

The University of Southern Mississippi
The Aquila Digital Community

School of Education Doctoral Projects - Higher
Education

School of Education

Summer 8-2022

**DISABILITY DISCLOSURE AND ACADEMIC ADVISING: FACTORS
THAT INFLUENCE DISABILITY DISCLOSURE TO AN ACADEMIC
ADVISOR**

Autumn Grant
University of Southern Mississippi, autumn.grant@usm.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://aquila.usm.edu/highereddoctoralprojects>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Grant, Autumn, "DISABILITY DISCLOSURE AND ACADEMIC ADVISING: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE DISABILITY DISCLOSURE TO AN ACADEMIC ADVISOR" (2022). *School of Education Doctoral Projects - Higher Education*. 26.

<https://aquila.usm.edu/highereddoctoralprojects/26>

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Education at The Aquila Digital Community. It has been accepted for inclusion in School of Education Doctoral Projects - Higher Education by an authorized administrator of The Aquila Digital Community. For more information, please contact aquilastaff@usm.edu.

DISABILITY DISCLOSURE AND ACADEMIC ADVISING: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE
DISABILITY DISCLOSURE TO AN ACADEMIC ADVISOR

by

Autumn B. Grant

A Doctoral Project Submitted to,
the College of Education and Human Sciences
and the School of Education
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

May 2022

This Doctoral Project was approved by:

Dr. Masha Krsmanovic
Advisor

Dr. Noal Cochran
Interim Director

COPYRIGHT BY

Autumn B. Grant

2022

Published by the School of Education



ABSTRACT

The National Center for Education Statistics revealed that in 2015-2016, 19.4% of undergraduate students reported having a disability. Further data convey that students with disabilities have lower graduation and retention rates than their non-disabled peers. Academic advising has a long-standing linkage to retention and success; however, academic advisors frequently feel that they are in a better place to support students with disabilities if they understand the impact of the disability on academic life. Existing literature focuses on factors that influence students to disclose a disability to obtain reasonable accommodations from an institution's disability/accessibility office and disclosure to faculty members. This research study intends to fill the gaps in the literature related to disability disclosure to academic advisors. The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed-method study was to explore why students choose to disclose a disability to an academic advisor, as well as the factors that dissuade them from disclosure, and to capture students' perceptions of their experience with disclosure to an academic advisor. Additional data about how students with disabilities believe that academic advisors can better support them through disclosure emerged. The data from the quantitative aspect of the study were analyzed through descriptive statistics to determine the most common factors examined, and thematic coding was applied to the qualitative aspect of the study. This research corroborated some of the past research evidence while also providing novel insights that have not been captured previously. The quantitative and qualitative data provide practical implications that could address some discrepancies in students with disabilities' academic experiences through the lens of academic advising.

Keywords: disability, higher education, academic advising, disclosure

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to my faculty and capstone advisor Dr. Masha Krsmanovic, who heroically took on a cohort of third-year students and mentored us as if she had been with us throughout the entire capstone journey. Her guidance and support made what could have been a difficult transition seamless and opened additional opportunities for my growth as a researcher. I would also like to thank my first capstone advisor, Dr. Emily Johnson; through their support, I was able to lay a solid foundation for the research project. Additional gratitude must go to Ms. Susie Murphy in the Office of Disability Accommodations for providing me an access to point to so many of the research participants. I also have abundant gratefulness for the student participants who shared so much of their experiences in this research. Finally, I must acknowledge the support, encouragement, and mentorship of Dr. Beverly Ballaro and Dr. Susan Campbell, for, without their guidance, I may have never started this journey.

DEDICATION

Countless people have supported me throughout my education, especially as a first-generation college student who took over 20 years to begin working on a doctorate after completing my master's degree. However, those who had the most impact on me and perhaps who were impacted the most by this adventure were my family. I would like to dedicate this work to my mother, Carolyn Grant, and my life partner Kenny Bergeron. I know this work has disrupted schedules, family events, and resulted in many instances of needing help through times when I questioned continuing. You both stood by me and helped me look at the big picture. I also need to acknowledge my father, Stanley Grant, who departed the earth before I started this journey but whose undying faith in me carried me through the most challenging times. I hope with all my heart that I continue to make you proud, Daddy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
LIST OF ACRONYMS.....	viii
CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Purpose Statement.....	3
Research Questions.....	4
CHAPTER II – LITERATURE REVIEW.....	5
Advising Students with Disabilities.....	5
Factors that Lead to Disability Disclosure.....	7
Factors that Discourage Disability Disclosure.....	8
Summary.....	9
CHAPTER III – METHODS.....	11
Research Design.....	11
Research Setting and Participants.....	11
Recruitment.....	12
Data Collection and Instruments.....	12
Quantitative Data Analysis.....	14
Qualitative Data Analysis.....	14
Validity and Reliability.....	15
CHAPTER IV – RESULTS.....	16
Participant Demographics: Quantitative Data.....	16
Participant Demographics: Qualitative Data.....	17
Previous Disability Disclosure.....	18

Factors Related to Disclosure to an Academic Advisor	19
Factors that Discourage Disclosure to an Academic Advisor	21
Perceived Benefits and Disadvantages of Disability Disclosure	24
Experience with Disability Disclosure to an Academic Advisor.....	26
How Academic Advisors Can Help with Disability Disclosure.....	27
Policy Recommendations.....	29
CHAPTER V – DISCUSSION.....	31
Implications.....	33
Limitations and Recommendations.....	35
REFERENCES	38
APPENDIX A.....	42
APPENDIX B	43
APPENDIX C	44
APPENDIX D.....	45
APPENDIX E	46
APPENDIX F.....	55

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Factors that Could Lead to Disability Disclosure to an Academic Advisor.....	19
Table 2 Factors that Could Dissuade Disability Disclosure to an Academic Advisor.....	22
Table 3 Benefits of Disclosing a Disability to an Academic Advisor.....	25
Table 4 Disadvantages of Disclosing a Disability to an Academic Advisor.....	25

LIST OF ACRONYMS

<i>ODA</i>	Office of Disability Accommodations
<i>STEM</i>	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
USM	The University of Southern Mississippi

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

The National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.) revealed that in 2015-2016, 19.4% of undergraduates reported having a disability. Current trends suggest that higher education institutions can expect the number of students with disabilities enrolled in postsecondary education to continue to grow (Hong, 2015; Rehfuss & Quillin, 2005). Beyond the number of students with disabilities pursuing postsecondary education, D'Alessio and Banerjee (2016) conveyed that students with disabilities often have lower graduation and retention rates than their peers without disabilities. Wessel et al. (2009) further quantified the outlook on graduations when they reported that students with disabilities had graduation rates about 10% lower than those without disabilities. Adding to this issue, the time to graduation was also a factor in degree completion as Hong (2015) stated that students with disabilities took nearly twice as long to complete their degrees compared to students without disabilities. The data indicate that interventions are needed to better support students with disabilities as they transition to and through postsecondary education to graduation.

Background

One element of the college experience in supporting students with and without disabilities is academic advising. Light (2001) explicitly linked academic advising as an underrated element of student success. Additionally, McArthur (2005) indicated that academic advising impacted retention. "While faculty, administrators, and student affairs professionals all serve as student advocates and play an integral part in student retention and attrition, advisors are

typically in the best position to assist students in making quality academic decisions" (Heisserer & Parette, 2002, p. 69).

Academic advisors have presented a hypothesis that they can better help undergraduate students with disabilities when they understand the impact of the disability on academic life (Jarrow, 1996; Rehfuss & Quillin, 2005). However, this hypothesis relies on the disclosure of the disability by the student and the advisor using that information to support the student. Academic advisors require a comprehensive understanding of the student's needs, strengths, and weaknesses; however, federal mandates restrict the sharing of disability-related information (Jarrow, 1996). The federal mandates around confidentiality associated with disabilities can hinder the advising process. Rehfuss and Quillin (2005) identified undisclosed hidden disabilities as challenges in the advising process, emphasizing that advisors risked not making appropriate referrals or crafting a schedule that creates unnecessary barriers without a thorough understanding of students' needs.

Federal mandates, particularly those around confidentiality and disability, put the onus on the student to disclose their disability to an academic advisor. Current research on disability disclosure in higher education focuses on disclosure to offices that provide reasonable accommodations and faculty. The synthesis of contemporary literature presented in Chapter Two portrays several factors that lead to and dissuade from disability disclosure for accommodations or faculty members. Research to date has yet to determine if the same factors influence a student's decision to disclose a disability to an academic advisor.

Statement of the Problem

As the number of students with disabilities pursuing higher education increases (Hong, 2015; Rehfuss & Quillin, 2005) and their graduation rates remain low (D'Alessio & Banerjee; 2016; Wessel et al., 2009), institutions of higher education must explore ways to support this growing and crucial student population. Academic advising has been identified as a key to supporting students (Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Light, 2001); however academic advisors rely on students to provide information about their disabilities (Jarrow, 1996; Rehfuss & Quillin, 2005). Existing research related to disability disclosure in the postsecondary setting primarily focuses on disclosure related to obtaining academic accommodations and to faculty (Lindsay et al., 2018; Marshak et al., 2010; O'Shea & Meyer, 2016; Thompson-Ebanks, & Jarman, 2018). On the other hand, the current research on academic advising centers on academic advisors' perspectives and perceptions of the benefits of utilizing disability information for effective and meaningful advising (Hong, 2015; Rehfuss & Quillin, 2005). Consequently, a lack of research addresses the student perspective regarding disclosing a disability to an academic advisor. To develop the best academic advising practices for students with disabilities, the experiences and factors that lead to or dissuade from disability disclosure to an academic advisor need further scholarly exploration.

