



American
Occupational Therapy
Association

Student Accommodations: Classroom to Fieldwork

Academic Leadership Council *Virtual Meeting*
October 13th, 2023 | 11:30am - 2:30pm EST



hi
st

Agenda



8:35 - 9:20

Opening Speaker: Presentation and Dialogue

9:20 - 9:25

5-minute stretch break (panel assemblies)

9:25 - 10:25

Panel Presentations

10:25 - 10:35

10-minute break

10:35 - 11:25

Dialogue and Questions and Answers with Panelists

Courtney Castleman Bucher, M.A.

(she/they)



Columbia University, M.A. Sociology
Mills College, B.A. Sociology

Biography

My sociological research examines educational institutions, social inequality, disability, and the act of disclosure. My goals are to push for adequate representation of people with diverse disabilities in educational settings and level the playing field for people from historically underrepresented groups in higher education.

Both inside and outside of my role as a Disability Specialist at University of California, Berkeley, I thrive in purposefully envisioning the future, and emboldening others in reaching their educational and personal aspirations.

As a person with multiple disabilities, I was a first-generation college student grappling with social and attitudinal barriers in the pursuit of a word-class degree at a competitive university. I bring these experiences to my role as a specialist.

Land Acknowledgement:

I want to take a moment to recognize that today I am Zooming in from the city of Berkeley, which sits on the territory of xučyun (Huichin), the original homeland of the Chochenyo speaking Ohlone people, the successors of the sovereign Verona Band of Alameda County. This land is of great importance to the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and other familial descendants of the Verona Band.

I recognize that every member of our community, including myself, has directly benefited, and continues to benefit, from the use and occupation of this area. Consistent with my values, I do have a responsibility to acknowledge and make visible the history of the land on which I stand. I also want to acknowledge that the Muwekma Ohlone people are alive and flourishing members of our community today.

This acknowledgement was adapted from a [living document](#) co-created by the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and Native American Student Development at UC Berkeley.

Thank you!

Deep Equity Work: Demystifying Disability Accommodations in Higher Education

- Introduction, my background, and why do this work?
- Overview of prior research: what I have learned about student perspectives (both through my research and work in the field)
- Models of Disability and how they are applied
- Disability Trends in Higher Education
- Roles and Responsibilities of a Disability Specialist, providing equitable access (not benefit)
- Introduction to the Interactive Process – what happens behind the scenes?
- Case Studies: “connecting the dots” between verified health concerns and context of educational settings (barriers) —> approved accommodations
- Moving beyond compliance, Universal Design, and DEI

Research at the Intersection of Disability & Education

Graduate Research:

Structured interviews with undergraduate and graduate students with invisible disabilities across a competitive east coast university about their experiences disclosing their disability status to others on campus

Findings:

-Students engaged in a complex cost-benefit analysis to decide when, where, and to whom they would disclose their disability status.

-Assumption of dishonesty: 100% of students feared professors did not believe their condition or disability was valid and/or thought they were exaggerating to gain unearned benefits.

Some disabilities look like this



Some look like this



Assumption of Dishonesty:

“I think the worst thing is when people don’t believe me or don’t understand. I think it’s just hard for people to believe something they don’t see”.

“It’s because it’s a condition that you can’t see. [...] I feel like a lot of them thought I was faking it, which made them kind of resent me”.

“I was very afraid that I wouldn’t be able to argue to them successfully that I had something [a disability]. That was very scary.”



Popular Models of Disability

Social Model - social and environmental barriers to access are the issue

Medical Model - based in diagnosis, a condition to be treated or fixed

Religious/Moral Model - caused by a moral issue and cured through right-mindedness, improved morality, or prayer

Legal Model - people with disabilities have rights

Charity Model - “we are good people because we help”, can sometimes include feelings of pity

Examples of ableism: imbedded and implicit bias, disability as inspiration, non-disabled people treating adults with disabilities as child-like, non-human, accolades and applause for providing access, tokenism, etc.

