

# STANDING COMMITTEE ON DISABILITY NEWSLETTER

QUARTERLY  
NEWSLETTER  
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EDITION

ACPA – College Student Educators

## A Letter from the Chair

NEWSLETTER  
CO-CHAIRS:  
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What a wild year 2012 has already been. The ACPA Convention is quickly approaching and I am eager to catch up with many of you there. If you are able to join us in Louisville, I invite you to attend as many of the SCD sponsored activities as possible. Our first open business meeting will occur on Sunday, between 2:30pm and 4:00pm and our second open business meeting will occur on Monday, between 5:00pm and 6:30pm. All of you are welcome to join us for one or both of these meetings. The SCD social will be Monday night between 8:00pm and 9:30pm in a VIP suite which we won as a prize for referring the most new members to ACPA.

Additionally, the SCD is sponsoring several individual sessions. And, there are two disability infused institutes that will be occurring over the course of the convention. One institute is being provided by Deaf

Culture Initiative (DCI) members and the other institute is being provided by past and present Directorate members regarding Universal Design. You can learn more about the DCI, the SCD activities, and plans for the upcoming academic year with SCD when you visit the SCD table during Showcase. We will be looking for you to come by with friends and colleagues, to share the work of the SCD and encourage members to join. We will be again co-sponsoring the Ability Exhibit, as presented by St. Louis University under the leadership of Dr. Karen Myer, and we invite you to come and experience this exhibit while in Louisville.

If you are planning to attend the Convention, you can find all of the session information online through the Convention itinerary

builder. There you will find all of the details about dates, times and locations for SCD sponsored activities and so much more. If you are unable to attend Convention this spring, the newly elected and returning Directorate members and I will pass along materials and pertinent information upon our return through the listserve and through the next newsletter.

Prior to Convention if you have any questions about SCD activities or how to get more involved, please do not hesitate to contact me or any of the Directorate members. I am looking forward to reconnecting with many of you and meeting some of you for the first time at the March Convention. Until then...

Sincerely,  
Melanie Thompson  
Chair, ACPA Standing  
Committee on Disability

## The New ADA/504 Direct Threat Standard- More Harm than Good?

Matthew Sheehan, Western New England University

Consider the Tyler Clementi suicide that occurred in September 2010. "Tragedy" is the first word that comes to mind for many of us. The horrors of cyberbullying and prejudice against LGBT students, or those students who are perceived to be in some way different, have led this situation to be well-known to so many people in our society.

However, many of us who work in higher education realize that self-harm amongst college students is an ongoing issue for concern. No one wants to encounter the loss of a student. The connection between suicides and psychiatric disabilities needs to be better understood: Pavela (2006) cites ninety percent of adolescents who had taken their own life had a psychiatric disability, and Mowbray et al. (2006)

adds that twelve to eighteen percent of the college student population has a psychiatric disability. Clearly, this is a challenge, yet the odds of a suicide attempt (being carried out by a student who is contemplating it) are one in one thousand (Appelbaum, 2006). Given these statistics student affairs professionals are more likely to encounter students who clearly need treatment, but are not immediately in danger.

As a result of these alarming statistics, some institutions have responded through the judicial system. This is contrary to the model policy developed by the Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law in 2007 for higher education institutions. It is suggested that while institutions rightfully encourage students to obtain treatment for mental health issues, that responding to a mental health crisis by punishing

students sends a message that is contradictory. Charging a student with breaking the code of conduct for coming forward with thoughts of suicide, would seem to be a mixed message (or, a "logical fallacy") at best. My concern, as an advocate for students, also stems from the inherent stress of judicial processes and the window that is created for such students to be expelled. The Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law (2007) explicitly states in their model policy that "self-injurious behavior will not be addressed through the disciplinary system" (p.9).

Recently, officials from the National Center for Higher Education Risk Management (NCHERM) and the National Behavioral Intervention Team (NABITA) have

## The New ADA/504 Direct Threat Standard—More Harm than Good? Matthew Sheehan, Western New England University

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announced recent changes to the ADA/504 Direct Threat Standard. The recent change makes a distinction between self-harm and danger to others. If a student is dangerous to others, placing him or her on an involuntary withdrawal is the best solution for the institution. As suggested by Lewis, Schuster and Sokolow (2012), this is a measure best suited to be separated from the code of conduct. As a college student educator I am in complete agreement with this separation. The need for campus safety, as well as the need for personal accountability, is still being addressed.

