

Functional Area Project

Disability Services/ Student Accessibility Services

The Pennsylvania State University

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With the increasing diversity of instruction and learning in colleges and universities, more and more challenges to include students with diverse abilities are arising. From keeping up with new technology to making study abroad accessible to every student, the area of disability services has a rich and sometimes complex function within student services. These new challenges are a long way from the legally mandated need for disability services spawning from Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that states: “no otherwise qualified individual with a disability shall, solely by reason of his/her disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity of a public entity.” Traditionally, therefore, the regulation only applied to schools which received public funding. Eventually, the Americans Disabilities Act of 1990 broadens this definition to include any public entities even if it does not include public funding. In light of these new requirements and a need for more concrete national standards, the professional organization Association on Higher Education And Disability (AHEAD) was founded in 1977 and continues to publish disability service practice guides today. In recent years this has become especially pertinent as the percentage of student with disabilities in higher education is growing from 3 percent of incoming first years in 1978 to a total of 12 percent in a 2006 survey (Weeks, 2001).

Introduction

The functional area of disability services within a college or university is often a forgotten office in student affairs work. Perhaps due to the fact that the office may not be found under the division of student affairs itself, the question of where to place this office is debatable and the answer varies with each institution. Typically it is either found under student affairs or academic affairs. We do not disagree with either classification because disability services serve students in a very academic way. While it is our belief that co-curricular activities contribute

greatly to the academic success of a student, that student cannot succeed academically without the tools they need within a classroom as well. Disability Services in higher education is about providing equal access, which we describe as intellectual affirmative action.

Another important distinction to make about disability services is the difference between these services in the primary and secondary education levels versus in higher education. As Dr. Amy Quillin of Kent State explained, in K-12 education, disability services are governed by IDEA, while the ADA is the law which encompasses higher education. She also shared that the goals of disability services are also different in K-12 education from what they are in higher education. In K-12 education specific curriculum and instruction may have been designed for a student with a disability, but in higher education accommodations may be granted in order to give the student equal access to the curriculum and instruction provided to all students.

A third point that distinguishes disability services from other areas of student affairs is that its existence is mandated by law. Specifically, The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 50 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 make providing services for students with disabilities a legal matter for either academic or student affairs. One way that professionals in this functional area of student affairs communicate with each other and develop is through the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD). This growth and connection is imperative because disability technologies are constantly evolving, as are techniques pertaining to accommodations based on school size, demographic, and changes to everyday technologies.

In order to illuminate these differences, two dissimilar institutions' disability services will be explored, compared, and assessed in this paper. The first will be Kent State University's Student Accessibility Services in Kent, OH and the second, Pennsylvania State University's Office of Disability Services in University Park, PA. The two schools will be given an overview

here including their services provided and the organizational structure of the office within the institution and nationally.

Kent State

The mission of Kent State's Student Accessibility Services is "to provide equal access to educational opportunities for qualified students with disabilities attending Kent State University" (Kent State University, 2012).

Services provided. When asked, the Senior Associate Director, Amy Quillin exclusively mentioned the service of providing accommodations to students with disabilities in her "elevator speech." The Senior Associate Director told us that the most common accommodations for students are 50% extended time on multiple choice exams and 100% extended time on essay exams, distraction reduced testing environment with space provided within the SAS office, and tape recording of lectures. Amy also mentioned that she and the office provide referrals to students, sit on committees throughout the university to make the entire school responsible for accessibility, speak with parents regarding a student's accommodation, and work with faculty to address their concerns and help set up accommodations for a student. In order to complete these services, Kent State is also responsible for reviewing documentation and determining the appropriate accommodation. Outside of the office and within the university, Amy also sits on a committee of ADA advisors across campus offices to "not just make sure the university meets the bare minimum requirements of the law but embracing the spirit of the law" (A. Quillin, personal communication, September 26, 2012).

Organizational structure. Kent State is a large research university with students spread across Kent's eight regional campus with the one in Kent, Ohio being the largest with approximately 27,000 undergraduate and graduate students combined. Student Accessibility

Services (SAS) is organized under Enrollment Management and Student Affairs. The regional campuses' other disability services are not organized in relation to the Kent campus at all and there is no explicit communication or collaboration between the offices. While the Kent office reports to the Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs (in Kent), the other regional campuses have separate deans to whom they report. Within SAS itself, Amy Quillin is the Senior Associate Director and she oversees two coordinators, one Editorial Communications Associate, three Staff Interpreters, one Administrative Clerk, one Graduate Assistant, and is less directly involved in the supervision of seven undergraduate student workers. Each of the two coordinators specialize separately in accessibility and adaptive technology.

Penn State

The Mission of Penn State's Office of Disability Services is given through a list of services that each Penn State region office: "requests and maintains disability-related documents; certifies eligibility for services; determines academic adjustments, auxiliary aids, and/or services; and develops plans for the provision of academic adjustments, auxiliary aids, and/or services as mandated under Title II of the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973" (Welsh, 2012).

