



Western Nebraska
Community College

Transition Guide for Students with Disabilities

Welcome! The Disability Services Office at Western Nebraska Community College works to ensure students who experience disability have an equal opportunity to participate in educational and co-curricular offerings. Students with disabilities are provided accommodations on an individualized student-centered approach. However, it is the responsibility of students with disabilities to request accommodations.

This Transition Guide is designed to meet the needs of WNCC students enrolled in on campus classes, online learning courses, and students enrolled in both online learning and on campus courses.

Role & Purpose of Disability Services

The Disabilities Services Office is available to:

- Problem-solve issues relative to disability access
- Provide equal access for individuals with disabilities
- Facilitate the development of reasonable accommodations for students
- Provide services and accommodations to qualified students with disabilities
- Serve in an advisory and supportive capacity to faculty and staff

Disability Services Officer

The Disability Services Officer (DSO) meets individually with students to verify eligibility for specific academic adjustments referred to in this guide as accommodations. These meetings can be held in person or by phone, email, or video conferencing (e.g., Zoom or Blackboard Collaborate), and arrangements can be made for in-person meetings in Alliance or Sidney. Many of the necessary adjustments are then coordinated by staff both within Disability Services (DS) and across WNCC (Educational Services, Online Learning, or Student Services).

Please contact the Disability Services Officer by phone or email to schedule an appointment.

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What Does the Law Require?

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Congress passed Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act in 1973. It is considered the first “civil rights” legislation for persons with disabilities on the national level. It is designed to prevent discrimination against individuals with disabilities and provides that:

No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States... shall, solely by reason of his/her disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance...

The Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law in July 1990. It is patterned after Section 504, but it extends the civil rights protections of Section 504 to persons with disabilities in private sector employment, all public services, transportation, and telecommunications.

Confidentiality and Records

Western Nebraska Community College employees have an obligation to maintain confidentiality regarding a student's disability. To that end, the Disability Services Officer (DSO) will provide information to WNCC staff and faculty only as necessary when evaluating and/or facilitating accommodations, auxiliary aids, and/or services. Except where permitted by applicable law, disability information will not be shared with non-WNCC employees without the student's express written permission. Students' files, which contain disability documentation and a record of accommodations requested, will be maintained with all appropriate privacy and confidentiality as required by law. Such information will be shared with institutional personnel only as necessary to ensure access to services and support and will not be released to agencies/individuals outside the institution without written authorization from the student.

Glossary of Terms

A **Person with a Disability** is someone with 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. The determination of whether a student has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity (and therefore has a disability) must be made on a case-by-case basis.

Physical or Mental Impairment means any (a) physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory (including speech organs), cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitor-urinary, hemi and lymphatic, skin, and endocrine; or (b) means any psychological disorder, such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities. The definition does not set forth a list of specific diseases and conditions that constitute physical or mental impairment because of the difficulty of ensuring the comprehensiveness of any such list.

Learning Disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations,

including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

Substantially Limits means unable to perform a major life activity, or is significantly restricted as to the condition, manner, or duration under which a major life activity can be performed, in comparison to the average person or to most people; the availability of some mitigating measure (such as a hearing aid) is not to be considered when determining if the disability substantially limits the individual.

Major Life Activity means functions such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.

Current users of illegal drugs: Section 504 excludes from the definition of a student with a disability, and from Section 504 protection, any student who is currently engaging in the illegal use of drugs when the College acts on the basis of such use. (There are exceptions for persons in rehabilitation programs who are no longer engaging in the illegal use of drugs).

Qualified individual with a disability: A qualified individual with a disability is a student who meets the academic and technical standards required for admission or participation in the chosen program with or without a reasonable accommodation or academic adjustment.

Academic Adjustments: WNCC is required to provide students with appropriate academic adjustments and auxiliary aids and services that are necessary to afford an individual with a disability an equal opportunity to participate in the College's program. The College is not required to make adjustments or provide aids or services that would result in a fundamental alteration of the College's program or impose an undue burden.

Auxiliary Aids and Services may include but are not limited to note-takers, readers, braille or large print materials, and mobility training for students with visual impairments; sign language interpreters, real time captioning, and note-takers for students who are deaf or hearing impaired; and typists and scribes for students with manual impairments. (This is not an exhaustive list.) Devices or services of a personal nature such as personal attendants, individually prescribed devices, or readers for personal use or study are not provided.

