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PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY

Office of Diagnostic Testing & Disability Services

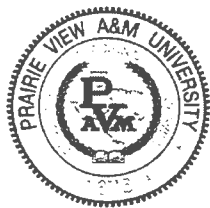
Handbook



...on of the Office
... and Disability Services
...ty, staff, and students with disabili
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... procedures for identification of persons with
... disabilities and to assist in securing reasonab
... accommodations in compliance with
... of the Rehabilitation Act
... s with Disabilities



Office of Diagnostic Testing & Disability Services
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PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY

A Member of the Texas A&M University System

April, 2007

The Office of Diagnostic Testing and Disability Services is pleased to issue this current Handbook. Please access ADA information via print and online at the University and Division webpage. It is our hope that we continue to be a valuable resource to students, faculty, parents and professional staff by providing relevant information to help persons implement and obtain the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Students with disabilities have always been present in the university environment. Examples range from students with notoriety such as Helen Keller who entered Radcliff College in 1900 to the huge influx of veterans studying through the GI Bill. Our mission is clear and steady: to ensure equal access for students and all persons with disabilities to all curricular and co-curricular opportunities offered by the University.

Thank you for receiving this document as a first-rate tool to help you make informed decisions about program eligibility, accommodations, steps to resolving a complaint, student advising and a host of other topics. Moreover, if additional or case-specific information is needed, please don't hesitate to call our offices immediately.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kay Norman'.

Kay F. Norman, Ed.D. Administrator
Office of Diagnostic Testing and Disability Services

www.pvamu.edu

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Mission

At Prairie View A&M University, the Office of Diagnostic Testing and Disability Services within the Division of Student Affairs. Its mission is consistent with the mission and core values of Prairie View A&M University. The office exists to create and sustain a supportive environment that includes policies and practices that assist persons with disabilities to achieve at their fullest potential.

To accomplish our mission we utilize two general approaches:

- Our first approach is to provide direct services to persons with disabilities. Services are individualized based on the needs of the person and the level of disability.
- The second approach involves coordination of services with University faculty, staff and external community agencies.

The goal of each approach is to ensure that persons with disabilities are provided equal access to the programs and services of the University.

Program Goals

The goals of the Office of Diagnostic Testing and Disability Services are found within the document titled, *PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS*, published April 27, 2005. The relevant subsections of the university goals which nestle office goals are as follows:

University Goal 7: Promote Programs that Contribute to Student Success.

University Goal 9: Increase and Enhance the Visibility and Awareness of the University to the Community at Large/all Stakeholders.

University Goal 9.3 to improve the climate for diversity.

Federal Disability Laws

The chart below shows similarities and differences among the laws that affect students with disabilities. Postsecondary institutions such as colleges and universities must comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).

| COMPARISON BETWEEN SECTION 504 AND THE ADA | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|---|--|
| TOPIC | Colleges & Universities | SECTION 504 | ADA |
| MISSION | PVAMU | To establish a "level playing field" and prevent discrimination based on a disability. | Strengthens Section 504 and extends coverage to employment, private institutions and other previously unnamed agencies and organizations. |
| APPLIES TO | PVAMU | All institutions and programs receiving federal financial assistance. Includes private institutions where students receive federal financial assistance (i.e. colleges and universities receiving federal aid). | Public and private education, employment, transportation, accommodations and telecommunications, regardless of whether there is federal funding (i.e., all colleges and universities). |
| COVERS | PVAMU | All qualified persons with disabilities regardless of whether they received services in elementary or secondary school. A person is "otherwise qualified" if she/he is able to meet the requisite academic and technical standards, with or without accommodations. | All qualified persons with disabilities and people without disabilities who are discriminated against because of their relationship with a person with a disability. |

Occasionally there is confusion on what constitutes a "qualified individual". Someone is considered to be "otherwise qualified" if, with or without reasonable accommodation, they meet the same standards – academic, professional, technical and behavioral standards – as do others. It means one must meet established criteria (e.g. admissions, course expectations, graduation, and code of conduct).

Identification and Eligibility at Prairie View A&M University

It is the responsibility of the student to self-identify to the institution and provide appropriate documentation of a disability. The list of specific disabilities is too long to include here. Please consult the law. Note Well: HIV status, contagious and non-contagious diseases are also defined as disabilities.

The definition of a person with a disability is a person with a physical or mental impairment that meets the following criteria:

- (1) Substantially limits one or more of life major activities.
- (2) Has a record of the disability.
- (3) Is regarded as having the disability.

