UNDERSTANDING & SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

**Facts about Disability**

Students with documentation are eligible to access accommodations through the Disability Support Services (DSS). Common disabilities at the college level include physical, learning, psychiatric, autism spectrum, and chronic health disabilities.

Students with **physical disabilities** may present special classroom access needs associated with limitations in mobility, speaking, hearing, and/or vision.

Students with **chronic health disorders** may experience difficulties participating in their academic programs due to the condition itself or the ongoing treatment protocol.

Flexibility of non-essential attendance requirements may be appropriate depending on the courses curriculum.

Students with **learning disabilities** have neurological impairments that interfere with and slow down information processing, memory and retrieval, and output. These disabilities can have an impact on reading, writing, math, attention, concentration, and/or overall organization. Students may need to use technology or other strategies to compensate.

Students with **psychiatric disabilities** may have a chronic and debilitating psychological condition that may at times affect their ability to participate fully in the routine educational program. Many side effects of medication may cause delays in processing. Examples of conditions that fall under this classification include Bipolar Disorder, Major Depression, Anxiety Disorders, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Students with **Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder** (AD/HD) may experience inattentive, hyperactive, and/or impulsive behaviors due to a dysfunction of the central nervous system. These behaviors may make longer class periods and time management difficult at times.

Students with **Autism Spectrum Disorders** may have difficulty negotiating social situations, group work, or giving eye contact, or may exhibit impulsive behaviors. Typically, students with Autism Spectrum disorders, including Asperger’s, are concrete thinkers and may have difficulty with vague assignments and taking another perspective.

Students with disabilities may not realize that they have a particular problem and that treatment/accommodations are available. If you have concerns about a student, please contact the DSS at your campus, for advice, information and support.

*HELPING the Student with a Disability or Challenges*

**WHAT TO DO**

* Speak to the student in private about your concerns.
* Treat each student with sensitivity and respect.
* Acknowledge the difficulties that the student is having.
* Refer the student to the Disability Support Services.
* Be open to follow-up consultation with the DSS regarding accommodations for the student.
* Remember students requesting accommodations must have an accommodations letter from the DSS with approved accommodations listed.
* Students affiliated with the DSS have valid documentation on file. Faculty may not ask to see the documentation, but may request to see the accommodations letter.
* Remember that all students, regardless of disability, need to be held to the same standards. However, accommodations are a part of providing equal access.

**WHAT NOT TO DO**

* Don’t prejudge a student’s potential based on a disability.
* Don’t make reference to the student’s disability in class or in front of others.
* Don’t use patronizing language with the student.
* Don’t underestimate or question the validity of the stated disability.
* Don’t presume the student understands the academic limitations potentially imposed by the disability.
* Don’t presume the student qualifies for accommodations without the DSS verification.