Smart Pen for Note Taking

One type of note-taking accommodation for students is using a Livescribe smart pen, which can be borrowed from DSS on a semester-by-semester basis. A smart pen is a device that records lectures as notes are taken on smart paper. When reviewing notes, students can tap the smart pen on the smart pen paper and the pen will play back the audio recording from the exact moment that the note was written. During playback, the speed and volume of the recording can be adjusted. Students can also add new notes that will sync with the computer. Notes can be uploaded to a computer using Echo Desktop.

If a student is approved for this accommodation, “use of an audio-recording device” will be specified on the DSS memo. Maryland state law requires that you inform a person that you will be recording him or her. Students are told that they must inform professors prior to using their smart pen to record class lectures. Students are not allowed to share the audio from their smart pens or post it online, and they are told that sharing the audio may result in a violation of the TU Code of Student Conduct.

Students who are approved for using a smart pen must sign a “DSS Agreement for Recording Lectures” that states:

*I have been approved for the classroom accommodation of “audio recording device”. This means that I am approved to use a recording device to record class lectures for personal study use. I understand that I am expected to inform my instructor prior to recording and that I may not share the recorded lectures with any other person without the consent of the lecturer. The recorded lecture is protected under federal copyright law and may not be published or quoted without the express written consent of the lecturer, and then only if the lecturer is properly identified and credited. I agree to erase all recordings of the lectures within 30 days after I have taken the final examination for the course.*

Advantages of using a smart pen rather than relying on a peer note-taker include greater autonomy for the student and a reduced burden for the professor by not having to secure a note taker for the student. However, a smart pen may not be an appropriate accommodation in all classes, depending on the needs of the student and the nature of the class. If there a question or concern about using a smart pen in a particular class, the student’s DSS specialist should be contacted to discuss possible alternatives.