Disability Transition Guide

Welcome to Western Nebraska Community College

WNCC works to ensure all students have an equal opportunity to participate in educational, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities. We provide reasonable accommodations on an individualized, student-centered approach. Students must request accommodations through the Dean of Students Office prior to each term they are planning to attend WNCC. Requests are then reviewed, approved or denied, and communicated to the student. The following document is meant as supplemental information for students with disabilities who are attending Western Nebraska Community College.

For specific questions, concerns, or needs, please reach out to the Dean of Students Office at deanofstudents@wncc.edu or by calling 308-635-6050. To submit a request for a reasonable accommodation, please visit: https://cm.maxient.com/reporting.php?WesternNebraskaCC and select “Accommodations Request” from the drop-down menu.

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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.

College Responsibilities

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

- Begin the planning and application process well in advance of the term you plan to start college. The request and approval process take time and must be completed prior to the start of the semester. Late requests are not guaranteed.
- 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. 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.

How Do I Request Accommodations?

1. Apply and be accepted to WNCC.
2. Submit the request form with all appropriate documentation online: https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?WesternNebraskaCC&layout_id=17
3. After submission, you will receive an email that either approves or denies your request. On occasion, you will be requested to meet with the Dean of Students or their designee to discuss the requests and find appropriate solutions.
4. Your instructors or applicable staff will be copied on your approval letter if you give permission. If you do not give permission, you are responsible for sharing the outcome letter with instructors or staff. 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.
5. If you need accommodations for placement tests, please complete the request form as soon as possible and make a note that you need accommodations for placement testing as well as the classroom, residence halls, or other.
6. Any questions or concerns can be directed to the Dean of Students Office at deanofstudents@wncc.edu or by calling 308-635-6050.

Among the factors considered in determining reasonable accommodations, auxiliary aids and/or services and/or modifications of academic requirements for students are:

- The nature of the student's disability.
- Accommodations, auxiliary aids and/or services that have worked for that student in the past.
- Whether the requested accommodations, auxiliary aids and/or services will allow the student effectively to access and participate in the course or program.
- 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.
- 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 Dean of Students, accommodation decisions are often made in collaboration with program/school administrators and relevant faculty. Modifications of academic requirements are always made in collaboration with Academic Affairs.

If a student's request for accommodations is denied, they can appeal to the Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Services within three business days of receiving their denial letter.

Common Accommodations:

Examples of changes in testing conditions that may be available include, but are not limited to:

- Braille;
- Large print;
- Fewer items on each page;

- Tape recorded responses;
- Responses on the test booklet;
- Frequent breaks;
- Extended testing time;
- Testing over several sessions;
- Small group setting;
- Private room;
- Preferential seating; and
- The use of a sign language interpreter for spoken directions.

Common Documentation:

A student must provide documentation, upon request, that he or she has a disability, that is, an impairment that substantially limits a major life activity[12] and that supports the need for an academic adjustment. The documentation should identify how a student's ability to function is limited as a result of her or his disability. The primary purpose of the documentation is to establish a disability in order to help the institution work interactively with the student to identify appropriate services. The focus should be on whether the information adequately documents the existence of a current disability and need for an academic adjustment.

Additional Information

The following information is taken from the publication Transition of Students with Disabilities to Postsecondary Education: A Guide for High School Educators, published in 2011 by Arne Duncan, U.S. Department of Education, and Russlyn Ali, Office for Civil Rights. Additional information can be found on the Department of Education website at: https://www.ed.gov/higher-education

Nebraska Department of Education has additional resources available at: https://www.education.ne.gov/

Keys to Success: Attitude, Self-Advocacy And Preparation

The attitude and self-advocacy skills of students with disabilities may be two of the most important factors in determining their success or failure in postsecondary education. Students with disabilities need to be prepared to work collaboratively with the institution's disability coordinator to enable them to have an equal opportunity to participate in an institution's programs and activities. To ensure that students with disabilities possess the desired levels of self-advocacy to succeed in postsecondary education, high school educators may want to encourage the students to:

- Understand their disabilities. Students with disabilities need to know the functional limitations that result from their disabilities and understand their strengths and weaknesses. They should be able to explain their disabilities to an institution's disability coordinators or other appropriate staff. As part of this process, students should be able to explain where they have had difficulty in the past, as well as what has helped them overcome such problems and what specific adjustments might work in specific situations. To assist students in this area, high school educators can encourage high school students to be active participants in their IEP or Section 504 meetings. High school personnel also can suggest that students practice explaining their disabilities, as well as why they need certain services, to appropriate secondary staff or through role-playing exercises to prepare them to engage in such conversations with confidence in a postsecondary setting.
- Accept responsibility for their own success. All students, including those with disabilities, must take primary responsibility for their success or failure in postsecondary education. Students with disabilities, in particular, are moving from a system where parents and school staff usually advocated on their behalf to a system where they will be expected to advocate for themselves. An institution's staff will likely communicate directly with students when issues arise and are generally

not required to interact with students' parents. In general, students with disabilities should expect to complete all course requirements, such as assignments and examinations. Students with disabilities need to identify the essential academic and technical standards that they will be required to meet for admission and continued participation in an institution's program. Students also need to identify any academic adjustments they may need as a result of their disabilities to meet those standards and how to request those adjustments. Students with disabilities need to understand that, while federal disability laws guarantee them an equal opportunity to participate these laws do not guarantee that students will achieve a particular outcome, for example, good grades.

- Take an appropriate preparatory curriculum. Because all students will be expected to meet an institution's essential standards, students with disabilities need to take a high school curriculum that will prepare them to meet those standards. If students with disabilities plan to attend a rigorous postsecondary institution, they, like their peers without disabilities, need to make high school curriculum choices that support that goal. High school guidance counselors and state VR agency counselors, in particular, can play an important role in students' curriculum planning.
- For all students, good study skills and the ability to write well are critical factors of success in postsecondary education. High school educators can help students in these areas by offering or identifying opportunities, such as workshops, courses or tutoring programs, that emphasize the importance of reading, writing and good study skills. In addition, staff should encourage students to enroll in classes that will focus on writing and study skills in their freshman year of postsecondary education.
- Learn time management skills. Although a primary role of high school educators is to provide monitoring, direction and guidance to students as they approach the end of their high school career, staff also need to prepare students to act independently and to manage their own time with little to no supervision. High school educators can assist students by identifying resources that will help them learn time management and scheduling skills.
- Acquire computer skills. Because postsecondary students use computers to complete a multitude of tasks, from registering for classes to accessing course material and obtaining grades, it is essential that students learn to use computers if they are to be prepared for postsecondary education. Ideally, students with disabilities need to start using computers as early as possible in school to increase their familiarity with, and their comfort level in using, computers. Students with visual impairments, hearing impairments, learning disabilities or mobility impairments may have problems with inputting data or reading a computer monitor.

Assistive technology can help certain students with disabilities use computers and access information.

- Consider supplemental postsecondary education preparatory programs. A variety of institutions of postsecondary education have summer programs in which students can participate while they are still in high school, or after graduation, to ease their transition to postsecondary education. These programs often expose students to experiences that they are likely to encounter in postsecondary education, such as living in dorms, relating to other students and eating in dining halls. The programs may also focus on instruction in certain subject areas, such as math or English, or in certain skills, such as computer, writing or study skills, that can prepare a student to be successful in postsecondary education. High school educators can assist students with disabilities by identifying such program opportunities in their area of residence.
- Research postsecondary education programs. Students with disabilities may select any program for which they are qualified but should be advised to review carefully documentation standards and program requirements for their program or institution of interest. For example, students should pay close attention to an institution's program requirements, such as language or math, to avoid making a large financial and time commitment only to realize several years into a program that they cannot, even with academic adjustments, meet an essential requirement for program completion. Campus visits, which include visits to the disability services office, can be helpful in locating an environment that best meets a student's interests and needs. In addition, while all institutions have a legal obligation to provide appropriate services, certain colleges may be able to provide better services than others due to their size or location.
- Get involved on campus. To help students avoid the isolation that can occur away from home during the first year of postsecondary education, high school educators should encourage students to live on campus and to become involved in campus activities. Attendance at orientation programs for freshmen is a good first step in discovering ways to get involved in the postsecondary education environment.