Welcome Back from Paula Perez  Coordinator of Accommodative Services

New Year/New Name! Our office is embracing a new identity given our new name! For years we have recognized the stigma associated with ‘disability’ and the additional barrier it imposes on access. More than 50% of eligible students choose NOT to access accommodations or supports each year and we strongly believe ‘stigma’ plays a role. Our goal in embracing a new identity is to remove a known barrier by highlighting our function rather than the label. We also look to serve a wider background of students including ADA eligible veterans returning from service who may benefit from academic accommodations. Our most recent statistics have shown that students who access supports do better academically than those that do not—from Spring ‘12 to Fall ’12 they had a 77% retention rate. The Office of Accommodative Services will continue to offer the same supports and comprehensive accommodations. We look forward to a positive and engaging relationship with our students.

Revised Laws/New Guidelines: The Americans with Disabilities Act of 2008 and revised Title 1 regulations state the primary purpose of the ADA amendments “is to make it easier for people with disabilities to obtain protection under the ADA.” Titles I, II and III clarify A) who has a disability entitled to protections; B) who is entitled to accommodations; and C) how those determinations are made and by whom. The definition of “disability” has expanded to include a broader scope of what is considered a “major life activity” and therefore ADA eligible. The shift is from pure documentation guidelines to a broader comprehensive dialogue and approach. Our students need to be able to articulate the nexus between the disability and the accommodation, show a record of utilization, and provide relevant documentation. A new “Self-Assessment Survey” helps student articulate that “nexus” which is so critical, not only to eligibility and accommodation determination but more importantly to student success.

Contact Us:
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Main Office: SSB 303
Monday through Friday, 8:30 am-5 pm, Wednesday to 7 pm
Adaptive Technology Lab, SSB 305
Monday through Friday, 9 am-5 pm
Deborah Herring: Administrative Assistant, 845-790-3631
Monday through Friday, 9 am-5 pm
Mary Koniz Arnold: Academic Tutor
Tuesday 8 am to Noon and 2-6 pm, Friday 2-5 pm
Dawn Buchal, Math Tutor
Monday through Thursday 1-4 pm

What We Offer for Students
One-On-One Academic Support including, but not limited to, time management and organization, study skills, note taking, test taking, adaptive tech training, and academic advisement.

Workshops/Group Work based on student need: study groups can be customized for a particular subject or desired training.

Technology like CCTV, screen readers and magnifiers, speech recognition software, alternate text format, and self-editing software.

What We Offer for Faculty
Instructional Support: strategies are offered for effective disability-related teaching methods. In some cases, supplemental instruction of content material may be provided.

Early Alert/Electronic Progress Reports which allow faculty to provide early intervention warnings with specific feedback and suggestions that our professional tutors will use when they work one-on-one with students academically at-risk.
Adapting Classroom Techniques for Blind and Visually Impaired Students

This semester DCC will have several new students with visual and hearing impairments. These students face a wide range of challenges. Students who are blind or visually impaired can have no vision, see only large forms, see magnified print, have tunnel vision, peripheral vision, or some other modified form of vision. Hearing impaired students may be deaf and have an interpreter assigned to work with them, or they may use hearing aids. From the perspective of the instructor, being cognizant of the barriers is essential to optimizing accessible instruction and materials.

Blind/Visually Impaired Students Requires Creativity, Planning: Our students with visual impairments will be using a wide array of auxiliary aides and adaptive equipment, including Braille. Highly visual instruction with overhead transparencies, PowerPoint presentations, material written on the chalkboard or whiteboard, videos, and demonstrations is a positive approach for most students, but doesn’t work for the visually impaired. Blindness or visual impairment may affect a student’s mobility or spatial orientation within the classroom, reading text unless it is modified through assistive technology, and impact a student’s ability to interact with others in class discussions or group work. A blind or visually impaired student can hear lectures and participate in the class discussions, but much classroom material is inaccessible. Making the class and all of its material accessible to students who are blind or visually impaired takes prior planning. Our office can help you implement a combination of classroom accommodations, instruction modifications based on Universal Design for Learning principles (UDL), and assistive technology so your students can meet the demands of the college experience. Here are some basic guidelines for working with blind/visually impaired students:

- employ UDL principles in design and delivery
- recognize that the assignment’s goal can be accomplished through a variety of means
- offer flexibility in assignment tasks
- clearly present the goal(s) of an assignment to students on instruction sheets and during in-class assignment review
- provide lecture notes, handouts, assignments and other printed material in alternate formats
- review assignment instructions orally in class; and for writing assignments, emphasize drafting and revisions
- provide study questions, study guides, and other study aides in multiple formats
- limit use of visual reference phrases such as "Look at this" or "As you can see" while pointing to board
- repeat aloud or verbally describe what is written

Deaf and Hearing Impaired Students Benefit from a Visual Environment: Do you ever hold class in a circle? If you have deaf or hearing impaired student in your class, it is one way to foster good communication techniques by allowing them to observe and interact with their classmates. Other environmental factors can also make a difference, like ensuring good lighting and minimizing glare, avoiding standing in front of a light source (being in silhouette interferes with speech reading), reducing background noise, and improving room acoustics.

A teacher’s communication techniques make a difference, too. Always directly face the student and be within three to five feet, get the student’s attention before speaking, stand in one place if possible, and speak clearly at a slow/moderate level. Make sure your face is clearly visible—that means don’t drink or chew when talking; keep beards and moustaches trimmed; keep hair and hands away from your mouth when you’re speaking; and avoid speaking when you’re writing on the board with your back turned to the student. Remember that clear signals make a big difference:

- indicate of the topic of conversation and signal the student to a change in topic
- use facial expressions, body language, and appropriate gestures to emphasize a point
- rephrase (rather than repeat) messages the student has a difficult time understanding
- point to other students or say the name of the student who is asking a question or making a comment
- pause after asking a question to allow the student processing time
- minimize copying because a student cannot listen and take notes at the time
- provide handouts such as syllabus, lesson plans, and assignments ahead of time
- provide printed copies of overhead or PowerPoint presentations ahead of time
- provide students with the curriculum information in advance
- provide a copy of the notes or allow the student additional time for recording any information placed on the board

It is also critical to use captioned DVD’s, videos, and websites. Closed captions were created for the deaf community and hearing impaired individuals to assist in comprehension, but they are also a tool for those learning to read, learning to speak a non-native language, in an environment where the audio is difficult to hear or is intentionally muted, or by viewers who simply wish to read a transcript along with the program audio.