Reasonable Accommodation: Although each accommodation request will be assessed individually, reasonable accommodations, in a general sense, are modifications made to remove workplace barriers and enable qualified individuals to perform their jobs. For qualifying students, reasonable accommodations are adjustments to policy, practice, and programs that "level the playing field" and provide equal access to WNCC's academic and non-academic programs and activities. Reasonable accommodations are addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Service and Assistance Animals: The College recognizes the importance of "Service Animals" as defined by the Americans with Disability Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) and the broader category of "Assistance Animals" under the Fair Housing Act. WNCC is committed to ensuring that individuals with disabilities requiring the use of a service animal can participate in classes, services, employment, and activities at all WNCC campus locations. The College is also committed to allowing assistance animals when necessary to provide individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to use and enjoy College housing. Specific definitions, guidelines, and requirements can be found in the College's Service and Assistance Animals Procedure (Appendix E-3-2016).

Differences Between High School and College

There are significant differences in laws that govern your high school experience and the laws that govern postsecondary education at any college or university.

In high school, the school has these responsibilities:

- Identify students with disabilities and prepare an individual education plan (IEP) or 504 Plan.
- Provide assessment of learning disabilities.
- Classify disabilities according to specified diagnostic categories.
- Involve parents or guardians in placement decisions.
- Provide certain non-academic services.
- Place students in programs where they can benefit (in any way) subject to placement committee and parent participation and approval.
- Structure a large part of the student's weekly schedule.
- Modify educational programs.
- Provide a free and appropriate education.
- Provide appropriate services by the school nurse or health service.

At the **postsecondary level**, the **college** has these responsibilities:

- Protect a student's right to privacy and confidentiality.
- Provide access to programs and service which are accessible to persons without disabilities.
- Inform students of their rights and responsibilities.
- Inform students of office location and procedures for requesting accommodations.
- Accept and evaluate verifying documentation.
- Determine, based on the documentation, that a mental or physical impairment causes a substantial limitation of a major life activity.
- Determine whether a reasonable accommodation is possible for a student who is otherwise qualified for participation in the program or service.
- Make reasonable accommodations for students who meet the above qualifying criteria.

Postsecondary institutions are not required to:

- Reduce or waive any of the essential requirements of a course or program.
- Conduct testing and assessment of learning, psychological or medical disabilities.
- Provide personal attendants.
- Provide personal or private tutors. Tutoring services normally available to persons without disabilities must be accessible to persons with disabilities who are otherwise qualified for those services.
- Prepare an individual education plan (IEP) for a student with a disability.

Successful Transition from High School

There are several things you can do to help successfully transition from high school to college, and the Disability Services Office at the WNCC is available to help you with this process.

Recommendations for Success

- Begin the planning and application process well in advance of the term you plan to start college.
- Understand strengths, abilities, and areas of challenge.
- Learn about your disability and how it impacts you while in school and at work. Be able to describe your disability and your strengths and challenging areas.
- Consider what strategies you have already used to be successful in school.
- College can be fun, but it is also hard work. Plan 3-4 hours of studying outside of class for each hour spent in class.

Should I Disclose My Disability?

You are never required to disclose your disability, but you may choose to disclose your disability in order to request reasonable academic adjustments and accommodations. The Disability Services Officer (DSO) is the individual designated by the college who determines which accommodations are appropriate for each student's needs. The DSO considers specific accommodation requests based on your documentation of a disability and experience with using the accommodation. In some situations, you may request an accommodation you have never used before. This may occur in cases where the accommodations were not available in your previous educational setting, or you may not have attended an educational institution since being diagnosed with a disability.

How Do I Request Accommodations?

The steps to request accommodations from WNCC for a student who is enrolled in on campus, online, and/or both on campus and online learning courses are as follows:

1. You must first apply and be accepted for admission to WNCC before a request for accommodations can be made.

Disability Services Officer (DSO) Contact Information:

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2. You will need to take a test to help determine your placement in some courses (e.g., English and math). Contact the DSO to arrange to take the placement test.

3. Once you are enrolled in classes, to request an accommodation, print out and complete the “Request for Accommodations, Auxiliary Aids and/or Services Form” found enclosed in this packet or online at <https://www.wncc.edu/student-life/student-life-pdfs/request-for-accommodations.pdf>. After completing the form, return it by mail, fax, or as an email attachment to the DSO.
4. Contact the Disability Services Officer to schedule an appointment and be prepared to provide documentation of your disability. Documentation can be sent by mail, fax, or as an email attachment to the contact information above. (See page 9 below for details)

Reasonable accommodations, auxiliary aids and/or services and/or modifications to academic requirements, are determined following an individualized assessment of each request and discussion with the Disabilities Services Officer. Among the factors considered in determining reasonable accommodations, auxiliary aids and/or services and/or modifications of academic requirements for students are:

- a. The nature of the student's disability.
- b. Accommodations, auxiliary aids and/or services that have worked for that student in the past.
- c. Whether the requested accommodations, auxiliary aids and/or services will allow the student effectively to access and participate in the course or program.
- d. Whether the requested accommodation, auxiliary aids and/or services and/or modifications of academic requirements will alter the essential requirements of the course or program.
- e. WNCC is not required to alter or modify a course or program to the extent that it changes the fundamental nature of that course or program. Although most auxiliary aids and services are decided upon and provided by the Disabilities Services Officer, accommodation decisions are often made in collaboration with program/school administrators and relevant faculty. Modifications of academic requirements are always made in collaboration with Educational Services. Recommendations made by the Disability Services Officer are not implemented until this collaboration has occurred.