To establish eligibility, students are required to provide documentation of their disability prior to receiving accommodations. Additionally, colleges have the right to establish documentation criteria. Sufficient documentation is the responsibility of the student. To assist in the identification and re-evaluation process, Prairie View A&M University has an on-campus Diagnostic Testing Center located in Room 323 of Evans Hall that administers educational evaluations at no cost to the student. Moreover, at PVAMU documentation must be on letterhead, dated within an acceptable time (5 years) and signed by a professional, who is licensed in the field of the disability.

Accountability

| PROGRAMMING RESPONSIBILITIES AT PVAMU UNDER SECTION 504 AND ADA | |
|--|--|
| Issue | Responsibility at Postsecondary Level |
| Identification | Student |
| Documentation | Student |
| Degree Plan | Student/Department |
| Advocacy | Student |
| Decision Making | Student |
| Support Services | Student/Institution |

Accommodations

The coordination of support services offered by the Office of Diagnostic Testing and Disability Services with the academic departments, the book store, the campus clinic and other auxiliary service providers makes it possible for students with a wide range of disabilities to have program access and a level playing field as they compete and achieve at Prairie View A&M University.

Learning Disabled – Students with learning disabilities are expected to provide acceptable documentation of their disability when they register with the Office of Diagnostic Testing and Disability Services. If documentation is not available, students can obtain evaluations on campus in the Diagnostic Testing Center or seek services from outside agencies. After eligibility of a learning disability has been established, students will be interviewed and appropriate services will be made available. A letter of professional notification will be given to the student to communicate with faculty and staff regarding the individualized, free and appropriate accommodations being recommended based on the disability. Learning disabled students vary widely in their deficit area and the extent of their disability. The kinds of cognitive deficits found in students with learning disabilities involve skills that represent the essence of what higher education is all about: absorbing information through attention and focus, listening and observing, remembering, processing, organizing, analyzing, synthesizing and applying information, critical thinking, reading comprehension, adequate writing and computational skills. However, in spite of these deficits, thousands of students with learning disabilities graduate from college and lead very productive lives. Most students

take breaks during class hours. It is very important that explicit documentation and corresponding course expectations about homework, class attendance and participation be established at the very beginning of the course.

The student and faculty person are expected to communicate early and frequently about the limitations of the disability without compromising the essential teaching elements of the class or learning outcomes of the student. Positive communication is the most important key to working with persons with medical and psychiatric impairments.

Additional Services

The Office of Diagnostic Testing and Disability Services at Prairie View A&M makes every effort to meet each student at their point of need. In that regard the office operates several additional services to promote access and success for students with disabilities.

✓ **Tutoring** – Qualified tutors are available in math, english and several other academic areas. Students who are unable to access tutoring services offered by the Center for Academic Support in the John B. Coleman Library may arrange tutoring services on a short-term basis with Disability Services office staff.

Student Computer Lab – Computers with updated software are available to students with deficits in written expression. The lab is equipped with state-of-the-art workstations. Typing assistance is available with a three-day request timeline.

✓ **Adaptive Equipment** - is also available to students with disabilities at Prairie View. Adaptive equipment stored in the office include: talking calculator, noise cancellation headphones, colored overlays for dyslexic readers, Inspiration software to help students visualize, think, organize and communicate information, and Keys to Access, reading software utilizing MP3 technology.

Psycho-education Evaluations -- Prairie View A&M University has an on-campus **Diagnostic Testing Center** that administers psycho-educational evaluations at no cost to the student.

SUGGESTED ADVISING GUIDE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Allowing students to self-disclose:

- What is important for me to know to better help you put together a manageable schedule?
- What factors/variables are important in choosing your schedule?

Course selection:

- Is math an area of difficulty for you?
- How do you handle a lot of reading?
- What foreign language experience have you had? Is it required for your major?

Give options & information (e.g. majors or schools without language requirement; alternatives to language, such as "area of concentration" or computer skills or culture courses; degree options. B.A vs. B.S.). CONSULT THE DEPARTMENT.

Differences that matter:

- MWF classes are approximately 1-hour long; TR classes are approximately 1 ½ hours long. What difference does that make to you?
- What about large classes vs. small classes? Explain options of how to meet needs, i.e. permission from instructor for enrollment, different class for same requirement, and summer vs. fall vs. spring.
- How many hours do you want to take? Explain that rule-of-thumb is 1-hour in class = 3 hours out-of-class preparation.
- When are you most alert? Is there anything that would affect you taking AM classes? PM classes?
- How much time are you allowing between classes? Is that enough time to get there? To get organized? To re-focus? To prepare for class? Point out potential issues/facts, e.g. takes 10-minutes to get across campus.