Purpose Statement

This study aims to identify the factors that lead students to and dissuade students from disclosing a disability to an academic advisor. Additionally, the study explores students' positive and negative experiences with disclosure to an academic advisor. Research data should inform academic advisors on creating advising relationships and spaces for students to disclose disability information crucial to their academic success.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What factors influence undergraduates with disabilities to disclose or not disclose a disability to an academic advisor?

RQ2: What are the reported positive and negative experiences of undergraduate students with disabilities regarding disclosing a disability to an academic advisor?

CHAPTER II – LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the synthesis of the contemporary literature examining students' disability disclosure in a college setting. Additionally, the review discusses the most common practices in advising students with disabilities. The literature search for this review included Academic Premier, ERIC, ProQuest, and Google Scholar databases. The searches used the keywords "students with disabilities", "academic advisor in higher education", "academic advising", "advising or advisor", and "disability disclosure in higher education or college or university". Parameters for the searches included English language, full text, and peer-reviewed journals. For the initial search, literature was not limited by publication date. Additional literature was obtained by utilizing references in the original sources.

The original literature search resulted in 37 articles that, at first glance, appeared to address an aspect of keyword searches. Ultimately, the literature review consisted of 18 peer-reviewed research articles that best addressed academic advising, students with disabilities, and disability disclosure in the higher education setting. Most of the articles excluded from the initial search were related to advising interventions concerning specific disabilities. All articles were published between 1996 and 2019. Three significant strands emerged through the synthesis of the selected literature: academic advisors' thoughts towards the importance of disclosure, factors that lead to disclosure in the college setting, and factors that discouraged disclosure in the college setting.

Advising Students with Disabilities

The review of contemporary research highlights that academic advising has been identified as a critical aspect of the undergraduate experience often associated with student success. Light (2001) linked academic advising to success when they stated, "good advising is

the single most underestimated element of a successful college experience" (para 5).

Additionally, Heisser and Parette (2002) emphasized that academic advisors were typically better positioned than faculty and administrators to help students make appropriate educational decisions. To this end, undisclosed hidden disabilities, including learning and psychological disabilities, challenged advisors in determining appropriate resources and compromised the educational process (Rehfuss & Quillin, 2005). As noted by Preece et al. (2007), one advantage that academic advisors have is that they are often identified as the first staff on campus to become aware of students with disabilities.

The available scholarship suggests that disability can impact students' course selection and degree planning process and identified additional areas where an academic advisor had opportunities to address disability-related needs (Hong, 2015; Jarrow, 1996; Rehuss & Quillin, 2005; Reiff, 1997). Examining the barriers that students with disabilities encounter in higher education, Hong (2015) noted that without the assistance of academic advisors, students did not always recognize the extent to which their disability would impact their course load or weekly schedule. Students in this qualitative study reported issues with not considering the meeting time or length of time for classes as factors associated with their disability-related needs. This finding supports Jarrow's (1996) conclusion that an advisor's knowledge of a disability might impact course selection when considering students' overall and disability-related strengths and weaknesses. Rehfuss and Quillin (2005) further supported that disability should be considered in both course selection and semester planning and should also be accounted for in spacing daunting degree requirements across the student's degree completion plan. This evidence strongly aligned with Reiff's (1997) finding that the most critical skills for students with learning

disabilities are self-advocacy and the ability to communicate strengths and weaknesses, which often falls into the realm of academic advising.

Factors that Lead to Disability Disclosure

Contemporary research has examined the factors that lead to disclosure in the overall college setting but has focused primarily on disclosure to receive academic accommodation through a designated office or a faculty member. O'Shea and Meyer's (2016) qualitative findings suggested a strong tie between high school experience and self-advocacy decisions in college. Additionally, they noted that participants with more socially acceptable and understood disabilities had greater ease in discussing their disabilities; specifically noting that students with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) may experience an easier time speaking about their disabilities than students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. To build upon the aspect of students' experiences in high school, de Cesarei (2015) stated that a previous positive experience with disclosure was a strong indication of whether a student would continue to disclose a disability in the college setting.

Self-advocacy and self-awareness were also identified as critical factors for disclosure in the college setting, as discovered by both de Cesarei (2015) and Lindsay et al. (2018). Through a more detailed examination of these phenomena, more specific factors regarding disclosure emerged, such as students often weighed the benefits of disclosing a disability (Lindsay et al., 2018; Miller et al., 2019). Some disclosure decisions were based on the student's feeling that the disclosure was vital to meet a goal (Lindsey et al., 2018). A qualitative study further reported that students disclose because they thought it was important to educate other students. Even if it did not directly impact them, they often saw themselves as advocates for other students to help dispel stigma or encourage others to disclose (Miller et al., 2019).

Factors that Discourage Disability Disclosure

Current research on why students do not disclose disabilities in the college setting focuses primarily on disclosing to receive accommodation services or disclosure to a faculty member. While many studies concentrated on students with hidden or invisible disabilities, Walpole and Chaskes (2011) noted that students with invisible and visible disabilities struggled with disclosure. Additionally, Houman and Stapley's (2013) qualitative study reported that the decision to disclose was not always internal as some medical professionals discouraged students from disclosing their disabilities.

The stigma attached to disability is a significant theme in the literature regarding the students who chose not to disclose their disabilities (Aune, 2002; de Cesrarei, 2015; Grimes et al., 2019; Thompson-Ebanks, & Jarman, 2018). The stigma concept was most often tied to fears related to discrimination (Lindsay et al., 2018) or being treated differently (Grimes et al., 2019). Further, the concept of stigma was found to be not only external but also internal. Grimes et al. (2019) affirmed that some students wanted to disassociate from the label of disability, while other studies documented concerns surrounding identity as a person with a disability (de Cesrarei, 2015; Grimes et al., 2019; Marshak et al., 2010). People with particular types of disabilities may experience denial of the need for support. "However, people with disabilities do not always have a stable and realistic representation of themselves, as denial may accompany a disability, particularly when this was acquired following an accident or disease" (Langer, 1994, as cited in de Cesrarei, 2015, p. 669).

A frequently referenced factor that led to the decision to not disclose in the college setting is lack of knowledge about how to get support (de Cesrarei, 2015; Lindsay et al., 2018; Lynch & Gussel, 1996; Marshak et al., 2010; Thompson-Ebanks, & Jarman, 2018). Lack of

knowledge was commonly tied to not being aware of available support or services offered at the institution (Grimes et al., 2019; & Lindsay et al., 2018). Closely related to the lack of knowledge, was not knowing how disclosure or how a student would benefit from the situation (Grimes et al., 2019; Marshak et al., 2010; Thompson-Ebanks, & Jarman, 2018).

Summary

The review of contemporary literature related to undergraduate disability disclosure remains limited in several important aspects. As presented, much of the scholarship has focused on disclosure to a disability services provider or faculty member. Even though some studies addressed the attitudes of academic advisors about disability disclosure concerning advising students, they offered minimal reference to the student perspective (Jarrow, 1996; Rehuss & Quillin, 2005; Reiff, 1997). Next, the reviewed studies mainly focused on what is often referred to as invisible disabilities (D'Alessio & Banerjee, 2016; O'Shea & Meyer, 2016; Rehuss & Quillin, 2005; Thompson-Ebanks, & Jarman, 2018). While such an investigation is important, it assumes that students with more apparent disabilities, including mobility, auditory, and visual, do not need to disclose because an advisor can see that they have a disability. Consequently, these studies do not consider the process that students with visible disabilities encounter when providing more information about their disabilities or comorbid disabilities. Lastly, most of the available evidence centers on what the advisors believe they need to support students with disabilities (Jarrow, 1996; Rehuss & Quillin, 2005; Reiff, 1997). So far, little attention has been dedicated to what students with disabilities believe academic advisors need to support them better.

As the number of undergraduate students with disabilities pursuing higher education continues to increase (Hong, 2015; Rehuss & Quillin, 2005), institutions must continue to

support this growing and diverse population. Existing research has investigated the concept of disability disclosure in terms of obtaining accommodations and working with faculty; however, it does not sufficiently address disclosure related to academic advising. As academic advisors are often the first on campus to become aware of students with disabilities (Preece et al., 2007), it is essential to set up relationships and spaces where students feel most comfortable sharing information that may impact their transitions and academic success. While factors that lead to disclosure to academic accommodation offices and faculty are important, it is crucial to determine if those factors differ regarding disclosure to an academic advisor as the power dynamic is often quite different. The primary goal of this research project is to provide academic advisors with the knowledge and tools they need to allow for disability disclosure to provide undergraduate students tailored support to level the playing field to academic success.

