SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: A NEW ACCESSIBILITY PARADIGM TOWARD SUCCESSFUL STUDENT OUTCOMES.

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Purpose

• To review current practices and challenges preparing students with disabilities for professional social work in the digital age.

• Promote critical analysis of current paradigm by suggesting an alternative.

• To position online social work education at the forefront of inclusion for people with disabilities seeking higher education.
Learning Objectives

I. Identify current policies, technology, and procedures making social work education accessible.

II. Examine current challenges and gaps to accessibility in current practices.

III. Analyze your program’s level of functioning toward accessibility.

IV. Determine if new paradigm should replace existing one or if other solutions are feasible.

V. Identify next steps.
False Assumptions

I. Online programs offer barrier free education to people with disabilities who otherwise might not receive it.

II. Technology based on *Universal Design* is enough.

III. Accessibility only involves technology and rigor.

IV. Disability community is homogeneous.

V. Except for Federal guidelines, disability is taboo.

VI. Making online education accessible is the purview of the OSD.

VII. We can and should wait until OSD informs us of a student.

VIII. Current system minimizes liability.
Some data to consider…

• 12.1% of all persons all ages reported a disability (see American Community Survey (2012) for details.

Of those who reported a disability…

• 10.4% (n=18,890,100) ages 21-64.
• 20.9% (n=3,957,100) full time employed.
• 10.8% (n=1,353,800) actively looking.
• 12.4% (n=2,346,100) with bachelors degree or higher.
• 20.2% (n=2,313,600) with VA connected service disability.

Break down of type of disability

• 2.2% visual
• 3.4% Hearing
• 6.9% Ambulatory
• 4.9% Cognitive
• 2.7% Self-Care
• 5.6% Independent Living
THE WAVE OF ADVOCACY

Bethany Hamilton
Systemic forces at play
Online industry

- 3rd party providers
  - Adobe Connect, Convene, Vyew, Join Me, Go to Meeting, WebEx, Wiggio, Sorrenson Video Relay.
  - YouTube, Google
  - Open source software i.e. grammarly.com, MSOffice,
  - LMS development- E-college, Blackboard, TrainCaster, Moodle, 2u, Google.
- Provider white papers
- Coursera
- edX
Online Resources & Accessibility Training

- **Accessibility services and TA**
  - W3C-Web Accessibility Initiative
  - AHEAD.org
  - NCD.gov

- **The industry of technical assistance**
  - Web Content Accessibility Guidelines WCAG 2.0
  - AChecker
  - WebAIM
  - Deque
  - Accessibility OZ

- **Accessibility Software**
  - JAWS
  - Universal Design (OS and MS office, Adobe).
  - Apple vs. PC
Department of Justice requirements of edX.

- make the edX website, its mobile applications, and learning management system software, through which online courses are offered, fully accessible within 18 months
- ensure that its content management system, called Studio, which edX makes available to entities creating online courses, is fully accessible and supports authoring and publishing of accessible content within an additional 18 months
- provide guidance to course creators at its member universities and other institutions on best practices for making online courses fully accessible
- appoint a Web Accessibility Coordinator
- adopt a Web Accessibility Policy
- solicit feedback from learners on the accessibility of the courses
- conduct Web Accessibility Training for employees responsible for the website, platform, and mobile applications
- retain a consultant to evaluate conformance of the website, platform, and mobile application
CURRENT PARADIGM
Disconnected, uncoordinated, one directional, disempowering, and detracting from academic rigor.
Current OSD involvement

Point of entrance

Point of exit
Yet, the Online lifespan involves…

- Marketing/open house
- Admissions
- OSD
- Courses
- Online community
- Student Support Services
- School/program gatherings
- Library
- Field
- Graduation
- Employment Services
- Alumni services
- PhD, DSW student
- Adjunct
- Field Instructor
- CEU’s
Leading to current student experience.
Requiring a more complex service system…

- Pre Admission
- Admission
- Enrollment
- Post Grad
Arriving at a new paradigm.

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The Classroom: change in architecture, process, and roles.

- **Flipped classroom**
  - New paradigm for higher education.
  - New student role
  - New faculty role

- **Technology**
  - Multimedia
  - Interactive
  - Course Templates
  - Software updates

Kletter-Weltmeisterschaften
Arco-2011
FIELD PLACEMENT

An expanded set of considerations and stakeholders.
Placement Considerations

- Needs of the student
- Geography
- Resources of the University
- Constraints of the agency
- Integrity of the curriculum
- Use of technology
If we bring the SWD to the center of our attention, what do we see?

- Accommodations are needed by SWD
- Constraints of our program design
- Constraints of the agencies
Why is it the School’s Issue?

• Once you admit a student you have a commitment to provide an accessible curriculum
Field Education is a Course

- A course completed outside the parameters of the school
- Changes the accountability for accommodations
How is field different?

- A course completed outside the parameters of the school
- Changes the accountability for accommodations
Constraints of the educational institution

• How is the structure of our programs a barrier? What are our true constraints?
  • Confines of the semester
  • Distribution of required hours
  • Type of written assignments
  • Demands/constraints of the agencies we use as placements
Challenges for the School

• Designing the learning platform – how much and what can you bend in our curriculum and practices?
• Provision of the placements - What are the barriers that create the problem?
• Special training needed for field placement team
Mindset of curriculum design

• Recognize the challenges
• Not lower the expectations
Agency constraints

• Liability
• Lack of technology
• Funding
• Misperception of “more work”
• Beliefs and attitudes of staff toward PWD
• Physical location
Fears that the SWD expressed

- Wray et. al. (2005)
  - Stigma
  - That they would be perceived as a nuisance or burden
  - Afraid that if they admit any weakness they won’t be seen as competent to be a social worker
Categories of accommodations

- Physical access - getting in the front door
- Information access - do they have what they need to do the tasks of the placement? interpreters
- Service access - para-transit to get there
- Scheduling alterations - rest periods, shorter days

Goal: Barrier – Free environment
Principles guiding paradigm shift

- Maintain academic integrity
- OSD recommendations coincide with online rigor and capabilities.
- Student empowerment and collaboration
- Early assistance
- Advance planning
- Repetitive curriculum assessment
- Coordination and communication
- Outcome driven
- Longitudinal design
THE SUM OF THE PARTS DO NOT ADD UP TO EQUAL THE WHOLE WHEN IT COMES TO MAKING SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMS ACCESSIBLE!

What is needed is coordination and participation between all stakeholders.
Issues of Accessibility: Lessons learned

Discuss cases by item along life span

• Admissions
• Curriculum design
• Accommodations
• Course instruction
• Tech support- upgrade, trouble shooting.
• Ancillary activities- webinars, office hours, student support services
• Field placement
Contact us…

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