

## Interaction Between Disabled and Nondisabled College Students and their Professors: A Comparison

Rhonda Amsel, McGill University; Catherine S. Fichten, Dawson College.

### ABSTRACT

*According to previous studies, students with disabilities and professors agree that it is desirable that students initiate contact concerning needed course adjustments, though the students rate student-initiated behaviors as less appropriate than do professors. The results of this discrepancy could be that students with disabilities request fewer adjustments than their professors would be willing to grant, perhaps even fewer than their nondisabled peers request and are granted. The goal of this study was to investigate this issue. For identical student- and professor-initiated behaviors, appropriateness ratings were obtained from 37 disabled and 62 nondisabled students and from 74 professors of disabled students and 96 professors of nondisabled students. Students with disabilities and their professors made ratings with reference to professor-disabled student interaction while nondisabled students and their professors answered questions concerning professor-nondisabled student interaction. Results indicate that (1) students with disabilities felt that it is less acceptable to request or be accorded special consideration than did nondisabled students and (2) they felt that it is less appropriate for professors to single out a student for special attention. While professors believed that it is more appropriate to accord special consideration to a disabled than to a nondisabled student, they also felt that it was less acceptable for a pro-*

*This research was funded by a grant from Fonds F.C.A.R. pour l'aide et le soutien à la recherche. Reprints are available from Rhonda Amsel, Department of Psychology, McGill University, 1205 Dr. Penfield, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3A 1B1.*

essor to single out a disabled student for special attention. The implications of the findings for research and for the design of skills-training programs for disabled students and their professors are discussed.

Many government agencies and citizens' rights groups have actively advocated greater access for disabled students to the higher educational system. As a result, many discriminatory college admissions practices have been eliminated in North America, and physical accessibility has been improved. These changes have allowed increasing numbers of people with disabilities to enter institutions of higher education (Fichten, 1988; Fichten, Bourdon, Creti, & Martos, 1987; Stilwell, Stilwell, & Perrit, 1983), and to find suitable college programs (HEATH Resource Center, n.d.; Houwing, 1986). But real access to postsecondary education only begins with admission. Students with disabilities may require special consideration from their professors in order to successfully complete course requirements.

Factors relevant to the successful integration of students with disabilities are still being defined (Jarow, 1987). Programming to facilitate interaction has often relied on experiences from elementary and high schools. Even in the lower levels of schooling, mainstreaming programs have enjoyed only qualified success. For example, Beatrice Wright (1980), one of the best known researchers in the field, has concluded that "regrettably, many change (mainstreaming) programs are ineffective and may even contribute to disabling myths about disability."

Ambivalent results are due partly to lack of needed services, advocacy programs, equipment, and architectural modifications and partly to inadequate student-teacher training (English, 1971; Gresham, 1982; Hirshoren & Burton, 1979; Walker, 1980). In earlier years, only the few extraordinary students with disabilities attended university-level programs. Now that increasing numbers of "average" students who have disabilities are enrolled in postsecondary educational institutions, there is an urgent need to develop effective skills-training programs for students with disabilities who are about to enter college and for the professors who teach them.

## STUDENT-PROFESSOR RELATIONS

Difficulties in the teaching/learning process can arise because of professors' discomfort with students who have disabilities (Nathanson, 1983) and because of students' reluctance to seek special consideration. Uncertainty about what does and does not constitute appropriate behavior also contributes to problems for both groups.

Students, both disabled and nondisabled, have a variety of concerns about relating to professors. What should be done when one cannot hear the professor? Is it appropriate to ask for extensions when course requirements are difficult to meet? Effective learning cannot take place when students do not know how or when to obtain needed course adjustments.

Similarly, teaching is hampered when professors are ignorant of appropriate behaviors toward students who have disabilities. Questions noted by Alexander (1979) pinpoint some professor concerns:

Must topics such as blindness, paralysis, or sexuality be avoided? Should any specific words be avoided? Will any changes in classroom teaching techniques be necessary? How can disabled students be tested? How will blind and wheelchair user students deal with their mobility problems? Will disabled students be able to meet term paper deadlines? How will the instructor communicate with a deaf student? (p. 196)

## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN STUDENTS' AND PROFESSORS' VIEWS

Before educational programs for students with disabilities and their professors can be designed and evaluated, the components of effective behavior must be identified. A recently completed study (Fichten, Amsel, Bourdon, & Creti, 1988; Fichten, Bourdon, Creti, Amsel, & Martos, 1986) indicated that professors are less comfortable with disabled than with nondisabled students. The findings also showed that professors who have taught students with disabilities are more at ease with disabled students and more interested in teaching them in the future than those who have not had previous experience. The data also indicated that professors and disabled students agree that it is more desirable for students to approach the professor concerning needed course adjustments than for the professor to approach the student. Students with disabilities, however, evaluated most of these help-seeking behaviors as less appropriate than professors believed them to be. Overall, the findings of this study suggested that the students are in a bind; they feel that the onus is on them to initiate the contact yet they hesitate to do so, questioning the appropriateness of such action.

