

Proposed Roundtable Discussion

Beyond Compliance: Creating Inclusive Classrooms for Students and Staff/Faculty with Disabilities

Danielle Clapham, Department of English

Hunter Deiglmeier, Department of English

(Fall 2018)

As simultaneously graduate students, instructors, and people with disabilities, we have witnessed the barriers many students with disabilities face every day in higher education. Some of these challenges include: navigating spaces designed for nondisabled students/staff, difficulty receiving accommodations, and issues with classroom inclusion. For example, many students with disabilities have stories of professors “outing” them as disabled in front of their classmates, or reacting with confusion or disdain when asked to comply with official accommodation requests. Additionally, many students choose not to pursue formal accommodations because of the stigma associated with being a “difficult student” (read: a disabled student). Within disability communities, these barriers are well known and often taken for granted as an inescapable part of higher education. However, as academics, teachers, and disabled scholars, we believe in creating open dialogue between disabled and non-disabled faculty and staff to facilitate more deliberately inclusive course design and interpersonal relationships. Therefore, we propose a roundtable discussion on access barriers and “best practices” for creating inclusive classrooms and to open the conversation surrounding education and disability at Marquette.

Our proposed panel will include two graduate student instructors from the department of English and 1-2 undergraduate students with disabilities from other departments. We are also open to including additional participants (i.e. faculty who excel at accessible curriculum, and/or representatives of ODS or the CTL). Participants will prepare brief remarks about their own experiences with disabilities, including a disclosure of any accommodations they require institutionally and any other ways in which their disability affects their educational experience. One of the graduate student participants will then moderate a discussion on common challenges to access that students may experience in the classroom. The moderator will open the floor to questions and conclude by providing documentation of available resources to help faculty and staff maximize accessibility in their classroom (including resources available through the Center for Teaching and Learning, the Office of Disability Services, the Ott Memorial Writing Center, and other organizations).

We believe that a partnership with the Center for Teaching and Learning would help facilitate faculty and interdepartmental engagement with these concerns; cross-campus education on access is essential as these are issues that occur in nearly every classroom on Marquette’s campus. Because the CTL has been a leader in increasing accessibility and faculty education on inclusivity and access, we think a partnership with the CTL would both increase cross-campus engagement and advance the CTL’s own goal of “promoting a culture of pedagogical excellence at Marquette.”