

Disability Services at Rutgers

Overview

The Office of Disability Services in New Brunswick currently manages nearly **950 cases** of students who require accommodations. The office is responsible for arranging accommodations for more than 1200 requests each semester. The cases include physical disabilities (ex. chronic illness, blindness, wheelchair bound), psychiatric disabilities (ex. Aspergers syndrome, bipolar disorder, anxiety), attention deficit disorders, learning disabilities and more recently an increase in disabilities associated with traumatic brain injuries.

The case management process includes an intake session with the student, evaluation of supporting documents to determine the validity of requested accommodations, to the daunting task of managing and providing accommodations. This includes academic coaching; arranging captioning and interpreting services; providing books in alternative formats; finding space for the accommodations of extra time on exams and reduced distraction testing locations; recruitment, scheduling and payment of note takers and proctors; relocating classes to accessible spaces; arranging on-campus transportation; working with University Facilities to insure placement of special chairs/tables in classrooms; as well as working with the New Brunswick Office of Residence Life to determine special on-campus housing accommodations.

The main office where all cases (from all campuses) are vetted and all New Brunswick students are administered is in the Kreeger Learning Center (3 professional staff and 3 administrative support staff). The space within the Kreeger Learning Center **is not** for the use of Disability Services except for five (5) offices. Camden and Newark have one

individual, who takes on the role as campus coordinator for the concerns of students with disabilities in conjunction with their other duties. Camden and Newark do not have separate physical resources delegated to provide disability services. Specifically, no campus has adequate office space to provide appropriate intake sessions and support and more importantly no campus has a testing center thus forcing the disability office to hunt and hope that they can find empty classrooms or meeting areas where exams can be proctored to fulfill required testing accommodations for some.

The Office of Disability Services is the **only office on campus** that provides academic accommodations that are **federally mandated** by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 including Section 504, and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1998, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the Americans with Disabilities Act and Amendments of 2008. Providing academic accommodations for students with disabilities is **not** the responsibility of the ADA Compliance Officer. In addition, the request to assist in the management of accommodations by faculty, although mostly well received, has the tendency to be cumbersome to the learning process and at times can lead to academic distress for student and faculty alike. Some of this can be relieved through awareness and education pointed directly at faculty and staff to allow them to understand the process and the disability characteristics of learning or other impediments that they might encounter.

The vision of every department on every campus is to increase enrollments. An even partial realization of that vision, will tax the Office of Disability Services to an even greater extent than it is now. A short-handed and under-resourced disability services office cannot be

expected to continue to ensure that the University is in compliance with appropriate laws and policy; provide adequate student support services; and supply faculty and staff with informational awareness and adequate resources.

Charge request -

Examine the function of disability services support to determine the adequacy of resource allocation and awareness. This includes the review of the adequacy of physical resources, the availability of funds for outside services and required accommodation equipment and tools, and sources for increases in professional and support personnel. It is also requested that the Senate provide suggestions of best practices to be implemented which would allow for the effective dissemination of information to faculty and staff to promote awareness so they may be a part of the solution towards providing accommodations and supporting this unique population of students.