

Date: August 19, 2021

To: Instructors, Chairs and Directors, Associate Deans, and Deans

From: Jill Creighton, Associate Vice President & Dean of Students
Bill Davis, Interim Vice Provost for Academic Engagement and Student
Achievement

Karen Fischer-Director, Dean of Students Office

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Eric Scott, Director, Student Services Center-WSU Vancouver

Michael Sugerman, Vice Chancellor, WSU Global Campus

RE: 2021-2022 Academic Year Student Requests for Alternative Instruction as an
Educational Accommodation

Dear Colleagues,

As we approach the start of the academic year, particularly this fall semester with students returning to in-person classes, we are already starting to receive requests for accommodations for remote or alternative instruction. The Office of the Provost, the Office of the Dean of Students, the Access Center, and Compliance and Civil Rights is sharing the following information and guidelines should you receive a request from a student, or alternatively, if you are contacted by the Access Center on behalf of a student requesting an accommodation.

Summary:

i) Students with disabilities, medical conditions, or pregnancy related needs have a legal right to request auxiliary aids and services, or modification of policies;
ii) the university has an established process to evaluate the reasonableness of such requests; you are required to engage in that interactive process and should not deny an accommodation request outright; and
iii) Instructors should contact Access Center staff, the Office of the Dean of Students, or your department leadership for assistance.

1. Students with disabilities, including immune-compromised students, have the right to request accommodations under certain civil rights laws including the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the university must engage in a good faith effort to determine if these requests are reasonable. If a student informs you that they have a disability or a medical condition and they are requesting a modification to a course or program, or an auxiliary aid or service, you should refer them to the Access Center. For compliance purposes, it is recommended you also contact the Access Center to ensure that your referral is documented.

For more information, contact a Disability Specialist on your home campus:

- [Access Center \(Pullman, Global, Extension, Bremerton, and Everett\)](#)
- [Access Center \(Vancouver\)](#)
- [Access Services \(Spokane\)](#)
- [Access Services \(TriCities and Yakima\)](#)

2. Similarly, students who are pregnant, or who are experiencing pregnancy related needs, have the right to request accommodations under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ("Title IX"). If a student informs you that they are pregnant and they are requesting a modification or an auxiliary aid or services you should refer them to the [Office of the Dean of Students](#); referrals will be routed to the appropriate department on the student's registered home campus.
3. The Access Centers will work with students to recommend accommodations that are reasonably tailored to address the specific needs of the student. Instructors must make a good faith effort to implement appropriate accommodations. Instructors should neither request nor accept medical documentation from students. Inquiring about specific details regarding a student's medical condition or disability is not appropriate.
4. In some specific circumstances, offering online or remote instruction may be considered a reasonable accommodation. Instructors should consult with the Access Center prior to making any changes in instruction modalities.
 - a. In some cases an online or other alternative teaching modality may need to be considered as a reasonable accommodation. If an instructor receives a request for reasonable accommodations from the Access Center, it is important to note that instructors and/or academic departments do not have the authority to unilaterally deny accommodations outright due to a potential fundamental alteration of an essential course or program requirement. These determinations require shared decision making between academic departments, the Access Center, and sometimes other administrators such as the WSU ADA Coordinator.
 - b. The U.S. Department of Education ("DOE") and the courts afford deference to the academic decisions of educational institutions, but they are not absolute and require that we follow appropriate processes (including those in Section 4a) in making these determinations.
 - c. It is important for instructors and academic departments to discuss their concerns with Access Center staff prior to a discussion with the student.
 - d. Instructors and academic departments should be prepared to consider what alternative accommodations may be offered if the student's primary request cannot be implemented.
5. It is prudent for colleges and academic departments to contemplate designating a point of contact for accommodation requests as we may see an increase in

student requests for learning accommodations that are unique or outside the typical context that we have seen in the past due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

6. While exploring access options for students based on their individualized medical condition or disability, it is important to note the following changes in guidance on instructional modality
 - A. Adding remote instruction to a face-to-face course. During the initial stages of the pandemic several federal rules that normally limit universities' ability to offer classes in online or remote modalities were temporarily suspended. With new guidance from medical professionals and the DOE these rules have been reinstated for Fall 2021. Therefore, courses seeking to use remote instruction will need to meet specific criteria for the Fall as outlined in the [Fall Instructional Guide](#) from the Provost's Office.
 - B. WSU provides online courses through the university's designated online unit, WSU Global Campus (WSU Online Programs), which has the infrastructure to ensure that there is the requisite faculty training required for courses to be taught using pedagogy that optimizes learning in an online environment. If a reasonable accommodation includes exploring enrollment options in Global courses, then the following points are important to consider.
 - a) Students should identify if the applicable course is online and whether it has already been scheduled as a blended course on their home campus. For example, in a student's "Class Search and Enroll" under "Additional ways to search" they can select the "Campus" as Pullman and ask for courses with the "Location" as Global Campus. This will give the student a list of Global Campus courses that are already scheduled as blended on the Pullman campus. Some of these courses may be consent required and then they can work with the department to obtain permission to enroll.
 - b) If a student wants to take all of their courses through the Global Campus, for one or two more semesters, but does plan on returning to their physical home campus to graduate, then the student should complete an Intercampus enrollment request through the WSU Registrar's Change of Campus Forms and Requests <https://registrar.wsu.edu/forms-and-requests/>. Before filling out this form students should consult with their advisor to ensure Global Campus has the courses they need to enroll in.
 - c) If a student decides they will not ever be returning to their physical home campus and wants to earn a degree offered through the WSU Global Campus, then the student should complete a Change of Campus request for the Fall semester. The forms for domestic and international students can be accessed through this site <https://registrar.wsu.edu/forms-and-requests/>.
 - d) If a student who is enrolled at their physical home campus identifies that they need 1 or 2 courses offered online or on another physical

campus (e.g. a WSU-Pullman student wants to take 1 or 2 Global Campus courses or a WSU-Pullman student lives in Vancouver and wishes to take a class on the Vancouver campus) then they should submit a Special Enrollment Request through this site <https://registrar.wsu.edu/forms-and-requests/>. These requests will require Advisor approval, Campus approval and Departmental approval. A videoconference or blended section will be created on the student's home campus if approved.

When appropriate as an accommodation, instructors and academic departments may be asked to consider modifying the enrollment limit for online, videoconference, or other alternate modality courses.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and collaboration as we continue to work through this unprecedented time and as we continue to provide high quality educational opportunities accessible to all Cougs