

Accessing Education
A Guide for Faculty and Staff at

UTSA[®]



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Disability is Part of our Diversity!

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The University of Texas at San Antonio is a leader in the San Antonio community for academic and program accessibility for students with disabilities. As a result, UTSA has a large population of students with disabilities. Currently, according to the 2010 U.S. Census, roughly 35% of the American population has some type of disability. Of those numbers, 35.8 million people have a condition limiting basic physical activity; 58.6 million people have a sensory disability involving sight or hearing and 13.5 million people have a mental or emotional condition causing difficulty in learning, remembering or concentrating. To meet the many challenges generated by this unique population, UTSA has developed a support service program through Student Disability Services.

The University of Texas at San Antonio is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 93-112 - The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled the ***Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)***, pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens in the United States.

You, as a faculty or staff member, are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" for equal access to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate based on that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with self-disclosing to Student Disability Services so that an accommodation notification letter/email can be sent on behalf of the student informing both faculty and the student of the student's basic accommodation/s needs. Each faculty member is encouraged to become familiar with relevant federal legislation regarding the rights of students with disabilities.

I. The Law and College Students with Disabilities

a. What is Section 504?

In 1973, Congress passed the Rehabilitation Act (Public Law 93-112). This act guarantees civil rights for Americans with disabilities. The law is grounded in the due process clause of the Fifth Amendment and the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Section 504 is the section of the law that specifically refers to postsecondary and vocational education services.

Section 504 of Public Law 93-112 provides that "... No otherwise qualified handicapped individual in the United States shall, solely by reason of handicap, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." With respect to postsecondary and vocational education services, "otherwise qualified" means a person with disabilities who meets the academic and technical standards requisite to admission or participation in the program or activity.

b. Does Section 504 mean lowering academic standards?

No, nothing in the language or intent of Section 504 abridges the freedom of an institution of higher education to establish academic requirements and standards. Under Section 504 guidelines, colleges and universities can require some physical qualifications for certain clinical programs. For example, it would be reasonable to require students training as pilots or surgeons to have the needed level of

visual acuity. However, the same vision level would not necessarily be required of students training as psychiatrists or as airline ground personnel.

A student's disabling condition may not be considered as part of any nonclinical admissions decision. Therefore, all students with disabilities will have been admitted through the same admissions process as other students.

c. What does Section 504 and the ADA require of postsecondary institutions?

Essentially, Section 504 requires that colleges and universities make those reasonable adjustments necessary to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disability. For example, it may be necessary to remove classroom prohibitions against animals (in the case of service animals). Other less obvious examples might include extending time limits on exams for a student with a learning disability or allowing lectures to be audio recorded when disabilities impair a student's ability to keep up with the lecturer. Occasionally, a substitution may have to be made for a course requirement (i.e., an art appreciation elective vs. a music appreciation elective for a student who is deaf). Classes enrolling students with mobility impairments may have to be relocated in accessible facilities. The college or university may need to provide special services such as priority registration, sign language interpreters for students who are hearing impaired or specially proctored examination arrangements and/or locations. Note that emphasis in each of these adjustments is on the word "may." The key is accommodating the disability, not altering essential elements of the course. "May" means that with the exception of removing architectural barriers, no set formulas exist for making adjustments. For example, a computerized registration procedure may provide easy access to students with hearing impairments or mobility difficulties, but may pose problems to some students with certain types of learning disabilities or with visual impairments.

In the classroom, a student who has difficulties reading due to a learning disability or visual impairment, or a student with a mobility impairment who has problems in the manner in which he or she is expected to respond to an exam question, may require additional time to complete an examination. Thus, the adaptation will be specific to the needs of the individual student. In every case, the intent is to accommodate the disability without altering academic standards or course content. More recent federal legislation as stated in the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendment Act of 2008 broadens the definition of disability as well as physical and program accessibility and by regulation defines appropriate accommodations. Moreover, the ADA authorizes the right by a single individual to bring suit for discrimination based on disability against not only the University as a public entity but also the individual/s responsible for the act of discrimination. In the classroom, the law requires that an instructor adapt the course presentation to meet the unique needs of the student's disabling condition. The law also charges students with the responsibility to make his or her abilities and limitations known and to meet with or without accommodations the instructor's expectations in class participation, performance, and work standards. The Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 are not designed to ensure equal results but are designed to ensure equal opportunities of access.

d. Student Disability Services (SDS)

UTSA is fortunate to have an office dedicated to providing accommodations for students with disabilities. Student Disability Services is located in MS 3.01.16 and is dedicated to providing an array

of services for the student with a disability as well as assist faculty and staff in the implementation of accommodations in the classroom as well as all classroom related student programs throughout campus.

