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Introduction

This publication is designed to help faculty, staff and students understand policies and problem-solving procedures related to accommodations for students with disabilities in the College.

The Americans with Disabilities Act and state and local policies mandate equal access to our institutions of higher education. The numbers of students with disabilities entering colleges and universities continue to rise. UR alumni with disabilities are now making their way through graduate and professional programs and into the world of work; our current students can be found across all majors and programs, and we anticipate more applications from incoming students in years to come.

Specific Types of Disabilities

Disabilities are described in a number of ways, depending on the perspective and the purpose of the analysis. Provided below are a few examples:

• **Asperger Syndrome** is often considered an autism spectrum disorder. It is characterized by difficulty in social interaction and restricted, stereotyped patterns of behavior and interests. Students with Asperger syndrome may have difficulty with change in routine, an inability to recognize subtle difference in speech tone, and difficulty picking up on social cues.

• **Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)** is considered to be a neurobehavioral developmental disorder. It is characterized by a persistent pattern of impulsiveness and inattention with or without the component of hyperactivity. Students with ADHD may have difficulty focusing, sitting through class and exams, difficulty following instructions and staying organized, and may be forgetful of daily activities.

• **Auditory Processing Disorder** is a learning disability that makes it hard to differentiate between similar spoken words, to store what has been heard in long-term memory, to follow oral directions, and to comprehend abstract reasoning in lectures.

• **Autism** is a neurological development disorder that is characterized by impaired social interaction and communication, and restricted and repetitive behaviors. Individuals with autism may have impaired social interactions and relationships, stereotyped and repetitive use of language, difficulty understanding their listener’s perspective, and limited interest in activities.
• **Cerebral Palsy** describes a group of permanent disorders that affect body movement and muscle coordination. Cerebral palsy is often accompanied by disturbances of sensation, perception, cognition, and communication.

• **Crohn’s Disease** is an ongoing disorder that causes inflammation of the digestive tract. This swelling can cause pain in the affected area and can make the intestines empty frequently.

• **Deafness** may result in varying degrees of hearing loss. Some students may only hear certain frequencies of sounds within a volume range; others may be profoundly deaf. Some students will use an American Sign Language interpreter in class to facilitate discussion.

• **Developmental Coordination Disorder** is a disability that may affect a student’s performance in daily activities that require motor coordination. This may manifest itself in tasks that involve both small and large muscles including dropping things, "clumsiness," difficulty forming letters, and poor handwriting.

• **Dyscalculia** is a learning disability that refers to difficulties in using numbers and math functions. Students may have problems with recognizing and remembering symbols, understanding spatial relationships, aligning numbers, and performing operations.

• **Dysgraphia** is a learning disability associated with the psychomotor skills needed for writing. Students with dysgraphia may have writing that is illegible.

• **Dyslexia** is a language-based learning disability that refers to reading deficits that can include problems in decoding words, determining the meaning of a sentence, and/or remembering what has been read. It should be noted here that dyslexia does not refer to reading problems that are the result of inadequate or inappropriate schooling, lack of intelligence, or insufficient time on task.

• **Emotional Disorders** can include anxiety disorder, depression, bipolar disorder, post traumatic stress disorder, etc. Medication may affect student performance, or the condition itself may interfere with academic performance.

• **Multiple Sclerosis** affects the ability of the nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord to communicate with one another. Symptoms may include changes in sensation, muscle weakness, difficulty in moving, or difficulty with coordination and balance.
• **Recurring and Remitting Disorders** are conditions that an individual may experience during episodes when a disabling disorder becomes present in their lives for a period of time. Examples of such conditions are sickle cell anemia, fibromyalgia, irritable bowel syndrome, etc.

• **Seizure Disorder (Epilepsy)** is a neurological disorder in which nerve cells in the brain signal abnormally. Seizures put an individual at risk for injuries, accidents, and loss of consciousness. Epilepsy medication can also have side effects that impair a student’s academic functioning. These side effects may include blurred vision, headache, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, and decreased energy level, mood, drive, and mental and motor speed on exams.