CHAPTER III – METHODS

The intention of this study was to identify factors that lead a student to disclose a disability to an academic advisor, as well as those that would dissuade a student from disclosure. In addition, the study sought to explore the experiences that students have had around disclosure to an academic advisor. Research data aims to inform academic advisors on ways to create environments and relationships that lead to disability disclosure and understand what students hope to accomplish regarding student success through disclosure. The following two questions guided this research:

RQ1: What factors influence undergraduates with disabilities to disclose or not disclose a disability to an academic advisor?

RQ2: What are the reported positive and negative experiences of undergraduate students with disabilities regarding disclosing a disability to an academic advisor?

Research Design

An explanatory sequential mixed-method research design was utilized for the study to allow for both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Research question one used a quantitative approach in the form of a questionnaire, while research question two employed a qualitative approach applying one-on-one interviews. This design was selected so that the qualitative nature of research question two could provide additional insights into the research question one results (Doyle et al., 2016). The combination of approaches allowed me to apply the most appropriate data collection and analysis processes that would gather the most valuable and reflective data. Using multiple methods to obtain data was aimed to reduce barriers and allow participants to engage in a data collection tool they are most comfortable with.

Research Setting and Participants

I utilized The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) as the research study site. I recruited current undergraduate degree-seeking students at USM who identified as having a disability and over the age of 18. I sought 50 current undergraduate students with disabilities to complete the quantitative questionnaire and ten students from the survey participants who have disclosed a disability to an academic advisor to complete a thirty-minute one-on-one interview.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited via a collaboration with the Office of Disability Accommodations (Appendix A), which sent out the recruitment email to 592 undergraduate degree-seeking students registered with their office. Additionally, I submitted a post to the USMTalk listserv, which is available to members of the University of Southern Mississippi community, with a link to the survey. The recruitment was expanded beyond the Office of Disability Accommodations registered students to attempt to include students who do not have a documented disability and students who have self-selected not to register with the office. To qualify for completing the questionnaire, the participants had to identify as a person with a disability and be currently enrolled in an undergraduate degree program at USM. To qualify for one-on-one interviews, the participants had to meet the questionnaire's criteria and have disclosed a disability to an academic advisor at USM. I offered a \$5 amazon gift card to the first 50 qualified individuals who completed the Qualtrics questionnaire. Additionally, I offered a \$25 amazon gift card to the first ten qualified individuals who completed the one-on-one interviews.

Data Collection and Instruments

After obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix B), the data collection for the Qualtrics questionnaire began on September 8th, 2021. I submitted a recruitment post to USMTalk, and The Office of Disability Accommodations sent out the

recruitment email on September 8th, 2021 (Appendix C). The survey remained open until 50 participants completed at least 90% of the survey and was closed to new participants on September 10th, 2021; participants with questionnaires in progress had access to the instrument until September 15th, 2021.

The second stage of data collection involved one-on-one interviews with qualified individuals who indicated that they would like to participate in the qualitative aspect of the study. I contacted interested participants within two business days of the survey completion via email with an invitation to participate in the one-on-one interviews. (Appendix D). Due to the ongoing pandemic and health concerns, all interviews were conducted via Zoom and lasted approximately 20 minutes. I completed all one-on-one interviews between September 11th and September 17th, 2021.

Quantitative Instrument

A questionnaire hosted by Qualtrics collected quantitative responses to research question one. The questionnaire featured an introduction question to filter out respondents who did not fit the criteria for the study. Demographic information, including gender identity and primary major, was collected using open-ended short answer questions. Questions related to race and ethnicity, type of disability, graduation date, use of accommodations, and disclosure of a disability to an academic advisor utilized multiple-choice questions. A series of questions related to factors that lead to disclosure and non-disclosure of a disability and a series pertaining to benefits and disadvantages of disability disclosure utilized a five-point Likert scale. Participants who indicated previous disability disclosure to an academic advisor had the opportunity to participate in the one-on-one interview. The questionnaire used for this study is presented in Appendix E.

Qualitative Instrument

Semi-structured, one-on-one interviews were used to collect qualitative data aimed to further address aspects of research question one and to address research question two concerning participants' experiences around disability disclosure to an academic advisor. Participants who completed the Qualtrics questionnaire and indicated that they had disclosed a disability to an academic advisor were invited to participate in the study's qualitative aspect. The interview focused on reasons for and experiences with disability disclosure to an academic advisor. Participants were asked to recount their most recent incidence of disability disclosure, including information of the reasons, perceived benefits, and experience rating. Additionally, participants were asked how academic advisors could better support them and make them feel comfortable around disclosure. The interview protocol and questions are presented in Appendix F.

Quantitative Data Analysis

For the quantitative aspects of the study, I utilized statistical analysis. For demographic information, the percentage of each category was determined in relation to the overall participants to obtain an understanding of who was responding to the questionnaire. General responses about disability disclosure were broken by gender identity, major, race, and disability to determine if these demographics potentially impact disability disclosure to an academic advisor using percentages. Items that focus on the factors that lead to disclosure and non-disclosure and perceived benefits and disadvantages of the disclosure utilized descriptive statistics for analysis. Through the analysis, I determined the most common perceptions about disclosure through frequency and mean scores.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative aspects of the study were primarily addressed in opened-ended questions in the Qualtrics questionnaire and the one-on-one interview. I analyzed the data through thematic

coding to allow for categories to surface from the data collected (Saldana, 2012). The data collected are meant to help develop best practices around disability disclosure for academic advisors.

Validity and Reliability

I instituted several protocols to work to ensure validity and reliability in the research study. I integrated several screening questions for the quantitative questionnaire to filter out non-qualified participants. Additionally, an attention check question was part of the questionnaire to work to prevent participants from randomly selecting answers. Regarding the qualitative interview portion of the research study, I worked with the co-PI faculty advisor to evaluate the analysis of the coding and theming.

CHAPTER IV – RESULTS

This chapter presents the results derived from an online Qualtrics questionnaire and semi-structured one-on-one interviews. The chapter is organized according to the research questions that guided this study. The first section discusses the factors that influence undergraduate students with disabilities to disclose or not disclose a disability to an academic advisor. The presented results were derived from the questionnaire and interview data analysis. The second section presents the most important results in relation to positive and negative experiences of undergraduate students with disabilities regarding disclosing a disability to an academic advisor. These results were gathered through the analysis of interview data.

Participant Demographics: Quantitative Data

The survey link was sent to 529 undergraduates registered with the Office of Disability Accommodations and posted to the USMTalk listserv. Of the 65 participants who started the Qualtrics questionnaire, 56 met the criteria to move forward. Ultimately, 51 participants completed at least 90% of the questionnaire, and their responses were used in the study. The questionnaire collected basic demographic information through multiple-choice and open-ended questions. Participants provided information on the type of disability/ies, gender identity, race/ethnicity, academic major, and expected graduation year.

For the quantitative aspect of the study, participants included 39 females, nine males, and three non-binary respondents. As participants were allowed to report one or more disabilities, some students reported multiple disabilities. The largest type of disabilities represented was psychiatric in nature (n=20, 28.5%) followed by neurodiverse, which included attention deficit disorders, autism spectrum disorder and non-verbal learning disabilities (n=12, 17.1%), learning disabilities (n=12, 14%), chronic medical conditions (n=8, 11.4%), mobility/physical disabilities

(n=8, 11.4%), other disability (n=7, 10%), deaf or hard of hearing (n=2, 2.9%), and blind or low vision (n=1, 1.4%).

Regarding racial and ethnic identity, participants were allowed to select all that apply. The overall majority of respondents identified as white (n=42, 71.2%), followed by Black or African American (n=6, 10.2%), Asian or Pacific Islander (n=5, 8.5%), multiracial or biracial (n=4, 6.8%), Hispanic or Latino (n=1, 1.7%), and a race/ethnicity not listed (n=1, 1.7%). I categorized participants' majors by fields of study and found that 20 (39.2%) were STEM field majors, 13 (25.5%) were majoring in social sciences, eight (15.7%) reported humanities majors and education majors, respectively, and two (3.9%) were majoring in a business-related field. Finally, three participants (5.9%) reported intended graduate year for their undergraduate degree as 2021, seven (13.7%) as 2022, 18 (35.3%) as 2023, ten (19.6%) as 2024, and 13 (25.5%) as 2025 or beyond.

Participant Demographics: Qualitative Data

Participants who had indicated in the questionnaire that they had disclosed a disability to an academic advisor had the opportunity to express interest in the qualitative aspect of the study by participating in a one-on-one interview. Of the 30 qualified participants, 20 expressed interest and received additional information and a link to an appointment calendar. Sixteen participants scheduled interviews from this sample, and thirteen completed an interview. Their demographic information was provided by answering open-ended questions in the online questionnaire.

