

Section 25 - A Faculty Guide to Accommodating Students with Disabilities

Introduction:

All students at Cambridge College deserve every opportunity to learn and benefit from the richness of the academic environment that we provide. Clearly, we are in a position to help them to achieve their full personal, professional and academic potential. However, in an effort to provide the best possible education for all students, it is important that we additionally recognize some of their limitations, and particularly important that we accommodate our students with disabilities.

For most students with disabilities, such accommodations can usually be achieved by the use of appropriate teaching strategies. The purpose of this faculty guide is to inform you of the procedure for assisting students who have disabilities at Cambridge College, including their responsibility to communicate to us their special requirements.

By knowing more about the academic challenges faced by our students with disabilities we will be in a better position to help them meet their educational goals. Achieving these goals is not merely a matter of good judgment. Many of us lack knowledge and sensitivity simply because of our lack of experience in teaching students with disabilities.

Americans With Disabilities Act (1990):

President George Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) into law on July 26th, 1990. This law reinforces the concept of reasonable accommodations in education and mandates greater access to employment, transportation and public accommodations. There is also a legal imperative, embodied in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, often referred to as the “Civil Rights Act” for people with disabilities. It states, in part: No otherwise qualified individual with a disability 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.

In order to comply with this mandate, colleges such as Cambridge College, that receive federal assistance must assure that the same educational programs and services offered to other students be available to students with disabilities. In order to accomplish this goal, programmatic and physical access must be provided for students. This means more than just removing architectural barriers and providing support services. It will also require that reasonable accommodations be applied to the instructional process to ensure full educational opportunity.

Procedure for Providing Accommodations:

Cambridge College has established procedures to assist students and faculty in achieving full educational access for all students with disabilities. These are as follows:

1. Students requesting services as a result of a disability should be referred to the Director of Student Services office at Cambridge College.
2. Upon referral, the Director of Student Services/ADA and staff will collaborate with the student to provide and arrange for appropriate accommodations, both architectural and instructional.
3. Once the accommodations have been decided upon, this information will be communicated to instructors via the Student Services office, giving details of the instructional and classroom accommodations needed by the student.
4. Faculty with additional questions should contact the Director of Student Services/ADA.

Documenting Disabilities:

Regardless of disability, hidden or visible, all students are required to provide appropriate documentation of that disability to the Director of Student Services. Students are not required to provide such documentation to any other College administrator, Dean or instructor. Instructors requiring verification of a student's disability should contact the Director of Student Services. However, due to the sensitive nature of some disabilities and the right to privacy, specific details of a student's documented disability will not be released to faculty. It is only necessary to know that the Director of Student Services has received verification of a student's disability and that specific accommodations have been approved.

Faculty Responsibility:

Faculty members receiving letters of accommodation from the office of the Director of Student Services/ADA should carefully review all information therein. If faculty members have questions or concerns about the information contained in the letter, they should contact the Director of Student Services immediately. If you do not contact the Director of Student Services, it will be assumed that there are no questions concerning a particular student's accommodation needs.

Reasonable accommodation in the classroom is an individual civil right. Once the accommodations have been identified and agreed upon, they must be provided. Most classroom accommodations are easy to arrange and do not require much reorganization on the part of faculty. However, if assistance is needed please contact the Director of Student Services, Ext: 200.

Examples of Accommodations:

Classroom accommodations are an attempt to level the playing field of opportunity for students with disabilities. They have been designed for each student based on appropriate documentation. Accommodations do not require that the instructor adjust evaluations of a student's academic performance. Instead, the accommodations facilitate a student with a disability being able to learn the material presented.

Examples of accommodations are:

- Tape recording lectures
- Classroom assisted-listening devices
- Enlarged print on syllabi
- Faculty member standing facing class when speaking
- Assigning priority seating for students who need it
- Allowing extra time for submission of papers
- Allowing extra planning time for presentations in class
- Use of scribes
- Advanced copies of reading lists and syllabi

Electronic classroom assisted-listening devices are available through the Office of Student Services.

Failure to Accommodate:

The accommodations outlined by the Director of Student Services are not optional. They must be provided under two federal pieces of legislation (Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504; and the ADA). If you have questions concerning a specific accommodation, it is the responsibility of the faculty member to contact the Director of Student Services and make these concerns known. Due to the number of students receiving accommodations and the number of faculty receiving accommodation letters, it is unfortunately not possible for the Director of Student Services to speak with individual faculty members prior to the letters being sent.

Student Responsibility:

Students with disabilities are responsible for ensuring that Cambridge College is aware of the disabilities that will require accommodations in a classroom setting or the general academic process. They should contact the Office of Student Services, as this is the only Cambridge College designated service responsible for classroom accommodations. After providing appropriate documentation of the disability requiring accommodation, the Office of Student Services will work with the student to determine which accommodations the student most needs. At this point, the Office of Student Services will send out letters of accommodation to faculty.

Students are responsible for requesting accommodations in a timely manner, in order to allow time for faculty to plan for those accommodations.

Student with disabilities are responsible for the following:

- Achieving and maintaining the same academic standards as students who are non-disabled
- Attending class
- Participating in classes
- Behaving appropriately
- Providing timely notification of individual needs

Preferred Language:

The term “handicapped” is generally not in common usage. People with disabilities prefer that you focus on their individuality, not their disability. By the same token, the terms “able-bodied,” “physically challenged” and “differently abled” are also discouraged.

“People with disabilities” is the preferred usage and avoids objectification by stressing the humanity of the individual.

- People who are deaf – **NOT** “the deaf”
- People who are visually impaired - **NOT** “the visually impaired”
- People with disabilities - **NOT** “the disabled”
- Wheelchair user or uses a wheelchair – **NOT** confined to a wheelchair or wheelchair bound
- Person with HIV/AIDS – **NOT** victim of AIDS or AIDS sufferer
- Had Polio – **NOT** polio victim