

## *The Methodist College Manual for Students with Disabilities*

In keeping with the mission statement, Methodist College is committed to giving students with disabilities equal access to an education firmly grounded in the liberal Arts tradition; to nurture moral values and ethical decision making; to prepare students for a variety of careers; and to provide educational and cultural services and resources to the community.

The staff at the Center for Personal Development take their role seriously in helping **all** students attain academic success at Methodist College. Their goal is to help students with disabilities by: acting as advocates in the college community; encouraging independence and responsibility through student self-advocacy; acting as a liaison between students and the college community; and by securing reasonable accommodations and/or modifications for classes for students with the proper documentation.

### **Federal Laws Pertaining to Students with Disabilities in Higher Education**

There are 2 Acts pertaining to students with disabilities in higher education – Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. These Acts guarantee that students with documented disabilities have rights (and responsibilities) to equal access and reasonable accommodations in the workplace and the classroom.

### *Accessing Services*

In high school, the law governing disabilities was the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1975, which placed responsibility on the school system for ascertaining a student's disability and for implementing requisite modifications. This gave birth to the Individual Education Plan (IEP), which documented the disability as well as making recommendations for accommodations. Once the student graduates, this law is no longer applicable.

In college, it becomes the student's responsibility to present appropriate documentation of a disability to the Director of Disability Services. This must be done upon **acceptance to the college** in order to secure accommodations in a timely manner. Further description of documentation is in Appendix A. The college can not make accommodations retroactively. All evaluations will be placed in a secure file cabinet for purposes of confidentiality. Students must meet with the Director at the beginning of **each** semester in which accommodations/modifications are required. Together the student and the Director will decide on the appropriate accommodations and the student will authorize a form/letter to be given to each instructor.

## **Disabilities and Reasonable Accommodations**

### **Access to Academics**

All students with properly documented disabilities **must** be provided with equal access to academic opportunities such as programs of study, courses and academic services. Equal access refers to the student's ability to have access to the same level of success as students who do not have disabilities. Therefore accommodations, modifications, and adaptations must be made for the student to obtain the same benefits from a course or program of study.

As specified on p. 1, students are responsible for: **initiating** a meeting with the Director of Disability Services; **providing** appropriate documentation for their disabilities (Appendix A) and **authorizing** forms/letters to be sent to their instructors at the beginning of **each** semester that the service is required. Together the Director and the student will decide on the appropriate measures to be taken in order to provide equal access to the students' courses.

If the Director authorizes accommodations while documentation is pending, the student **must** provide the missing information by the culmination of **that** semester. **If the requisite documentation is still missing at the beginning of the next semester, services will not be provided.** Accommodations will be resumed upon presentation of complete documentation.

Accommodations must **not** fundamentally alter a course or program of study. If a clear case can be argued (by the faculty member or Department Head) that a modification will fundamentally alter the course, the modification will **not** be provided. The faculty member, Department Head, Assistant Academic Dean and the Director of Disability Services, will determine this. In such a situation, all efforts will be made to provide alternative accommodations to the student.

Students must be independently mobile or arrange to recruit, train, and pay a personal assistant.

All students of Methodist College are expected to maintain policies and standards of conduct as set forth in the Methodist College Student Handbook.

Examples of unreasonable accommodations include, but are not limited to:

- Unlimited tutoring
- Waivers of courses that are essential to the program (or core requirements)
- Ungraded exams or exams on a pass/fail basis
- Excusing tardiness or lack of preparation
- Lowering passing scores
- Modification of class ranking
- Permission to re-take exams or courses at no cost

Examples of reasonable and common accommodations include, but are not limited to:

- Alternate testing location
- Extended time on tests or exams
- Information broken down into sequential form

- Tape recorders to tape lectures
- Note takers
- Limited individual tutoring
- Course waiver or substitution when not essential to the program of study
- Taped texts
- Computer access
- Calculator in class or exams (providing it does not fundamentally alter the class or exam)
- Lowering the course load allowed
- Reassignment of courses to accessible location if necessary
- 1<sup>st</sup> floor room in residence hall if needed
- Structural alterations such as ramps or grab bars if needed
- Alternate test formats
- Alternate access to oral and/or written material
- Instructions orally and in writing
- Priority seating

### **Enhancing Learning of Students with Disabilities**

The Academic Development Center and Center for Personal Development have resources that may be checked out by students. Once the equipment has left the building, the student becomes responsible for its safety. Checking out equipment requires the student signing a form stating that they understand that they are responsible for the equipment, and if it is lost, stolen or damaged, their Methodist College account will be charged for the replacement amount. Students will not be allowed to use the Center's services until the amount is paid in full. Students must understand that transcripts will not be issued by the Registrar's office if there is an unpaid balance in the students account.