Services provided. According to Director Bill Welsh, Penn State's ODS provides "equal access for students with disabilities across the University" including all colleges as well as the law and medical schools. The access of most commonly achieved through academic accommodations for students with intellectual disabilities. According to the director, the most common accommodations granted at Penn State are extended time on exams, note taking services, and the loaning out of Live Scribe Pens (a newer technology which has uses outside of disability services) for use in place of note taking services. The ODS participates in many non-

specifically disability related committees as well as the University Access Committee and the Technology committee. As well as participating in committees across the university the ODS works closely with Old Main executives to make sure that disability issues are paramount through the use of fliers, presentations, and trainings. Welsh stated that part of the goal of the office was to take care of the students and to make sure that people understand issues with disabilities and that those issues are at the forefront .

Organizational structure. The Pennsylvania State University is a large research institution as well with nineteen commonwealth campuses serving over 86,000 students. The largest of these campuses is found at University Park. The Office of Disability Services is organized under the Vice Provost for Educational Equity because disability access is seen as a diversity issue. The commonwealth campuses are closely connected to the University Park campus in relation to the ODS. Each campus has at least one person serving students with disabilities, and at the University Park campus the director and a liaison are responsible for training and support for those commonwealth campus service providers. These offices follow all the same policy and procedure regarding services and documentation review and are able to send documentation to be reviewed at University Park, if they feel that is needed, as part of their professional resource. At the University Park Campus in the ODS there is the director, five disability specialists, a graduate assistant, an intern, an exam coordinator, two staff assistants with one also serving as a translator, and a receptionist.

The following report will achieve four points of purpose. We will review relevant literature on the area of disability services to provide more background information but also various points of view pertinent to the subject. A summary of our process for gathering and analyzing information will also be provided. The information will then be applied to other

relevant student affairs material including theories of development. Finally, our own evaluation of the functional area and our recommendations for improvement towards enhancement of the service provided will be given.

Summary of Relevant Literature

The History of Disability Services in Higher Education. The first postsecondary division for education of people with disabilities was established by Abraham Lincoln in 1864 under the Columbia Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. From this time up until World War I, there was little change, beyond a few examples of individuals with disabilities participating in higher education, in access to higher education for students with disabilities. It was at end of World War I that the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1918 was passed which provided financial assistance to veterans. Many veterans were now impaired physically, introducing the issue of access on a large scale for the first time to institutions of higher education. In 1944 the Serviceman's Readjustment Act (GI Bill) was passed and again created a wave of students requiring physical accommodations in higher education. Despite years of students with disabilities succeeding in higher education there was, and is, still discrimination against these students.

The next large wave of change for disability access in higher education came from the civil rights movement. It was in 1963 that the term learning disability was first used and this term now describes more than half of all students with disabilities. In 1975 the Education of All Handicapped Children Act was passed requiring the availability of special education services to all students as well as individualized education programs. Through the provisions made for student by this act, more students have been able to become qualified to attend institutions of higher education. One of the best known pieces of legislation pertaining to disability access is

Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This requires institutions to consider applications of students regardless of disabilities as well as provide necessary and reasonable accommodations and services for students with disabilities. While this created concern in the higher education community about having the available resources, the concern went unjustified.

The Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 led to further development of programs against discrimination based on disabilities. Around the same time self-determination became more prevalently applied in education and, when applied to students with disabilities, engages them in self accountable and goal oriented behavior. While the twenty years following the passage of the ADA saw court rulings which limited the reach of the act, recent reauthorization opened the legislation back up and expanded the definition of disability. The first professional organization for professionals working with students with disabilities was established in 1977 at the “Disabled Students on American Campuses: Services and State of the Art” conference and was originally known as the Association on Handicapped Student Service Programs in Post-Secondary Education. This organization, as of 1992 has been known as the Association of Higher Education And Disability (AHEAD) (Maddaus, 2011).

AHEAD Literature. The Association of Higher Education And Disability provides many resources for professionals working in disability and accessibility services in higher education. This includes, but is not limited to, professional standards, a code of ethics, and guides on supporting accommodations requests. The professional standards set forth by AHEAD outline the responsibilities of professionals working in disability services in terms of administration, direct service, consultation and collaboration, institutional awareness, and professional development. Some of the responsibilities of these professionals, according to these standards, include developing policies and services, maintaining up to date knowledge of issues in the field,

maintaining confidential records. In addition disability professional should be providing information to students, providing material aides to students, counseling students individually, consulting with resources outside of the institution, educating the university community, and participating in professional development such as conferences and professional literature (AHEAD, 2012a). The code of ethics provided by AHEAD are aimed at commitment to excellence in serving students with disabilities through professional development, counseling, and programming (AHEAD, 1996). As a resource for these professionals seeking excellence AHEAD has a guide for helping them review documentation to provide reasonable accommodations for students. There are three classifications of documentation; primary documentation which is the student's self- report of their limitations and tools needed for success, secondary documentation which is the observations of the professional during interviews or conversation with the student, and tertiary documentation from external third parties such as health care providers, teachers, psychologists, or anyone else who may provide physical documentation of a student's disability. The AHEAD guide recommends that a professional review all documentation individually considering the individuality of the student and their needs as well as all current and relevant information. The key word in documentation review tends to be current because learning styles and methods can change and disabilities can evolve over time for a student (AHEAD, 2012b).

Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Disabilities. Over the past twenty years there has been an increase of students with disabilities in higher education. Reasonable accommodations are required by many of these students in order provide successful access to postsecondary education. Recent studies have shown that one of the common hindrances to students being provided reasonable accommodations is the lack of knowledge on the part of

faculty members of legislation pertaining to disabilities. Beyond not providing access for students with disabilities, this can also lead to litigation. In 2003 over 11% of college undergraduate students reported having a disability. Of those, 25% had an orthopedic impairment, 21.9% had mental illness, 17.4% were affected by a health impairment, 10.9% lived with ADD, 7.4% were working with a learning disability, and 4.9% and 3.8% had hearing and visual impairments respectively. In higher education students with disability have a lower retention and graduation rate. Efforts to increase these numbers have revolved around assisting in the adjustment for these students in terms of planning, awareness, highlighting differences between secondary and post-secondary education, and self-advocacy. It is not only faculty who lack knowledge of disability legislation, but also administrators, and this results in ineffective practices for teaching and serving students with disabilities.

University Faculty Knowledge. An important part of the accommodations process is the involvement of faculty, especially in executing the use of accommodations. Some faculty members are more willing to participate in the provision of accommodations than others and this is due to many factors. One of the major factors is knowledge of the process. “Studies have indicated that postsecondary faculty members have limited knowledge of the legal responsibilities to provide accommodations to students with disabilities” (Zhang, 2010). The more knowledgeable faculty members are on the legal implications of the process, the more likely they are to fulfill the accommodations without issue. Another issue with accommodations is the faculty members’ personal attitudes about students with disabilities, which has the possibility to hinder students’ learning abilities. If a faculty member believes that the institution does not give them adequate support in providing the allowed accommodations for a student, they are also less likely to put forth an effort to provide those approved accommodations.

Another reason that faculty have difficulty with accommodations is their own comfort level in interacting with students who have disabilities. The study “suggests that improving faculty personal beliefs may be key in enhancing services for students with disabilities” (Zhang, 2010). Faculty members are an imperative link in the chain of support for students with disabilities. Therefore their willingness and comfort level in participating in support is directly related to the success of the support they may be able to offer students.

Methodology

In order to gather information on Kent State’s Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and Penn State’s Office of Disability Services (ODS) initially, we did extensive research conducted through the websites of both institutions. In light of this research, we developed a series of open-ended questions in response to the expected deliverables of this paper (see Appendix A for interview questions).

After developing questions, we sent e-mails to both office directors at either institution: Amy Quillin, Senior Associate Director, at Kent State’s Student Accessibility Services and Bill Welsh, Director, at Penn State’s Office of Disability Services. The e-mails introduced ourselves as College Student Affairs masters students and asked if they would be willing to be interviewed about their experience working in Student Accessibility Services or the Office of Disability respectively so we gain a better understanding of what working in this functional area is like. After both agreed, we scheduled two hour windows with both and sent out the previously designed interview questions so that they could view them prior to our meeting. We also made sure to tell them that we will be taking notes on paper during the interview and that they are invited to ask for a final copy of our paper on this subject if they so wish.

At each interview, one of us interviewed the director and the other took notes with pen and paper and asked clarifying questions only as needed. Kate interviewed Amy and Hilary interviewed Bill. Due to geographic distance, Amy's interview was done via Skype and Hilary was not consistently in the field of the video as she was taking notes. The notes were then transcribed electronically and shared with each other (see Appendix B for transcriptions). Themes and comparisons were then drawn from these transcriptions to develop an analysis and recommendations.

Analysis

The CAS standard mission for disability services is "to ensure equal access for students with disabilities to all curricular and co-curricular opportunities offered by the institution" (CAS, 2006, p.10). Analyzing the missions in light of the CAS standards, both the institutions pass the test in meeting the CAS general mission. They both do well in meeting the CAS's general mission, encouraging accessibility to be a university-wide issue, and providing clear guidelines on how to get accommodations including legal access. However, neither mission explicitly addresses student learning and development outcomes as integral in the goals of their offices, despite CAS suggesting that the mission "must incorporate student learning and student development" (CAS, 2006, p.10).

Both the interviews brought up the challenge of the transition between high school and college. In contrast to the success oriented legislation in elementary and secondary education schools (IDEA), post-secondary education is access-oriented (Section 504 – Rehabilitation Act). Kent State and Penn State had varying responses to this problem. Penn State was much more proactive in this regard and even conducted outreach to high schools as the AHEAD Professional Standards suggest (AHEAD, 2012a).

Providing clear expectations and guidelines is especially important when legal issues are involved. This functional area of disability services is unique because it is one of the few institutional areas that is covered by federal law (i.e. ADA). Due to this connection, the mission and operation of service is much more legal-centered than other areas of student affairs. Furthermore, both offices brought up lawsuit threats as one of their biggest challenges in this job. Whether it comes from a parent or, in Penn State's case, a national organization (The National Association for the Blind), legal services in the university work closely with disability services and, consequently, the office has to keep very detailed record of everything they do as well as make sure they "keep up with the times" as Welsh stated.

