



## GUIDE TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Pine Technical & Community College values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. Our institution is committed to the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in its programs, services, and activities through its compliance with state and federal laws. PTCC will provide reasonable accommodations to individuals with documented disabilities enrolled in courses at the college.

This guide is meant as a resource to understand the following processes:

1. Definition of accommodation and who is eligible
2. The intake process and responsibilities
3. Best practices and tips to support students with disabilities

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

### WHAT IS AN ACCOMMODATION?

An academic accommodation is defined as any alteration in the usual manner of teaching, demonstrating, or evaluating a course objective, that enables a qualified student with a disability to have an equal opportunity to participate in the educational experience.

### WHO IS CONSIDERED A STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY?

*\*An Individual with a Disability is:*

*a. Any person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the person's major life activities (such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working).*

*b. Any person who has a record of, a history of, or who has been classified as having a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more of the person's major life activities.*

Most students registered with the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations have invisible disabilities, meaning they have no obvious signs indicating their accommodation needs. **Individuals with a disability are protected under \*The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.** These laws establish criteria and offer guidance regarding the provision of services to students with disabilities in post-secondary education. While the scope and specific language of each of these laws differ, their goal in the higher education setting is the same: to provide meaningful access to the educational services offered by colleges and universities so that students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate.



## **HOW DO WE DETERMINE ACCOMMODATIONS?**

The accommodation plan that a student utilizes will depend upon their characteristics and needs, as well as the demands of the course and learning environment. Accommodations are developed from the individual student's documentation that is provided to the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations. Two students with the same disability may qualify for and be eligible to receive different accommodations.

## **WHAT ACCOMMODATIONS ARE APPROPRIATE?**

The Office of Accessibility and Accommodations grants accommodations to students with documented disabilities based on the recommendations of medical or mental health professionals and the needs of students. These accommodations should not compromise the essential elements or objectives of the course.

## **WHEN DO I HAVE TO COMPLY WITH A STUDENT'S REQUEST FOR ACCOMMODATIONS?**

The law states that students with a disability have the right to request accommodations from PTCC once they have provided the college with appropriate documentation. In some cases, PTCC may allow for temporary services while a student is in the process of obtaining documentation of their disability. The documentation is kept by the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations and is held in a confidential manner. Privacy laws protect students from having to disclose such information to most people, including faculty and staff. The Office of Accessibility and Accommodations encourages students to discuss their accommodations with faculty and staff directly once approved. Accommodation(s) are to be honored immediately once you receive notification from the Accessibility and Accommodations office.

## **AM I BEING FAIR TO OTHER STUDENTS BY GRANTING ONE STUDENT AN ACCOMMODATION?**

Appropriate accommodations do not compromise the essential elements of the course, nor do they weaken the academic standards or integrity of the course. Accommodations simply provide an alternative way of accomplishing the course requirements by eliminating or reducing disability-related barriers. The goal of accommodations is to provide an equitable and level playing field, not an unfair advantage.

## **WHAT HAPPENS IF I DO NOT PROVIDE THE FORMALLY REQUESTED ACCOMMODATION?**

The student can take legal action against you and/or PTCC. Denial of accommodations could be considered a violation of a student's civil rights. Colleges and universities cannot discriminate against qualified people with disabilities in recruitment, admission, or treatment after admission. If you have concerns about an accommodation request, you should discuss it with the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations.



## IF I RECEIVE A STUDENT'S ACCOMMODATION PLAN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SEMESTER, AM I OBLIGATED TO PROVIDE ACCOMMODATIONS?

Yes, accommodations are in effect once a student has an established Accommodations Plan. In a college setting, it is the student's responsibility for requesting and initiating all disability-related services and accommodations. If a student does not have an Accommodations Plan, please refer them to the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations. Accommodations begin when the Accommodations Plan is established. They are not retroactive.

## HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE A STUDENT TO TALK TO ME ABOUT A DISABILITY?

Each student has the right to determine when, and if they disclose the nature of a disability to faculty or staff. We know that communication is important, and we encourage students to discuss their learning needs, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. Some students, especially those with non-visible disabilities, such as psychological or learning disabilities, may need time to feel comfortable discussing their disability. Some students may never choose or need to discuss their disability.

## BEST PRACTICES TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

**Be inclusive** – include the Statement of Accommodations in course syllabi (example included below.) Additionally, be aware of inclusivity within course materials. For example, if videos are often used in the classroom, verify that they are captioned or transcribed. Infobase is an online database of video-based technology training courses that can assist in many accessibility situations.

***Accessibility and Accommodations:** Pine Technical & Community College values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. Our institution is committed to the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in its programs, services, and activities through its compliance with state and federal laws. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion, please notify the instructor as soon as possible. PTCC will provide reasonable accommodations to individuals with documented disabilities enrolled in courses at the college. For further information regarding the College's services, please contact the Student Success Coordinator at 320-629-5174. For more information visit: <https://pine.edu/student-services/accessibility-accommodations/>.*

**Make an announcement** – announce during the first-course period “if any student needs accommodations for this course, please meet with me during my office hours”. This approach maintains the privacy of the student and indicates the willingness of the faculty or staff member to assist the students. Do not ask students to self-identify in front of their peers.

**Keep confidentiality** – respecting and maintaining information about a student's disability is very important. At no point should a faculty or staff member share information about a specific student's disability unless at the explicit request of the student. Any paperwork associated with a student's disability should be forwarded to the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations.



**Communicate** – communicate with the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations staff any questions, concerns, or needs for clarification. If a student chooses to utilize their approved accommodations for your course, maintaining communication with the student and the Student Success Coordinator regarding the accommodation details can aid in the student's success.

**Referrals** – for further information regarding the College's services, and to refer any requests for accommodations, please contact the Student Success Coordinator.

