Tutoring Students with Physical, Hearing, Visual, or Mobility Impairments

Students with Physical Disabilities

Before the consultation

- **Communicate ahead of time:** If a student discloses to you that they have a physical disability ahead of a consultation, ask if there are any particular accommodations that they would find useful.
- **Discuss any location changes or space accommodations** which could make the meeting room more accessible for the student.
- **Send comments ahead of time:** A student with hearing or visual impairments may benefit from receiving your feedback in advance of the meeting time.

Students with Hearing Impairments:

General Information:

- Students with hearing impairments can experience different levels of hearing ability and loss. They can present varying abilities in communications. Differences can be attributed to the degree of the hearing loss; when the hearing loss occurred; social, educational and home environments; and the modes of communications used. Students may rely on lip reading, amplification, any one of a number of interpreting services, and/or Computer Assisted Real-time Transcription (CART)
- What a student needs in his or her academic life depends on degree of loss, the age at which the hearing loss occurs, and his or her experience with alternative communications and the environment.

Accommodations and Strategies:

- To get the student’s attention not already in visual direction, a light tap on the shoulder or other visual sign is helpful.
- Make sure that you always face the writer for lip reading and try to keep hands and other objects away from your mouth.
- If something is misunderstood, try rephrasing rather than repeating and avoid speaking louder.
- Check in advance about what technologies, if any, the student uses.
- If a student is using an interpreter or CART service, try to pause often when speaking.
- When speaking privately to a student with a hearing loss accompanied by an interpreter, direct your eye contact to the student, not the interpreter.
- Type out a message and have a written conversation.
Students with Visual Impairments:

General Information:

- There is a wide spectrum of etiologies and functional abilities among persons known to have a visual impairment. For instance, some students may be experiencing a progressive loss of vision, while others may have a visual impairment that has stabilized and is corrected but still substantially hinders their ability to see near and/or far.
- Students with visual impairments are often challenged by the regular methodologies and demands of academic life that are highly visual. Modern technology allows access to print and electronic material within certain limits. These technologies include enlarged print, books on tape, and computer software with the capacity to support Internet use through enlargement or presenting materials verbally. How individual students use this technology can vary.

Accommodations and Strategies:

- Scan the room for obvious obstacles
- If a student with a visual impairment is alone and needs to walk or sit, you can offer assistance. Wait for a response. If the student declines the offer, do nothing. If the student accepts, extend your right or left arm bent at the elbow depending on how you are situated in reach of the student's extended hand. Place your upper arm in reach of the individual’s hand and if walking through a maze of obstacles, talk about the need to move right, left or up/down stairs as required. Pause for only a second if going up/down stairs and inform the student of stairs and the approximate number before reaching a flat surface. To assist and direct the student to a seat in an office or meeting room, extend your arm, elbow bent to reach the student's extended hand for direction. When approaching a chair, place the student’s hand on the back or arm of the seat.
- Make reference to the elements of the paper rather than to visual cues like page numbers
- Engage the writer in explaining what problems they might have

Students with Chronic Mobility Impairments

General Information:

- Students with mobility impairments may use wheelchairs (manual or powered), scooters, crutches or braces. A personal aide may accompany some students. Others may walk unassisted but sometimes slower and/or with a noticeable difference in gait. And there may be students who rely on a mobility aid (e.g. a wheelchair) only occasionally.
- There are a number of medical conditions that affect mobility. Some also affect the individual’s fine or gross upper limb ability. Some can affect the length of time an individual can sit or stand. Chronic medical conditions can include (but are not limited to) spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, amputation, multiple sclerosis, severe arthritis, dwarfism, muscular dystrophy, severe back injury/pain, severe cardiac conditions, severe sickle cell anemia, and severe respiratory disorders.
Accommodations and Strategies:

• Take note of the room’s layout. Chairs and desks can present obstacles to wheelchair navigation. Ensure doorways and aisles are clear of obstructions.
• Students experiencing permanent limitations in their manual ability often use compensatory strategies, such as scribes or computer based voice recognition, to manage written assignments.
• If you are meeting with a writer outside of the CTL, make sure the space is accessible.

Students with Temporary Physical Disabilities

General Information:

• The Resource Office offers time-limited services to injured students to support the continuity of their academic responsibilities compromised by the injury. Temporary injuries to fingers, hands, wrists, forearms, elbows and shoulders will occur during the academic year.
• Suggest to a student with an obvious and new injury (students with casts, arm slings) to contact the Resource Office on Disabilities if he or she speaks with you about unique arrangements that cannot be put into place simply or have not been communicated from the Resource Office.

Accommodations and Strategies:

• Check in advance with the student about space related accommodations
• Accommodate the writer by assisting them with specific tasks (writing notes or typing comments)
• Record the meeting and make the video available to the writer