Despite this explicit legal connection, the practitioners in these offices are not lawyers. Both Amy and Bill have backgrounds in mental health counseling which seems to underscore the importance of counseling in this work although neither of them addressed this explicitly. Implicit in mental health counseling work, though, is appreciation and understanding of diversity which is a critical component of each of the CAS standards particularly in holistic program implementation and diversity sensitivity during intake and accommodation implementation. This, too, contributes to the learning-centered approach of disability services in that despite all the legal issues in the office, the office's primary role is to help support students within the greater learning environment.

In line with the nation-wide trend to grow and become larger in order to survive the higher education financial strain, colleges or universities smaller in size have less leverage finding affordable assistance technology. While Kent State visibly struggles to provide adequate assistance, Penn State's sheer size enables them to bargain companies down by promising a large captive audience. The level of support, therefore, is associated with the extent

that Penn State encompasses the widespread governance of Clark Kerr's "multi-versity." While disparate except for the Commonwealth campus liaison and congruent policies, the loose semblance of unity enables Penn State to have collective buying power. Despite the downfalls, the multiversity approach aids the effective availability of accessible technology in disability support services, such as being able to negotiate the price of Kurzweil 3000.

While Kent State appears to have an intimate relationship with the senior level student affairs administration, Amy gave the impression that there is still some difficulty in line with the literature supporting faculty's lack of knowledge on disability issues. One of the benefits of residing under Academic Affairs, the ODS at Penn State has leverage and instant credibility with faculty which may explain the ability to mandate statements that require equal access to persons with disabilities on all syllabi and Penn State official published material versus Kent State's policy that only "strongly suggests" faculty and officials to do so.

Recommendations

While the Office of Disability services is not an advocacy unit, we think there is more wide-spread education on disabilities and the differing special populations that need to be done. At both universities, despite having a month packed full of events for Disability Awareness Month in October, there was not much consideration to the perception of their office and, intrinsically, of students with disabilities by those who do not use their office. Not once does Amy nor Bill mention "ableism." Penn State concentrates on educating faculty and staff to be sensitive and understanding of students' abilities, but the same dedication does explicitly transfer to the students. The education and outreach to students is not explicitly stated in any of the professional standards (AHEAD, CAS). Yet, language, attitudes, and stereotypes have been shown to negatively affect the psychological, social, emotional, and financial health of people

with disabilities (see Evans, 2008; Evans, Assadi, & Herriot, 2005; Evans & Herriot, 2009; Griffin, Peters, & Smith, 2007; Marks, 1999). Just as the lack of accessible accommodations can limit a student's right to equal access, the lack of education and the presence of negative attitudes of able-bodied peers can also do so. Even the World Health Report on disabilities recommends more public awareness on these issues.

Similarly, taking into account the importance of language as described above, the use of language in "Student Accessibility Services" versus "Disability Services" is an important one. In both interviews, the leaders focus on *ability diversity* and *equal accessibility*. "Student accessibility services" succeeds in removing the implication that students lack something and are less abled because of their different abilities. We recommend that more student services offices have this discussion and make more positive choices on the official language.

More research and assessment needs to be done on the experiences of college students with disabilities specifically. More generally, still today research needs to be strengthened in areas including how the environment and different service programs impact students and how to measure this and how students best overcome barriers in society (World Health Organization, 2011). While both universities talked about continually assessing accessibility and the effectiveness of their programs, more general data collection and research needs to be done.

Conclusion

The functional area of disability services is often a forgotten office in institutions of higher education because the administrative location varies. Offices of Disability Services are typically located in either student or academic affairs. Of the two institutions which we explored, one was located in student affairs and the other in educational equity. A major part of the operation of disability services is the differences between the services and legislation from K-

12 education to post-secondary education. The two institutions we explored were chosen to highlight these and other differences in disability services. Kent State has an office of Student Accessibility Services whose mission is to provide equal access through accommodations. The office also provides referrals, reviews documentation, and participates in many committees throughout the institutions including a committee of Americans with Disabilities Act compliance. Penn State's Office of Disability Services also aims to provide equal access for students with disabilities. This office also participates in committees across the campus, but also works very closely with executives within the institution to bring disability awareness issues to the forefront of the University's attention. A large difference between the approaches of these two large research institutions was the involvement of their various campuses. While both institutions have multiple campuses, Kent State's Student Accessibility Services function separately on each campus and Penn State's Disability Services are trained in the same way and use the University Park campus as a touchstone for documentation review and other methods of support. The literature summary provides a historical background for the other material discussed, especially around the legislation that has had such an impact on disability services. Through the review of the literature of AHEAD, the professional standards and ethics were detailed as a basis on which to compare the services of the institutions we explored. Two major issues were also explored in the review; provision of reasonable accommodation from the view of faculty and from the view of administrators.

The methodology we used in interviewing two separate institutions that are considered leaders in the field was effective because although they vary significantly, they carry some key similarities. Their size proved to be an important similarity because they both have multiple campuses which proved to be an interesting point of comparison in terms of the way disability

services are organized on these different campuses. By having one person interview and the other take notes we were able to engage in a conversation with our helpful interview subjects and truly gain a wealth of knowledge and insight from them outside of our planned interview questions. This has become a great asset to our research, exploration, and professional knowledge.