While SDS embraces the uniqueness of the faculty-student relationship as essential, you will receive notifications regarding a student with a disability and appropriate accommodations to guarantee equal access. Relying on the expertise and guidance available from Student Disability Services will simplify your compliance with the law.

II. Students with Disabilities in the Classroom

a. Possible Accommodations

UTSA's population of students with disabilities represents a variety of disability groups that fluctuates from semester to semester. A typical long semester will include students who may have a visual, hearing, physical, mental and/or learning disorder. There are typically over 1200 students with disabilities attending classes at UTSA during each of the fall and spring semesters. Each student will have a unique set of abilities and disabilities requiring unique accommodation(s). These may include but are not limited to:

- Extended time on examinations
- Reduced Distraction Environment for exams
- Note-taking assistance and/or copies of notes
- Use of audio recorder in class
- Preferential seating in the classroom
- Alternative media formats
- Sign Language Interpreter or Captionists in class
- Readers or scribes for tests
- Large print material or use of CCTV
- Audio Loop (assistive listening device)
- The freedom to change positions or take breaks in class
- Absentee or Tardy leniency

*Faculty and Staff are **not** responsible for disability determination and/or the selection of accommodations; however, their input is valued and we often consult with them before prescribing an accommodation.*

b. Referring a Student to SDS

If a student mentions any physical or mental concern/disability to you as a faculty or staff member, please immediately refer them to Student Disability Services (SDS). You do not have to collect their documentation, letters from doctors, psychological testing or the like. Although we understand that instructors often only want to help students, before they assume the responsibility of looking at a student's medical documentation to determine if he or she is eligible for accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 or the ADA, simply make a referral to Student Disability Services. Again, the student must come to SDS for any accommodation related to a disability.

Once the student completes the registration process and makes an accommodation request for their classes, faculty will receive an official electronic notification letter that outlines the agreed upon individual accommodation plan as well as instructions on how to implement various accommodations. Depending on when accommodation request forms are received by SDS, emails will be sent out at the beginning of each semester and throughout the semester. Each fall and spring semester, SDS implements deadlines to submit accommodation requests to their instructors. (Note: If an instructor has not been assigned to the course or an email address cannot be identified for the assigned instructor, SDS will send the accommodation letter via email directly to the student who will then be responsible to notify their instructor/s directly). When instructors receive notification of accommodation, students and instructors should engage in a discussion to make sure an accommodation "plan of action" has been put in place and have agreed on how these accommodations will be implemented.

It is important to note that not all physical or mental conditions rise to the level of being a disability as defined by the ADA. For instance, a broken limb can be a major inconvenience; but provided it is healing in the usual amount of time, without complications, it would not be considered a disability.

NOTE: It is likely that SDS will determine some of the students you refer to us as not actually having a true disability based on the ADA. Unless you receive an official accommodation notification from SDS, faculty are not required to make any adjustments in their teaching methods, test delivery etc. based upon Section 504 or the ADA.

c. Confidentiality (Extremely Important):

The disclosure of a disability and the need for accommodations is an extremely sensitive subject requiring the utmost confidentiality. Discussion between the student and faculty member should be protected. Furthermore, your ability to work with the student to ensure equal opportunity in your class to consume knowledge and be fairly tested on course material will largely depend on a positive "work with me" attitude from both parties. Keep in mind that students do not necessarily have to reveal a specific diagnosis to you, but they must do so in our office and provide substantial documentation of the condition. It is very important, unless the student decides otherwise, that he or she not be identified as a person with a disability to other faculty, staff or classmates. For students with obvious disabilities, like wheelchair users, disclosure of the disability cannot be avoided; but students with learning disabilities and/or mental health impairments can be sensitive about being identified as a student with a disability. Therefore, it is very important that instructors avoid "singling out" such students in the classroom. For instance, instructors often help students find a volunteer notetaker. Unless the student says otherwise, the instructor should request a

notetaker but not disclose whom the notetaker will be assisting. He or she should collect the copies of the notes and allow the student to pick them up at his or her office, or some other manner that would enable the student to maintain his or her anonymity.

