

Faculty Information 11/02/2019

**STUDENTS WHO HAVE PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITIES**

**OVERVIEW**

Many disabilities make up the broad category of Psychiatric Disabilities, including but not limited to depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder. In addition to coping with a Psychiatric Disability, it is possible that a student with this disability is also on medications that impact the speed of the learning process. It is critical that the professor maintain confidentiality of ALL students with disabilities, so make sure that discussions about the student’s needs and accommodations are done privately.

With appropriate reasonable accommodations, students with Psychiatric Disabilities are capable of meeting the academic standards of the class and the college. Professors may want to consider strategies such as presenting the curriculum in multiple modalities, which is a Best Practice in Universal Design for Instruction and benefits all students in the class.

Despite myths to the contrary, students with Psychiatric Disabilities are no more likely to become violent that anyone else. In fact, a student with Psychiatric Disabilities is more likely to be a victim than a perpetrator. However, it is also important to remember that ALL students are expected to meet the same academic standards and to abide by the Texas A&M University Commerce Code of Conduct. This includes students with Psychiatric Disabilities. If a student is engaging in behavior that is disruptive of the class, talk with the student privately. If you and the student chose to do so, SDRS can arrange a consultation among the Case Manager, you and the student. Should behavior persist, this becomes a conduct issue, not a disability issue.

If you have concerns about a student, contact SDRS at SDRS@TAMUC.edu or call 903-886-5150. For more serious concerns, file a complaint through appropriate Student Conduct channels. If there are imminent concerns of danger or if the student is exhibiting behaviors that cause you to be concerned about the student’s connection with reality, contact the University Police Department, as you would with any student who gives you reason for imminent danger concern.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR FACULTY**

* Include a statement in your syllabus inviting students with disabilities to meet with you privately so that you may confidentially discuss the students’ needs and reasonable accommodations. Also, at the beginning of each semester, verbally invite students with disabilities to meet with you privately to discuss their individual and unique needs. Talk about the requirements of the class, special needs of each student (on a case-by-case basis, as each student’s needs are unique), and strategize as to how to implement the reasonable accommodations defined the Student Disability Resources and Services. If you and the student note any needs that are not met by existing accommodations, contact SDRS and refer the student to schedule an appointment with the SDRS Case Manager so that the needs can be identified and appropriate reasonable accommodations can be noted. Ask the student if there are any triggers that you need to be aware of, and if the student choses to share that information with you, please alert the student in advance of showing any films or having class discussions that relate to those triggers. Offer an alternative assignment.
* Never make an assumption about a student or that student’s abilities. Each student is unique, and his/her disability impacts him/her in varying ways. Always be respectful of each student. If you have concerns, contact the Student Disability Resources and Services (SDRS).
* Some students may require preferential seating as a reasonable accommodation. Discuss the accommodation with the student and together determine the best seat for that individual.
* Many students with a Psychiatric Disability will require the use of a note taker or note taking technology as a reasonable accommodation. If needed, please assist the student in obtaining a note taker by either announcing to the class that SDRS is hiring note takers, or by singling out good students and asking if they would be interested in the job. Never disclose who the notes are for in order to preserve the confidentiality of the student with the disability. SDRS will provide NCR paper to the note taker who is hired and establish how the notes are to be delivered to the student needing the notes.
* The student may need to leave the class briefly as a strategy to help the student manage mounting anxiety. This enables the student to regain composure and return to class in a more productive state of mind.
* Due to medication side effects, the student may need to bring something to drink into the class. Please be tolerant.
* Use multiple modalities of instruction when possible to promote attentiveness and comprehension of the subject matter. This benefits ALL students in your class.
* Provide a detailed course syllabus as early as possible, or post it online for students to access. Be sure to clearly describe course requirements, assignments, due dates, and grading criteria.
* Give a brief overview of what will be taught at the beginning of each class, followed by a brief review of what was taught at the end of each class. This promotes retention of the course material.
* Provide both verbal and written directions for each assignment.
* For exams, it is helpful to provide, in advance, a study guide that reviews the content to be covered in the exam, as well as illustrating the format of the exam. This helps prepare the students for the exam and reduces anxiety.
* It is helpful to present new terms and technical language both verbally and in writing.
* When writing on the board or using visual materials, describe and discuss the content to ensure better understanding of the material by the students.
* Most students with a Psychiatric Disability will require extended time for exams, quizzes, in-class writing assignments. Additionally, many students also struggle with issues of anxiety disorders and/or attention disorders and may need to take exams in a distraction-reduced environment. Consult SDRS if you have questions.

**Be sure that, at all times, you maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the student. If you need to discuss issues or testing arrangements with the student, do so privately.**

**Texas A&M University Commerce Student Disability Resources and Services**

Gee Library, Suite 162

903-886-5150

E-mail: StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

**Texas A&M University-Commerce at Frisco – 9700 Wade Blvd, University Hall 105, Frisco TX**

Frisco@tamuc.edu

(972) 377-1665

**Universities Center at Dallas – 801 Main Street, Suite C340, Dallas TX**

Dallas@tamuc.edu

(214) 954-3600

**Collin Higher Education Center – 3452 Spur 399, Mckinney, TX 75069**

CHEC@tamuc.edu

972-599-3122

**Mesquite Metroplex Center – 2600 Motley Drive, Suite 100, Mesquite, TX 75150**

Russell.blanchett@tamuc.edu

972-882-7520

**Navarro Partnership – 3200W 7th Avenue, Corsicana, TX 75110**

Virginia.monk@tamuc.edu

903-875-7619

***REMEMBER****:*

***ALL*** *students must meet the same academic standards for credit in your class. Standards should NOT be lowered. Students with disabilities may use reasonable accommodations, but they are held to the same academic and Code of Conduct standards as any other student.*