Promoting Academic Success In the Classroom for Student with Disabilities

Stacy Walent, Counselor of Accessibility Services
Americans with Disabilities Act

• The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides broad nondiscrimination protection in employment, public services, and public accommodations (including many areas of colleges and universities), for individuals with disabilities.

• Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination against an otherwise qualified individual with a disability, solely on the basis of the disability, in any program or activity that receives federal financial assistance. Section 504 is enforced by, amongst others, the Office for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education.
Under the ADA

- An individual with a disability is a person who:
  - Has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities;
  - Has a record of such an impairment; or
  - Is regarded as having such an impairment.
Examples of Disabilities

• Specific Learning Disorder
• Anxiety
• Hard of Hearing/Deafness
• Visual Impairment/Blindness
• Multiple Sclerosis
• Seizure Disorders
• Paralysis
What are reasonable accommodations?

• Reasonable accommodations aids a student with a disability so they are able to fully participate in his or her education.

• Reasonable accommodations do not give students with disabilities an unfair advantage, they simply “level the playing field.”
Functional Limitations

• Physical or Mental concern related to a person’s disability that limits activities of daily life, in this case, the student’s ability to learn.

• Example – Difficulty with Reading Comprehension.
Differences Between High School and College

• Student may have had an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) during high school.

• Although this may help in determining accommodations during college and often acts as a source of documentation, an IEP does not follow a student into higher education.
Differences between High School and College

• In high school, student may receive a variety of modifications in their education, such as reduced assignments, word banks during fill-in-the blank tests, and decreased choices for multiple choice tests.

• Colleges accommodations do not include modifying the curriculum in any way.
Differences Between High School and College

• Some accommodations for college include, but are not limited to:

• Extended Test Time

• Testing in a Distraction-Free Area

• Preferential Seating

• Oral Testing
Putting It All Together

• A student with a Specific Learning Disability may cause the functional limitations of difficulty with Reading Comprehension result in an accommodation such as Oral Testing.
Responsibilities of Counselor of Accessibility Services

• Once a student has self-disclosed a disability and requested accommodations, the counselor will request from the student documentation and information regarding the disability.

• Counselor will then review any documentation and together with the student, will determine which accommodations will work best for student based on the student’s functional limitations.
Responsibilities of Counselor

• Stress importance of self-advocacy to student and act as liaison between student and faculty.

• Provide Academic Advisement
Responsibilities of the Student

• Student must self-disclose disability and request accommodations from Counselor of Accessibility Services.

• Student must provide documentation regarding disability and meet with Counselor of Accessibility Services.

• Student must provide instructors with Accommodation Letters. The student does is not required to disclose disability to the instructor, but may do so, especially if this information will be particularly helpful.
Responsibilities of the Student

• Student must make any arrangements in advance with professors regarding specific accommodations, such as extended test time.

• For example, students are instructed to discuss extended testing at least a week before a test is given. Extended time for projects should be discussed at the beginning of the project.

• Note – Some students may submit accommodation letters, but never arrange accommodations.
Role of the Instructor

• Send back “Notification Receipt” from Accommodation Letter.

• Follow Accommodations as listed on the Accommodation Letter and as arranged with the student.

• Any questions regarding the Accommodations that the student is not able to answer should be directed to the Counselor of Accessibility Services.
Role of the Instructor

• A student’s disability and accommodations should be held in confidence.

• It should be avoided to do anything openly during a class period that would identify a student as having a disability.
Testing

• Students can arrange to have their tests taken in the Learning Lab if for accommodations such as extended time, distraction-free testing, oral testing, or if they need to use a word processor to complete test.
Testing

• Tests should be delivered to the Learning Lab by the instructor.
• If tests are in Electronic Format, they can be emailed to Learning Support Coordinator, Susan Socash.
• Instructors have the option of implementing these accommodations on their own if they this is agreeable with the student.
• Extended time usually is time and a half or double time, depending on the students needs.
Notetakers

• Some students will need a student notetaker.
• A student may prefer to choose their own notetaker.
• If the student does not choose their notetaker, the instructor may have to make an announcement in class.
• The announcement should not mention the student’s name. It should be announced there is a student in the class that needs a notetaker and anyone interested should contact Counselor of Accessibility Services.
Notetakers

• Student notetakers should be good students and have a GPA of at least 2.5. The student notetaker is provided with a binder with NCR paper.

• If a notetaker is to be a paid notetaker, there is a contract that needs to be completed with the Counselor of Accessibility Services.
Policy on Recording in the Classroom

• Students sometimes find it helpful to couple written notes and recordings of a lecture when learning class material.

• Other student are auditory learners and benefit more from listening to a lecture multiples times than taking notes and reviewing them.

• Policy and Agreement
Interpreters

• Students who are deaf or hard of hearing whose main communication method is ASL or American Sign Language will need an interpreter as an accommodation.

• An interpreter’s purpose is to relay information to student in the student’s preferred language.

• **How to Work with a Sign Language Interpreter**
Enlarged Text

• Students with Visual Impairments may need text enlarged on tests and handouts.

• A student may know best what size font is most appropriate for them, but any questions can be referred to Counselor of Accessibility Services.
Preferential Seating

• Preferential Seating can be helpful to students with a variety of disabilities.

• Preferential Seating has a variety of meanings, including sitting close to the front of the classroom, sitting with a distance between student and the rest of the class, seating near exit.
Permission to Leave Classroom because of Disability

• It may be an accommodation for someone to be able to leave the classroom as a result of their disability.

• Usually this is just for a short period of time, but it may be necessary for the student not to return to the class.
Helpful Hints

• Universal Design - Concept that creates equal access for all individuals.

• Examples of Universal Design that benefit everyone – curb cuts, automatic doors.
Helpful Hints

• If an instructor suspects that a student has a disability, the instructor should not ask the students if they have a disability.

• It is recommended that an instructor list on their syllabi information regarding Tutoring, Counseling, and Office of Accessibility Services.
Helpful Hints

• Instructors can then refer a student to the resources on the syllabi to make them aware of the services that are available at the college.

• An instructor can also send an Early Alert to a student’s counselor where the student may feel comfortable discussing any concerns.
Professional Ethics in the Classroom
Questions/Concerns?
• Stacy Walent, Building 14, Rm 125
  • 570-740-0397
  • swalent@luzerne.edu
Resources

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SH3vt-XrkEs
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AY6PhCtCLrTg
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49Y7oXx-2K4
- www.eoc.gov
- www.ssdrc.gov
- www.higheredcompliance.com
Thank you!!!!