Of the 13 participants in the qualitative aspect of the study, eight (61.5%) identified as female, three (23.1%) as non-binary, and two (15.4%) as male. As with the quantitative data collection, participants were allowed to provide one or more disabilities, five (38.5%) reported a psychiatric disability; five (38.5%) identified as neurodiverse (which includes attention deficit

disorders, autism spectrum disorder, and non-verbal learning disabilities), three (23.1%) as chronic medical, two (16.7%) as mobility or physical disability, one (7.7%) as a learning disability and communication disorder respectively. Self-reported race/ethnicity identity of the sample included 11 (84.6%) white and one (7.7%) as biracial and Asian or Pacific Islander, respectively. As with the quantitative aspect of the study, participants' majors were represented in one of four categories – five (38.5%) reported majors in a social science field and STEM, respectively, two (15.4%) in humanities, and one (7.7%) in education.

Previous Disability Disclosure

Participants in the quantitative aspect of the study reported if they had previously disclosed a disability to an academic advisor. A majority of the participants (n=30, 58.8%) reported that they had disclosed a disability. All participants in the qualitative study had disclosed a disability to an academic advisor. The demographic breakdown surrounding disclosure found that female and non-binary participants were more likely to disclose (n=23, 58% and n=3, 100%) as compared to males (n=4, 44%). In relation to disability identification, the percentages of disclosure are communication disability 100% (n=1), mobility or physical disabilities 75% (n=6), chronic medical 66.6% (n=6), psychiatric disabilities 61.9% (n=13), neurodiversity 60% (n=6), learning disabilities 60% (n=6), participants who identified as blind or low vision, deaf or hard of hearing, and other reported disabilities did not indicate that they had disclosed a disability to an academic advisor.

Examining the disclosure rate by race showed that participants that identified as multiracial or biracial were the most likely to disclose (n=3, 75%), followed by white (n=26, 61.9%), Black or African American (n=3, 50%), Asian or Pacific Islander (n=2, 40%) with no participants identifying as Hispanic or Latino indicated that they had disclosed a disability to an

academic advisor. In regard to major categorization and disability disclosure, participants in education major were the most likely to disclose (n=6, 75%), followed by social science majors (n=8, 61.5%), business majors (n=10, 50%), STEM majors (n=10, 50%), and humanities majors (n=5, 37.5%).

Factors Related to Disclosure to an Academic Advisor

I asked the participants to identify their level of agreement using a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) on some factors that could lead to disability disclosure. The mean, standard deviation, and variance are presented in Table 1. Additionally, through the Qualtrics questionnaire and the one-on-one interviews, participants were permitted to provide additional information regarding the factors that could lead to disability disclosure. Through the Likert scale and open-ended questions, three themes emerged regarding disclosure, which I categorized as schedule, performance, and understanding.

Table 1

Factors that Could Lead to Disability Disclosure to an Academic Advisor

Factor	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Count
I feel comfortable enough with my academic advisor to disclose a disability.	3.84	1.04	1.07	51
I feel that my academic advisor could serve me better if they knew about my disability.	3.88	1.00	1.01	51
I want my academic advisor to understand how my disability impacts my academics.	4.06	1.11	1.23	51
I feel that my academic advisor could help me build a schedule based on my disability needs.	3.90	.98	.95	51
I believe that disclosing a disability to an academic advisor is beneficial.	4.08	.97	.94	51

Schedule

While 70.5% (n=36) of participants indicated that a factor for disclosing a disability to an academic advisor for help with building a schedule based on disability as either agree or strongly agree, they did elaborate more through open-ended questions. Concerning disclosure in relation to scheduling, participants noted locations, balance, timing, and modes of class offering. A student with a physical disability stated that she needed to find classes that were in close relation to each other, and another student with a physical disability relied on his advisor to let him know if the labs he was signing up for were accessible. Additionally, students were hoping that their advisor could help them find balance in their schedule concerning pairing more challenging classes with classes that focused on their strengths. A non-binary participant with a psychiatric disability noted that her advisor helped find a schedule that was not so overwhelming and more balanced to their needs.

Assistance with the timing of classes was also reported in relation to medications, food, and "needing classes spaced apart in time because I am unable to walk across campus" (female, class of 2024). Participants also noted that the mode of the classes offered was necessary as some students needed all online, all on-campus, or a mix of both in relation to their disability. "I could disclose my disability to my academic advisor by stating that I need to have a mix of in-person classes and online classes each semester if possible, not all online classes" (male, class of 2023).

Performance

Participants in the study felt that disclosing a disability would help an academic advisor understand how their disability impacts academics, with 78% (n=40) either agreeing or strongly agreeing. The aspect of the impact of performance in relation to disclosure served as an opportunity for participants to talk specifically about approved reasonable accommodations through the Office of Disability Accommodations (ODA), such as extended time or approved

absences. Other participants felt that disclosure was helpful to explain past poor performance. A female member of the class of 2024, disclosed because she was on academic probation in the honors college and wanted her advisor to understand the impact of her disability. Another female from the class of 2022, used disclosure as a mechanism to explain the need to retake failed courses from a previous semester when she missed several classes due to her disability. Other participants utilized disclosure to be proactive about their concerns regarding their performance in future semesters. "I will have a difficult time completing my practicum because of my disability, which may cause me not to graduate" (female, class of 2022).

Understanding

Beyond a desire for academic advisors to understand the impact of a disability on performance concerning academics, participants expressed a more generalized want to be understood as a reason for disclosure. A female member of the class of 2023 with a communication disorder felt it was critical to disclose so that her advisors would understand her communication needs and provide her with patience to express her thoughts and concerns. Participants also expressed that they wanted to be understood not just as a student but as a person. "I think that my advisor knowing about my circumstances is helpful when it comes to helping arrange my schedule and class hours, but also just because they can understand me more as a student and a person" (female, class of 2023). Additionally, participants sought understanding through disclosure to an academic advisor to form connections and additional support. "It honestly really helps knowing that there's somebody on staff here, that knows me personally and generally cares if I'm taking care of myself" (non-binary, class of 2023).

Factors that Discourage Disclosure to an Academic Advisor

To better understand the participants' thoughts on disclosure to an academic advisor, it was also imperative to gather information on the factors that would dissuade a student from disclosure. As with the factors that could lead to disclosure, I asked the participants to identify their level of agreement using a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) on some factors that dissuade them from disability disclosure. The mean, standard deviation, and variance are presented in Table 2. Additionally, through the Qualtrics questionnaire, participants had the opportunity to share additional thoughts regarding not disclosing a disability to an academic advisor. Through the Likert scale and the open-ended questions, three themes emerged regarding choosing not to disclose, which I categorized as discrimination/stereotyping, attributes of the academic advisor, and comfort with disclosure.

Table 2

Factors that Could Dissuade Disability Disclosure to an Academic Advisor

Factor	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Count
I do not feel comfortable enough with my academic advisor to disclose a disability.	2.22	1.19	1.42	51
I do not have a reason to disclose my disability to my academic advisor.	2.43	1.12	1.26	51
I do not want to be treated differently by my academic advisor.	3.82	1.20	1.44	51
I do not want my academic advisor to know that I have a disability.	2.27	1.14	1.30	51
I do not want my academic advisor to discriminate against me due to my disability.	4.08	1.31	1.72	51

Fear of Discrimination/Stereotyping

Fear of discrimination emerged as the most substantial factor that could dissuade participants from disclosing a disability to an academic advisor, with 78% (n=40) of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they did not want their academic advisor to discriminate

against them due to a disability. Participants used the open-ended question about additional factors that could dissuade them from disability disclosure to expand upon their fears regarding discrimination and stereotyping that could lead to being treated differently. Participants expressed concerns about being denied access to continuing their research due to a disability as a reason for not disclosing (female, class of 2023). Additionally, another participant expressed concern that disability disclosure could prevent degree completion. "It may have an impact on my ability to graduate" (female, class of 2022).

Concerns about being treated differently by an academic advisor after disability disclosure also emerged as a factor to be considered for not disclosing as 68% (n=35) of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement regarding the different treatment. The open-ended questions revealed respondents' apprehensions about being treated differently because of stereotypes related to specific disabilities. "The only factors I can think of that would dissuade me from disclosing my disabilities would be the worry that they would start to 'baby me' being on the autism spectrum. I've experienced people talking to me as if I was a child after learning about my disability" (non-binary, class of 2022). Another participant feared that disclosure would lead an academic advisor to doubt her intellectual abilities. "I don't want my advisor to view me as lazy or to think I cannot handle my coursework" (female, class of 2023).

Attributes of Academic Advisor

While the Likert scale question relating to not feeling comfortable enough with an academic advisor to disclose only had 21.5% (n=11) select agree or strongly agree, the open-ended question responses supported that this factor may have a more significant impact on choosing to disclose. Participants cited specific attributes of an academic advisor that could impact their decision to disclose. Respondents used the words nonempathetic (female, class of

2023) and judgmental (female, class of 2023) to describe the characteristics of advisors they would not disclose to. Others noted that if they did not trust an advisor (female, class of 2024) or felt they "would dismiss [my] disability as something that couldn't affect my experience in class or overall experience on campus" (Female, class of 2021) that they would not disclose a disability.

