

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.

Stuck in the Middle

Helping Disability Services Staff Navigate Faculty-Student Dynamics

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Who Am I?

An Expert at The Middle!

- Middle Manager
 - Staff Advisory Council Veteran
 - ASL Interpreter
- (More on this later!)*



MIZZOU

Land-Grant University

~ 30,000 students

- Medical School
- Law School
- Nursing School
- College of Veterinary Medicine

Approximately 3,000 students
connected with the Disability Center.



How Often Do You or Your Staff Feel Caught Between Faculty and Student Needs?

- a. Never
- b. Sometimes
- c. Often
- d. CONSTANTLY

What is “The Middle”?

Clowns to the left of me?



Jokers to the right?



Stuck Between...

Student Access
Policy
Access
Parent involvement



Faculty Autonomy
Practice
Institutional Culture (Habits)
Student Responsibility

Hidden Costs

- Feeling powerless
- Burnout
- Decision fatigue
- Emotional exhaustion
- Role ambiguity



Small Group Discussion:

- When has this happened to you or your staff?
- Where was the pressure coming from?
- What was at risk?
- What was the resolution? Was it satisfactory to all parties involved?

But... what does this have to do with interpreting?

Many times, faculty and students are NOT speaking the same language and do not share the same knowledge and culture.



Models of Interpreting



- Helper
- Conduit (Machine)
- Bilingual – Bicultural Mediator Model

Bicultural Mediation

The bilingual-bicultural (Bi-Bi) model positions interpreters not just as message conduits, but as bicultural mediators who bridge the linguistic and cultural gaps between the American Deaf community and the hearing world. This approach requires a deep understanding of Deaf culture, norms, and sociolinguistic realities to ensure accurate meaning.

Case Study 1

A second-year medical student with a documented learning disability is approved for lecture recording as an accommodation. The course director for a pharmacology class refuses to allow recording, citing:

- Intellectual property concerns
- Fear of content being shared publicly
- A longstanding course policy prohibiting recording

The student reports they cannot effectively process the information in real time without replay access. They begin falling behind and escalate concerns to you.

Case Study #1 (Continued)

Faculty Member:

“I’ve taught this course for 15 years. Recording changes the integrity of how I teach.”

Student:

“Without this, I’m not getting equal access. I’m barely keeping up.”

Case Study 2

A first-year undergraduate student with a documented anxiety disorder and ADHD registers with the Disability Center and is approved for exam accommodations. Early in the semester, the student begins missing classes and performs poorly on exams. The student's parent calls and emails the access advisor repeatedly requesting confirmation that accommodations are being implemented and intervention with faculty to "ensure my child isn't penalized". The parent is escalating concerns that their student is struggling and not advocating for themselves and feels that someone needs to step in.

Case Study #2 (Continued)

Meanwhile....

The student has not responded to outreach from the Disability Center

A faculty member reaches out to express concern about lack of attendance and participation from the student

How do we leverage our staff's place in the middle?

Helping them recognize:

- Power dynamics at play
- Culture of both sides
- Soft skills for mediation purposes
- Remembering the goal (ACCESS) amongst the noise and emotion



Staff Needs

- Structure
- Autonomy
- Support (as needed)



How to Support Staff in Practice

- Normalize the Tension
- Provide Clear Decision Frameworks
- Build the “Soft Skills”
- Create Backup Systems
- Encourage Reflective Practice
- Protect Capacity

Our staff are not neutral – they are translators, negotiators and protectors.



**WHEN THE MIDDLE HOLDS, WE ALL
WIN!**

Questions?