

West Chester University  
Office Of Services for Students with Disabilities (OSSD)  
Guide to Departmental Policies and Procedures  
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Handbook

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## **I. Law**

### **A. History**

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is often cited as the first federal “civil rights” legislation for persons with disabilities. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of a disability at any institution or entity receiving federal financial assistance. Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act prohibits such discrimination in making employment decisions. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act provides that “no otherwise qualified person with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of his disability, be excluded from the 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 of 1990 (ADA) broadens the mandate of nondiscrimination on the basis of a disability to include entities that do not receive federal financial assistance. The ADA prohibits discrimination in employment, state and local government programs, transportation, public accommodations, and telecommunications. Title I of the ADA addresses employment practices, and Title II addresses nondiscrimination by public entities.

West Chester University, as a public post-secondary institution that receives federal financial assistance, is covered by both the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA. Failure to comply with the requirements of these laws may result in both institutional and individual liability.

### **B. Requirements**

The ADA requires that “each service, program, or activity conducted by a public entity when viewed in its entirety be readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities” (ADA Handbook, U.S. Department of Justice, 1995). For practical purposes, this means that not every part of an institution’s buildings and programs must be made accessible, but that participation by disabled persons at a level and form that is the same as non-disabled persons must be provided. “Fundamental alteration in the nature of the program” is not required if it should result in an “undue financial or administrative burden” on the institution. The latter is understood to be an action requiring significant difficulty or expense. Even so, the institution is not absolved of its responsibility, since an alternative accommodation that would not be such a burden must then be provided.

There is some discretion left to public institutions in the choice of auxiliary aids to be provided. However, the aid chosen must result in effective accessibility. The fact that the concept of “undue burden” is put forth in the law does not mean that it alters in any way an institution’s responsibilities in this area. Title II, Section 35.164, makes it extremely unlikely that the provision of auxiliary aids and services by a state or local government entity will result in undue financial burden when considered in the context of the entire state budget. The possibility of

undue administrative burden under the ADA remains, but is difficult to establish in the majority of instances that may arise in higher education. Some ADA mandated accommodations are reassignment of classes to accessible buildings, redesign of equipment, or adding peripherals to computers (e.g., voice output). In the area of alternative formats (Braille, audio, screen readers, hardcopy, etc.), recent case law is leaning towards allowing the student to decide which format best meets his or her needs. The Department of Education, for example, mandated in 1996 that any grant recipient or co-sponsor of a grant sponsored program provide all information in the formats most often requested (Braille, audio, and large print).

### **Legislative Links**

#### [ADA Basic Building Blocks](#)

ADA Basic Building Blocks, is an introductory webcourse on the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) that explores the legal requirements and spirit of the ADA.

#### [ADA Technical Assistance](#)

The ADA and IT Technical Assistance Centers (DBTACs\*) are your comprehensive resource for information on the Americans with Disabilities Act and accessible information technology.

#### [Comparison of Disability Laws Affecting Education](#)

A chart was put together to compare the differences between the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disability Act (ADA).

#### [DisabilityInfo.gov](#)

This easy-to-use Web portal is a directory of government Web links relevant to people with disabilities, their families, employers, service providers and other community members.

#### [FacultyWare](#)

The Legal Context for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities, Institutions of Higher Education, and Faculty Members.

#### [Nondiscrimination in Higher Education - What's the Law?](#)

Teacher Tipsheet - Northeast Technical Assistance Center

#### [Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities](#)

The Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities is an independent State agency created to safeguard and advance the civil and human rights of people with disabilities in Connecticut.

#### [Thomas - Legislative Information in the Internet](#)

THOMAS was launched in January of 1995, at the inception of the 104th Congress. The leadership of the 104th Congress directed the Library of Congress to make federal legislative information freely available to the public. Since that time THOMAS has expanded the scope of its offerings to include the features and content listed below.

## [U.S. Department of Education's Laws and Facts on Disability Discrimination](#)

The U.S. Department of Education and the Office of Civil Rights provides information regarding disability discrimination including an overview of the laws, questions and answers regarding disability discrimination, disability discrimination regulations and resources.

### **C. Definitions (ADA Handbook, U.S. Dept. of Justice, 1995)**

Under the ADA, a “person with a disability” is someone with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. A person is considered to be a person with a disability if he/she has the disability, has a record of the disability, or is regarded as having the disability. In other words, a person who is obviously blind or is using a wheelchair to move about is a person who may be “regarded as having” a disability. Other relevant definitions are detailed as follows:

- *“physical impairment”* means any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory (including speech organs), cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genito-urinary, hemic and lymphatic, skin and endocrine.
- *“mental impairment”* means any psychological disorder, such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities.
- *“substantially limits”* means unable to perform a major life activity, or significantly restricted as to the condition, manner, or duration under which a major life activity can be performed, in comparison to the average person or to most people; the availability of some mitigating measure (such as a hearing aid for someone with a hearing loss that brings hearing acuity within normal limits) is not to be considered when determining if the disability substantially limits the individual.
- *“major life activity”* means functions such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.
- *“auxiliary aids and services”* are required to ensure communication accessibility. They must be provided unless doing so would result in a fundamental alteration of the programs/goods/services being provided or would result in undue financial or administrative burden. Examples of auxiliary aids and services would include (but are not limited to):
- Qualified interpreters (see below), assistive listening systems, decoders,

open and closed captioning, and Telecommunications Devices for the Deaf (TDD's)

- Qualified readers, audio recordings, electronic texts, Braille materials, large print materials, speech synthesizers, computer terminals, communications board's acquisition of or modification to equipment or devices

The ADA provides a specific definition of the term "qualified interpreter". This definition is included both to prevent the inappropriate use of someone who "knows a little sign" as an interpreter and to assist public and private entities in meeting their responsibilities when no specially trained (certified) interpreters are available. A qualified interpreter is defined as one who is able to interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially, both receptively and expressively, using any necessary specialized vocabulary.

As is true under Section 504, neither public nor private entities are required to provide services of a personal nature. In the case of post-secondary institutions, this would include attendant care, personal readers for study, devices for independent study purposes, or individually prescribed devices such as wheelchairs or hearing aids.

*Communications (alternate formats):* Title II of the ADA places the burden for communication access on public institutions. Aside from the mandate for the availability of auxiliary aids and services, Title II guidelines indicate that state and local government entities are expected to facilitate the removal of barriers to communication whenever and wherever possible.

All written communications produced by the institution for use in any of its programs or activities must be available on request in formats other than print. This may include school catalogues and admissions/application materials, the school newspaper, and all communications produced by the public relations office.

Video and television programming and other media must provide access for persons with hearing impairments. This would include everything from public service programming developed for an educational TV station to recruitment films produced for use in outreach activities. Access may be provided by closed captioning, use of an interpreter, or through the provision of a transcript of the audio portion of the presentation.

Included in this mandate is a call for "equally effective communication systems" that may include the use of telecommunications relay services such as those required under Title IV. However, administrative units within public entities that have extensive telephone contact with the public (such as the Office for Disability Services, the registrar's office, the financial aid office, or the athletic ticket office) are encouraged to:

- Have Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDD's) to ensure more immediate access. As noted under "Emergency/Evacuation Policies and Procedures," all emergency services must be directly accessible without the need for a relay operator.
- It is appropriate to make special mention here of the availability of public telephones equipped with TDD's. In the architectural guidelines accompanying the ADA, there are specific requirements established (Section 4.1.3.17) for the number and location of telephones that include TDD capabilities.
- At WCU there are 5 TDD's on campus and they are located in the FHG Library, Public Safety, Sykes Student Center, the OSSD, and at South campus in the Health and Physical Education Center main lobby.

## **II. Policies**

### **A. Rights and Responsibilities**

Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the following general requirements are made for all public and private institutions of higher learning:

1. The law prohibits exclusion of persons on the basis of disability. Neither the Admissions office nor the OSSD may place a cap on the numbers of students with disabilities who may be admitted, providing they meet criteria as otherwise qualified. Re-admission procedures allow a student who considers his/her disability to have played a part in his/her academic failure to present that information to the person or committee responsible for making such decisions. The student in question is also permitted to include a person from the University with appropriate professional training (usually the Director of OSSD) to sit on the committee. In addition, the criteria for returning to WCU must include reasonable expectations based on the documentation of disability status provided.
2. All contracted University services, such as transportation, food services, entertainment services, communication services, off-campus housing, and off-site educational contracts, must provide the same rights and protections to students with disabilities as the University provides for non-disabled students. Such contractual agents are generally responsible for compliance with the ADA (aids, interpreters, etc.), but the institution has an obligation to assure that accommodations are provided by such agents so that students are not denied opportunities.
3. Persons with disabilities are entitled to participate in the most integrated setting possible. The University will make all classrooms accessible or move the classes to an accessible location for the benefit of a student with a

disability who indicates the need for such a move. Participation in non-academic activities is also assured by law for qualified students.

