**Disability 101: A Quick Guide for Faculty Members**

*The Facts:*

* Faculty should have the same expectations of students with disabilities as other students, and maintain the same academic performance standards while also providing the appropriate accommodations as given by the school’s disability services office.
* Faculty should expect to have students with disabilities in their courses.
* When students with disabilities graduate, they are as successful as other graduates.

*Many Shades of Disabilities*

Defining the various categories of disability does not have black and white clarity. Rather, professionals in the field have their own terminology. Below are a few categories often used and some examples associated with those categories:

~Psychiatric Disorder- schizophrenia, associative disorder, anxiety

~Physical Impairment- cerebral palsy

~Learning Disabilities- dyslexia, dysgraphia

~Auditory and Visual Impairment- deafness, blindness

~Brain injury- traumatic brain injury

~Health Impairment- lupus

\*Material drawn from U.S. Government Accountability Office (www.gao.gov)

*Legally Speaking…*

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (2008)

* Designed to prevent discrimination based on a student’s disability
* Have four basic implications: (1)right to higher education, (2) right to confidentiality, (3) right to access to all programs and (4) right to reasonable accommodations
* Student is responsible for requesting accommodations for the college, and providing the necessary documentation and testing – the college does not (typically) provide diagnostic testing, and is not responsible for identifying students with disabilities
* Laws for secondary school (IDEA) and laws for college can vary greatly – see attached charts

*Universal Design Can Help all Students*

UD- allows for access for all, regardless of individual characteristics

* More integrated, less stigmatizing and more supportive learning environments
* Key component of UD is flexibility
* Take in to consideration the full range of learners

*Reasonable Accommodations:*

A "reasonable and appropriate accommodation" is a modification, adjustment, and/or auxiliary aid that minimizes or eliminates the impact of a disability, allowing the student to gain equal access and opportunity to participate in the University's courses, programs, services, activities, and facilities.

A "reasonable and appropriate accommodation" is one that does not:

* require a substantial change or alteration in the curriculum to an essential element of a course or program
* fundamentally alter the nature of the service provided
* pose an undue financial hardship or administrative burden
* pose a direct threat to the health and safety of others

Accommodations:

* Include examples like note-takers, text-to-voice programs and alternate testing locations.
* Are determined on an individual basis; not all students with the same disability will have the same accommodations.
* Require students provide proof to the Disability Services Office of the need for each accommodation.

*Confidentiality in ALL Areas*

* This means faculty may receive a request for accommodations without knowing the student’s disability. This is completely acceptable. Many students will approach faculty with full disclosure about their disability.
* Violation of confidentiality can have legal impacts on both the faculty member and the institution.

*From Soldier to Student*

Currently, over 1.6 million service members have been deployed- what does this mean for faculty?

* The chance that faculty will have a returning veteran in one of their classes or as an advisee is increasing.
* Understand the use of the Disability Services office at your school for help.
* Many schools are creating/enhancing veterans’ programs to aid this population of students.
* Faculty should understand the common issues these students face, such as reintegration into civilian life, post-traumatic stress disorder and possible physical injuries from combat.

