

Roles, Rights & Responsibilities

The number of students with disabilities attending postsecondary education continues to increase with each passing year. Faculty and staff need to be well-informed about the roles, rights and responsibilities postsecondary institutions have towards supporting students with disabilities. These roles, rights and responsibilities are supported by several federal laws which support students with disabilities and allow them the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of a postsecondary educational experience.

From the Office of Civil Rights:

“OCR enforces Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (Title II), which prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability. Every school district and nearly every institution of postsecondary education in the United States is subject to Section 504 or Title II. Entities covered by these civil rights laws have an obligation to comply with legal requirements and to carry out their programs and activities in a manner that does not discriminate on the basis of disability.

Institutions of postsecondary education must provide an appropriate academic adjustment based on students’ disabilities and individual needs when necessary to avoid discrimination. In providing an academic adjustment, a postsecondary institution does not have to eliminate or lower essential requirements or make modifications that would result in a fundamental alteration of the programs or activities being offered or impose an undue burden on the institution.”

Faculty Roles

- Make Reasonable Accommodations
- Provide Access to Classroom & Materials
- Maintain Confidentiality

While it is the instructor’s responsibility to ensure that the learning environment is accessible, students with disabilities must request accommodations, when needed. Instructors will find it useful to include a statement on their syllabus which informs students about the steps they need to take to receive classroom accommodations through Accessibility Services.

In certain situations, reasonable accommodations may require modification of standard classroom approaches. The following are examples of accommodations that may be necessary to ensure equal access to education:

- Provide necessary accommodations for exam taking or submit a test form request and provide the exams to the testing center where the student can receive the accommodations needed.
- Provide alternative ways to fulfill course requirements.

- Allow assistive technology such as audio recorders, electronic note takers, and laptop computers to be used in the classroom.
- Consider alternate ways of assessing student's knowledge of the course content which allows the student's academic abilities to be measured.

Confidentiality in the accommodation process must be maintained by all parties. Faculty should refrain from discussing students' disabilities and necessary accommodations in the presence of fellow students or others who do not have an "educational need to know."

Accessibility Services staff are always available to answer questions and serve as a resource for faculty seeking assistance in providing accommodations to students.

Faculty Rights

Faculty members have the right to:

- Maintain academic standards for courses
- Determine course content and how it will be taught
- Confirm a student's accommodations and ask for clarification about a specific accommodation (listed on the student's accommodation notification) with Accessibility Services
- Deny a request for accommodation – if the instructor has not been officially notified of such an accommodation*
- Award grades appropriate to the level of the student's demonstration of mastery of material
- Fail a student who does not perform to passing standards**

Faculty members do not have the right to:

- Refuse to provide an approved accommodation for a documented disability***
- Challenge the legitimacy of a student's disability
- Review a student's documentation, including diagnostic data

Faculty Responsibilities

Faculty members have the responsibility to:

- Understand the laws and College's guidelines regarding students with disabilities
- Refer students to Accessibility Services when necessary
- Provide requested accommodations and academic adjustments to students who have documented disabilities (and notify their instructor through myWofford) in a timely manner
- Provide handouts, videos and other course materials in accessible formats upon request

*If a student presents with a condition that is providing an obvious functional limitation in the course (i.e. mobility impairment), the instructor should provide reasonable accommodations in the moment and refer the student to Accessibility Services

**It is important for instructors to remember that providing reasonable accommodations to a student with a disability does not guarantee success in the course. Students with disabilities may *not* master the course material, just like any other student. Students with disabilities have the same right as other students to fail as part of their educational experience.

***If an instructor believes that an approved accommodation poses an undue burden or fundamentally alters the course, the instructor should contact Accessibility Services immediately for guidance.