4. West Chester University will not use eligibility criteria that screen out or tend to screen out an individual or class of individuals with disabilities unless it can be shown that those criteria are necessary to the provision of services. Screening tests cannot rule out participation in a major unless the skill assessed is essential to completion of a required component for the major of study in question.
5. It is discriminatory to fail to make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, and procedures when necessary to avoid unequal treatment on the basis of a disability. This includes test modifications (extended time, varying format), modifications to method of instruction (where appropriate varying the presentation to meet the needs of students' learning differences), and modifications to degree requirements (extended time to complete degrees, exceptions to policies on full time status, course substitutions).

The caveat here is that the law does **NOT** require an individual instructor or university official to *fundamentally alter* the nature of the class or substantially change an essential element of the curriculum while attempting to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

6. Groups/organizations/or representatives of individuals with disabilities may not be denied space on campus or access to meetings or persons usually accessible to student representatives (e.g., AIDS awareness activities, focus group discussions, university hearings).
7. Surcharges may not be imposed solely on persons with disabilities to pay for the cost of compliance with Section 504 or the ADA.
8. Discrimination against individuals with disabilities in examinations or courses related to licensing is illegal. This means that architectural barrier removal and the provision of auxiliary aids and services is necessary in testing for licensing and in placements, internships, co-ops, etc., that help prepare students for a given profession. Provision of aids and services in external programs or placements is mandated by law; agreements between the institution and such outside agencies should include an understanding of how such assistance will be made available.
9. It is discriminatory to retaliate against students or their agents because they have requested their rights under disability legislation. Comments in public (e.g. classrooms) that cause or are aimed to cause ridicule or harassment of students with disabilities are strictly forbidden.

10. Modifications permit the presence of service animals (e.g. canine companions for the blind) in classrooms and on campus.

## **B. Confidentiality**

Documentation regarding a disability will be considered confidential and kept in secure files in the OSSD. This information is considered subject to the same exclusions as medical information under the Buckley Amendment. Generally, faculty members and administrators have no need or right to such information. Faculty will be given only such information as pertains to students' needs for accommodations and then only with the student's permission. All such communication will be initiated by the student, usually by presentation of a letter of accommodation written jointly with the student and the OSSD. Communication about students with disabilities will be shared with other members of the University on a need-to-know basis and only in so far as it impacts on their involvement with the student.

## **C. OSSD Role**

The Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (OSSD) is a part of the Academic Affairs Division of West Chester University and serves the entire institution in matters regarding students at WCU. The function of the OSSD is to provide programs and services that ensure compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990). The office also determines eligibility for and appropriateness of requested accommodations. All programs and services are in keeping with the University's mission to provide equal education for all qualified students.

The Office of Services for Students with Disabilities operates as a centralized service center for students and faculty. The OSSD collects and maintains all records of documentation, issues accommodations letters, and acts as a liaison among students, faculty, and administrators on ADA compliance concerns. In addition, the OSSD serves as a resource center for faculty to refer students for whom there is a question of the existence of an undiagnosed disability. The OSSD also offers training and Information specifically detailing the accommodations required of and pedagogical support services available to WCU faculty. OSSD staff member(s) serve on the ADA Committee which is chaired by a member of the Social Equity office. This is a campus-wide organization of WCU administrators, faculty, and staff who monitor compliance with ADA in employment, architectural access, and program access.

## **D. Social Equity Role**

**<http://www.wcupa.edu/admin/social.equity/>**

The goal of the Social Equity Office is to advance the University's commitment to creating a community that is reflective of the diversity of the society in which we live. This is accomplished by creating a supportive environment for every

member of our community and by providing equal opportunity for all participants in all aspects of University affairs. One function of the Office of Social Equity is to identify and correct discriminatory policies and practices and to handle complaints of discrimination of all kinds, including discrimination based upon disability.

The Director of Social Equity has been appointed by the University as the ADA Coordinator as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. In this capacity, the Director of Social Equity works with the ADA Committee to advance University policies and programming that will provide equal education opportunity for individuals with disabilities.

Any individual who has a suggestion, problem or complaint relating to a person with a disability is encouraged to contact the Director of Social Equity located at 13/15 University Avenue, (610) 436-2433.

### **III. Disability Services**

#### **A. OSSD Policies & Procedures**

##### **1. Self-Identification and Documentation**

The OSSD works with the Admissions office as part of the continuum of the transition process to inform interested prospective applicants of the availability of services and the process involved in gaining accommodations at WCU. The admissions application contains a self-addressed postcard from the OSSD which allows interested students to initiate contact with our office. Upon receipt of this card, the OSSD sends all self-identified students with disabilities a letter requesting appropriate documentation. **Confidentiality is assured by maintaining all documents on file in the OSSD.** A summer orientation session(s) is also available to inform students and parents of the services the University offers for students with disabilities. The University does not perform diagnostic testing, but students are informed of the variety of options available to locate resources for testing.

In order to receive services, students must submit appropriate **documentation** of their status as a person with a disability and of their need for accommodation in order to receive equal access to their education. Evaluations must be from licensed, certified professionals. A disability is defined by law as resulting in impairment to a major life activity, such as learning.

The OSSD helps concerned students to determine how their particular disabilities may impair the pursuit of their education. The disability may impact the student's accessibility to housing, mobility, communications, transportation, financial aid, or registration at WCU. In addition, students may need accommodations that pertain more directly to academic need, such as access to materials in alternate formats, classroom accommodations, and auxiliary aids and services. In some

cases, additional documentation may be required to verify the need for a specific accommodation request. **The OSSD reserves the right to approve or deny any and all accommodation requests.**

## **2. Initiating Services**

Students with disabilities are encouraged to meet with the Director of the OSSD to identify specific needs. To help support the success of our students, the OSSD-- through a TRIO/Student Support Services grant and in conjunction with WCU's Academic Programs and Services--provides training in study skills and time management, tutoring, mentoring, coaching, career planning, selective referrals, and/or facilitated meetings with faculty for students who request them. While some students would prefer only minimal assistance, others require a range of services and may also need assistance in identifying what those may be. Since the university process differs so markedly from that used by most secondary schools, part of our initial work involves fully informing students regarding the types of services available and how they may acquire services. The law stipulates that students need to initiate the process, and that they may do so at any time. It is the OSSD's goal to have students with disabilities to take a proactive stance in order to facilitate timely service and effective compliance. In keeping with this goal, the OSSD provides an extended self-analysis procedure that informs students of their rights and obligations and trains them to be effective self-advocates.

The following guidelines are provided for evaluators, physicians, medical professionals, students and family members to guide the process of submitting documentation to the Center for Students with Disabilities. Our goal in providing these guidelines is to facilitate the OSSD's review process for students with disabilities requesting accommodations.

- Documentation submitted must reflect evaluation conducted within the past 5 years.
- Evaluators, physicians, medical professionals, etc. are encouraged to submit any prior assessments and/or evaluative reports together with the current documentation.
- Documentation must be printed on official letterhead and signed by the credentialed professional.
- A Summary of Performance (SOP), Individualized Education Program (IEP) and/or a 504 Plan are not considered adequate documentation.
- Documentation must be submitted by a qualified professional who is not a family member of the student.

- Reasonable accommodations are determined based on the nature and resulting impairment(s) due to the disability.
- While the law requires that priority consideration be given to the specific methods requested by a student, it does not imply that a particular accommodation must be granted if it is deemed not reasonable or other suitable techniques are available.
- Prior receipt of accommodations (e.g., in high school) does not guarantee receipt of the same accommodations at West Chester University.

