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Student Disability Services Campus Newsletter, February 2012

University of Northern Iowa. Office of Student Disability Services.

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Have you ever wondered how eligibility for accommodations is determined? Are you confused as to your role in providing accommodations in your class or at a university event? Are you interested in learning how your department can be more inclusive of all students?

SDS staff are available to answer these questions (and many more!) and can meet with your department or organization to discuss these questions further. If you would like SDS to present at your next department meeting, please call 319-273-2677 or e-mail me at ashley.brickley@uni.edu.

In addition to these presentations, SDS is also providing a large presentation for UNI student organizations. On Thursday, March 8th from 5:30-6:15 PM in the State College Room in Maucker Union, student organization officers and their members can learn more about designing and planning inclusive meetings and events. Those interested in attending should e-mail Amy Dillard at adillard@uni.edu.

I hope you will consider taking advantage of these great learning opportunities!

Ashley Brickley
Coordinator, Student Disability Services

Professional Development Opportunities through SDS

Getting to Know Accommodations: Alternate Test Formats

What is alternate format for tests?
Students who may use the alternate format tests accommodation may take a test that involves writing directly on an exam rather than using a Scantron sheet, dictating answers into a tape recorder rather than writing them out, or having an exam printed in large text. There are several other alternate test formats for which students may be eligible.

Why is this accommodation provided?
Individuals whose disabilities make traditional or common test-taking methods extremely difficult or impossible may be eligible for this accommodation.

How can an instructor help with this accommodation?
The use of non-traditional testing methods depends on an individual’s disability documentation and must be arranged with the student, instructor, and disability services staff so as not to alter the necessary requirements of a course.
5 Tips for Successful College Students

College is a huge transition for any student. There are a lot of different things to do: spending time with friends, getting involved in student organizations, working on or off-campus, classes, and much more. By following these five tips, you can set yourself up for a rewarding college experience inside and outside of the classroom.

1. Seek out help when you need it.
Support is essential in helping you achieve academic success. Seek out tutors, study groups, and consider using resources like the Academic Learning Center to help you do your best academically.

2. Map out how you will use your time.
Many of your classes and activities may not follow the structured schedule that you are used to with high school coursework. Make an intentional attempt to use your planner, schedule tasks, homework, study time and even meal and sleep times.

3. Plan ahead, especially for final projects and tests that are a big part of your grade.
Space out your homework into manageable sections that you can do bit-by-bit so that you don’t become overwhelmed before big assignments, papers and tests.

4. Be an active listener.
Constantly be sure to ask yourself, “What does this mean?”, “What is the main point?” and “What can I connect this to?” This will help you to understand and remember the material that you’re trying to learn, while also keeping you engaged.

5. Identify problems that repeatedly get in your way.
Make it a point to self-reflect on a regular basis. If you’re having a difficult time with coursework, sit down and ask yourself, “What is preventing me from doing my best? Can improving my attitude help me to see this differently?”
Universal Design

Utilizing Universal design principles in your classroom creates an open and inviting environment that encourages student learning.

Students have many different talents and abilities and with this, they have methods of learning that are unique to that individual. By noting these differences and incorporating them in the instructional goals, methods, materials and assessments in the classroom, it is possible to help students succeed at the highest level possible.

Universal Design for Learning includes working with three different brain networks.

- **Recognition networks** - How we gather facts and categorize what we see, hear, and read. Identifying letters, words, or an author's style are recognition tasks.

- **Strategic networks** - Planning and performing tasks. How we organize and express our ideas. Writing an essay or solving a math problem are strategic tasks.

- **Affective networks** - How learners get engaged and stay motivated. How they are challenged, excited, or interested. These are affective dimensions. ([http://www.cast.org/udl/index.html](http://www.cast.org/udl/index.html))

Using all three of the networks in the classroom lead to maximum learning. By presenting information and context in multiple ways, giving alternatives for the ways that students can express what they know and inspiring interest and motivation for learning, you can incorporate the principles of Universal Design in your classroom!

**Fact Folder:**

The more information you have, the more difficult it can be to use it if it isn't organized. By using the Fact Folder button, you can automatically create a bibliography with all of your sources.

**Fact Finder:**

Click this button to find more information about a specific topic. By highlighting the word and clicking on the Fact Finder button, you'll find out even more about that topic with online search results.

**Assistive Technology:**

Read & Write Gold can assist students that have books in alternate format, need website text reading as well as many other features.

Read & Write Gold is a program that promotes reading and writing success. The new software is available for all students in every UNI Computer Consulting Center computer lab.

If you would like to try Read & Write Gold for yourself, check out the available computer labs at the following website: [www.uni.edu/its/labs/sccs](http://www.uni.edu/its/labs/sccs).
The student organization, Awareness for Individuals with Disabilities (AID) has begun planning for a new semester!

The first meeting of the semester took place on Tuesday, January 31.

Regular meetings take place the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at 5:00 pm in Maucker Union in the lower level Elm Room. The next meeting will be Tuesday, February 14th.

For more information, please contact: Ashley Brickley, AID Advisor at ashley.brickley@uni.edu.

Learn about a Disability: Learning Disabilities

Learning Disabilities are often called ‘invisible disabilities.’ This is because the person with a disability may show no apparent signs of having one. Learning disabilities affect the way a person’s brain processes certain information.

The three most common learning disabilities are:
- dyslexia -- a severe difficulty with reading
- dyscalculia -- a severe difficulty with math
- dysgraphia -- a severe difficulty with written expression

Persons with learning disabilities (LDs) are of average or above average intelligence. However, they do have to use tools and strategies to help them learn more effectively.

Accommodations commonly used by LD students:
- Alternative exam formats
- Taped lectures
- Extensions on papers/projects on a case-by-case basis (as negotiated with the faculty member)
- Extended time (exams)
- Distraction free room (exams)
- Note taker / scribe
- Books on tape

Positive communication tips for instructors:
- Include a disability statement in your course syllabus and repeat it during the first class meeting.
- Stress the importance of good study habits and effective time management.
- Give timely feedback to the student; errors need to be corrected as soon as possible.
- Give praise when merited; it builds confidence.
- Remember these important facts:

Although a learning disability may present with other disorders, these conditions are not the cause of the learning disability.

(http://ssd.uindy.edu/specificdisorders.php)
Faculty Resources: Learning from a Student’s Point of View about Disability

Listening to a student’s story may prove to be extremely beneficial. This helps the student to define their challenges and provide the professor with feedback and aids the professor in finding creative solutions to helping all students progress. By taking the time to learn more about a student’s disability, we create a greater awareness of the disabilities’ field and collaborate to create an environment of encouragement and inclusiveness that is essential for all students’ growth and development. To hear about one student’s disability, check out David’s story. David took one year off of college to interview others with disabilities to learn more about others’ challenges and to embrace his own path to success. Find out more at http://growingupwithadisability.blogspot.com/.

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