonable accommodations

Adjustments or modifications provided by the employer to enable person with disabilities to have equal employment opportunities.

Time, material and access.

- Undue Hardship:

The employer does not have to provide reasonable accommodation if it will interfere with business operations

DISCLOSURE OF DISABILITY

VOLUNTARY

For some students disclosure is:

EMOTIONAL, DIFFICULT TO EXPRESS,

HARD TO BE SEEN AS DIFFERENT

UNFAIR TO OTHERS FOR ACCOMODATION

FACULTY RESPONSES CAN BE:

- BASED ON INDIVIDUAL KNOWLEDGE OF DISABILITIES
- BASED ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
- BASED ON ACADEMIC TRAINING AND EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT
- FAIRNESS TO OTHER STUDENTS
- PROTECTION OF ACADEMIC EXPRESSION.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act 1973

- Prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals by federal agencies or by programs or activities that receive federal funds.

Invisible Disabilities: Inclusive Strategies



Invisible Disabilities

- Attention deficit hyperactive disorder
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Psychiatric conditions
- Seizure disorders
- Brain injuries
- Learning disorders
- Pain disorders
- Some hearing/vision disorders
- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (Trauma)
- Etc...



What might you see in a classroom?

- No visible supports to indicate a disability aka, “They look like anyone else...”
- Difficulty maintaining attention
- Student may seem disorganized
- Repeating questions or difficulty processing information
- Trouble interacting well with others, the professor
- Trouble participating appropriately (no participation, monopolizing)
- Swapped letters/numbers/words in written assignments
- Difficulty taking notes
- Need to take breaks, standing, leaving class
- Absences, lates, inconsistent attendance
- Fatigue (may also be due to medication)
- May appear “not there”
- Trouble getting started on an assignment, may appear unmotivated

Students may seem less intelligent, less capable, or lazy... not necessarily the case!

Teaching Strategies and Values

- How do you balance student needs and accommodations with other realities?
 - Universal Design
 - Empathy
 - Safe and patient opportunities for students to self advocate
 - Being proactive versus reactive
 - Identifying personal biases and need for education
 - Consultation with disability services, other faculty resources
 - Students with disabilities have legal right to accommodation

"But you don't look sick!"

Did You Know



Teaching Strategies and Values

- Students are navigating an unfamiliar land
- Many did not participate in their own IEP meetings
- **Self-advocacy is a skill developed over time – may not disclose at all or at first**
- **Diagnosis doesn't really matter – functional impact and presentation matter – that's what the accommodation is for**
- You might not think you are scary or intimidating – but students probably do



Teaching Strategies and Values

- Don't fall into the "I walked to school uphill both ways in the snow" trap
- Students with disabilities may not feel like they belong in college
- **Disability doesn't mean "can't;" means can, perhaps in a different way**
- **Making accommodations does not mean lowering expectations**
- Multimodality teaching instruction
- Fitchburg State is a student-focused teaching institution

Accommodations for Invisible Disabilities

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University

Testing/Diagnosis of Learning Disabilities

- Recent Neuropsychological testing required (WJIII, WISC, WIATII)
by school psychologist or outside provider
- Cognitive (IQ) testing which measures different components of ability, aptitude, and achievement.
- These are standardized scores and can be compared to the “general population” scores.
- Discrepancies in the clusters of scores and or subtest scores will show the likelihood of a learning disability.
- Disability Services uses the scores on these tests to prescribe accommodations based areas of weakness.