Unfortunately, there have already been differences in interpretation over what the Direct Threat Standard implies for self-harm. In reviewing the NCHERM and NABITA Whitepaper on the subject matter, my concerns are as follows:

*Unfortunately, these new regulations may return us to a day prior to the creation of*

*formalized Behavioral Intervention Teams when the code of conduct policies (e.g., “harm to self”) were the sole source for dealing with and/or managing students who attempted suicide (Lewis, Schuster and Sokolow, 2012, p.13).*

However, I am not so sure that this logic is the intent of the changes to the Direct Threat Standard. If an involuntary leave is considered to be discriminatory, expulsion clearly is even more so. In comparison with expulsion, medical leaves and withdrawals provide time for students to receive rehabilitation or enhanced and modified services that the institution cannot provide, the opportunity to eventually resume one’s education, and the courtesy to address conduct within venues that will add as minimal stress to students as possible.

Additionally, Brett Sokolow’s 2011 blog post expresses another reason as to why utilizing codes of conduct toward this issue could be

legally challenged:

*...This conduct approach won’t likely work for threat provisions under our conduct codes, as DOJ (the Department of Justice) is explicitly telling us we can’t use a direct threat standard for self-harm, so they are highly unlikely to approve of us using a less protective conduct code threat standard to make an end-run (para. 5).*

In conclusion, it seems that it is easier to prescribe what institutions ought not to do, than it is to say what they ought to do. Given that there are so many variations amongst students and institutions, there does not seem to be a concise or one-size-fits-all answer. But, given the ethical framework that I believe and practice, addressing self-harm through disciplinary systems is the wrong approach.

## **Indiana HB1367 – How Does This Impact Us?**

**Megan Wetzel, Webster University**

At the end of January of 2012, there was an uptick of tweets ending with the hashtag #LiesAGBellToldMyParents. These tweets included pictures of individuals holding up a sign saying ‘I’m a survivor of the AG Bell Association. I’ll never forget.’ In many of these tweets, these individuals shared that they were not happy in an all-oral environment where they were not allowed to use any form of visual communication, i.e. sign language. AG Bell is a household name for many of those who are Deaf. In the Deaf community, AG Bell was a renowned oral/aural instructor who was invited to at least three schools for the deaf to teach children how to speak and lip-read, including Helen Keller. The actions of AG Bell in the 19<sup>th</sup> century created a very deep

rift within the deaf community—caused by the question, which is better, oral/aural education or the use of sign language?

The tweets were in response to a new state bill that was proposed in Indiana in mid January 2012. Indiana House Bill 1367 proposed to separate the statewide resource center from Indiana School for the Deaf (ISD). This bill was written to tackle two issues—one was to create a local, independent, non-biased resource center that will advocate for all communication options and the other demanding the review of evaluation and accountability measures of ISD due to their abysmal test scores in 2009. The bill was believed to be spearheaded by a representative from HEAR INDIANA, an organization that promotes AG Bell’s philosophy to teach deaf children to hear and speak. Members of the ASL

community felt this bill served no purpose or benefit for the deaf and hard of hearing children. The current law states that all parents who discover that their child is deaf or hard of hearing must go through the outreach center which is currently located at ISD. Many feel that ISD has been doing a positive job serving as a neutral and bias-free resource center for the state.

ISD was established in 1843 as the first state-sponsored school for the deaf. They claim to be the first state school for the Deaf to adopt bilingual-bicultural philosophy in the classroom. This educational approach teaches children to learn ASL and English as two separate languages—both as written and spoken. However, in 2009, ISD had an 11.5% ISTEP (state standardized test) English Language Arts and Math pass rate and a 51.7% graduation rate in 2009

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## Indiana HB1367 – How Does This Impact Us?

Megan Wetzel, Webster University

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(Indiana Department of Education, 2009). These testing scores are not appealing the parents or is it anything the school should boast about, hence the proposal to review evaluation and accountability measurements for ISD. As of Friday, February 24, over six thousand people signed a petition on Change.org to oppose Indiana's HB 1367. Hundreds of #LiesAGBellToldMyParents tweets were shared. Tens of vlogs and blogs were posted online. Deaf individuals expressed concerns about HB1367 giving heed to AG Bell and his philosophy. Deaf adults fear that more deaf children will suffer from their oral upbringing and lack of access to sign language. Over the past two months the state was greatly divided by the debate of how this bill will affect the future of deaf children in Indiana. On March 1, the Senate passed the bill and sent it to the

Governor's office to be signed into law. The bill promises the transition committee, assigned to develop a budget and guideline for the new outreach center, will include parents of D/HH children, a key administrator from ISD, representatives from multiple departments, organizations that represent neutral or various philosophies.