### **3. Letters of Accommodation**

During the first week of classes, if not before, all students are urged to come to the OSSD to obtain copies of a letter of accommodation to present to their professors. This letter briefly describes the University procedure for complying with the ADA, lists accommodations, and offers assistance to faculty and advisors. Accommodations are categorized by professor responsibility (e.g., test modifications), student responsibility (e.g., adaptive equipment), University responsibility (e.g., interpreters), and OSSD responsibility (e.g., readers, alternative test site proctoring). It is recommended that faculty and students sign and date the letter of accommodation once it has been presented to the faculty member, so that both parties are clear as to the effective date of the mandated accommodations. Faculty members are encouraged to contact the OSSD with any questions.

### **4. Test Accommodations**

Students are responsible for requesting test modifications (see Appendix E) of both faculty and the OSSD early in the semester. A **Test Proctoring Form** is available at OSSD and should be filled out at the beginning of each semester and presented to the faculty concerned along with the necessary letter of accommodation. These forms are required of all students who need a distraction free environment, readers, scribes, extended examination time (time and a half or double time), or other test modifications. Hallways, busy offices, and noisy rooms are not acceptable sites for administering exams. **The OSSD will be the final arbiter of the acceptability of location and setting.**

Test proctors can be provided on a limited basis for test administration at the OSSD when requested at least a week in advance. In such cases, faculty is responsible for making arrangements for delivery and pick-up of the exam and for informing the proctor of any special provisions of the exam. Test proctoring forms are available from the OSSD and must be completed and filed to ensure adequate scheduling and assignment of support staff.

## **5. Auxiliary Aids**

The OSSD can supply study skill tutoring for students with disabilities who need help with organization, test preparation strategies, reading assistance, and note taking skills. In addition, tutoring may be available in math.

Sign language interpreters and transliterators (real time or CART and C-print captionists) are available through the OSSD at no cost to the student. However, sufficient notice must be given. We encourage students to report their needs for interpreting as far in advance as is possible. It is the policy of OSSD to recruit qualified interpreters and captionists. Interpreters can be provided for meetings with faculty and/or advisors as well as other special events. When interpreters are not available or unexpectedly have to cancel, students are responsible for obtaining the class notes either through another student or directly from the faculty member. Students should also be prepared to bring a tape recorder to class for such an occasion. It is up to the faculty member concerned whether or not he/she would prefer to excuse the student, in which case the class may be made up at another time or the material may be covered in a private session with the student and an interpreter present. (See Appendix H Guidelines for Faculty.)

*Note taking* is a critical skill and should be attempted by all students to the extent of their capabilities so that the final product is as much as possible a version of their interpretation and evaluation. Some students will need to supplement their own notes by borrowing notes and tape recording class sessions. The OSSD will assist such students by alerting faculty of their needs in order to locate an appropriate note taker from class for assistance. In addition, OSSD will supply concerned students with NCR paper and/or allow students to use the OSSD copier or a copy card for use at the FHG Library. Tape recorders have been found to be an appropriate academic accommodation and, as an item of personal use, is the responsibility of the student.

## **6. Adaptive Equipment**

Equipment is available for use by students as well as faculty and staff that will be assisting students with disabilities. The purpose of the equipment is to allow students to engage in full participation in university classes regardless of their disability. Equipment is available that can be used to enlarge the size of print on a screen, read printed text aloud, amplify sound, translate the spoken word to the written word, create Braille versions of print materials, and more.

Additionally, the OSSD offers training and support for transfer of information to an alternate format. We encourage students and faculty to attempt to secure all required course texts in electronic format from the publisher, the Library for the Blind (Braille text books and journals), Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic (books on tape and electronic text), or other Internet sources prior to the semester and before requesting transfer to an alternate format from the OSSD.

## **7. Resources for Personal Needs**

In accordance with the law, WCU does not provide personal services. Mobility instruction, personal aides, and equipment for personal use must all be secured from external agents and should be in place before the first semester of enrollment begins. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind and Visual Services Agencies are located in each state and must be contacted at least six months in advance of need to be sure they have time to register and secure services. *Brian's Run* is a local organization dedicated to assisting students with disabilities by providing grants of aid for the purchase of computers, adaptive equipment, ramps, wheelchairs and other materials that help disabled students attend classes and participate fully in the life of the University. Contact the OSSD for information about applications for Brian's Run funding.

## **IV. Faculty Guide**

WCU recognizes its responsibilities to include fully students with disabilities in the academic life of the university and encourages all faculty to actively assist in the process. Besides legal sanctions against the University due to discrimination, the ADA permits separate legal action against any faculty member who engages in harassment, retaliation, or obstruction of a student with disabilities rights under the law.

### **A. Reasonable Accommodations**

Requests for accommodations are approved by and originate from the OSSD. Students must have a Letter of Accommodation that validates their claim and specifies all accommodations. Any questions about the accommodation letter should be addressed to the OSSD. It is recommended that both faculty and students sign and date the Letter of Accommodation on the day it is presented to the faculty member; in this way, there can be no confusion as to the start date of the stipulated accommodations.

At times, faculty members may need to assist students with disabilities through test modifications or modifications to their method of instruction as detailed in the Letter of Accommodation. Test Modifications include allowing extended time for quizzes, exams, and other forms of evaluation (papers, projects, in-class writing etc.). In addition, tests may need to be adjusted to accommodate different learning styles. For example, many learning disabled students experience great difficulty interpreting multiple choice tests and request that other types of tests be administered or that reader or other test modifications be considered. For example, alternate test sites are sometimes necessary to provide a distraction free environment. The type of test modification needed by each student will be an individual matter best discussed with the student and OSSD personnel. When making test modifications, the integrity of the course content will always be protected; faculty will not be asked to violate the course content.

Faculty may be asked to modify their method of instruction, altering or expanding lecturing format or style, for example, to be more sensitive to students' disabilities or learning styles. Overheads, outlines, and class notes may need to be provided to students in alternate formats such as hard copy, audiotape, large print, or electronic text for Braille printing. While class notes are not always available in advance, students may need assistance from faculty in locating reliable sources of notes from among their classmates. Case law since the passage of the ADA has found that providing course instruction and test materials in an accessible manner for the students concerned is the responsibility of the University, carried out through the faculty.

Providing required texts in alternate formats is required under the ADA. For this reason, it is strongly recommended that faculty make syllabi and booklists available as early as possible so that students can make arrangements to acquire or convert texts. Taped texts, for example may require four to six months to record. Braille texts may be very costly in any case, but the opportunity to research options (e.g. ASCII text files from publishers or printers) saves enormous time and money. The library must provide alternate formats for any reserve materials. Cooperation in acquiring existing materials in electronic form is required of all faculty members.

A student with a documented disability may request a **Modification of Curricular Requirements** (either general education or degree) as long as the student has documented evidence that he/she cannot complete the curricular requirement, even when appropriate classroom accommodations are made. In such cases, faculty needs to determine whether or not the course in question constitutes an "essential requirement" to completion of the academic degree in question. An "essential requirement" is one that is "fundamental to the program." In other words, can a student enrolled in a given program master the essential content of that degree *without* passing the disputed course? If a program determines that there is not acceptable alternative to an essential requirement, and that approving such an alternative would clearly alter the fundamental nature of the program itself, students who cannot complete the requirement will not be able to complete that program. Department faculty determine the essential requirements of their programs; in making such determinations, faculty must consider carefully whether there is sound disciplinary and professional justification for maintaining that any course is an "essential requirement" for completion of a degree. See Appendix K for a detailed description of how undergraduate students with disabilities may request a modification of curricular requirements.

## **B. Recommended Syllabus Statement**

West Chester University strongly encourages the inclusion of a syllabus statement that invites students with disabilities to come forward early in the semester with requests for accommodations and services. Such a statement is one of the most basic ways faculty members can demonstrate that they are making a good faith effort to teach in compliance with the law. The following syllabus statement may be used as is by faculty or varied to suit individual style:

*If you have a disability that requires accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), please meet with me as soon as possible so that I can support your success in an informed manner. If you would like to know more about West Chester University's services for students with disabilities, please contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities at ext. 3217.*

Additionally, students with disabilities express appreciation for those faculty who verbally address University policy by reading the syllabus statement aloud during the initial class meeting and speaking comfortably about their willingness to work with students with disabilities, rather than leaving their policies for students with disabilities unspoken, in textual form only.

