Teaching Faculty Tool Kit
Student Disability Services
Preface

The Office for Student Disability Services provides services, auxiliary aids, and accommodations to students at Central Connecticut State University with documented disabilities. At the same time, the Office for Student Disability Services assists teaching faculty in their responsibilities to ensure that all students have access to classroom instruction. The Teaching Faculty Tool Kit is a guide to assist you in this endeavor.

If you have any questions that are not answered by the information contained in the Teaching Faculty Tool Kit, please contact the Office for Student Disability Services and we will be happy to assist you.

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The Law

There are two legal mandates enforced by the Office for Civil Rights that protect students with disabilities from discrimination and ensure that they have equal access to all aspects of university life: The Americans with Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. (Refer to page 16 for detailed information.)

What is a Disability?

As defined by the Americans with Disability Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a disability is a mental, physical, or emotional impairment, which substantially limits one or more major life activity. Substantially Limits: Unable to perform or significantly restricted as compared to persons without such disability. Major Life Activities: Include, but are not limited to: caring for oneself, speaking, writing, walking, seeing, hearing, breathing and learning.
A Person with a Disability: One who meets one or more of the following:

- Has a physical or mental impairment
- Has a record of such impairment and/or is regarded as having such impairment

Disability Categories include, but are not limited to the following:

- Learning disability
- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
- Visual limitation
- Deaf and hard of hearing
- Communication disability
- Mobility limitation
- Psychological/Psychiatric disabilities
- Autism
- Physical/Medical disabilities
- Traumatic brain injuries
Reasonable Accommodations

A reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to a course, program, facility, or activity that enables a qualified individual with a disability to have an equal opportunity. Those accommodations which do not result in a significant alteration of the position, program or activity or incur undue financial and administrative burdens.

Based on documented need, reasonable accommodations must be made in the instructional process to ensure accessibility to the learning environment. The purpose of reasonable accommodations is to "level the playing field," not to provide an unfair advantage.

Reasonable accommodations should not alter a course's essential components or in any way "water down" the curriculum or the standard of the institution.

Students with disabilities who are attending CCSU must provide documentation of their disability to receive reasonable accommodations based on that disability. It is the student's responsibility to initiate contact with Student Disability Services, provide appropriate documentation of the disability and its impact on the academic tasks for which accommodations are being requested. The cost of obtaining professional documentation is the student's responsibility. This process follows the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. A diagnosis of a disorder/condition/syndrome in and of itself does not automatically qualify an individual for accommodations under the ADA. Students are responsible to follow the process in order to receive accommodations.

Each student's academic accommodations will be determined on an individual basis and will be based on appropriate documentation and in accordance with CCSU Policies and Procedures. All new, transfer or transient students must provide appropriate documentation in order to receive disability-based accommodations.

Who is a qualified individual with a disability?

A qualified individual with a disability meets the academic standards required for admission or participation in the education programs at CCSU. This includes students with disabilities participating in clinical or field placements that are offered as part of a program's field of study. A qualified individual with a disability meets the essential requirements for receiving services or the participation in programs or activities offered at CCSU regardless of:

- Age
- Gender
- Race
- National Origin
- Religion
- Political Beliefs
- Marital Status
- Sexual Orientation
- Disability

A qualified individual with a disability does not mean a person with a disability who needs no accommodation to be able to fully participate in the education program at the college. A person can be a qualified individual with a disability if a reasonable accommodation will enable him/her to meet the academic standards required for admission or participation in the education program at the college.
Examples of reasonable accommodations for various disabilities:

- Aids or appliances
- Assistive devices
- Braille
- Computers
- Braille transcription
- Electronic reader
- FM systems
- FM phonak hearing systems
- Computerized real-time transcription
- American sign language
- Mid-term testing
- Physical modifications
- Textbooks on CD
- Note-takers
- Interpretation
- Liaison with community agencies
Encouraging Disability Disclosure

