Greetings from the Disability Resource Center. I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Jennifer Pippen, and I am the new director of the Center. I have come from a private liberal arts college in the Midwest where I granted and ensured the effective delivery of accommodations for the past eight years. In addition to my experience, I have a diverse educational background which is composed of two Master's degrees—one in counseling and the other in higher education.

I am excited to bring my education and small collegiate experience to Northern Illinois University. The Center will continue the mission of promoting and facilitating access, creating inclusive environments and finding creative ways to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. I strongly believe disability is another form of diversity, and I desire to change some of the stigma associated with disability.

In Huskie Pride,

Jennifer Pippen
Director, Disability Resource Center

MEET THE STAFF

Sara Clark is our Adapted Testing Coordinator and Access Consultant. She oversees the testing program in its entirety. This includes scheduling student exams, working with faculty and staff to obtain exams, and adapting the exam for the student’s use. Sara is a graduate of Northern Illinois University, where she earned her M.A. in Rehabilitation Counseling. She recently moved back to the area from Philadelphia, where she worked as a rehabilitation counselor for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
FLEXIBILITY IN ATTENDANCE—WHY DO WE USE THIS ACCOMMODATION?

In some cases, a student who is registered with the Disability Resource Center may qualify for consideration for class absence. This accommodation is most frequently granted for a student who has a documented chronic health problem which occasionally causes him or her to be absent from class. Faculty set their own attendance policies; this accommodation is simply a request for some flexibility in the policy. The amount of flexibility will depend on the nature of the class and whether class participation is a factor in the final grade. Students who are eligible for this accommodation are responsible for completing all coursework. This accommodation is not a “blank check” that allows students to miss a large number of classes for any given course. A student with excessive absences in a class should consult with the instructor about alternatives. Before the end of week six of the term, this may mean dropping the course with a grade of WD. If the absences are grouped around the end of the term, then a grade of incomplete may be appropriate.

OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS CASES

The Office of Civil Rights in the United States Department of Education is responsible for holding colleges and universities accountable to disability laws. In 1994, the Office of Civil Rights determined that requests for accommodations for absences due to a disability should be considered on an individual basis. The accommodation should be provided unless the accommodation threatens the integrity of the course as offered. If a course grade is dependent on attendance, it is important that the student and faculty member discuss the issue early in the semester so that the student can then make an informed decision about alternatives.

In 1996, the Office of Civil Rights determined the following six factors should be used in considering whether attendance is an essential element of a course:

1) Are there classroom interactions between the instructor and the students?
2) Do student contributions in class constitute a significant component of the learning process?
3) Does the functional nature of the course rely on student participation as an essential method for learning?
4) To what degree does a student’s failure to attend constitute a significant loss to the educational experience of the other students in the course?
5) What do the course description and syllabus say?
6) What are the classroom practices and policies regarding attendance?

[Cabrillo Community College, Case No. 09-96-2150 (OCR Region IX 1996)l]
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS: ARE ACCOMMODATIONS NECESSARY OR SIMPLY SUGGESTIONS?

This question is frequently asked by faculty and staff members when working with students with disabilities. After a student gives the faculty member the letter of accommodation, the question is: are these accommodations necessary or just suggestions? Accommodations are legally required to occur at institutions of higher education. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, Northern Illinois University needs to ensure that its programs and activities are fully accessible to students with disabilities unless to do so would fundamentally alter the nature of the program. The process that has been established is for the student to meet with an access consultant at the Disability Resource Center to discuss reasonable accommodations. Once reasonable accommodations are determined, a student is supplied with a letter of accommodation and must present this letter to their faculty members if the student plans to use accommodations in this course. If you have additional questions or concerns about the accommodations listed, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 815-753-1303. We are happy to answer all of your questions.

DISABILITY REDEFINED...ANXIETY

Students who have anxiety conditions may experience:

• Increased worry over assignments and evaluations
• Fear of speaking in discussions
• Increased nervousness during presentations
• Poor test performance (the student may know the material but cannot remember it for the test)

What Faculty Members can do:

• Allow for alternative assignments to gauge student knowledge
• Increase ability of student to work with others
• Use multi-modal learning approaches to reduce student anxiety
• Encourage the student to visit you during office hours to discuss how anxiety affects the student’s ability to learn

How this student brings DIVERSITY to your course:

• Greater detail in papers
• Unique view of human nature
• Greater appreciation of interaction with faculty

STATISTICS: HOW MANY EXAMS?

The Disability Resource Center’s testing facilities were busy this past year. We proctored 3,469 exams, which is an increase of six percentage points from the 2012-2013 academic year. During the fall 2013 semester, DRC staff proctored over 450 exams during finals week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER OF EXAMS PROCTORED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FALL SEMESTER 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPRING SEMESTER 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL NUMBER OF EXAMS PROCTORED</td>
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<tr>
<td>1,786</td>
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<td>1,683</td>
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<td>3,469</td>
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MISSION, GOALS, OBJECTIVES

The mission of the Disability Resource Center (DRC) is to create an accessible, inclusive, sustainable learning environment, where disability is recognized as an aspect of diversity that is integral to the campus community and to society.

The goals and objectives of the Disability Resource Center are to:

• Promote and facilitate access through creative outreach and training, collaborative partnerships, innovative programs, and proactive solutions;
• Create inclusive environments by engaging and supporting the campus community in progressive system change;
• Increase the recruitment, transition, retention, and graduation of students with disabilities;
• Consult regarding reducing barriers for persons with disabilities;
• Ensure the effective delivery of accommodations.