

Fast Facts for Instructors

Teaching Students with Medical/Mobility Impairments

Description

Mobility impairments are often due to conditions such as cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, or spinal cord injury. Students may use crutches, braces, or a wheelchair, and in a few instances, may be accompanied to class by an aide. Medical impairments are often invisible disabilities, caused by such conditions as arthritis, asthma, cancer, orthopedic limitations, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, or seizure disorder. The student may have limited energy; difficulty walking, standing, or sitting for a long time; or other characteristics, such as an inability to write.

Functional limitations may be episodic for some students who may experience dizziness, disorientation, and difficulty breathing during a recurrence. For example, with asthma or a seizure disorder, a student may have periods when they function without any accommodations, but at other times their functional limitations are quite severe.

Even with the same disability, students with mobility or medical impairments may have a wide variety of different characteristics. For example, persons who have experienced a spinal cord injury are likely to show differing degrees of limitation. They may require different types of class accommodations or may need no accommodations, depending upon functional limitations.

Guidelines

Exam Accommodations: Students who have upper body limitations who are unable to use their hands will likely need exam accommodations. These accommodations may include extended time, a scribe, or voice recognition software. Assist the student in coordinating these accommodations with Disability Services (DS).

Access to Class Notes: Students who are unable to use their hands may need assistance in finding a note taker, or they may elect to audio record lectures.

Tardiness: Some students may be unable to quickly get from one location to another due to situations that are out of their control- such as broken elevators, inclement weather, or construction/ architectural barriers that may affect their ability to navigate the campus environment. For these reasons, a student may be late getting to class. For guidance in these situations, please contact the DS office.

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Seating Arrangements: In a few situations, a student may be unable to use the type of chair provided in a particular classroom. DS will assist the student in making special seating arrangements.

Inaccessible Classroom: If your classroom is inaccessible and a student is unable to get into your classroom, your class location must be moved to an accessible location. Call DS immediately for assistance in getting your class location changed.

Laboratory Courses: Some students may need assistance for laboratory courses. These students may need to be paired with an able-bodied student or a teaching assistant. Consult DS if you need assistance in making these arrangements. A student using a wheelchair may need a lower lab table to accommodate the wheelchair.

Missed Exams or Classes: Some students can experience an exacerbation of a chronic condition that may require absense or hospitalization. These students may need flexibility in deadlines to complete incomplete work- if possible. Other arrangements may be necessary if a student misses a class excessively due to a disability. PLEASE NOTE that student's still have to meet the essential functions of the class and should explore the requirements of the class, Students are encouraged to meet with their instructors at the start of the term to discuss what their plan of action will be if there is an exacerbation that affects their class performance. Students should also realize that they may need to withdraw from a class if they do not meet the goals of the class or are unable to complete the work that is required.

Field Trips: Make arrangements for field trips or other out of classroom experiences as soon as possible so that all students are able to experience all class teaming opportunities. Consult with DS about arrangements if you need assistance.

Considerations for Teaching All Students with and without Disabilities

Universal Design for Learning: “Universal design is an approach to designing course instruction, materials, and content to benefit people of all learning styles without adaptation or retrofitting.” By incorporating Universal Design principles in instruction that allow students with disabilities access to the classroom, you may also be designing instruction that works better for everyone in the class. Classes designed with this concept in mind offer a variety of methods of content presentation, flexible teaching strategies, and options for demonstrating mastery of course content.

Expectations: Although many students with disabilities need accommodations, expect these students to perform at a level on par with their peers. Do not have a special grading scale or other criteria.

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Guided Notes on the Web: Providing students with guided notes that they can access through the Web prior to class assists them with focusing on the appropriate material. It will help them to learn more effectively in the classroom as well as take better notes.

Web-Enhanced Learning: If classroom materials are available on the Web, check with Disability Service's Alternate Media Department to check if the web format is compatible with assistive technology.

Comprehensive Syllabus: A comprehensive syllabus with clearly delineated statements about expectation is helpful to students who need help with structure and organization.

Inappropriate Behavior: Students with disabilities are subject to the same code of conduct required of any student at Columbus State. If there are incidences of inappropriate behavior, meet privately to discuss issues of behavior and encourage students to seek help. Give concise and honest feedback about behaviors that are inappropriate. If there are situations involving threats or abusive behavior, call Public Safety. If the student is so disruptive that he/she prevents you from effectively teaching your class, call the Office of Student Conduct. You are always welcome to consult with DS. These situations are not likely to occur, but it is wise to have a plan.

Remember...

It is your responsibility to support Columbus State's commitment to equal access to education. This information will assist you when you have students with disabilities in your class; staff at DS are also available to help you. Some key elements are:

- **Alternate Format:** Many students need print materials in alternative format (scanned, audio, Braille, or enlarged). Work quickly with DS and the student to make sure students get materials converted in a timely fashion.
- **Verification of a Disability:** Students should provide you with a Letter of Accommodation. DS produces these letters only for students who are registered with this office and for whom documentation of the disability is on file.
- **Class Notes:** Some students with disabilities have difficulty taking notes. They may need your assistance in getting a volunteer note taker, or you may provide them a copy of your notes and/or copies of overheads and other class materials.
- **Test Administration Request:** In order for DS to administer your exam to your student, you must complete the Test Administration Request form. Not only does the form help facilitate the exam accommodation process, but it also helps DS administer the exams using your specific requirements for the administration of the exam.

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