Supporting College Students with Concussions (and Brain Injury)

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March is Brain Injury Awareness Month

ANYTIME, ANYWHERE

BRAIN INJURIES DO NOT DISCRIMINATE

BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION

WWW.BIAUSA.ORG
Understanding Traumatic Brain Injury

- Open Head Injury
- Closed Head Injury
  - Concussion

A concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury. 1.6 to 3.8 million concussions occur in the US every year.

CDC, 2016
BIRI, 2015
A concussion is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to either the head or the body that causes the brain to move rapidly inside the skull. A concussion changes how the brain typically functions.
What are the characteristics of a college student who has recently experienced a concussion?

Common signs of concussion:

- Double vision or blurred vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Feeling sluggish or drowsy
- Difficulty concentrating on or remembering things
- May say “Something doesn’t feel right” or report “feeling down”
After a concussion or brain injury, physical and cognitive rest is essential.

This means...

- NO sports
- NO school work
- NO screens
- NO computers
- NO video games
- NO TV

REST your injury!
What are some of the classroom challenges for someone with a brain injury or a concussion?

- Difficulty concentrating, especially for long periods of time
- Easily experience sensory and physical overstimulation
- Difficulty with certain classroom tasks such as simultaneously listening and taking notes
- Difficulty ignoring distractors in the classroom
- Difficulty remembering information, or scheduled appointments
- Difficulty managing emotions or reactions
- Difficulty taking an examination in typical classroom environments
- Needing extended time to complete assignments and examinations
How can faculty provide educational accommodations for a college student with brain injury?

- Treat a concussion as a significant health condition
- Seek guidance from staff at Accessibility Services
- Be understanding of a student’s need for absence from class, until student is cleared by physician to return-to-learn (ask about this!)
- Be open to short-term measures such as deferring test-taking or critical assignments
- Provide accommodations during a test (e.g. quiet room, a break as needed, extended test time)
Other helpful hints....

- Using accessible multi-media
- Provide extra support in terms of:
  - *advance access to instructional materials*
  - *office hour visits*
  - *consider providing another student’s notes from class (with permission)*
- Appreciate that a student recovering from a concussion might find it difficult to complete and participate in projects involving multiple students
- If near the end of the semester, suggest the student take an Incomplete rather than rush to complete a final or other critical assignment