

**Memorandum for Record (7)**

**To:** Anna Walker, President of Student Government, Grant Epstein, VP of Student Government

**From:** Dr. Sally Harmych and Dr. Sarah Aldrich Renner

**Date:** 19 November, 2021

**Subject: Report:** Student Government's Concern with Proactivity in Accommodations and Support for Disabled Students

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**I. Introduction**

This Memorandum Report is written to allay any concerns that student leaders expressed regarding student accommodations and faculty communication.

**II. Student Government Concerns Regarding Proactivity in Accommodations and Support for Disabled Students**

On 24 September, 2021, Student Government President Anna Walker and Student Government Vice-President Grant Epstein with their Steering Committee responded to Memorandum for Record (3), dated 7 September, 2021, from the Faculty Senate Committee for Student Affairs, stating the following:

- A.** "UTSG understands that the granting of accommodations for disabilities is done by the Office of Accessibility and Disability Resources, and notification of accommodations is up to this office and the student. However, the majority of students requesting accommodations submit their accommodation requests/memos prior to or within the first two weeks of the semester. Not all faculty members are equal in their response to such memos. Some faculty members are very prompt in acknowledging the memo and will inform the student of their plan to provide accommodations or ask the student to set up a meeting so that they can discuss in further depth. Other faculty members never acknowledge the memo and are ill-prepared to provide requested accommodations without students sending multiple follow up emails, office hour visits, and reminders before/after class. UTSG asks for consideration of the following: - Faculty should reply to the student when accommodations memos are received to confirm that they have received the memo and understand that they are required to provide the noted accommodations. In this email, faculty should provide information about how they would prefer to communicate further about ensuring that accommodations are met (such as via email, phone call, or meeting) so that it is clear to the student requesting accommodations how their needs will be met over the term. - The time and a half testing accommodation is one of the most common testing accommodations provided at the university. Faculty members should

always have a plan in place to provide this accommodation and include it as part of the syllabus or syllabus day discussion. The details surrounding this accommodation should not be determined within days of an exam (as it often is), as this causes undue stress for students, but rather well in advance of the exam (1+ weeks).”

### **III. Faculty Senate Committee on Student Affairs’ Sub-Committee Takes Action**

On October 25, 2021, the Student Affairs sub-committee on this issue (Drs. Sally Harmych and Sarah Aldrich Renner) wrote to Enjie Hall, Director of the Office of Accessibility and Disability Services.

- A. A meeting was requested with the Office of Accessibility and Disability Services director and assistant director to discuss the current processes for students seeking accommodations, students receiving accommodations, and faculty response to students provided accommodations.
- B. Enjie Hall, Director, and Lisa Yost, Assistant Director, agreed to meet on October 29, 2021, at 11:00 AM to discuss UTSG’s stated issues of concern.

### **IV. Office of Accessibility and Disability Services Provides Insight into Current Process**

On October 29, 2021, Enjie Hall and Lisa Yost (Director and Assistant Director of Accessibility and Disability Services) met with the Student Affairs sub-committee on this issue (Drs. Sally Harmych and Sarah Aldrich Renner). The following discussion and details were provided:

#### **A. Student Process for Seeking Accommodations + Disability Resources:**

- i. Student seeks accommodations, or is referred to office (referrals from prior schools, faculty, or medical personnel); No timeframe is in place for requesting accommodations. Students can contact the office any time during the year to request accommodations.
- ii. Students fill out an online questionnaire regarding previous accommodations and what they think they require.
- iii. Student is asked to provide documentation including a Disability Verification Form. Form provides signature from medical professional and basic information about the disability and potential impact on academics.
- iv. Office of Accessibility and Disability Resources personnel meet to discuss and review all requests (requests reviewed in online DAP system):
  - Student requests reviewed and academic support is decided.
  - Of note, all areas of student experience are reviewed for accommodations.
- v. Student may be eligible for multiple things, but is allowed to select accommodations. Accommodation selections can change semester to semester.

- vi. Once reviewed and approved, the Office of Accessibility and Disability Resources college-specific specialist meets with the student to review the impact on academics and potential barriers and creates a plan.
  - Part of plan sent to faculty in “memo”
- vii. Faculty are notified of accommodations by email memo from automated system

## **B. Faculty and Student Expectations**

### **i. Student:**

1. Advised by Office of Accessibility and Disability Resources to communicate with faculty:
  - a. Support offered by office to help students connect (email examples, plan examples, etc)
2. Students are expected to notify the Office of Accessibility and Disability Resources with any issues related to faculty communication.
3. Students are encouraged to reach out to faculty first.
4. Student Handbook and Portal exist for information.

### **ii. Faculty**

1. Memo acts as notification that accommodations need to be met.
2. Faculty are encouraged to communicate with student if needed regarding accommodations.
3. Recommendation from Office of Accessibility and Disability Resources that student accommodations always be put in place, whether or not the student decides to utilize them on any given activity.
4. Faculty Handbook and Portal exist for information.

## **V. Email Follow-up Sent to the Office of Accessibility and Disability Services to Agree upon Actionable Items Proposed**

On November 8, 2021, an email was sent to the Office of Accessibility and Disability Services proposing actionable items related to meeting discussion: Actionable items included the following:

- A. Add proposed next steps for faculty in memo.
- B. Include links to online system and handbook.
- C. Add proposed next steps for students in memo or email.
- D. Include links to online resources and handbook.
- E. Semester email to all faculty outlining accommodations expectations (memo serves as student request).

## **VI. Office of Accessibility and Disability Services Agrees to the Following Actionable Items:**

- A. Add faculty next steps and link online system and handbook to Spring 2022 Advocacy memos, or send a separate semester email highlighting the information.
- B. Add additional language to student appointments and follow-up emails to ensure expectations for students are outlined.

## **VI. Outlook**

Memos and emails should be updated for Spring semester to improve communication between students and faculty regarding accommodation communications and expectations. *Increased communication and agreed-upon expectations* should improve the student experience.

Cc: Terry Bigioni, Gary Insch, Deborah Coulter-Harris, Diane Miller, Jennifer Hanrahan, Mohamed Samir Hefzy, Shery Milz, Berhane Tecleaimanot, Sally Harmych, Carolyn Lee, Sarah Aldrich, Lucy Duhon

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**Committee Sponsor(s): Faculty committee on Student Affairs + Office of Accessibility and Disability Services**

Speaker of the Senate,

Colleen Palmer

President,

Anna Walker

Date Adopted : \_\_\_\_\_

Date Vetoed : \_\_\_\_\_

