

Faculty Information 11/02/2019

**STUDENTS WHO ARE BLIND**

**OVERVIEW**

According to the American Foundation for the Blind, the clinical diagnosis for blindness is a central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with the best correction and/or a visual field of 20 degrees or less. Most (not all) individuals who are legally blind have some useable residual vision remaining. Total blindness is the inability to see anything with either eye.

When working with a student who is blind, it is critical that the professor ensure that the materials that are being used in class and online are accessible for individuals who are blind. For more information on how to proactively design an accessible class and accessible online materials, please refer to the Tip Sheets on Producing Accessible material, posted on the Website of the Student Disability Resources and Services under “Faculty Resources”.

Some individuals who are blind will need to use Braille and/or tactile graphics to access the content of your class. The Student Disability Resources and Services can assist you in converting materials to Braille when this accommodation is required. However, please keep in mind that it takes time to convert materials into Braille, so the earlier you get your materials to SDRS, the faster SDRS can get them back to you in an accessible format. Some students may also require descriptive narration for videos. When purchasing new videos, please inquire about the availability of videos with both captioning and descriptive narration as options. Please contact SDRS when needing assistance with descriptive narration for older videos that do not include descriptive narration. It is important to also remember that the student who is blind has the right to access your materials ***at the same time*** as other students, making it critical that you work closely with SDRS in order to be able to release both the traditional materials and the accessible materials simultaneously.

Most students who are blind are competent in the use of assistive technology. There is a range of differing types of assistive technology that a student who is blind may use, including but not limited to Braille note takers, digital recorders, text-to-speech software with optical character recognition for reading printed documents, text-to-speech software for use with the web and online content. SDRS makes much of the assistive technology available for use in testing, so that the professor can send an electronic version of the exam to SDRS and the student can take the exam using assistive technology which reads the content to him/her.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR FACULTY**

* Include a statement in your syllabus inviting students with disabilities to meet with you privately so that you may confidentially discuss the students’ needs and reasonable accommodations. Also, at the beginning of each semester, verbally invite students with disabilities 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 Director of the Student Disability Resources and Services. If you and the student note any needs that are not met by existing accommodations, contact the Director and refer the student to schedule an appointment with the Director so that the needs can be identified and appropriate reasonable accommodations can be noted.
* Never make an assumption about a student or that student’s abilities. Each student is unique, and his/her disability impacts him/her in varying ways. Always be respectful of each student. If you have concerns, contact the Director of the Student Disability Resources and Services (SDRS).
* Speak directly to the student, not a third party, and use your normal voice.
* Provide a thorough orientation to the layout of the room/lab, making sure to note various exits, steps, raised platform, low-hanging objects, and/or items such as equipment, tables, etc. so that the student is comfortable safely navigating the room/lab.
* If one of the student’s accommodations is to have material in an alternate format, you may need to provide an electronic copy of materials to SDRS so that they can be converted to the appropriate format. Some accommodations are simple and you will be able to do those yourself, such as increasing the size and type of font, printing on a different color of paper, and allowing the student to mark answers on the exam rather than a Scantron.
* Face the class when speaking. Clearly describe what you are writing on the board or reviewing, step-by-step (especially if you are reviewing information that is visual in nature). Use specific descriptors. Provide tactile models when possible and appropriate.
* Establish ground rules for discussions and group activities, having each participant state his/her name so that the student can follow the conversation. When calling on a student, call on the student by name so that the student who is blind knows who is talking.
* Always introduce yourself when entering the room so that the student will know that you are present. Conversely, always let the student know when you are leaving so that the student will know that you are no longer present.
* If the student has a guide dog, do not pet or distract it. It is a working dog and is doing its job keeping the student safe and helping the student navigate the campus.
* Some students may require preferential seating as a reasonable accommodation. Discuss the accommodation with the student and together determine the best seat for that individual.
* Most students who are blind will require extended time for exams, quizzes, in-class writing assignments and may need to take exams in SDRS to ensure access to the appropriate assistive technology. Consult SDRS if you have questions.
* 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**

Gee Library, Suite 162

903-886-5150

E-mail: StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

**Texas A&M University-Commerce at Frisco – 9700 Wade Blvd, University Hall 105, Frisco TX**

Frisco@tamuc.edu

(972) 377-1665

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

Dallas@tamuc.edu

(214) 954-3600

**Collin Higher Education Center – 3452 Spur 399, Mckinney, TX 75069**

CHEC@tamuc.edu

972-599-3122

**Mesquite Metroplex Center – 2600 Motley Drive, Suite 100, Mesquite, TX 75150**

Russell.blanchett@tamuc.edu

972-882-7520

**Navarro Partnership – 3200W 7th Avenue, Corsicana, TX 75110**

Virginia.monk@tamuc.edu

903-875-7619