**Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities**

A student with a learning disability should not be thought of as “a person who cannot read”, “a person who cannot write” or a “person who cannot learn at the same pace or knowledge level”. Each student who has been accepted at Marquette has shown competitive academic and community achievements. Those with learning disabilities have identified and managed compensatory strategies that minimize a difference in auditory, visual and/or performance (i.e. hands-on) learning. The student’s ability to learn can be challenged by traditional education methodologies and the student’s ability to perform to his or her maximum capability may be dependent on the accommodations provided in each course.

A student with a learning disability will meet with a representative of the Office of Disability Services upon registration and each semester the student requests and requires services. Changes in accommodations may occur each semester and are customized to the course requirements and evaluation methods. Knowledge of the student’s learning strengths and weaknesses is derived from testing information received from a licensed practitioner and from interviews with the student.

Instructors can generally expect that students with learning disabilities will need support in information processing. This may include reading comprehension, written and verbal expression, writing mechanics (i.e. cursive or print), sequencing and memory, as well as receptive auditory and visual processing. The skill levels and amount of support required by each student can vary drastically. It is impractical and unnecessary to change a course’s structure to accommodate one student’s needs in the classroom, however teaching with various modalities (verbal, visual and performance) may provide the support for a good cross section of students’ learning styles. A combination is effective if there is more than one student in the class with a learning disability and will not be detrimental to other students.

As with other types of “invisible” disabilities, if a student discloses a learning disability to you, that information should remain confidential.

Instructors can provide necessary supports for their students with learning disabilities in the following ways:

* Present the course syllabus in writing with clear deadline dates for assignments. Review the syllabus aloud at the start of the course. Remind students of upcoming deadlines with a week’s notice.
* Sharing lecture notes with a student in advance can be extremely helpful to support his or her visual and auditory preparation for each class.
* During a lecture, pause occasionally allowing students to take the time to assimilate the information and catch up with notetaking. Pauses can be used to erase a board or change a visual slide.
* When presenting abstract concepts, support the concepts with concrete examples or visual materials such as charts and graphs.
* Invite the student to submit drafts of written assignments with a specific deadline. When reviewing, make notes but do not correct sentence structure, spelling and syntax. Discuss the draft in person with the student.
* Unless considered as an essential requirement of the course, grading on spelling errors for in class writing assignments should be suspended. Permission to use portable and computer based spell checkers can be requested. It will be the instructor’s decision to determine if spelling is critical and essential to the course requirements.
* In the classroom, avoid “rapid fire” questions of students.
* In the testing process, do not make assumptions about the student who has submitted the exam completed before the extended time allowed. There are times when a student “gives-up “on an exam – just like any student – and, there are times when a student completes the exam because the format did not challenge his/her learning style. This can be especially true when the information about test format was not pre-published or spoken to in enough detail in advance to change what might have been expected when a Letter of Accommodation was written at the beginning of a semester.