The BES Model: Student Support and Gatekeeping Tool

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Universities are ill equipped to handle the specialized nature of students with psychiatric disabilities. Due to the increasing numbers of students with both identified and unidentified psychiatric disabilities, this case study provides guidance through a description and application of the Behavioral Ecological Strengths-Focused (BES) Model. Use of the BES Model assists administrators and faculty to simultaneously support students with psychiatric disabilities while maintaining standards for gatekeeping required in master's level programs.

INTRODUCTION

Graduate students struggle with implementing appropriate behavior for a myriad of reasons ranging from immaturity to poor role models to limited knowledge of university expectations. No matter what the reason for the failure to achieve mastery, graduate faculty are charged with the responsibility of graduating only those students that meet all of the expected discipline competencies set forth by professional accrediting body. Students with psychiatric disabilities are not exempt from this expectation.

Faculty are often faced with conflicts related to gatekeeping responsibility. Federal laws and regulations; university, departmental, and program policies; and professional values may offer different perspectives on the best course of action in regards to students that are not mastering course requirements. Information from these various sources may puzzle faculty who are content experts in specific disciplines but are inadequately prepared to deal with the expectations placed upon them when behavioral red flags are noted in the classroom setting. Support provided to faculty to implement appropriate reasonable accommodations and assistance to students with psychiatric disabilities is inconsistent. A faculty only needs to attend one national conference to become aware of the various levels of administrative support from student disability services offices across the nation.

This paper will provide guidance to administrators and faculty struggling to address student issues related to psychiatric disabilities. A historical overview of important federal laws, legal definitions, and court cases are provided. A short overview of the problem serves to undergird the need for faculty to have administrative guidelines to support decisions in the classroom. The Behavioral Ecological Strengths-Focused (BES) Model is one suggested method for implementing classroom, program, and departmental

policies and procedures that support both student success and an appropriate level of gatekeeping. A case study will highlight the utility of the BES Model.

Legal Definitions

Legal definitions such as "a person with a disability", "otherwise qualified", and "reasonable accommodations" are provided here to establish a common language. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) was created to ensure that recipients of federal funding do not discriminate against persons with disabilities. The Rehabilitation Act definition of "person with a handicap" is the same as the American Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) definition of a "person with a disability" except for the removal of illegal drug users in ADA (Cole, Christ, & Light, 1995). ADA defines disability as any physical or mental impairment that limits one or more major life activities. A person must be regarded as *currently* having such impairment or there must be a record of past impairment to be qualified for accommodations (42 U.S.C. 12101). It is up to the person with the disability to provide evidence of both disability and impairment that justifies their requested accommodations (Cole et al., 1995).

Likewise, the ADA definition of a "qualified individual with a disability" (or a person that is "otherwise qualified") is taken directly from the Section 504 definition. The main idea is that a qualified individual must meet the eligibility requirements for services *with or without* reasonable accommodations [emphasis added] (Cole et al., 1995). University, department, and program policies and processes for student access to reasonable accommodations must be in place to be in compliance with federal law (GlenMaye & Bolin, 2007).

Once a student has established eligibility and requested reasonable classroom accommodations, these must be provided to that student by the entity receiving federal funding. Reasonable accommodations (or adjustments) are those that are based on documented needs, allow for an integrated education experience for the student, are safe, and are not overly burdensome to the program (GlenMaye & Bolin, 2007; Cole et al., 1995). Essential academic requirements of the course or program (i.e. accreditation standards) must not be altered in the course of providing the accommodation. For example, a student with a trauma-related psychiatric disability may request an educational accommodation of field placement in a non-trauma related field. This would be reasonable. If they do not pass a specified number of practicum placement interviews (as dictated by program policy) completion of an independent research study course instead of practicum placement would not be reasonable. In fact, both ADA and Section 504 advocate graduating students with disabilities that possess an adequate level of professional competence (Cole et al., 1995).

Gatekeeping Responsibility

There are court cases that provide guidance in understanding legal requirements for assisting students with disabilities. Legal cases such as Southeastern Community College v. Davis (1979) and Crancer v. Board of Regents of the University of Michigan (1986) have upheld the right of academic programs to establish the suitability of individuals for program participation leaving the individual with the disability with the responsibility to prove their qualifications. Along that same line, programs or individual professors are not allowed to deny entry into a program or class based on predicted failure in future employment. Only suitability for academic programming may be considered in program admission processes. This is considered program access (Konur, 2007), and this is the first step in any gatekeeping process.

