

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 27, 2020
TO: Faculty/Instructors
FROM: Tawny McManus, Assistant Vice Provost for Accessibility & Disability Services
RE: ACCOMMODATIONS & SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Welcome to the Fall 2020 semester from the Office of Accessibility & Disability Services!

This memo highlights information from Student Disability Services (SDS) to assist you in ensuring that students enrolled in your courses have equal opportunity for full participation, access and inclusion.

- I. **ACCOMMODATIONS:** Instructors will receive an emailed letter from SDS listing the required and approved accommodation(s) if there is a student with a disability enrolled in their class that has requested support.
- a. If you have a TA or Co-instructor, please share the accommodation letter with them.
 - b. If you have a student who reports need for an accommodation due to disability but you **have not received a letter from SDS**, please refer the student to contact SDS. We do not advise providing accommodations if you have not received a current semester letter directly from SDS stating approved and required accommodations.
 - c. Students with disabilities have the right to register for and request disability services at any time throughout the year. Thus, accommodation letters may come to you at different times during a semester (despite students being encouraged to register with SDS prior to classes starting).
 - d. Students can choose not to use their approved accommodations, however, an instructor is not required to accommodate a student retroactively who did not request SDS accommodations.
 - e. Faculty cannot deny a student an accommodation. Please reach out to SDS staff if there are concerns. SDS will work with the faculty member and student on an access solution. (Note: ADA & Section 504 obligation).
 - f. Note: Students reporting COVID-related concerns are not necessarily students with documented disabilities.
- II. **TEST ADMINISTRATION:** Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the SDS office will not be proctoring in-person tests. ****SDS students approved for testing accommodations can be proctored online through Do-IT recommended Respondus Lockdown browser and extended time can be set in Blackboard's tools during FA2020 operations.****
- a. Departments/instructors can provide accommodated testing using other methods as long as the accommodation can be met appropriately. For example, providing students the correct amount of required extended time.
 - b. SDS students with challenges to online testing can be referred to SDS to discuss solutions, such as those who may require scribes for typing assistance and could need a unique testing arrangement.
 - c. Please consider accessibility challenges for all students during COVID, such as Internet challenges, time zone differences, and home environment complications (shared devices, childcare, etc.) when planning for testing.
 - d. Note: Testing accommodations do not provide an unfair advantage to a student with a disability and students with disabilities are no more likely to have academic integrity difficulties than any other student.

Remember, accommodations provide an opportunity for equal access and demonstration of abilities given a student's limitations. For example, slowed processing speed can require extended test-taking time in order to allow the SDS student the opportunity to read and complete each question just like their peers can. If a student does not know an answer, sitting with a test longer will not help them, however, it will give them a chance to complete the test.

- III. NOTE-TAKING ASSISTANCE:** Students with disabilities who have been approved for note-taking assistance are encouraged to use audio note-taking software. SDS provides access to note-taking technologies to students who requires this support in order to record class lectures and allow for more active learning.
- a. Recording of lectures may be listed as an approved accommodation on the student's letter from SDS. The recording is only to be used for academic study and cannot be distributed elsewhere without instructor permission. An audio recording agreement approved by UMBC's Office of General Counsel is available on our SDS [web page](#) under *Faculty Resources* and it is linked in our SDS accommodation letter.
 - b. If a student cannot use note-taking software, we may solicit a [peer note-taker](#) from the class by emailing your class roster announcing a note-taker is needed for a student with a disability. SDS coordinates the hiring and approval for this stipend paid position. Instructors can also provide their own notes as an alternative.
 - c. Note: SDS makes the note-taker assignments and student names are kept confidential. SDS requires the use of our *Accommodate* secure online data management system for uploading and tracking of notes. Peers who take notes but do not go through the hiring/payroll process in SDS are not eligible for a stipend. There is only one note-taker assigned per class, if and when one is needed.
 - d. During COVID-19 virtual operations, **recording of all lectures is strongly advised for accessibility** for all students by both SDS and the Provost's office. Challenges with recording for an SDS student who requires this as an accommodation should be directed to SDS staff so a solution can be arranged.
- IV. ACCESSIBLE COURSE MATERIALS:** Accessibility is a shared and required campus responsibility and it benefits everyone (#universal design)! All course documents and videos should be in accessible formats generally, but it is required for students with sensory impairments such as blindness, low vision, and deafness.
- a. Faculty are advised to attend free trainings on campus provided throughout the year by SDS, the department of Instructional Technology and the FDC on topics related to online teaching, universal design, and accessibility. There are also many free online "how-to make your documents accessible" resources.
 - b. Please check out the PIVOT faculty training for best practices in online teaching (<https://pivot.umbc.edu/>) and the SDS Faculty Resources website page for support (<https://sds.umbc.edu/resources/information-for-faculty/>).
 - c. **Please use Blackboard Ally**, the accessibility tool within Blackboard provided by DoIT that can scan the course content you have uploaded or created and informs you if your materials are accessible.
 - d. Examples of accessible course content include uploading PDFs that can be read by a screen reader- not "image" or picture files, choosing captioned videos, and selecting digital textbooks. Be proactive and share reading lists in advance to facilitate SDS obtaining alternate format texts if needed.
 - e. Make sure you include [SDS's contact info on your syllabus](#) and please run Microsoft Word's accessibility checker tool on your syllabi and self-created documents to check for accessibility problems.

Thank you for assisting UMBC in providing access to students with disabilities. We look forward to working with you to help support the diverse learning needs of our students. Remember, accommodations do not compromise academic standards but provide an alternative way of accomplishing course objectives by reducing disability-related barriers.

Please do not hesitate to contact an SDS staff member when questions arise.

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