

UW-Eau Claire: Stepping up to lead in disability services for students: Katie Bublitz

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Katie Bublitz is the new director of the office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) and TRIO Project Ability in Motion at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. She is a six-year veteran of the campus unit, having served in previous positions of disability accommodations coordinator and TRIO Project Abilities in Motion (AIM) careers and services coordinator.

Prior to joining the SSD staff at UW-Eau Claire in 2016, Bublitz had vocational rehabilitation experience as an evaluator and work adjustment coordinator with Pantheon Industries in the southeastern part of the state. She also served as a special education support specialist in the Eau Claire Area School District, supporting students with cognitive disabilities and autism.

Bublitz officially began her position as director on Oct. 17 after being out for maternity leave, and she is thrilled to be back on campus serving students once again with the passion she says she's always held for these vital services.

"I'm excited to take on this role," Bublitz says. "My whole time at UW-Eau Claire has been about creating equal access for students with disabilities and creating a welcoming and inclusive environment where students have their needs met and feel safe.

"While I look forward to continuing to provide the mandated accommodations that we always have, I hope also to promote a stronger disability culture on campus and spotlight disability rights through more education for students, faculty and staff about the disability civil rights movement and what it means in this space."

The SSD program at UW-Eau Claire provides services, accommodations and advising for upward of 700 students each year, students Bublitz says form a broad mix of incoming and current traditional four-year students and nontraditional students as well.

“Many students come in with a diagnosed disability they have worked with as younger students,” Bublitz says. “But we also serve older students, veterans and others who develop or are diagnosed with issues later in life, some of whom are diagnosed midway through their college career.”

Bublitz says that some of the most common situations for which students are working with SSD are ADD/ADHD and psychological or mental health-related concerns. The staff also provide services for the following types of disabilities:

- Autism spectrum.
- Brain injury.
- Hearing loss.
- Various learning disabilities.
- Mobility loss.
- Temporary disabilities from injury or illness.
- Vision loss.

Bublitz says she has several top priorities as she takes the helm in SSD, but core to all efforts she says will be continuing to raise awareness of SSD services and overall campus inclusiveness for all the students her office serves.

“I’m always looking for ways to help our office and programs be more visible,” she says. “For instance, I hope to continue working with our friends in Admissions to include disability statistics in recruitment materials.

“It’s important to normalize things like disability accommodations so that young students and their families are aware from the start of their college search that we are here to connect them with the resources they need to succeed here. Part of that will also include helping faculty learn ways to create even more inclusive classroom environments and high-impact project opportunities,” Bublitz says.