Due to the invisible nature of psychiatric disabilities and the stigma of mental illness, it is not uncommon for student applicants or accepted students to fail to disclose their disability. Disclosure holds ramifications such as a perceived reduction in independence, social stigma, and concerns about impact on future employment (Schreuer & Sachs, 2014; GlenMaye & Bolin, 2007; Cole & Cain, 1996). If a student chooses not to identify themselves as disabled, they are not entitled to federal protections or reasonable accommodations, and identified students are under no obligation to accept accommodations (Cole & Cain, 1996).

Once accepted into a master's level program, curriculum access (or reasonable accommodations) becomes the predominant issue. Konur (2007) identifies three curriculum access issues related to reasonable accommodation: (a) classroom (teaching) access requiring presentation and student response adjustments, (b) testing access requiring timing and response adjustments, and (c) setting adjustments requiring changes in the location of exams, lectures, and field placements. The courts have established some guidelines. Southeastern Community College v. Davis (1979) established that program standards should be upheld in order to provide an otherwise qualified person with "meaningful access" to the curriculum which applies to reasonable accommodation for both classroom access and setting adjustments. Brookhart v. Illinois Board. of Education (1983) provides specifications for testing access. Court cases such as these provide legal backing for graduate programs to make reasonable accommodation decisions regarding curriculum access for students with psychiatric disabilities.

Scope of the Problem

The number of students affected by psychiatric disability is substantial. Unfortunately, it is nearly impossible to know the exact number of students in post-secondary education who are affected by psychiatric disabilities. University officials cannot be sure that all students who need services actually come forward. There is limited national data, and state statistics are lacking for this specialized population.

National Statistics

Data is recorded at the national level by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). In 2012, the Profile of Undergraduate Students: 2007-08 was released, and in 2014, NCES released a report for 2011-2012 (US Department of Education NCES, 2014 & 2012). Based on the increasing percentage of college students reporting disabilities, one could speculate that there has been an increase in awareness of mental illness and that more people are seeking help and being diagnosed. Another view could be that there is a higher level of acceptance of psychiatric disabilities in general and students feel more comfortable self-reporting their disabilities in recent years.

TABLE 1
DISPERSION OF US POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (11% OF TOTAL STUDENTS) BY TYPE OF DISABILITY

Type of disability	2007-2008	2011-2012
	Total %	Total %
Visual	2.7	3.6
Hearing	6.0	7.0
Speech	0.7	0.2
Orthopedic	15.4	9.3
Specific learning disability	8.8	4.8
Attention deficit disorder	19.2	21.8
Mental illness/depression	24.1	30.8
Health impairments/problems	5.8	3.5
Other	17.3	19.0

Note: Adapted from U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics, 2012 & 2014

State Statistics

Data regarding psychiatric disability was not recorded at the state level. Through correspondence with Jennifer Hicks, the coordinator with the Kentucky ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act), it became evident that there is a knowledge gap surrounding students with psychiatric disabilities in post-secondary

education in this particular southeastern state (J. Hicks, personal communication, January 21, 2015). With disability statistics being recorded for education levels K-12, it leaves one wondering why it has not been recorded in post-secondary education. This further demonstrates the lack of importance placed on assisting students with psychiatric disabilities in college settings.

University Statistics from Western Kentucky University (WKU)

Statistics from this university come from students who voluntarily contact Student Disability Services seeking assistance. As of January 22, 2015, there were 880 students with reported disability diagnoses from a total of 20,456 enrolled student population at WKU. In the fall 2014 term, there were 2,603 diagnoses among those 880 students. They do not have specific statistics recorded for graduate level students (M. Davis, personal communication, January 22, 2015). Although the diagnoses of these students are not divided by psychiatric disability versus physical disability, the focus of this article is on students with psychiatric disabilities. The next section will describe typical psychiatric disabilities encountered in the post-secondary educational setting.

Behavioral Red Flags

The most commonly reported psychiatric disabilities at universities include Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (18%), Autism Spectrum Disorder (2%), Intellectual Disability (3%), and other various diagnoses (15%) found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, 5th Edition (APA, 2014) as reported by the US Department of Education (2012). Students with self-reported mental health concerns comprise 11% of the total number of postsecondary students in the US putting the number of students with disabilities in public institutions at 2,563,000 (US Department of Education, 2014). These numbers are from public Title IV eligible institutions only, as such numbers for private and religious based universities are unavailable. It is important to note that students may have unreported psychiatric disabilities.

Typical behavioral red flags of students with psychiatric disabilities may include but are not limited to difficulty concentrating, trouble sitting still, disorganization, limited comprehension, interpersonal conflict, poor communication, erratic behavior, mood instability, low grades, disheveled appearance, and sleeping in class (APA, 2014). These behaviors may vary over time in quantity and quality of presentation, and it is common for stress to increase behavioral and emotional difficulties of students with psychiatric disabilities.

