

Creating Access Together

An Introduction for Faculty/Staff

The Accessibility Services office collaborates with the college community to create accessible educational environments for students with disabilities. “*Disability*” used in this context is a broad term. It includes mental health conditions, ADHD, chronic health issues, learning disabilities, temporary injuries (e.g. broken bone, concussion), and sensory/physical disabilities.

Creating access is not just the responsibility of Accessibility Services. Rather, **creating access is a shared responsibility--and valuable opportunity-- for the entire college community.**

Access Matters

- **Students with disabilities make up an important cross-section of Columbus State**, approximately 10% of the college student population.
- **By working together**, we can eliminate barriers and provide equitable educational experiences for students with disabilities.
- **By providing access**, we allow students to learn and be evaluated fairly, based on their merits (not based on their disabilities or barriers).
- **By eliminating barriers**, we create pathways for students with disabilities to achieve their full potential, leading to higher retention, graduation, and employment rates.

From course curricula to software programs to physical spaces on campus, we can create access in two ways: (1) **universal design**, and (2) **accommodations**.

Universal Design

“**Universal design**” is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. Practicing universal design principles for our physical spaces, curricula, and student services can often minimize or eliminate the need for accommodations. This is truly the most equitable experience for students with disabilities, as they don’t have to do anything more or different than their peers in order to gain the same level of access.

Universal design (by definition) is not just beneficial for students with disabilities, but for all students. For example, captioned videos benefit students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing as well as ESL students and students with more visual-based learning styles.

For more universal design examples/resources:

- [Universal Design: Making Classroom and Online Materials Accessible to All \(source: CSCC Accessible Media Team\)](#)
- [About Universal Design for Learning \(source: CAST\)](#)

Accommodations

“Accommodations” are reasonable modifications made to college policies/procedures in order to minimize or eliminate disability-related barriers. Registering with Accessibility Services is the official channel for students to be approved for accommodations.

Common academic accommodations include:

- **Exam accommodations** (e.g. extended time; distraction-reduced testing space)
- **Note-Taking Assistance** (e.g. audio recording; peer note-takers; instructor notes)
- **Assistive Technology** (e.g. screen-readers, text-to-speech software)
- **Accessible Course Materials** (e.g. digital textbooks, captioned videos)
- **Sign Language Interpreting/Transcribing** (for Deaf/Hard of Hearing Students)

Registering with Accessibility Services and Requesting Accommodations:

To register with Accessibility Services, students provide verifying documentation and meet with their assigned Access Advisor for an Intake Appointment. During the meeting, the Access Advisor discusses the student’s access needs and trains the student on how to use their approved accommodations.

After registering, students follow Accessibility Services procedures by communicating their accommodation requests to their instructors (or relevant staff) with their Letter of Accommodation. Students may choose which accommodations to use for each of their courses and can confidentially communicate that to their instructors.

Accessibility Services keeps students’ medical information (e.g. diagnosis) strictly confidential. However, Accessibility Services can discuss a student’s registration status and approved accommodations with faculty/staff.

Reasonableness and Timing of Requests:

Accommodations are designed to be reasonable (meaning they cannot compromise the essential elements of a course, program, etc.) and implemented at the point of request moving forward. Accessibility Services does not grant retroactive accommodations. In addition, for a variety of reasons, students may register with Accessibility Services or request accommodations from faculty/staff at any point in the semester. Accessibility Services encourages faculty and staff to consult with us if ever concerned about the reasonableness or timing of a student’s accommodation request.

For more guidance on implementing accommodations:

- Visit our [Accessibility Services webpage](#) for additional information.
- Contact Accessibility Services: 614-287-2570 / disability@csc.edu.