Updating Disability Self-Advocacy through the lens of Critical Disability Studies

Presenters:
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We ask you to join us in creating a culture that reflects…

Access and Inclusion

and

Civility and Respect

…this week and in all aspects of our organization.
Learning and Action Goals

• Understand the dominant model for disability self-advocacy in higher education and possible consequences.

• Apply a Critical Disability Studies lens to imagine alternative ways to discuss disability self-advocacy on campuses.

• Brainstorm possible next steps on your campus.
Self-Advocacy Models

• Adopted from secondary education
• Individual skill based:
  • Knowledge of self
  • Communication skills
  • Ability to negotiate
  • Conflict resolution
Self-Advocacy In Disability Services

• Centers practices that involve disability service offices:
  • Self disclosure (often providing documentation)
  • Requesting accommodations
  • Using accommodations
  • Discussing/negotiating accommodations with professors and disability professionals as needed
Self-Advocacy Individual Model

Consequences

• If disabled students are not able to effectively use self advocacy skills it is perceived as a “skill deficit”.

• Solution is often to develop self-advocacy skill-based programs for disabled students.

• Students do extra work to utilize accommodations for equitable access.
What are you doing on your campus?

• Share with some folks near you what you are currently doing on your campus related to disability self-advocacy.

• We will share in 5 – 10 minutes.
Critical Disability Studies (CDS) lens

• CDS is an interdisciplinary field that examines disability from a social, cultural and political perspective.
• For this presentation based on two CDS research articles.
CDS perspective on Self-Advocacy

- Self-advocacy is important for disabled student success.
- The self-advocacy model the way it is currently framed is problematic.
- CDS supports the importance of focusing attention on the wider institutional context.
- Including the conditions that make self-advocacy necessary.
- As well as the structural and attitudinal barriers that determine if disabled student self-advocacy will be effective.
CDS Article Citations

• “Politicizing Self-Advocacy: Disabled Students Navigating Ableist Expectations in Post-Secondary Education”, Woolf & de Bie, 2022 Politicizing Self-Advocacy Article

• “Just My Being Here is Self-Advocacy: Exploring the self Advocacy Experiences of Disabled Graduate Students of Color”, Karpicz, 2020 Just My Being Here is Self-Advocacy Article
Students’ Perception of Institutional Expectations of Self-Advocacy (Woofe, 2022).

Based on Qualitative Data (grounded theory) of 11 students, students perceive an institutional endorsed “right way” to self-advocate:

- Arrange for formal accommodations.
- Embody visible/physical disability.
- Perform as less disabled.
- Make other comfortable.
Student Perceptions from Karpitz, 2020

• Based on qualitative data, 7 primarily Black and Latinx disabled graduate students:
  • One student reported that they needed to do more self-advocacy than white disabled peers (more steps to self-advocate to be believed).
  • When self-advocating, disability and race intersect (as well as other marginalized identities).
  • Two students in the study decided to leave their programs of study due to perceived persistent access barriers.
Karpitz’ comments, 2020

• "When environments appeared to be hostile, resistant, or marginalizing, students felt that disclosing their disability status would be neither beneficial, nor necessarily safe, p.153-154."
Do It Better!
Disabled Student Self-Advocacy through a CDS lens

Strategies for Disability Professionals and Offices:
• Ask disabled students how to “Do It Better” (focus groups, surveys, meetings etc.).
• Move away from individual student self-advocacy skill development as the only strategy.
• Educate about ableism and intersectionality and possible impacts on the self-advocacy experience, especially related to power and privilege dynamics in the institution.
• Develop disabled student workshop(s) sharing self-advocacy individual experiences and creating effective individual strategies for change.
• Using a CDS lens, including disabled students’ experiences, develop effective institutional strategies for creating change.
AHEAD Competency 3: Self-Advocacy

• Competency: Apply appropriate student and adult development theories/practices to engage with and support students in developing appropriate and effective self-advocacy skills.

• Attribute 3.2: Develop an understanding of the intricacies associated with implementing a compliance-founded resource that provides person focused support through a Social Justice framework which incorporates features of civil rights and compliance.
Ideas for Creating Changes to Disability Self-advocacy On Your Campus.

• Share with some folks near you some ideas for disability self-advocacy changes, and/or possible next steps on your campus or your disability services office.
• Record them to share with others when back at work.
• Time permitting, we will share in 5 – 10 minutes.
Thank you for attending!
Presenter Information

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