Comfort with Disclosure

Another theme around deciding not to disclose was more directly related to the participant's characteristics and not necessarily the academic advisor. Within the theme emerged concerns about the ability to talk to an advisor, whether it was related to the disability itself or a more general sense of comfort. A male participant in the class of 2025 or beyond wrote, "The main factors that dissuade me into confiding with my advisor is purely social anxiety, which keeps me from many avenues in which I would like to discuss my problems with advisors". Another participant defined the concern as "Just a reluctance of telling it all to my advisor" (male, class of 2023). Additionally, students expressed feelings towards their disabilities that prevented them from disclosing a disability, such as stigma and embarrassment.

Perceived Benefits and Disadvantages of Disability Disclosure

Through Likert scale questions ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, participants were asked to react to possible benefits and disadvantages of disability disclosure to an academic advisor, which are displayed in Table 3 and Table 4. Overall, based on mean scores, participants agreed more strongly with benefits than they did with the disadvantages. A standout benefit was "if I disclose a disability to an academic advisor, they will know my challenges", with 94% (n=48) of participants selecting agree or strongly agree. Conversely, participants chose "if I disclose my disability to my academic advisor, they will not understand my disability" as

the most relevant disadvantage, with 25% (n=13) of participants selecting agree or strongly agree. The possible disadvantage that participants expressed a minor concern about was "if I disclose my disability to an academic advisor, they will try to talk me out of class/majors," with nearly 69% (n=35) selecting disagree or strongly disagree.

Table 3

Benefits of Disclosing a Disability to an Academic Advisor

Benefit	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Count
If I disclose my disability to an academic advisor, they will understand my disability needs in relation to my academics.	3.96	.77	.59	51
If I disclose my disability to my academic advisor, they will know my strengths	3.61	.89	.79	51
If I disclose my disability to my academic advisor, they will know my challenges.	4.24	.61	.38	51
If I disclose my disability to my academic advisor, they will work with me to create a schedule that meets my needs.	4.04	.74	.55	51
If I disclose my disability to my academic advisor, they will work with me to find balance in my classwork.	3.86	.91	.82	51
If I disclose my disability to my academic advisor, they will advocate on my behalf.	3.78	.94	.88	51
If I disclose my disability to my academic advisor, they will have additional resources available to me.	3.78	.87	.76	51

Table 4

Disadvantages of Disclosing a Disability to an Academic Advisor

Disadvantage	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Count
If I disclose my disability to my academic advisor, they will try to talk me out of classes/majors.	2.20	1.10	1.22	51
If I disclose my disability to my academic advisor, they will not understand my disability.	2.76	1.02	1.04	51
If I disclose my disability to my academic advisor, they will misadvise me.	2.25	1.03	1.05	51
If I disclose my disability to my academic advisor, they will treat me differently.	2.55	1.23	1.50	51
If I disclose my disability to my academic advisor, they will ask me questions that may make me uncomfortable.	2.49	1.11	1.23	51

Experience with Disability Disclosure to an Academic Advisor

Thirteen of the original respondents who indicated that they had disclosed their disability to an academic advisor participated in the one-on-one semi-structured interviews to discuss their experiences. The purpose of the interviews was to learn more about how students would categorize their experience with disclosure, why they ranked the experience in the way they did, and what recommendations they had to make disability to disclosure to an academic a positive and comfortable experience. Other suggestions for policy changes also emerged from the interviews.

Ranking of Experience

The participants in the semi-structured interview were asked to categorize their most recent disclosure of a disability to an academic advisor as either positive, neutral, or negative. A large majority of respondents at 69% (n=9) reported that their most recent experience was positive. When asked to explain why they choose to categorize the experience as positive,

participants indicated they had achieved what they were hoping for through the disclosure. A non-binary member of the class of 2023 not only received appropriate academic advisor support, but they also felt that the disclosure allowed for a deeper connection and someone on their side. Two participants categorized their experience as neutral, and both mentioned that advisor did not appear to be taking the disclosure information into consideration as the reason for this categorization. One participant categorized her most recent experience with disclosure as negative, as did two other participants who were reflecting on incidents of disclosure that were not the most recent. A female member of the class of 2024 explained that as she was talking about her accommodations, the academic advisor questioned her on whether or not she needed them. Additionally, a female participant from the class of 2022 recounted that a previous advisor had continually pushed her to take a full-time course load despite her explanation of needing part-time. She expressed being made to feel as if she was inadequate because she could not meet the advisor's expectations and stated: "It's almost like they're shaming me into having to go more".

How Academic Advisors Can Help with Disability Disclosure

During the semi-structured interviews, I asked the students to reflect on ways that an academic advisor could make disclosing a disability to an academic advisor a more positive experience. My questions focused on making a student feel more comfortable with disclosure and ways to make the process easier. Through analysis of the student responses, I have categorized their thoughts into three themes: proactivity, experience, and attitude.

Proactivity

Students in the interview portion of the study highlighted that they would appreciate it if their academic advisors would be more proactive in the disclosure process by creating or

utilizing opportunities to start a discussion. Most commonly, the participants thought that academic advisors could ask open-ended questions, including "is there anything that you might want me to know that would impact your success" or "are there things that we should take into consideration when building your schedule". These questions could be backed up by an explanation regarding how the advisor can assist when they have a more thorough understanding of the student's needs. Additionally, interviewees thought it was important for academic advisors to reach out when they noticed that a student was struggling through a drop in grades or another indicator. Participants believed that the check-in from an advisor with questions related to what is impacting their academic performance could facilitate disclosure. Some participants noted that their academic advisors were also their faculty members. As faculty members, they would receive an accommodation letter through the ODA. Students thought it would be helpful for the faculty member to also reach out in their advisor role if a letter was received.

Experience

As noted in the experience ranking, neutral and negative experiences were associated with an academic advisor not doing anything with the disability disclosure information and challenging the student regarding their disabilities and needs. Participants expressed the desire to work with academic advisors who had at least some understanding of the impact of disability on academics and scheduling needs. Participants felt that an advisor sharing their understanding of disabilities and specific needs, such as spacing out classes, created a greater sense of confidence in the advisor. A male student from the class of 2025 thought it would be helpful for academic advisors to acknowledge that they had worked with similar students, "If the advisor said, you know, I've worked with other students with a similar diagnosis, and they've been very successful in this class or have had a great experience with this faculty member, something of that nature".

Attitude

As the questionnaire previously identified that a negative attitude or the presence of uncaring personality from an academic advisor could serve as a factor not to disclose, participants in the interviews stressed conversely that a positive attitude could contribute to students being more comfortable with the disclosure process. Students emphasized the importance of positive characteristics and used words including patience, listening, empathy, supportive, and trust to describe what they would like from an academic advisor. A non-binary member of the class of 2024 recalled:

Every time we meet up for a meeting now, she always ask(s) me is everything going well. Have you been taking your meds... I want the best for you, like stuff like that, and it honestly really helps knowing that there's somebody on staff here that knows me personally and generally cares if I'm taking care of myself.

Overall, the desire to feel as though they as students mattered and being treated as an individual with needs was prominent throughout the interviews.

Policy Recommendations

Beyond individual interactions with academic advisors, some participants thought that broader policies within the University might assist with the disclosure process. Interviewees thought the ability to request an accommodation letter for their academic advisor would be helpful in starting the conversations. Currently, accommodation letters are only sent to the students' faculty members each semester and not the designated academic advisor. Additionally, students felt that the initial advising meeting when they register for the first time with an academic advisor is far too short to talk about needs or to disclose. When asked if they had

disclosed a disability during their first advising appointment, a non-binary student from the class of 2024 replied:

No, I did not; it was very, very quick, probably like a five-minute conversation, maybe.

And then they were kind of just like, I don't know, I know they have a lot of freshmen to go through, but it just kind of felt like. Okay. Get in. Get out.

Other students in the interviews thought that students with disabilities, especially those that could impact scheduling, should be able to utilize priority registration just as athletes and honors students. They felt that not only would it allow students to get the schedules that they need based on their disabilities, but it would also slow down the rush during appointments so that they could more thoroughly express their needs to an academic advisor.

Overall, participants in the study reported that while there were disadvantages to disclosure, there is a clear benefit related to providing their academic advisor with disability-related information to allow for their academic advisor to support them better. Assistance with scheduling, academic performance, and an understanding of their disabilities emerged as the top factors for disclosure. While fear of discrimination/stereotyping, discomfort with disclosure, and individual attitudinal attributes of the academic advisor emerge as deterrents, these are factors that training and hiring practices can possibly address. Participants indicated that academic advisors could be better partners in disclosure through proactivity, experience, and attitude, again emphasizing that the academic advisor's characteristics, approach, and knowledge are crucial in creating an optimal environment for disability disclosure.

CHAPTER V – DISCUSSION

Current statistical data show that students with disabilities are graduating at rates about 10% lower than their peers without disabilities (Wessel et al., 2009). And with students with disabilities making up nearly 20% of college students (National Center for Educational Statistics, n.d.), this is a significant population of students in need of intervention and support. While research currently exists on disability disclosure in the college setting, most studies have focused on disability disclosure concerning obtaining and using accommodations with faculty members. The intention of this study was to identify factors that lead to and dissuade students from disclosing a disability specifically to an academic advisor. Additionally, the study sought to capture students' experiences surrounding disability disclosure to an academic advisor to potentially identify common variables attributed to either positive or negative disclosure events. The research goal was to provide academic advisors and administrators with insight into conducive environments for disability disclosure to support students with disabilities as a resource, advocate, and proactive partner in their academic pursuits.