Through our interviews we were able to gain more insight into the actual application of history, law, and standards of the profession. The most helpful point of comparison for these interviews was the CAS standards. We believe that these standards not only benefit the student by holding professionals to high expectations but also benefit the professionals because the standards force them to challenge themselves in the way they provide services for students. In serving students and overcoming obstacles to perform within or above the CAS and AHEAD standards, it seems that the two professionals we interviewed mentioned helping students transition, and complying with the legality of disability services to be the largest challenges. Therefore we believe that these are two issues which deserve greater attention in the larger widespread education of students, faculty, administrators, and staff regardless of their connection to the offices of disability services.

Overall this exploration has brought the functional area one step closer to what we feel is our most important recommendation for the area; awareness and education. By exploring the issues we have educated ourselves about disabilities and disability services, enabling us to impart this important knowledge onto others in our profession and to our greater communities. In order to help all students achieve their highest potential, each student must reside in a health learning community. Disability services makes learning communities stronger not only for the students

they directly serve but the students who are then able to interact them in a diverse collaboration that would not have been possible a hundred years ago.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

- 1 Can you speak to the history and evolution of student accessibility services on college campuses?
- 2 What are your responsibilities as an office? What does your typical day look like?
- 3 What is Kent State/Penn State's strategic plan for student accessibility services and equity?
 - a Where do you hope for this office to go in the coming years, decades?
 - b What is your own personal vision for equity in student accessibility services?
 - c How does that vision relate to the plan of the institution?
- 4 How did you choose and end up working at the Office of Student accessibility Services/Office of Disability Services?
 - a What do you feel you contribute specifically to this functional area?
 - b Why at a college in particular?
- 5 How do students use your office?
 - a What are students perceptions of your office?
 - b How are students counseled on the differences of learning with a student accessibility between high school and college?
 - c Does your institution have a standard paragraph about services for students with disabilities for faculty to include in their syllabi?
- 6 Describe how you see your role within the larger institution?
 - a How are you organized in the larger institution? And who do you report to?

- b What does your interaction with other employees look like?
 - c How does working at [institution] impact your work as opposed to working at a different institution?
- 7 How do you see your work connected to social justice? How do you attend to individual differences and the diversity of students with disabilities?
- 8 Can you describe how you continue to actively learn and grow within this position?
 - a What are some professional development opportunities available in this functional area?
 - b How do you use assessment in your office?
- 9 Describe a time you felt the most challenged in this position?
 - a What gives you the most joy? Happiness? Despair?
 - b What do you find most rewarding about this area of work?
- 10 Can you describe the process that is followed when students apply for academic adjustments?
 - a Through what process is documentation reviewed?
 - b What types of adjustments or accommodations are most commonly provided for students with documented disabilities at this institution?
 - c How is the process for applying for academic adjustments or accommodations different or unique on this campus?
 - d What outside agencies does this campus cooperate with in order to best provide support for students? (ie council for the blind etc.)
 - e Can you speak to the legal obligations you have and the occupational standards that you follow?

Appendix B

Interviews

Institution: Kent State University

Interview Subject: Dr. Amy Quillin, Senior Associate Director of Student Accessibility Services

Date: September 26, 2012

Topic: History and evolution of student accessibility services on college campuses

- Speaking to the history of disability services, in 1990 the ADA was put in place, and before that, in 1973 there was the Rehabilitation Act, which was an extension of the Civil Rights Act. Before 1990, any institutions of higher education that provided accommodations or accessibility did this on their own because it was not mandated before the ADA.
- At Kent State they were ahead of the game, and in 1964 they were building ramps. Not everything was accessible to all people, but awareness was becoming more prevalent. Their focus was on mobility and this awareness was cutting edge for the time.
- One area which they can still improve on is technology; they are always looking to improve. This is because technology evolves so quickly that accessibility to technology cannot always keep up. The example given was a math program that can't be used with existing assisting technology for the blind.
- Physical environment, technology, and attitudes are areas to constantly improve on

Topic: Word choice of accessibility versus disability

- Their office used to be the office of Student Disability Services, but six or seven years ago it was changed to the office of Student Accessibility Services. They want to keep the focus off of the disability and focus rather on accessibility for students.
- There is always a discussion on disability/access/resource focus in her professional community.
- In her mind, if attitudes are right than it can be called anything, but not matter what you have to be for the student. For now, words to make a difference.
- She was not sure that it would offend students to use disability in their office title.

Topic: Responsibilities as an office

- The elevator speech is that the office generally provides academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. These disabilities run the gamut and therefore so do the accommodations. And there is no such thing as a typical day
- The office spearheads the effort to make sure that classrooms are accessible but the university is responsible overall. They rely on advisors and faculty to help achieve accessibility for students
- On a typical day she may meet with students, review documentation, talk about how the disability affects the student, what accommodations they have had in the past and how that worked for them, speak to parents, answer questions from professors, go to committee and staff meetings, or address faculty concerns.

Topic: Incorporation of Accessibility Services within Kent State

- In regards to the whole school, does not know. She is on a committee of ADA advisors. This committee is representative of many different campus services. This opportunity allows her office to educate people across the university on issues of accessibility.

