Southeast Missouri State University
Disability Services

WORKING WITH STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Section II: Faculty Notification of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities are required to register with Disability Services (DS) if they wish to request accommodations for their classes. Students should not be provided academic accommodations for a disability unless the student has completed the registration process with DS. The registration process includes the student: submitting a request for services, providing documentation that substantiates the request for services, and meeting with a DS professional staff member. The student is responsible for providing documentation. DS does not provide testing for students to determine if a disability does exist. DS will provide referrals to local and state agencies that may assist students in completing testing and/or gathering documentation that substantiates the existence of a disability. Services are determined for each student on a case by case basis.

DS is a central location for the reception and evaluation of documentation of disabilities. DS staff has experience evaluating documentation and determining what accommodations are appropriate for a given disability. DS is not only concerned to ensure that students receive the accommodations they need but is also committed to preserving the quality and integrity of Southeast’s academic programs. If there are questions regarding the viability or appropriateness of an accommodation requested by a student, DS is here to assist you in determining what is a reasonable accommodation.

Once a student with a disability has become registered with DS, DS will send faculty notifications to faculty to inform them of what are appropriate accommodations both reasonably and legally. Faculty are strongly encouraged to refrain from providing any accommodation for a student for whom they have not received a faculty notification memo. Students should be referred to DS to register and/or authorize the sending of the appropriate notification. Students may become registered at any time during the semester, so it is possible that faculty will receive notices throughout the semester. Additionally, if students have a change in their disability status, it is possible that faculty will receive an updated faculty notification during the semester.

Students are strongly encouraged to speak individually with each instructor during the first week of classes concerning their individual needs. Faculty are encouraged to modify, when necessary, rather than waive, specific course requirements; lowering academic standards for
**students with disabilities is not an appropriate accommodation.** DS staff are available to consult with students or faculty members to arrange proper adaptations or accommodations.

Legally, students have a right NOT to be identified as disabled, if they so choose. They will not get accommodation unless they identify themselves, but that also is their choice. Moreover, while DS presumes that faculty are concerned with maximizing the learning experience in class for students, DS must also be concerned with helping the student develop the independence and self-advocacy that will help him or her outside the classroom while in college and beyond. Students with disabilities need to learn how to explain their disability, describe their needs, and negotiate appropriate accommodations. Their need for accommodations will always exist – the skills needed to obtain such accommodation should also be developed on a permanent basis.

For all of these reasons, it is appropriate for students to take the responsibility for identifying themselves and their need for accommodation to faculty, rather than vice versa. A student must take the initial step in self-identification by registering with DS as a student with a disability. If a faculty member is concerned that a student in his or her class may have a disability and the student has not identified themselves as such, faculty are welcome to contact one of the DS staff members to consult about their concerns.

The faculty notification identifies the instructor, course, the student, and the student’s ID number. The memo does not identify the student’s diagnosis but sets out what accommodations are deemed appropriate in light of the documentation on file with DS. It is best not to assume that one set of accommodations will work for all students, or that two students using the same accommodation have the same disability. Faculty who feel a need for diagnostic information should discuss this with the student at their first interview regarding accommodation. DS attempts to respect the students’ right to privacy and control of their diagnostic information to the greatest extent possible.

Registered students occasionally have approved accommodations that may not be needed in every class setting. It is reasonable that a student may use one accommodation in one course and a different accommodation in another course. With this in mind, DS encourages each student to take the initiative in arranging to discuss accommodations with each faculty member once the faculty member has received their copy of the faculty notification. Students will feel more comfortable about identifying themselves in this manner if they are approaching someone whom they believe to be receptive to the discussion. For that reason, faculty are encouraged to include a statement on each class syllabus such as:

“**Southeast Missouri State University and Disability Services remain committed to making every reasonable educational accommodation for students with disabilities. Many services and accommodations which aid a student’s educational experience are available for students with various types of disabilities. It is the student’s responsibility to contact Disability Services to become registered as a student with a disability in order to have accommodations implemented. Accommodations are implemented on a case by case basis. For more information visit the following site: www.semo.edu/ds or contact Disability Services at 573-651-5927.**”