Faculty Tip Sheet for Supporting Students with Disabilities During COVID-19

Many students with disabilities may be experiencing increased challenges and/or stressors in light of the current pandemic. This and other tip sheets are being offered to assist faculty in ways to extend empathy while maintaining high academic standards during these difficult times.

Commonly Reported Challenges During the Pandemic

- Increased anxiety and other mental health symptoms, especially for anyone considered high risk
- Difficulty focusing or paying attention to remote instructions or activities
- Keeping track of assignments and staying organized
- Needing instructors to be available to answer questions promptly
- Better understanding of course information and expectations face to face
- Need for longer time to complete assignments
- Decreased personal motivation to complete coursework remotely
- Increased feelings of loneliness and isolation, especially for those who are considered high risk and unable to do even minor things, like errands, in public

Faculty Tips to Support Students with Disabilities

- Be flexible with course structure and requirements such as due dates or attendance for synchronous classes.
- Set clear course expectations.
- Provide reminders about assignments and due dates, and do so through multiple means (e.g., email, Blackboard announcement, during lectures or on a recording).
- Recording lectures may help students who may have a number of things going on when the live lecture is occurring. Access to a recording will allow the student to revisit any materials that might have been missed.
- Allow microphones and/or cameras to be turned off during live sessions. Refer to Use or Non-Use of Videos in Virtual Teaching and Learning Environments.
- Create accessible course content (e.g., Word documents, caption video recordings when feasible, etc.)
- Provide assignment information well in advance of the due date. The more notice students have about their assignments, the more they can work at their own pace and times that are conducive to completing their academic work.
- Provide PowerPoint content or other course materials to be discussed during a synchronous class in advance of the class time.
- Incorporate Universal Design for Learning into your course.