This study corroborated some of the past research evidence while also providing novel insights that have not been captured before. For instance, de Cesarei (2015) and Lindsay et al. (2018) identified self-advocacy and self-awareness as critical factors for disclosure in the college setting. Previous research also indicated that students often weighed the benefits of disclosing a disability (Lindsay et al., 2018; Miller et al., 2019), and some decisions to disclose depended on the student's feeling that the disclosure was essential to meeting a goal (Lindsey et al., 2018). Similar patterns emerged in this study as participants indicated that they often had a specific goal or need concerning disclosing a disability to an academic advisor, whether it was in reference to scheduling, understanding of academic performance, or an overall sense of support from a

university official. This study provided additional information about the environments where students feel most comfortable with disclosure. The most frequent responses indicated students wanted proactivity from academic advisors, which creates opportunities to disclose, a general ability to communicate understanding and knowledge about the impact of disabilities, and an empathetic, caring attitude which indicates the willingness to establish a relationship of support.

In relation to factors that persuade from disability disclosure, stigma surrounding disability is a significant theme in the college setting (Aune, 2002; de Cesarei, 2015; Grimes et al., 2019; Thompson-Ebanks, & Jarman, 2018). The ideas tied to stigma are related to fear of discrimination (Lindsay et al., 2018) or different treatment (Grimes et al., 2019). This study also confirmed that the fear of discrimination or different treatment by academic advisors, if they knew about a disability, emerged as the stronger themes as to why a student would choose not to disclose. Students in this study frequently cited specific fears regarding discrimination, including the fear of not being able to graduate or denial of access to research opportunities. Another factor that emerged from this research study that was not present in the reviewed research attributed non-disclosure to perceived or experienced attitudinal responses from an academic advisor. This factor presents an external variable that can be controlled through training and hiring selections and could make the difference in whether a student chooses to disclose a disability to an academic advisor.

Previous literature related to students with disabilities and academic advising focused on the assumption that academic advisors are better able to support students if they know about a student's disability (Jarrow, 1996; Rehfuss & Quillin, 2005). In that regard, Rehfuss and Quillin (2005) specifically stated that disability should be a consideration in both course selection and semester planning. Jarrow (1996) said that, with knowledge of a student's disability, an academic

advisor could use information about a student's disability-related strengths and weaknesses to aid in course selection. This study produced data that corroborated the finding of Jarrow (1996) and Rehfuss and Quillin (2005) in that the participants in the study selected, "I want my academic advisor to understand how my disability impacts my academics," as the most agreed upon factor for disclosing a disability to an academic advisor. The qualitative aspect of the study solidified that assistance with scheduling was an important goal related to disability disclosure to an academic advisor. The scheduling needs varied greatly; physical aspects of scheduling including classroom distance and accessible locations to more academic needs regarding balancing more and less challenging classes within a semester schedule.

Implications

The quantitative and qualitative data gathered and analyzed through this study provide practical implications that could address some discrepancies in the academic experiences of students with disabilities through the lens of academic advising. Minor adaptations to practice could significantly impact the academic success of students with disabilities by creating an environment and a system conducive for disability disclosure within academic advising. All stakeholders – the students, academic advisors, and administrators – play a role in optimizing the opportunities of success for students with disabilities.

Implications for Students

The data from this study indicate that students with disabilities share a similar feeling with academic advisors in that shared knowledge about the strengths and challenges of a disability can assist in the academic advising process. While the onus may lay with the academic advisors to create spaces and opportunities for disability disclosure, the student is responsible for understanding and communicating their disability-related needs. As discomfort around disclosure

emerged as a theme to not disclose, students can work to practice self-advocacy to gain confidence in talking about their disability. Additional training around disabilities may be warranted for academic advisors; however, at its core, a student needs to serve as their own advocate to make their specific needs known so that stereotyping does not occur even if the intent is to help support the student.

Implications for Academic Advisors

Academic advisors may hold the key to creating spaces that encourage disability disclosure as well as minimizing some of the factors that dissuade from disability disclosure. The attitudinal nature of an academic advisor appears to play a major role in whether a student decides to disclose a disability. Participants in this study indicated that an understanding and supportive nature of an academic advisor were factors in whether they disclose or not. Hence, advisors need to portray an empathetic nature even during busy times. Students indicated that rushed initial meetings did not allow the opportunity to disclose. While academic advisors may not have control over meeting times, open-ended questions such as "Is there anything that you like to share that will help me support you?" often opened the opportunity for disclosure. Participants that reported negative or neutral experiences with disclosure revealed that the advisor either did nothing with the information or questioned the student's needs. Ultimately, students reported a positive experience if the advisor took the disclosure into consideration during advising or offered care and support. Even if there was no practical action, participants appreciated having someone who expressed concern and support.

Implications for Administrators

As noted by Preece et al. (2007), academic advisors are often the first staff on campus to become aware that a student has a disability and, therefore, administrators should work to

support academic advisors in providing time and resources. Academic advising administrators can work to provide ample time during the first meeting to avoid the student feeling rushed and unable to disclose a disability. Without the opportunity for a student to discuss their disability-related needs, students are in jeopardy of an unsuccessful academic experience. If additional time is not an option, academic advising administrators should work with the office of the Registrar and the office for disability services to provide access to early registration; as some of the participants have stated the opportunity to register early ahead of the rush of registration would allow for more in-depth conversations. Additionally, administrators with disability and accessibility offices should consider providing students with the ability to request an accommodation letter to an academic advisor, as this may provide enough information to help guide the academic advisor in addressing disability-related needs. Administrators in academic advising and disability support services can produce training around disabilities, providing academic advisors with information about asking appropriate questions and providing resources and referrals.

Limitations and Recommendations

The first limitation of this study stems from its research design. For the quantitative part of the mixed-methods design, this study utilized basic descriptive statistics because it aimed to portray participants' general attitudes about disability disclosure. Future research in this direction would benefit from advanced statistical analysis to determine if perhaps gender, disability type, and race are significant factors to influence disability disclosure. This information could be critical in determining best practices to support students with multiple marginalized or minoritized identities in disability disclosure. Additionally, this study's qualitative semi-structured interview portion focused on participants who indicated that they had previously

disclosed a disability to an academic advisor. A closer qualitative examination of students who decided not to disclose a disability to an academic advisor is needed. This analysis could identify additional barriers that did not appear in the quantitative questionnaire and provide academic advisors with the practices and tools to help support students who were reluctant to disclose a disability in the past.

Next, a strict timeline influenced the implementation of this research to ensure data collection and analysis completion. Due to the nature of the study, there was a small window to reach out to participants and collect the data needed. Therefore, future research should expand the potential population of participants and invite students across different geographical locations and institutional types, such as replicating this study at other institutions, including small and private colleges. As noted, the implications and recommendations deduced from this research may relate directly to this one institution and may not apply to other institutions. Expansion of institutional types may identify additional factors and recommendations for best practices. This approach may also identify specific types of institutions where disability disclosure is likely to occur.

The next limitation of this study was that the sample size of 50 represents a low response rate. The total number of students who qualified to participate in the study is unknown. There is no available information regarding how many more students outside of those 592 registered with the institutional ODA are students with disabilities. Students not registered with the ODA only received notification of the research opportunity if they opted to receive USMTalk emails.

The final limitation of this research is that it was conducted at one point in time. The data collection occurred using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews between September 8th and September 17th, 2021, and was not repeated at another point in time. In many cases, students

had not met with an academic advisor since the spring semester, and their recollection of the solicited data may have been impacted. It is also important to note the possible impact of COVID on the experiences of the participants involved. Given the timeline of this study, for most participants, their most recent interactions with academic advising and disability disclosure were potentially remote, which may have impacted their advising experience.

I hope that this research will give academic advisors additional insight into how to support students with disabilities through disability disclosure and incorporate their needs into the advising process and support interventions. When students with disabilities can fully utilize the potential of academic advising to support them with their academic disability-related needs, the likeliness of success should increase. Through targeted support of disclosed disability-related needs, it is the goal of both research and practice to see the graduation rates of qualified students with disabilities match or exceed those of their peers without disabilities.