BES MODEL

Desrosiers and Cappiccie created the BES Model to fill a void in the literature related to assisting students with psychiatric disabilities and to provide guidance for administrators and faculty struggling with students suffering from psychiatric disabilities. Coming from a "Prac-ademics" background (Owens, 2010), the strong impact of student variables including psychiatric disabilities on academic performance is apparent. The authors were interested in utilizing practice wisdom and best practices to support students and faculty when psychiatric difficulties impact graduate programming.

The BES Model is a combination of the Behavioral, Ecological, and Strengths-Focused approaches (Atkins et al., 2010; Steele, 2005). Students are viewed to be people in a social environment, and the entire faculty strives to create a supportive environment for student success (Atkins et al., 2010). The underpinning theoretical approaches used to develop this model will be explored in this section.

Behavioral Approach

Behaviorists believe that behavior is learned. Through observation of a subject, behaviorists identify behaviors and stimuli that either encourage the behaviors through positive or negative consequences or discourage them through negative reinforcements or punishment. Incorporation of behavioral ideas and techniques into the BES model allows for useful approaches such as identification of behavioral red flags (behaviors), the clear and explicit description and demonstration of appropriate professional behaviors

(modeling), and the creation of individualized Student Success Plans that increase the likelihood of improved professional behaviors. By remaining focused on specific behaviors, the student, faculty, and administrative staff remain focused on professional expectations.

Ecological Approach

Cole (1996) explains that the ecological problem-solving perspective could be used to approach accommodating students with psychiatric disabilities. For example, the author suggests, "…all parties involved could review appropriate documentation to determine specific limitations imposed by the disability and how these might be reasonably overcome" (Cole, p.344, 1996). This is furthered by Atkins, Hoagwood, Kutash, and Seidman (2010), when they break down how the ecological approach could be used for school-based mental health services. According to the authors, the ecological model provides a framework to guide research, policy, and practice. One of the most important implications is the alignment of educational and mental health needs. Instead of focusing on symptom reduction, improved functioning is the focus. It is the focus on the competency that creates the better alignment.

Atkins et al. (2010), adds that along with this focus on the achievement of competencies it is important to note that learning occurs within a social environment. This social environment includes interactions with faculty and classmates. Thus, the ecological approach promotes the social-emotional aspects of students. This is helpful, as there is both social and emotional learning that is needed, especially for students with psychiatric disabilities.

The BES Model encourages the utilization of environmental supports both inside and outside the EU and the SU. The student support system in the EU includes guiding documents to guide professional behavior (syllabi, student handbooks, student codes of conduct, and professional accreditation standards) as well as supportive services to assist students with psychiatric disabilities (student disability services office, student care teams, and student counseling centers). Outside the EU, the SU offers multiple supports that can be utilized for student support including but not limited to friends, family, community mentors, mental health care service providers, and support groups. These supports can be used in the development of a Student Success Plan.

Strengths-Focused Approach

The last approach utilized to build the BES Model is the Strengths-focused approach. Primary to this approach is the idea of developing trusting working relationships to empower others to collaboratively determining the positive resilient characteristics that can be brought to the situation that will assist in achieving sustainable change (Hammond, 2010). Rather than focusing on problems, the person is encouraged to identify strengths and supports that can be used in achieving necessary goals (Hammond, 2010).

This approach is an integral part of the BES Model. The focus of the model is on support for students, faculty, and administrators through offering guidance towards collaborative planning aimed at overcoming challenges in the SU that are negatively impacting the EU. The identification of supports is a collaborative process, and the focus is always on the desired professional behaviors. Now that the basis for the BES model has been clearly described, the application of the model will be undertaken.

SPECIFICS OF THE BES MODEL

This social environment includes interactions with faculty, mentors, and classmates. Thus, the ecological approach promotes the social-emotional aspects of student learning. Supporting students by collaboratively reviewing appropriate disability documentation with them to determine the best course of action to overcome limitations is a strengths-focused best practice (Cole, 1996). Behaviorally, repeated modeling is an effective strategy for students with psychiatric disabilities (Steele, 2005). These examples demonstrate how a behavioral, ecological, and strengths based approach to accommodation can benefit students with psychiatric disabilities.

