#2.5 A Case Study Approach – Accommodation Decision Making

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Short Description

Disability Specialist staff in disability resources offices are tasked with making decisions about accommodations and access as a part of new student onboarding. Requests for assistance and discussion on listservs suggest that practitioners are stymied by novel requests. We will use case studies to illustrate reasoning and decision-making processes. Applicable legal paradigms and best practices in the field will also be referenced.

## Case Study One: Daniel

Daniel is a freshman who is majoring in BioEngineering. He has transferred to a university from a community college where he was affiliated with the Disability Resources office. He has Crohn’s Disease and a Generalized Anxiety Disorder. He has a 3.5 GPA. He is currently enrolled in four classes for 16 credits. He has had his medical and psychological records transferred to his new university. While attending the community college for the past two years, he experienced some ‘flare ups’ with his Crohn’s and was once hospitialized for a week. During his interview, he discussed his current health and concerns about missing classes and falling behind, due to his two conditions. He is requesting flexibility with assignment deadlines and attendance. He also wants 1.5 X time for exams because he states that his anxiety during exams is often high. He asks if it is possible to record course sessions in the event that he had an extended absence (like his former hospitialization), so that he could view them later and complete his work.

### Consider:

1. What questions did you plan to ask during his interview to get to know him and to discover the access barriers he may face currently and in finishing his degree?
2. What legal paradigms are important to consider when discussing attendance and assignment deadlines?
3. What do you need to know about the courses he is taking to evaluate his accommodations requests? How will you discover this information?
4. What procedures and guidelines exist on your campus to facilitate the implementation of the accommodations he has requested?
5. Will you need to do follow up work with him and his faculty after the initial interview?

Make your personal notes here and on the back as needed. Then discuss this case with someone near you. Pair up with someone from your campus or from another campus, in groups of two or three.

## Case Study Two: Mitchell

Mitchell is a student who had a liver transplant (at age one) and who has a learning disability. His physician recommended being extremely cautious about exposure to illness (COVID-19) because he is immunosuppressed – such as social gatherings and classes (recommend remote courses). He also provided a psychological evaluation completed in 2017, when he was entering 12th grade. He had needed breaks during exams because of frequent bathroom breaks. When he returned to testing, he didn’t have enough time to complete his exams. He takes immunosuppressant drugs which cause:

* Frequent need to use the bathroom (took 4 breaks during his ACT testing)
* Dizziness, drowsiness, joint pain and headaches

During his early years, he had extensive PT and OT. He also had issues with spatial orientation and awareness. Later he was diagnosed with synostosis – fusing of bones in his arms and wrists, resulting in fine motor output and agility impairments. It was also discovered that he is color blind.

He was given a WAIS-IV assessment, which revealed significant weaknesses in Perceptual Reasoning and Processing Speed. He also scored very low in Sentence Reading Fluency. His reading rate was improved when he had extra time (1.5x).

In a test of behavioral characteristics, he had very elevated scores related to:

* Performance fears
* Obsessions and compulsions
* GAD

He was also diagnosed with a Specific Learning Disability with impairment in reading and a developmental coordination disorder – fine motor weakness.

Accommodations recommended include:

1. Time-compensated breaks, private room for testing and ability to write answers on exam documents
2. Utilize priority registration and notetaking assistance

Fatigue can be an issue for him, so this could impact his studying.

His major is American Popular Culture and he is a sophomore

In addition, he is requesting a single room / single bedroom with a private bathroom

His liver functioning is monitored every 3 months

### Consider:

1. What questions did you plan to ask during his interview to get to know him and to discover the access barriers he may face currently and in finishing his degree?
2. Are there legal paradigms that are important to consider?
3. Do you need to know about the courses he is taking to evaluate his accommodation requests? How will you discover this information?
4. What procedures and guidelines exist on your campus to facilitate the implementation of the accommodations he has requested?
5. Will you need to do follow up work with him and his faculty after the initial interview? What is your plan?

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## Case Study Three:

Michelle contractedCOVID-19 in 2020 and saw a Clinical Occupational Therapist in June 2021. The OT reported her case as moderate in impact and noted that her symptoms are episodic. She experiencesmalaise, fatigue (noted as severe), and jointpain. Stress, mental and physical exertion exacerbate her symptoms. It was noted that she has OCD as well (self-report?). Her symptoms are being addressed through ‘disease education’. She is a freshman. She is a Social Work major.

Communicating/interacting, manual tasks, sleeping, thinking, attending class, meeting deadlines, persistence, reading and taking exams are impacted moderately. Challenges with sleeping, reading and taking exams are more frequent. She had been “ill” continuously since March 2021. Her prognosis is unknown because not much is known about the long-term effects of post-COVID 19. She has OT on Wednesday’s at 11 am or 3 pm. It is noted that the “patient is highly motivated to get back to her baseline”.

Accommodations recommended include:

* Ability to take exams in the morning
* Allow student to watch afternoon synchronous lectures (is this possible?)
* Allow rescheduling of big exams (apply to projects also?)
* Permission to live off campus

The persistence of her symptoms is unknown. She is scheduled to take some units every summer and 16 units in fall 2021. All classes run from 9 am – 4 pm, but there are night classes between 4 pm and 6 pm. She reports being able to do work from 8 am to 1 pm, then resting from 1:30 – 4 pm. She can do some work from 5 – 8:30 pm. She is most worried about future summer courses. She wants to have lectures recorded so she can watch them later, if needed. She wants notetaking support also. For reading, it is easier to listen than read visually. She reports that living on campus would be very difficult for her.

### Consider:

1. What questions did you plan to ask during his interview to get to know her and to discover the access barriers she may face currently and in continuing her degree?
2. Are there legal paradigms that are important to consider when discussing her accommodation requests?
3. What do you need to know about the courses she is taking to evaluate her accommodation requests? How will you discover this information?
4. What procedures and guidelines exist on your campus to facilitate the implementation of the accommodations she has requested?
5. Will you need to do follow up work with her and her faculty after the initial interview?

Make your personal notes here and on the back as needed. Then discuss this case with someone near you. Pair up with someone from your campus or from another campus, in groups of two or three.