**Legal Issues**


According to federal law, no otherwise qualified individual with a disability shall, solely by reason of his or her disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity of a public entity.

“Qualified” with respect to postsecondary educational services, means “a person who meets the academic and technical standards requisite to admission or participation in the education program or activity, with or without reasonable modifications to rules, policies or practices; the removal of architectural, communication or transportation barriers; or the provision of auxiliary aids and services.”

“Person with a disability” means “any person who (1) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities (including walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working), (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment.”

Disabilities covered by legislation include (but are not limited to) AIDS, cancer, cerebral palsy, diabetes, epilepsy, head injuries, hearing impairments, specific learning disabilities, loss of limbs, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, psychiatric disorders, speech impairments, spinal cord injuries, and vision impairments.

**Accommodations**

The student with a disability is the best source of information regarding necessary accommodations. In postsecondary settings it is the student’s responsibility to request disability-related accommodations, but a faculty member can include a statement on the class syllabus inviting students who have disabilities to discuss academic needs. An example of such a statement is “If you wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible.” On most campuses an office that supports students with disabilities informs instructors of reasonable accommodations for specific students.

**Universal Design**

Universal design has been defined by the Center for Universal Design as “the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design” (www.ncsu.edu/project/design-projects/uid/center-for-universal-design/the-principles-of-universal-design/).

Applications of universal design are described at The Center for Universal Design in Education at www.uw.edu/doit/CUDE/.

Universal design principles can be applied to the overall design of instruction as well as to specific instructional materials and strategies to improve access for everyone. For example, captions on multimedia benefit students with hearing impairments, those whose first language is not English, and people with some types of learning disabilities. Examples of how universal design of instruction can improve class climate; physical access, usability, and safety; delivery methods; information resources; interaction; feedback; and assessment can be found in Equal Access: Universal Design of Instruction at www.uw.edu/doit/Brochures/Academics/equal_access_uidi.html. Universal design minimizes, but does not eliminate the need for accommodations.

**Examples of Academic Accommodations**

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<thead>
<tr>
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**Useful Teaching Techniques**

Below you will find examples of teaching techniques in the classroom, laboratory, examinations, and fieldwork that benefit all students, but are especially useful for students who have disabilities.

**Classroom**

- Select course materials early so that students and the campus disabled student services office staff have enough time to translate them to audiotope, Braille, and large print.
- Make syllabi, short assignment sheets, and reading lists available in electronic format (e.g., CD, email, online).
- Design course webpages to be accessible to students with disabilities. For further information, refer to www.uw.edu/computing/accessible/howto.html.
- Face the class when speaking. Repeat discussion questions.
- Write key phrases and lecture outlines on the blackboard or overhead projector.

**Laboratory**

- Take the student on a tour of the lab she or he will be working in. Discuss safety concerns.
- Assign group lab projects in which all students contribute according to their abilities.
- Arrange lab equipment so that it is accessible to and visible by everyone.
- Give oral and written lab instructions.

**Examination and Fieldwork**

- Ensure that exams test the essential skills or knowledge needed for the course or field of study.
- Some students will require extra time to transcribe or process test questions. Follow campus policies regarding extra time on examinations.
- Consider allowing students to turn in exams via email or CD.
- Attempt to include student in fieldwork opportunities, rather than automatically suggesting non-fieldwork alternatives. Ask students how they might be able to do specific aspects of fieldwork.
- Include special needs in requests for field trip vehicle reservations.

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Video
The videos, Working Together: Faculty and Students with Disabilities, Building the Team: Faculty, Staff, and Students Working Together, and Equal Access: Universal Design of Instruction may be freely viewed online at www.uw.edu/doit/video, or purchased in DVD format.

About DO-IT
DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology) serves to increase the successful participation of individuals with disabilities in challenging academic programs and careers, such as those in science, engineering, mathematics, and technology. Primary funding for DO-IT is provided by the National Science Foundation, the State of Washington, and the U.S. Department of Education.

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Founder and Director:
Sheryl Burgstahler, Ph.D.

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