

*Rebellion against your disabilities gets you nowhere.  
Self-pity gets you nowhere.  
One must have the adventurous daring to accept oneself as a bundle of possibilities  
and undertake the most interesting game in the world-  
making the most of one's best.  
-Harry Emerson Fosdick*

## **Student Self-Advocacy**

Students with disabilities often create a unique challenge for faculty. Part of that challenge comes from a lack of understanding of the student and his/her particular needs. Developing basic knowledge of various disabilities helps dispel some of the mystery about how to facilitate students' learning. This understanding is the first step in increasing the comfort level of working with the student to achieve the accommodations and/or modifications needed to meet academic demands.

An equally valuable component in working with students with disabilities is understanding which responsibilities are the student's and which are the teacher's. Often teachers feel they are totally responsible for meeting the needs of all students. This is not true.

### **Postsecondary faculty responsibilities are:**

- To be aware of the laws that provide for students with disabilities in postsecondary school.
- To provide reasonable accommodations to students with diagnosed disabilities.
- To provide a positive environment where students are encouraged to self-advocate.

### **The student's responsibility in postsecondary school is to:**

- Tell the teacher about his/her special needs.
- Know his/her specific needs as they relate to the disability.
- Let the teacher know the kind of accommodations needed to meet academic needs.
- Understand that he/she is responsible for the choices made to learn.
- Ask for help at the beginning of the quarter and not after he/she is failing.
- Bring pertinent information to school to verify the disability as well as background information to help in planning for appropriate support and placement.
- Plan a realistic schedule for home, work and school.
- Set priorities so he/she can meet the demands of school.
- Use an assertive approach to ask for help needed. This means know what the needs are, be respectful and polite, and be patient with other people who are trying to understand and help.

## **Being a Self-Advocate**

As a student with a disability, you become successful when you learn to responsibility for yourself. These responsibilities include:

1. Telling the appropriate person at school that you have a disability. If you do know who to tell, ask the admissions counselor.
2. Knowing your strengths and weaknesses and being able to verbalize them to the appropriate person. Write what you would say about your strengths. Write what you would say about your weaknesses.
3. Using the information you know about your strengths and weaknesses to ask for accommodations in specific areas. Think of an accommodation you will need and write how you would ask for it.
4. Asking for help at the beginning of a class, not after your are failing.
5. Letting the instructor or professor know what assistance you will need in the class. Do not expect the instructor to figure it out for you.
6. Bringing information about your disability to school when you enroll. Know what information you will need to have. It is important to identify yourself early to receive help right away.
7. Planning ahead for the demands of college. Get your financial aid, work schedule, and study time in place. Then when you start school you can concentrate on these new demands.
8. Learn about the legal rights of individuals with disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Knowing your legal rights will help you know what your responsibilities are and what you are entitled to with regards to academic adjustments.