



What Are You Hearing?

*A Presentation and Discussion
about Current Opportunities and
Challenges in providing Inclusive
Experiences and
Accommodations for Graduate
Students*

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Disability Symposium

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Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Understanding the graduate student experience
- Video clip and Discussion – What are you hearing?
- Factors, assumptions, barriers and questions
- Video clip and Discussion – What are you hearing?
- Opportunities/Brainstorming next steps
- Wrap up

Factors impacting students with disabilities as graduate students

- Transition from undergrad to grad student
 - Full time student vs. Part time student
 - Greater professional stake
 - May have more connections to make to providers/supports if moving areas
 - Managing Relationships/mentors/advisors/community –professional culture
- Time
 - Intensity of the work
 - Managing a disability too
 - Time constraints due to functional limitations
 - Some are just realizing they have a disability; not sure what to do

Factors impacting students with disabilities as graduate students

- Expectations
 - Fear disclosure and accommodations will impact professional and personal relationships
 - Fear being viewed as less capable will lead to stigma/missed opportunities
 - Developing a professional identity, understanding the culture, implicit responsibilities, etc.
 - Nobody (else) with a disability is here
- Relationships
 - Peers/cohort/lab
 - Mentors/advisors/professors

Cultures, climates and assumptions

- Managing grad school culture
 - Specific departments
 - Sciences/research based work
 - Sink or swim
- Assumptions and Questions:
 - Students with disabilities don't exist at Harvard, Penn, Johns Hopkins
 - Did we make a mistake?
 - Students need to sink or swim; tough it out (Testing accommodations off the table?)
 - Mental health, dyslexia, ADHD, coping skills, strategies, access technologies, therapy, time for doctor appointments - how are things like this perceived?
 - Academic accommodations are the same as workplace accommodations

Decoding the student experience

- Differences between graduate and undergraduate students
- Differences having visible and invisible disabilities
- Visible needs versus underlying medical and therapeutic needs
- Climate and culture
 - Academic ableism
 - How assumptions and attitudes affect inclusion and provision of accommodations
 - How intersecting identities may factor in
- “Purpose” for being in the program (outcomes vs. process)
- Type of program (online, low residency, blended, on campus)

Student experience

- Stacy
- Video 1:

What are you hearing?

- Current complexity of the work
- Challenges to disclosure and self-advocacy
- Academic ableism
- Formal and “informal” accommodations
- Barriers to requesting services
- Challenges to working with graduate students
- Professional requirements versus academic success
- Diversity and multicultural programs versus disability inclusion?

Faculty , student, administration comments

- How did they get here?
- I don't have time to take care of this student. She doesn't seem to fit in.
- Once I disclosed my disability, I felt like that was all they could see of me.
- Why do we have to pay for 'that'?
- This accommodation is not fair to my other students.
- Why is this student.... ??

Fears that determine disclosure /formal and informal

- Exclusion from inclusion
- Disability as a con
- Skeptics about professional competence
- Stigma
- Unfair advantage
- Negative attitudes
- Non visible disabilities problematic
- Lack of experience with accommodations process/self advocacy

Barriers

- Completing school can take more time, money and stamina:
 - Increased processing time, work becomes more intensive
 - Increased time for degree completion (time out, reduced load, etc.)
 - Health coverage may differ
 - Added living costs, transportation, semester fees, doctors, therapy, housing adjustments, other costs associated with disability (meds, hospitals,
- Students need to plan and research:
 - Coordinate accommodations and other services
 - Manage personal life and health care (balance)
 - Seek support during transitions (coaching, counseling, student support)

Student experience

- Raul
- Video 2:

What are you hearing?

- Do graduate students believe accommodations and services are for them?
- What outlandish questions do advisors ask students with disabilities?
- Do students share too much information?
- Disability identity or not?
- Who is uncomfortable talking about accommodations and disabilities?
- Who gets to know and what do they get to know about disability and accommodations?
- How do you raise awareness among faculty and what exactly do they need to know?

Opportunities/Next steps

- Collaborations with Graduate Schools
 - Orientations and programming
 - Dedicated space on websites
 - Targeted materials - one pager
- Faculty training
- Support groups/organizations
- Space to congregate/study
- Directed information about support service
- Bring services to point in place and time needed

Brainstorming ideas and next steps

- What is working on your campus?
- What have students proposed?
- How have accommodations worked well?
- Have you been able to partner in unique ways?
- Programming? Employing them?
- Creating allies? Including alumni?
- Changing the culture?
- Meeting the needs of a changing graduate student body?