Accommodations for students with disabilities are best done when there is lead time for planning. However, because of the stigma associated with mental illness and disability, students find it difficult to bring up the subject of accommodations. As a course professor, you can facilitate early planning by encouraging students with psychiatric or hidden disabilities to disclose their condition to you and begin the discussion of what accommodations might be needed. A good way of encouraging such discussion includes a statement in your syllabus that announces your willingness to talk about accommodations with students who may need them. An example of a syllabus statement might read like this:

Please contact me privately to discuss your specific needs if you believe you need course accommodations based on the impact of a disability, medical condition, or if you have emergency medical information to share. I will need a copy of the accommodation letter from Student Disability Services in order to arrange your class accommodations. Contact Student Disability Services in room 241, Copernicus Hall if you are not already registered with them. Student Disability Services maintains the confidential documentation of your disability and assists you in coordinating reasonable accommodations with your faculty.

This announcement helps to set a tone of acceptance of differences and of a willingness to make your course accessible to everyone. Reinforcing this information verbally during class time will provide additional emphasis and reassurance to students.

Academic Expectations

Departments and professors should not alter the core essential functions of the major, or course requirements. A student with a documented disability is held to the same academic expectations as other students. However, the student is entitled to reasonable academic accommodations that ensure equal access to the course material, tests, lectures, and classroom environment, etc. Reasonable and appropriate alternative methods of demonstrating mastery of course content may be offered. Appropriate exam accommodations are not to give the student with a disability an unfair advantage over other students, but to allow that student an equal opportunity to demonstrate what was learned.
1. Who is responsible for initiating and maintaining contact with Student Disability Services in order to arrange for course accommodations?

Students are responsible for initiating and maintaining contact with the Office for Student Disability Services. Each semester, at the student’s request, Student Disability Services provides a letter which identifies the appropriate accommodations needed by the student. This letter is given to the professor by the student. In addition, it is important for students to have contact with their professors. Continuing dialogue between student and professor will help minimize problems and maximize understanding of the impact of the disability on the student’s academic performance.

2. Who is responsible for determining appropriate accommodations?

Eligibility for accommodations must be supported by documentation from a licensed professional and be determined reasonable by Student Disability Services. If you have questions about a recommended accommodation, contact the Office for Student Disability Services. Current relevant documentation is the key to identifying appropriate accommodations and auxiliary aids at the college level.

3. Do I have any recourse if I disagree about requested accommodations? (Text from the University of Minnesota’s website)

Discuss your concerns regarding the recommended accommodation with the Coordinator for Student Disability Services. You may have an equally viable alternative that meets the student’s needs and does not alter the essential components of your course.

If you identify essential outcomes you can expect all students in your course to demonstrate, you can fairly evaluate all students and not have to be concerned about “watering down” the course.

Essential components are the outcomes (including skills, knowledge and attitudes) all students must demonstrate with or without accommodations to be evaluated in a nondiscriminatory manner. In other words, some students might use accommodations and some might not, but all students must achieve the same outcomes.

Process is important, but not necessarily essential. Focusing on your course outcomes will help you to define your course’s essential components.
The difference between essential and nonessential course components is similar to the difference between “essential” and “preferred” skills commonly listed in job descriptions. An employer may want to see both sets of skills but only the essential skills are an absolute requirement of employment. Similarly, in your courses, you can articulate essential outcomes that all students must demonstrate in order to successfully complete the course, as well as preferred outcomes you hope students will be able to demonstrate.

Finally, consider allowing some flexibility in getting to the outcomes. For example, a student with a panic disorder may be unable to give a class presentation but may give the presentation privately to the professor. The accommodation in this example is the private nature of the presentation; the essential component, the presentation, remains.