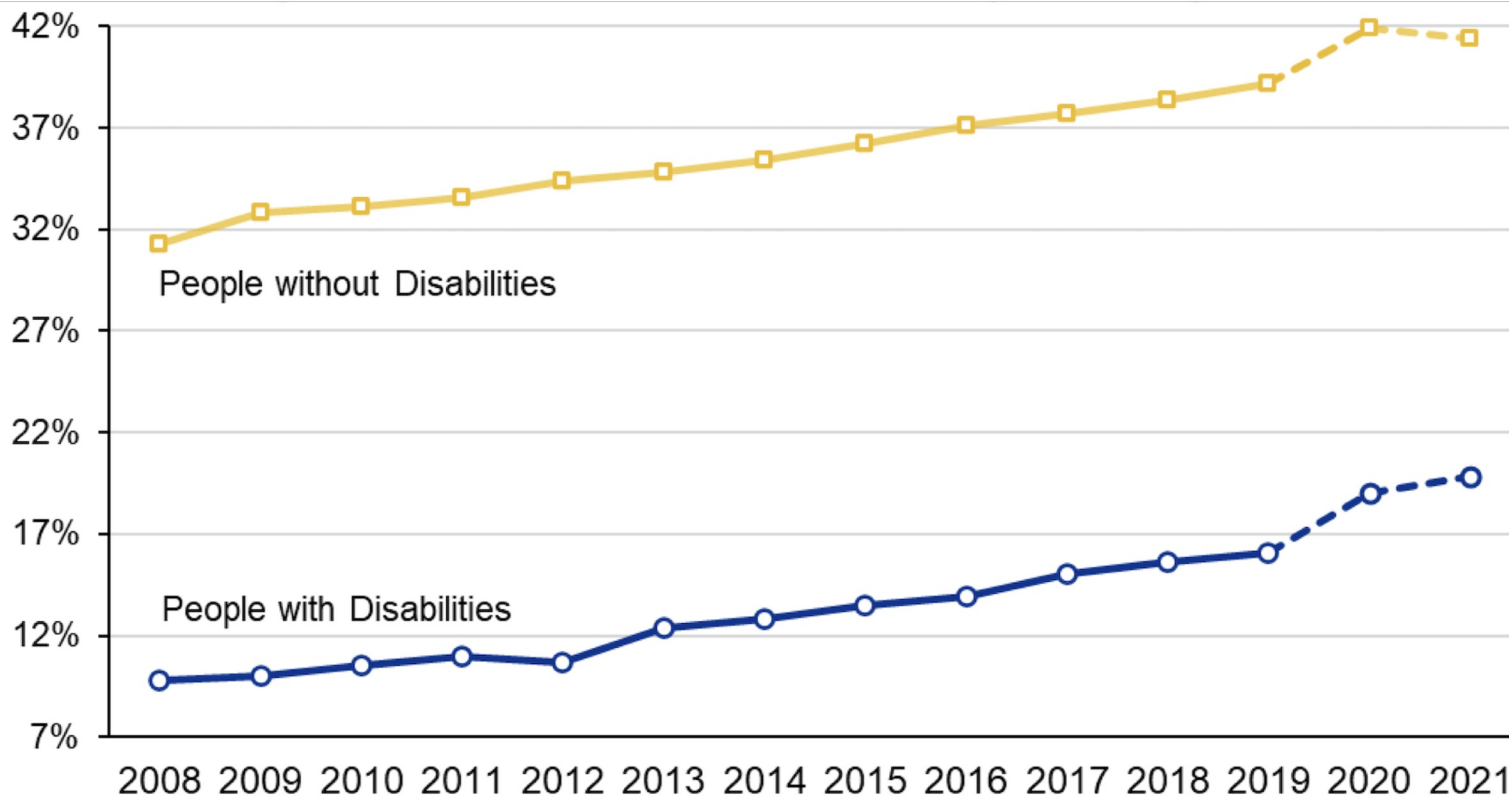


Trends in Higher Education

- More and more students with disabilities attending college
- Disability services offices are seeing an increase in students with psychological and invisible disabilities requesting accommodations
- More students with autism attending college and requesting accommodations
- More students in need of nuanced and complex accommodations
- An increase in [disability community & cultural centers](#) across the nation

“During the 2020–2021 school year, more than 60% of college students met the criteria for at least one mental health problem, according to the Healthy Minds Study, which collects data from 373 campuses nationwide” (Abrams, 2022) ([Lipson, S. K., et al., *Journal of Affective Disorders*, Vol. 306, 2022](#)).