Course style:

- Instructor style-how do you learn best (lecture, participation, read on own)?
- Test format- explain how you perform on different types of tests (multiple choice, essay, short answer).
- Encourage students to talk with instructor/department head and/or look at a syllabus **BEFORE** enrolling in a course, if possible.

Include the following statement on the course syllabus and/or announce it during first class meeting: **If you need accommodations in this class related to a disability, please make an appointment as soon as possible. My office location and hours are...**

Grievance Procedure – Steps To Resolution

- 1) Students who wish to raise a specific complaint regarding the University's compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) may request assistance from the Office of Diagnostic Testing and Disability Services to try to informally resolve the issue with faculty or staff.
- 2) If step 2 becomes necessary, the student should document the complaint in writing. The documentation should be given to the Administrator of Diagnostic Testing and Disability Services within 30 calendar days of the root or trigger event. The written complaint must include a) concise statement of the University rule or policy the student upon which the is grievance is based; b) the date of any action the student is appealing; c) summary of actions the student has taken or has been offered to resolve the matter informally; and d) documentation which supporting the complaint. The complaint and documentation will be forwarded to the appropriate

administrator as specified by the issue. These documents will be reviewed by the appropriate administrator who shall meet with the student within 10 calendar days of the receipt of the documentation to gather more information and attempt to resolve the conflict. The appropriate administrator shall respond in writing to the grievance within 15 calendar days. It is recommended that the written response be mailed to the student by certified mail, return receipt requested.

- 3) If the appropriate administrator is not able to reach a resolution, the student may file the grievance in writing to the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs within 10 calendar days of receipt of the response from the appropriate administrator. The Senior Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs or designee shall conduct a meeting with the student and all persons involved in the grievance and shall, within 30 calendar days issue a written answer to the complainant. A copy of the written decision of the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs or designee shall be provided to the Office of Diagnostic Testing and Disability Services, the Dean and department head and the faculty person. The ADA Compliance Officer shall maintain the files and records relating to the complaints filed.
- 4) The Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs or designate makes the final decision.

Appeals

The right of a person to a prompt and equitable resolution of a grievance should not be impaired by the person's pursuit of other remedies such as filing a complaint with a responsible federal department or agency. Although individuals have the right to pursue appeals through external channels, they are encouraged to use internal mechanisms to resolve disagreements. Note: The student should continue to receive reasonable academic adjustments while the written complaint and appeal are under review.

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Higher Education And Accommodations

The following question and answer section is provided to dispel some of the myths and misconceptions concerning services mandated by disability service laws.

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Can I arrange with the college to wake me up in the mornings, make sure I get to class/exams, help me get organized, and remind me of deadlines?

Items of a personal nature are the responsibility of the student. It is also reasonable for the institution to expect the students can get to class and be responsible as part of being "otherwise qualified".

Will parents or the advisor/counselor will enroll me in college?

Students are responsible for selecting courses and enrolling each semester. Working with academic advisors and factoring-in disability-related needs are important considerations in course selection.

Is it true that some universities do not provide accommodations?

ALL postsecondary institutions are required to provide appropriate academic accommodations. The extent of services/accommodations may vary, as well as the name of the office/person who is responsible.

Can admission and/or graduation requirements can be altered/flexible?

Established requirements i.e. admission, graduation, course(s), GPA, code of conduct, etc.- are the same for ALL students. Accommodations may be appropriate dependant upon the "essential elements" of the program. However, the same standard exists, and students with disabilities are equally accountable.

If I qualified for Social Security, I will automatically get disability services in college?

Services and accommodations are based on two (2) prongs: (1) documentation of a disability by an appropriate professional and (2) a substantial limitation (impacting learning, reading, etc.). Having a disability protects an individual from discrimination but does not establish a need for accommodations.

Will colleges provide me transportation from my home/apartment to campus?

Equal access to transportation is required. If no transportation exists, there is no responsibility to create a system for students with disabilities. So, be sure to identify what college and/or public transportation exist. Where you live may also be important in terms of proximity to campus or a bus route.

Will college provide the same services and modification as the high school IEP?

The IEP is specific to K-12. Accommodations in higher education are determined by disability documentation and substantial limitation due to the disability. Also, some services provided in K-12 may be inappropriate in higher education. Determining the availability of accommodations in college is NOT solely based on whether an IEP existed (or not) in high school.

Do colleges provide tuition and fee waivers for students with disabilities, and help with the cost of books?

No. Financial aid and scholarships may be available through the Office of Financial Aid. Other resources for information on books and tuition assistance include the campus disability services office, Vocational Rehabilitation Services (a.k.a. "Voc Rehab", "DARS").

Are accommodations supposed to guarantee that I will pass my classes?