4. How do I know if a student's request is appropriate?
If the student is registered with Student Disability Services, he/she will be given an Accommodation Letter specifically addressed to the teaching faculty from Student Disability Services. (Refer to page 15)

5. What kind of verification should I ask for if a student requests extended time to take an exam?
The student should give you an Accommodation Letter from Student Disability Services, specifying the appropriate accommodations.

6. What is the teaching faculty's role and responsibility in accommodating students with disabilities?
In complying with federal and state laws, universities must make educational programs and services accessible to students. This means more than the removal of architectural barriers and the provision of auxiliary services. It means that reasonable accommodations must be made in the instructional process and the work environment to ensure full and equal opportunity. This principle applies to all teaching strategies and modes, as well as institutional and departmental policies.
What are auxiliary aids?

Some of the various types of auxiliary aids and services may include:

- Books on CDs
- Note takers
- Interpreters
- Readers
- Scribes
- Electronic readers (Kurzweil Technology)
- Closed captioning
- FM Phonak Hearing System
- Visually-impaired magnification device (Zoomtext Technology)

How do I encourage students to discuss their needs with me?

The teaching faculty should make an announcement at the beginning of the semester inviting students with disabilities who may need course accommodations to meet during office hours.

Why do students with disabilities make test accommodation requests in the middle of the semester?

There is no particular time for a student to register with Student Disability Services. Some students register when they are having academic problems and will not be successful without accommodations. Students must identify in advance of the exam in order to allow the teaching faculty and Student Disability Services time to make the appropriate arrangements. It is too late for students to reveal their disability after completing an exam, assignment, or class, and then requests deletion of unsatisfactory grades.

What should I do if a student with a disability exhibits inappropriate and threatening behavior, i.e. disruption or obstruction of teaching?

Disruptive behavior in the classroom is always inappropriate and should be treated and disciplined as such. The student will be subject to the sanctions described in the Student Code of Conduct and Statement of Judicial Procedures located in the Survival Guide under the Rights and Responsibilities tab, or contact the Director of Student Conduct at (860) 832-1667.
11. Should I provide accommodations to a student who is not registered with Student Disability Services?

No. Not all students with disabilities are registered with the Office for Student Disability Services. This Office is designated to review documentation of a disability and determine eligibility for specific accommodations for students. Faculty should not provide accommodations without proper confirmation from Student Disability Services as this could compromise the integrity of the process. Ask the student to provide a letter from Student Disability Services if accommodations are requested. Also, if a request for an accommodation seems questionable, consult with the Office for Student Disability Services.

12. What should I do if I think a student has a disability?

Encourage the student to contact the Office for Student Disability Services at (860) 832-1900 or go to The Learning Center in Copernicus Hall Room 241 for information.

13. Is the information that a student shares with a teaching faculty confidential?

According to state and federal law, the information that a student shares about his or her disability is confidential. Avoid discussing a student’s disability in front of the class or in the presence of other students. Written material about a specific student and their disability needs to be regarded as “confidential” material.

In some cases, the student's disability is obvious. Other students have hidden disabilities, which they may or may not disclose. While some students are comfortable with their differences and are able to discuss their needs, others may not. Sensitivity to their dilemma is appreciated. They must self-disclose, and provide documentation that they have a disability before receiving accommodation letters from Student Disability Services.

Whether or not students with disabilities prefer to discuss the nature of their particular disability, their challenges, or personal history with their professors is entirely up to them. They are NOT required to disclose specifics about their disability when they self-disclose a need for accommodations, having already done this with the Coordinator for Student Disability Services.
14. Is the teaching faculty required to have an interpreter or real-time captioner in the classroom?

Yes. You are required by law to have what is essential for the students to have equal access to an education, and this includes a sign language interpreter or real-time captioner. This is arranged by the staff in the Student Disability Services Office.

15. What should I do if an eligible student with a disability needs note-taking assistance?

Some students with disabilities have difficulty taking notes; however, it is important that they receive assistance in getting access to class notes. Several options are provided below.