## **C. Disclosure**

Faculty can be of great assistance in helping students with disabilities to self-identify. The vast majority of students with disabilities resist disclosure due to fear of discrimination. While students have a right not to be identified as disabled, accommodations are not required unless they do self-identify. Disclosure requires trust, knowledge of benefits, and information on the process for receiving services. The University and the OSSD make every effort to inform students of all available resources in advance of their arrival at WCU (see OSSD policies and procedures). Nevertheless, the first personal contact many students have upon entering the University is with a faculty member in class. Thus, the role of the faculty member is crucial in maximizing the satisfaction and success of students with disabilities. Research indicates that students will disclose if:

1. There is a positive relationship
2. The context is deemed appropriate
3. They feel personally comfortable
4. The receiver is viewed as trustworthy (Petronio and Martin 1984).

## **D. Disability Types and Teaching Strategies**

### **1. Disability Etiquette**

#### [Disability Etiquette Handbook: City of San Antonio Access Office](#)

The City of San Antonio, Texas Planning Department and the Disability Advisory Committee have prepared this Disability Etiquette Handbook to enhance opportunities for persons with disabilities to pursue their careers and independent lifestyles. The Disability Etiquette Handbook is yet another step toward making San Antonio one of the most accessible cities in the nation. It contains information that can help make San Antonio a better place for all who visit, live and work here.

#### [Federal Communications Commission: Disability Etiquette](#)

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is an independent United States government agency, directly responsible to Congress. This site provides excellent etiquette tips on general etiquette, sensitivity to blindness and visual impairments, and interacting with people with speech disabilities.

#### [Marist College's Disability Etiquette - Tips on Interacting with People with Disabilities](#)

People with disabilities are individuals with families, jobs, hobbies, likes and dislikes, problems and joys. While the disability is an integral part of who they are, it alone does not define them. Don't make them into disability heroes or victims. Treat them as individuals.

#### [National Organization on Disability: Disability Etiquette Tips](#)

The mission of the National Organization on Disability (N.O.D.) is to expand the participation and contribution of America's 54 million men, women and children with disabilities in all aspects of life. By raising disability awareness through programs and information, together we can work toward closing the participation gaps.

#### [United Spinal Association: Disability Etiquette](#)

United Spinal Association was founded in 1946 by veterans with spinal cord injuries to help enable members, as well as others with disabilities, to lead full and productive lives. You don't have to feel awkward when dealing with a person who has a disability. This booklet provides some basic tips for you to follow. And if you are ever unsure about what to do or say with a person who has a disability, just ask!

### **2. Learning Disabilities**

#### [Council for Learning Disabilities](#)

The Council for Learning Disabilities (CLD) is an international organization concerned about issues related to students with learning disabilities. Working to build a better future for students with LD has been the primary goal of CLD for more than 20 years.

#### [Educational Testing Service](#)

This section provides information to applicants with disabilities who seek

approval of reasonable testing accommodations. Please review all of the materials before submitting your request. Application forms may be obtained by linking to a specific testing programs listed.

[GWU Heath Resource Center: Online Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Disabilities](#)

The HEATH Resource Center Clearinghouse has information for students with disabilities on educational disability support services, policies, procedures, adaptations, accessing college or university campuses, career-technical schools, and other postsecondary training entities.

[LD Online](#)

LD OnLine.org is the world's leading web site on learning disabilities and ADHD, serving more than 200,000 parents, teachers, and other professionals each month. LD OnLine seeks to help children and adults reach their full potential by providing accurate and up-to-date information and advice about learning disabilities and ADHD.

[Learning Disabilities Association of America](#)

Since 1963, LDA has provided support to people with learning disabilities, their parents, teachers and other professionals. At the national, state and local levels, LDA provides cutting edge information on learning disabilities, practical solutions, and a comprehensive network of resources. These services make the Learning Disabilities Association of America the leading resource for information on learning disabilities.

[Learning Disabilities Association of Connecticut, Inc.](#)

LDA of Connecticut is a non-profit organization of parents, professionals, and persons with learning disabilities. We are dedicated to promoting a better understanding of learning disabilities and securing appropriate educational and employment opportunities for children and adults with learning disabilities and related disorders.

[National Center for Learning Disabilities](#)

NCLD provides essential information to parents, professionals and individuals with learning disabilities, promotes research and programs to foster effective learning and advocates for policies to protect and strengthen educational rights and opportunities.

### **3. Attention Deficit Disorder/Hyperactivity (ADD/ADHD)**

[ADD Resources](#)

ADD Resources, a national non-profit organization, helps people with ADD/ADHD achieve their full potential through education, support and networking opportunities.

[ADDA: Attention Deficit Disorder Association](#)

The Attention Deficit Disorder Association (ADDA) is designated as a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit organization by the Internal Revenue Service. This international organization has been in existence since 1989. The mission of ADDA is to

provide information, resources and networking to adults with AD/HD and to the professionals who work with them.

#### [ADDvance](#)

You may be a parent searching for information to help your child, an adult experiencing problems at work, a high school or college student struggling to keep up, a young adult trying to take charge of your own life, a woman whose daily life feels overwhelming, or a professional looking for information to help your clients with ADD (ADHD). Whoever you are, whatever your questions, we are here to assist you in finding the answers you're looking for.

#### [Children and Adult ADD/HD \(CHADD\)](#)

The organization is composed of dedicated volunteers from around the country who play an integral part in the association's success by providing resources and encouragement to parents, educators and professionals on a grassroots level through CHADD chapters.

#### [HealthLine ADD/ADHD Learning Center](#)

HealthLine.com's ADD/ADHD Learning Center provides information and resources about ADD and ADHD.

#### [National Resource Center on AD/HD: A Program of CHADD](#)

The National Resource Center on AD/HD: A Program of CHADD is funded through a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD) affects how millions of children and adults function on a daily basis. The NRC was created to meet the information needs of both professionals and the general public.

### **4. Mobility Impairments**

#### [National Spinal Cord Injury Association](#)

The National Spinal Cord Injury Association is the nation's oldest and largest civilian organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for hundreds of thousands of Americans living with the results of spinal cord injury and disease (SCI/D) and their families. This number grows by thirty newly-injured people each day.

#### [Paralysis Resource Center](#)

Welcome The Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation Paralysis Resource Center (PRC) promotes the health and well-being of people living with a spinal cord injury, mobility impairment and paralysis by providing comprehensive information, resources and referral services.

#### [Spinal Injury Resource Center](#)

I put this site together shortly after my injury. It was very difficult to find information on spinal cord injury at that time that wasn't scattered across the Internet in bits and pieces. So I decided to put together a resource where anybody who was interested could find everything in one place.

## **5. Visual Impairments**

### [American Council of the Blind](#)

The American Council of the Blind is the nation's leading membership organization of blind and visually impaired people. It was founded in 1961 and incorporated in the District of Columbia.

### [American Foundation for the Blind](#)

The American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) is a national nonprofit that expands possibilities for people with vision loss. AFB's priorities include broadening access to technology; elevating the quality of information and tools for the professionals who serve people with vision loss; and promoting independent and healthy living for people with vision loss by providing them and their families with relevant and timely resources. AFB's work in these areas is supported by the strong presence the organization maintains in Washington, DC, ensuring the rights and interests of people with vision loss are represented in our nation's public policies.

### [Board of Education and Services for the Blind \(BESB\)](#)

The Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) is responsible for the confidential registry of people who are blind in Connecticut and provides, within available resources, comprehensive low vision services, specialized education services, life skills training, case management, and vocational services to individuals of all ages who are legally blind and to children who are visually impaired. The agency assists them in acquiring the skills and support services necessary to be independent.

### [National Federation of the Blind \(NFB\)](#)

The purpose of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) is two-fold-to help blind persons achieve self-confidence and self-respect and to act as a vehicle for collective self-expression by the blind.

### [Learning Ally](#)

Learning Ally's materials are for all people who cannot effectively read standard print because of a visual, perceptual or other physical disability. An education is your right to embrace. Providing equal access to the printed word for our members - that is our profound privilege.

## **6. Hearing Impairments**

### [Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired \(CDHI\)](#)

The Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired (CDHI) is a unique agency with a great diversity of expertise and experience in deafness, deaf culture and hearing loss.

### [National Association of the Deaf](#)

The mission of the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) is to promote, protect, and preserve the rights and quality of life of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the United States of America.