Once a determination has been made that you are eligible for reasonable accommodations, you will receive an “Eligible Academic Accommodation” (EAA) letter that you will need to discuss with your faculty member for each course you intend to request accommodations in. Each of your faculty members will have an advance copy of the EAA letter. It will be your responsibility to contact the faculty member in person, by phone or email to set up an “implementation conference” to discuss your needs and the accommodations for which you are eligible. The implementation conference can be in person, by phone, email, or video conference.

Late Identification

A student who chooses to identify a disability after the beginning of the semester may experience a delay in receiving timely accommodations. This is in no way a reflection of the intent of the Disability Services Office, but simply a matter of timing and receiving any needed information or documentation once classes are underway.

Note: Western Nebraska Community College is not required to provide accommodations to students who have failed to self-identify and have not provided documentation of disability.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Colleges have an obligation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to provide qualified students with disabilities access to their programs and services. Institutions also have an obligation to provide reasonable accommodations. **HOWEVER, students** also have equal, if not greater, responsibilities to be partners with educational institutions in meeting their needs.

The qualified student has the responsibility to:

- Be a self-advocate for their needs.
- Formally request accommodations with the Disability Services Office and follow the procedures outlined.
- Provide current documentation.
- Discuss accommodation needs with disability services officer.
- Discuss the Eligible Academic Accommodation letter with faculty members in the courses you desire the accommodations during an implementation conference.
- Communicate with faculty and the Disability Services Officer as needed.

A student has the right to:

- Not be discriminated or retaliated against because they have a disability.
- Participate in and enjoy the educational programs and services offered by the institution the student has chosen to enroll and attend.
- Appropriate accommodations.
- Have information about their disability kept confidential.
- Expect that other departments of the College will work cooperatively with the Disability Services Office and the student in providing accommodations and addressing legitimate needs.
- Choose not to self-identify with the Disability Services Office or request an accommodation.

Faculty Responsibilities

Each member of the faculty plays an important role in the implementation of accommodations to students with disabilities. Although providing reasonable accommodations are not negotiable; the way the accommodations are provided may be negotiable, and in keeping with that role. . .

Faculty has the right to:

- Expect students with disabilities to actively participate in the course; for on campus students to adhere to attendance and participation requirements and for online learners to meet participation requirements.
- Expect students to observe the code of conduct.
- Expect that students will adhere to the academic integrity policy.
- Determine the curricula for their courses.
- Determine student progress and assign grades.

- Provide input regarding the accommodations employed in their courses.
- Question accommodations that would fundamentally alter the academic standards or compromise the mastery of essential competencies.
- Receive a letter of notification about accommodations (known as the EAA Letter) a student is entitled to receive.
- Provide timely notification of specific needs.

Faculty has the responsibility to:

- Provide an atmosphere in which all students can learn course material.
- Include a “reasonable accommodation” statement in the syllabus for each course taught.
- Provide accommodations in a fair and timely manner.
- Contact the Disability Services Office with questions or suggestions regarding the appropriateness of an accommodation.
- Grade students based on their performance, without counting off for reasonable accommodation.
- Make academic adjustments in instruction as appropriate.
- Make technology and technological resources, including Internet access, accessible to students with disabilities just as they are for other students.
- Participate in implementation planning by meeting with the student in person or by phone or video conference (e.g., Zoom or Collaborate) for an Implementation Conference.

Guidelines for Communicating with Faculty Members

- Call or email your faculty members as soon as you receive the “Eligible Academic Accommodations Letter” to discuss the eligible academic accommodations to be implemented in your course. You need to meet in person, by phone, email, or video conference with your faculty member for an “Implementation Conference.” Your faculty member will have an advance copy of your “Eligible Academic Accommodations Letter,” so they will be expecting your call.
- If you have questions or concerns about the course or your performance, make an appointment to speak to the faculty member during their office hours. Be punctual for the appointment (whether the appointment is in person, phone, or through video conferencing) and address your faculty member with courtesy. Email your faculty members if you have questions that are less complex.
- Faculty members have different policies for exams, due dates, and attendance. It is your responsibility to study each faculty member's syllabus. Adhering to your faculty members' policies will benefit you.
- Email your faculty members in advance if you need to be absent from class, or if you are an online learner, to notify them that there will be a period of time you will not be participating in your course.
- Be ready to problem solve with your faculty member. If any conflicts arise, devise potential solutions to propose to your faculty member.

