

The Faculty Role in Services for Students with Disabilities

The University of Indianapolis has been committed to providing equal opportunity to its academic programs and ensuring its campus is free of discrimination and harassment. The university believes a rich diversity of people and points of view enhances the quality of the education. This commitment to a diverse and inclusive learning environment includes providing equal access for students with disabilities. As a course instructor, you are an important partner in this endeavor and the following information will provide an introduction to your role in ensuring the university meets its commitment.

Five Key Facts for Faculty to Know . . .

1. The university has a legal obligation under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act to ensure all its programs and activities are made accessible for students with disabilities. Equal access to education is achieved when physical and instructional barriers to learning are removed and the student is allowed to compete on the basis of their academic abilities.
2. UIndy has established Services for Students with Disabilities procedures (SSD) to provide leadership for its commitment to equal access in education and to ensure compliance with applicable federal laws.
3. Students with disabilities have met the same admission standards to be enrolled at the university as have other students in your class, i.e., they are “otherwise qualified” to be here.
4. Once admitted, students with disabilities who request assistance from the university must provide SSD with appropriate documentation for review. The documentation must come from a qualified professional and provide information regarding the functional limitations imposed by the condition in an academic setting. When SSD determines a student has documented a physical or mental impairment that limits one or more major life activities (e.g., walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, learning), the student will be eligible for support.
5. Once students have established their eligibility for services, they will bring you a memo from SSD on official letterhead detailing the testing/classroom modifications which you are to provide. Reasonable accommodations are designed to offset the substantial limitations imposed by the disorder, not to alter essential elements of courses or programs. It is important not to question a student as to whether a documented disability exists. The SSD has an extensive documentation process that all students must adhere to in order to receive “disability status.” Please be assured that if you receive a Memo from the SSD office, the student has been determined to be a qualified individual with a disability.

Five Important Actions for Faculty to Take . . .

1. Include a statement on your syllabus each semester which invites students with disabilities to meet with you and which provides contact information about SSD.

Example: If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please inform me immediately so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. Students with a disability must register with the Services for Students with Disabilities office (SSD) in Schwitzer Center 206 (317-788-6153 / www.uindy.edu/ssd) for disability verification and for determination of reasonable academic accommodations. You are responsible for initiating arrangements for accommodations for tests and other assignments in collaboration with the SSD and the faculty.

2. Provide disability modifications only after the student provides you with a memo from SSD. If a student requests disability modifications but does not have a memo from SSD to give you, refer them to SSD. If a student gives you disability documentation such as a psychological report or a doctor's note, do not accept the documentation. Instead, let the student know SSD is the office designated to review such information and refer them to SSD.
3. The student is to meet with you to discuss the arrangement (i.e., the logistics) of their modifications for your course. Be sure that the arrangements you make provide a testing situation that is comparable to the classroom setting. This means hallways, break rooms, busy offices, public areas of libraries, starting in one location and moving to another, etc. may not be appropriate options.
4. Grade the student by the same standards as other students are graded.
5. Review the information on the SSD website at <http://www.uindy.edu/ssd>.