Services/Supports for Graduate Students with Disabilities at Illinois

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Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES)

- Function of the division: To provide academic adjustments, services, and supports to U of I students with disabilities.
- To maintain confidential documentation and determine reasonable accommodations for disability.
- Equal access/to level the playing field
The laws are intended to REMOVE BARRIERS that keep persons with disabilities from participating in the public and productive life of American society on an equal footing with persons not currently experiencing a condition of disability.

They prohibit the subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) discrimination which is built into programs, services and activities designed without taking into account the needs of qualified persons with disabilities.
Section 504

- Section 504 of the Rehab Act of 1973 has required institutions receiving federal funds to assure that no otherwise qualified person with a disability is
  - excluded from participation in
  - denied the benefits of, or
  - subjected to discrimination under
- any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance solely because of that person’s disability.
- No major university has been outside the requirement of Section 504 since it became effective in 1973.
The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

Since 1992, both public and private entities, whether they receive federal funds or not, have been required to assure that no qualified individual with a disability is

- excluded from participation in
- denied the benefits of, or
- discriminated against in regard to any services, programs or activities, or
- discriminated against in regard to employment solely by reason of such disability.
Who is a “Person with a Disability?”

- A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY is a PERSON who
  - has a PHYSICAL or MENTAL impairment that
    - SUBSTANTIALLY LIMITS one or more MAJOR LIFE ACTIVITIES,
    - has a RECORD of such an impairment or
    - is REGARDED AS HAVING such an impairment
A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY IS OTHERWISE QUALIFIED to participate in a program, engage in an activity, benefit from a service or be employed in a position if the person is able WITH or WITHOUT a REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION, to perform the essential functions required to:

- participate in a program or activity,
- utilize a service or
- perform the essential functions of an employment position
Major Life Activity

- Major life activities include:
  - self care, manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, sitting, standing, reaching, thinking, concentrating, reading, interacting with others, learning, and working
Post-Secondary Student’s Rights

- Equal access to courses, programs, services, activities and facilities
- Equal opportunity to learn
- Access to reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments and auxiliary aids
- Appropriate confidentiality
Post-Secondary Student’s Responsibilities

- Meet qualifications
- Maintain essential institutional standards
- Disclose the fact that he/she has a disability
- Provide necessary documentation
- Request reasonable accommodations utilizing published University of Illinois procedures
In 2010, 11.2% of college freshmen reported disabilities, as compared to 2.6% in 1978.

Largest growth has been in the number of students with cognitive and psychiatric disabilities.

U of I disability statistics

- LD, ADHD, ABI, and psychiatric disabilities comprise 74% of the students with disabilities registered at DRES.
2013–2014 DRES Statistics

- PHYSICAL MOBILITY: 208
- SYSTEMIC/MEDICAL: 113
- LEARNING DISABILITY: 191
- ADHD: 579
- ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY: 29
- PSYCHOLOGICAL: 316
- DEAF/HOH: 26
- BLIND/VISUAL: 30
- TOTAL: 1492

- Grad College/Professional: 350
To register for services a student:
- Fills out the online Application for Services (www.disability.illinois.edu)
- Provides DRES with documentation of the disability per our guidelines

The student is then assigned an access specialist to meet with to discuss and plan accommodations and services.

This process can take a day or weeks depending on how quickly the student provides us with documentation.
Academic Disability Services

- Priority registration
- Academic accommodations
- Environmental access
- Testing with accommodations
- Conversion of text to alternative formats
- Assistive technology
- Interpreters and captioning
- Coaching
- Individual/group therapy
- Academic Lab
Non-academic Disability Services

- Transportation services
- Physical therapy
- Campus orientation
- Housing access (including Beckwith Hall)
- Sports, recreation, and exercise programs
- Campus life activities
- Career Services
Emerging Issues

- Professors getting book orders turned in and videos by deadlines to text conversion services and captioning can take place.
- Professors still denying accommodations particularly for students with nonvisible disabilities
- Large numbers of students with complex and severe psychological issues
How do I interact with students with disabilities?

- Use “People First” language—Person with a disability, Person with epilepsy
- Don’t pretend like you understand if you don’t. It’s okay to ask for clarification.
- Wheelchair or assistive devices part of the individual.
- Common courtesies are always nice.
- If unsure, just ask.
- Two people with same disability may have very different needs.
- Be aware of hidden disabilities.
What if I suspect a student has an undiagnosed disability or needs to register with DRES?

- Great idea to put DRES information on incoming materials for students.
- If a student requests an accommodation from you, can let them know they need to register with DRES first.
- If you see a student struggling, can suggest that they contact DRES for an academic screener or to register for services.
What should I include on my syllabus or say in my class?

- Invite students to privately self-disclose their need for disability-related adjustments and auxiliary aids.
- A disability statement should be made on the first day of class, and a similar written statement should be included in the course syllabus.
- Example: "To insure that disability-related concerns are properly addressed from the beginning, students with disabilities who require assistance to participate in this class are asked to see me as soon as possible."
It seems like you are struggling with (insert difficulty) despite being a really bright student or it seems that (insert difficulty) is getting in the way of making great progress and is frustrating for you. DRES offers an academic screener for you to discuss your difficulties confidentially and receive professional feedback about strategies or next steps.
How do accommodations look different for grad students?

- Extended time on assignments/projects
- Extended time for degree
- Extended time for progress
- Accommodations on qualifying exam
- Online courses
Should I be concerned about confidentiality for DRES Students?

- YES, YES, YES
- Letters of Accommodation should be kept in a secure location and shredded at the end of the semester.
- Students do not have to provide details about their condition, only that they have a disability and how it impacts them.
- Do not discuss accommodations in public.
Making students aware of DRES

- Place DRES information/resources as part of department orientations for grad students
- Online degree programs are also included
- International students also need information
- Disability Ally Program
For More Information

- www.disability.illinois.edu
- 333–4603