- The president of the university gave the committee money to fulfill the ADA, and they are charged with not just make sure the university meets the bare minimum requirements of the law but embracing the spirit of the law.
- The Student Accessibility office is housed in Student affairs and enrollment services. At other universities this type of office can be found under the provost or in equity and inclusion. At Kent State, they enjoy a great relationship with the Vice President who is very supportive.

Topic: Hopes for the office in the future

- She would love to do a technology audit through the ADA committee. She wants to be able to look at accessibility of technology for students from the admissions process through graduation. This primarily is in regards to visually impaired or hearing impaired students. Technology is so pervasive that an audit is incredibly daunting but she would like to begin the process to find holes in their technology accessibility and also recognize the strengths. The rest of the ADA committee may not be as enthusiastic about this as she is.
- She would also like for Kent State to be known as having an office within the region and the state that promotes excellence in disability services. They already have this to some extent but wants other institutions to feel that they should come ask ‘those people over at Kent State’ when they have a question about accessibility services.

Topic: How she ended up working at the Office of Student Accessibility Services

- Initial reaction was laughter and to respond that this was a good question. She has graduate training in counseling and vocational experience in higher education. She has

served as a hall director, in career services, resident services, academic advising, basically a lot in student affairs.

- When she finished her doctorate she took a year for her residency and then took a position at disability services. As a hall director she has been in a hall with a larger population of students with disabilities (mostly mobility).
- She said it wasn't necessarily a fluke but not necessarily what she trained for and what had been her passion but it has evolved into a passion for her.
- The area feels noble because people in her position are really the ones assisting students in getting the education that they may not be able to get without her office.

Topic: Why Kent State?

- Because she lives there and has a house and a mortgage.

Topic: Special skills she brings to the functional area

- Counseling background in terms of being able to ask key questions, not be surprised by emergencies or crises. She expects that at some point in their education students have some type of crisis, but for students with disabilities she knows that they don't necessarily need to be counseled in the way she was specifically trained.
- In terms of staff, she is very even keeled and what you see is what you get, no drama in the office. Her sense of humor is sarcastic.

Topic: How students utilize the office

- some students register 'just in case' and come in once and never again.
- Other students come in weekly or meet regularly to talk about accommodations, classes, life at school. If a student initiates this type of communication they are there to make themselves available if possible.

- Some students with certain accommodations (typically for hearing impairment) have a closer relationship with their translator because of the different culture in the deaf community. In that case it's not just providing a service, they are asking about each others families and really forming a bond.

Topic: Student perceptions of the office

- Some students see the office as invaluable, others only use it because they have to but do not want to be known for their disability.
- Other students feel that the office hasn't done enough for them.

Topic: Transition from high school to college for accommodations

- it can be difficult to explain to students and parents that the laws which govern K-12 (IDEA)schools are different than those that govern higher education. In higher education equal access has to be given.
- Accommodations are usually similar but sometimes they aren't. If students don't get the same accommodations it can get dicey.
- The office can tell a student or parent that they come they might be asking for different documentation than another institution because they all have different requirements.
- The question sometimes comes from parents of students who applied but were not given admission, if there isn't something the office can do. But that is the difference between k-12 and higher education because higher education is not free, and the student has to be qualified and once they have then they will be given equal access.

Topic: Parents and the office

- Parents use the office in a couple different ways, first the intake. The student decides if the parent will be there for it, but the discussion is directed towards the student. Sometimes the student defers to the parent and the parent picks up the conversation.
- The parent often provides the basic information about a student's disability and past accommodations.
- If a student is struggling in class or something the parent will call to see what the office can do and they are told that it would be most helpful for the student to call the office and work directly with them.
- The office wants students to take control and be self-advocates.

Topic: Process for accommodations

- There are forms on their website that students fill out for ADD, medical, or physical disabilities. There are different forms for different disabilities, but no form for LD.
- LD requires different testing and documentation because it can be so nonspecific.
- Documentation is just one piece, it can be given prior to intake, at intake, or after although it is helpful to have before hand.
- Intake takes about 45-60 minutes to discuss how the disability affects them and how it does so in the classroom, what accommodations they're looking for, how accommodations will be helpful. The process is explained to them, other available services are explained. They then fill out 2 more forms, a release and a demographics form.
- If the documentation is cut and dry they can let the student know at the intake what accommodations they will be given, if not (old, incomplete, etc.) they will say what they will possibly be eligible for.

- The director, the GA (in a counseling program), and the accessibility coordinators all review documentation.

Topic: Most common accommodations

- extended time; 50% for multiple choice, 100% for essay
- distraction reduced access (space in office for test taking)
- tape recording of lectures

Topic: Differences at other Universities

- philosophical differences on documentation
 - Eastern Michigan does not require documentation, they simply have a conversation with the student discussing their past history and base it on their articulation of challenges.
- AHEAD put out documentation guidelines for universities to refer to but they are not like the law of the land.
- Some universities use the note taker accommodation, but she cannot see how it is done successfully for the student, organizationally.

