

## POLICY ON ACCESSIBILITY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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**Effective Date:** April 2, 2003

**Originating Office:** Office of the Provost and Vice-President, Academic

**Supersedes /Amends:** VRS-14/n/a

**Policy Number:** PRVPA-14

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### SCOPE

This policy covers the treatment of all students with disabilities.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the respective roles and responsibilities of the University and of students with disabilities with respect to accessibility to the academic programs and physical facilities of the University.

### PREAMBLE

The University's commitment to providing equal educational opportunities to all students includes students with disabilities. To demonstrate full respect for the academic capacities and potential of students with disabilities, the University seeks to remove attitudinal and physical barriers that may hinder or prevent qualified students with disabilities from participating fully in University life.

### DEFINITIONS

In this policy:

"appropriate documentation" means a written evaluation or report provided by a clinician in a specific profession or area of expertise who is considered qualified to make the diagnosis. The documentation must be current, comprehensive and may include clinical and social histories from parents, counsellors and specialists. The documentation must conform to well-established practices in specific areas/fields and a diagnosis must be included.

"a student with a disability" means a student who 1) has a physical or mental impairment or a learning disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities; and 2) has a history or record of such an impairment. Examples of recognized disabilities include, but are not limited to, blindness, deafness, paralysis, cystic fibrosis, lupus, multiple sclerosis, mental

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illness, HIV/AIDS and specific learning disabilities including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

“learning disabilities” refer to a number of disorders which may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or non-verbal information. These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning. As such, learning disabilities are distinct from global intellectual deficiency.

“reasonable accommodation” means a modification or adjustment to an academic program, course or physical facility made by the University that enables an otherwise qualified student with a disability, access to or participation in, University-sponsored programs. These modifications shall not alter the fundamental purpose of the academic program or course. Reasonable accommodation(s) is determined on an individual basis and must relate to the student's specific functional limitations within the academic setting so that accommodation(s) may vary from class to class depending upon course content and format. Reasonable accommodation(s) is intended to be effective and reasonable and may not be exactly what the student wishes or requests. Moreover, reasonable accommodation(s) is subject to the University's capacity to respond to the request and the University's financial and other resource constraints.

### POLICY

#### Responsibilities of the University

1. The University acknowledges that qualified students with disabilities have a right, subject to the University's capacity to respond to the request and the University's financial and other resource constraints, to:
  - a. full access to all educational programs of the University;
  - b. full access to the educational process and learning environment (including but not limited to, classes, laboratories and libraries)
  - c. full access to the University campuses; and
  - d. full access to University facilities and services.

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2. The University is committed to fostering, creating and maintaining both an attitudinal as well as a barrier-free environment for qualified students with disabilities, including:
  - a. providing support services, subject to its capacity to respond to the request and its financial and resource constraints;
  - b. promoting a respectful attitude for students with disabilities, and
  - c. promoting awareness of the needs and abilities of students with disabilities; and
  - d. informing the University community about the services available to qualified students with disabilities and seeking to ensure that such services are delivered in ways that promote equity.
3. The University acknowledges that qualified students with disabilities have a right to assistance and to reasonable accommodation(s) that is individualized with respect to scope and pace, consistent with the student's needs and the University's legitimate academic standards and subject to the University's capacity to respond to the request and the University's financial and other resource constraints.
4. Where warranted and without compromising its academic standards and subject to the criteria outlined in article 3, the University shall modify, as appropriate, in close consultation with the instructor, one or more of the following for a qualified student with a disability:
  - a. workload;
  - b. examination procedures;
  - c. other course requirements;
  - d. scholarship and other financial assistance requirements.
5. In order to assist in fulfilling the University's commitment, all newly admitted students shall receive on their letter of acceptance a statement indicating that if they

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have a learning disability or any other disability for which they may require reasonable accommodation or other assistance, they should contact the Office for Students with Disabilities to ascertain the degree to which their needs can be met.

6. The University shall take all reasonable steps to consult students with disabilities as fully as possible about decisions relating to matters affecting them.

### Responsibilities of Students with Disabilities

7. Students with disabilities requesting assistance or reasonable accommodation(s) from the University shall:
  - a. initiate contact with the Office for Students with Disabilities and make the nature of their disability and/or their needs known. The initial contact may take place at or prior to admission or at any time during the student's course of study; and
  - b. provide appropriate documentation in order to be considered for assistance or reasonable accommodation(s). The Office for Students with Disabilities may request additional documentation from students if the determination of a disability is inconclusive, if the documentation does not support the assistance or reasonable accommodation(s) requested or if the documentation is not current. The request for assistance or reasonable accommodation(s) and supporting documentation must be provided in a timely manner so that needs can be assessed and assistance or reasonable accommodation(s) planned and put in place, if appropriate; and
  - c. be expected to undertake a reasonable measure of self-advocacy.
8. While the Office for Students with Disabilities is the administrative unit responsible for the implementation of this policy, this responsibility is shared by all members of the University community, including all faculty members, administrative and support staff and management personnel.
9. A Review Committee shall be established by the President every five years to review the scope and application of this policy. The review shall include, but not be limited to,

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consultations within the University community, including the users of the Office for Students with Disabilities.