### [Postsecondary Education Programs Network \(PEPNet\)](#)

PEPNet is the national collaboration of the four Regional Postsecondary Education Centers for Individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The Centers are supported by contracts with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. The goal of PEPNet is to assist postsecondary institutions across the nation to attract and effectively serve individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

### [Role of Interpreter in the Classroom](#)

PEPNet, the Postsecondary Education Programs Network, is the national collaboration of the four Regional Postsecondary Education Centers for Individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

### [Teaching Strategies for Students with Hearing Impairments](#)

PEPNet, the Postsecondary Education Programs Network, is the national collaboration of the four Regional Postsecondary Education Centers for Individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

### [The University of Melbourne, Australia: Towards Success in Tertiary Study with Deafness](#)

This booklet has been written for students who are studying or intend studying at tertiary level and who are deaf or hard of hearing. The strategies included here bring together the experiences of many students, staff and support organizations. The booklet also builds on existing resources, both print and electronic media.

## **7. Psychiatric Disabilities**

### [Campus Blues](#)

CampusBlues.com is designed to facilitate student awareness and use of school resources. The college experience is challenging by design. Students learn about themselves and life by developing ways to adjust to new environments and support systems. This is an important process in becoming self-sufficient.

### [College Mental Health](#)

According to a recent survey, nearly half of all college students report feeling so depressed that they had trouble functioning, and 15 percent meet the criteria for clinical depression. It is important for college-age students to seek care so they can have a healthy mind and lead a healthy life.

### [Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services \(DMHAS\)](#)

The mission of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services is to improve the quality of life of the people of Connecticut by providing an integrated network of comprehensive, effective and efficient mental health and addiction services that foster self-sufficiency, dignity and respect.

### [Go Ask Alice!](#)

Go Ask Alice! is Columbia University's health Q and A Internet site! Alice is glad you're here, and hopes you'll browse the archives in search of the answers to your health questions.

### [National Institute of Mental Health](#)

The NIMH mission is to reduce the burden of mental illness and behavioral disorders through research on mind, brain, and behavior. This public health mandate demands that we harness powerful scientific tools to achieve better understanding, treatment, and eventually, prevention of these disabling conditions that affect millions of Americans.

## **E. Advising Students with Disabilities**

A 1994 Association for the Study of Higher Education Report states the following about the general significance of advising:

In college, students suddenly find themselves in a new, strange, and, for many, a much more demanding and stressful environment than they have previously known. The quality of guidance they receive can markedly affect the degree to which they profit from their own development, clarify their personal values and goals, plan an appropriate development curriculum and other educational experiences, and feel emotionally secure, integrated, and at home on campus. . .

**Academic advising by faculty provides a choice opportunity for close contact between students and faculty out of class, one that can have a major effect on students' values, goals, and behavior and significantly increase their satisfaction with college and thus persistence (87).**

The Association's emphasis on the importance of the role of the advisor takes on even greater import when one considers the experiences of students with disabilities. Such students face the challenges listed above--and then some. Academic advisors are in a unique position to communicate to students with disabilities that they are indeed entitled to a full educational experience at WCU and that the University community is both invested in and committed to their successes. Individual departments will, of necessity, need to tailor the content of what their advisors communicate to students with disabilities. However, the following principles may serve as a general guide for advising students with disabilities:

1. Having a disability does not mean a lack of or loss of intelligence. This may seem obvious, but there are still many in our culture who associate "difference" of any kind with intellectual inferiority. Students with disabilities should be spoken to with respect, as should all students. Patronizing, condescending, or pitying tones are inappropriate.
2. Steering students with disabilities towards restrictive career options is prohibited by law. It is permissible to talk with students about the requirements of one's profession and also to consider the difficulties a given student may meet within a given profession. But foreclosing career options is in no way beneficial to disabled students.

3. Communicate fully your interest in learning about your advisee's particular condition. Find out specifically how it has impacted his/her education thus far, as well as his/her learning experiences at West Chester University. Don't hesitate to ask your advisees questions about any aspect of their experience as students which is unclear to you. At that same time, it is important to respect the privacy of students with disabilities. Note: Students do not have to disclose the exact nature of their disabilities unless they feel they want to; confidentiality is protected under the ADA.
4. The OSSD works hard to encourage self-advocacy among our students. Anything advisors can do to support this position is valuable. Encourage your advisees to take a leadership role in articulating what kinds of support they will need to succeed in your department or program.
5. Departmental procedures and requirements must be made available in alternate format on request. It is not the student's responsibility to scan said materials.
6. Keep in mind the value of designing a realistic course schedule. For example, a first year student who has serious difficulties with math may profit from deferring his mathematics courses until he has completed one or more semesters at WCU and has fully adjusted to university life. When necessary, consider and accommodate specific learning styles in relation to course schedules. For example, some students know that they do better with an afternoon schedule, as opposed to a morning schedule. Don't undervalue the importance of attending to such learning differences. In many cases, the hours at which students regularly take prescribed medications will influence their differential ability to perform at different times of the day. Students with mobility impairments frequently need a longer window of time to travel among classrooms, buildings, and/or the North and South campuses. Some students know that they perform much better when their classes are "block scheduled," one after another, while others successfully use free time between classes to review notes and digest material just obtained in the previous class. As a final example, a student who identifies herself as a "visual" learner will learn more effectively from a faculty member who is known to teach with substantial amounts of visual learning aids.
7. When necessary, accommodate specific learning styles when setting up course schedules. For example, some students know that they do better with an afternoon schedule, as opposed to a morning schedule. Don't undervalue the importance of attending to such learning differences. In many cases, the hours at which students regularly take prescribed medications will influence their ability to perform at different times of the day. Students with mobility impairments frequently need more time to travel among classrooms, buildings, and/or the North and South campuses. Some students know that they perform much better when their classes are "block scheduled," one after

another, while others successfully use free time between classes to review notes and digest material just obtained in the previous class. As a final example, a student who identifies herself as a "visual" learner will learn more effectively from a faculty member who is known to teach using lots of visual learning aids.

West Chester University currently has a policy of providing priority registration (two weeks before regular scheduling) for students registered with the OSSD who need early registration privileges to safeguard their ability to construct a workable schedule given their particular disabilities.

8. While advising, be willing to repeat, reword, and clarify the necessary information. Some learning disabled and cognitively impaired students have comprehension difficulties when confronted with rapid speech or large amounts of spoken information.
9. Don't hesitate to make referrals to the OSSD. Students previously undiagnosed can be enormously relieved to know there's a reason behind the serious difficulties they commonly experience as part of the learning process despite their best efforts.
10. Keep in mind the importance of your role as a mentor. Most faculty have profited from mentoring relationships during their academic career. Students with disabilities are prime candidates for the positive elements of a successful mentoring relationship and too often function outside of such invaluable experiences, feeling isolated and marginal.

## **F. ADA Classroom Modifications Appeals Procedure**

In circumstances where either the student or the faculty member is dissatisfied with the classroom modifications requested or provided, the following appeals procedure has been officially adopted by West Chester University.

### **Notification of classroom modifications**

For a student with a documented disability requesting classroom modifications, the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (OSSD) will issue a copy of a letter of modifications for the student to present to the faculty member of the course. This modifications letter will inform the faculty member of the student's specific academic needs. It is the responsibility of the student to present the letter of modifications to the faculty member. Students with disabilities are held to the same academic standards as all other students. Faculty members are not required to provide modifications prior to or retroactive from the date a

modifications letter is presented. Faculty members should contact the OSSD if they have questions about the modifications outlined.

### **Appeals regarding classroom modifications**

The university provides for an appeals process regarding classroom modifications. Any and all efforts will be made with the understanding that a timely resolution is in the best interest of all parties involved. While an appeal is under review, the student is expected to attend classes and do assignments to the best of his/her ability and faculty members are expected to provide reasonable classroom modifications to the best of their abilities. While an appeal is under review, the student and the faculty members of his/her courses are expected to make good faith efforts toward reasonable classroom modifications and engage in the educational process. An appeal reviewed under this policy does not alter or interfere with the student's right to file a complaint of discrimination on the basis of a disability with the Social Equity Office of the University or to pursue a formal complaint with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission or the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights.