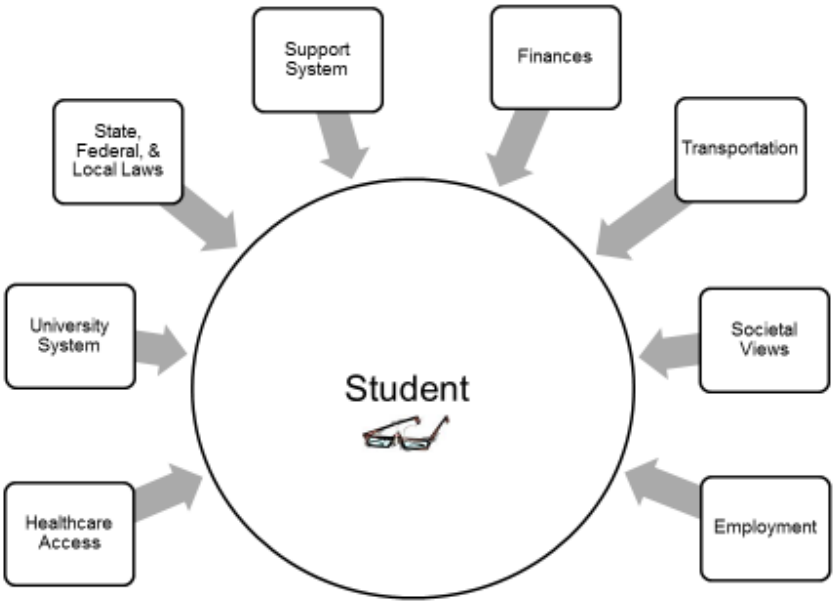
Student Universe

This model contains three important levels of analysis within the Student Universe (SU): the student perspective, the student university experience, and the student experience in society. The SU portion of the model encapsulates the combined teaching experience (25 years) and the combined professional mental health experience (45 years) of the authors. As such, this portion of the model uses practice wisdom and professional experience as a foundation.

Student Perspective

Students are complex individuals. The student framework involves a variety of factors that shape and influence that specific individual, that individual's worldview; thus impacting behavioral interactions with others in the environment. Student individual characteristics include categories such as personal history, personality type, mental health, physical health, ability to cope with stress, academic ability, race/ ethnicity, gender/gender identity, prejudices, etc. Imagine each student wearing their own unique set of glasses that include many of the factors listed previously (see Figure 1). As such, each student is truly a unique individual with various perspectives that shape their thoughts and action.

FIGURE 1
VISUAL DEPICTION OF THE STUDENT UNIVERSE IN THE BES MODEL



Student University Experience

As an individual within the university, the student has interactions with other students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Structure is provided within the classroom setting by the syllabus, which is considered a contract between the student and the individual faculty member. The syllabus links the students to other systems within the university setting such as university policy and procedures (ie. Student code of conduct), writing lab support, disability services, and accrediting body expectations if applicable for the discipline (see Figure 2 in the appendix for a checklist of potential structural supports).

Students may perceive a positive, negative, or neutral interaction pattern with the university system based on his or her individual glasses. Student perception is quite powerful. For example, a student with a

positive perception tends to have more participation in student organizations, interaction with faculty, and overall involvement in his or her discipline. A neutral student may perceive interactions with the university system as a must to complete the required degree with little interaction outside the classroom setting. A negative student perception tends to lend itself to a higher number of behavioral red flags at the program and/or university level. Because of personal life circumstances, students may shift between different perceptions thus not staying consistently within one interaction pattern.

This can be confusing to faculty as students interact differently based on unique student universe differences, which may change over the course of a semester and/or degree program. Faculty can feel overwhelmed by student variance and lack of university support, which in turn, can lead to burnout.

Student Experience in Society

Students as individuals within the environment are impacted by a variety of outside influences. The university system is one contributing factor, but there are many others such as healthcare access; local, state, and federal laws; support systems; financial solvency; transportation; societal views; and employment (see Figure 1). Students with more barriers and less environmental supports are more likely to have trouble coping. A student with similar number of barriers and a stronger support level can have increased success in dealing with the stress of continuing education.

Educational Universe

The Educational Universe (EU) is comprised of the policies and procedures within the university setting. This includes university, graduate school, departmental, and classroom policies and procedures. At some universities, the department is obsolete because the discipline may have a separate school within the university setting. The following information on the EU will provide the reader guidance on application of best practice standards identified in the BES Model. It is noted that not all universities will have every level or document discussed in this section, however, best practice standards are presented here.

University Level Standards

Most Universities have a Student Code of Conduct. The Student Code of Conduct will contain standards on expectations for behavior inside and outside of the classroom that support a harmonious academic environment. The standards set are in addition to conduct that is prohibited by state and federal law. Areas of regulation for universities typically center on dishonesty, drugs, alcohol, sexual misconduct/ assault, weapons, identification, theft, hazing, harassment, unruly conduct, disrupting the academic/judicial process, classroom conduct, technology use, and destruction of property, forgery and violation of rules/regulations (WKU, 2015).