Percent with Bachelor's Degrees or Higher (Annual Disability Statistics Compendium, 2023 Annual Report)



Roles & Responsibilities

Role and responsibilities of the DS: assess accommodation requests, gather information and data to determine barriers, set and monitor reasonable accommodations

Role and responsibilities of the student: disclose medical condition to disability services office, submit documents and information for assessment, engage in the interactive process as needed, communicate changing needs to specialist

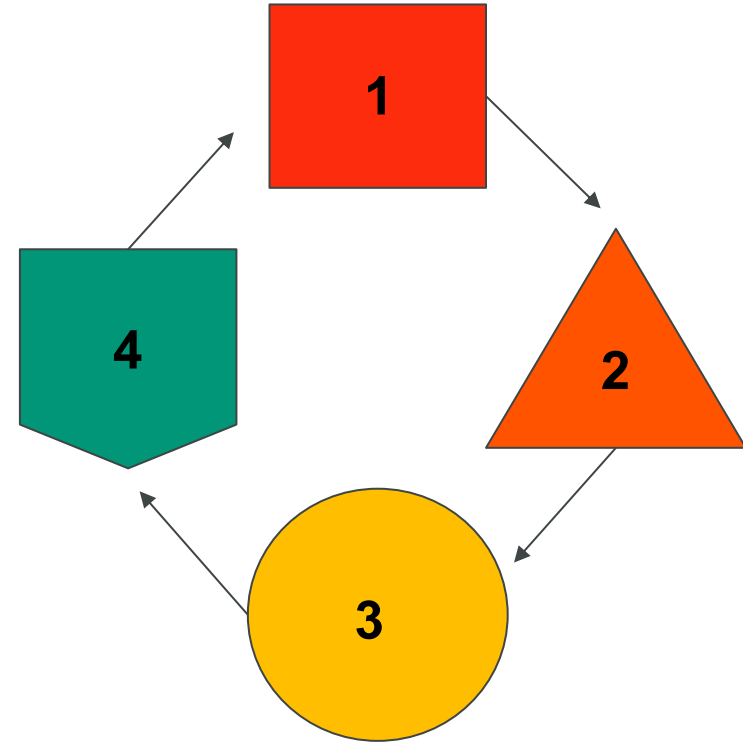
Role and responsibilities of the instructor or program director: enact reasonable accommodations set by DS, report any accommodations that fundamentally alter a course's stated learning objectives, participate in the interactive process as needed, refrain from asking about disability

Question to Ponder:

What does it mean to provide equal access/equity (and not provide a benefit or guarantee success)?

Introduction to the Interactive Process

1. Student discloses and applies for academic accommodations, submits medical documentation
1. Student and DS meet for an intake session. DS gathers student self-report and context in session, connecting the dots (where functional limitations meet barriers).
1. Consultation and review of additional sources, as needed
1. DS sets and assists student in communicating accommodations, troubleshooting as needed
1. The interactive process continues and may change accommodations, depending on fluctuations in disability, course content, and environmental barriers.



What is a fundamental alteration?

Case Study #1

Diagnoses: Autism, ADHD, Major Depression Disorder (recurrent, episodic)

Functional impact: sensitivity to noise, challenges with attention and concentration, depressive episodes 1-5 times a semester that last for 2-5 days that include difficulty getting out of bed, eating, sleeping, and difficulty attending class and completing assignments.

