Athletes & Learning Disabilities

Christine Tunstall, MS
Disabled Student Programs & Services
Mt. San Antonio College

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Types of Disabilities

- Developmental Disabilities
- Learning Disabilities
- Acquired Brain Injury (also PCS)
- Attention Deficit (ADD/ADHD)
- Blind/Low Vision
- Deaf / Hard-of-Hearing
- Mobility
- Medical
- Psychological Disabilities
Definition of Learning Disability

- Overall average to above average intellectual ability
- Severe processing deficit (taking in info)
- Severe aptitude-achievement gap
- Measured achievement in an instructional or employment setting
Post-Concussion Syndrome

Sports Concussions (PCS)
- May not lose consciousness
- May have/be:
  - Dazed, confused, disoriented
  - Mild headache, irritable, moody
  - "Foggy," poor concentration
  - Forgetful, easily distracted
  - Mild balance/coordination probs
  - Change in sleep patterns, tired

• Can be hrs/days/months/more
• Test periodically (e.g. ImPACT)
Acquired Brain Injury (ABI or TBI)

- "Intelligence" unaffected
  - "Swiss cheese" effect
- Usually ↓attention, ↓memory
- Skills improve over time
- May have epilepsy
- Subtle neurophysical changes
  - Increases risk for injury
- May have impulsivity/poor judgment
Academic Issues for LD/ABI

• Wide variations in severity and types
• Notable strengths and weaknesses
• More academically “at-risk”
• Need ↑ time for academics, but also need ↑ time for athletics
• Unique counseling issues
• Assessment may be out-dated
• Stigma of “disability”
• Not IDEA; now Title V/504
Academic Needs of LD/ABI

• Academic Support and Transitions
  – Orientation: college/athletics/disabilities
  – Advising: Course Balancing
    • Not only during season, but also non-season
    • Time mgmt: academic/athletic
    • “Intrusive” advising
  – Instructional Support
    • Academic Time Management
    • Non-appointment Tutoring
    • Specialized tutoring training
    • Specialized instruction
    • Assistive Technology
Needs That Support Academics

- Peer & Professional Mentoring
- Identified counselor(s)
- Identified support personnel
- A “home-base” for services
  - Studying
  - Peer mentoring / Support
- Collaboration
  - Athletics
  - Counseling/Advising
  - Services for Disabilities
Orientation / Transition

• Mandatory on many campuses
• Athletic orientation is common
• Incorporate/Add DSS Orientation
• Summer “Bridge” courses
  – More in-depth / Advocacy
  – Introduce time management
    • General (sports/acad)
    • Specific Academic
  – Study techniques
  – Review for placement testing
Advising for Athletes w/Disabilities
These are “at-risk” students!

• Course Balancing: off-season
  – Based on individ. strengths/weakness
  – Math/Science difficulties
  – Use of Arts / Support Classes
  – Prob. ↑ Eng & ↑ Math together

• “Intrusive” Advising
  – Ask lots of questions
  – Timely instructor feedback
  – Monitor assignmnt grades

• Reduction in Units: Pros & Cons
Instructional Support

• Academic Time Management
  – Semester Calendar
    • Syllabus: Due Dates
    • Get specifics from Instructor
    • Set step-wise due dates

• Mt. SAC WIN Program
  – “Home-base” Services

• Specialized Instruction/Tutors
  – Is there tutor training on campus?
    • Add techniques for LD/ABI
  – Math/English support classes
Assistive Technology for All

• Electronic Text (DSS to convert)
  – Screen Readers
  – MP3 Players
  – RFB&D: Textbook Recordings
• Screen Reader for papers
  – ReadPlease (FREE version)
• Word Prediction software
  – Incorporate into Word
• Concept Organizing
  – Inspiration
Peer & Professional Mentoring

- Prior year athletes can support new
- Mt. SAC ASPIRE program
  - African American Student Success Program Inspiring Responsibility for Education
  - But targets all students
  - Omoja Community model
  - Mentoring & academic support
  - 19 current mentors, mostly Mt. SAC faculty
Collaboration

• Athletic Coaches/ Liaisons
• Identified Counselor
• Identified support staff
  – Tutors familiar these needs
  – “Intrusive” advising tasks
• Disability Services Liaison
  – Coordinate services
  – Disability-related counseling
  – Specialized instruction
  – Assistive technology
Sources

- Mt. SAC WIN Program
- MT. SAC ASPIRE Program
- Kurzweiledu.com
- ReadPlease.com
Heading Out

Fred Cherry remembered his days as a teenager in Virginia. Sometimes, on clear days, when he and the other kids were playing in the school yard someone would point to the skies. The navy fighter pilots would be training there.