The Student Code of Conduct is routinely part of the University Student Handbook. The University Student Handbook will address violations against the Student Code of Conduct. Even if sanctions are not imposed, the student incident is documented and becomes part of the student record. Sanctions might include any of the following: warnings, restricted University participation, parental notification, suspension or probation, suspension or termination of employment, termination of housing contract. This list of sanctions is not all-inclusive and as such each university might slightly differ on that is deemed an appropriate disciplinary action (WKU, 2015).

It is important for administrators at all levels to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct and the University Student Handbook. Students who have infractions should be notified in writing and the violation should be clearly stated citing the appropriate area of the Student Code of Conduct/University Handbook that is of concern. This is helpful both for the student to understand the concern and for any possible legal action that the student may attempt. The Graduate Student Handbook and the Program Student Handbook must follow the University expectations. A lower level handbook may be more stringent but not less than the University level expectations.

In addition to conduct, the University Handbook will characteristically provide student information on Student Disability Services, Student Care Teams, and Student Appeal Procedures (WKU, 2015). The

Student Disabilities section will provide a statement of the mission of this department. Contact information as well as a brief overview of services, policy and procedures is normally provided.

Student Care Teams are provided on some campuses. The teams, composed of administrators and faculty representatives, help to "provide an avenue to assist students and ensure a safe campus environment" (Sullivan, Karam, Mardis, Cappiccie, & Gamm, 2014, p. 3). Student Care Teams are a resource to hear individual cases of stressed students to provide a wrap-around approach to resources on campus and in the community. Students' have the right to appeal university decisions.

The University Handbook must provide the policy and procedures of how a student can file a complaint or an appeal at that specific institution (WKU, 2015). This might involve the chain of command for complaints as well as paperwork necessary to file such an appeal.

Graduate Level Standards

The Graduate Level Standards will address specific policies and procedures that center on being a graduate student at that particular institution (WKU Graduate School, 2015). Faculty that work within an undergraduate environment will be able to find similar information in the appropriate undergraduate catalogue. The Graduate Student Handbook should refer to the University Student Handbook as needed but go further by addressing policy specific only to the graduate student at the institution. Examples specific to the graduate catalogue would be graduate admissions requirements, graduate GPA expectations and reasons for graduate student academic dismissal. The Graduate Student Handbook should have more stringent policy and procedures due to the rigors required by students at the graduate level versus the undergraduate level.

It is important for faculty and administrators at the program level to be aware of policy and procedure in the University Student Handbook and the Graduate Student Handbook. Both of these important documents will guide the information provided in a Program Student Handbook. The person responsible for writing the Program Student Handbook must make sure that no contradiction exists between these three documents. As well, the Program Student Handbook should refer to the higher order Graduate Student Handbook and University Student Handbook on important matters such as student dismissal and appeal procedures.

Program Level Standards

The Program Student Handbook should be the guide for all student policy and procedure. This document will reference both the Graduate Student Handbook and University Handbook as needed. However, the Program Student Handbook may be more stringent than the higher-level handbooks according to faculty discretion. In Graduate Professional Programs, it is important for the Program Student Handbook to include both academic concerns and what was in the past referred to as non-academic concerns (WKU Master of Social Work (MSW) Program, 2015). In recent accreditation discussions a shift in philosophy has occurred with no difference noted between academic and non-academic concerns. This program has chosen to use the term "professional concerns" to encapsulate the previous non-academic concerns lingo. As such, it is extremely important to have detailed policy and procedure both on academics and the linked professional concerns.

Most Programs have made an attempt in Program Student Handbooks to address specific academic concerns that may arise. Faculty are skilled at addressing academic concerns related to grading and assessment (ie. An F results in class failure). But how does a faculty or program as a whole handle a student whom comes to class on a mood altering substance? Or a student that subtly threatens a faculty member about needing a certain grade in the class? To specifically handle such situations is to delineate exactly what professional practice looks like in the discipline. Linking the classroom, class activities, and field practicum (if applicable) to expected professional practice behaviors not only provides a guide to faculty and programs but prepares students for the exact expectations after graduation. This requires faculty to hold students to high standards in verbal and written communication as well as behavior inside and outside of the classroom. This can be a great deal of work for faculty, but in the long run, this Program has found that it provides much needed structure for all parties involved. In addition, anecdotal

evidence from employers notes the difference in our graduates versus other schools in the level of professionalism.

It is recommended that the Professional Concerns section of the Program Student Handbook link all expectations either to accreditations standards or to the Student Code of Conduct at your university. As well, student should easily be able to recite the expectations from the applicable document. Linking professionalism to these guiding documents further helps students to understand the importance of professionalism inside and outside the classroom setting.