- If a student has concerns with the determination of modifications by the OSSD, the student and the Director of OSSD should first meet in order to resolve the matter. If they do not reach agreement, the student may initiate a formal appeal by contacting in writing the Associate Provost (for undergraduate students) or the Graduate Dean (for Graduate Students, see section C).
  - If a faculty member has concerns about the application of the modifications to his or her course and/or a student feels the modifications are not being adequately implemented, the student and the professor should meet in order to resolve the problem. If these efforts are unsuccessful, either the faculty member or the student may request informal resolution through OSSD.
1. The Provost shall review the recommendation of the Panel and render a final decision on the matter in writing to the student, the faculty member, and the OSSD director within one week after receiving the Panel's recommendation. The student and/or the faculty member informs both OSSD and the chair of the department of the course within two work days following the meeting between the faculty member and the student about unresolved concerns for modifications in the course.
  2. Within one week after being informed of the concerns, OSSD will coordinate a meeting of the student, faculty member and/or chair in an attempt to achieve a resolution by meeting with the student and/or faculty member. During this meeting, with the consent of the student, OSSD may further advise the faculty member of the student's individual needs and the appropriateness of any recommended modifications.

3. If resolution is not accomplished after informal meetings between OSSD, the student, faculty member, and chair, a formal appeal may be started. Either the faculty member or the student may initiate the formal appeal by contacting OSSD in writing; as appropriate, the Associate Provost or the Graduate Dean will then be notified. The formal appeal will proceed as follows:
4. Within the two weeks following the initiation of the formal appeal, a Classroom Modifications Review Panel will meet. If the student involved is an undergraduate, the Associate Provost will convene the panel. If the student is a graduate student, the Graduate Dean will convene the Panel. The Panel will consist of a Dean of a School or College, a faculty member and a student each of whom will be from outside the department than the one in which the problem arose and selected from respective pools of individuals who have received training in ADA law and procedures; the Dean shall serve as Panel chair. Panel members will be informed in writing by the Associate Provost or Dean of the Graduate School at least a week in advance of the date, time and place that the Panel will be convened.
5. At the proceedings of the Panel, the representative of OSSD will present to the Panel relevant information about the nature of the student's disability and appropriate modifications. Because this information is confidential, the student's consent to the disclosure of the information must be obtained beforehand. In order to protect matters which are confidential, the Panel may, upon its own motion or upon the request of any involved party, hear statements in private without the other parties being present.
6. If the situation involves a challenge to the OSSD Director's denial of a requested modification, the OSSD shall present information and documentation showing why such modification is inappropriate.
7. If the dispute is related to the application of a modification in a particular course, the faculty member shall then present to the panel his or her concerns about the modification and shall have the opportunity to present any information or documentation which the faculty member believes is relevant. The Panel may request that the chairperson of the academic department in which the dispute arose, or other faculty members who teach the same course, present any concerns that they may have regarding how the modifications might create a fundamental alteration in the nature of the course.
8. The student shall have the opportunity, but shall not be required. To make a statement to the Panel and to present any information or documentation which the student believes is relevant. The Office of Social Equity will be available to the Panel for consultation on an "as needed" basis.
9. It shall be the function of the Panel to make a recommendation to the Provost

concerning the appropriateness of the requested modifications and/or a revision of the modifications. The Panel shall deliberate immediately following the meeting and shall render its recommendation by majority vote. The decision and any dissenting opinions of the Panel shall be sent in writing to the Provost within three work days by the Panel chair.

10. The Provost shall review the recommendation of the Panel and render a final decision on the matter in writing to the student, the faculty member, and the OSSD director within one week after receiving the Panel's recommendation.

## **V. Student Guide**

### **A. Welcome to West Chester University!**

This Handbook is designed to help make your transition to college as easy as possible. Success for students with disabilities depends primarily on two factors: motivation and the ability of the student to make effective use of accommodations.

There are many support services on campus available for students with disabilities. The Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (OSSD) is responsible for assuring reasonable accommodations, program access, and support to physically and learning disabled students as noted in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act mandated the following requirements regarding post-secondary educational institutions and students with disabilities: (a) admission policies and practices that do not discriminate on the basis of disability; (b) access to facilities and activities; (c) testing procedures with appropriate accommodations; and (d) provision of auxiliary aids, services, and assistive technology. West Chester University is committed to serving all students with disabilities as defined by federal regulations.

Students must provide documentation of their disability before receiving services. In the case of a medical disability, documentation from a physician is appropriate. In the case of a learning disability, documentation must be submitted from one of two sources:

1. Students diagnosed with a learning disability prior to graduation from secondary school may submit the psychoeducational evaluation on file at their high school. Typically, this evaluation should be recent, that is, within three years of its completion.
2. Students diagnosed after high school must submit a psychoeducational evaluation performed by a licensed psychologist or educational specialist, usually completed within three years of the request for services. It is the student's responsibility to arrange and pay for all testing necessary to qualify for disabilities services.

## **B. Diagnostic Testing and Referrals**

Testing to diagnose a learning disability is the responsibility of the student. The OSSD can provide information and assistance in deciding on and locating testing services. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation will evaluate Pennsylvania residents who meet certain criteria. Please call the OVR for further information.

Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficit Disorder often require follow-up support services. The OSSD can help with screenings and referrals for independent services. The OSSD should be contacted when follow-up assistance is desired.

## **C. Obtaining Accommodations**

Once the OSSD has appropriate documentation on file, the student may request accommodations. The OSSD staff will work with the student to determine what accommodations are appropriate using the existing documentation and self-analysis check-lists that prompt an examination of needs in the context of college classes.

The Letter of Accommodation explains the rights and responsibilities of students under the law along with a list of recommended accommodations (see Appendix D). A copy of this letter should be presented to each professor at the beginning of each semester. It is the responsibility of the student to request accommodations, but they are guaranteed by law and University policy. In the case of test modifications, it is prudent to remind faculty at least a week before tests of your specific accommodation needs so arrangements can be made. In instances where test proctoring will be necessary, the test proctoring form must be submitted to OSSD at least two weeks prior to the date of the exam (See Appendix F). Any questions about procedure that you are not comfortable with and any conflict should be brought to the attention of the OSSD. In the case of failure on the part of the faculty to provide accommodations, contact the OSSD immediately so appropriate steps can be taken. It is the responsibility of the student to request the accommodations, present the letters informing faculty what has been requested, and contact the OSSD when an accommodation has not been provided.

## **D. Financial Aid**

According to federal law, students with documented disabilities may take a reduced course load. The chief Financial Aids Officer on campus has the authority to declare a student with a disability “full-time” even though he or she is enrolled in less than a full-time load. This means that you may extend your degree (disabled students are eligible for financial aid for five years), apply for a waiver for full-time status in any semester, and remain in good standing (active pursuit of a degree) despite having less than the required number of credits for a

year. Applying for reduced course load status will enable you to remain in the dorms and engage in extra-curricular activities as well.

Financial aid and insurance agencies that require “full-time” status will be informed that the University considers students with disabilities full-time even if they are registered for less than twelve credits. There may be instances, however, where a family’s insurance carrier, for example, is legally permitted to make their own determination as to a student’s eligibility for coverage, despite the status WCU has already agreed upon for a given student. Additionally, federal student guaranteed loans (e.g. Pell and Stafford) stipulate their own course load levels independent of any university policy. Students on scholarship should know that they are eligible for a pro-rated amount of stipend for lesser courseloads; in other words, nine hours of course work would entitle a student to 3/4 of the full stipend amount. PHEAA loans are the exception to this policy.

Students with disabilities frequently face additional expenses necessary for their success in college not incurred by other students. Such expenses may be related to special equipment needs, personal assistance or study needs, transportation, and medical expenses. Students should be sure to carefully document and inform the campus Financial Aid Officer of any disability related expenses necessary to ensure the attainment of their educational goals. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation does provide additional financial support for tuition, books, computers, and other personal use equipment for authorized clients. All Financial Aid inquiries should be directed to the Financial Aid office.

### **E. Priority Registration**

For those who need it, priority registration is available each semester, two weeks prior to regular registration. The OSSD will send out reminders, but it is the responsibility of the student to contact his/her advisor about self-scheduling.

### **F. Exceptions to Policy and Substitutions**

Among the areas that the University considers for exceptions to policy are degree requirements and course substitutions. The University will consider reduced course loads and extensions of time to complete degree requirements if academically necessary or due to medical problems (see Appendix K). Contact the OSSD and your department chair for specific course offerings and substitutes. For foreign languages, the University will accept a clear statement or finding from an appropriate evaluator that the student cannot succeed in a foreign language course due to his/her disability. Otherwise, students must take the basic course with the provision that they will be allowed to withdraw and then apply for a substitution (courses taught in English as Culture Clusters) if, in the opinion of a faculty member, they have no reasonable expectation of success

and the OSSD concurs that the foreign language difficulty is disability-related. Registration for these courses must be done with the assistance of the OSSD.