Accommodations are meant to provide "equal access" and "equal opportunity". Access is no guarantee of success. All students are required to perform to the same standards.

Will all of my accommodations will be taken care of once I enroll?

Students are required to self-identify each semester. Upon self-identification, review of documentation, and determination of appropriate accommodations, students must request services in order to receive them. Without notification or request, no accommodations are provided. Prairie View requires students to request accommodation letters and services each semester since courses, expectations, needs and the impact of the disability may change.

Will whatever accommodations I request be provided?

Accommodations are based on disability documentation and substantial limitation of the disability. "Essential elements" need not be changed. Consideration is given to individual preferences, but it is the institution's decision, as long as it can be shown to be "equally effective".

Will any absences automatically be excused if it is disability related?

Courses in which attendance is deemed "essential" are subject to the attendance policy of the University. In case of excused absences, the student is responsible for the material and assignments in the class. Assignments should be completed within the time arranged by the instructor.

Can I redo and retake assignments and tests to adjust the results?

Accommodations are made in order to meet the expectations and requirements of the course. With appropriate accommodations, it is expected that students with disabilities will complete the homework assignments, and take exams at the scheduled time. Poor performance, with accommodations, is no grounds for a retake/redo or extra credit.

Are colleges are required to provide one-on-one tutoring?

Tutoring is considered something of a "personal nature" therefore, outside the scope of accommodations. Equal access to tutoring provided to all students is required. PVAMU provides tutoring specifically for students with disabilities as an additional service.

Once accommodations are requested, can all the previous exams/assignments be changed, if necessary?

The obligation to provide accommodations begin at the point a request is made. Reasonable notice is required from the student to enact accommodations. Accommodations are NOT retroactive.

Will my professors will give me hints/prompts when taking tests?

Exams are taken with the same expectations of other students in the class. "Prompting" by instructors or proctors is an inappropriate accommodation.

Are instructors required to give me their notes, outlines, study guides and a practice exam?

Equal access to the material presented is the focus of accommodations. Lecture material can be gained via taping lectures, use of volunteer note takers, notes posted on the internet, or instructor notes. There is no requirement to create something (e.g., notes, study tools). Additional study strategies, such as identifying key points, reading comprehension, and extended test-taking time may be necessary. If instructors request, extended time may be given in the instructor's office or in the Disability Services office on campus.

As a parent, can I arrange to have weekly progress reports like all through grade and high school.

FEPPRA (Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act), a.k.a. "Buckley", requires strict confidentiality of student information. The institution interacts with the student as an adult, and would require a "release of information" to share records and/or information with anyone else...including parents. This change in focus is important in that the STUDENT is expected to be responsible and accountable for his/her business.

If I attend class and do the homework I will pass the class?

Grades are based on the criteria established by the instructor. Extra credit as an accommodation is inappropriate.

Since I provided the other college with documentation about my disability, do I just need to bring the accommodation list to the college to where I am transferring?

Each college is permitted to establish their documentation guidelines/requirements. Although greater consistency is occurring nationwide, it is important to check with the institution directly as to what documentation is necessary. Also, accommodations provided at one institution do not obligate another institution to the same.

Will the college need to create an independent study program or allow me to take classes at home?

Some courses are offered via Independent Study, or on-line, as Distance Education, etc. Check with the Registrar or other appropriate office for these courses. Creating another version of a course offered on-campus is not required.

Is "Coaching" a service that colleges provide students who have ADD?

Study skills (note taking, test-taking, time management, organization, etc.) are typically offered in the Center for Academic Support or by developmental education specialists on campus. It is a service offered to students in general. The PVAMU Diagnostic Testing and Disability Services Office also provides one-on-one assistance. Note Well: The purpose is skill building. The student is responsible for his/her own studying and preparation. Before coaching or one-on-one tutoring services, we will discuss what issues exist and what available long-term accommodations may best address them.

If I have poor memory, can I have open book tests or weekly exams?

Accommodations are provided in order to have equal access and equal opportunity to the programs and services offered. Changing the exam format and/or the number of exams is generally considered to be a change in the "essential elements" of the course. Alternate forms of the exam may be an accommodation provided by the instructor, if this service can be provided without changing essential elements or mastery levels of the course.

Office Information

Staff:

Dr. Kay F. Norman Administrator for Diagnostic Testing and Disability Services

Ms. Belinda Lewis Program Specialist

Mr. Jarrell Barnes Administrative Assistant

Location:

Evans Hall, Rm. 317

Telephone Number:

936.261.3585

References:

AHEAD. Washington, D.C.

5-Year University Goals. Prairie View A&M University, 2005

ADA Compliance Handbook, 2007

Section 504 Compliance Handbook, 2007

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