**Understand responsibilities** – the responsibility of the faculty is to provide the accommodation(s) for the student. Some students with disabilities may choose to never use an approved accommodation; however, the accommodation must always be available for the student to use once approved. The Student Success Coordinator is available to answer questions, address any concerns or help you discover ways to work most effectively with any student with a disability.

## **TIPS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

### **Vision Impairments**

Suggestions for working with students who are blind or with visual impairments

- Recorded lectures allow the student to listen to the lecture in the future and process material as necessary for their learning.
- Preferential seating is important for a student with visual impairments. Since visual cues may not be available, you may want to make sure they are getting all the auditory cues possible. If the student is using a guide dog, it would help if the student were given an assigned seat so that the dog can aid them in getting there. The guide dog is not to be treated as a pet. When a guide dog is with their owner they are working. Ask the student if it is okay before interacting with the animal. Guide dogs must be allowed in the classroom with the student.
- Give students plenty of notice in the event that research papers are assigned. Someone may have to aid in the literature search, both in finding materials and reading them. You may want to extend deadlines for the student.
- To assist students with visual impairments when using the blackboard, lessen the glare as much as possible, and write in large letters.
- Important information written on the blackboard should also be emphasized verbally.



## Hearing Impairments

Suggestions for working with students who are deaf or with hearing impairments

- Make sure you have a deaf student's attention before speaking. A light touch on the shoulder, a wave, or some other signal will help.
- Look directly at the person with hearing loss during a conversation, even when an interpreter is present. Speak clearly, without shouting. If you have problems being understood, rephrase your thoughts. Writing is a good way to clarify.
- Make sure that your face is clearly visible. Keep your hands away from your face and mouth while speaking.
- Maintain eye contact. If you turn away from a deaf person, hold your conversation until eye contact is re-established.
- Use facial expressions and gestures to help clarify your message. Pointing to appropriate objects or using visual aids can also be very helpful.
- If you are in a group situation, only one person should be talking at a time.
- Circular seating arrangements offer deaf or hard of hearing students the best advantage for seeing all class participants.
- Allow the student the same anonymity as other students (i.e. avoid pointing out the student or the alternative arrangements to the rest of the class).
- When in doubt about how to assist the student, ask them.

## Mobility Impairments

Suggestions for working with students with mobility impairments

- Most students who use wheelchairs will ask for assistance if needed. Don't automatically assume that assistance is required. Assist if you wish, but do not insist and accept a "no, thank you" graciously.
- If a classroom or faculty office is inaccessible it will be necessary to make the area accessible to the student or locate an alternate class site that is accessible.
- If breaks between their classes are short, a student who uses a wheelchair or has difficulty walking may be frequently a few minutes late. Students may need to take a circuitous but accessible route or wait for assistance in opening doors. Please do not penalize the student for being late.
- In a class that involves fieldwork or a field trip, ask the student to participate in the selection of sites and modes of transportation. If possible announce field trips early so that students can plan ahead for their transportation.
- Classes taught in lab settings usually require some modifications of workstations. Considerations include under-counter knee clearance, work, and countertop heights, horizontal working reach, and aisle widths. Working directly with the student may be the best way to determine needed modifications.



- Students are not “confined” to wheelchairs. Some who use wheelchairs can walk with the aid of canes, braces, crutches, or walkers. Using a wheelchair some of the time does not mean an individual is “faking” a disability. It may be a means to conserve energy or move about more quickly.

## Psychiatric Disabilities

Suggestions for working with students with psychiatric disabilities

- Students with a history of psychiatric disabilities can be intelligent, sensitive, creative, and interesting, and may have difficulty with responding to change, screening out environmental stimuli, sustaining concentration, interacting with others, responding to negative feedback, etc.
- Address a variety of learning styles (e.g. auditory, visual, kinesthetic, experiential, or a combination of styles).
- Incorporate experiential learning activities.
- Be prepared to set behavioral expectations for all students in your class.
- Embrace diversity to include people with psychiatric disabilities.
- May need prearranged or frequent breaks.

## Learning Disabilities/Cognitively Impaired

Suggestions for working with students with learning disabilities/cognitive impairments

- Provide a detailed course syllabus.
- Clearly define expectations before courses begin, i.e. grading, materials to be covered, due dates, etc.
- Start each lecture with an outline of materials to be covered during that class period. At the conclusion of class briefly summarize key points.
- Write new or technical vocabulary on the board or use handouts. Terms should be used in context to convey greater meaning.
- Give assignments both orally and in written form to avoid confusion.
- Announce reading assignments well in advance for students who are using recorded materials.
- Allowing students to record lectures can help students learn at their pace
- Provide study questions for exams that demonstrate the format and content of the test.
- Clearly explain what constitutes a good answer on an assignment or test and why.



## Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Suggestions for working with students who have ADHD or ADD

- A quiet work area and seating away from windows, doors, or other distractions.
- Provide opportunities for movement and tactile input.
- Reformatting documents to minimize clutter and provide documents in alternative formats.
- Give clear and specific instructions.
- As the semester progresses, keep reminding students of impending deadlines.
- Avoid making assignments orally, since students with ADHD may miss them. Always write them on the board or pass them out in a written form.

## Systemic Disabilities (Cancer, Diabetes, MS, etc.)

Suggestions for working with students with other health issues

- The condition of a student with a medical disability may fluctuate over time, causing the need for accommodations to vary.
- Some conditions may cause the student to frequently be late to or miss class. It is reasonable to provide alternative arrangements for completing the learning outcomes of the course.
- A student may need to leave the classroom early and unexpectedly.
- Ask the student if they will need assistance during an emergency evacuation and assist in planning if necessary.
- Ask the student if you are unsure about something.