III. Rights and Responsibilities

a. Student Rights and Responsibilities

Students Have The Right To:

- ✓ Expect all disability-related information to be treated confidentially.
- ✓ Receive appropriate accommodations in a timely manner from faculty or SDS. Students should have the opportunity to meet privately with faculty to discuss needed accommodations and any other concerns. Please keep in mind that SDS is the only office designated to review disability documentation and determine eligibility for appropriate accommodations for students.
- ✓ Appeal decisions regarding accommodations and auxiliary aids.

Students Have The Responsibility To:

- ✓ Self-Disclose and provide SDS with appropriate documentation of the disability that meets the university documentation guidelines.
- ✓ Meet with the instructor during their office hours or make an appointment to facilitate privacy in order to engage in an interactive conversation about the student's accommodations.
- ✓ Initiate requests for specific accommodations with SDS in a timely manner, preferably early in the semester.
- ✓ Follow procedures with faculty and SDS in order to put appropriate accommodations in place.
- ✓ Inform SDS of the materials you need in alternate format as soon as possible.
- ✓ Notify faculty/SDS immediately when an accommodation is not being provided completely or correctly.
- ✓ Notify faculty/SDS immediately when a decision has been made to not use an accommodation or the accommodation is no longer needed.
- ✓ If student is utilizing other SDS services (e.g. Adaptive Test Center, Accessible Furniture), they are responsible for following prescribed SDS procedures to put those accommodations in place.

- ✓ Provide for their own personal independent living needs or other personal disability-related needs. For example, coordinating services of personal care attendants or acquiring homework assistance are student responsibilities and are not the responsibilities of the instructor or SDS.
- ✓ Act as their own advocate. Work with counselors on developing advocacy skills and communicating your specific needs and accommodations to faculty.

b. Faculty Rights and Responsibilities

Faculty Have the Right To:

- ✓ Request verification of a student's eligibility for any requested accommodations. Such verification will be in the form of an official notification from SDS. (SDS is the only office designated to review disability documentation and determine eligibility for appropriate accommodations for students.)
- ✓ Expect the student to self-disclose their accommodations needs to SDS
- ✓ Expect the student to engage in an interactive conversation about their approved accommodation requests.
- ✓ If the student is taking their tests at SDS, expect SDS to administer exams in a secure and monitored environment.

Faculty Have The Responsibility To:

- ✓ Identify and establish essential functions, abilities, skills, and knowledge of their courses and evaluate students on this basis. Students with disabilities should meet the same course expectations as their peers.
- ✓ Provide accommodations only to students who are registered with SDS. It is NOT your responsibility to provide accommodations to students who are not registered with SDS.
- ✓ Use a syllabus statement and class announcements to invite students to disclose their needs.
- ✓ Act immediately upon getting a student's request for accommodations by engaging in an interactive conversation with the student about their accommodations.
- ✓ Contact SDS (if unsure about request) to further discuss the accommodation.
- ✓ If a student needs **alternative media**, please provide SDS with syllabi, textbooks, course packets etc, well before classes begin (at least 4-8 weeks prior to the start of the semester is recommended) in order for students with disabilities to use alternative media when all other students have course materials. With such timely consideration, students with disabilities who have alternative media needs for accommodations and instructional access will be best served. Converting print materials is both labor and time intensive. Alternative media may be print material in Braille, scanned onto discs, or enlarged.