• **Temporary Disabilities** are sometimes the result of an accident, surgery or medical condition.

• **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)** occurs when a sudden trauma causes damage to the brain. Symptoms of a TBI can be mild, moderate or severe, depending on the extent of damage.

• **Visual Disabilities** are often divided into two categories: blindness and low vision. Individuals with visual disabilities may not be able to perform certain tasks in the classroom without accommodations.

• **Visual Learning Disabilities** can cause problems in discriminating between similar letters, in copying shapes and figures, using computerized answer sheets, making sense of graphs and charts, lining up numbers in math problems, and taking notes from the board, the overhead, PowerPoint presentations, and the like.

It is worth noting that the experience of dealing with any disability may have serious consequences for self-esteem and confidence. In turn, students’ ability to initiate and maintain positive relationships with faculty members, staff, and other students may be affected. As with all students at this university, individuals displaying these concerns are unique and have individual needs. Thus, a one-size-fits-all approach for these situations is not recommended. The staff in The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning is ready to assist instructors, students, and staff with these matters.
Documentation Requirements

Upon disclosing the existence of a disability, students may be asked to forward supporting documentation to the local Disability Support Coordinator. Supporting documentation must be submitted on letterhead that is dated, typed, and signed and be provided by a qualified physician, psychologist, audiologist, speech pathologist, rehabilitation counselor, physical therapist, occupational therapist, or other health care provider. Supporting documentation should not be provided by a family member. The diagnostic report should, where appropriate, include:

- History of onset of the diagnosis
- The methodologies used to determine the diagnosis
- The diagnostic statement
- A description of the current functional limitations of the disabling condition as they relate to the major life activity impacted by the diagnosis
- The suggested accommodations

The supporting documentation should include specific recommendations for reasonable accommodations with a detailed explanation or rationale as to why each accommodation is recommended with reference to the specific functional limitations of the individual in an educational setting. The University often will provide the specific accommodations requested, but may not be legally required to do so if there is another effective accommodation available.

If the supporting documentation is not adequate or does not reflect the individual’s current level of function, the University may request that a student provide additional documentation to further support specific test results or clinical observations. The cost of obtaining professional documentation is borne by the student. If the initial supporting documentation provided by the student is not sufficient to establish the need for reasonable accommodations, the University has the discretion of requesting supplemental documentation. The cost of obtaining the supplemental documentation is also borne by the student.

In the event of the need for a second evaluation, by someone other than the student’s care provider, the University will bear the cost if it is not covered by a third party payer. In circumstances in which the cost of providing documentation of a disability increases the student's cost of obtaining an education, the University will consider such expenses in the student's financial aid package.
How is Documentation Reviewed?

After documentation is submitted to The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, the paperwork will be reviewed within two weeks. The Disability Support Coordinators will consider a wide variety of factors, including the nature of the disability and its effect on the student, the documentation provided, evidence of past accommodations that the student has received, and other relevant facts.

If the student’s documentation meets University of Rochester guidelines, the student will receive a confirmation letter in the mail or by email.

If the student’s documentation does not meet the University of Rochester guidelines, the student will be sent a letter indicating what information is needed in order to grant the accommodation request(s).

If the student receives a letter requesting additional information, The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning will be happy to address any questions or concerns.

Requests for Further Review

If a student is dissatisfied with a decision concerning accommodations, both informal and formal processes are available to request further review. The initial review consists of an informal review of all relevant materials by the local Disability Support Coordinator, in consultation with appropriate committees. The purpose of this local review is to mediate and resolve differences.

If a student is dissatisfied with the decision made at the informal level, the student may formally request that the decision be reviewed by the dean of the school or by his or her designee. The dean may request a report and recommendations from the University Disability Resource Coordinator and, when appropriate, the Eligibility Assessment Team. A final appeal may be made to the provost, who may accept or reject the appeal or, at his or her discretion, assign it to a designee.
Letter to Faculty Form

Students meet with their Disability Support Coordinator to review their personal Accommodation Letters. This letter lists the student’s in-class accommodations (i.e., extended time, alternate text location, notetaker, FM system, etc.). If students wish to inform any or all of their instructors about these accommodations, they must fill out a Letter to Faculty Form and deliver it to the CETL office in 107 Lattimore Hall.

