



ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE PROGRAMS STUDENT DISABILITY SERVICES NEWSLETTER

FALL 2021

NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS

• **Determining Eligibility for Accommodations**

- The process
- Documentation Review Committee

• **Policy Updates**

- Modified Attendance
- Extensions on Assignments

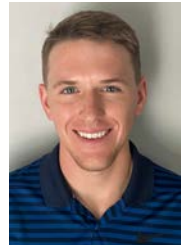
• **The Testing Center**

- Exam and space security
- Exam delivery

• **AEP Staff Spotlight**

- Ana Di Donato

Meet the Associate Director



Hi there! My name is Zach McDowell and I am the new Associate Director of Academic Excellence and Student Disability Services. Having joined AEP in April, I am thrilled to be at UT. Coming from Illinois, I have a PhD in higher education administration, where my research focused on faculty perceptions of students with mental health concerns. I have nearly 10 years of experience in the higher education disability field, holding a variety of positions in disability service. I look forward to supporting both faculty and students to bolster the disability community and increase success across campus.

Determining Eligibility for Accommodations

SDS has improved the process for determining eligibility for accommodations! We have bolstered the process by placing a stronger emphasis on the interactive process, or what we refer to as the conversation that occurs between students and SDS staff to determine reasonable and appropriate accommodations.

Additionally, we have created the "Documentation Review Committee", a committee made up of SDS staff that review student requests for accommodations. Here is the process for determining eligibility for accommodations:

- 1) The student must self-identify to SDS
- 2) The student will be asked to complete an accommodation request form and provide documentation of disability
- 3) There will be an interactive process between the student and a staff member
- 4) The Documentation Review Committee reviews the documentation submitted and the Request for Services form to determine eligibility for accommodations at the University of Tampa
- 5) Once the Documentation Review Committee has reviewed the request, if approved, the student will be contacted to schedule a welcome appointment
- 6) After the welcome appointment, students will have the ability to create a Letter of Accommodation that must be used as verification of the accommodations to instructors
- 7) The student meets with each instructor to discuss approved accommodations listed on the Letter of Accommodation
- 8) The use of services is the student's choice



ACADEMIC SUCCESS CENTER



ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE PROGRAMS

POLICY UPDATES

Modified Attendance

Previously known as "attendance leniency", this accommodation allowed a student with a disability to be given a specific number of absences from a class, without penalty, when they are impacted by their diagnosis. After being approved for this accommodation, students were required to have a conversation with their instructor and fill out an "attendance leniency agreement".

The way that this accommodation was written presented several issues. First, the "attendance leniency agreement" is cumbersome - for both students and faculty. Second and most importantly, students and faculty were required to come up with a specific number of absences based on their course, course structure, and student needs. Given that disability is a spectrum that waxes and wanes over time, an individual is going to be impacted differently throughout different times of the week, day, or even hour. As such, it becomes impossible to quantify the number of absences a student with a disability will potentially have in a course.

To address these issues, SDS rewrote the "attendance leniency" accommodation and changed the name. Now known as "modified attendance", the following updates have been made:

- Changed the accommodation name - In the spirit of inclusivity, clarity, and understanding, the "attendance leniency" accommodation was renamed to "modified attendance"
- No more attendance leniency agreement - It is no longer necessary for students or faculty to fill this agreement out. Instead, students must email their instructor (CC'ing SDS on the email) before their class starts notifying them that they intend to use their modified attendance accommodation
- Better Tracking - Because there is no agreement, students and faculty are no longer burdened by coming up with a specific number of absences that can be allowed, taking on an all-around more inclusive approach. Because students must CC SDS when they email their instructor of an absence, SDS will track the number of absences a student has in an effort to make sure the accommodation is being used appropriately. If SDS determines that modified attendance will fundamentally alter a course, the accommodation will not be provided.

Extensions on Assignments

Previously known as "extensions on assignments - as feasible", this accommodation gave students the ability to have an extension on an assignment when their disability impacts them such that they are not able to complete their assignment at the deadline. The accommodation used the language "as feasible" so that instructors and students could work together to determine if a particular extension is feasible on a particular assignment.

Structuring the accommodation in this way created questions from instructors regarding feasibility, and often left instructors feeling like they were the individuals making the accommodation decision, rather than SDS. Additionally, the accommodation did not have any sort of built in structure for tracking the number of times a student was utilizing the accommodation, a key indicator of feasibility.

To address these issues, SDS rewrote the "extensions on assignments - as feasible" accommodation. The following updates have been made:

- Changed the accommodation name - In an effort of clarity, the extensions on assignments accommodation has been renamed to "extensions on assignments - 1 day" and "extensions on assignments - 2 days". No longer structuring the accommodation "as feasible", the extensions on assignments accommodation will be offered to students as a 1 day or a 2 day extension
- Better tracking - The extensions on assignments accommodation will now incorporate a measure of accountability into the accommodation by stating that students must, in order to use their extension on an assignment, **email their instructor before the assignment is due and CC SDS on that email**. Failure to do this step results in the student not being able to use the accommodation. Additionally, this allows SDS to track the number of times a particular student uses the accommodation, allowing SDS to intervene when the accommodation is used to the point where it becomes unreasonable.

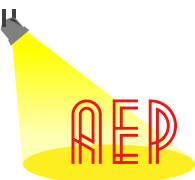




ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE PROGRAMS

Testing Center Updates

- **Increased Exam/Quiz and Space Security**
 - **This summer, our Testing Center coordinator, Justin McFatridge, updated policies and processes to bolster exam/quiz security, as well as the security of the physical space at the Testing Center**
 - **Exam/quiz delivery - Exam Receipts**
 - All exams and quizzes that are proctored at the Testing Center will be hand delivered back to the relevant department office. Upon delivery, department office staff will sign off on a physical exam receipt. A signature must be acquired to complete the delivery of an exam. After signing the exam/quiz receipt, we will leave a carbon copy with the office for their records.
 - **Space Security - Card Swipe Access to the Testing Center**
 - Card swipe access was installed at the main entrance to the Testing Center - to enter, simply swipe your Spartan ID card in front of the black card access box to the left of the main door entrance.
- **Updated building hours**
 - The Testing Center will have new hours this Fall 2021 semester, which are as follows:
 - Sunday 12-9 pm
 - Monday-Thursday 8-9 pm
 - Friday 8-5 pm



AEP STAFF SPOTLIGHT



What is your job title and responsibilities?

As the Director of Academic Excellence Programs, I get to work with an extraordinary team of professionals and student leaders who help students reach their academic potential! We provide programs and services in the areas of: Academic Coaching; Academic Skills Course (ASK 100), Student Disability Services, Students Overcoming Academic Roadblocks (SOAR), Supplemental Instruction, Testing Center, and Tutoring.

How long have you been an employee at UT?

I began working at UT in February 2020 but have worked in higher education for over 21 years.

What do you love most about working at UT?

I love the people! I work with the most amazing student-centered folks who are truly passionate about student development.

When you're not working, what are you most likely doing?

I am most likely working on my dissertation, cooking, or spending time with my family.

What is your favorite spot on campus?

My favorite spot on campus is the Sykes Chapel and Center for Faith and Values. Not only is it a beautiful facility, but it is also the perfect location to pause for a moment and reflect on the importance of the work we are called to do every day!