History: Diagnosed with ASD and ADHD as a child, but has provided updated documentation. Depression started about 5 years ago. Is connected with care providers.

Context: This student is studying social work. They are taking 2 online courses, for which attendance is not graded. They are also taking an in-person course that has an associated (and graded) internship working with a local organization. In this course, attendance is 20% of their grade. Has missed one week of classes this semester already.

Potential accommodations?

Case Study #2

Diagnosis: visual impairment (convergence insufficiency), migraines, and Adjustment Disorder

Functional impact: difficulty reading small print, high anxiety at night impacts ability to sleep and get out of bed in the morning. Tracking sentences line by line is an area of difficulty.

History: Student was diagnosed with a visual disability as a child and is currently undergoing medical treatment to improve ability to read and track sentences. The student shared that her migraines have been in remission for more than 6 months, but previously the condition impacted the student's ability to eat, sleep, turn in assignments on time, and attend class. The student is now able to attend most classes and therapy is working, however the student is still struggling to attend morning classes because of high anxiety at night and difficulty with mornings. Student shared they have started a new medication for depression and anxiety that has them feeling groggy before 12pm.

Context: Student is an Anthropology graduate student who is required to read a large amount of material and write a 50-100 page graduate thesis.

Potential accommodations?

Further questions to ponder:

- How might we go beyond compliance?
- What does it mean to have a commitment to equity and equal access?
- How might we think of accessibility as DEI work?
- How might we use a [Universal Design](#) approach to create more accessible programs?
- How might we contribute to disability community, culture, and student belonging?

Questions?



Contact Courtney Castleman Bucher

By email: clc2233@columbia.edu

or connect via LinkedIn

Featured Panelists



Kim Nguyen
MSW, LCSW



Tessa Milman
OTD, OTR/L



Deanna Mannarelli
OTD, OTR/L



Michaela Scanlon
OTD, OTR/L



Kim Nguyen, MSW, LCSW

(She/Her)

Associate Director, Clinical & Professional Programs

Biography

Kim is a licensed clinical social worker who's been working in the field of education since 2011. Kim served as a school counselor for nearly 6 years providing individual and group therapeutic services to students with special needs. She has always had a passion supporting students with their long-term educational goals. That led to Kim pursuing student disability services in higher education for 2 years before joining OSAS. Kim currently manages a OSAS caseload with an emphasis in coordinating accommodations for students in clinical and professional placements.

Kim - Disability Specialist

- Best Practices in Supporting Students and Faculty
- Myths related to Academic Accommodations
- Common Barriers and Pitfalls

Tessa Milman, OTD, OTR/L

(She/Her)

Associate Director of the Entry-Level Doctorate of Occupational Therapy Program and Associate Professor of Clinical Occupational Therapy

Biography

I teach mental health, reflection, communication and qualitative research courses, utilizing Team-Based Learning and other learner-centered pedagogies. It is important to me to incorporate diverse perspectives and critical theories, to support occupational therapy students to become culturally humble practitioners who care deeply about lived experiences and embody person-centered and trauma-informed approaches. I'm a mental health OT at heart and have practiced and supervised students in pediatric and adult mental health settings.

I'm parenting a neurodivergent child and in the process of figuring out what kinds of accommodations and shifts to the school environment will make school more accessible to her.



Accessible Education

Accessible Education is the process of designing courses and developing a teaching style to meet the needs of people from a variety of backgrounds, abilities and learning styles.

(Ontario's University's Accessible Campus, 2017)

Let's consider for a moment how academic environments can be disabling for students...

- Organizational or Systemic
- Attitudinal
- Information or communications
- Architectural or physical
- Technological

(Ontario University's Accessible Campus, 2017)

What are the are the barriers to accessibility in your programs?

- Organizational or Systemic
- Attitudinal
- Information or communications
- Architectural or physical
- Technological

(Ontario University's Accessible Campus, 2017)

Characteristics of Accessible Education

- Reduce barriers to accessibility
- Takes into account a variety of student characteristics, including ethnicity, race, abilities, disabilities, age, gender, language abilities and learning styles.
- Does not compromise academic rigor.
- Is a proactive and inclusive way of teaching and designing courses and curricula.

