

8 FACTS ABOUT DISABILITY SUPPORT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A disability status or medical diagnosis does not have to be an obstacle in a student's educational goals. There are resources available to assist students in higher education, but it is important to know the expectations and roles of both the student and the Student Disability Services office.

1 THE STUDENT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR REQUESTING ACCOMMODATIONS

Unlike in high school, it is the student's responsibility to self-identify and request accommodations in higher education. It is not the university's or the instructor's responsibility to identify a need. Students who disclose a disability or request accommodations from faculty will be directed to contact Student Disability Services (SDS), but ultimately, only SDS can approve accommodations.

2 ACCOMMODATIONS IN COLLEGE HAVE LIMITS

In high school, any accommodations needed to ensure a student's success may be used. In college, the goal of accommodations is to remove barriers for students with a disability by ensuring equal access to the learning environment. Only accommodations that do not fundamentally alter, lower or substantially modify essential requirements of the course or program can be approved. All students are held to the same standards across their programs of study and the same accommodations that individuals had in the K-12 setting may not be applicable in higher education.

3 IT IS THE STUDENT'S CHOICE TO DISCLOSE THEIR DISABILITY

Students are not required to self-identify or request accommodations for their disabilities. However, in most cases, accommodations are not retroactive and are only in effect as of the date the documentation is approved. Students initiate the process by submitting an Accommodation Request Form and providing supporting documentation of their disability issue.

4 DOCUMENTATION DETERMINES ACCOMMODATIONS ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS

All accommodation requests require supporting documentation. While there are specific criteria that must be met minimally, documentation must include a typed, signed letter from a medical or mental health provider that explains the symptoms and challenges and how they impact the student at school.

Because K-12 and post-secondary laws and requirements differ, so will the available services and accommodations. An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) may be submitted as documentation to inform and determine reasonable accommodations, but post-secondary schools are not obligated to follow the requirements of an IEP. Any IEP or 504 plan that is submitted should include the justification for why the IEP was in place and should not just be progress notes.

5 ACCOMMODATIONS ARE INDIVIDUALIZED

While all accommodations are based on a student's needs as reflected in supporting documentation, the most common accommodations requested are due date flexibility for assignments and testing accommodations, such as an alternative testing environment or extra exam time.

6 STUDENTS HAVE AN ASSIGNED SDS ADMINISTRATOR

At GCU, students have an assigned SDS administrator. Once an Accommodation Request Form and documentation have been submitted, students can then schedule a time to meet with their SDS administrator to review what accommodations can be approved and address questions and concerns.

7 STUDENTS ARE NOT REQUIRED TO USE THEIR ACCOMMODATIONS

Even if a student has approved accommodations, they are not required to use them. For example, students with approved extended time may choose to still submit the assignments on the original class due date. Students are encouraged to approach the due date with the goal of meeting it and to use the extended time as their safety net should they need more time, need additional assistance or to utilize different resources in the completion of the assignment.

8 THE INTERACTIVE PROCESS IS CONTINUAL

The interactive process is central to the accommodation process. If a student finds their accommodations are not effective, their medical circumstances change or they need additional supports, it is the student's responsibility to re-engage with SDS through the interactive process.

Communication is key and the foundation is the interactive process.

LEARN MORE AND CONNECT

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