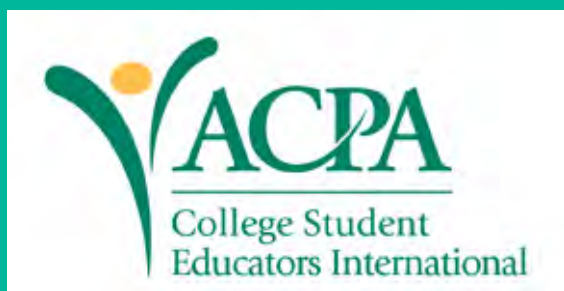




# Standing Committee on Disability



Fall/Winter Newsletter  
January 2013

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# Letter from the Chair

Welcome to the Fall/Winter 2013 edition of the Standing Committee on Disability Newsletter. Current headlines indicate that access and inclusion for individuals with disabilities continues to be on the radar of those at the forefront of postsecondary education. In a recent Chronicle of Higher Education article, for example, there was reference to the ongoing use of electronic versions of copyrighted materials under the fair use construct specifically for individuals with print related disabilities. In the article, there was reference to individuals with disabilities being able to more equitably and consistently engage in postsecondary education with advances such as accessible versions of electronic materials. Perhaps this forward movement is in response to the 2008 amendments to the Americans with Disabilities Act. Or, perhaps it is in response to a shift to a social model of disability. Whatever the reason, it is affirming to see that progress continues to be made and that conversations are occurring regarding the removal of barriers for individuals with disabilities.

As the chair of the SCD Directorate, I try to be cognizant of the many perspectives prevalent about individuals with disabilities and find ways to bring these different perspectives into our conversations as we identify areas of interest to address through the work we do as a committee. This fall, I have had the opportunity to have many conversations with colleagues and peers about terminology used within disability resources and services. One example is person first language. There are advocates for person first language (e.g., student with Autism) and advocates against person first language (Autistic student). I do not believe the role of the chair is to tell you which one is correct; rather, I believe the role of the chair is to encourage you to have conversations, read, research, engage in dialogue, and determine for yourself why you use the language you use, what frame you use to view disability, and how you can best contribute as a disability advocate and ally.

From this lens, it is an exciting time to be the chair of the Standing Committee on Disability. Membership is growing, the Directorate is active, and the interest in the SCD's work is expanding. As you may know, elections for the new Chair of the SCD recently were completed. ACPA will be releasing election results in January and I look forward to our new Chair coming aboard!

Sincerely,

*Melanie Tucker Thompson*  
Chair, ACPA Standing Committee on Disability



# What's In a Name? Why the DSM Matters

Matthew Sheehan  
Western New England University

In recent years, disability has become more widely viewed from social and cultural models; whether from the perspective of disability being constructed from rigid social norms or hostile environments, or as a difference that manifests its own identities and subcultures. However (at least for this point in time), the structure established through the medical and legal models are necessary toward providing equal access for people with disabilities. Accommodations, for example, are established through federal law, and are made on the determination of a medical diagnosis.

I am not saying that the notion of disability begins and ends with the letter (or even the spirit) of the Section 504 and ADA laws. Nor do I believe that people with disabilities are “inferior” to those without a disability, or that there is a stark division between so-called “normal” individuals and “abnormal” individuals, as the medical model arguably implies. And, of course, the medical model of disability is not the most conducive means toward addressing misconceptions and stigma toward people with disabilities.

Despite these limitations, the need for a tool for higher education practitioners to utilize medical diagnoses in order to develop legally binding accommodations remains. One way to reconcile this reality with other perspectives on disability is to consider how we use student development theory, which provides a framework toward understanding the needs and functions of our students. Neither of these tools should serve as a “be-all-end-all,” but given the many different stages of development our students enter college at, it would be impossible to best serve each individual without a method to figure out where each student is as an individual – disability or not.