(Ontario's University's Accessible Campus, 2017)

Accessible Education

Universal Instructional Design

- Focuses on designing accessible and inclusive teaching and learning activities, environments and materials (U of Guelph, 2016)

Universal Design For Learning Framework ([CAST, 2018](#))

- Provide multiple means for:
 - Engagement (why)
 - Representation (what)
 - Action and Expressions (how)

Accommodation Vs Accessibility

Accommodation	Accessible Education
Access is a problem for the individual and should be addressed by that person and the disability service program.	Access issues stem from poorly designed environments and should be addressed by the designer.
Access is achieved through special accommodation and/or retrofitting existing requirements.	As much as possible, the system or environment is designed to be used by all.
Access is reactive.	Access is proactive.
Access is often provided in a separate location or through special treatment.	Access is inclusive.
Access must be reconsidered each time a new individual uses the system.	Access, as part of the course design and curriculum, is sustainable.

(Ontario's University's Accessible Campus, 2017)

In your program, do you lean towards an accommodation or an accessible approach?

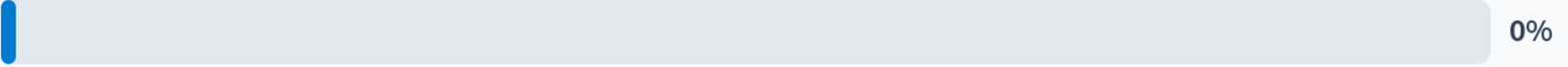
Accommodation	Accessible Education
Access is a problem for the individual and should be addressed by that person and the disability service program.	Access issues stem from poorly designed environments and should be addressed by the designer.
Access is achieved through special accommodation and/or retrofitting existing requirements.	As much as possible, the system or environment is designed to be used by all.
Access is reactive.	Access is proactive.
Access is often provided in a separate location or through special treatment.	Access is inclusive.
Access must be reconsidered each time a new individual uses the system.	Access, as part of the course design and curriculum, is sustainable.

(Ontario's University's Accessible Campus, 2017)

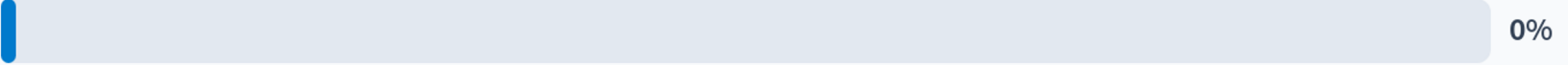
Does your program lean towards an accommodation or accessibility approach?

👍 0

Accommodation



Accessible





American
Occupational Therapy
Association

Advice from one of our students:

Instead of thinking about what is wrong with the student,
consider:

“What about this environment is hindering the student or
making it challenging for them to engage in the program?
How can we change it?”

What are the are the barriers to accessibility in your programs? How could they be overcome through an accessible approach?

- Organizational or Systemic
- Attitudinal
- Information or communications
- Architectural or physical
- Technological

(Ontario University's Accessible Campus, 2017)

References

Campbell, F. K. (2008). Refusing Able(ness): A Preliminary Conversation about Ableism. *M/C Journal*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.46>

CAST (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.2. Retrieved from <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>

Chacala, A., McCormack, C., Collins, B. & Beagan, B. (2014). “My view that disability is okay sometimes clashes”: experiences of two disabled occupational therapists. *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 21(2), 107-115.

Feldman, J. (2019). *Grading for equity: what it is, why it matters, and how it can transform schools and classrooms*. Corwin: A Sage Company.

Kielhofner, G. (2005). Rethinking disability and what to do about it: Disability studies and its implications for occupational therapy. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 59, 487–496.

References

Leblanc, S.& Kinsella, E. Toward epistemic justice: a critically reflexive examination of 'sanism' and implications for knowledge generation. *Studies in Social Justice*, 10(1), 59-78.