It is recommended to consider including the following in the Professional Concerns portion of your Program Student Handbook: Professional Practice Expectations, Mental Health and/or Substance Abuse Issues, Illegal Activity, and Classroom Behavior. Your Program Student Handbook should provide broad definitions for what each of these areas entail and specifically link expectations back either to accreditations standards or to the Student Code of Conduct at your university.

Beyond stating the expectations a plan of action must be provided that informs the student of each step in the process if and when there is a concern. In this program, the first level of concern is a written concern on a Professional Concerns Form (WKU MSW Program, 2015). This document is written by the faculty or staff that has observed a behavior in violation of the expectations as stated in the Program Student Handbook. A copy of the Professional Concerns Form is provided to the student. In addition, a copy is placed in the student record and also provided to the MSW Program Director and the student's advisor. The nature of the concern or the level of the violation is considered by the Program Director and the student's advisor.

If behavior of concern is determined by the Program Director and the student's advisor to be a shapeable behavior, the advisor works with the student to create a Student Success Plan. This plan has specific goals and objectives to help the student improve the area of concern. The student meets regularly with the advisor to review progress. The Student Success Plan can be changed as needed to further meet the needs of the student's growth. The advisor presents the student's progress or continued difficulties at Program Faculty Meetings so that all faculty can support the plan.

If the Program Director, in conjunction with the Student Advisor, deems the violation magnitude to be of high concern, the student may be referred for dismissal consideration. Examples of this would be an ethical violation in the field placement, cheating on the comprehensive exam, or numerous threatening emails to faculty and other students. For such serious violations, the student would be asked to attend a Faculty Program meeting and present his/her side. The faculty advisor is at the meeting as a student advocate and liaison to the process. The student presents information on why he/she should be allowed to continue in the program. The faculty listens to the student's information and then moves into executive session to make a final decision. The student's information and other documentation (such as emails or student written work) can be used to make the final decision of dismissal or retention. If the student is retained, the advisor will work with the student to form a Student Success Plan (WKU MSW Program, 2015).

Classroom Standards

The literature suggests many best practice standards for working with students documented with psychiatric disabilities (Cole, 1996; Lightfoot & Gibson, 2005). To further support the specific policy and procedures outlined in the Program Student Handbook, information should be provided in the classroom syllabi. A solid place to start is providing a blurb in your syllabus that states information such as what is a disability, the location/phone/email of the University's disability office and the class/program policies relating to a registered disability (Cole, 1996). It is always helpful to remind students verbally the first day of class via a face-to-face or online format. In this way, students have received the notification in the syllabus and at least one other time in first class orientation materials.

In this program, the standard syllabi template used for all courses has a professionalism section that links this expectation to Accreditation Standards. Links are provided to discipline specific guiding documents. To further help students practice and improve upon professionalism, this program provides a professionalism rubric that is used in all classes. The rubric contains sections on written and oral

communication, electronic communication, class attendance, timeliness, response to constructive feedback, collegiality, etc. Students are graded on this as a separate assignment at the end of the semester. Notes are provided for any point deductions so that can use the feedback to further sharpen his/her professionalism as needed. The professionalism rubric helps students to understand the expectations that will be required beyond the classroom in social work jobs during and after graduation.

Another area of focus centers on the concept of Universal Design (Lightfoot & Gibson, 2005). Universal design is the principle that integration of accessibility and usability features result in greater social inclusion by catering to the broadest diversity of users (Council on Disabilities and Persons with Disabilities, 2010). What benefits a disabled student may benefit others with a weakness not reaching the level of a certified disability.

In developing curriculum, then, the professor should consider the most effective way to deliver material to all students. "All students" includes students with a variety of learning styles as well as students with documented psychiatric and physical disabilities. This means that students with visual/ hearing difficulties and those with Bipolar I Disorder should have equal potential to learn as those students in the class without a registered disability. The class structure, in class assignments, lectures, tests, etc. must all be designed for ease of access and effective acquisition of material. One way to focus on this concept is to use multi-modal instructional methods (Lightfoot & Gibson, 2005). Offering a combination of lecture, video, in-class activities, reading, quiz/testing, video lectures and in vivo learning activities can help to meet the learning styles of many different students.

Beyond the structure of the class, the professor must present a welcoming classroom or field practicum learning environment (Lightfoot & Gibson, 2005). This concept entails ideas such as: a student feeling heard by the professor and other students, a student feeling physically and psychologically safe in the classroom, a student feeling encouraged to offer dissenting opinions for discussion and a student feeling that the professor encourages the student to ask questions.

