

My name is Wendy Stevenson from the Student Disability Resources office, and my job here today is to talk a little bit about what we do, but also what is a disability?

So, in moving along. I wanted to show you a little bit about our numbers. A lot of people think of a disability as something that is more physical, where our numbers have gone nuts lately. We only have the numbers now through the end of the fall 2015, but our numbers are up to basically 2,000 students, so obviously, it's got to be more than just the physical disabilities that you're thinking about, because we work with a huge variety of students.

So, what does make a disability? All of the conditions that I had up on the Power slide, all of those could become a disability. It really depends on the impact. Okay, so we have a variety of answers there. Definitely, people understand that blindness or using a wheelchair, those are our highest response areas, but also the trouble concentrating. All of those conditions could rise to the level that we classify it actually as a disability. So a disability is defined by the ADA as an impairment that severely impacts a major life activity. So a lot of people think of the physical things, the hearing, the eating, the sleeping, standing, and all of that, but the majority of the students that we actually work with, it's the ones that are the invisible disabilities, the reading, the concentrating, the thinking, the communicating, and actually this slide did not update. It's actually over 95% of our students have the invisible disabilities. I say it every day, but when I come here, I can't say it correctly.

So, it's a good thing it's our passion. It is, it does, like he had said, it does consume our life. It consumes our job. Everyone that works at Student Disability Resources really does love working with students. Disabilities are different for every person, and that's where the difference lies, where is it a disability, or is it just a diagnosis that they have been, a condition they have been diagnosed with? It has to severely impact a student. So, these effects can be different at different times. We have students that, one day they're walking around, and the next day they might be in a wheelchair. One day they're concentrating real well, but then they did something that the next day that they're in so much pain they can't concentrate. So it is totally different. It can be physical, biochemical, psychological, emotional, environmental. It can lead to a lot of social isolation. A lot of our students will talk about feeling like they're the only ones out there. Lot of times, it will lead to a secondary diagnosis. We have very few students that come in are diagnosed with just one condition. A lot of them will also be struggling with anxiety, depression, some of the psychological effects. Especially the low self-esteem, we see a lot of that with our students.

We also see a lot with students not wanting to come forward and be diagnosed or come forward and use services. They have that negative connotation of, those students that went to the resource room, where we explain to them it's totally different on the college level. You're not going to the resource room. We also have those students that, their parents drag them in, and then they never come back and use services. So

our numbers are around 2,000, but there's also a lot of students out there that are not diagnosed. We also have a lot of students that come in and we're fairly convinced that they have a diagnosis, they have a condition, but then they don't have the funds to go get the diagnosis, to go through a psychological evaluation. So we're working with a very large area.

So, the first thing the students have to do when they work with us is that they have to provide us documentation to support that they have a disability. So it's not just the condition, the diagnosis. It has to show us how it severely impacts the student so that it rises to the level that we can classify it as a disability. So then we're going back to that ADA definition that it must severely impact them. And this is where a lot of students, remember what I said, they don't have the funds to go out and get that documentation that's necessary. So that can be a difficulty.

So kinda getting into what we do, we work closely with a lot of departments on campus, first of all, the Registrar's Office. We have students that because of their condition, they're not able to attend full-time, but we can get them classified as a full-time student at a reduced credits. We have some students that, because of their disability, they need to register early. Say, for example, if someone has limited mobility and we have them register early, they can almost take care of their accommodations on their own and schedule their classes with an hour in-between each one of them, so they can get to their classes in-between. Otherwise, we're working with facilities management, and we are moving classrooms around so that classes that they have that are back to back are closer together, that they can physically get to each one, we're putting desks in classrooms, we're putting in extra chairs. So there's different things that we do with facilities management. The majority of what we do are the in-class accommodations. We have a lot of students that have difficulty with testing, so they might get extra time. A lot of them, it's just taking them out of a classroom of 400 students and having them in a low-distraction environment that helps with their concentration, helps with their anxiety. So that's a big factor. Some, they have difficulty with note-taking, getting them copies of PowerPoints. It's just a huge variety of things that we do. We also--

[Question from audience] Wendy, quick question. So with some of these accommodations, if there's a financial aspect, does your office pay for that, or how is that handled?

If it's something that's in the classroom that we're responsible, that we need to be taking care of. Not many of the things that we do cost. We also work with Housing Accommodations and Assistance Animals on campus, so big variety. I think we're going to have a question and answer time at the end, so if you have questions. And then, I'm going to go ahead and pass it on.