



DISABILITY RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

Division of Student Life

Promoting *and* Creating Access for Students *with* Disabilities

Disability Resources for Students partners with students, faculty and staff to ensure equal access and inclusion to the wide and rich array of programs, services, activities and facilities throughout our campus for students with disabilities.

**Diversity.
It's the Washington Way.**

Our Story

Access, equity and inclusion...this is our story. Students with a wide array of physical, sensory, cognitive and mental health disabilities attend the University and are active in all majors and disciplines at every level of our educational system; undergraduate, graduate and professional programs.

The core of our work is to remove barriers and create access to buildings, books, laboratories, fieldtrips, exams, class or research projects, campus housing, policies or procedures, etc. While this work is required by law at both the federal and state level, we do this work not only out of obligation, but because it is about social justice and the full inclusion and participation of all of our students..

DRS partners with the student, faculty and appropriate campus departments to establish the accommodations needed to remove the student's unique access barrier(s). Examples of the accommodations provided by our office include: converting printed textbooks into alternative formats such as Braille or electronic texts that can be read by screen reading software or listened to on MP3 players; providing note takers for classes; providing sign language interpreters or real-time captioners; relocating classrooms to improve physical accessibility; providing alternative exam arrangements such as additional time or the use of a computer or private room; modifications to room assignments; disability parking assignments and use of the free campus shuttle service for persons with mobility-related limitations.

Eliminating access barriers is also accomplished by educating our campus community about the types of barriers students encounter and how to proactively reduce and eliminate them. Creating an accessible and inclusive campus is the work of all and the DRS staff is committed to developing a strong network across campus to promote and facilitate this important work.

Our Commitment

Access – Ensuring equal access to the wide and rich array of programs, services and facilities throughout our campus for students with disabilities is at the heart of our mission. Our commitment to access for students with disabilities begins prior to admission and does not conclude until they complete their degree. DRS is actively involved in grant programs through the UW DO-IT Center (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking and Technology), targeted at high school students with disabilities to increase their participation in postsecondary education. We provide information to prospective students and families to better prepare them for transitioning to a postsecondary education in consideration of their disability access needs. UW students with disabilities, whether they are temporary or permanent in nature, can work closely with our office to establish an individualized access plan designed to target and remove barriers enabling their full participation in all aspects of the educational experience and campus life.

Diversity – Our office actively promotes the inclusion of disability as an integral aspect of diversity within our campus community. We recognize that disability is not exclusive; it is a part of every community regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, or sexual orientation. Disability is and of itself, is diverse in nature where even the same disability can impact a person differently. We believe that students with disabilities bring a unique perspective to their academic studies, research, work and social activities. This perspective can broaden and enrich the learning experience for all.

Engagement – Students with disabilities desire to be actively engaged in all aspects of campus life. However, they may experience difficulties fully engaging due to an unanticipated or unidentified barrier to their access. DRS works collaboratively with the student and the appropriate faculty and/or staff to determine how to remove the barrier interfering with the student's access, and whenever possible, create a systemic change to remove the barrier for future students.

Our Commitment *continued*

Care – Our staff works with students in developing self-knowledge regarding their disability and skills to be effective self-advocates for their academic accommodations and equal access needs. We assist students in learning how to problem solve when faced with an access issue while working cooperatively with others to ensure a workable solution. We stand ready to also advocate on behalf of students access needs as necessary.

Student Learning – Students with disabilities enter the University at different points on a continuum of self-knowledge and self-acceptance about their disability. Often they need to learn about effective academic accommodations or compensatory strategies for personal success. DRS works with students to develop important life skills such as self-advocacy and independence.

Quick Facts

Based on the academic school year of 2009-2010:

- DRS employs 5 full-time professional staff and 2 part-time professional staff and between 3-5 student assistants. We currently serve close to 1,000 students with a wide variety of disabilities:

Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing = 41

Conditions with primary impact on mobility of either legs/arms/hands = 101

Conditions impacting speech = 1

Learning disabilities including ADHD = 392

Blind and other conditions impacting vision = 25

Chronic or acute health conditions that do not fit into the other categories = 209

Neurological and central nervous system conditions = 59

Psychological conditions = 141

Total: 979

- The staff of DRS recruited and trained 709 student volunteers to take class notes for students who due to the nature of their disability could not take their own notes effectively or at all.
- DRS staff with assistance from a pool of approximately 20 paid student and community members converted 953 books/articles from print to an alternate format at the student's request of either audio, electronic-text, large print or Braille.
- 2,380 class exams for students with disabilities were scheduled to be taken in the DRS Testing Center. 2,124 exams were actually taken in the DRS Testing Center.
- A total of 5,125 hours of sign language interpreting and real-time captioning was provided for Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing students.

Efficiencies

In collaboration with the Registrar's Office, a program was developed to allow DRS to download class list rosters from the University's database system for use in recruiting volunteer class note-takers. Prior, DRS requested multiple lists each quarter from the Registrar's and there was a waiting period of 2 or more days. This efficiency has resulted in removing this function from the Registrar's Office and allows DRS the ability to generate the class list independently.

An optional questionnaire was developed to provide information and better prepare the student for their Access Planning Meeting (APM). The APM is the student's initial meeting with a counselor to plan out their accommodations.

Challenges and Opportunities

We have outgrown our current location in Schmitz Hall. At heavy exam periods within the quarter we must borrow space from the Placement Testing Center down the hall and other office space on our floor to accommodate the number of students taking exams.

Our Testing Center has seen an unprecedented rise in the number of exams we are to administer for professors, requiring the daily involvement of every staff member including the director in the administration of exams. Our data reveals that the number of exams our office administers in our Testing Center has increased 154% in the last 7 years with 51% of that growth occurring in the last 2 years.

Current staffing is not adequate to meet all of the needs of the campus community. Most staff time is spent on the core services of our office, establishing and implementing accommodations and services for students. Little time is available for outreach and education to the campus.

DRS is excited to join the national conversations within disability communities on and off college campuses calling for a new framework for viewing disability. Rather than seeing a person with a disability as having a deficit and need for accommodation to enjoy equal access and inclusion, the new frame places disability within a social justice context. People with disabilities are a part of every society. Society should plan for their inclusion by designing physical and programmatic environments that will meet the various needs of all people inclusive of people with disabilities (Universal Design).

DRS has begun and will continue to review our role in perpetuating the deficit model of disability. We are reviewing policies, procedures and practices to eliminate the deficit model message in place of a social justice frame for disability.



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