**Teaching Students with Psychological Disabilities**

There is a broad range of psychological diagnoses that can be experienced by a student at Marquette, both temporary and long term in their presentation. By experience, these students are the least likely to seek exceptional support in the course work or to self-identify their current or previous history with faculty and staff members.

Symptom ebb and flow and the possibility of the interruption of academic progress as a result of psychological disorders are mostly unpredictable. Some students with psychologically based disabilities register to mitigate the effects of a disorder that is currently being experienced while others may not be experiencing overt symptoms at present, but want to be proactive in identifying supports if they are needed in the future. There are some students who will want to meet to discuss the *possibility* of a recurrence so that if it happens, they and you have an agreed upon plan for addressing their needs instead of first alerting you to those needs later in the semester when less may be able to be done about them.

The most common symptoms of psychological disorders exhibited by students at the University are behaviors displaying (but not limited to) inattentiveness, difficulty in concentration, lethargy, low motivation, depressed mood or heightened anxiety; all of which may affect students in the classroom, and testing setting. Medication prescribed to help treat a psychological impairment can have side effects which may include inattentiveness, additional changes in mood, impacts on concentration or energy level, changes in appetite or the need to adjust access to food/drink, etc. If a student changes medications, they may need time to adjust to new side-effects. Both the direct impairments as the result of a disability and the side effects of treatment may be addressed through accommodation.

Any student choosing to self-disclose a psychological disorder to faculty should receive the same respect of confidentiality expected of other students. Some students with psychological disabilities worry about judgment or discrimination after disclosure. If a student reveals a psychological diagnosis, consider and look at the factual information available from the student and self-directed research. Avoid making judgments and assumptions based on casual information.

Instructors can provide necessary supports for their students with psychological diagnoses in the following ways:

* If a student self-reveals a diagnosis, ask the student what supports he or she may need. Determine what is reasonable and state why any unreasonable requests cannot be accommodated. Encourage the student to communicate a change in their needs if anticipated during the semester. Meet the student privately. Do not attempt to hold a conversation in a public area.
* Consider requests for extensions on papers and examinations and reasons provided with each request.
* Communicate deadlines and exam dates clearly in the class and in the syllabus. Avoid sudden changes in dates for exams. Give reasonable notice for quizzes and tests not announced at the beginning of the semester.
* Discuss inappropriate behavior or unacceptable academic performance as you would with any other student. Present the facts and expectations of the class. Maintain a calm delivery and eye contact. Allow the student the opportunity to respond. Keep the communication professional. Do not attempt to counsel the student.
* Avoid “rapid fire” questions in class. Allow time for a thoughtful response if the procedure within the class is to randomly call upon any and all students for answers.