Is this underestimation of appropriateness specific to disabled students or does it just reflect some general professor-student difference? Students with impairments want to do well in college not because of their *disabilities* but because of their *abilities*. Disabled students may feel it is inappropriate to request special consideration because they believe that this singles them out and devalues their accomplishments. However, professors may grant special treatment more readily to students in general (regardless of disability) than disabled students assume is the case.

It is equally possible to perceive the difference as an overestimation of appropriateness on the part of the professors. Professors may be motivated by pity, thereby perpetuating the very discriminatory system that students with disabilities must quash if they are to compete with their nondisabled peers on the basis of equal status.

## OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

This investigation attempted to evaluate the basis for differences in appropriateness perceived by students and by their professors. To do this, disabled and nondisabled students rated the same student and professor behaviors. Comparisons of these ratings were used to determine (1) whether professors accord special consideration to students with disabilities more readily than to nondisabled students and (2) whether disabled and able-bodied students differ in their evaluations of the appropriateness of special treatment.

## METHOD

A questionnaire concerning the appropriateness of 32 student behaviors (e.g., "student asks for professor's permission to tape lectures") and 44 professor behaviors (e.g., "professor agrees to allow a student to tape lectures") was completed by college students with physical disabilities and group-matched nondisabled college students. Students with disabilities completed this questionnaire with reference to professor–disabled student interaction; nondisabled students answered questions concerning professor–nondisabled student interaction. In addition, all students indicated how comfortable they were with their professors and how satisfied they were with the treatment received from professors. The same questionnaire was completed by professors of disabled students and group-matched professors of nondisabled students. Professors of disabled students completed the questionnaire with reference to professor–disabled student interaction while professors of nondisabled students completed the questionnaire concerning professor–nondisabled student interaction.

### Participants

Participants were 37 college and university students with various physical disabilities, 62 group-matched nondisabled students, 74 college and university professors who had taught disabled students, and 96 group-matched professors of nondisabled students. All students with disabilities and the 74 professors who had taught disabled students were participating in a larger study (Fichten et al., 1988).

The nondisabled student sample was obtained by contacting two able-bodied students for each of the disabled student participants; able-bodied students were selected so as to match the disabled students on sex, educational institution, and program of studies. Professors of nondisabled students were solicited by contacting, on a random basis, two professors for each of the professors of disabled students; the same matching criteria used for students were used to select professors. Data from all subjects who returned completed questionnaires were used.

### Students

The average age of the 37 disabled student participants was 26 years (range = 19–37). They had been disabled for an average of 20 years. Of the disabled students, 24% were wheelchair users, 24% had a hearing impairment, 18% a visual impairment, 18% cerebral palsy, and 16% other physical disabilities (mainly neuromuscular). Thirty-two percent attended a junior/community college and 68% attended a university.

Mean age for the 62 nondisabled students was 22 (range = 18–48) [it is common for disabled students to be older than their nondisabled peers (G.N. Wright, 1980)]. Forty percent attended a junior/community college and 60% attended a university.

### Professors

Most of the 74 professors who had experience with disabled students had taught several students with disabilities; the average number of disabled students taught

was 3. Sixty-one percent of the professors taught primarily at a junior/community college and 39% at a university. Of the 96 professors of nondisabled students, 71% taught at a junior/community college and 29% at a university.

### Procedure

Participants completed either the disabled or the nondisabled version of the Professor–Student Questionnaire. The disabled version of the measure consisted of a listing of 196 possible student and professor behaviors (for details, see Fichten et al., 1988). The nondisabled version retained the 32 student and 44 professor behaviors that were applicable. The questionnaire presented a variety of situations organized under such headings as class activities, time issues, and grading. For each situation a number of student and professor behaviors were listed. For example, one situations and related behaviors was:

In a class where a student has difficulty taking notes:

- (a) student asks to use professor's notes
- (b) professor refuses to lend his/her notes
- (c) professor agrees to lend his/her notes
- (d) student asks professor's permission to tape lectures
- (e) professor refuses to let the student tape his/her lectures
- (f) professor agrees to let the student to tape his/her lectures

All student and professor participants rated the appropriateness of each behavior on a 10-point scale. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the Professor–Student Questionnaire indicate reasonable internal consistency for this measure for both student (.738) and professor (.802) behaviors. In addition, using 10-point scales, all students indicated how comfortable they were with their professors and how satisfied they were with the treatment they received from professors.