Topic: Dr. Quillin's philosophy on documentation

- She has a high regard for education, and her personal opinion is that a college education may not be for everyone because that education ought to mean something
- once you meet the college's admissions requirements you should have what you need to succeed
- she will fight to the death to avoid discrimination and give the same access

- She wants to know that when the faculty is notified of a student's accommodations, there is something they as an office can go back to in order to hold integrity although the professors do not get to see the documentation.

Topic: Work with outside agencies

- State agencies; the bureau of vocational rehabilitation, assistance for disabled persons to find jobs. can include testing, tuition assistance, and funding for technology
- Visually impaired- counselor and student figure out how to make a class accessible with computer technology
- inside the university:
 - psych services- counseling and documentation for psychiatric disabilities
 - psychological clinic- testing
 - tutoring and academic success
 - writing center
 - academic advisors
 - medical services- consulting

Topic: Disability statement in class syllabi

- There is a standard statement but it may not be mandated, but has been strongly encouraged by the provost for about 15 years
- They work with the center for student involvement and were asked to work with student government to make big acts that are being brought in (250 + students) budget for interpreters

Topic: Working with other offices

- Try to be intentional in getting their office face time with edifferent people and entities through networking
- They invite different offices to staff meetings to talk about collaboration (registrar, IT, transit services, etc). They invite 4-5 office/semester although sometimes one office is repeated throughout the semester.

Topic: Connection to social justice

- Disability services connection to social justice is a no brainer, just by virtue of having a disability you shouldn't be disqualified from anything.
- People should be mindful of words, actions, policies towards class of people who could feel marginalized or ostracized
- In trainings and meetings they make it clear that it is everyone an the universities responsibility, not just disability services to make the campus accessible for all students.
- You don't always know that someone has a disability so using the 'R' word has a very big impact

Topic: Legal obligations

- AHEAD
- ADA is the law which under girds and supersedes what we do

Topic: Professional development

- She believes she is lucky to be in a position with student contact and administrative contact. any student can come in and teach her about disabilities.
 - ex student with Spina Bifida and unique characteristics for that
- she participates in a listserv with different institutions so she gets different opinions and points of view

- Conferences; some are more beneficial than others. A few years ago there was a big effort in the area to have a regional brown bag issue discussion.
- Internally as an office she keeps sharp, and as a supervisor she keeps the staff engaged and motivated.
- AHEAD offered universities a service for assessing their services (at a price) Surveyed students, faculty, administration, and the office did a self assessment.
 - it was informative and had good results. It was helpful. the most telling thing was to be better about educating the university (particularly faculty) about the office

Topic: The position for Dr. Quillin

- When a student tells her, verbally or in writing, that their services made a difference in their education it gives her joy, “it’s why we are here”
- 10-15 student workers in the office. She doesn’t get to interact with them on a daily basis but it is cool to see them bloom in their role and how the office develops them as workers and people. They instill confidence, and skill sets outside of classroom learning. The office is also nurturing with food and difference celebrations.
- The position is challenging when you get sued or threatened with law suits (but the university legal council is awesome. Students can file a complain with the office of civil rights. Or if a parent calls the presidents office because they have a complaint it elevates issues. Sometimes it is silly but everything needs to be dropped to handle it. Being misquoted by students is also difficulty
- Service animal vs therapy animals is a difficult issue that goes to resident services and the federal housing act.

- It's difficult when students believe that they have grounds for accommodations that they aren't receiving and then file a complaint through the college or the OCR. You have to put focus on that issue, protect the university. She encourages students who feel that they have been discriminated against or that they didn't get the right accommodations to file a complaint

Topic: Student Workers

- They all work different shifts doing different things
 - answering phones
 - proctoring tests
 - delivering tests
 - making copies
 - maintenance of office
 - desk coverage
 - ITS- adaptive technology
 - assist in text conversion
- they report to her but she doesn't interact with them daily

Topic: DisAbility Month

- They always have a key note address (last year it was Bruce Jenner- LD)
- Marlee Matlin

Institution: Pennsylvania State University-University Park

Interview Subject: Dr. Bill Walsh, Director of the Office of Disability Services

Date: October 10, 2012

Topic: Hist.

- In general, he states that most campuses are in Student Affairs or in Diversity Initiatives and were created after the American Disabilities Act 20 years ago
- Specifically at Penn State, the Office of Disability services started in undergraduate education and student affairs much earlier

Topic: Responsibilities as an office

- “Equal access for students with disabilities across the University.”
 - This includes all colleges, the law, medical school
 - every school has at least one person
 - all very connected with the main campus
 - One liaison in University Park that connects the main office to all campus
 - he and Bill travel to campuses to do training, etc.
 - They all follow same policy, procedure, documentation, etc.
 - Many send info to University Park first to check it out first
- “Run office here and provide institution as a whole education on disability service”
 - sit on committees, incl.:
 - University Access Committee
 - Technology Committee
 - many others that are not specifically disability related

- work with Old Main Executives to make sure disability issues are paramount
 - fliers
 - presentations
 - trainings
- “Keep up with the times”—big issue
- Take care of our students and make sure people understand issues with disabilities and that we keep these issues at the forefront

Topic: organizational structure:

- under the Vice Provost for Educational Equity
 - Disability accessibility is seen as a diversity issue
 - alongside multicultural offices, veteran services, grant programs for underprivileged students, etc.