Accommodations for Learning Disabilities/ADHD

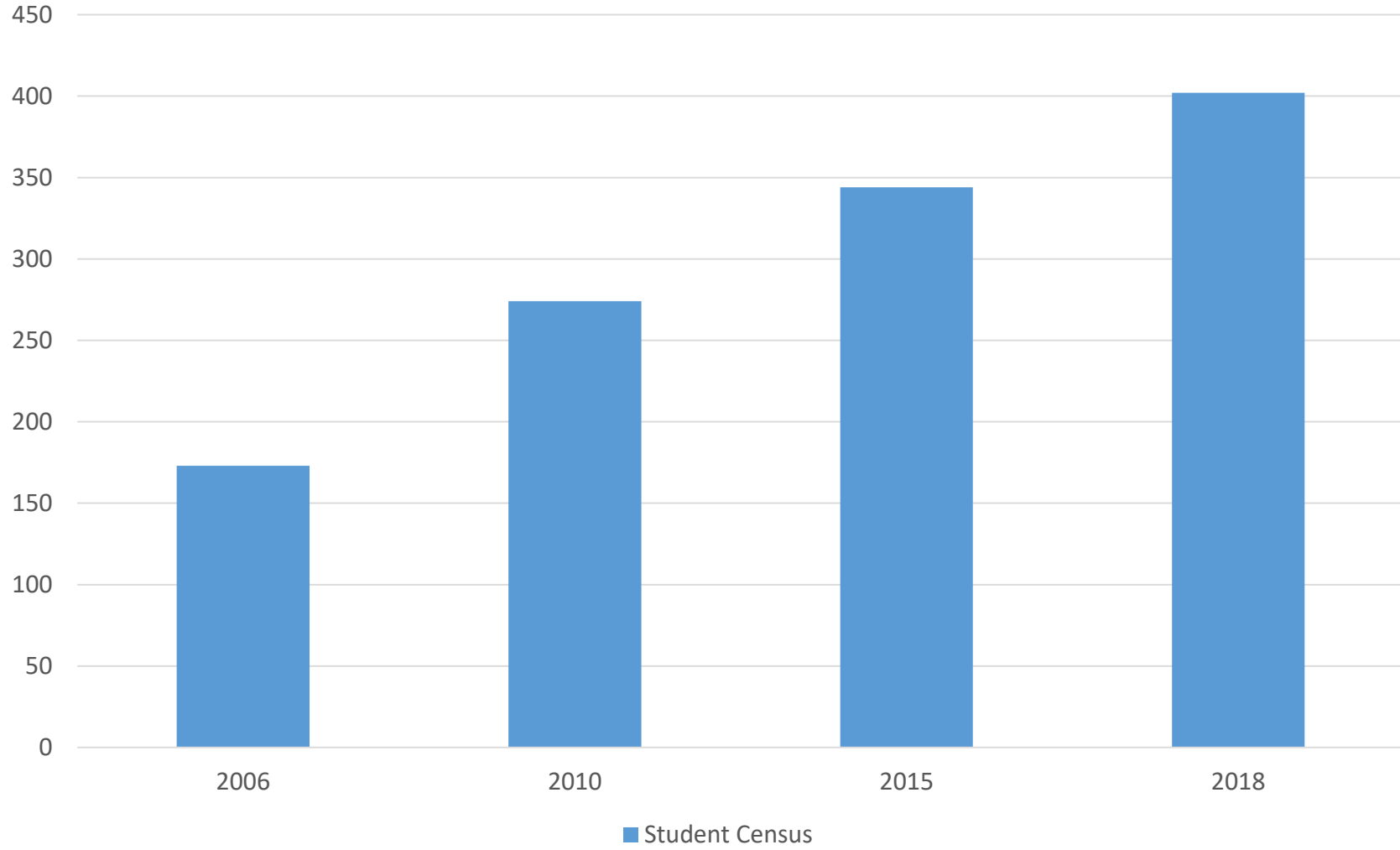
Area of Concern

- Dyslexia or significant weakness in reading fluency
- Weakness in processing speed/working memory
- Dyscalculia or significant weakness in math fluency
- Inconsistent focus during lecture
- Issues with focus during exams
- Difficulty meeting deadlines

Accommodation

- E-text/audio text screen reader, dictation software, spell check
- extended time exams, memory aids
- Calculator/reference sheet
- Smart Pen, peer note taker, copy of lecture notes.
- Extended time/quiet testing.
- Work with Academic Coach

