



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

W A S H I N G T O N , D C

SCOTT A. BASS
PROVOST

MEMORANDUM

March 20, 2009

TO: All Faculty

FROM: Scott A. Bass, Provost 

SUBJECT: Disability Accommodations for Students and Faculty

American University is committed to providing equal access to educational and employment opportunities for qualified individuals with disabilities. Given the complexity involved in determining disabilities and providing reasonable accommodations, there are processes in place to provide appropriate responses to student and faculty requests for accommodations. This memo serves as both a reminder of our obligation to be responsive to individuals with disabilities and as a resource outlining the university's processes pertaining to disability accommodations.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the DC Human Rights Act prohibit discrimination against individuals with disabilities. These laws require the university to provide reasonable accommodation for qualified individuals with disabilities to ensure their equal access and participation in services, programs, and activities offered by the university.

Student Accommodations

Once admitted to the university, students with physical, medical, or psychological disabilities who wish to request accommodations must contact Disability Support Services (DSS). Likewise, students with learning disabilities or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder must contact the Academic Support Center (ASC). These offices are charged with evaluating documentation to verify disabilities, recommending accommodations, and notifying faculty members of students' needs for accommodations. Students enrolled in the Washington College of Law (WCL) must contact the WCL Office of Student Affairs. WCL in turn will work with DSS and ASC to verify disabilities and to recommend reasonable accommodations.

A faculty member's first notification of a student's need for accommodation normally comes in the form of a letter from either ASC or DSS verifying that the student has provided appropriate documentation of a disability, and specifying what accommodations the student may need. In the event a student requests an accommodation directly from a

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faculty member and the student does not present a letter of verification from DSS or ASC, the faculty member must refer the student to the appropriate office to begin the verification process.

As a rule, faculty should not provide accommodations without verification from DSS, ASC, or the WCL Office of Student Affairs and should refer students to the appropriate office. To provide accommodations without verification, or to refuse to provide accommodations recommended by these offices, may expose a faculty member and the university to legal liabilities. DSS, ASC, and the WCL Office of Student Affairs are available to work with a faculty member to discuss what may constitute a reasonable accommodation in the context of a particular course for an individual student. These offices also work closely with the Office of General Counsel on legal questions related to the accommodation process.

For more information, DSS and ASC have created guides to inform and assist faculty in handling accommodation requests from students with disabilities. These are available online at <https://cms.american.edu/ocl/asc/Learning-Disabilities-and-ADHD-Information-for-Faculty.cfm> or in print by contacting DSS or ASC. If a faculty member has individual questions and concerns, DSS and ASC staff are available for consultation.

Faculty Accommodations

Whereas student accommodations are handled through DSS and ASC, faculty who require accommodations must contact the Employee Relations unit within Human Resources. Human Resources will evaluate documentation, in consultation with DSS or ASC, as needed, to verify faculty and staff disabilities and to recommend accommodations.

Confidentiality

Information regarding a student or faculty disability is considered confidential. Disability information is provided only to individuals who need to know this information in order to facilitate the accommodation process or to those for whom there is an authorized release. University personnel who receive such information have an obligation to maintain the confidentiality of all disability and accommodation-related information.

Thank you in advance for your serious attention to this matter. Should you need assistance, please contact the appropriate office listed below.

Academic Support Center	(ext. 3360)
Disability Support Services	(ext. 3315)
WCL Office of Student Affairs	(ext. 4030)
Human Resources	(ext. 2607)