

Letter from the Provost Regarding Disabilities

August 25, 2015

TO: Faculty Colleagues

FROM: Ian D.C. Newbould, Ph.D., Interim Provost

RE: Background Information on Students with Disabilities

Under the provision of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, colleges and universities receiving federal funds may not discriminate in the recruitment, admission, educational process or treatment of students. Students who have self-identified, provided documentation of a disability, and requested reasonable accommodations are entitled to receive approved modifications of programs, appropriate academic adjustments, or auxiliary aids that enable them to participate in and benefit from all educational programs and activities. **Attachment “A” in the syllabus memo has been updated—the College Policy on Students with Disabilities—and should be included on each of your course syllabi.**

Accommodation Notices

Verification forms that outline the required academic accommodations have been prepared based on the individual student’s documentation of disability. The students have been instructed to meet with each of their faculty within the first two weeks of the semester, to discuss their academic needs. The students will ask the faculty to read and sign the Verification form, which the student will return to the Disability Services office and Test Center (K-300) or designated graduate office. The process is intended to encourage students to recognize the importance of self-advocacy and at the same time, to ensure the faculty that the accommodations are supported by the appropriate documentation. The Test Accommodation Request form is attached for your reference.

**The provision of academic accommodations in post-graduate programs is coordinated by the individual School.*

Classroom Assignments and Equipment

In response to the needs of students with mobility or hearing impairments an effort is made to assign their courses to accessible classrooms. Specified classrooms are equipped with free standing, height adjustable tables and/or cushioned straight-back chairs. The furniture labeled, “for use only by individuals with special needs” is most often placed in the front of the classroom, relatively close to the door. The faculty is asked to assist the effort to keep the furniture in place and to prohibit use by anyone except the designated students.

Web Page/Blackboard Accessibility

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) require access to all educational material. Faculty should keep in mind that all classroom software (Blackboard) or web pages

used in their course, need to be accessible to students with disabilities. For assistance in checking accessibility, contact Katie Sabourin, educational technologist, Library 109, (585) 385-7245.

Alternate Format Materials

If requested, please provide written information (syllabi, handouts, textbook information, videos, etc.) in advance. If possible, please select textbooks that are also available in electronic format and videos with captions. It can take up to four weeks for Disability Services to obtain or convert materials into audio format. Longer time is needed if a book/document needs to be transcribed into Braille or captioned.

Assistive Listening Devices in the Classroom

Many students who use hearing aids effectively in quiet environments have a difficult time following information presented in large college classrooms. Some students who have an auditory processing disorder may also struggle to tune out extraneous noises. In the classroom, the instructor's voice is competing with background noise, room echo and distance. Most Assistive Listening Device systems (ALDs) use a microphone/transmitter positioned close to the instructor's mouth to send the instructor's voice through the air or by cable to the receiver worn by the student. *If a student's hearing impairment requires the use of an ALD, the student will bring the necessary equipment to class. The faculty will be asked to wear a lapel microphone approximately three to five inches from the mouth, to speak slowly and clearly and to make sure that their voice intensity is not too loud.* Since the ALD user may not have access to questions raised by others in the room, remind students to speak one at a time. Be sure to face the student when speaking and to repeat questions and comments from other students.

Adaptive Computer Equipment

The adaptive computer stations located in the Test Center (K-300) and in the Kearney Open Lab (accessible 24/7 by card swipe) are primarily for use by students with disabilities. Both computer stations feature Kurzweil 3000, a reading software program. The Test Center station also includes Dragon Naturally Speaking, a word processor with voice activation capabilities. Kurzweil 3000, scans any printed document, displays an exact image and reads the text aloud, while highlighting the spoken word and sentence. In addition, the Kurzweil program can magnify text larger than a conventional copy machine. Students can use Dragon Naturally Speaking as a hands-free way to compose papers, reports, etc. by speaking into the computer with the use of a headset and microphone. Individual training to use the Naturally Speaking program will be provided as needed. Both programs are potentially useful for students who need readers for tests and for those who are better able to produce essays using a computer rather than handwriting.

Read Out Loud software is installed on all of the College's academic computers. Read Out Loud provides accessibility support with text-to-speech and includes study tools that assist with reading comprehension.

A Merlin LCD desktop electronic magnifier is also located in the Test Center. Similar in function to a CCTV, this high quality flexible LDC magnifier allows individuals with low vision to read and write independently.

Questions and concerns regarding students with disabilities should be directed to:

Joy Breeden, Coordinator of Disability Services
Disability Services Office and Test Center, Kearney 300

Phone: (585) 385-5252

Email: jbreeden@sjfc.edu

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Attachment A

College Policy Concerning Students with Disabilities

This statement regarding Fisher's ADA policy should be included on all syllabi:

In compliance with St. John Fisher College policy and applicable laws, appropriate academic accommodations are available to students with disabilities. All requests for accommodations must be supported by appropriate documentation/diagnosis and determined reasonable by St. John Fisher College. Students with documented disabilities (physical, learning, psychological) who may need academic accommodations are advised to refer to the Disability Services website.

Questions should be directed to the Coordinator of Disability Services in the Disability Services Office and Test Center, Kearney 300. Late notification will delay requested accommodations.