Topic: Hopes for the office in the future

- We establish a framework “across the board” to foster diversity
- All students have equal access physically, in the classroom, with technology, etc.
- Strategic Plan: info-tech
 - recent 3 year strategic plan to make website accessible
 - currently assessing the entire University’s accessibility
 - each functional unit must send a tech person to the Office of Disability services to make sure they are accessible
 - Bill co-chairs the technology accessibility practice groups
 - All university videos need to be captioned (in effect 2 years ago)
- “Make sure that our office isn’t the only office that promotes accessibility”

- Wants to be less reactive and have accessibility practices more ingrained like the physical construction of campus
- “we all have different abilities”—not disabilities
- Spread the education and responsibility so it isn’t just the Office that is promoting accessibility.

Topic: How he ended up working at the Office of Student Accessibility Services

- Started in mental health, including working with people with brain injuries, but then it became too draining
- Got a job on a grant at a community college about disability services, but then grant ran out
- Worked at Drexel for 4 years in same area, met a person at a conference in 1999 who recommended this job and then has been at PSU ever since

Topic: Special skills she brings to the functional area

- Always had a vision for PSU that changes constantly
 - wants students to be more comfortable and welcome to PSU
- Make sure our voice is at the table so people know about our office before they build buildings, implement technology, etc.

Topic: How students utilize the office

- Many students want to come here and do it on their own probably because of the negative stereotypes

- To combat these stereotypes, we attempt to foster a safe space and provide a welcoming environment so that students know that asking for accommodations is okay

Topic: Student perceptions of the office

- I don't know
- Those with physical disabilities usually don't need us because the campus is accessible already
- His goal is that no one will need the office because no one will need an accommodation

Topic: Transition from high school to college for accommodations

- PSU does a lot of transition training knowledge nationally; teach high schools how to prepare and prospective students what to expect
- College is about equal access, not about having an IUD

Topic: Parents and the office

- Often involved in the intake process, but makes a point to separate them
- Tell students that now they are an adult, college is different, and that they now need to know more about their university
- Tell parents about the changes

Topic: Process for accommodations

- Intake process: need to self disclose and know that the office exists
- Full intake:

- ask for documentation
 - present the accommodations one is asking for
 - goes through staff and then me (Bill) if need review
- Let students decide what accommodation works for them, e.g. live scribe pen or note-taker

Topic: Most common accommodations

- Individualized ones:
 - extra time on test
 - note taking services
 - loaning live scribe pens out

Topic: Differences at other Universities

- We are under diversity initiatives, not Student Affairs
 - Everything is academic related which helps us work with faculty and implementing accommodations
 - Better connection with faculty
- We are above and beyond in technology and tech accommodations

Topic: Philosophy on documentation/accommodation

- Less formal after 2008 law
 - definitely much more broad
 - “does the documentation support accommodations”
- Promoting self-actualization and self-sustaining accommodations

Topic: Work with outside agencies

- Any and every agency that can help students, incl.:
 - local psychologists
 - sight loss support group
 - transition councils
 - Council of Independent Living
- Connect locally and nationally
- Work with Georgia State's Alternative Media Access Center to make especially technical books accessible

Topic: Disability statement in class syllabi

- There is a University policy that mandates a standard paragraph that was put into effect last year, but it was done informally by many for years before then
- This performs two functions:
 - welcomes students with disabilities
 - informs faculty, staff, and students that the Office exists

Topic: Working with other offices

- Get word out to faculty, advisors, etc to increase understanding
 - Educate faculty on standards and encourage trust that the documentation/accommodation requirements are real
 - have better connection with faculty verses other institutions
- Work with Office of Physical Plant to create accessible facilities and events, including football games
- Work with library and the adaptive technology lab to make accessible books and put it in Kurzweil format

Topic: Connection to social justice

- Not disabilities, but abilities: “we all have different abilities”
- “Every day we fight this battle”
 - want to make people understand
 - want students to feel part of the university

Topic: Legal obligations

- “We have an obligation to equal access to classroom, program, and activities”
- Inform school about documentation/accommodation requirements

Topic: Professional development

- Attend webinars
- Connect with peers and colleagues in many areas
- Keep up with court and legal issues
- Many schools see PSU as a model

Topic: Challenges in the job

- Recently received a complaint from the National Association of the Blind
 - really hard, but now a model for other schools with the most accessible technology usage

Topic: Joy in the job

- Seeing not just the office, but the culture of the whole institution change to support and voice accessibility
 - “make sure Penn State doing everything we can to promote access and make it easier for people with disabilities to come to Penn State” especially in light of the high amounts of discrimination that happen

- “Our office is just a piece of the puzzle to provide disability services”
- Being ahead of the curve in accessible technology on campus

Topic: Technology and accessibility

- Able to work with Kurzweil Company to make it more affordable and gain a University-wide license, but still some issues:
 - Cater to secondary education
 - Not as good on Macs
 - Hard to keep up with the updates
 - The iPad app is very limiting.
- Books
 - Access Tech to get accessible books
 - E-books
 - Book share
 - Problem: lack of universal file formats
 - Publishers are getting better at accessibility, but still a long way to go