Nationwide and at Beloit College the number of students with disabilities choosing to attend college has risen over the past decade. The impact of relevant laws* can be seen when looking at new and renovated buildings on campus, increases in accommodations provided, and new or changing policies and procedures.

Beloit College has been in the forefront of higher education institutions nationwide as we formalized policies and procedures in disability services over the past decade. As part of this process, the campus has become increasingly educated to the needs of students with disabilities. As part of the institution’s commitment to equal opportunity for all students, including those with disabilities, faculty and staff have collaborated with the Learning Enrichment and Disability Services office to ensure the implementation of equitable accommodations. This has resulted in a culture of inclusive excellence for all.

The number of students self-identifying as having a disability has risen steadily over the past decade – a testament to the success of laws and policies that provide equal access to students with disabilities. There is every reason to expect this trend to continue. With this in mind, this newsletter has been created in the hope of giving you a better sense of disability services at Beloit College.

**Increased Numbers:**
Students with disabilities (documented)
26 in Fall 2001, 106 in Fall 2012.

In addition, most students have multiple diagnoses. The expanding types of diagnoses are leading to additional and more complicated accommodations.

*Relevant Laws:*
Rehabilitation Act (Sec. 504), 1973 and Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended
Increasing Numbers

The rise in numbers is a national trend. However, particularly for Beloit College, this is likely a result of several additional factors including: 1) having a specific contact person for student disability services, 2) syllabi referral statements, 3) referral efforts of faculty, staff, and parents, 4) a culture of acceptance of differences, 5) a visible, centralized location. Beloit College has also been cited in several national publications as an exemplary location for students with disabilities.

Major Points - Faculty

1) Accommodations provide equal access and therefore are a right, not a privilege.
2) Accommodations may involve modifying the course material presentation and/or how learning is evaluated as long as the essential components are not compromised.
3) Faculty may question accommodations and suggest equitable alternatives – to be discussed with the director and student.
4) Faculty must implement accommodations as soon as possible, even if they are seeking alternatives.
5) Information about a student’s disability is not revealed to faculty unless there is a “need to know.”
6) When there is a dispute, faculty as well as students are encouraged to reach agreements on an informal basis. But if this does not work, either party may pursue a grievance using the established Grievance Procedures.

However, faculty must not delay implementing accommodations while pursuing the grievance.
Individuals may also choose to file a complaint with the Federal Office of Civil Rights or the Wisconsin Civil Rights Commission.

(For more information, visit the website [http://www.beloit.edu/dss] or consult the Administrative Policy Manual.)
Self-identified & Documented Disabilities at Beloit College

Some of the more common diagnoses (most students have more than one diagnosis):

- Learning Disabilities (LD) – (dysgraphia, dyslexia, dyscalculia, non-specific, processing speed, non-verbal, reading, visual, verbal processing, written expression)
- ADHD/ADD
- Chronic Illnesses (Eating Disorders, Immune Diseases, Crohn’s, Lupus, Migraines, Seizure Disorders, Von Willibrand’s etc.)
- Depression
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- Anxiety/Panic Disorders
- Asperger’s Syndrome
- Bi-Polar Disorder
- Hearing Impairments
- Epilepsy
- Motor Skills
- Schizoaffective Disorder
- Social Phobias
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Post-Traumatic Stress
- Vision - Limited

Resources for all Students

- Handouts & Individual Assistance with:
  - Time Management
  - Organization
  - Note-taking
  - Reading
  - Test-Taking Strategies
- Tutoring for Most Courses
- Other Resources
  - Semester schedules and time charts
  - Information on GRE/MCAT/LSAT/GMAT Exams

Procedures at Beloit College

- Students self-identify to the Learning Enrichment and Disability Services office.
- Students must provide documentation of the disability.
- After reviewing the documentation and speaking with the student, the Director determines accommodations.
- The Director writes an Accommodation Verification Letter and gives it to the student to deliver it to and discuss it with faculty.
- The faculty member and student figure out the logistics of providing the accommodation(s).
Possible Indicator(s) that a Student May Have a Disability

When Students:

- Talk about services they had in high school (e.g. extended time, private test-taking, tutors or resource rooms).
- Speak of taking prescription medications.
- Seem to put forth appropriate effort but still do poorly on exams.
- Exhibit anxiety (sweats, jittery, hyperventilating) during exams.
- Do not complete or do well on exams, yet seem to have a solid grasp of the material.
- Make statements like, “I blank, and lose all of the information when the test is in front of me.”

Note: Don’t directly ask a student if he/she has a disability unless you have a strong relationship with the student.

COMMENTS? SUGGESTIONS?

Meeting the academic enrichment needs for the entire campus and creating a system to provide appropriate services and accommodations to students with disabilities are primary goals of our office.

The Learning Enrichment and Disability Services staff has made great strides in reaching toward these goals, largely due to the willingness of students, faculty, and staff to share with us their suggestions, ideas, and concerns. If you have comments, please contact the office, (call 608-363-2572 or email learning@beloit.edu, or drop by the office on the second floor of Pearsons).

We hope to hear from you soon.

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