What does this have to do with us? We will receive the end-product of this law enactment. It is important that we pay attention to what's going on in K-12 education. I cannot and will not tell you whether or not this was a good decision on Indiana's behalf. We cannot determine now if the children going through the newly formed Outreach Center starting in 2013 will receive "better" education, based on allegedly higher score on their state standardized test. I cannot tell you if they will graduate with a stronger sense of identity and ability to become independent after high school. However, it is

imperative that we pay attention to the upcoming generations. We need to maintain a strong understanding of their upbringing to develop best practice so we can provide them with an inclusive and accessible learning environment once they reach college age. Kudos to Indiana for making a difficult decision.

Here's a fun little tidbit while researching for this article. AG Bell was granted an honorary PhD degree from Gallaudet College, now University, in 1880. Gallaudet is the first and only Deaf-Serving Institution. Oh, the irony.

# An Interview with Karen Myers, Phd, Concerning The Ability Exhibit

Saint Louis University

## ***What is the mission of the exhibit?***

The purpose of *The Ability Exhibit* is to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities through respect for others, comfort during interactions, and awareness of disability issues. Using a multi-media approach to demonstrate respect, comfort and awareness, the exhibit offers suggestions for becoming disability allies and educators.

## ***How did the Ability Exhibit come into being?***

*The Ability Exhibit* debuted on Saint Louis University's campus on October 27, 2010 – only five (5) months after the idea was presented. *The Ability Exhibit* began with a student project in my graduate course, Disability in Higher Education and Society. I was so inspired by Anne Marie Carroll's initiative that I formed a team of students to take her idea to the next level.

Through required projects in my subsequent

Disability classes in 2010/2011, and with the help of donations and contributions, I was able to coordinate the development and growth of the exhibit with a small team of students consisting of its originator, a graduate assistant, 1-5 interns, and many volunteers. Since that time, the exhibit has been displayed at over 13 sites in 6 states including a 5-college tour on the east coast.

## ***Since this is the second year of the ability exhibit at convention, what feedback have you received?***

We are pleased to have received extremely positive feedback from visitors and hosts. Several of our hosts during the past year visited the exhibit at the ACPA 2011 convention in Baltimore. Many visitors say they learned new things such as person-first language and the

history of the disability movement, while others appreciate the ideas for inclusion and becoming allies.

We do take suggestions seriously. As a result, we are developing a **Workshop Edition**, which will be introduced at the ACPA 2012 Convention. AJ Friedhoff and I will present it in a program session sponsored by the SCD, and the Workshop Edition will be for sale later this year. In addition, parents have suggested that we offer *The Ability Exhibit* to elementary and secondary students, so we are developing a **K-12 Edition**. Lastly, at the recommendation of some host institutions, we are developing the **Mini Edition** – a “reduced” version of the current traveling *Ability Exhibit* to allow those institutions with limited resources the opportunity to host a smaller version of the exhibit for a reduced rental fee and reduced shipping costs.

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## **An Interview with Karen Myers, Phd, Concerning The Ability Exhibit Saint Louis University**

### ***What are you most excited about concerning the exhibit?***

First, I am thrilled that this was a student's idea that was actualized. From a PowerPoint in class to a national – and potentially international – multimedia travelling exhibit within 5 months – wow! Now that is quite an accomplishment!

Also, I am excited when people tell us they learned something new about disability through the Ability Exhibit and that they will use what they learned and will tell others. That is what it is all about...inclusion through example. I am so proud of my students who developed and work with the exhibit projects, and, of course, I am overjoyed when people tell us how "professional" the Ability Exhibit appears and feels.

I am overjoyed when corporations and committees want to host the exhibit. Every time I get an inquiry or interest

email or phone call, I say to myself (and sometimes aloud), "Yay!", disability education is my passion and I am thrilled when others share even an ounce of that passion.