- ✓ Work to ensure that all audio-visual materials used in class are accessible (e.g., that videos shown are captioned for students with hearing impairments and that the VCR equipment used has captioning capabilities, that videos shown will be made with auditory description in some way or that written transcripts will be provided, etc.)
- ✓ Consider incorporating principles of **Universal Design** for Learning in your teaching. More information about University Design can be found at <http://www.ahead.org/resources/universal-design>
- ✓ Clearly communicate your testing procedures with the student and with SDS.

IV. Tips for teaching students with Learning Disabilities or other cognitive impairments

The term "learning disorder" describes a condition in which a person with normal or above average intelligence does not achieve at the expected level in academic areas. This gap in performance is assumed to arise from neurological origin and is not the result of mental retardation, physical disabilities, emotional disturbance, cultural differences, or educational deprivation. Persons with learning disorders often acquire, integrate and express information in ways, which differ from the norm.

a. Course Adaptations

Students with learning disorders often need explicit structure. They may need help distinguishing between main and supporting ideas or seeing the relationship of parts to the whole. Students who have difficulty writing may need to take extra time for exams or make alternate arrangements in which they can respond orally, use word-processing, or tape test answers. Student Disability Services makes such arrangements for examinations and can provide information concerning the appropriateness of such alternatives. If a requirement poses a difficulty for the student due to a learning disability, provide an alternate format that will maintain the content of the course. For example, provide extended time limits if needed for completion of assignments, or give shortened assignments. Give students frequent feedback about their performance so that they can modify their activities in time to help their grades. Provide as much information as possible about course requirements as far in advance as possible. This lets students organize and secure support services where needed. Explain carefully all class expectations, grading requirements, etc.

b. Lecture Aids and Written Materials

Try to provide a list of new vocabulary words at the beginning of each class. When possible, provide copies of lecture notes to assist the student in following the lecture. Permit the student with a learning disability to obtain notes from a classmate or notetaker. An instructor soliciting a volunteer notetaker has the advantage of obtaining a "skilled" notetaker and anonymity for the student. Student Disability Services will copy and/or enlarge notes, overheads, and other written lecture materials at no charge. The use of visual aids such as chalkboards, overhead projectors, films, diagrams, and charts greatly assists these students. When showing a film or video, it is helpful to provide written transcripts or have it captioned, if available. Allow use of dictionaries to correct

spelling errors, hand held "spellcheckers" (which look like calculators), or spellcheck software programs for those students who can use a word-processing program on a computer.

Be sure handouts and copied readings are clear and easily read. Students with learning disorders may have special difficulty filling in missing pieces of words or reading through smudges or streaks on a poor copy.

c. Lecture Delivery

It is best to speak naturally; however, it may be necessary to rephrase particularly complex ideas or ideas introducing new terms. Colloquial expressions and idioms are often difficult to process; try to limit their usage. Allow audio recording of lectures; where copyrighted video or audio materials are used, permission may need to be obtained from the distributor. Use multiple modes to deliver information. Both speaking and the use of chalkboard, overhead projector, printed outlines or diagrams are very useful to the student who has difficulty in processing information due to his or her learning disability. Orally and visually (on the board or overhead), outline the lecture at the beginning of class and review it at the end.

V. Students who are blind or visually impaired

The basic categories of visual impairments are total and partial blindness. Only ten percent of the visually impaired population may be able to discern light, colors, or shapes to one degree or another. Some may be able to see a whole area but have difficulty with precise visual functions. Some students have diseases that cause their visual acuity to fluctuate. Visually impaired persons are sometimes also mobility impaired because of their visual disabilities.

The major challenge facing visually impaired and partially sighted students in colleges and universities is the volume of printed materials. These include textbooks, syllabi, outlines, class schedules, and tests. Unless recently disabled, students with visual impairments have probably developed their own personal method of dealing with the volume of visual materials by the time they reach college. Students may use readers, Braille books, tape-recorders and computer equipment that give them access to required course material. In addition, some students may be able to use large print books, electronic visual aids or other magnifying devices for readings, and/or a large print typewriter for writing papers. They may also be able to take their own notes in class by printing with a felt pen. Students may use a slab and stylus which enables them to record notes in Braille. Often students may need the assistance of a fellow student's notes to be copied and enlarged. Many students may prefer to record class lectures to alleviate additional time needed to transcribe written notes shared by a fellow student. This is all a matter of preference.

