

Facts in a Flash for Faculty! #1

Reasonable Accommodations in Higher Education

Did You Know? Accommodations for students with disabilities level the playing field by providing needed assistance to stay in and graduate from postsecondary education.

Accommodations Defined: An accommodation is any change in the environment or in the ways things are customarily done that enables an individual with a disability to enjoy equal opportunities.

What Makes an Accommodation *Reasonable*?

Accommodations are reasonable if they mitigate the effect a disability has on a student's ability to learn.

Accommodations are *NOT* reasonable if they compromise the course content or the instructor's academic standards.

Most Commonly Requested *Reasonable* Accommodations

- Presence of note-takers in your class
- Extended time on exams
- Taking exams in a controlled environment at a Disability Student Services office
- Presence of sign-language interpreters in class
- Preferential seating arrangements
- Printed materials in alternate format

FACTS:

Students will need time to have materials made accessible to them, for example, have important handouts/syllabi available several weeks prior to the beginning of class.

Requests for reasonable accommodations are initiated by student.

Students must fulfill all academic requirements for courses.

Students with disabilities are subject to same Student Conduct Code as their non-disabled peers.

Disability-related information is considered medical information and subject to strict confidentiality rules.

Do not mention a student's disabilities to the class.

Barriers: Assumptions and Attitudes

"Accommodations are unfair advantages."

"Accommodating a student means lowering my standards."

"Students will invent a disability to get special treatment."

They will try and “work the system.”

“They aren’t smart enough to make it in college. They don’t belong here in the first place.”

Fast Fact Strategies: What do I need to know?

Be open to students with disabilities.

Create a syllabus statement which welcomes students to the class and explicitly states that it is accessible to all students.

Be open to accommodations requested by students.

Modify your materials and your teaching techniques; but not your expectations of your student’s learning.

Adjust your teaching style

Don’t lecture with your back to class.

Read aloud overheads/what you write on the blackboard.

Make lecture notes available online.

Resources

Teaching All Students, Reaching All Learners Professional Development Training Program

www.ist.hawaii.edu/training/

Ohio State University: “ADA Resources: Fast Facts for Faculty”

<http://ada.osu.edu/resources/fastfacts/index.htm>

FAME (Faculty and Administrator Modules in Higher Education)

<http://www.olin.org/ILT/ada/Fame/>

Information taken from a presentation by Dr. Megan Conway and co-presenters, Kiriko Takahashi & David Cayton, Center on Disability Studies, University of Hawai’i at Manoa.

For more information on working with students with disabilities, visit our Web site at www.ist.hawaii.edu.

Please feel free to distribute with the following acknowledgement: Teaching All Students, Reaching All Learners, Center on Disability Studies, University of Hawai’i, Honolulu, HI. For more information contact Steven (Steve) E. Brown, Ph.D., Project Coordinator at sebrown@hawaii.edu or visit the Web site at: www.ist.hawaii.edu.

June 2009