### ***What future goals do you have for the exhibit?***

We have applied for grants for the Ability Exhibit projects and continually seek donations and contributions.

We are in the process of scheduling hosts for 2012. In addition to the ACPA convention in Louisville, the Ability Exhibit will be at Webster University, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, Western Washington University, University of Illinois Springfield, and Slippery Rock University. Other possible locations are Ohio University, Seattle University, and University of Wisconsin Milwaukee.

### ***How can those interested become involved?***

To volunteer to assist with the exhibit at the ACPA convention Exhibit Hall or if you have questions contact Karen Myers, [kmyers11@slu.edu](mailto:kmyers11@slu.edu)

You can visit the *Allies for Inclusion: The Ability Exhibit* website and promotional video at [www.slu.edu/theabilityexhibit](http://www.slu.edu/theabilityexhibit).

In addition, I want to mention that I am extremely grateful to this year's co-hosts at the ACPA convention: Chartwells, Teamworks, ACPA Standing Committee on Disability, Standing Committee for Men, Standing Committee for Women, Standing Committee for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Awareness, Commission for Social Justice Education, and Commission for Professional Preparation. What a wonderful collaboration!

## **Visit Us At Convention!**

### **Sponsored SCD Programs at the Annual ACPA Convention:**

Allies for Inclusion: The Ability Exhibit Workshop Edition

Presenters: Karen Myers, PhD, & A.J. Friedhoff

Disability Identity Development Model: Pilot Study and Revised Survey Tool

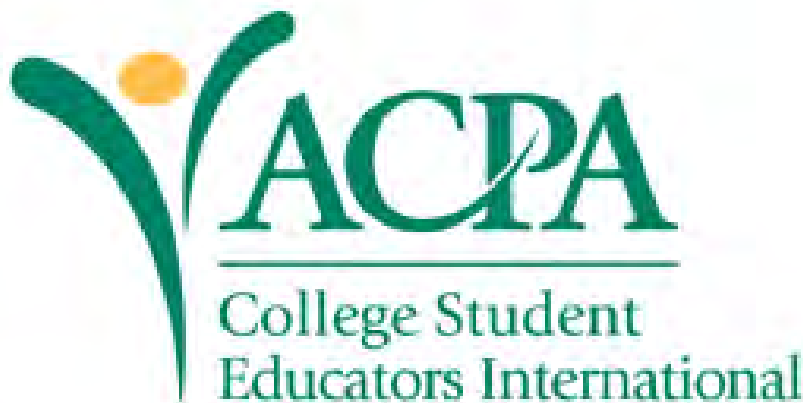
Presenters: Karen Myers, PhD, Jen Gibson & Sarah Laux

Discovering My Invisible Disability: Exploring "Re Learning to Learn"

Presenters: Andrew Beverly & Erika Heffernan

Experiences of Students with Disabilities Mentored by a Faculty Member

Presenters: Roger Wessel & Shawn Patrick





## **Contributors to the Winter Edition of the Standing Committee on Disability Newsletter:**

### **Matthew Sheehan**

#### **Author of The New ADA/504 Direct Threat Standard – More Harm Than Good?**

Matt Sheehan is the interim office manager at Western New England University's Office of Student Disability Services. Additionally, he serves as a postgraduate intern in the Division of Student Affairs at WNE. 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).

### **Megan Wetzel**

#### **Author of Indiana HB1367 – How Does This Impact Us?**

Megan Wetzel is a Deaf sign language user born and raised in California. She currently serves as a Community Director in Housing and Residential Life at Webster University in St Louis, Missouri after graduating with her master degree in CSP at Bowling Green State University. She currently serves as the State and International Liaison to SCD and is looking forward to serving as the DCI Liaison for the upcoming season.

### **Karen Myers**

#### **From An Interview with Karen Myers, Phd, Concerning The Ability Exhibit**

Karen A. Myers, PhD, is associate professor in the higher education graduate program at St Louis University. She has been a college teacher and administrator for over 30 years and currently serves on the Directorate of the ACPA Commission on Professional Preparation. In addition to classroom teaching with focus on student personnel administration, student development theory, and college teaching strategies, she facilitates online classes including her self-designed course, Disability in Higher Education and Society. She is a writer, researcher, consultant and trainer in the area of disability, and is the author of three books related to disability. She is one of the co-founders of the ACPA Standing Committee on Disability, serving as its first chair.

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