## RESULTS

Results indicate that disabled and nondisabled students did not differ significantly in their level of comfort with professors ( $M = 7.46$ ,  $M = 7.06$ , respectively) or on satisfaction with treatment received from professors ( $M = 7.60$ ,  $M = 6.90$ , respectively). On appropriateness ratings, however, there were a number of important differences.

### Comparisons of Students' Appropriateness Ratings

#### Student Behaviors

Comparisons of nondisabled and disabled students' responses concerning behaviors of students similar to themselves are detailed in Table 1. Results indicate that on 10 of the 13 differences found, students with disabilities felt that it was less acceptable to ask for special consideration than did nondisabled students. For example, disabled students felt that it was less appropriate to ask the professor for the course outline and requirements before the start of classes than did nondisabled

**Table 1**  
*Comparison of Students' Appropriateness Ratings: Student Behaviors*

Student Behaviors Rated by Students	Direction of Difference	Mean Ratings By		df	t
		Disabled Students (D)	Nondisabled Students (N)		
Seek out special consideration					
Ask professor for the course outline and requirements before the start of classes.	N > D	7.50	8.42	96	1.81
Ask the professor whether the course is appropriate.	N > D	5.50	7.18	96	2.47*
Explain to the professor during the first few days of classes that one may frequently be late for class (leave early).	N > D	5.25	6.56	96	1.93
Use equipment in class without having consulted the professor.	N > D	3.14	4.54	94	2.02*
Frequently ask the professor for needed clarifications.	N > D	5.69	8.31	96	4.43†
Ask professor for further explanations after almost every class.	N > D	4.86	5.87	97	1.74
Ask for extensions on assignments when course requirements are difficult to meet.	N > D	5.67	6.95	95	2.54*
Tell the professor that he/she is expecting too much when course requirements are difficult to meet.	N > D	3.69	5.00	94	2.49*
Ask for a make-up exam or extra assignments when the final grade is a failure.	N > D	4.14	6.21	95	3.62†
Ask the professor to write, whenever possible (e.g., use blackboard, overhead) if student has difficulty understanding the professor's speech (accent, audibility).	D > N	7.63	6.56	90	1.97*
Ask professor to exempt a student from reading aloud in class.	D > N	6.67	5.18	92	2.19*

**Table 1**  
*Continued*

Student Behaviors Rated by Students	Direction of Difference	Mean Ratings By		df	t
		Disabled Students (D)	Nondisabled Students (N)		
Fail to seek out special consideration					
Fail to approach the professor about course concerns.	D > N	4.31	3.11	95	1.80
Fail to act if student cannot hear classmates' comments in class.	N > D	2.34	3.55	92	2.27*

Note. 10 = very appropriate, 1 = very inappropriate.

p < .10 unless otherwise marked

\*p < .05

\*\*p < .01

†p < .001

students. The three instances where disabled students felt that asking for special consideration was more acceptable than did nondisabled students all involved requesting changes that would allow someone who has difficulty hearing or speaking to better adapt to classes.

#### *Professor Behaviors*

As the results in Table 2 show, students with disabilities were also generally less approving than were nondisabled students of professors initiating or granting special consideration. For example, students with disabilities felt that it was less appropriate for the professor to allow a student to write extra assignments and make-up exams to help improve grades if the course requirements were difficult to meet than did nondisabled students. They also felt that it was less appropriate than did nondisabled students for professors to single out a student for special attention such as suggesting that a student go to the learning or tutorial service for extra needed help. Yet students with disabilities, compared to nondisabled students, also believed that it was less appropriate for a professor to avoid dealing directly with a student regarding problems.