*FAQS and Scenarios*

1. How will I know when one of my students gets accommodations?
   1. The Disability Services Office at your institution should have a method for informing the faculty of accommodations – it may be an e-mail sent to the faculty & student, o a letter sent to the faculty or hand-delivered by the student (common methods of notification). The student **must** register with the Disability Services Office at your institution to request/receive accommodations – some students may want to make arrangements with the faculty and bypass the DSO, but it is in the best interest of the faculty & the institution to require the student to register with the DSO – so that consistent, reasonable, legal accommodations can be granted
2. How exactly can I help my students with disabilities succeed?
   1. Disability services and reasonable accommodations are designed to provide access, not success; while we want all students to be successful, the student is ultimately responsible for their success (or lack of success) in college
   2. To facilitate access, work with the Disability Services Office at your university, communicate with the student, and treat them as you would any other student .
3. Are all accommodations considered reasonable?
   1. The accommodations provided by the DSO at your institution are probably reasonable and appropriate, but not all accommodations requests made by students are reasonable
   2. The accommodations provided in secondary school are designed for “success” and the accommodations provided in college are designed for “access” and can be very, very different. If a student received a particular accommodation or modification in high school they may not receive it in college because it may not be appropriate for college – the DSO will make this determination when they meet with the student
4. One of my students informs me they need a note-taker as part of his accommodations. Is this something I announce in class to ask for volunteers?
   1. Professors absolutely CANNOT disclose the name of the student needing the note-taker. The faculty member may make a general announcement asking for volunteer note-takers, and should refer the volunteer to the DSO to coordinate the provision of notes. Many faculty rely on email to ask for volunteers or they know of a good student with a good GPA that they then ask.
   2. It may also be helpful for professors to ask the class to post their notes on the course website – everyone can take turns – this gives everyone access to the notes, and allows the Professor to monitor the notes, and the processing of course concepts (Universal Design at work!)
5. Is it possible for me as a faculty member to get in legal trouble? I always worry about not doing everything exactly right for the student with a disability?
   1. If a faculty member outright denies the legal accommodations the DS office has permitted for the student, then yes that faculty member can get in to trouble. However, the fact that you want to do everything “exactly right” for the student shows care. The key is to communicate with the student and the DS office whenever needed.
   2. Institutions must have a grievance policy in place for students who feel that they were not properly accommodated – it is best to keep e-mails and communications from students, and to contact the DSO if you are concerned about a student with a disability.
6. What if a student comes to me late in the semester and wants accommodations because he has done horribly this semester?
   1. The student is permitted to request accommodations but they must be reasonable and timely. Most schools have a process in place that the student must follow. For example, the student must meet with the DS office, get Professor Letters and then meet with the Professor to get the Professor Letter signed before any accommodations can take place. Contact the Disability Services Coordinator at your school for more information on helping your students. If the student has a test the next day, there is no way that student would be able to reasonably get everything set up. The accommodations would most likely be able to be set up and utilized for the very next test. A working knowledge of the process will allow you to respond quickly to these types of late requests for assistance and connect students to services.
   2. Institutions and faculty are not legally required to provide retroactive accommodations – the student may receive accommodations after they have requested them through the DSO, but the institution /faculty is not required to give “do-overs” because a student didn’t make arrangements for accommodations in a timely manner. If the student had requested accommodations & they were not provided then you may need to allow a “do-over”, but this should be decided with the DSO on a case-by-case basis.
7. What if the student’s behaviors are alarming or disruptive in class?
   1. All students must abide by your institutions rules of classroom conduct – regardless of disability status or diagnosis. If the student is disruptive, discipline them as you would any other student. If the behavior continues consult with the DSO, they may have suggestions for counseling the student on proper classroom behavior
   2. If the student’s behaviors are alarming (potentially threatening or harmful) report them to your institutions Behavior Intervention Team. If your institution has a protocol for unruly or threatening students use the protocol outlined by your school
   3. *No student may disrupt the teaching and learning experience for other students.* If the behavior persists, contact DSO and ask them to intervene.
8. What do I do if the student is not turning in their work, or is late or absent frequently?
   1. Treat them as you would any other student with late work. You can ask why their work is late or not up to standards, but you are not required to change your rules for assignments, attendance, etc… due to disability
      1. The student may have a chronic condition that makes consistent attendance difficult – this matter should have been discussed with the DSO and this information should have been included in the Letter of Accommodations. Even if they do have a disability that impacts their attendance they can still be held to typical attendance standards, but they may need leniency. This should be discussed with the DSO right away – **there are legal exceptions to a rigid attendance policy**, but they are complicated & should be considered on a case-by-case basis with your DSO
      2. If the student is unable to finish their work due to their disability (motor impairment that slows typing speed, visual impairment that slows reading or writing speed, etc…) discuss this with the student & consider how to accommodate.
      3. “MY ADHD makes it hard for me to get my work/reading/paper done on time” is not typically excused, but that is up to you!
9. The student is very nice, but just isn’t able to do the work that I expect of a college student, what should I do?
   1. The student should be performing at the same level as their average peers – unless the program is for students with Intellectual disabilities, or has some other standard for students with disabilities. In general the student needs to perform at the same level and adhere to the same standards of attendance, behavior, and course performance as all other students.
   2. You can always refer students to your institutions tutoring center for assistance
10. I like the student but I cannot imagine that they will ever be employable in their field – should I counsel them into another major?
    1. It is not up to you to decide what they can major in – you can ask how they plan to handle different situations, and suggest strategies and coping mechanisms for handling potential obstacles, but you cannot tell them they can’t be in a certain major or field because of their disability – that is discriminatory & illegal
    2. If they meet the standards for admission to their major, you cannot keep them out of that major, even if you feel they won’t be successful – they might surprise you with their success!