WCU recognizes that students with disabilities may have extenuating circumstances that will affect the length of time it takes to complete degree requirements.

The University wants students to use their time productively and encourages students to work cooperatively with the OSSD to optimize their success. However, some recommendations for appropriate academic accommodations, such as reduced course loads and preparatory courses (Q courses) may in and of themselves delay graduation.

Late withdrawal or grade changes must have the approval of the professor. Conflicts must be taken to the appropriate administrator or panel. The OSSD should be consulted when conflicts or questions about procedure occur.

## **G. Communication with Faculty**

Understanding your disability requires not only self-knowledge but honesty. Most students have a difficult time admitting their weaknesses to themselves or others. It is important to realize that everyone has strengths and needs. We all have a learning style that is unique, but the potential impact of your disability requires a closer look at your learning needs because of the risks involved when those needs are overlooked. You are the person who needs to become the expert in how you learn. You will teach the rest of us how to give you the best opportunity to get an education. Tools that can help you to become your own best advocate:

- Start by reading your diagnostic evaluation and questioning people who have taught you.
- Work with the OSSD to gain a better understanding of your learning style and services that will improve your skills. Checklists that help focus you on the specifics of how you learn and help you to translate your needs into concrete academic terms are very useful.
- Learn what solutions have been previously attempted before for students who experience similar difficulties and what would work for you by talking to other students and the OSSD staff.
- Take advantage of the help available through agencies like OVR and Blind and Visual Services that can improve your skills and give you more confidence in your abilities.
- Don't be afraid to take chances with courses and professors who may resemble situations that have frustrated you in the past. With appropriate help, obstacles can be overcome.

Self-advocacy is the goal of all help rendered by the OSSD. It is in the student's best interest to learn early on how to communicate his/her needs in a straight forward manner to faculty. Self-advocacy must be extended to communications

with tutors and advisors as well. Most faculty members are empathetic, but they may be uninformed about your disability and how it affects you in their class. They may want to help, but may not know how. Some will act busy and others distracted which can give the wrong impression during a first meeting. After class many faculty are rushed and preoccupied with their next class/obligation. Presenting your accommodations letter and making an appointment during office hours (printed on the syllabus) is what should be expected to be accomplished at that time. During your subsequent meeting(s), be prepared to answer questions about your disability. You are under no obligation to justify your rights to accommodations.

The following is a synopsis of the recommended stages to follow when advocating for yourself with faculty, advisors, and tutors:

1. Present your accommodation letter.
2. Make an appointment to discuss your needs.
3. Prepare a “script” with needs and suggestions.
4. Present your request in an assertive (not aggressive) manner that commands respect.
5. Follow-up to remind professors of test modification requests at least one week before the exam date.

Defer all questions you cannot handle or feel uncomfortable about to the OSSD. When they are fully informed, faculty will be more helpful in anticipating issues, accommodating requests, and making modifications to tests and instruction methods.

The OSSD staff can help prepare you in a number of ways for effective self-advocacy. The first step is complete and accurate information. The OSSD has “Guidelines for Professors” that you can use in your discussions with faculty. This checklist details behaviors/experiences in the classroom which may impede the ability of students to learn effectively. We recommend that you read carefully through this list, checking off those behaviors/ experiences which you commonly experience. From this completed checklist, we will create a document that reports on your specific areas of need. This document also offers suggestions for faculty and mentions the strategies you need to adopt in order to succeed academically. Lastly, practice talking about your disability and the accommodations you need with someone you are comfortable with, making your case in an assertive manner that promotes respect.

Remember, this is a relatively new phenomenon to professors as well. Although ignorance of the law is inexcusable, most faculty have had only a handful of students with disabilities and few have had the opportunity to work with a particular disabled student across time. In fact, one of the problems you may

have to overcome is being compared to a previous student who was completely unlike you.

## **H. Aids, Tutors and other Supports**

Readers, scribes (transcribers), adaptive equipment, and aides will be provided for students as deemed necessary by the OSSD. Sufficient notice (two weeks is recommended) must be provided to schedule supports not generally used in daily classes but necessary for examinations. (See the OSSD section for a complete description.)

In the case of study skills tutoring, students are encouraged to fill out a self-analysis checklist on "Learning Style" so a proper determination of needs and strengths can be made. To obtain an appointment with tutors with special training and coaching skills, contact the OSSD (Ext. 3217).

## **I. Campus Resources**

### **The Learning Resource Assistance Center (LARC)**

<http://www.wcupa.edu/ussss/larc/>

Tutors can be provided for most introductory level courses and some higher level courses. Contact that office extension (2535) early in the semester to request one on one tutoring.

### **The Writing Center**

<http://www.wcupa.edu/academics/writingcenter/>

The writing consultants will help with any writing at any stage of the writing process. Schedule a regular appointment with the same person for several weeks or the entire semester, so he/she can get to know you and provide consistent advice.

### **Counseling Services**

<http://www.wcupa.edu/SERVICES/stu.cou/>

The staff of psychologists and therapists can help with concerns you may be having regarding anxiety, home life, social life, depression, drugs, suicide, and many other issues.

### **The Wellness Center**

<http://www.wcupa.edu/services/stu.inf/>

The Wellness Center provides information and confidential referrals for health related concerns. The Wellness Center is closely affiliated with the Student Health Center which is staffed by nurses and a part/time physician.

### **The Office of Residence Life and Housing**

<http://www.wcupa.edu/services/stu.lif/>

Residence Life is responsible for special requests that relate to living on campus. All such requests should be made during the regularly scheduled notification period in the spring and for incoming students on the forms made available from Housing. Requests will be honored as the supply of housing stock allows. Decisions will be based not only on students' desires but safety, the availability of trained staff, and proximity to services as well.

### **J. ADA Classroom Modifications Appeals Procedure**

In circumstances where either the student or the faculty member is dissatisfied with the classroom modifications requested or provided, the following appeals procedure has been officially adopted by West Chester University.

#### **Notification of classroom modifications**

For a student with a documented disability requesting classroom modifications, the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (OSSD) will issue a copy of a letter of modifications for the student to present to the faculty member of the course. This modifications letter will inform the faculty member of the student's specific academic needs. It is the responsibility of the student to present the letter of modifications to the faculty member. Students with disabilities are held to the same academic standards as all other students. Faculty members are not required to provide modifications prior to or retroactive from the date a modifications letter is presented. Faculty members should contact the OSSD if they have questions about the modifications outlined.

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The university provides for an appeals process regarding classroom modifications. Any and all efforts will be made with the understanding that a timely resolution is in the best interest of all parties involved. While an appeal is under review, the student is expected to attend classes and do assignments to the best of his/her ability and faculty members are expected to provide reasonable classroom modifications to the best of their abilities. While an appeal is under review, the student and the faculty members of his/her courses are expected to make good faith efforts toward reasonable classroom modifications and engage in the educational process. An appeal reviewed under this policy does not alter or interfere with the student's right to file a complaint of

discrimination on the basis of a disability with the Social Equity Office of the University or to pursue a formal complaint with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission or the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights.

- If a student has concerns with the determination of modifications by the OSSD, the student and the Director of OSSD should first meet in order to resolve the matter. If they do not reach agreement, the student may initiate a formal appeal by contacting in writing the Associate Provost (for undergraduate students) or the Graduate Dean (for Graduate Students) (see section C).
  - If a faculty member has concerns about the application of the modifications to his or her course and/or a student feels the modifications are not being adequately implemented, the student and the professor should meet in order to resolve the problem. If these efforts are unsuccessful, either the faculty member or the student may request informal resolution through OSSD.
1. The student and/or the faculty member informs both OSSD and the chair of the department of the course within two work days following the meeting between the faculty member and the student about unresolved concerns for modifications in the course.
  2. Within one week after being informed of the concerns, OSSD will coordinate a meeting of the student, faculty member and/or chair in an attempt to achieve a resolution by meeting with the student and/or faculty member. During this meeting, with the consent of the student, OSSD may further advise the faculty member of the student's individual needs and the appropriateness of any recommended modifications.
  3. If resolution is not accomplished after informal meetings between OSSD, the student, faculty member, and chair, a formal appeal may be started. Either the faculty member or the student may initiate the formal appeal by contacting OSSD in writing; as appropriate, the Associate Provost or the Graduate Dean will then be notified. The formal appeal will proceed as follows:
  4. Within the two weeks following the initiation of the formal appeal, a Classroom Modifications Review Panel will meet. If the student involved is an undergraduate, the Associate Provost will convene the panel. If the student is a graduate student, the Graduate Dean will convene the Panel. The Panel will consist of a Dean of a School or College, a faculty member and a student each of whom will be from outside the department than the one in which the problem arose and selected from respective pools of individuals who have received training in ADA law and procedures; the Dean shall serve as Panel chair. Panel members will be informed in writing by the Associate Provost or Dean of the Graduate School at least a week in advance of the date, time and

place that the Panel will be convened.

