



SoTL

Snapshot

A synopsis of a scholarship of teaching and learning journal article

Discussing Disability Accommodation on the First Day of Class

What is this Research About?

Invisible disabilities are the most common form of disabilities among students in higher education. Research shows that when students disclose their disabilities and access accommodations, their quality of education improves. However, many students with disabilities do not feel comfortable disclosing their disability to access accommodations and services. Instructors may play an important role in helping students feel comfortable in disclosing their disabilities by discussing disability accommodations and services offered at the university. In this study, the researcher analyzed instructors' discussions of disability accommodations and services on the first day of classes and in their course syllabi.

What did the Researchers Do?

The researcher obtained first-day-of-class video recordings and course syllabi from 30 undergraduate courses at a large university in the United States. The courses studied included lower and upper-level courses taught by 17 different instructors. The researcher analyzed short recordings from the first day-of-class videos that included keywords such as disability, accommodation, or paperwork. The researchers also examined all 30 syllabi for information about disability policy, resources, and accommodation at the institution.

What did the Researchers Find?

The researcher found that only 4 different instructors in 8 different classes discussed accommodations and disability. Most of these instructors spent less than 1-minute discussing disability and accommodations with students. Instructors mainly focused on what students needed to do to receive accommodations, such as completing specific paperwork. The researcher found that some instructors used outdated language when discussing disability. The researchers also found that most syllabi contained no references to disability accommodation other than the required university policies.

➔ How to Implement this Research in Your Classroom

Students with invisible disabilities often do not disclose their disability. This lack of disclosure prevents students from accessing accommodations and academic support. Disability accommodations can be discussed and included in syllabi to encourage students to disclose their disability. This research demonstrated that most instructors only briefly discussed disability accommodation and support on the first day of classes and in course syllabi. Instructors should use the first day of classes as an opportunity to clearly discuss institutional accommodations, services, and support regarding disabilities and encourage student disclosure. It is also important for instructors to communicate their desire to support students with disabilities and their concern for student privacy.

➔ Citation

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➔ Keywords

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