One of the tools that I speak of is the DSM, or the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. In laymen’s terms, the DSM is the guide used to help determine a person’s disability and possible challenges encountered from the given disability. Admittedly, I have not had the opportunity through my experience to date to become well-versed in utilizing the DSM, but the purpose behind it is quite evident. The criteria utilized by the DSM affect what services and accommodations students may or may not receive – and as a result, have an impact upon student success.

As some may know, the diagnostic criteria with the DSM have periodically received revisions. The latest revision is due to be released in May 2013, as the DSM-5. Given my background, the changes have been challenging for me to synthesize, and I have found myself dependent on secondary sources (the perspectives and judgment from others rather than from the DSM language itself) in spite of the reality that these revisions will directly affect the work of anyone in higher education who “has” at least one student with a diagnosed disability.

However, because a majority of my experience with disability has pertained to students with Autism Spectrum Disorders, I am in the processing of reviewing the proposed criteria for the DSM-5 more thoroughly. My plans are to discuss them further in a subsequent newsletter issue, with an emphasis on any differences from the current DSM. This stems from concerns some have raised that these changes in criteria will affect students and others who currently receive accommodations – and potentially impact our students’ success.

I encourage my colleagues to review the proposed changes at <http://www.dsm5.org>.

**Matthew Sheehan** serves as a postgraduate intern in the Division of Student Affairs at Western New England University. He has been a member of ACPA since 2009; serving on SCD’s Research Subcommittee and is also a member of the Standing Committee for Graduate Students & New Professionals. He can be contacted at [msheehan05@gmail.com](mailto:msheehan05@gmail.com).



# Allies for Inclusion: The Ability Exhibit is On the Move

Matthew Sullivan  
Saint Louis University

Allies for Inclusion: The Ability Exhibit not only brings attention to disability, but the hands-on, interactive experience provides solutions and information on how to better include and accommodate those living with disabilities. Ultimately, this exhibit emphasizes that individuals living with disabilities are equals: no more and no less. The exhibit helps to bring awareness to those who might not be familiar with or who might want to learn more about inclusion. It provides a framework of inclusion for those concerned with the way they interact with students, friends, and family members. It also builds confidence in those who are apprehensive about the future of our society by bringing understanding to the uneducated. This exhibit is taking emphasis off of “Dis”abilities and putting the focus onto abilities.

## A Class Project

Beginning as a class project, Anne Marie Carroll, a Saint Louis University graduate student in Dr. Karen Myers’ Disability in Higher Education and Society course, unknowingly created a 400-pound, nationally known, traveling exhibit that would provide disability education by demonstrating respect, comfort, and awareness to thousands of people. Allies for inclusion: The Ability Exhibit has come a great distance from its premier on Saint Louis University’s campus in October of 2010. Over the last two years, the Exhibit has been presented at more than 20 colleges, universities and conferences throughout the United States. Currently traveling on the east coast, The Ability Exhibit has been experienced at Augusta State University, Slippery Rock University, Pennsylvania State University Hazleton, Pennsylvania State University Abington, Southeast Missouri State University, and will then head to California where it will be presented at California State University Northridge on November 13-15.

In the Spring of 2013, The Ability Exhibit and its staff will be in Las Vegas at the ACPA Annual Convention in the Exhibit Hall during scheduled hours of operation. In addition to being on display, Allies for Inclusion: The Ability Exhibit will be up for bid in the ACPA Foundation’s Silent Auction, which is held in the ACPA Convention Exhibit Hall and online at <http://www.acpafoundation.org>. Congratulations again to last year’s winner: Pennsylvania State University Abington.

ACPA and the Standing Committee on Disability have been among the Ability Exhibit’s staunch supporters since its inception, having co-sponsored the Exhibit with other Standing Committees and Commissions at ACPA for the last two years.

