

Guidelines for Students Utilizing Hired Note-Takers

Overview:

Students with documented disabilities that limit their ability to take effective notes in the classroom may qualify for a note-taker to be hired for a particular course by Disability Services. Decisions around this specific support are made on a class-by-class basis, depending on the disability, the past academic history and practices of the student, the amount of lecture time contained in the class, and the pace and difficulty level of the class.

A note-taker is another individual – usually a student-worker – who attends an assigned class along with being served by Disability Services, and has the very specific job duty of compiling additional hand-written notes of the lecture to be given to the student after class.

Expectations of Students Utilizing Hired Note-Takers:

A student utilizing note-taking services is still expected to take notes within a class to the extent possible, given the limitations and challenges of a particular disability. It is essential that students practice and improve their own methods of note-taking, so that they are eventually independent and self-sufficient in meeting classroom requirements. The goal right from the beginning is to reduce the dependency on outside note-taking assistance. Disability Services' staff will assist students in exploring effective methods of note-taking, as well as exposing them to rapidly changing technology that can streamline and enhance the process.

It is important to remember that note-taking is one small piece of a course's requirements. The student utilizing this service is still required to meet all other expectations: Purchasing all textbooks and related materials; attending all classes; participating in classroom projects, preparing for and successfully completing assignments, quizzes and exams; successfully passing the class.

Concerns and Communications:

In case of absences from a class, or misunderstandings arising from particular notes, it is recommended that students exchange phone numbers and email addresses with their note-takers. There must be open and effective communications in order for this supportive relationship to work as it should.

- In the event of an absence or significant delay on the part of the student being served, the note-taker is only authorized to wait 15 minutes past the start of a class. After that time they must leave, and are paid for only 1 hour of their assignment. Repeated absences not only weaken a student's outcome of success, absences penalize a note-taker who has made a commitment of time and effort toward the student.

- Likewise, in the event that a note-taker is excessively absent or late for class, the student being served is potentially penalized, and is, at best, put into the role of communicating to the worker as an “employer”. If direct communications are not successful, and classroom note-taking needs are not being satisfactorily met, then the student being served is responsible for contact the Office of Disability Services immediately for assistance in resolving the matter.

It is important to note that without this open communication with Disability Services, there are no other means of knowing whether or not note-taking services are being effective. The only information coming consistently back to the office is in the form of pay sheets. If the schedules of students being served match the work hours of assigned note-takers, the assumption is that services are being provided as requested.

Note-taking is often an important service, especially for newer students who are transitioning from the limited responsibilities of high school to the faster-paced, more complex responsibilities of college. Note-taking skills must be acquired, developed, and enhanced as rapidly as possible by all students, even those with limitations who must be extra creative, innovative, and even inventive in meeting their individual needs.