

August 21, 2009

TO: Faculty Colleagues  
FROM: Ronald J. Ambrosetti  
Provost and Dean of the College  
RE: Background Information on Students with Disabilities

Under the provision of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, colleges and universities receiving federal funds may not discriminate in the recruitment, admission, educational process or treatment of students. Students who have self-identified, provided documentation of a disability, and requested reasonable accommodations are entitled to receive approved modifications of programs, appropriate academic adjustments, or auxiliary aids that enable them to participate in and benefit from all educational programs and activities. Attachment "A" in the syllabus memo —the College Policy on Students with Disabilities-- should be included on each of your course syllabi.

**Accommodation Notices:**

Verification forms that outline the required academic accommodations have been prepared based on the individual student's documentation of disability. The students have been instructed to meet with each of their faculty within the first two weeks of the semester, to discuss their academic needs. The students will ask the faculty to read and sign the Verification form, which the student will return to the Office of Academic Affairs. The process is intended to encourage students to recognize the importance of self-advocacy and at the same time, to ensure the faculty that the accommodations are supported by the appropriate documentation. An outline of the Procedures for Testing Accommodations and Tips to Facilitate Student Learning, are enclosed for your reference.

**Classroom assignments and equipment:**

In response to the needs of students with mobility or hearing impairments an effort is made to assign their courses to accessible classrooms. Specified classrooms are equipped with free standing, height adjustable tables and/or cushioned straight-back chairs. The furniture labeled, "for use only by individuals with special needs" is most often placed in the front of the classroom, relatively close to the door. The faculty is asked to assist the effort to keep the furniture in place and to prohibit use by anyone except the designated students.

**Assistive Listening Devices in the classroom:**

Many students who use hearing aids effectively in quiet environments have a difficult time following information presented in large college classrooms. In the classroom, the instructor's voice is competing with background noise, room echo and distance. Most Assistive Listening Device systems (ALDs) use a microphone/transmitter positioned close to the instructor's mouth to send the instructor's voice through the air or by cable to the receiver worn by the student. *If a student's hearing impairment requires the use of an ALD, the student will bring the necessary equipment to class. The faculty will be asked to wear a lapel microphone approximately three to five inches from the mouth, to speak slowly and clearly and to make sure that their voice intensity is not too loud.* Since the ALD user may not have access to questions raised by others in the room, remind students to speak one at a time. Be sure to face the student when speaking and to repeat questions and comments from other students.

**Adaptive computer equipment:**

An adaptive computer station is located in Lavery Library (L-311) primarily for use by students with disabilities. The computer features Kurzweil 3000, a reading software program and Dragon Naturally Speaking, a word processor with voice activation capabilities. Kurzweil 3000, scans documents, displays an exact image and reads the text back to the student, while highlighting the spoken word and sentence. The Kurzweil program can also magnify text larger than a conventional copy machine. We use Kurzweil to provide textbooks and printed materials in an audio format for students with vision or learning disabilities. Students can use Dragon Naturally Speaking to compose papers, reports etc., just by speaking. Individual training to use the Naturally Speaking program will be provided as needed. Both programs are potentially useful for students who need readers for tests and for those who are better able to produce essays using a computer rather than handwriting.

Questions and concerns regarding students with disabilities should be directed to Chris Hogan, Coordinator of Disability Services, Office of Academic Affairs, Kearney 202, 385-8034, email: [chogan@sjfc.edu](mailto:chogan@sjfc.edu).

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation when working with students with disabilities in your classes.