

Faculty Information 11/02/2019

**STUDENTS WHO ARE DEAF**

**OVERVIEW**

Deafness varies greatly in how it impacts an individual, depending on a variety of factors. These factors include ***age of onset of deafness, type of hearing loss, extent of hearing loss, and family history of deafness.***

The single most critical factor is age on onset of the deafness. Individuals with prelingual deafness are less likely to use lip reading and speech because these individuals lost hearing before developing a language. An individual with prelingual deafness is more inclined to use American Sign Language to communicate. American Sign Language (ASL) is recognized as a foreign language. Although English words are used in ASL, the sentence structure is much more similar to Vietnamese language. Typically, individuals who use American Sign Language as the primary mode of communication as also members of the Deaf Community, which has its own identity and culture. Individuals within the Deaf Community do not consider Deafness a disability. Instead, they consider that it is a part of the language of their culture. This concept is especially prevalent in families with a multi-generational history of Deafness.

 The type of hearing loss also impacts the communication style of an individual. There are three types of hearing loss: ***Conductive Hearing Loss; Sensorineural Hearing Loss; and Combined Type of Hearing Loss.***

Conductive Hearing Loss occurs when there is a lack of vibrations in the middle ear. It typically involve either the middle ear, the outer ear, or both. It is caused by the inability of sound waves from the outer ear to connect with the bone within the middle ear. Individuals with Conductive Hearing Loss may benefit from hearing aids, personal amplification systems, and/or a cochlear implant. Often, with these aids, the individual’s hearing is able to be restored to a useable level. While not all individuals with Conductive Hearing Loss will use and/or benefit from the available aids, many will benefit and will use spoken language as the primary mode of communication, supported by the aids, use of residual hearing amplified by the aids, lip-reading, contextual cues (body language, facial expressions).

Sensorineural Hearing Loss is more complex than Conductive Hearing Loss and poses more challenges. Sensorineural Hearing Loss can occur suddenly or over time. It is caused by complications of the inner ear’s cochlea, which are the nerves that carry the hearing impulse to the part of the brain that interprets hearing. It impacts both the volume of sound and the clarity of sound, much like radio static. The aids that may help an individual with Conductive Hearing Loss are probably not going to help an individual with Sensorineural Hearing Loss.

As one might infer, Combined Type of Hearing Loss is a combination of both Conductive Hearing Loss and Sensorineural Hearing Loss. Because the combination includes Sensorineural Hearing Loss, the aids that may help an individual with a pure Conductive Hearing Loss may not benefit an individual with Combined Type of Hearing Loss.

Students who are Deaf cannot hear well enough to hear spoken language, with correction such as hearing aids. The student may be able to discern a loud noise, such as a car horn or a near-by airplane, but not able to interpret the sounds of spoken language.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR FACULTY**

* Include a statement in your syllabus inviting students with disabilities who may have special needs to meet with you privately so that you may confidentially discuss the student‘s needs and reasonable accommodations. Also, at the beginning of each semester, verbally invite students with disabilities and to meet with you privately to discuss their individual and unique needs. Talk about the requirements of the class, special needs of each student (on a case-by-case basis, as each student’s needs are unique), and strategize as to how to implement the reasonable accommodations defined by the Student Disability Resources and Services Director. Never make an assumption about an individual’s abilities. Each individual is unique, and his/her disability impacts him/her in varying ways. If you have concerns, contact the Director of the Student Disability Resources and Services (SDRS).
* Most students who are Deaf and taking a class in person as opposed to online will require the use of a note taker as a reasonable accommodation. Please assist the student in obtaining a note taker by either announcing to the class that SDRS is hiring note takers, or by singling out good students and asking if they would be interested in the job. Never disclose who the notes are for in order to preserve the confidentiality of the students. SDRS will provide NCR paper to the note taker who is hired and establish how the notes are to be delivered to the student.
* Additionally, a student who is Deaf will probably use either an Interpreter for the Deaf or a Captionist in order to access what is said in class. The Interpreter signs in American Sign Language what is said in class, and may voice for the student who is Deaf. The Captionist types what is said in class and the student reads the captions on a laptop or personal electronic device. Typically, a student who uses a Captionist will voice for himself/herself. The captionists or interpreter may be down in class, or the student may access services remotely using a strong microphone and internet in order for the service provider to hear what is said in class and caption or interpret.
* Allow preferential seating, so that the student who is Deaf may select a seat near the front, on the side of the room where vision is best for following the facial expressions of the professor, watching the board and/or PowerPoints, and watching, when applicable, the Interpreter.
* Face the class when speaking. Read what you have written on the board. Don’t stand in front of a backlight such as a bright window, which makes your face difficult to see.
* Provide the student with a copy of your handouts and PowerPoints in advance, so that the student may have a copy to supplement the notes from the note taker.
* Post handouts, PowerPoints, assignments, and notes on the class website. Make sure that any videos that are used are captioned, as this is the only way that a student who is Deaf will have access to the content. If you have questions about how to make material accessible or how to get captions, please contact the Director of SDRS for additional support and information.
* When possible, use multiple modalities when teaching. Once again, the entire class benefits and it is a good Universal Design for Instruction strategy. Use visual presentations when possible.
* Students who are Deaf may use testing accommodations. These accommodations may include extended time for exams, quizzes, in-class writing assignments, use of an interpreter or captionists for clarification, as well as the use of a distraction-reduced environment, such as the SDRS Testing Rooms. If a student qualifies for testing accommodations, it is noted on the Accommodations Letter that the faculty member receives from the SDRS. Please honor the privacy and confidentiality of students using testing accommodations and do not comment in class or call attention to the fact that these students are testing in an accommodated manner.
* As a matter of courtesy, **ALWAYS** speak directly to the student, not to the Interpreter or Captionist. The Interpreter and Captionist are only there to provide the student Real-Time access to what is said in class. It is the student with whom you should communicate.
* Be sure that, at all times, you maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the student. If you need to discuss issues or testing arrangements with the student, do so privately.

**Texas A&M University Commerce Student Disability Resources and Services**

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E-mail: StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

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**Universities Center at Dallas – 801 Main Street, Suite C340, Dallas TX**

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