As courses and instructors change each term, the Letter to Faculty form must be completed and delivered to CCAS each semester in which a student wishes to inform his or her instructors.

Typical Accommodation Requests

With appropriate documentation, students may choose to request course modifications. The following are some suggestions for adjustments in course presentation and evaluation. Few students will need all of these accommodations, but some may require new strategies to be implemented for specific course requirements.

Please remember that the goal is not to eliminate requirements or to water down courses. Instead, it is to develop approaches that provide equal access to the content of the course and that permit students to demonstrate their competence in ways that provide detours around their disabilities.

Alternative testing procedures

Often, students with specific disabilities can demonstrate knowledge and competence via alternative methods. For students with reading difficulties, slower processing speed, and/or motor skills problems, reasonably extending deadlines or adding time to testing sessions can significantly improve performance. Reasonable accommodations are agreed upon in collaboration between the student, instructor, and with the Disability Support Coordinator.

AlphaSmart word processors and desktop computers can be a great aid for students who have poor handwriting, trouble organizing their thoughts, spelling challenges, a shorter attention span, and difficulty with sentence structure.

Those who have reading deficits may be able to demonstrate their abilities much better if the exam items are taped or read to them.

It often helps to do a practice run with these alternative procedures before giving the test itself. This gives the instructor and the student the opportunity to deal with any complications at a less stressful time.
Calculators

Some students are able to handle quite sophisticated math concepts without being able to perform basic operations automatically. For these students, the use of a calculator can be of considerable assistance.

CCTV equipment

The Smart View equipment, intended for those with low vision, combines a video camera and a monitor. Students place a book or article on a viewing stage and then magnify the video screen version of the text and/or adjust the background to make the words legible. Students have access to a CCTV in the reference section of Rush Rhees Library.

FM system

A Frequency Modulation (FM) system may be used by students who are hard of hearing. FM systems transmit the instructor’s voice directly to the student at a constant level, ensuring that the instructor’s voice is heard above the level of background noise, regardless of the instructor’s distance from the student.

FM systems consist of a small microphone, a transmitter, a receiver, and some method of routing sounds from the receiver to the student's ear.

Interpreters

A student who is deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired may work with interpreters. Instructors may wish to consult with the student and with The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning staff about effective teaching practices when an interpreter is in the classroom.

Pulse Smartpen

The Pulse Smartpen (Livescribe) is relatively new technology that links audio (class lectures) to what students write (their notes). Students walk out of each class session with a complete audio recording, and have the option to play back their lectures at differing speeds, download their notes online, jump ahead in their notes, bookmark special pages, and more.

Notetakers

Some college students with learning needs perform better with the assistance of a scribe who takes notes during lecture. These students are still expected to attend class and take notes themselves; the notetakers’ notes are used to fill in gaps, to reinforce
learning, and to serve as models of good note taking. A student may also request a copy of the instructors’ lecture notes.

**Recorded lectures**

For students with auditory processing deficits, graphomotor difficulties, or attention problems, recorded lectures can be of great assistance. A signed agreement that the student will not share the recordings with others, and/or that the recordings will be destroyed at the end of the semester can be utilized by those faculty members who are concerned about copyrighted material within the lecture.

**Text to speech technology**

This accommodation has proved invaluable for many students with dyslexia, visual impairments, and ADD. Equipment that scans text and converts it to speech is currently available in the Multimedia Center at Rush Rhees Library. Most students using recorded books follow along in the text as they listen to the computer.

**Confidentiality**

Supporting documentation regarding the existence and the nature of a student's disability is generally considered private.

Accordingly, without written consent from the student and except as stipulated below, information contained in the disability file is kept confidential to the maximum extent possible. Disability-related information will also be kept separate from the student's academic record.

