

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN ONLINE LEARNING

Bree Callahan, Center for Disability Services

CWU Westside Operations

March 18th, 2010

Presentation outline:

- Why is this important?
 - ▣ Legal Issues
 - ▣ Best Practices
- Issues for students with disabilities in online courses
 - ▣ Intersection of disability and online learning
 - ▣ Technology
- Moving Forward
 - ▣ Course Design
 - ▣ Course standardization
 - ▣ Resources at CWU & nationally
- Questions and answers

Why is this important?

Legally speaking

Best Practices

Demand for online

Why is this important?

- Program Access is a Legal requirement
 - Access to college programs, services & activities = online versions as well
 - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
 - Rehabilitation Act
 - Section 504 (Program Access)
 - Section 508 (Federal website compliance)
- Online learning education growing
 - Increasing numbers of students in some form of online
 - Not a choice for some majors = have to take

Why is this important? cont'd

- Access to online removes barriers for all students
 - Removal of physical barriers have benefited everyone
 - Curb cuts & Automatic doors
 - Removal of web barriers will benefit everyone
 - Multiple learning styles, Non traditional & ESL learners
 - Spring 2010 web enrollments (*as of 3.16.10*)
 - 683 Ellensburg vs 1009 University Centers
 - 55+% of University Centers students enroll in online

What are the issues for students with disabilities online?

“What was old is new again”

“Quick Fix”

Technology

Specific Disabilities issues

Issues re: Students w/Disabilities

- “What is old is new again”
 - ▣ Online education has Disability Services offices re-examining how to serve students
 - ▣ Not a “traditional” classroom
 - Class formats are different (Hybrid & Online)
- CWU Student profile
 - In 2+ formats at once (i.e. lecture, online & hybrid)
 - All 37 active Westside CDS students have online formats
 - 12% increase from last year

Issues re: Students w/Disabilities cont'd

- Students (and faculty) may think that online learning is a “quick fix” to accommodations
 - ▣ Solves some issues, i.e. physical access issues
 - ▣ Creates new issues, i.e. compatibility with assistive technology
 - ▣ Increase of non-disclosure
 - Students often feel that their disability does not matter when studying online and do not disclose or request accommodations until it is too late.

Specific disability examples

Physical Disabilities

Learning Disabilities

Visual Disabilities

Hearing Disabilities

Psychological/Emotional Disabilities

Physical disability & online learning:

- Some issues students face:
 - ▣ Physical access to the computer
 - ▣ Physical manipulation of texts and other course materials
 - ▣ Timing of synchronous components of the course, especially chat rooms
 - ▣ Activities to fulfill assignments if they require the student to work outside of the course environment

Learning disability & online learning:

- Some issues for students:
 - Accessing textbooks and printed course materials
 - Clarification of misunderstood (written) points
 - “Chunking” of text heavy and lengthy material
 - Timing and organization of synchronous components, especially chat rooms
 - Extra time to take online exams and other assessments
 - Clearly outlined expectations/assignments in syllabus
 - Getting timely feedback

Visual impairment & online learning:

- Some issues for students:
 - ▣ Interaction of course management system and assistive technology used by the student
 - ▣ Course materials in accessible alternative formats
 - ▣ Video components
 - ▣ Graphics, photos & charts
 - ▣ Activities to fulfill assignments if they require the student to work outside of the course environment

Hearing impairment & online learning:

- Some issues for students:
 - ▣ Audio/Video components and transcripts/captions
 - ▣ Language issues if ASL is the first language
 - ▣ Timing and organization of any synchronous components, especially chat rooms
 - ▣ Activities to fulfill assignments if they require the student to work outside of the course environment

Psychological/Emotional impairment & online learning:

- Some issues for students:
 - Timing issues due to the side effects of medications taken or due to flare up of condition
 - Processing of text heavy courses
 - Increase of triggers of impairment: stress & anxiety
 - Need to increase phone/email contact with instructor to clarify misunderstood points
 - Social skills needed (i.e. chats & discussion posts)
 - Inappropriate behavior may be sign of distress
 - Clearly outlined expectations/assignments in syllabus
 - Extra time to take online exams and other assessments
 - Getting timely feedback

What do we do from here?

Course Design

Post resources for students online

Behavior & standards

Web course access policy

Moving forward

- Course Design Ideas: It is easier to build accessibility into the course during development than it is to retrofit a developed course.
 - ▣ Include accessibility in course and program development
 - ▣ Make early decisions about course materials
 - ▣ When purchasing new video/audio materials give preference to accessible versions
 - ▣ Design regular, large and popular classes with accessible formats and universal design in mind

Moving forward cont'd

- Standardize delivery formats
 - Create CWU templates for online power points, lectures, web videos etc
 - To avoid student having to navigate new versions each quarter or having to manage 3 different courses in one quarter
- Provide information for online regarding accommodations
 - Work closely with CDS when a student starts taking major classes (i.e. Blind, Hard of Hearing)
 - Continue dialogue around accommodating in an online environment

Moving forward cont'd

- Over communicate with students
 - Clearly state expectations of students in course syllabus
 - Provide examples of grading criteria for online postings
 - State feedback timeline (i.e. 24 hour turn around on email)
 - Outline acceptable behavior in posting, discussion boards or other online environments used
 - Provide multiple avenues to communicate with you
 - Define online terminology

Moving forward cont'd

- What technology do you use in your course?
 - Audio & Video material (i.e. YouTube, podcasting, DVD's etc)
 - Are they captioned or have transcripts?
 - Recorded Lectures
 - Is the script posted and accessible?
 - Graphics & pictures
 - Do they have text descriptions?
 - Text Documents
 - Can they be highlighted, copied and pasted?
 - PowerPoint Presentations
 - Are they high/low in contrast?
 - Is the format accessible?

Moving forward cont'd

- Create CWU online behavior standards and/or responsibilities for online courses
 - Have links to information built into every course
 - Align with Student Conduct Code
- Develop policy related to online courses accessibility
 - University of Washington: <http://www.washington.edu/accessit/articles?1247>
 - University of Texas: <http://www.utexas.edu/web/guidelines/accessibility.html>
 - University of Maine: <http://www.umaine.edu/weboffice/accessibility/>

Resources

- CWU Center for Disability Services
 - <http://www.cwu.edu/~dss/cms/>
 - PT reader : <http://www.cwu.edu/~dss/cms/index.php?page=p-t-reader>
 - Online Access Checklist (handout)
- Georgia Tech Research on Accessible Distance Education (GRADE): <http://www.catea.gatech.edu/grade/index.php>
- Kansas State University: K-Access
 - Quick Tips: <http://www.k-state.edu/dss/k-access/QuickTips.html>



Questions?

Contacting us:

Center for Disability Services Central Washington University

Ellensburg & Eastside Centers: Moses Lake, Yakima & Wenatchee

Bouillion 205 Mon-Fri 8-5pm

509-963-2171 cdsrecept@cwu.edu

Westside Centers: Lynnwood, Des Moines, Pierce, Kent & Everett

Bree Callahan bcallaha@cwu.edu

Des Moines M/TH ext. 3866, Lynnwood T/W ext. 3782