**Teaching Students with Chronic Illnesses**

Chronic illnesses that can affect academic life are too numerous to list in entirety. Many present no visible difference but can involve pain, severe and chronic fatigue, stress, discomfort and required time for medical treatment. Some examples are arthritis, Lupus, cancer, diabetes, chronic fatigue syndrome, chronic and severe asthma, seizure disorder, cardiac disease and narcolepsy.

Students with chronic illnesses have made a conscious choice to attend school and do so with medical support. Attendance can be affected by a flare-up or medical complication that cannot be predicted. A change in medication can be disruptive to a student’s energy level, concentration or general feeling of “wellness”. Students with medical impairments, more often than their peers, may request mild exceptions to a classes attendance policy or assignment deadlines. Instructors may use their discretion in applying these policies, but should discuss any exceptions granted to a student directly with them. If the general policy is no longer applied to them, they will need to understand the limitations to the ad-hoc agreement.

Students with chronic medical illnesses are frequently experts on their medical management. They are often honest with their self-imposed limits of activity. Because of a history of unpredictable medical episodes and subsequent time delays, these students often plan ahead, within reason, and manage time carefully.

Instructors can provide necessary supports for their students with chronic medical illnesses in the following ways:

* If a student chooses to self-reveal his or her illness, limit questions related to academic concerns. The student may volunteer additional information.
* If a student is absent and or tardy frequently, approach the student in the same fashion as any other with the same pattern. Speak to the student in a private location. Plan for sufficient time to hold a comfortable conversation. Review course expectations regarding attendance and ask the student to respond. In some cases you may decide that additional absences are acceptable; be sure to clearly communicate new expectations and the limits to those.
* Short rest breaks may be required for some students in class times longer than one
* If a student requests, and is granted an extension on an assignment deadline, make the new timeline clear and objective.