- Identify someone in class whom you believe is a good note taker (carbonless paper is available for use in the Office for Student Disability Services).
- Make an announcement in class requesting a volunteer note taker. The identity of the student needing notes must be kept anonymous.
- If you have difficulty identifying a volunteer on the first try, Student Disability Services is willing to pay a student to share their notes.
- When a student requests payment for their Services, please direct them to the Office for Student Disability Services to complete the appropriate paperwork.
- Faculty can also develop web-guided notes. This service may also be beneficial to mainstream students.

16. Am I required to provide exam accommodations to disabled students who request them?

Yes. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, as well as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protect students with disabilities. These laws require that qualified students with disabilities receive equal access to education, including exam accommodations.
14. What is the procedure for setting up extended time for exams, or a distraction reduced location through Student Disability Services?

If you do not have an appropriate location to accommodate an extended time or distraction reduced environment, Student Disability Services can make arrangements. The teaching faculty should deliver the exam to The Learning Center, Copernicus Hall, room 241, and complete a Test/Quiz form with instructions for issuing the exam. The exam can also be emailed to the Coordinator, Byers@ccsu.edu, or mailed to The Learning Center with instructions for issuing the exam. The student is responsible for contacting The Learning Center within three days prior to the exam to ensure that a testing location is available.

18. Do I have to rewrite my exam to accommodate a student with a disability who has difficulty with the format of the exam?

Sometimes it is necessary to rewrite an exam. Accommodations are usually provided by adjusting the way that the student takes your exam. To accommodate students, you may wish to do one of the following:

- Be available during the exam and allow the student to clarify questions.
- Encourage students to ask to restate the question in different words.

19. Is it fair to give extra time to students with disabilities when other students have to work under time constraints?

Yes, it is fair, as long as the accommodation for the student with disabilities does not fundamentally alter the nature of the curriculum. The accommodation should be viewed as leveling the playing field for the student with disabilities and not as a means to disadvantage non-disabled students.
If a student with a disability really understands the material thoroughly, why do they need extra time to write answers?

Students with visual impairments, mobility, or specific learning disabilities typically need additional time to take exams because they may need adaptive technology, readers, scribes, or because their disability affects the writing process. They are protected under the law, which specifically mandates auxiliary aids and services, by their very nature, require more time.

Must I write a different exam for a student with a disability who will take the exam at a different time from the rest of the class?

The choice is left to the professor. If the exam is given close to the time the rest of the class is taking the exam, there may be no need to give a different exam. However, if an alternative exam is used, care is needed to ensure that the alternative exam is equivalent in level of difficulty and material covered to the one administered to the rest of the class.

Am I required to lower the standards of a required assignment because the student has a disability?

No. Standards should be the same for all students; however, some students with disabilities may exhibit their knowledge, production, and other course expectations differently than their peers. For example, a student with a learning disability in writing may produce an essay exam by using a computer or scribe rather than writing out an answer without the use of accommodations. The quality of work should be the same.

When we provide all these accommodations are we preparing students with disabilities for the “real world” where they have to meet deadlines and write reports in a hurry?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that employers make the workplace accessible, and that accommodations be provided. All private and public business must comply with the ADA by providing reasonable accommodations.

Should I feel obligated to provide accommodations if a student with a known disability has not requested them?

Students have the right to choose or not to use accommodations. If a student asks retroactively to fix a problem because he/she failed to use accommodations, you are not under any obligation to do so.
A student with a disability has missed a number of classes and has not handed in several assignments. Although he has taken a midterm and used accommodations, he received a D for the midterm. At this point, he is not passing the class. Do I have a right to fail a student with a disability? (Text from the University of Minnesota's website)

The student with a disability has the same right to fail as anyone else. Their work should be equivalent to their peers. It may be a good idea to discuss your observations with the student just as you would with any other student in your class who is experiencing difficulty.

