

DISABILITY MYTHS



That Can Affect Academic Success

These myths are often based on unrealistic stereotypes and can interfere with how people relate to college students with disabilities. These negative attitudes are often more disabling than the disabilities.

Myth: *Students with disabilities who can't perform like non-disabled students, don't belong in college.*

Fact: Students with disabilities are subject to the same admissions process and criteria as other RIC students and if they meet admissions and program standards, they are entitled by law to attend and to receive accommodations. Students with disabilities usually do as well or better than the larger student body. Some do need some special accommodations.

Myth: *Students with disabilities who request accommodations are looking for a way to do less work.*

Fact: Most RIC students with disabilities have to work much harder than non-disabled students. Many don't want to ask for accommodations.

Myth: *Students with disabilities are given special preferential (charity-like) treatment and these accommodations give them an unfair advantage over other students.*

Fact: Students are often at a distinct disadvantage because of their disabilities. Academic accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis and are intended to adjust the learning environment to meet specific needs. Essential core characteristics of a curriculum cannot be changed by accommodations. For example a math waiver in an elementary education curriculum would not be permissible, but extended time on a math exam would be. Students must meet expected performance levels with or without accommodations.

Myth: *Providing accommodations means lowering academic standards.*

Fact: The law does not require lowering academic standards for students with disabilities. Accommodations allow students with disabilities an opportunity to meet the College's standards.

Myth: Providing accommodations takes extra time for faculty and costs too much as students with disabilities always need expensive and high-tech assistive devices or services.

Fact: Most accommodations require minimal time and many of the teaching adjustments that help students with disabilities are strategies that help non-disabled students learn better as well. Sometime the accommodations are inexpensive. However, with the proper accommodations, adaptive tools, and living environments many RIC students with disabilities can pursue an education, participate in campus affairs, and enjoy different forms of recreation, as do others.

Myth: People with disabilities are sick or have something wrong with them.

Fact: This perpetuates the assumption that persons can and should be cured to be all right. Having a disability is not the same as being sick. Individuals with disabilities have varying degrees of need and are sometimes sick, just as people without disabilities have needs and are sometimes ill.

Myth: People with disabilities have a poor quality of life.

Fact: This is a very damaging stereotype as it sometimes discourages social interactions. People with disabilities strive for a high quality of life, as do other individuals. The attitude that having a disability results in a poor quality of life is often viewed as more disabling than the disability itself.

Myth: People with disabilities feel no emotional or physical pain.

Fact: Many people with disabilities are thought of as having no feeling or being immune to physical or emotional pain and suffering. This myth often makes them more vulnerable to abuse and harassment.

Myth: People with disabilities are unpredictable, dangerous, consumed by rage and anger at their loss as well as at those who are not disabled, and a menace to society

Fact: This myth stems from a lack of information, knowledge, and experience. Anyone who is perceived as different from the "norm" is often regarded as suspect and marginalized even though the facts do not support this misconception.

Myth: *People with severe disabilities need to live in nursing homes, rehabilitation hospitals, or under constant supervision so that they do not hurt themselves.*

Fact: This myth has created a system of long-term care in our nation. Many even those with severe disabilities could live in their own homes given adequate community based services and should be given a choice.

Myths: *People with disabilities are unfortunately often looked at as biologically or mentally inferior; burdens to be dealt with; victims to be pitied; outsiders; unfortunate cripples that need to be cared for; fragile, breakable, sickly; deficient without skills or talents, needing charity or welfare; of little value to the community; or to be ashamed of and hidden away.*

Fact: In spite of the many changes in the disability community, laws, and society, some of these misconceptions still exist.

Myth: *People with disabilities are inspirational, brave, and courageous for living successfully with their disability.*

Fact: Most people with disabilities are carrying out the activities for living and don't want to be regarded as superheroes.

Adapted from :

Academic Access: Disabling stereotypes, University of Southern Maine:

<http://www.usm.maine.edu/oassd/stereotypes.html>

Block, L. Stereotypes about people with disabilities: <http://www.npr.org/programs/disability>

Common myths and stereotypes about disability: <http://www.acils.com/acil/myths.html>

Rohland , P. (01). Facts about disability replace the myths,