Accommodating Students with Disabilities in Online Courses

Larry Markle, Director
Disability Services
765-285-5293
lmarkle@bsu.edu
www.bsu.edu/disabilityservices

Why accommodate students with disabilities in online courses?

- Ball State’s long history of being “disability-friendly”
- Legal mandate to do so
  - Same disability laws apply as with on campus courses (Section 504 & the ADA)
- Increased attention by federal government and advocacy groups to ensure that online education is accessible to all

Implications for not being accessible

- “Dear Colleague Letter” issued to all college presidents by Departments of Ed & Justice
  - http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-20100629.html
- Settlements reached at several colleges after complaints/investigations
  - Penn State - http://accessibility.psu.edu/nfbpsusettlement

Students with disabilities at BSU
2012-2013 academic year

- Visual Impairments 30
  - This includes four students who are blind.
- Deaf/Hard of Hearing 27
  - This includes seven students who are deaf.
- Mobility/Orthopedic Impairments 82
  - This includes forty-two wheelchair users.
- Learning disabilities/ADHD/TBI 337
  - This includes students with learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, and traumatic brain injuries.
- Chronic Health Conditions 63
  - This includes conditions such as cancer, fibromyalgia, & diabetes.
- Psychological Disabilities 77
  - This includes conditions such as schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder, and obsessive-compulsive disorder.
- Autism Spectrum Disorders 29
  - This includes students with Asperger’s Syndrome.

Accommodation examples for on campus courses

- Priority registration
- Extended time for exams
- Reduced distraction testing environment
- Large print-Braille
- Oral administration of test questions
- Interpreters/CART
- Lab assistant
- Notetakers
- Copies of overheads & Power Point
- Recording lectures
- Books in alternate formats
- Accessible residence hall room
- Modification of attendance policies

Accommodating Students in Online Classes

- Process
- Syllabus statement
- Exam accommodations
- Considerations for students with specific disabilities
- Universal Design of Instruction (UDI)
Process for Receiving Online Accommodations

- Similar to traditional courses
  - Student discloses disability to Disability Services
  - Disability Services verifies disability
  - Student requests verification from Disability Services to present to instructor listing accommodations – done via email for online courses
- Not wise to accommodate unless student presents letter/email from Disability Services

Syllabus Statement

- If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact me as soon as possible. Ball State’s Office of Disability Services coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

Exam Accommodations

- Most common accommodation for all SWDs is extended time on exams
  - Blackboard – Two options:
    - If the student is not shut off the system at the time limit, simply allow the student to continue without taking off points for doing so
    - If the exam is timed, simply create a separate section for student receiving extra time using the Adaptive Release settings
  - InQsit – Easy to add extended time (Disability Services can do if student logs in with username/password)

Considerations for Students with Specific Disabilities

- Learning Disabilities/ADHD
- Mobility Impairments
- Psychological Disabilities
- Chronic Health Conditions
- Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- Blind/Visually Impaired

LD/ADHD

- Testing accommodations (typically 50%-100% more time)
- May need texts in different formats
  - Electronic format received from the publisher, or
  - Text scanned through the Adaptive Technology Lab
- May need greater access to instructor for clarification – office hours for email or phone contact
- May struggle to keep up with synchronous communication (chat rooms)

Mobility Impairments

- If chat function is used, students may take longer to input information & may be using assistive software/hardware (can chat function accommodate this?)
- Extended time on exams
- May struggle to keep up with notes in synchronous classes
- Could struggle with due dates if ability to write/type is affected
### Psychological Disabilities/Chronic Health Conditions
- May need additional time on assignments or make-up exams when condition flares up
- May need a W if unable to keep up with demands because of health complications
- Possible need for test accommodations

### Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- Is there an audio component to the course?
  - Videos, You Tube, lecture, etc.
- Captioning of audio is vital, but this is a very time & labor intensive process
- Jeff Bowers, Ball State’s caption writer at the Teleplex, can assist with ample notice.
  - jbowers@bsu.edu; 285-2766

### Blind/Visually Impaired
- Making documents accessible
  - Using word documents
  - PDFs
  - Charts & graphs
- Building in accessibility vs. retrofitting
- Contact Carlos Taylor, Ball State’s Adaptive Tech Specialist for more info
  - cetaylor@bsu.edu; 765-285-6124

### Blind/Visually Impaired
- Accessibility of platforms such as Blackboard and Mediasite
  - Cluttered screen is difficult
  - Chat function not accessible
  - Alternatives for creating access
- Carlos Taylor, Ball State’s adaptive technology specialist, can consult with you to ensure access
  - cetaylor@bsu.edu; 285-6124

### Moving Beyond Accommodations: Universal Design of Instruction
- Creating access while course is being developed as opposed to accommodating SWDs later
  - Good teaching for SWDs is good teaching for all students
- UDI is based on the architectural concept of Universal Design
  - Creating spaces, buildings, environments, etc. that are usable by everyone

### UDI Implications for Online Courses
- Flexibility with design
  - Audio for students who are deaf?
  - Visual for students who are blind?
- Simple layout helps all students, especially SWDs
- Fonts, colors, PowerPoint slides can be difficult for students using adaptive tech
- Chat rooms can be tricky for many SWDs
  - Consider alternatives/make it optional
- Assessments – do exams need to be timed?
Final points

- Ensure that any product you consider using is accessible at time of purchase!!!
  - Digital textbooks and some supplemental online tools are not accessible for students who are blind/visually impaired or deaf/hard of hearing.
- Students with disabilities need to be able to access online courses with as much independence as possible
  - Using inaccessible technology and expecting a reader or notetaker to be hired will not suffice.

For more information...

Visit the Online Accessibility section of Disability Services' website at www.bsu.edu/disabilityservices