Oliver, M. (2018). *Understanding disability: From theory to practice*. Macmillan International Higher Education.

Ontario's University's. (2017.) *Accessible Education*. Retrieved from: <https://accessiblecampus.ca/tools-resources/educatorpus>



Deanna Mannarelli, OTD, OTR/L

(She/Her)

Director of Fieldwork and Doctoral Capstone Coordinator for the Entry-Level OTD Program, and Assistant Professor of Clinical Occupational Therapy

Biography

Deanna Mannarelli began her clinical work in acute care and transitioned to inpatient rehabilitation. It was during these years that she became aware of her passion supporting Level II fieldwork students. In 2020 she transitioned into the role of academic fieldwork coordinator, supporting students in the mental health immersion course and collaborating with other coordinators to secure and prepare fieldwork experiences.

Supporting Students in Fieldwork By Educating Students about OSAS

Before any fieldwork placements, coordinators inform all students that accommodations in the classroom may indicate a need for accommodations in fieldwork (encourage students to meet with their OSAS representative) and inform students of lengthy turnaround time to get OSAS accommodations in place before the start of fieldwork.

Academic Fieldwork Coordinator + OSAS Representative

As a coordinator it is important to understand the various fieldwork experiences we establish, including the following;

- environment
- expectations
- work demands
- supervisory styles of the fieldwork educators

Collaborating with the OSAS representative is beneficial for many reasons. One being reminding each other of our roles and unique contribution to the advocacy and rights of the student

- OSAS representative is available to maintain the perspective of equity and ensure students with accommodations are not given preferential treatment.
- Coordinator can share perspectives on accommodations within reason or potential strategies sites can use to integrate accommodations based on coordinators knowledge of the practice and unique fieldwork experience

Supporting Students in Fieldwork with OSAS Accommodations

If and when students share their OSAS accommodations to a coordinator, coordinators...

- Provide consultation regarding the available fieldwork experiences. Collaborate with students to discuss how the accommodations may be implemented at sites students are interested in.
- Explore students comfort with presenting their accommodations to the site coordinator. AFWC offer to be present to support student as they disclose to the site.
- Check in on all students throughout the fieldwork, specifically check on whether accommodations are meeting their need.

Common Fieldwork Accommodations

- Extra Time (i.e. for documentation, chart review, etc.)
- Breaks as Needed
- Modified schedule to attend appointments
- Recording devices
- Other equipment to support performance and success, e.g.
 - Sun-glasses for migraine
 - Ergonomic work station
 - Stool for accessibility

Michaela Scanlon, OTD, OTR/L

(She/Her)

School-Based Occupational Therapist

USC Chan Division Graduate

Biography

Hello! I graduated from USC's Chan Division in 2021 with my Master's of Art in Occupational Therapy and also obtained my Doctorate of Occupational Therapy this last May. I was born and raised in the Monterey Bay Area and am back in my hometown. I currently work in the school setting with a local district and serve two elementary schools. My service dog, Niko, has shifted her working role to be therapeutic alongside me. She is our campus therapy dog and is adored by the students and staff. As a team, our meaningful occupations include taking walks together and playing tug-of-war. We find immense joy in supporting our kiddos to be successful in their occupational role as students.



My Journey to USC Chan



**El Camino
Health**



Experiences as a Disabled Student

- Combating Stigma & Fostering Self - Advocacy
- Education & Empowerment from OSAS and Chan Faculty
- Support Through the Adversity, Holding Space, and Seeking Tangible Solutions
- Takeaways - What Made a Difference for Me?

Questions

How can we as educators and life-long learners continue to work to destigmatize disability?

How might we go beyond compliance?

What does it mean to have a commitment to equity and equal access?
How might we think of accessibility as DEI work?

How might we use a [Universal Design](#) approach to create more accessible programs?

How might we contribute to disability community, culture, and student belonging?

Describe a moment when you felt really discouraged and what got you through it.