

Working With a Student Who Has a Learning Disability

- Learning disabilities may be invisible, but they are no less debilitating than hearing, vision or mobility disabilities. Yet many individuals with learning disabilities feel attacked and undermined by the disbelief of others. If you have questions about the validity of a student's disability, please talk to the Director of Services for Students with Disabilities about the qualifying documentation. Be aware, however, that documentation of a disability is considered a *medical record* and cannot be shared with faculty. Do not put the student "on the line," so to speak. Such challenges are demoralizing to the student and do nothing to support his or her success.
- Communicate instructions both verbally and in writing. During a one-to-one conference, encourage the student to take notes or write a summary of the conversation. Solicit frequent feedback to determine if your comments and instructions are clearly understood.
- In general, good teaching for students with learning disabilities is simply good teaching period. Clear objectives, high expectations, interactive pedagogy and a genuine concern for the individual are best practices.
- Extended time on exams is the most frequently suggested and implemented accommodation. Qualifying students can pick up proctoring blue cards if they will be taking their tests in Ramstad 106. **It is up to the student to give an instructor at least 48 hours notice for any exam accommodation.**
- Note takers may be hired for a student with a learning disability. Services for Students with Disabilities will hire, train and arrange payment. You may be asked to announce the position in the class.
- **A student with a disability who does not attend class is not eligible to receive notes. A note taker is in no way a substitute for going to class.**
- Some flexibility with deadlines may be requested. This is not a routine accommodation and must be negotiated by the student. It also is best if assignments are given early and, if the assignment is lengthy or complex, it helps to encourage "check-in" appointments to monitor progress.
- Writing on a computer also helps a student whose disability impacts spelling. Even if a professor says that spelling errors do not count, a paper riddled with such errors is hard to understand and makes a bad impression. Students want their knowledge to shine through rather than their writing disability. Using a computer for essay exams is an option when students test in our office. Note that these computers have no Internet access.
- The student is responsible for making classroom and academic needs known. The faculty member is responsible for assuring program accessibility.

* Anytime there are questions or concerns, please talk with the student in private. The Director of Disability Support Services can assist if there are any problems. Please call x7206 if you have questions.