



# OFFICE OF ACCESSABILITY SERVICES

SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES



## Student Information Packet

Updated December 2015



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |      |
|---|------|
| General Information .....                         | pg.3 |
| What is a Disability? .....                       | pg.3 |
| How to Disclose a Disability .....                | pg.3 |
| What are Accommodations.....                      | pg.3 |
| How to Request Accommodations.....                | pg.4 |
| Student Rights and Responsibilities.....          | pg.5 |
| Release of Information .....                      | pg.6 |
| Grievance Procedures.....                         | pg.7 |
| Differences between High School and College ..... | pg.7 |



## Office of AccessAbility Services

**Welcome to Goodwin College!** We are pleased that you have chosen our school to help you achieve your educational and career goals, and we are looking forward to working in partnership with you over the coming months.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

The Office of AccessAbility Services (OAS) assists individuals with disabilities with accommodations and services that will promote success and integration into the college. Goodwin College complies with the mandates created by the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The intent of these laws is to protect people with disabilities from discrimination and to guarantee the civil rights of anyone who has met the requisite academic and technical standards required for admission or participation in the programs and activities of any post-secondary institution that receives federal financial assistance.

### WHAT IS A DISABILITY?

A disability is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical, social, attitudinal, and cultural barriers encountered by persons having physical, sensory, psychological, developmental, learning, neurological, or other impairments.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines disability as having a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, students must self-identify as having a disability and provide appropriate documentation of a disability upon request. Based on student self-report, professional observations, and requested documentation, students receive reasonable accommodations as developed by the student and the AccessAbility Services Coordinator.

### HOW TO DISCLOSE A DISABILITY

**Prior to the start of each semester**, if you have a documented disability or think you do; please contact the AccessAbility Services Coordinator as soon as possible. You can contact The Office of AccessAbility Services by calling 860.727.6718 or emailing [AccessAbilityServices@goodwin.edu](mailto:AccessAbilityServices@goodwin.edu)

### WHAT ARE ACCOMMODATIONS?

A reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to a course, program, job, activity or facility that ensures educational equity for qualified students with disabilities. Educational equity provides students with an opportunity to attain the same level of performance or to enjoy benefits and privileges equal to those available to students without a disability. Any student with a disability may be eligible to receive accommodations & services from the Office of AccessAbility Services.

Accommodations are not guaranteed for success, but rather to promote non-discrimination and equal access to opportunities.



Accommodations are not student preferences; they are determined on a case by case basis through an established review process. While the law requires priority consideration be given to the specific methods requested by the student, it does not imply that a particular accommodation must be granted if it is deemed not reasonable or it fundamentally alters the course or alters essential program requirements. In order to access accommodations, students must disclose their disability to the AccessAbility Services Coordinator.

Common accommodations students with disabilities may qualify for include, but are not limited to:

- ❖ Advocacy to faculty, staff, and administration
- ❖ Classroom note-takers or instructor provided class lecture outlines or notes
- ❖ Testing Accommodations
- ❖ Assistive Technologies
- ❖ Alternate format textbooks
- ❖ Environmental adjustments
- ❖ Sign language interpreters
- ❖ Other accommodations deemed reasonable

## **HOW TO REQUEST ACCOMMODATIONS**

When a student visits with the AccessAbility Services Coordinator, (s)he bring any relevant documentation of his/her disability as well as any other supporting documents (s)he may have. Goodwin College understands that each person's situation is unique; therefore, The Office of AccessAbility Services simply asks that any interested student meet with us. Documentation requirements vary by situation. The AccessAbility Coordinator will talk with the student about documentation during the initial conversation. No student should delay meeting with the AccessAbility Services Coordinator out of concern for not having appropriate paperwork.

All medical records and learning assessments will be kept confidential.

Accommodations will be reviewed and/or renewed every semester. Students who receive accommodations through The Office of AccessAbility Services should see the AccessAbility Services Coordinator for updated Letters of Accommodation before each semester begins.



## STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Any student accessing The Office of AccessAbility Services needs to understand his/her rights with regards to accommodations as well as his/her responsibilities.

### *Rights:*

- It is the student's right to have his/her disability kept confidential as the law allows. The Office of AccessAbility Services will not share information regarding a student's disability with any faculty, staff, parent, or other entities unless the student has completed a Release of Information and given permission to do so or there is an explicit need to know.
- It is the student's right to have your approved accommodations provided free of charge, as mandated in the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Office of AccessAbility Services will never charge a student for classroom accommodations.
- It is the student's right to request adjustments to his/her accommodations. All requests will be reviewed by the AccessAbility Services Coordinator and approved, as appropriate, in order to ensure equal access.
- It is the student's right to choose which instructors his/her accommodation letter is sent to. A student may not need all accommodations for every class, but any professor that a student will need an accommodation from **must** have a copy of his/her accommodation letter.
- It is the student's right to access the process of Grievances as outlined in the Student Catalog.

### *Responsibilities:*

- It is the student's responsibility to disclose his/her disability to the AccessAbility Services Coordinator and request accommodations. **Accommodations become effective on the date the letter is delivered to the professor. Accommodations are not retroactive.**
- It is the student's responsibility to read each class syllabus and talk with professors about the ways in which the course structure and essential requirements may impact the use of accommodations.
- It is the student's responsibility to notify the AccessAbility Coordinator if you believe their accommodations were not be met. Notification must be made in writing within 72 hours of determining an accommodation was not met. Once notification has occurred, the AccessAbility Coordinator will review the complaint and determine if a violation of accommodations has occurred and what remedies can be made for that event, as well as how this can be avoided going forward.



