Hello! Welcome to the Orientation for New Faculty and Administrators. My name is Beth Ann Dickie. I am the Director of the Office of Educational Accessibility. We serve more than 750 students with disabilities who attend Old Dominion University.

The Office of Educational Accessibility is located in the Student Success Center which is behind the Learning Commons and Perry Library. If you have any questions following this presentation, please feel free to stop by the office or give us a call at 683-4655.

The Mission of the Office of Educational Accessibility is:

- To advocate for student with disabilities
- To make sure that student accommodations are provided
- To ensure that the students with disabilities have equal access to all campus facilities and activities
- To foster acceptance of students with disabilities
- And to empower students to become self-advocates.

The Office of Educational Accessibility exists because of two landmark pieces of legislation

- The Americans with Disabilities Act
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

As a public agency that receives federal funding, we are required to comply with these two laws.

These two laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability and require equal access to qualified students with disabilities.

A qualified student with disabilities is one who

- meets the requirements to be admitted into the university
- and meets the technical standards of its programs

We are required to provide accommodations and services to qualified students with disabilities so that they can have equal access/equal opportunity to participate in our programs.

Keep in mind that we are not required to fundamentally alter our programs or standards for these students; they must meet the technical requirements/standards of our classes and programs.

But also keep in mind that there is the letter of the law that must be followed and there is the spirit of the law that we should all consider. Students with disabilities have a right to be served on our campus and should be embraced into the diversity and the fabric that makes this university great.

The Office of Educational Accessibility supports students who have a wide range of disabilities. According to our spring 2013 enrollment information:

- 37% of our students have ADD/ADHD. It affects not only their attention and activity level but also affects their planning and processing abilities. These students will have difficulty sustaining attention in class and starting or completing long term assignments. It is important for professors to provide clear instructions and written due dates to help these students succeed in class.
• 2% of our students have Asperger Syndrome or Autism Spectrum disabilities. These students are typically very gifted in their area of interest which makes college the perfect place for them but they have difficulty with social understanding or social interactions, they can be very rigid in their thinking, and they can have great difficulty shifting gears to a new train of thought. They require routine, set schedules, and clear directions.

• 2% of our students have hearing impairments. They range from students who use hearing aids and must sit close to an instructor to hear lectures to students who require sign language interpreters in their classes. Here’s a rule of thumb: if you have a sign language interpreter in your class, always direct your conversations to the student, not to the interpreter.

• 18% of our students have learning disabilities. These learning disabilities can impact their ability to read, write, spell, calculate, or process information. Assistive technologies, such as speech-to-text software and screen readers, can really help these students thrive in college.

• 23% of our students have medical disabilities. There is a huge range of medical issues that we see; most affect the ability of students to attend classes when the medical condition is flaring.

• 2% of our students have physical disabilities. Many of these students will require the use of assistive technology to access course materials and requirements.

• 14% of our students have psychological disabilities. These can range from anxiety and depression to bi-polar disorder. Most students simply require testing accommodations to help reduce stress levels while others might need to be monitored a little more closely by various campus offices.

• 2% of our students have vision impairments. They can range from students who need enlarged text to students who need brailed notes or tests as well as screen readers for their computers.

This is just a very brief overview with generalized information. Please feel free to call the Office of Educational Accessibility at a later time to discuss individual student needs.

Now that you have seen the types of disabilities that are present on our campus, let’s talk about typical accommodations for these students.

Testing Accommodations - The Office of Educational Accessibility offers a testing room where many of our students come to take tests. Students receive extended time to complete their exams in this office and the space is generally distraction-reduced.

Volunteer Notesharing - Many of our students have a hard time listening to or processing information during class and physically taking written notes at the same time. That is why we ask fellow classmates to help take notes. You as an instructor will be asked to help facilitate this process in a confidential manner.

Electronic textbooks - For students with print-related disabilities, including vision impairments, physical disabilities, and learning disabilities, we work with publishers to secure electronic versions of their textbooks. That way, students can access the information through assistive technologies such as computer screen readers.

Excused absences may need to be granted to students with medical disabilities.

Students need to be able to make up their work or tests following these disability-related absences

We provide interpreting services for students who are deaf.
We provided brailed notes to students who are blind.
Enlarged texts, notes, and tests need to be available to students with vision impairments.
Assistive technology such as screen readers and voice dictation software is allowed for students who require them.
Mobility assistance in the form of golf cart transportation is provided to students with permanent or temporary mobility impairments.

We allow service animals on campus. A service animal is usually a dog which is specifically trained to perform a task for a student with disabilities. The service animal can be trained to guide a student who is blind, to open doors for a student with physical disabilities, and to alert a student who has a seizure disorder to an oncoming episode. These are just a few examples of what service animals can be trained to do.

Points to consider:

- If the animal is required and has been specifically trained to perform a service, then the animal is allowed by law to be on campus and have access to all reasonable spaces.
- If the animal has not been specifically trained to perform a service for a person with a disability, then the animal is not allowed to be on campus.
- The animal must be a dog although the ADA also allows for miniature horses. It must be housebroken, and must be in full control by the owner.

Please feel free to contact the Office of Educational Accessibility if you have any questions about service animals on campus.

So, how do students go about receiving accommodations?

Students must provide the Office of Educational Accessibility with current documentation from a qualified professional. The documentation must state the disability and the direct impact it has on the student.

We review this documentation and meet with the students to develop appropriate accommodations.

This information is then transferred into a Faculty Accommodation Letter.

This is where you come into the process:

Students will self-disclose their need for accommodations to you through accommodation letters.

They will give you the letters and should discuss with you their particular needs.

You will then need to sign an Accommodation Agreement Form - which the student will provide - stating that you have indeed received the letters.

Please do not provide accommodations to students until you receive an accommodation letter.

Here are the implications for Faculty and Staff:

You must provide the accommodations as outlined in the accommodation letters. If you have a question about them, please feel free to talk with someone from the Office of Educational Accessibility.

Consider the principles of Universal Design when developing your classes. We have a very diverse group of learners at ODU with many different learning styles. Take that into consideration as you plan course activities.

All instruction - face to face, video, written, and web-based - must be accessible to all learners.

So, how can you help?
You can help by being available to meet with students to discuss their accommodations. The staff members in Educational Accessibility encourage students to meet with their professors during office hours so they can discuss how accommodations will work in each class.

You can also help by:

- Working closely with the Office of Educational Accessibility
- Calling the office if you have any questions
- Maintain confidentiality at all times. Never disclose that a student is registered with the Office of Educational Accessibility and receives accommodations.

Refer students who are having difficulty in your class to our office.

It is estimated that approximately 11% of college students have a disability of one form or another. Our current numbers certainly do not reflect that percentage; we only have about 3% of the population registered with Educational Accessibility. Many students choose to not get registered with us because

- they want to try it on their own
- they might not want to admit they have a disability
- they might not know that they have a disability
- or they might not know our office exists.

You can help. Please refer struggling students to our office!

I know that this was a lot of information in a short period of time. Please feel free to contact us in person or by phone if you have any questions! We also have a faculty handbook and resources available on our website that may help.

Thanks so much for taking this opportunity to find out more about the Office of Educational Accessibility. We look forward to working with you to support all students with disabilities who attend ODU!