#### *Comparisons of Professors' Appropriateness Ratings*

##### *Student Behaviors*

Comparisons detailed in Table 3 show that, generally, professors of disabled students believed it more acceptable for students to ask for special consideration than did professors of nondisabled students; 73% of the differences on student behaviors reflected this tendency. For example, professors of disabled students believed it

**Table 2**  
*Comparison of Students' Appropriateness Ratings: Professor Behaviors*

Professor Behaviors Rated by Students	Direction of Difference	Mean Ratings By		df	t
		Disabled Students (D)	Nondisabled Students (N)		
Grant special consideration Give a student extensions when course requirements are difficult to meet.	N > D	5.92	7.08	96	1.85
Reduce the amount of work required when course requirements are difficult to meet.	N > D	3.58	4.47	96	1.85
Allow a student to write extra assignments and make-up exams to help improve grades if course requirements are difficult to meet.	N > D	5.59	7.39	94	3.12**
Offer a student a make-up exam or extra assignments when the student fails if this is contrary to the professor's usual practice.	N > D	3.58	5.66	95	4.16†
Fail to grant special consideration					
Fail to repeat classmates' comments in class when these are not audible to a student.	D > N	4.56	3.15	92	2.52*
Refuse to allow student to tape lectures.	N > D	2.42	3.40	96	1.88
Refuse a request for special adjustments when course requirements are difficult to meet.	N > D	2.86	4.94	95	3.38†
Single out a student for special attention					
Warn a student that the course is very difficult.	N > D	3.43	6.32	97	5.37†
Periodically inform a student about how he/she is doing in the course if this is contrary to the professor's usual procedure.	N > D	4.08	6.19	96	3.38†

**Table 2**  
*Continued*

Professor Behaviors Rated by Students	Direction of Difference	Mean Ratings By		df	t
		Disabled Students (D)	Nondisabled Students (N)		
Speak to a student if he/she is not participating in class activities if this is contrary to the professor's usual procedure.	N > D	5.19	7.35	96	3.28†
Suggest that a student go to the learning or tutorial service for extra help when course requirements are difficult to meet.	N > D	6.69	7.69	95	1.77
Avoid dealing directly with a student regarding problems					
Fail to inform a student if the professor notices problems with inappropriate behavior (e.g., continually interrupting others).	N > D	3.20	4.34	95	1.66
Ask someone else to speak to a student who has problems with inappropriate behavior.	N > D	2.17	3.40	96	2.13*
Tell a student that everything is OK and to just keep on trying when the student is doing poorly in the course.	N > D	2.33	3.35	96	2.04*

Note. 10 = very appropriate, 1 = very inappropriate.

p < .10 unless otherwise marked

\*p < .05

\*\*p < .01

†p < .001

more appropriate for a student to ask the professor for the course outline and requirements before the start of classes than did professors of nondisabled students.

*Professor Behaviors*

On professor behaviors, the findings in Table 4 indicate that professors of disabled students also believed that it is more appropriate to grant special considerations, such as agreeing to allow a student to tape lectures, than did professors of nondisabled students. This was true for 86% of items where differences were found. Yet

**Table 3**  
Comparison of Professors' Appropriateness Ratings: Student Behaviors

Student Behaviors Rated by Professors	Direction of Difference	Ratings by Professors of		df	t
		Disabled Students (D)	Nondisabled Students (N)		
Seek out special consideration					
Ask professor for the course outline and requirements before the start of classes.	D > N	9.19	8.07	165	2.57*
Approach the professor before the course starts if student foresees problems.	D > N	7.21	6.32	162	1.73
Use equipment in class without having consulted the professor	D > N	4.00	3.06	161	1.93
Be frequently late for class.	D > N	3.44	2.38	160	2.52*
Ask professor for further explanations after almost every class.	D > N	6.18	5.31	163	1.89
See professor about personal problems.	D > N	5.37	4.45	162	1.94
Ask for regular weekly appointment to see the professor concerning course material.	D > N	6.76	4.71	164	4.23†
Ask to use the professor's notes.	D > N	4.44	3.09	158	2.78**
Ask professor for permission to tape lectures.	D > N	8.88	7.72	161	2.79**
Ask the professor to exempt a student from reading aloud in class.	D > N	7.87	4.84	153	6.29†
Ask for exemptions from certain course requirements when these are difficult to meet.	D > N	5.79	3.02	160	2.62**
Frequently ask professor for needed clarifications in class.	N > D	7.42	8.88	160	4.49†
Ask for extensions on assignments when course requirements are difficult to meet.	N > D	5.79	7.23	161	3.51†

**Table 3**  
Continued

Student Behaviors Rated by Professors	Direction of Difference	Ratings by Professors of		df	t
		Disabled Students (D)	Nondisabled Students (N)		
Fail to seek out special consideration					
Fail to approach the professor about course concerns.	D > N	4.10	2.98	162	2.69**
Fail to ask for needed clarifications during class.	D > N	3.15	2.14	162	2.49*

Note. 10 = very appropriate, 1 = very inappropriate.

p < .10 unless otherwise marked

\*p < .05

\*\*p < .01

†p < .001

these same professors also believed, overwhelmingly, that it was less appropriate to single out a student for special attention (e.g., speaking to a student about frequent absences when this is contrary to the professor's usual procedure).