Other common difficulties visually impaired students may experience differ only in degree. Faculty are sometimes confused about the legitimacy of a visual impairment when the student does not use a cane or service animal for mobility assistance. Actually, the large majority of individuals who are visually impaired do not require these types of support. For the majority, other signs are more apparent. The use of adaptive methods when scrutinizing printed materials and larger-than-normal handwriting may give the impression of childlike or immature responses or that the student is

attempting to "stretch" the quality of the printed assignment. In actuality, the visually impaired student is only trying to see what he or she has written. These students are usually unable to adequately utilize standard printed material like textbooks, classroom handouts, references, and tests. This is also true for information written on the chalkboard, seen on the overhead projector, or on other audiovisual formats.

a. Suggestions for teaching students who are blind or visually impaired

- ✓ Some students may have their textbook converted by SDS into electronic text or Braille. Because these types of conversions are time and staff intensive, a minimum four to eight weeks is required for each text (depending on the type of text and conversion used). It is very important that the faculty select their required texts early in the previous academic semester and make that information available. Student Disability Services works with each student to decide which type of conversion is best applied and will assist all qualified students with this process.
- ✓ Visual aids used during lectures should be clearly described. This would include verbalizing what is written on the board.
- ✓ Copies of overhead materials should be made available to the student to be viewed at a later time via a reader or alternate material transfer.
- ✓ Due to the time needed to schedule an appropriate testing arrangement, "pop-quizzes" in class create tremendous difficulty and more often than not preclude involvement by the student who is visually impaired. Alternate arrangements may have to occur by setting up test proctoring services that are available through Student Disability Services. For those students able to benefit from enlarged print, there is a copy machine available in Student Disability Services for enlarging class work.
- ✓ If any room changes occur, be certain the arrangement is made in verbal form. Students who are visually impaired might well miss a notice written on a chalkboard.
- ✓ Preferential seating is important for students who are visually impaired. When visual cues are not available, the student must receive all auditory cues possible. Please arrange seating the first day of class.
- ✓ Give the student plenty of advance notice in the event that research papers are to be assigned as someone may have to aid in the literature search, both in finding and in reading materials.
- ✓ Early in the semester, it is a good idea to orient the student to the room by explaining where things are located and guiding the person around the room.
- ✓ Inform the student when classroom furniture has been rearranged.
- ✓ Keep doors fully open or fully closed.

- ✓ If an individual who is visually impaired seems to need assistance, identify yourself and offer your services.
- ✓ If you are walking with an individual who is visually impaired, let him or her take your arm just above the elbow and walk in a relaxed manner. The person can usually follow the motions of your body. Warn the person when you are approaching a step or other obstacle.
- ✓ When giving directions, use descriptive words such as "straight ahead" or "forward." Be specific in directions and avoid vague terms such as "over there."
- ✓ When interacting with students who are visually impaired, use verbal identification when you arrive or leave an area.
- ✓ Guide/service animals are working animals; it can be hazardous if the guide dog is distracted. Never pet the dog without the owner's knowledge and permission. Normally, the dog is "working" when wearing the harness.
- ✓ Do not hesitate to use words like "see" or "look" when speaking with an individual who is visually impaired. Also, make sure you identify yourself by name, maintain a normal voice volume, speak directly to the person, and maintain eye contact.

VI. Deafness and hearing impairments

a. Suggestions for teaching students who are deaf or hard of hearing

To communicate effectively with an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing, we suggest the following guidelines:

- ✓ Obtain the student's attention before speaking. A tap on the shoulder, a wave or another visual signal is usually effective.
- ✓ Clue the individual who is hearing impaired into the topic of discussion. Students who are deaf need to know what subject matter will be discussed in order to pick up words that help them follow the conversation. This is especially important to individuals who depend on oral communication.
- ✓ Speak slowly and clearly; but do not yell, exaggerate, or over pronounce. Exaggeration and overemphasis of words distorts lip movements, making speech reading more difficult. Try to enunciate each word without force or tension. Short sentences are easier to understand than long ones.
- ✓ Look directly at the student when speaking. Even a slight turn of your head can obscure their ability to see your lips.

