

Disability Services Information for Faculty

College faculty members often ask the question, “How do I get students to talk to me about their accommodation requests?” Many faculty members would be more than willing to discuss and provide appropriate accommodations, but sometimes don’t find out until too late that the accommodation is needed because students don’t come forward.

It is appropriate for students to take the responsibility of identifying themselves and their need for accommodations to the faculty, rather than vice-versa. To assist in this process, faculty members are encouraged to do two things.

First, contact Disability Services personnel for suggestions and information so you are familiar with West Virginia University at Parkersburg’s procedures. Second, include a statement in every syllabus, as well as making a verbal statement in class during the first week of each new term, inviting students to feel free to discuss their accommodation needs. Such an invitation goes a long way toward encouraging the students to approach the instructor early - which is what you and they both need! Such a statement will also be encouragement to all students that you are the type of instructor who is student-oriented and approachable. The following statement is recommended:

West Virginia University at Parkersburg is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our College does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Disability Services (424-8378).

The process of determining the appropriateness of documentation and a student’s need for disability based accommodations within a student’s academic program is the responsibility of the WVU at Parkersburg Office of Disability Services. All students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the Office of Disability Services and provide appropriate documentation. The student will then be provided with a ‘Notification of Need for Accommodation’, a letter which will list the student’s specific accommodations. The student must provide you with this notice. No other accommodations are authorized nor are you required to provide other than those listed on the letter. Although the student must present you with the Office of Disabilities Services letter requesting accommodations, the student must discuss with you which of the authorized accommodations he/she wishes to utilize, so that you can jointly determine how the specific accommodations will work in your classroom situation. All arrangements must be handled in a manner that respects the confidential nature of a student’s disability. If another student should ask questions about why a student is being treated differently, the response should be that the “action is for legitimate business reasons or in compliance with state and/or federal law.”

It is important to only provide accommodations to students who have presented you with a letter from the Office of Disabilities Services authorizing accommodations within your class. Accommodations should not be made without notification from the Office of Disabilities Services that appropriate certification of the disability has been provided. Faculty who provide accommodations without following the process of the College in serving students with disabilities may be held personally liable for difficulties that arise in providing unauthorized accommodations.

Faculty should **not** accept documentation of a disability or medical, psychological, or educational information directly from a student. Students should be directed to provide such documentation to the Office of Disability Services.

Although a professional may provide a diagnosis and the associated limitations, it is the responsibility of the WVU at Parkersburg Office of Disability Services to determine if the limitations imposed meet the level of significance to be considered a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the guidelines set forth by the College.

A more thorough discussion of disability accommodations is available on the Social Justice web page and the Disability Services web page, under *Faculty Resource Manual for Disability-Related Issues* (<http://www.wvup.edu/ADA/INDEX.HTM>). You may also contact the Office of Disability Services staff:

Cathy Mutz	Room 1019	424-8320	Coordinator of Disability Services
Pam Clevenger	Room 1019	424-8378	Program Assistant
Sandy Swisher	Room 1019	424-8304	Disability Services Representative
Violet Mosser	JCC	424-8269	Counselor/Disability Services Representative

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