- Contact the Disability Services Officer if you need support or practice in talking with a faculty member.

Advocating for Yourself

Communicating your needs effectively involves several factors. Students with disabilities who succeed in college generally possess the following characteristics:

- Ability to articulate one's talent and abilities clearly.
- Knowledge of the nature of one's disability and the kinds of teaching strategies, tools, and services which best help one compensate.
- Ability to explain both talents and needed compensatory strategies clearly and frankly to others.
- Maturity and initiative to assume the greater share of one's own advocacy.
- Adherence to effective, routine study habits to whatever degree is necessary for success.
- Initiative to seek assistance for academic and other problems as appropriate.
- Acceptance of the idea that it may take longer to graduate than one's friends and that you may have to study harder than your friends do.
- Recognition of the concept that postsecondary education is meant to be a challenge and that temporary frustrations are a part of the normal growth process.
- Regular, frequent communications with parents, friends, faculty members, academic advisors, and support service personnel are all part of taking responsibility for one's ultimate success.

It has been observed that the college-level student with a disability **must be self-reliant and able to cope with ever-changing challenges of daily living**. Students with disabilities who have come to rely heavily on both parents and teachers to direct them and manage their lives may have difficulty adjusting to the demands of college.

For a student, the task is to find ways to work with the college that will permit you to stretch and develop talents, interests, and abilities while at the same time being respectful and supportive of needs.

Online Learning and Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities sometimes decide that taking online courses will be the solution to their accommodation needs. You may be considering online study for the same reasons. Please be aware that studying online can create the need for a completely different set of accommodations. You should enroll in an online course only after you have taken the time to carefully consider the requirements of the study and your strengths and weaknesses.

Ask yourself these questions:

How well do I manage my time?

The independent nature of online study requires a firm grasp on the ability to manage your time. You will be required to set a regular study schedule, keep track of assignments and due dates, as well as participate in online discussions. This may be more difficult without in-person reminders

from a faculty member. This requires discipline and self-motivation to ensure that the course is not forgotten in your day-to-day activities.

Does my disability affect my ability to process and comprehend written information?

For individuals with certain disabilities, managing the content, directions and discussion in an online course becomes increasingly difficult. Information in an online course is frequently delivered via written material on the course management system. The faculty member will not be immediately available to deliver the information auditory or to provide clarification for any misunderstood concepts or assignments.

Will I need to utilize assistive technology to complete this course?

For some students with disabilities, the use of assistive technology is necessary. This can pose a challenge if some aspects of the online course management system are not compatible with the assistive technology you are using. Try to use your assistive technology with the sample course to identify any challenges that you will encounter while engaged in online study.

How comfortable am I with computers and technology?

It is important to be aware of your current comfort level with technology and computers. Are you already accustomed to working with computers? If you have not already mastered at the very least some basic computer skills, your course material can seem much more mysterious and confusing. Accessing all course information and instruction in an online format can be intimidating and stressful for some students. Knowing your comfort level with computers and technology will allow you to determine whether online study is for you.

What do I expect of an online course?

It is important to be aware of your expectations of online courses. No two courses (or faculty members) are exactly alike! What kind of interaction are you expecting from the faculty member? Are you expecting a lot of personal interaction or a little? Do you think that you will have a lot of writing to do or not as much? What information are you basing your expectations on? Before the course begins, consider contacting the faculty member to find out as much as possible about the format of the course, the expectations the faculty member has of you, and what you need to do to successfully complete the course. The more information you learn about the study prior to enrolling and beginning the study, the better you can determine if online study is for you.

Request for Reconsideration of a Determination in the EAA Letter of Accommodation, Auxiliary Aid and/or Services

If a student requesting an accommodation, auxiliary aid, and/or services has any questions related to the Eligible Academic Accommodations letter issued by the Disability Services Officer, they should first consult with the DSO so any errors can be corrected. If a student **disagrees** with the determination of eligible accommodations, auxiliary aid, and/or services communicated by DSO in the EAA letter, the student may file a written appeal with the Dean of Students, or designee, **within five (5) school days** of receiving the accommodations plan, or as soon as is reasonable after the student comes to believe that they are not being properly served by the accommodation.

After considering the appeal, the Dean will respond to the DSO and in a format accessible to the student within five (5) school days. The response will explain the position of the College and, where practical, offer options for a substantive resolution.

If a student does not agree with the Dean's recommendations, the student may appeal to the Equal Access Review Panel (EARP) by submitting a written appeal to the Institutional Compliance Officer (the Executive Director of Human Resources). The complete procedure for a student appeal of an accommodation is set forth in the WNCC's Compensatory Abilities Procedure. Copies are available to students in the Dean's Office or on the College's website at the following: www.wncc.edu/about-wncc/leadership/board-of-governors/policies-pdfs/appendix/appendix-e-2-2017.pdf