- ✓ Do not place anything in your mouth when speaking. Mustaches that obscure the lips, smoking, pencil chewing, and putting your hands in front of your face all make it difficult for students who are deaf to follow what is being said.
- ✓ Maintain eye contact with the student. Eye contact conveys the feeling of direct communication. Even if a sign language interpreter is present, continue to speak directly to individual who is deaf. He/she will turn to the interpreter as needed.
- ✓ Avoid standing in front of a light source such as a window or bright light. The bright background and shadows created on the face make it almost impossible to speech read.
- ✓ If the student indicates that they did not understand you, first repeat and then try to rephrase a thought rather than repeating the same words. If the person only missed one or two words the first time, one repetition will usually help. Particular combinations of lip movements sometimes are difficult for individuals who are hearing impaired to speech read. Do not be embarrassed to communicate by paper and pencil or computer, if necessary. Getting the message across is more important than the method used.
- ✓ Use pantomime, body language and facial expression to help communicate. A lively speaker is always more interesting to watch.
- ✓ Be courteous to the individual who is deaf during conversation. If the telephone rings or someone knocks at the door, excuse yourself and tell the student that you are answering the phone or responding to the knock.
- ✓ Use open-ended questions that must be answered by more than "yes" or "no." Do not assume that a student who is hearing impaired has understood your message if the student's response is a nod of acknowledgement. Open-ended questions ensure that your information has been communicated.
- ✓ Seat the student to his/her best advantage. This usually means a seat opposite the speaker so the person with the hearing impairment can see the speaker's lips. The speaker should be illuminated clearly, so be aware of the room's lighting.
- ✓ Provide new vocabulary in advance. It is difficult, if not impossible, to speech read or read finger spelling of unfamiliar vocabulary. If new vocabulary cannot be presented in advance, write the terms on paper or a chalkboard, or use an overhead projector. If a lecture or film is to be presented, a brief outline or script given to the student and interpreter in advance helps them in following the presentation.
- ✓ Avoid unnecessary pacing and speaking when writing on a chalkboard. It is difficult to speech read a person in motion and impossible to speech read one whose back is turned. Write or draw on the board, then face the group and explain the work. If you use an overhead projector, do not look down while speaking.
- ✓ Make sure the student does not miss vital information. Write out any changes in meeting times, special assignments, additional readings or additional information. Allow extra time

when referring to manuals or texts since the person with the hearing impairment must look at what has been written and then return his or her attention to the speaker.

- ✓ Slow down the pace of communication slightly to facilitate understanding. Many lecturers talk too fast. Allow extra time for the student to ask or answer questions.
- ✓ Repeat questions or statements made from the back of the room. Remember that students with hearing impairments are cut off from whatever happens outside their visual area.

b. Working with a Sign Language Interpreter

It may be helpful for you to become familiar with the following guidelines if a student uses an interpreter for your class.

- ✓ Speak directly to the individual with the hearing impairment, not the sign language interpreter. The interpreter is not part of the conversation and is not permitted by professional ethics to voice personal opinions or enter the conversation. Face the student with the hearing impairment and speak directly to him/her in a normal manner. Do not make comments to the interpreter that you do not mean to be interpreted to the student, even if the student's back is turned. The interpreter is there to provide a service and to accurately provide direct translation.
- ✓ Remember that the interpreter is a few words behind the speaker. Give the interpreter time to finish before you ask questions so that the student can ask questions or join in the discussion.
- ✓ Provide good lighting for the interpreter. Any time a presentation requires darkening the room to view slides, videotapes or films, auxiliary lighting is necessary so that the student with the hearing impairment can see the interpreter. If a small lamp or spotlight cannot be obtained, check to see if room lights can be dimmed, still providing enough light to see the interpreter.
- ✓ Allow only one person to speak at a time during group discussions. It is difficult for an interpreter to follow several people speaking at once. Ask for a brief pause between speakers to permit the interpreter to finish before the next speaker starts.
- ✓ Speak clearly and in a normal tone when using an interpreter. Do not rush through a lecture. The interpreter or the student who is deaf may ask the speaker to slow down or repeat a word or sentence for clarification.
- ✓ Allow time for students to study handouts, charts or transparencies. A student who is deaf cannot watch the interpreter and study written information at the same time.
- ✓ When facilitating discussions, call on individual speakers rather than waiting for people to speak up. Because the interpreter needs to be a few words behind, students who are deaf do not always have an opportunity to become involved in discussions. Also, these individuals

sometimes do not realize that other people are starting to speak; often their contributions are passed over.