Access to a student's disability file is limited to the local Disability Support Coordinator, the UDRC, and other University officials who require access to the information to perform their professional responsibilities, or who need access to protect the health or safety of the student or others.
Campus Resources

University Disabilities Resource Coordinator (UDRC)
The UDRC chairs the University Disability Resources Advisory Committee and coordinates the activities of the Eligibility Team. The team is convened by the UDRC on an as-needed basis to review documentation to determine eligibility for accommodations, to provide advice about accommodations, and to assist Disability Support Coordinators and members of their schools in understanding how to accommodate a student’s disability.

Contact person: Kathy Sweetland, UDRC
kathy.sweetland@rochester.edu
Wallis Hall 36
585-275-9125 voice
585-765-0165 fax
www.rochester.edu/diversity/disabilities.html

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning
The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning reviews the documentation of college students who arrive on campus with previous assessments. The director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning serves as the Local Disability Resource Coordinator for the College. Disability Support Coordinators are available to help students plan any needed accommodations and to offer learning support throughout their years at the University. For students without prior assessments, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning can also provide preliminary screening, as well as referrals off campus for in-depth testing. The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning also assists with academic accommodations (e.g., hiring notetakers and scribes, providing assistance with alternative examinations) and other services as needed.

Contact Persons: Vicki Roth, Assistant Dean and Director
Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning
vicki.roth@rochester.edu

Pamela Spallacci, Disability Support Coordinator
pamela.spallacci@rochester.edu

Elizabeth Carpenter, Disability Support Coordinator
elizabeth.carpenter@rochester.edu

Amy Clark, Disability Support Coordinator
mailto:amy.clark@rochester.edu

Lattimore Hall 107
585-275-9049 voice
585-273-1116 fax
www.rochester.edu/college/cetl
Other Local Disability Resource Coordinators

School of Engineering and Applied Sciences
Lisa Norwood 585-275-4155

Eastman School of Music
Melissia Schmidt 585-274-1106

Simon School of Business
Laura Gavigan 585-275-8177

Warner School of Education
Brenda Grosswirth 585-275-1009

School of Medicine and Dentistry
Brenda Lee 585-275-4537
(Medical Students)

Linda Lipani 585-275-7288
(M.A. and Ph.D. Students)

School of Nursing
Nancy Kita 585-275-2375
Disabilities and the Law

Qualified students with disabilities may be entitled to reasonable educational accommodations. The legal basis for this was established by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (PL 93-112), which states:

*No otherwise qualified handicapped individual in the United States shall, solely by reason of his handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.*

The Americans with Disabilities Act, which reinforces and greatly extends the impact of previous legislation, was passed in 1990. The ADA makes it unlawful to discriminate against any qualified person with a disability in terms of employment, government services, public accommodations, transportation, and telecommunications.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (P.L.101-476), was also established in 1990. IDEA helps to ensure that more students with disabilities are well prepared for college.

The detailed implications of these laws have been interpreted in some cases to provide for the following for students with documented disabilities:

- No discrimination during the admissions process for qualified applicants.

- Modification of academic courses so that there is no discrimination on the basis of disability. While the overall goals for the course should remain the same for all students, those with disabilities may require modifications in the way they achieve those standards.

- For some students, alternative testing is an appropriate accommodation. The most common modification is extended time; another adjustment may include converting a multiple-choice exam to an essay exam, or vice versa.

- Costs of required auxiliary services are to be borne by the college or university, not by the student. A number of recent court cases have tested the extent of the University’s financial obligation to students with special needs. It currently appears that the expenses of diagnosis and evaluation are to be paid by the student; the costs of adaptive equipment, taped texts, readers, scribes, and interpreters, if reasonable, are to be paid by the institution.
The University of Rochester’s Policy

The University of Rochester is committed to providing equal educational and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. To ensure equality of access for students with disabilities, the University provides reasonable accommodations, including auxiliary aids and modifications to courses, programs, services, activities or facilities. Exceptions will be made in those situations where the accommodation would fundamentally alter the nature of the program, cause undue hardship on the school, or jeopardize the health or safety of others. Accommodations must specifically address the functional limitations of the disability.