## DISCUSSION

### Disabled Versus Nondisabled Students

The results indicate that, generally, students with disabilities are relatively disinclined to request or to accept special consideration. Because students with disabilities are more likely to need special consideration than are nondisabled students in order to succeed ("ACT Study," 1980; Moore, Newton, & Nye, 1986), it is ironic that the nondisabled students are the ones who believe it more appropriate to request or accept special treatment. In comparisons of disabled students and their able-bodied peers, the direction of the difference was maintained for behaviors generally considered to be appropriate, such as asking for extensions on assignments when course requirements are difficult to meet, as well as for behaviors generally considered inappropriate (e.g., using equipment in class without having consulted the professor). Because disabled students also evaluate special treatment as less appropriate than their professors believe is the case (Fichten et al., 1988), it appears that it is the students with disabilities, rather than their professors, who misperceive the appropriateness of requesting or accepting special considerations.

### Why Disabled Students Underestimate the Appropriateness of Special Consideration

Underestimation of the appropriateness of special treatment may be due to lack of knowledge concerning what nondisabled students consider acceptable. Students

**Table 4**  
*Comparison of Professors' Appropriateness Ratings: Professor Behaviors*

Professor Behaviors Rated by Professors	Direction of Difference	Ratings by Professors of		df	t
		Disabled Students (D)	Nondisabled Students (N)		
Grant special consideration					
Agree to allow a student to tape lectures.	D > N	8.94	7.56	160	3.31†
Give a student exemptions when course requirements are difficult to meet.	D > N	4.44	3.57	159	1.95
Give student extensions when course requirements are difficult to meet.	N > D	6.28	7.47	161	2.96**
Fail to grant special consideration					
Refuse to lend one's lecture notes to a student.	N > D	4.70	6.90	159	4.23†
Refuse to allow a student to tape lectures.	N > D	2.38	4.34	161	4.04†
Refuse a request for special adjustments when course requirements are difficult to meet.	N > D	3.30	4.49	159	2.64**
Refuse a request for a make-up exam or extra assignments when the student's grade is a failure.	N > D	5.60	6.57	159	1.93
Single out a student for special attention					
Warn a student that the course is very difficult.	N > D	4.69	6.04	167	2.69**
Periodically inform a student about how he/she is doing in the course if this is contrary to the professor's usual procedure.	N > D	4.88	6.21	162	2.51*
Speak to a student about frequent absences when this is contrary to the professor's usual procedure.	N > D	6.46	7.91	162	2.96**
Speak to a student if he/she is not participating in class activities if this is contrary to the professor's usual procedure.	N > D	5.99	7.23	160	2.41*

**Table 4**  
*Continued*

Professor Behaviors Rated by Professors	Direction of Difference	Ratings by Professors of		df	t
		Disabled Students (D)	Nondisabled Students (N)		
Tell a student, in private, to ask fewer questions in class.	N > D	2.86	3.66	162	1.87
Talk to a student about problems with inappropriate social behavior.	N > D	7.45	8.12	162	1.65
Ask a student if he/she can hear the professor.	N > D	7.57	8.99	161	3.64†
Frequently ask student to repeat when professor doesn't understand the student because of audibility or accent.	N > D	4.66	7.56	158	6.48†
Frequently ask a student to summarize his/her comments when professor doesn't understand the student because of audibility or accent.	N > D	4.44	6.83	153	5.11†
Frequently ask student to paraphrase when professor doesn't understand the student because of audibility or accent.	N > D	4.49	6.32	154	3.74†
Speak to the class when the student is present concerning encouraging him/her to participate in class activities.	D > N	5.13	3.52	163	2.86**
Avoid dealing directly with a student concerning problems					
Ask someone else to speak to a student if he/she has problems with inappropriate behavior (e.g., continually interrupting others).	D > N	3.14	2.08	160	2.40*

Note. 10 = very appropriate, 1 = very inappropriate.  
*p* < .10 unless otherwise marked  
 \**p* < .05  
 \*\**p* < .01  
 †*p* < .001

with disabilities may simply lack normative information about able-bodied students' views. The mistaken belief that being accorded special consideration means that one is not treated as an "equal student" could have important consequences for designing orientation programs for students with disabilities about to enter post-secondary education. Because this is an empirical question, in future research, disabled students' beliefs concerning the appropriateness of special treatment being requested or according to disabled and to nondisabled students should be compared.