It is important for the professor to focus on specific core content that is essential for the course (Lightfoot & Gibson, 2005). Keeping on track and pointing out the core concepts via lecture and classroom activities helps all students to understand the areas to focus on for extra study. It improves student success and decreases students asking numerous questions due to confusion. One specific tactic is breaking down the tasks into parts, rather than looking at the whole (Steele, 2005). This could mean turning one large lesson into more manageable segments for teaching, also known as "chunking". This could be especially helpful for students who learn differently as they may become easily exasperated and overwhelmed when schoolwork appears to be too difficult. Often, this causes students to give up before even trying the assignment.

In the syllabus, in class material and in one on one discussion with the student, the professor can work to incorporate natural supports (Lightfoot & Gibson, 2005). Natural supports might include student mentoring, tutoring, writing center help, disability services assistance, counseling assistance, etc. This expands the professor's ability to help the student far beyond what can be done in that individual class. It also empowers the student to seek out resources to support his/her success. Learning this skill further supports success in other classes and in the work environment.

A final standard to consider is flexible means of evaluation (Lightfoot & Gibson, 2005). Flexibility might mean allowing a choice in the delivery method such as a test being either verbal or written. Flexibility might mean choosing between two completely different assignments such as taking a paper test or writing a specific length paper. In this way, students are allowed to make choices that cater to personal strengths. Utilization of strategies that encourage students to keep track of their own progress by self-monitoring can be very effective with students (Steele, 2005). When students practice self-assessment, they may be more likely to gain more confidence and feelings of success.

All of these classroom standards assist not only students with disabilities, but all students due to the variety of learning styles and needs students bring to the classroom. Most students with documented disabilities require specific accommodations beyond the classroom standards mentioned above, however, utilizing these standards will assist students with psychiatric disabilities who choose not to seek out

formal accommodations. The following case study depicts the story of Awiti, a graduate student who chose not to seek out formal accommodations from the student disability services office.

CASE STUDY

After one year in a two-year full-time graduate program, Awiti has established herself as an excellent student. She has garnered top marks in all courses, and she always come to class prepared. Awiti is married with a husband and three children, and she speaks highly of her family. Awiti reports her past includes working as a jail guard at a county jail. She also reports that she has a permit to carry a concealed weapon. Awiti works in the department as a Graduate Assistant (GA), and she frequently chooses to work from home with permission from the graduate program director.

One faculty member brings up concerns about Awiti during faculty meeting. She has been unable to complete part of her GA assignment saying that she is having difficulty with the literature search she has been working on for that professor. No other faculty members report difficulty in their classes or elsewhere with Awiti. A different faculty member did express concern that Awiti appears depressed lately in class and has missed a few online assignments, which is unlike her. Due to her previous disclosure to a faculty member of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), the faculty are unconcerned about Awiti's lack of emotion and unusual behavior chalking it up to her undocumented medical disability.

Over the next month, Awiti continues to fail in completing GA tasks, and she is fired from that position. She completely stops attending class and completes no further assignments after she is dismissed from the GA position. She does not respond to any phone calls or emails from faculty. She does not withdraw from classes despite recommendations from her faculty advisor to do so.

Awiti is one semester from graduation at this point, yet she is missing in action. She continues to maintain contact with some of the graduate students, and she reports to them that the faculty of the graduate program are persecuting her for no reason. She is very angry that she has been dismissed as a GA and makes veiled threats towards faculty saying "They will be sorry!", "I won't let them get away with this!", and "I'll be at graduation no matter what they say! They can't stop me!" Concerned students report these statements to faculty. Awiti reports she shot an intruder during a home invasion, and she would not hesitate to do so again. She also reports that she has a permit to carry a concealed weapon. Awiti reports that the campus police have given her special permission to carry a concealed weapon on campus.

The next section of this paper will apply the BES Model to the case of Awiti. Consider implications for your institution during the following analysis. Awiti's case occurred prior to the development of the BES Model, and in fact, spurred the authors to examine best practices for handling such difficult student encounters.

APPLICATION OF BES MODEL TO A CASE STUDY

The Awiti Case demonstrates the complex situations students with psychiatric disabilities may present to faculty. It is important to note that in this particular case, the student had not provided documentation of the medical condition mentioned. This is a typical scenario because students with psychiatric disabilities may be unwilling to seek formal disability accommodations seeing it as stigmatizing or as a sign of weakness (Schreuer & Sachs, 2014; GlenMaye & Bolin, 2007; Cole & Cain, 1996). Legally, faculty may not provide instruction differently for any student unless approved by the Office of Student Disability Services. By having a standard way of handling Student Professional Concerns, administrators, faculty, and students may support each other toward improved outcomes. In the event that the Student Success Plan is unsuccessful, there will be documentation of actions taken to support all involved in a difficult situation.

Both the EU and the SU are harnessed when utilizing the BES Model. Taking a faculty-based view of the EU, the Classroom, Department/Program, Graduate School, and the University aspects of the BES Model will be explored, and the SU aspects will be expanded upon.