REFERENCES

- Aune, B. (2002). Career and academic advising. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2000(91), 55-67. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.9105>
- D'Alessio, K. A., & Banerjee, M. (2016). Academic advising as an intervention for college students with ADHD. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability* 29(2),109-121. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1113031.pdf>
- de Cesarei, A. (2015). Psychological factors that foster or deter the disclosure of disability by university students. *Psychological Reports*, 116(3), 665–673. <https://doi.org/10.2466%2F15.PR0.116k26w9>
- Doyle, L., Brady, A., & Byrne, G. (2016). An overview of mixed methods research – revisited. *Journal of Research in Nursing* 21(8), 623-635. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987116674257>
- Grimes, S., Southgate, E., Scevak, J., & Buchanan, R. (2019). University student perspectives on institutional non-disclosure of disability and learning challenges: reasons for staying invisible. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23(6), 639–655. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1442507>
- Heisserer, D.L.; & Paretter, P. (2002). Advising at-risk students in the college and university settings. *College Student Journal*, 36, 69-84. <https://www.advising.sdes.ucf.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/63/2019/06/Article20-20Advising20At-risk20Students20in20College1.pdf>
- Hong, B. S. S. (2015). Qualitative analysis of the barriers college students with disabilities experience in higher education. *Journal of College Student Development*, 56(3), 209-226. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/csd.2015.0032>

- Houman, K., & Stapley, J. (2013). The college experience for students with chronic illness: Implications for academic advising. *NACADA Journal*, 33(1), 61–70.
<https://doi.org/10.12930/NACADA-13-227>
- Jarrow, J. E. (1996). The Americans with disabilities act, students with disabilities, and the role of the academic advisor. *NACADA Journal*, 16(2), 6-10.
<https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-16.2.6>
- Lindsay, S., Cagliostro, E., & Carafa, G. (2018). A systematic review of barriers and facilitators of disability disclosure and accommodations for youth in postsecondary education. *International Journal of Disability, Development & Education*, 65(5), 526–556.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1034912X.2018.1430352>
- Light, R.J. (2001, March 2nd). The power of good advice for students. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, B11. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-power-of-good-advice-for-students/>
- Lynch, R. T., & Gussel, L. (1996). Disclosure and self-advocacy regarding disability-related needs: Strategies to maximize integration in postsecondary education. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 74(4), 352-357.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.1996.tb01879.x>
- Marshak, L., Van Wieren, T., Ferrell, D. R., Swiss, L., & Dugan, C. (2010). Exploring barriers to college student use of disability services and accommodations. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 22(3), 151–165. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ906688.pdf>
- McArthur, R.C. (2005) Faculty-based advising: An important factor in community college retention. *Community College Review*, 32, 1-19.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/009155210503200402>

- Miller, R. A., Wynn, R. D., & Webb, K. W. (2019). This really interesting juggling act: How university students manage disability/queer identity disclosure and visibility. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 12(4), 307–318.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000083>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *Fast facts: Students with disabilities*. Retrieved February 2nd, 2021, from <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=60>
- O'Shea, A., & Meyer, R. H. (2016). A qualitative investigation of the motivation of college students with nonvisible disabilities to utilize disability services. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 29(1), 5–23. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1107472>
- Preece, J. E., Roberts, N. L., Beecher, M. E., Rash, P. D., Schwalb, D. A., & Martinelli, E. A., Jr. (2007). Academic advisors and students with disabilities: A national survey of advisors' experiences and needs. *NACADA Journal*, 27(1), 57–72.
<https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-27.2.57>
- Rehfuss, M. C., & Amy B. Quillin, A. B. (2005). Connecting students with hidden disabilities to resources. *NACADA Journal*, 25(1), 47-50. <https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-25.1.47>
- Reiff, H. B. (1997). Academic advising: An approach from learning disabilities research. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 75(6), 433–441.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.1997.tb02359.x>
- Saldana, J. (2012). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed). Sage.
- Thompson-Ebanks, V., & Jarman, M. (2018). Undergraduate students with nonapparent disabilities identify factors that contribute to disclosure decisions. *International Journal of Disability, Development, and Education*, 65(3), 286-303.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1034912X.2017.1380174>

Walpole, M., & Chaskes, J. (2011). Advising new students with disabilities: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of College Orientation, Transition, and Retention*, 19(1), 37-48.

<https://doi.org/10.24926/jcotr.v19i1.2777>

Wessel, R. D., Jones, J. A., Markle, L., & Westfall. C. (2009). Retention and graduation of students with disabilities: Facilitating student success. *Journal of Postsecondary*

Education 21(3), 116-125. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ831430.pdf>

APPENDIX A

Office of Disabilities Accommodations Support Letter



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI.

OFFICE FOR DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS
118 College Drive #8586 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Phone: 601.266.5024 | Fax: 601.266.6035 | usm.edu/oda

April 13, 2021

Dear Institutional Review Board:

I am writing this letter to confirm that we are aware of Ms. Autumn Grant's research project that will focus on factors that lead students with disabilities to disclose to academic advisors. Ms. Grant will be using The University of Southern Mississippi and its Office for Disability Accommodations as the site for her research.

I am confident that no harm will be done to any of the Office for Disability Accommodations' students. The research will be handled in a manner that will keep the student's identities confidential, and no one will be able to associate them with our office nor will their specific disabilities be disclosed. We will be transparent with our students so they will understand exactly what this research project is about, and that their participation is voluntary.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any concerns or questions pertaining to our participation in this project.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susie Murphy".

Susie Murphy
Interim Assistant Director

APPENDIX B

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

Office of
Research Integrity



118 COLLEGE DRIVE #5125 • HATTIESBURG, MS | 601.266.6576 | USM.EDU/ORI

NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

The project below has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately. Problems should be reported to ORI via the Incident template on Cayuse IRB.
- The period of approval is twelve months. An application for renewal must be submitted for projects exceeding twelve months.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: IRB-21-172

PROJECT TITLE: Disability Disclosure and Academic Advising

SCHOOL/PROGRAM: Educational Research and Admin

RESEARCHER(S): Autumn Grant, Emily Johnson

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved

CATEGORY: Expedited

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: June 9, 2021

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Donald Sacco".

Donald Sacco, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

APPENDIX C

Questionnaire Recruitment Email

Email Subject: Research Survey Opportunity Regarding Disability Disclosure and Academic Advising – Incentive available to first 50 qualified participants.

Sent on Behalf of Autumn Grant – Doctor of Education candidate

I am a student in the Doctor of Education in Higher Education Administration at USM and I am currently conducting research on factors that lead to or deter students from disclosing a disability to an academic advisor.

I would like to request your participation in a questionnaire survey on this topic. If you are an undergraduate degree seeking student with a disability, whether or not you have sought accommodations with Office for Disability Accommodations (ODA), I ask that you consider completing my survey questionnaire. It will take approximately eight minutes to complete. Your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and anonymous. You must be 18 years of age or older, a degree seeking undergraduate student and identify as a person with a disability to participate in this survey. A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. There is a \$5 Amazon gift card incentive provided for completion of the survey by the first 50 qualified participants. After the end of the survey, it will take you to a separate link to complete information to receive the gift card (please do not share this link). This study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of The University of Southern Mississippi, Protocol # 21-172

Please access the questionnaire using this link

[REDACTED]

Any questions regarding the study or questionnaire can be directed to [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

Autumn Grant

APPENDIX D

Interview Recruitment Email

Dear Student,

Thank you for completing the Disability Disclosure and Academic Advising survey questionnaire. Because you indicated that you have disclosed a disability to an academic advisor at USM, you are eligible to participate in a follow up interview about your experience surrounding disclosure. The follow-up interview will last approximately 30 minutes over Zoom. If you would like to participate in the follow-up interview and you complete the interview you be compensated with an electronic \$25 Amazon gift card.

If you are interested in participating in the follow up interview, please use this link to select a time that works for you [REDACTED]. If you are unable to find a time that works, please let me know.

Additional information about the interview and the research project are attached to this email.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits.

Please reach out to me at [REDACTED] with any questions.

Sincerely,

Autumn Grant
Candidate for Doctor of Education in Higher Education Administration

APPENDIX E

Qualtrics Questionnaire

Factors that Lead to Disability Disclosure to an Academic Advisor

Start of Block: Informed Consent

Q1 Informed Consent

1. Purpose: This study is intended to gather information about factors that influence disability disclosure to an academic advisor. The questionnaire is intended to gather undergraduate degree-seeking students with disabilities thoughts regarding the benefits and disadvantages of disclosing a disability to an academic advisor as well as factors that would influence decisions about disclosure. The goal of the study is to provide academic advisors with information towards developing best practices to more fully support students with disabilities.

2. Description of Study: The questionnaire is designed to collect quantitative data related to disability disclosure and academic advising. The questionnaire will remain open for six weeks and will take approximately eight minutes to complete.

3. Benefits: The first 50 qualified respondents who complete the survey will receive an electronic \$5 amazon gift card. Additional participants beyond 50 will not receive direct benefits from participating in the study. However, your responses may help us learn more about disability disclosure to an academic advisor.

4. Risks: There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

5. Confidentiality: Your survey answers will be collected by Qualtrics where data will be stored in a password-protected electronic format. Qualtrics does not collect identifying information such as your name, email address, or I.P. address. Therefore, your responses will remain anonymous. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study. 6. Participant's Assurance: The project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5125, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-001, 601-266-5997.

Any questions about this research project should be directed to Autumn Grant, the Principal Investigator at [REDACTED]

Q2 Consent to Participate in Research

I understand that participation in this project is completely voluntary, and I may withdraw at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. Unless described above, all personal information will be kept strictly confidential, including my name and other identifying information. All procedures to be followed and their purposes were explained to me. Information was given about all benefits, risks, inconveniences, or discomforts that might be expected. Any new information that develops during this project will be provided to me if that information may affect my willingness to continue in the project.