c. American Sign Language

Many people see deafness as just a loss of hearing. However, it is more complicated and creates unique problems at the university level. Most people who were born deaf or lost their hearing before age two have never heard English. The communication language used by most students who are hearing impaired in the United States is called American Sign Language (ASL). This language has its own syntax and grammar. Having never heard it, English is very difficult for most students who are deaf to master. Most individuals that are deaf have some hearing capabilities called residual hearing. Listening and understanding speech vary with each individual's residual hearing capability. It is important to understand that students may need to use speech reading (lip reading), utilize hearing aids and require interpreter or real time captioning services to make it through their curriculum. Since only 25% of all speech is visible on the lips and English has never been heard, speech reading alone will not meet the student's needs. Moreover, a hearing aid amplifies all sounds, so unless there is an ability to differentiate between speech and background noise, the hearing aid will not meet the student's "hearing" needs. Having never heard English creates difficulty with speech. It takes practice to understand the speech of a person who is totally deaf since there appear to be no discernible consonants. The most important point is that there is no correlation between a student that is hearing impaired or deaf and a person's speech abilities and intelligence.

VII. Tips for teaching students who have physical or mobility challenges

- ✓ Never come up behind an individual and push a wheelchair without his or her knowledge and consent. Most wheelchairs are delicately balanced (tipsy) to allow the individual to keep the majority of his or her weight on the rear wheels. The front wheels then "float" over sidewalk cracks, rocks and doorjambs to avoid tumbles. A sudden push from behind may cause the wheelchair to flip over.
- ✓ The only suitable manner of gaining multi-floor accessibility is elevators. UTSA has elevators in every classroom building and use is not restricted. Given a full elevator, consider stepping off when an individual who is mobility impaired needs access. This will allow the student who uses a wheelchair or other mobility device to be on time for class.
- ✓ Most students with physical limitations will ask for assistance if they need it. Never hesitate to ask if a student needs assistance, but keep in mind that students often try to do as much as they can on their own. Assistance is not always required or welcomed. Ask; do not insist.
- ✓ When talking to a student in a wheelchair for more than a few minutes, it is a good idea to sit down, kneel or squat if convenient. Communication will be enhanced and neck strain alleviated.
- ✓ Words such as "walking, running or standing" are acceptable in conversation. People using wheelchairs use the same words.

- ✓ If accompanying a student who uses a wheelchair from one location to another, walk beside, not in back of, the individual.

VIII. Other types of disabilities

No one can reasonably expect faculty and staff members to be experts on the myriad of possible disabilities. We have simply tried to provide a guide for some of the most common. Many other conditions, especially cognitive and emotional impairments, will be found in your classrooms and on campus. Often poor performance in the classroom can suggest depression; erratic behavior may signal other emotional conditions. The most important thing you as a faculty or staff member can do is recognize that there may be a problem and that there is help on this campus. Please, don't take it upon yourself to be counselor and instructor; on the other hand, certainly do not ignore the problem. Please inform the student that there is a group of caring individuals on this campus who want to help. If he or she will not come to our office, recommend Counseling Services (210) 458-4140. Suggesting that someone seek professional help can be a difficult thing to do; but for the student, the alternative can be much worse.

As I am sure you have learned, accommodating students with disabilities is a multi-faceted service that requires educators, psychologists, medical professionals, and legal experts to all come together in order to create fair and equal access for all UTSA students. This holistic approach is an endeavor to which we are extremely dedicated, but we also greatly value the input of the faculty and staff at UTSA. Feel free to contact us for any reason, we are always happy to answer questions or work toward solutions. Thank you for taking time to learn about our office and the process of disability accommodation at UTSA.