

# Helping Students with Disabilities

Each year, approximately 100 students with disabilities are enrolled at Pepperdine University. Although all students go through the same admissions process and must meet the same academic standards, students with disabilities may require additional assistance. The mission of the **Disability Services Office** is to provide that assistance, ensuring that Pepperdine remains in compliance with the guidelines of the Americans With Disabilities Act. Although the DSO provides services for students with disabilities to help them manage their studies, as a faculty member, you will most likely be interacting with these students personally as well. We hope this newsletter can provide such information as when and how to provide assistance properly.



## Documentation

- ◆ All documentation for the student's disability should come through the DSO.
- ◆ If a student says he/she wants to advocate for themselves and work directly with you to negotiate their own accommodations, we strongly encourage you to refer them to us immediately.
- ◆ Faculty members who conscientiously try to make life easier for the student by allowing the student to bring the documentation (not the DSO accommodation letter) directly to them may inappropriately gain access to confidential information.

## **\*\*IMPORTANT\*\***

All Faculty are encouraged to include the following statement on all course syllabi and to mention it in class during the first two weeks:

Any student with a documented disability (physical, learning, or psychological) needing academic accommodations should contact the Disability Services Office (Main Campus, Tyler Campus Center 264, x6500) as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Please visit <http://www.pepperdine.edu/disabilityservices/> for additional information.

## But Can You Be *Too* Accommodating?

Although well-meaning, accepting documentation and taking responsibility for accommodations yourself can result in...

- ◆ **Personal Jeopardy:** Faculty acting as "gate keepers" are acting without institutional authorization (even without meaning to do so) and can subject themselves to unwanted legal liability.
- ◆ **Institutional Jeopardy:** Pepperdine may also be at risk if all professors do not adhere to uniformly established accommodations.
- ◆ **Student Jeopardy:** Students suffer most from faculty not referring to the DSO. If the DSO is not informed, other professors may not know the need for accommodations, and students will leave Pepperdine without an official history of accommodations, making any needed postgraduate accommodations difficult to obtain.

Please remember to refer to the DSO and do not be drawn into taking on the responsibility for arranging accommodations yourself.

## When It Comes To Lecture Time...

### *Before the Lecture*

- ◆ Invite students to make known any special considerations or arrangements they need to meet the course requirements.
- ◆ Study guides, key terms, outlines, and organizing lectures into a logical sequence can greatly aid students with understanding the material.
- ◆ Assigning advanced readings before the topic is due in the class session allows students to prepare for class more effectively.
- ◆ Selecting the texts to be used in your course early allows for time to acquire alternative forms of the text for students who need it.

### *During the Lecture*

- ◆ Printed material and visual aids can greatly benefit a student with a disability.
- ◆ When showing films in class, please use captioning for deaf and hard of hearing students.
- ◆ When a student asks a question that you just answered, please avoid expressing annoyance.
- ◆ Encourage participation, but do not require a student with a communication difficulty to speak in front of the class.
- ◆ Please do not overly praise, pamper, or criticize students with disabilities. Treat them as you would a student without a disability.

Questions? Need more information? Please feel free to contact us at: EXT. 6500 or [DSO@pepperdine.edu](mailto:DSO@pepperdine.edu)