5. At the proceedings of the Panel, the representative of OSSD will present to the Panel relevant information about the nature of the student's disability and appropriate modifications. Because this information is confidential, the student's consent to the disclosure of the information must be obtained beforehand. In order to protect matters which are confidential, the Panel may, upon its own motion or upon the request of any involved party, hear statements in private without the other parties being present.
6. If the situation involves a challenge to the OSSD Director's denial of a requested modification, the OSSD shall present information and documentation showing why such modification is inappropriate.
7. If the dispute is related to the application of a modification in a particular course, the faculty member shall then present to the panel his or her concerns about the modification and shall have the opportunity to present any information or documentation which the faculty member believes is relevant. The Panel may request that the chairperson of the academic department in which the dispute arose, or other faculty members who teach the same course, present any concerns that they may have regarding how the modifications might create a fundamental alteration in the nature of the course.
8. The student shall have the opportunity, but shall not be required to make a statement to the Panel and to present any information or documentation which the student believes is relevant.

The Office of Social Equity will be available to the Panel for consultation on an "as needed" basis.

9. It shall be the function of the Panel to make a recommendation to the Provost concerning the appropriateness of the requested modifications and/or a revision of the modifications. The Panel shall deliberate immediately following the meeting and shall render its recommendation by majority vote. The decision and any dissenting opinions of the Panel shall be sent in writing to the Provost within three work days by the Panel chair.
10. The Provost shall review the recommendation of the Panel and render a final decision on the matter in writing to the student, the faculty member, and the OSSD director within one week after receiving the Panel's recommendation.

#### **K. Delta Alpha Pi**

Because of the negative stereotyping associated with disability, students with disabilities have been reluctant to identify themselves publicly. Delta Alpha Pi International Honor Society presents an opportunity to change that perception by recognizing students with disabilities for their academic accomplishments.

#### Delta

D for Disability, but also the triangle, symbol of strength. Members of Delta Alpha Pi demonstrate strength as leaders on campus to help break down the barriers of negativism. Also, they serve as mentors and role models for other students with disabilities.

#### Alpha

A for Achievement. Alpha is the beginning and academic achievement much come first. But also for advocacy because students must advocate for themselves before they can advocate for others. Members of Delta Alpha Pi enhance advocacy skills for themselves and for the rights of all individuals with disabilities to be included fully in society.

#### Pi

P for Pride, pride in academic achievement and in other accomplishments, not just as students with disabilities but as members of the university community. Pi is a mathematical symbol that we all learned to use in elementary arithmetic classes. So Pi is an appropriate symbol for education. Members of Delta Alpha Pi participate in activities designed to educate the community and society regarding the need to apply the principles of universal design in learning. For membership to DAP students must:

- Present with a documented disability and be registered with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities.
- Demonstrate an interest in disability issues
- Undergraduate students must have:
  - A minimum of 24 credits
  - Earned an overall GPA of 3.10
- Graduate students must have:
  - A minimum of 18 credits
  - Earned an overall GPA of 3.30

#### **L. Ambassador Program**

The OSSD Ambassador Program is aimed at providing high school students information about the transition from high school to college as a student with a disability. Ambassadors are volunteers from the WCU student body who are registered with the OSSD. Ambassadors make visits to local area high schools

and share their experiences and answer students' questions about college life. Ambassadors are also asked to help out with Shadow Day in the spring.

On a typical school visit, 2-5 Ambassadors accompany OSSD staff. The staff begins the presentation by talking about the different types of accommodations and how to receive them at the college level. The types of accommodations available through the office are explained at this time. Academic coaching is a unique service at WCU. The other Pennsylvania state schools do not offer this service. The ambassadors are then asked to speak to the students, first introducing themselves with their names and majors-there are no need to disclose your disability. The ambassadors then answer a list of relevant questions to the college bound high school population.

### **M. Shadow Day**

Shadow Day provides high school seniors and juniors with disabilities, who are college bound with an opportunity to experience college life for a day. College bound students with disabilities may have a difficult time successfully transitioning to college. Shadow Day allows the students to experience a day on campus and ask questions.

The day begins with a panel of the OSSD student ambassadors discussing the differences between high school and college. The students then shared some personal experiences of how to make this transition more effectively. The students are then paired with WCU volunteers to shadow them to a morning class. In the afternoon the students have lunch and participate in small group discussions on disabilities and transitioning to college. This activity is facilitated by the OSSD academic coaches.

### **N. Accessible Transportation**

#### **Transportation Information**

WCU is committed to providing consistent and reliable transportation for students with disabilities that is comparable to services provided for non-disabled students. WCU will provide an on demand transportation service comparable to the University's fixed route transportation for non-disabled students to supplement public transportation where it is inadequate. The on demand transportation service will enable access for students with disabilities to all programs and services normally designed for student use.

The University will provide on-campus transportation for students with disabilities to all points normally serviced by the WCU bus routes.

In cases when off campus transportation is normally made available for students, the University will provide accessible transportation for students with disabilities.

If off campus transportation is not typically made available for students then providing accessible transportation for students with disabilities is optional depending on the availability of the vehicle and the driver.

In the event that the vehicle is available and a university organization provides a volunteer driver, the volunteer driver must:

- Have no record of motor vehicle violations greater than parking tickets.
- Have no record of criminal convictions, which would reflect upon his/her ability to drive.
- Be instructed in proper use of the vehicle by Public Safety
- Be an employee of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Responsibility for making arrangements for accommodated service rests with the student. A routine schedule can be arranged in advance with adequate notification. Students are encouraged to arrange for transportation needs at the time classes are being scheduled by contacting Marty Patwell (OSSD).

Students who have non-routine on campus transportation needs should provide adequate notification to Public Safety to arrange service. The Public Safety driver, if needed, will assist passengers in safely boarding, securing wheel chairs, and disembarking passengers from the van. The Public Safety driver will be properly trained and sensitive to the needs of mobility impaired individuals. Emergency and special event transportation will be coordinated through Public Safety.

### **O. Placements, Internships, and Student Teaching**

The accessibility of on and off-campus placements, (assistantships, internships, student teaching, etc.) is the responsibility of the department(s) and the student involved. The OSSD has limited adaptive equipment to loan, but it is in everyone's best interest that placements are chosen that have staff and equipment that can accommodate students' needs. Technical support cannot be provided by the University for installation and maintenance of adaptive equipment at any student teaching, assistantship, or internship site. The University is responsible for ensuring that supervisory staff at off-campus sites are knowledgeable about and comply with the non-discrimination aspects of the ADA.

### **P. DISABILITY RELATED RESOURCES**

AHEAD (Association on Higher Education and Disability)

U Mass Boston  
100 Morrissey Blvd.  
Boston, MA 02125-3393  
(617) 287-3880  
<http://www.ahead.org>

*Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic* offers texts on audiotape (cassettes) and some materials on electronic text (disks). Applications are available at OSSD. To order books, call (610) 527-2222.

CHADD (Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorders)  
8181 Professional Place, Suite 201  
Landover, MD 20785  
1-800-233-4050  
<http://www.chadd.org>

HEATH Resource Center (National Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Disabilities)  
American Council on Education  
One DuPont Circle, NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 939-9300 or 1-800-544-3284  
<http://www.acenet.edu>

Learning Disabilities Association of America  
4156 Library Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15234-1349  
(412) 341-1515  
<http://www.ldanatl.org>

National Center for Learning Disabilities  
381 Part Avenue South, Suite 1401  
New York, NY 10016  
(212) 545-7510 or 1-888-575-7373  
<http://www.nclld.org>

For information on legal rights and accommodations:

U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Penn. Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20530-0001  
Toll Free ADA line: 1-800-514-0301 (voice) or 1-800-514-0383 (TDD)  
<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm>