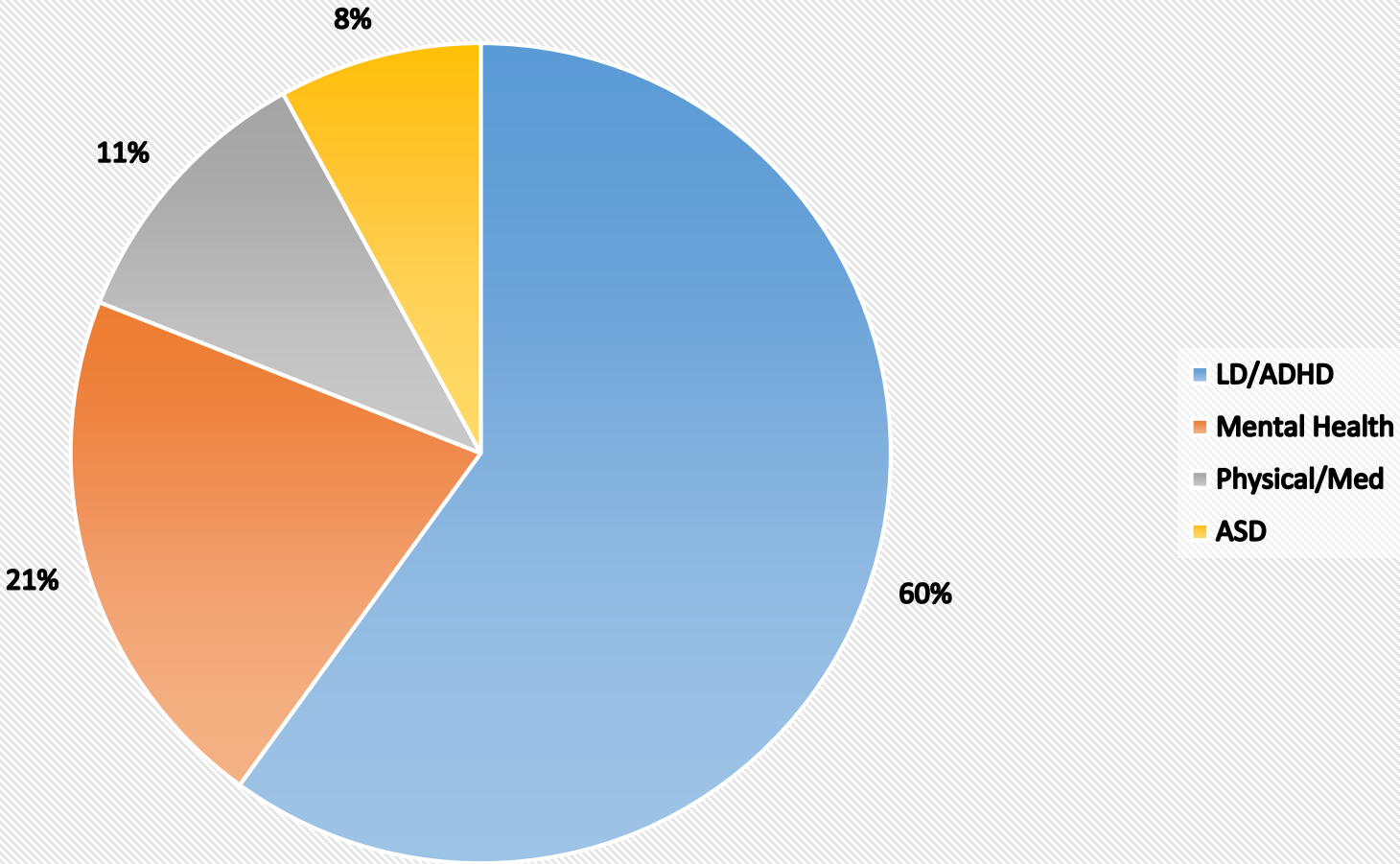
Student Census



Medically Excused Absences

- Does the student have a documented disability that directly affects his/her ability to attend class on a regular basis? Disability Services will make this determination based on a review of documentation from the student's physician or psychologist and provide verification in a letter the student presents to the instructor.
- Is attendance an essential part of the class? Would modification of attendance policies result in a fundamental alteration of the curriculum? Faculty make this determination in consultation with Disability Services. (See Office of Civil Rights guidelines)
<http://www.projectshift-refocus.org/faculty.htm>

Disability Category total=402



Consultation and Referral

- Faculty are encouraged to call the Director of Disability Services with any questions about student accommodations.
- Faculty are responsible for assuring student accommodations are met in the classroom.
- Concerns for students without accommodation agreements can be addressed by listing all supports available.
- Student affairs offices do not share data.
- <http://www.projectshift-refocus.org/faculty.htm>

Discussion/Questions?
Thank you!