Because having an impairment is not positively valued, students with a disability may also feel that special treatment will result in being singled out as different, a "handicapped student" (Newman, 1976). This sensitivity is certainly suggested by the results of this investigation, which show that disabled students believe it is less appropriate than do nondisabled students for professors to single out a student for special attention.

Of course, students with disabilities do not want to succeed simply because of their disability. Thus, they may want to minimize the number of special considerations accorded. While they appear to be unwilling to request changes necessitated by an impairment, they seem to be unwilling to ask for additional considerations deemed appropriate by their nondisabled peers. In the process of ensuring that they are treated "equally," they are insisting on less than normal consideration, in effect making their disability into a handicap. Even the courts have recognized that identical treatment is not necessarily equal treatment and that identical treatment does not constitute nondiscrimination (Calamai, 1985). Instead, equivalent consideration is needed.

#### ***What Could Be Done to Help Students***

Students with disabilities need to learn that in the attempt to obtain equal treatment from professors they ought to be willing to accept as much as their nondisabled peers. Advisors of disabled students might be made aware of this problem. They could suggest that students with disabilities contact their professors to request course information or a course outline before classes begin. Such action would have two advantages. First, it could serve to assure the student that such considerations are generally acceptable. Second, it would open communication between student and professor on an issue devoid of emotional connotations. This would be especially effective if the student were to use the opportunity to apprise the professor of what action the student plans to take with regard to equipment and services, what teaching and learning considerations and issues are likely to arise because of the disability, and what the professor could do that would be helpful.

#### ***Differences Between Professors of Disabled and of Nondisabled Students***

Professors of disabled students believed it more appropriate for students to request and to be accorded special considerations such as asking for and being granted permission to audiotape lectures than did professors of nondisabled students. This was true for generally appropriate behaviors such as approaching the professor before the course starts if problems are foreseen as well as for inappropriate be-

haviors such as frequent lateness for class. When it came to singling out a student for special attention, however, professors showed the opposite trend, with professors of disabled students believing it less appropriate to actively approach a student to discuss progress in the course or to talk about difficulties.

#### ***What Could Be Done to Help Professors***

Professors appear willing to allow their disabled students to decide when extra considerations are needed. They are also more reluctant to approach a disabled than a nondisabled student concerning course problems and difficulties. In view of disabled students' apparent underestimation of the appropriateness of student-initiated behaviors, this overly sensitive approach by professors may fail to provide equivalent consideration to students with and without disabilities. The tendency to avoid offending students with disabilities by not according them the special attention one would accord to nondisabled students constitutes reverse discrimination. This inaction can have deleterious consequences for students with disabilities, as neither students nor professors are likely to discuss course concerns. Therefore, when preparing college professors to teach students with disabilities, the strategy of discrimination through "avoiding discrimination" should be pinpointed and counteracted.

As one step toward a solution to this problem, student services professionals could advise professors to make a general announcement on the first day of class. This should include information about evaluation, exams, and assignments, tutorial services, professor's office hours and the like, as well as a general statement inviting students to see a professor if they have concerns about the course or if they need special consideration. Again, this would open communication before problems became acute and would serve to assure disabled students that these considerations are acceptable and generally available to all. When approached by a disabled student, whether or not accommodation is possible, the professor should stress his or her availability for discussion on other issues.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

Misperceptions of the appropriateness of special consideration on the part of students with disabilities and the rejection of necessary course adjustments are likely to constitute major and unnecessary impediments to student success. Consistent with recommendations made by others (e.g., Farbman, 1983), the results of this study suggest that when preparing students with disabilities to cope with the demands of postsecondary education, the tendency to "be hard on oneself" by rejecting or failing to seek out needed special treatment from professors should be taken into consideration and targeted for modification. This is an issue that may be addressed while students are in high school or in college orientation programs. These findings also suggest that professors should be made aware of the tendency to be overly "sensitive" to the sensibilities of students with disabilities. Such "sensitivity" can inadvertently result in discrimination by causing professors to fail to approach students with disabilities when course problems and difficulties arise,



although they would approach nondisabled students in similar circumstances. Student services professionals may profitably address this issue in workshops for faculty.

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