

**Ciner: Disabilities and Academics: Supporting and Accommodating Students  
Carleton College LTC, October 28, 2003**

**Language Learning Disabilities – a nightmare case**

**The Student's Story:**

I placed into French 103 and began it fall term of my freshman year. I immediately ran into difficulty and eventually dropped the class (I was failing it because I wasn't attending, but I was failing it anyway). I decided not to do language my second year but to go to Cameroon to finish my language there. This trip got called off because my parents were worried about AIDS, so I went on the Sea semester instead (no French on board). I enrolled in French 103 Fall of my senior year for the second time and just couldn't do it.

**The Instructor's Report:**

While I no longer have written records of Sam's graded assignments or class attendance, I do have clear recollections of his difficulties in French 103, since we discussed them on more than one occasion. It could very well be that he has a legitimate claim to an exemption from the language requirement, but I cannot make the case for him. He didn't do any of the homework for the entire second half of the term (and a substantial part of the first half). He had more unexcused absences than the department allowed (6) and arrived at least 30 minutes late to as many TA sessions.

At the beginning of term, he made an effort to speak the language and participate in class discussions. He struggled throughout with the compositions and got failing or near failing grades on the exams. He had not kept up with the reading assignments.

Sam is a very nice guy. If only he applied himself to studying French as assiduously as he attempts to circumvent requirements that he finds unpleasant, I'd support his petition one hundred percent.

**The Outside Experts' Reports:**

According to the student's physician, the student "carries a formal diagnosis of Attention Deficit Disorder and Learning Disability." The physician felt that the student's "learning style differences, which are significant, make it difficult for him to learn language in a classroom setting." The Reading Center (diagnosticians Carleton has used for over two decades) reports that testing indicates the student "has an insecure visual memory for written language and an insecure auditory memory for spoken language sequences . . . visual auditory dyslexia."

What, if anything, could the faculty have done differently?

What, if anything, could the student have done differently?

What, if anything, should the institution have done or do?