Methodist College offers the following resources:

- Tape recorders and cassette tapes
- Texts on tape
- 4-track tape recorders
- Reader(s) for test taking purposes only
- Scribe(s)/Typist(s) for test taking (by dictation only)
- Alternate testing location
- Photocopying course material
- Tutoring services in all subjects
- Study Skills texts, audio and videotapes
- Computer access (Microsoft Word, Excel and internet access)

In order to receive modifications in a timely manner, students must meet with the Director of Disability Services prior to the onset of the semester. Methodist College faculty and staff can not implement accommodations or modifications if they are unaware of the existence of a disability.

For further information please contact Linda K. Szulc, Director of Disability Services at 630-7402.

## **Appendix A: *Documentation of Disabilities***

For disabilities in which a full psychological evaluation is required (such as learning disabilities), the evaluation must be conducted by a licensed psychologist/psychiatrist and it must have been prepared no longer than 3 years prior to the student's acceptance into the college. Students will **not** be requested to re-test once the evaluation has been accepted by the Director of Disability Services.

### **Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD or ADD)**

Appropriate documentation for students with ADHD or ADD includes evaluations conducted by a licensed psychiatrist, psychologist, neurologist or family physician who has no personal connection to the student.

The evaluation should clearly show the specific diagnosis and the instrument used to make the diagnosis (to include the test name and score data); a written interpretation of the results; a specific listing of recommendations for accommodations/modifications/adaptations; date of testing; and the name of the evaluator.

If the student has more than one disability further documentation may be required by the college. The Director of Disability Services on a case-by-case basis will determine this.

### **Learning Disabilities**

In order to access services for students with Learning Disabilities, an evaluation must have been conducted (within 3 years of acceptance to Methodist College) by a professional who is licensed in learning disabilities testing. This may include, but is not limited to psychologists, psychotherapists, psychiatrists, LD specialists and licensed or certified rehabilitation specialists.

The evaluation must present clear and specific evidence of a learning disability with a written explanation of deficits and difficulties the student faces which are directly linked to the disability; an explanation of the results (to include all scores) indicating the student's strengths as well as areas of limitations; a specific list of recommendations for accommodations/modifications/adaptations; date of testing; and the name of the evaluator.

If the student has more than one disability further documentation may be required by the college. The Director of Disability Services on a case-by-case basis will determine this.

### **Blind/Visually Impaired**

Students who have impaired vision are required to provide proper documentation by a licensed ophthalmologist. The documentation must not have been prepared more than 3 years prior to acceptance to Methodist College and it must provide a clear indication of the extent of the impairment (how it affects the student's daily and academic functioning), an explanation of the instrument used for diagnosis, as well as recommendations of accommodations/modifications/adaptations to be made.

If the student has more than one disability further documentation may be required by the college. The Director of Disability Services on a case-by-case basis will determine this.

### **Head or Brain Injury**

Documentation may be prepared by, but not limited to otologists, audiologists and physicians. Documentation must not be prepared more than 3 years prior to acceptance to Methodist College. Students will not be requested to re-test once the Director of Disability Services has accepted the evaluation.

Appropriate documentation must include: a current audiogram with an indication of the extent of hearing loss and an explanation of how the loss impairs daily functioning; a description of the instrument used to make the diagnosis (with an explanation of the scores); and specific recommendations for accommodations/modifications/adaptations.

### **Physical and Systemic Disorders**

This category includes, but is not limited to: AIDS, cancer, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy and spina bifida. A licensed professional in the area of the disability must provide documentation. This may include, but is not limited to neurologists, physicians and psychiatrists.

This documentation must have been prepared no more than 3 years prior to acceptance to Methodist College. For students with degenerative disorders, documentation may need to be more recent and the student may be required to be re-tested during their college career. The Director of Disability Services will make this decision on a case-by-case basis.

### **Psychiatric/Psychological Disorders**

This category includes, but is not limited to bipolar disorder, diagnosed depression, dissociative disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder and schizophrenia. A licensed professional in the area of the disability must provide documentation. This may include, but is not limited to neurologists, psychotherapists and psychiatrists. The documentation must have been prepared not more than 3 years prior to acceptance to Methodist College and it must provide: a clear indication of the name of the disorder/disability and the extent of the impairment (how it affects the student's daily and academic functioning); an explanation of the instrument used for diagnosis (to include scores and a written narrative); and specific recommendations of accommodations/modifications/adaptations to be made.