Consent to Participate in Research

- Yes - I give my consent to participate in this research project (1)
- No- I do not give my consent to participate in this research project (2)

Skip To: Q3 If Consent to Participate in Research I understand that participation in this project is completely... = Yes - I give my consent to participate in this research project

Skip To: End of Survey If Consent to Participate in Research I understand that participation in this project is completely... = No- I do not give my consent to participate in this research project

Q3 Do you identify as a person with a disability/disabled person?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Do you identify as a person with a disability/disabled person? = No

Display This Question:

If Do you identify as a person with a disability/disabled person? = Yes

Q4 Are you currently enrolled in an undergraduate degree program at the University of Southern Mississippi?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Are you currently enrolled in an undergraduate degree program at the University of Southern Missi... = No

Q5 Are you at least 18 years old?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Are you at least 18 years old? = No

End of Block: Informed Consent

Start of Block: Disability Information

Q6 Which category/ies represent your disability/ies? Select all that apply.

- Blind or Low Vision (1)
 - Chronic Medical (2)
 - Deaf or Hard of Hearing (3)
 - Learning Disability (4)
 - Mobility or Physical Disability (5)
 - Neurodiverse includes Attention Deficit Disorders, Autism Spectrum Disorder and Non-Verbal Learning Disabilities (6)
 - Psychiatric Disability (7)
 - Other (8) _____
-

Q7 Have you ever (currently or in the past) used academic accommodations at USM?

- Yes, I currently use accommodations (1)
 - Yes, I have used accommodations in the past but I am not currently using accommodations (2)
 - No, I have never used accommodation at USM (3)
-

Q8 Have you ever disclosed your disability, to an academic advisor?

- Yes (1)
 - No (2)
 - No, my disability is visible, and I did not feel the need to disclose (3)
-

Display This Question:

If Have you ever disclosed your disability, to an academic advisor? = Yes

Q9 Did you disclose your disability to your academic advisor during your most recent advising appointment?

- Yes, for the first time (1)
- Yes, but this was not the first time (2)
- No, but I have disclosed in the past (3)
- No, my disability is visible and I did not feel the need to disclose (4)
- No (5)
- I don't know (6)

End of Block: Disability Information

Start of Block: Block 2

Q10 Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
I feel comfortable enough with my academic advisor to disclose a disability. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel that my academic advisor could serve me better if they knew about my disability. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For Quality Control Purposes, Please Select Strongly Agree for this row. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want my academic advisor to understand how my disability impacts my academics. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel that my academic advisor could help me build a schedule based on my disability needs. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe that disclosing a disability to an academic advisor is beneficial. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q11 Are there additional factors or reasons that could lead you to disclose your disability to an academic advisor?

Q12 Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
I do not feel comfortable enough with my academic advisor to disclose a disability. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not have a reason to disclose my disability to my academic advisor. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not want to be treated differently by my academic advisor. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not want my academic advisor to know that I have a disability. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not want my academic advisor to discriminate against me due to my disability. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Block 2

Start of Block: Block 3

Q13 Are there additional factors or reasons that would dissuade you from disclosing a disability to an academic advisor?

Q14 Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
If I disclose my disability my academic advisor will understand my disability needs in relation to my academics. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I disclose my disability my academic advisor will know my strengths. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I disclose my disability to my academic advisor will know my challenges. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I disclose my disability to my academic advisor, they will work with me to create a schedule that meets my needs. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I disclose my disability to my academic advisor, they will work with me to find balance in my classwork. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I disclose my disability to my academic advisor, they will advocate on my behalf. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I disclose my disability to my academic advisor, they will have additional resources available to me. (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q15 To what degree do you agree with the following disadvantages of disclosing a disability to an academic advisor?

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
If I disclose my disability to my academic advisor, they will try to talk me out of classes/majors. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I disclose my disability to my academic advisor, they will not understand my disability. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I disclose my disability to my academic advisor, they will misadvise me. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I disclose my disability to my academic advisor, they will treat me differently. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I disclose my disability to my academic advisor, they will ask me questions that may make me uncomfortable. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Block 3

Start of Block: Block 4

Q16 What is your gender identity?

Q17 What year do you intend to graduate with your undergraduate degree?

- 2021 (1)
 - 2022 (2)
 - 2023 (3)
 - 2024 (4)
 - 2025 or beyond (5)
-

Q18 What is your primary major?

Q19 With which of the following race/ethnicity(its) do you identify? Select all that apply.

- Asian or Pacific Islander (1)
- Black or African American (2)
- Hispanic or Latino (3)
- Native American or Alaskan Native (4)
- White (5)
- Multiracial or Biracial (6)
- A race/ethnicity not listed here (7)

End of Block: Block 4

Start of Block: Block 5

Display This Question:

If Have you ever disclosed your disability, to an academic advisor? = Yes

Q20 Because you have indicated that you have disclosed a disability to an academic advisor at USM, you may be eligible to participate in a follow-up interview about your experience surrounding disclosure. The follow-up interview will last approximately 30 minutes over the phone or zoom. If you are selected to participate in the follow-up interview and complete the interview you be compensated with an electronic \$25 Amazon gift card.

If you are interested in participating in the follow-up interview please use this [link](#) to submit your USM email address. Your email address will not be associated with your survey responses.

Q21 The first 50 qualified participants to complete this survey are eligible for an electronic \$5 Amazon gift card. Please use this [link](#) to submit your USM email address. Your email address will not be associated with your survey responses. We are not responsible for incorrect or non-USM email addresses.

End of Block: Block 5

APPENDIX F
Qualitative Interviews Protocol and Questions

Semi-Structured Interview

Participants in the Qualtrics survey who express that they have disclosed a disability to an academic advisor will have the opportunity to self-select into a thirty-minute one-on-one interview. All interviews will be conducted over Zoom or over the phone. Otter.ai will be utilized to transcribe the interview. Additionally, the researcher will request permission to record the interview session to make corrections to the otter.ai transcript.

Explain the interview process

Thank you for your interest in participating in this one-on-one interview regarding your experiences with disability disclosure to an academic advisor. The interview should take approximately 30 minutes. During this time, I have several questions that we would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning. You were selected for this interview because you have previously indicated you have disclosed a disability to an academic advisor at USM. The research project seeks to gather information about student experiences with disclosure and to improve the process of disability disclosure to academic advisors. At the conclusion of the interview, you will be compensated with an electronic \$25 amazon gift card.

Introductory Protocol

To facilitate notetaking, I would like to utilize otter.ai an assistive technology that will transcribe our conversations today as well as record our conversation. You will not be identified by name in the final research project.; however, there be references to your type of disability, gender identity, class year, and race. At this time, with your permission I would like to start the transcription and recording and go over the informed consent information and then proceed with

the interview. You were emailed a copy of the informed consent form if you would like to read along.

Obtain Consent

1. Purpose: This study is intended to gather information about experiences with disclosure of a disability to an academic advisor at the University of Mississippi.
2. Description of Study: You are invited to participate in a phone or virtual one-on-one interview related to your experiences disclosing a disability to an academic advisor at USM. This is a research project being conducted by Autumn Grant a student at the University of Southern Mississippi. It should take approximately 30 minutes to complete.
3. Benefits: At the completion of the interview, you will receive an electronic \$25 Amazon gift card. Additionally, your responses may help us learn more about disability disclosure to an academic advisor.
4. Risks: There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.
5. Confidentiality: Your answers will be not be coded with your name, and no one will be able to identify you or your answers except for the researcher.

■ Participant's Assurance: The project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5125, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-001, 601-266-5997.

Any questions about this research project should be directed to Autumn Grant, the
Principal Investigator at [REDACTED]

I understand that participation in this project is completely voluntary, and I may withdraw at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. Unless described above, all personal information will be kept strictly confidential, including my name and other identifying information. All procedures to be followed and their purposes were explained to me. Information was given about all benefits, risks, inconveniences, or discomforts that might be expected. Any new information that develops during this project will be provided to me if that information may affect my willingness to continue in the project.

Do you consent to participating in this research project?

We will now proceed with the interview questions, if at any time you feel uncomfortable with a question or feel the need to stop the interview, please let me know.

Questions

1. Do you identify as a person with a disability/disabled person?
2. What is your disability? (Name or Category)
3. Do you currently use or have you used academic accommodations at USM in the past?
4. Have you ever disclosed your disability to an academic advisor at USM?
5. When was the last time you disclosed your disability to an academic advisor at USM?
6. What factors led you to disclose your disability to an academic advisor?
7. What did you hope to gain from disclosing your disability to your academic advisor?
8. Did you gain what you were looking for from the experience?

9. Have you had a positive experience disclosing your disability to an academic advisor?

Please tell me about that experience. Why did you categorize it as positive? What could have made that experience better?

10. Have you had a negative experience disclosing your disability to an academic advisor?

Please tell me about that experience. Why did you categorize it as negative? What could have made that experience better?

11. What suggestions do you have to make disability disclosure to an academic advisor a more positive experience?

Demographics

1. What is your gender identity?

2. What year do you intend to graduate with your undergraduate degree from USM?

3. What is your primary major?

4. What is your racial identity?

This concludes our interview. Thank you for your participation. Please confirm your USM email address so that I may follow up with an electronic \$25 amazon gift card.