- It is the student's responsibility to request new accommodation letters for each semester that (s)he is going to need accommodations or if there is an update to accommodations.
- If a student has note taking assistance as an accommodation, the student must attend class and be attentive. The student **does not** have the right to request a copy of notes from a class for which (s)he was absent unless it is considered an excused absence by the faculty member.
- If a student requires an alternative test location, or extra time on exams, it is the student's responsibility to make the request at least *one week* prior to the exam. If the student does not schedule the test with one week's notice, the Testing Center will make a good faith effort to accommodate the student, but there is no guarantee that the Testing Center will be able to provide the student with a proctor or a seat to test. Test reservation requests should be made by filling out the "Test Accommodations Request Form" which can be found on the AccessAbility Services webpage.
- If a student requires alternative format texts, it is the student's responsibility to provide a receipt showing purchase of the book along with the written request. A written request can be made by filling out a "Request for Alternate Format Texts" form in the AccessAbility Services Office and can also be found on the AccessAbility Services webpage. A request for an alternative format test should be done in advance of the start of classes to ensure the alternative text can be provided in a timely manner.
- If a student requires ASL Interpreting Services, it is the student's responsibility to submit his/her request for interpreting services immediately following registration for classes in order to assure this accommodation is provided on the first day of class. If an interpreter is needed for other meetings or events on campus, please notify the AccessAbility Services Coordinator at least 10 days' in advance. If The AccessAbility Services Coordinator is not alerted with at least 10 days' notice, the Office of AccessAbility Services will make a good faith effort to accommodate the student, but there is no guarantee that The Office of AccessAbility Services will be able to provide an interpreter.

*\*Information adapted from The University of Texas at Austin, Services for Students with Disabilities.*

## **RELEASE OF INFORMATION**

The Office of AccessAbility Services at Goodwin College is the agent that is charged with the responsibility for collecting and maintaining disability documentation. Submitted documentation becomes the property of the College; any documentation provided to the Office of AccessAbility Services is stored in a secure file system with limited access for no more than 7 years from the date students were last registered at the College. Documentation sent to the College by prospective students is kept only for those students who subsequently attend Goodwin the following semester. Documentation received by this College will remain confidential and will not be shared with faculty, administration, or parents without the student's informed and written consent, except where disclosure is required by law. Confidentiality is not maintained relative to child abuse, suicidal, or homicidal intent. A written release of information must be completed by the student before documentation will be released to the student and / or other parties.



## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

If a student feels he/she is being denied the agreed upon accommodations, (s)he should first appeal to the classroom instructor who is not provided the needed accommodation. If services/accommodations continue to be denied, the student should report the problem to the AccessAbility Services Coordinator. If still unsatisfied with this resolution, it is the student's right to file a formal complaint following the appeals and grievances procedure that is described in the College catalog. Please refer to this catalog for specific information, which can be found on the Goodwin College website.

Any student who have been denied accommodations by the Office of AccessAbility Services may ask the Coordinator to reconsider his/her request upon presentation of evidence not previously submitted. Such evidence must be from a licensed professional who is qualified to evaluate and report on the specific disability. If accommodations are still denied, a student may grieve using the appeals and grievances procedure outlined in the College catalog.

## **DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DISABILITY SERVICES IN HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE**

For many students and their families, it can be difficult to make the transition from the laws and procedures in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to the approaches and legal protections that apply to college students. In K-12 education, special education and IDEA outline how educational supports are provided. Colleges and universities are not subject to those laws and practices.

In the postsecondary world, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 forms the legal foundation for protections to individuals with disabilities.

These regulations are civil rights protections, not entitlement programs, and so are very different in approach. This distinction forms the basis for the legal and procedural differences that every college student and their parents need to understand.

Beyond the legal differences are the developmental and philosophical differences that are just as important to understand. College students are adults and the expectations of them differ dramatically from what was asked in high school. Parents not only are not expected to advocate directly for the student, they may be actively discouraged from doing so. This can be a big adjustment for the family but the AccessAbility Services Coordinator can help the student navigate these changes.

The chart below highlights some of the important differences between high school and college. It may help you to identify areas of needed growth for the student as well as to support a change in approach for parents.

| HIGH SCHOOL  | COLLEGE  |
|--|--|
| The law is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)  | Laws are Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.                                    |
| IDEA is about success  | ADA is about access  |
| Education is a RIGHT and must be accessible to you.  | Education is NOT a right. Students must apply to attend.   |
| Core modifications of classes and materials are required.  | No modifications are required – only accommodations.   |
| In high school, education may be modified and individualized according to the students' needs.   | At the college level, course work does not need to be modified, and special education services are not provided.             |
| Student is helped by parents and teachers, even without asking directly.   | Student must request accommodations from Disability Services Office.   |
| School is responsible for arranging for accommodations and modification.   | Student must self-advocate and arrange for accommodations.   |
| Parent has access to student records.  | Parent has no access to student records without student's written consent.   |
| Teachers meet regularly with parents to discuss their child's educational progress.  | College faculty members seldom, if ever, interact with parents and expect the students to address issues with them directly. |
| School district develops Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and must follow this legal document in the provision of educational services. | Student must identify needs and ask for services. NO IEP exists and is not considered legal documentation.                   |

*\*Information/Chart adapted courtesy of © 2010. Think College. Think College is a project of the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts, Boston.*