ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY (ABI)

OVERVIEW AND DEFINITION

ABI is characterized by moderate changes in one, or all, of an individual's level of cognitive, emotional, behavioral, or physiological functioning. These changes can take a number of forms, but will most likely include a combination of:

impaired memory trouble expressing thoughts decreased tolerance for frustration dizziness and loss of balance frequent headaches or nausea difficulty solving problems increased fatigue poor coordination of movements lack of emotion an inaccurate assessment of ability depression poor judgement impulsivity tendency to overreact

An ABI can be the result of a number of causes, e.g., brain tumor, a stroke or aneurism, seizure activity, infectious disease, a loss of oxygen to the brain, or substance abuse. However, the most common cause of ABI is a traumatic injury to the brain as a result of either a blow to the head or a violent whipping action of the neck.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Cognitive Functions	Educational Implications					
Memory	Difficulty committing information to memory					
Organizational skills	May experience difficulty organizing their time, breaking large tasks down to smaller parts, following the train of thought of an instructor, completing assignments on time or preparing for exams.					
Attention/concentration	May find it difficult to learn new material and complete exams or assignments, particularly when faced with competing stimuli, such as noisy classrooms or exam room.					
Other cognitive functions	Visual processing: may have difficulty recognizing objects, picking out details or completing tasks requiring visual-spatial abilities. Decrease in executive functions: reasoning and judgement may be affected. Communication difficulties: clear speech can be difficult to generate. The brain may also have difficulty transferring thoughts into speech or interpreting incoming speech, a phenomenon known as aphasia.					

Behavioral Functions	Educational Implications
may exhibit a change in behavior patterns.	Individuals with an ABI may not only lack the work habits and social skills to function effectively as a student, but they may not realize when they are behaving inappropriately. They may lack initiative or may have difficulty following through on tasks.

Physical Functions	Educational Implications						
Fatigue	Students may find that they run out of energy part way through a long class or later in the day. Fatigue may be particularly evident when high levels of concentration are needed, such as taking an exam.						
Chronic pain	May take the form of headaches, neck or back pain, or other physical discomforts. Additionally, medication given to reduce pain or prevent seizures can cloud thinking.						

SSD FACULTY INFO

Physical Functions	Educational Implications (continued)				
Poor motor control	Reduced motor speed, body tremors, reduced hand-eye coordination or poor balance. Individuals may also experience periodic seizures that involve temporary loss of consciousness and/or muscular convulsions.				

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

In most cases these young adults are in the process of regaining some direction and purpose in their life. The following strategies will help them succeed academically:

- summarizing information as it is being taught
- encouraging the use of daily planners to record important information
- identifying important information from notes and textbooks and providing a written study guide in preparation for tests and exams
- periodic student/instructor meeting to review progress and discuss problems

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

- break periods as needed for rest and taking medication
- provision of a peer note taker for lectures
- tape recording of lectures
- extended time for in-class assignments, tests and exams
- provision of written, step by step instructions when assigning assignments
- modified exam schedule to spread out work load and proctoring of exams