The graduate school is making a decision about accepting a student with a disability into their professional degree program. The graduate school is concerned about the cost of providing accommodations, the extra time this student will require, etc. Are we required to accept this person? (Text from the University of Minnesota's website)

Students with disabilities need to meet the same requirements as all other students when considering acceptance in a program. If a student with a disability meets the same requirements as other applicants and is otherwise qualified, then any disability-related concerns cannot be taken into consideration.

What accommodations should I provide to a student with a temporary disability? An example of a temporary disability would be a broken limb, shoulder, etc. Although temporary disabilities are not covered under the ADA/504, accommodations are provided on an as needed basis. Services such as scribes, taped lectures, or note takers can be provided. Students with a temporary disability can park in any lot on campus once they have provided Campus Police with medical documentation and receive a hang tag, but not in a space reserved for the handicapped, unless the Department of Motor Vehicles medically recognizes the disability.
17. What should I do if a student with disabilities has absences?

Students with varying disabilities may occasionally miss class due to poor health. Web guided notes is an excellent service for students with disabilities to access if they have sporadic health issues, but also for all students at CCSU. Teaching faculty may be asked by the student to help recruit a peer note taker to take notes during absences. It is strongly encouraged that teaching faculty communicate with the student regarding how you would like to be informed when the student needs to be absent. If student success is determined by consistent attendance and participation, e.g., practical class, student teaching, etc. students should be counseled to take the class during times of more stable health. The integrity of the class should not be challenged.

19. What should I do if a student has a seizure in my class?

Call 911 immediately.

30. What is the evacuation policy for the physically impaired?

When the fire alarm sounds and there is no sign of obvious danger (smoke or fire) in the area, the student is to be left in a room with the door closed. A room with a window and a phone would be ideal, but not required. A staff member should inform the first arriving police/fire personnel of the location where the student was stationed.

If there is obvious danger, the student should be moved horizontally as far away as possible from the danger and placed in a room, the door closed and a staff member notifying the first police/fire personnel on the scene as to the room location of the student. At no time should a student be moved or carried vertically in a building. The fire department will evacuate the student as they see fit after being notified.

31. Which office is responsible for retaining American Sign Language interpreters for students, faculty, and visitors on campus?

The Office for Student Disability Services is responsible for retaining American Sign Language interpreters for students, faculty and visitors on campus.
Please be aware that the student above has a documented disability and needs the following accommodations. The purpose of accommodations is to "level the playing field", not to provide an unfair advantage. The University is required, under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities.

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Legal Mandates

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 mandates “nondiscrimination on the basis of disability in federally assisted programs.” It requires reasonable accommodations for disabled persons in any programs receiving U.S. Government funds.

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, Congress significantly strengthened section 508 in the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. Section 508 requires access to electronic and information technology provided by federal and state agencies. It is known as the technology law. Section 508 requires that persons with disabilities may use electronic equipment. The law applies to equipment purchased or leased by agencies or programs receiving federal funds. This means that students or staff with disabilities must have computers and technology available to them, which are made accessible, by assistive technology.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Title II prohibits discrimination by state and local government agencies. This Title covers all public agencies regardless of whether they receive federal assistance. This Title guarantees access to all programs, services, and activities provided by a public agency, including public education, employment, recreation, health care, social services, courts, voting and town meetings. State and local government funded colleges and universities and other post secondary programs must not discriminate under Title II.

The Connecticut Department of Higher Education Strategic Plan for the Recruitment and Retention of people with Disabilities was developed as a result of legislation adopted by the General Assembly in 1988 (Special Act 88-2). It requires nondiscrimination in areas related to employment, access to facilities, student programs, activities and services aimed toward the goals of full participation and integration of students and staff with disabilities in Connecticut higher education.

The Office for Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Education enforces Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Individuals with disabilities are responsible for enforcing the requirements of Section 508. Individuals with disabilities may file a complaint with an agency or bring a civil action in Federal Court for an agency’s noncompliance with the requirements of Section 508.