

FACULTY

Frequently Asked Questions

How does a student become eligible to receive accommodations?

A student must have a documented disability and inform the college that he or she is requesting accommodations based on a disability. The student must

1. Make an appointment with the Disability Support Services (DSS) office and an initial intake meeting will be scheduled.
2. Students must present documentation of a disability from a qualified professional.
3. Students must pick up accommodation forms from the DSS office, preferably during the first week of classes.
4. Students must discuss accommodations with professors and have each professor sign the accommodation form.
5. Students must sign the accommodation form and return it to the DSS office.

Won't providing accommodations on examinations give an unfair advantage to a student with a disability?

Accommodations allow students to be measured based upon their knowledge of course content not on the effects of their disability. *The same standard should be used for students, with and without disabilities, when evaluating and determining grades.* Accommodations should not jeopardize essential functions or technical standards of a class or program of study. If you feel that an accommodation listed on a student's accommodation form is jeopardizing these standards please contact the DSS Coordinator for guidance.

What do I do when a student discloses a disability?

Ask for his or her accommodation form. This form specifies the accommodations that faculty are legally mandated to provide. During an office hour or other convenient time, discuss the accommodation form with the student and sign the form to indicate that you have received it. If the student does not have the accommodation form, he or she should be referred to the DSS office. If questions or concerns remain after discussing the accommodations with the student, please contact the DSS office.

What if a student doesn't tell me about a disability until late in the semester?

Students have a responsibility to give faculty and the DSS office adequate time to arrange accommodations. Students are encouraged to identify early in the semester. Instructors can help by making an announcement in class and in the syllabus. This announcement should invite students to speak with them after class if they are seeking accommodations due to a disability. Once a student has identified him or herself and requests accommodations authorized by the DSS office, the college has a legal responsibility to make reasonable attempts to accommodate the need, even late in the semester. There is no responsibility to provide accommodations prior to identification. Accommodations are not retroactive. Students are not allowed to retake exams with accommodations in place if they did not provide notification of the disability and authorized accommodations. Faculty are encouraged to contact the DSS office for assistance in arranging last minute requests.

Can I review the student's documentation of the disability?

The DSS office is the office designated to receive and interpret documentation of the disability. The DSS Coordinator certifies eligibility for services and determines reasonable accommodations based upon necessary documentation. Disability information is confidential and students are not required to disclose this information to instructors.

What if I suspect that a student has a disability?

It is perfectly acceptable to arrange a meeting to discuss your concerns with the student's performance in your class. However, do not assume that the student's difficulties are a result of a disability. The Americans with Disabilities Act state that a public entity may not make unnecessary inquiries into the existence of a disability. If you do suspect a disability, document your concerns and contact the DSS office.

What if a student with a disability is failing?

Treat the student as you would any student who is not performing well in your class. Invite the student to your office hours to discuss reasons for the failing performance. Find out if students are using all resources available to them to try to improve upon their performance. If the student has presented you with an accommodation form, you may ask if they are using their accommodations. If the student is not using their accommodations, you may ask the student if they feel that by using their accommodations, their performance would improve. Encourage the student to see the DSS office for additional strategies to improve his or her grades such as time management skills, test taking and study strategies, textbook reading and note taking skills. Students can also utilize any available tutoring provided on campus.

What if a student with a disability is absent?

Talk with the student to discuss your concern that absences are affecting class performance. Remind him or her of your policy on class absences. Determine whether the missed work can be made up and if so, make arrangements with the student to do so. Refer the student to the DSS office if too much work has been missed. The DSS staff will explore options with the student, including a possible audit/withdraw.

What is a note taker?

A note taker is usually another student in class who volunteers to provide copies of lecture notes taken during class. The instructor's help is usually requested in helping the student with a disability find a conscientious volunteer who is a dependable student and capable note taker. The note taker can make copies of notes at any of the copiers on campus and will be given a copier code to do so. The note taker also has the option of using carbonless lined notebook paper provided through the DSS office. If a suitable volunteer is not found, the DSS office should be contacted as soon as possible. The DSS office will attempt to find a note taker and/or make alternative provisions. The student with a disability is expected to attend class as usual when a note taker is provided. Usually he or she is encouraged to take his or her own notes to the extent possible.

What should I do if a student who is deaf or hard of hearing shows up in my class without an interpreter?

In the unlikely event that a student shows up for the first day of class without an interpreter, the student should be referred to the DSS office. The DSS staff will schedule an interpreter to be present for the rest of the semester. If a previously scheduled interpreter does not show up for a class, contact the DSS office immediately. The DSS staff may be able to contact the interpreter to check on his or her whereabouts and whether or not they will be able to attend class.

Do I need to alter my teaching style with an interpreter present?

Interpreters are professionals who facilitate communication between hearing individuals and people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Some adaptations in presentation style may be helpful when using a sign language interpreter. The interpreter will let you know if you need to slow down your rate of speaking or if they need you to repeat any information. A desk copy of the textbook used in class is especially helpful for the interpreter when the class is using examples or doing exercises from the text. Please realize that if students are looking at the interpreter, they cannot be reading a book, writing, or taking notes. Therefore, a pause for the student to finish their task may be required before continuing the lecture.

What can I expect if there is an interpreter in my classroom?

Interpreters are bound by the code of ethics developed by the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), which specifies that interpreters are to serve as communication intermediaries who are not otherwise involved.

- When an interpreter is present, speak directly to the deaf or hard of hearing person rather than to the interpreter, and avoid using phrases such as “tell him” or “ask her.”
- Speak normally, noting that there may be lag time between the spoken message and the interpretation.
- When referring to objects or written information, allow time for the translation to take place. Replace terms such as “here” and “there” with more specific terms, such as “on the second line” and “in the left corner.”
- The deaf student and the interpreter will work out seating arrangements, with the interpreter usually located near the speaker.
- Inform the interpreter in advance if there is an audiovisual element in a presentation, so arrangements can be made for lighting and positioning.

What should I do if my class needs to evacuate the building due to an emergency?

Students should let you know at the beginning of the semester if they will need assistance during an emergency.

- Students who are blind or have low vision may need a “buddy” to assist them when exiting the building.
- No one should use an elevator, including students who use wheelchairs. They should wait for fire or police personnel to safely assist them to exit the building. To prevent injuries, it is preferable that instructors or other untrained personnel not attempt to evacuate a student who uses a wheelchair. Please wait for trained emergency personnel.

What if a student has a seizure in my class?

The DSS staff encourages students with seizure disorders to discuss with their instructors at the start of the semester what to do if a seizure occurs during class time. Some students may request that emergency personnel be called; others may request action as listed below.

A seizure can result in a relatively slight reaction, such as a short lapse in attention, or a more severe reaction which involves convulsions. Seizure disorders are generally controlled by medication, so the possibility of a seizure in the classroom is rare. If one does occur, the campus police and/or DSS staff may be called if the student has requested this response. The actions listed below are also suggested:

- Keep calm. Ease the student to the floor and open the collar of the shirt. You cannot stop a seizure. Let it run its course and do not try to revive the student.
- Remove hard, sharp, or hot objects that may injure the student, but do not interfere with his or her movements.
- Do not force anything between the student's teeth.
- Turn the student's head to one side for release of saliva. Place something soft under the head.
- Make sure that breathing is unobstructed, but do not be concerned if breathing is irregular.
- When the student regains consciousness, let him or her rest as long as desired.
- To help orient the student to time and space, suggest where he or she is and what happened.
- If the seizure lasts beyond a few minutes, or if the student seems to pass from one seizure to another without regaining consciousness, contact the campus police. This rarely happens, but when it does, it should be treated immediately.