

Helpful Classroom Suggestions for Professors

1. Understand that many disabilities are “invisible” (e.g. learning disabilities, attention deficit disorders, chronic fatigue syndrome). Many students with these disabilities have been treated with skepticism and disbelief, and may be understandably hesitant to talk about their disability, fearing similar reactions from professors and students.
2. Include a statement in your syllabus encouraging students with disabilities to talk with you privately about accommodations. Make a similar verbal announcement during the first few days of class (this could be positive for reluctant students).
3. Respect students’ privacy. Talk to them about their disability in private, not in front of others. Do not divulge the fact that a student has a disability without his/her permission.
4. If a professor thinks that an approved accommodation might violate or compromise an **essential** element of his/her course or program of study, please contact Disability Services immediately. Even in these situations, it is imperative to continue to provide the Disability Services-approved accommodation(s) until the issue is resolved.
5. Two of the most common accommodations for Xavier students are extra time on in-class tests and permission to take tests in a separate, distraction-free/reduced room. An appropriate room in the professor’s department is an ideal option, if distractions are minimal (i.e., no talking, ringing telephones, copy machines, people walking in and out, etc.). When necessary, Disability Services may be able to provide a distraction-free/reduced room.
6. It is beneficial if you can begin class with a review of material covered last time and an overview of topics to be covered that day. The more structure you can provide the better. Providing an outline of each lecture is a very helpful learning aid to all students. Posting a set of class notes on the internet (e.g. WebBoard, CourseInfo, Blackboard, etc.) is another helpful practice.
7. Give assignments both orally and in writing to help students with auditory/visual processing difficulties or attention deficit disorders understand and record the assignments accurately.
8. Provide study questions in the same format as those on the test. Make exam questions as clear and concise as possible. Avoid double negatives, unduly complex sentence structure, and questions within questions.

Making appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities is like allowing students with visual acuity problems to wear glasses/contacts. Rather than conferring an advantage over other students, appropriate accommodations merely allow students with disabilities an equal opportunity to learn and/or demonstrate their knowledge.