Classroom Aspects of the EU

Prior to classes starting, Faculty A had put into practice all of the best practice methods listed in the BES Model including providing a syllabus blurb (standard for the department) describing all student support services available and how to access disability services and the professor; designing learning activities that appealed to a variety of learning styles; providing a flexible means of evaluation for some assignments; and developing a welcoming learning environment for class.

Red flags identified by Faculty A included late and missing assignments, flat affect, reduced quality of assignments, and missing classes. Peers reported erratic behavior in written and oral communication. According to the BES Model, Faculty A would complete a Professional Concerns Form that addressed the specific behaviors of concern. This would include the red flags previously noted.

Program Aspects of the EU

The Professional Concerns Form would be forwarded to the academic advisor and the program director. The advisor would meet with Awiti to develop a Student Success Plan. It is important to note that the behavioral red flags are high severity; the program director can refer the Professional Concerns Form for a Program Review to consider Dismissal. However, in Awiti's case, these are mild concerns, and an initial Student Success Plan would be the most appropriate course of action. Awiti's faculty advisor made sure to include Awiti's strengths in the plan including a supportive family, strong relationships with peers in the graduate program, and a past of overcoming adversity. Since the BES Model was not in place when this case actually took place, Awiti's behaviors escalated in severity during the next semester.

University Aspects of the EU

Awiti began displaying new behavioral flags that were threatening in nature. Veiled threats were noted towards faculty as well as student members of the cohort, and these behaviors are strictly prohibited in the University Code of Student Conduct found in the University Student Handbook. Due to the involvement of weapons in the veiled threats, the Program Director notified the Student Care Team of specific behavioral concerns as well as providing written documentation of threatening emails. The Student Care Team recommended dismissal of Awiti based on this information. The easiest course of action was dismissal based on cumulative GPA falling below Graduate Study requirements. Safety concerns were reported to campus police due to threats focused on the upcoming graduation ceremony. Campus police attended the graduation ceremony to insure safety for all students, families, and university personnel.

If Awiti had not failed her courses, and thus been dismissed for academic reasons, the documentation of the Student Success Plan and monitoring would have provided support for dismissal from the program for Professional Concerns. Upon any dismissal, students are provided with the Appeal Procedures of the University in writing should they choose to take that course of action. Making the University Appeal Procedures explicit to the student and documenting it in writing are important step if legal action ensues. The BES Model would have provided documentation to support dismissal in a more timely manner had it been followed in this case.

Several years following dismissal, Awiti contacted the Program Director in hopes of completing her degree. She admitted to an addiction to painkillers that was a result of an injury. Now that she was attending Narcotics Anonymous, she felt she deserved a second chance. The Program Director informed Awiti of her rights as a student to reapply to the program as per the Program Student Handbook and the Graduate Studies Student Handbook. Awiti did not follow through with the application at that time. With the benefit of the BES Model, Awiti and faculty may have experienced a different course of events.

CONCLUSION

The BES Model was developed out of frustration over the challenges related to providing students with psychiatric disabilities a successful educational experience. Lack of faculty and student support,

frustration with nonexistent or ineffective university policies, and student failure to complete the graduate program were a few of the challenges that have been addressed through utilization of the BES Model. Development of a model utilizing a mix of behavioral, ecological, and strengths-focused approaches is consistent with the professional values of the authors, and faculty report it is appealing due to the early intervention nature of the Student Support Plan and the clear guidance provided when problems with students arise. The BES Model can also be used with students regardless of their legal status of disability which faculty find useful. Students report Student Success Plans and subsequent reviews keep them focused on the strengths and supports in their environment. Administrators appreciate the guidance and structure provided by policies and procedures that are aligned with professional expectations and accreditation standards.

As demonstrated in this case study, professional standards can serve a dual purpose: support and gatekeeping. As both faculty and students become clearer regarding behavioral expectations, including professionalism, it becomes easier to determine when to offer support and when to block entry into a profession for which the student is not well suited. Guidance for administrators, faculty, and students at all levels of the EU are vital to insure success of all students including students with psychiatric disabilities.

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APPENDIX

FIGURE 2
BES MODEL CHECKLIST OF STRUCTURAL SUPPORT ALIGNMENT FOR USE BY FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATORS

	University	Graduate	Program	Classroom
Student Handbook				
Student Code of Conduct				
Student Disability Services				
Student Care Team				
Student Appeal Procedures				
Professional Concerns Form				
Student Success Plan				
Syllabi Blurb Template				
Professionalism Rubric				
Universal Design				
Welcoming Learning Environment				
Learning Style Approach				
Flexible Means of Evaluation				