The Ability Exhibit team currently is organizing a trivia night scheduled to take place in April at Saint Louis University. Funds raised from this event will be used for the advancement of the Ability Exhibit Project. Although the Exhibit has been quite successful thus far, there is still room for growth. From marketing and promotion to upkeep and enhancement, there is always more that can be done to ensure that those experiencing the Exhibit gain understanding on how to move toward a more inclusive tomorrow.

## The Future

### *Workshop Edition*

On August 27th, 2012, a new chapter in the life of the Exhibit began; Allies for Inclusion: The Ability Exhibit Workshop Edition was sent to Western New England University. The Workshop Edition, which is available for purchase, includes a flash drive containing quizzes, videos, activities and instructional information. With this edition you also receive items found in the traveling exhibit like a space rope, “I Pledge to be an Ally” buttons, bookmarks, and a personalized mini pledge board with your institution’s logo.

## ***K-12 Edition***

We are pleased to announce that we have received a grant from AAUW – American Association of University Women. This grant will allow us to create age appropriate modules that are geared toward educating students in elementary, middle, and high school on disability awareness and methods of inclusion.

## ***Mini Edition***

A smaller, reduced version of the larger traveling exhibit also is under development. This “Mini Edition” will include many of the same aspects of the larger, traveling exhibit, but it will allow institutions with limited resources the opportunity to host a smaller version of the exhibit for a reduced rental fee and reduced shipping costs.

## **Hard Work Paid Off**

Saint Louis University’s Allies for Inclusion: The Ability Exhibit was the 2012 recipient of the Ignation Medal for Outstanding Program from the Jesuit Association for Student Personnel Administrators (JASPA). This is an annual national award and is the only Ignation medal to be given to an institution rather than an individual. The award recognizes creative programming that can be implemented successfully on other campuses, along with honoring an institution for its creativity, effectiveness, and focus.

Karen A. Myers, PhD, Director of the Ability Exhibit project, is Associate Professor and Director for Higher Education Administration at Saint Louis University. Dedicated to teaching and service, Dr. Myers enthusiastically devotes her time and energy to advance the understanding and acceptance of disabilities in today’s society. In 2011, Dr. Myers received the ACPA Voice of Inclusion Medallion Award for her work with inclusion and disability (an honor for which she is humbly grateful).

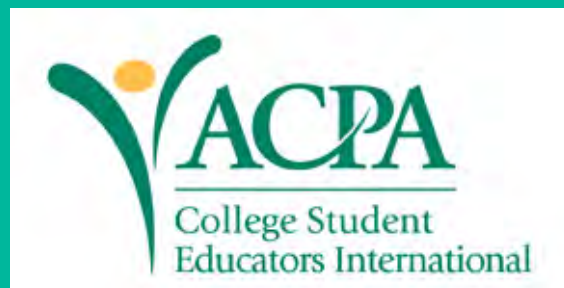
## **Interested in Hosting?**

To learn more about the Exhibit and to host the Exhibit, see Allies for Inclusion: The Ability Exhibit website and promotional video are at [www.slu.edu/theabilityexhibit](http://www.slu.edu/theabilityexhibit). To volunteer to assist with the Exhibit at the ACPA Convention Exhibit Hall or if you have questions about The Ability Exhibit projects, please contact Matthew Sullivan at [msulli64@slu.edu](mailto:msulli64@slu.edu) or Karen Myers at [kmyers11@slu.edu](mailto:kmyers11@slu.edu).

**Matthew A. Sullivan** is in his last year of the Master’s in Student Personnel Administration in Higher Education program at Saint Louis University. In addition to being a full-time student, Matthew works as a graduate assistant in the Department of Education where he assists in the coordination of The Ability Exhibit. Through his busy schedule – balancing school, research, work with the Exhibit, and life – he has come to find that true happiness comes to those that find peace in chaos.

# Standing Committee on Disability

Fall/Winter 2013



Please note that the opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the featured authors and are not always shared by the Standing Committee, or the Newsletter editors.

