Policy Regarding Students with Disabilities

Keene State College Policies and Procedures

Policy Regarding Students with Disabilities

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Mission

At Keene State College we value diversity in our community, and we accept responsibility to provide access and educational opportunities to students with disabilities. Our mission regarding this population is to achieve an accessible College environment where otherwise qualified students with disabilities have equal opportunity to fully participate in all College programs and activities. Through partnerships with faculty and staff, we seek to create a campus environment where students are viewed on the basis of ability rather than disability. The College complies with the law regarding the civil rights of all students, but more importantly, we embrace the spirit of the law in our actions.

Section 504/ADA

Keene State College recognizes a disability condition as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 under which a person has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities (walking, standing, seeing, speaking, hearing, breathing, learning, taking care of oneself). Under the guidelines of ADA and Section 504 legislation, upon request, the College will make reasonable accommodations to the known physical and mental limitations of otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities.

Office of Disability Services at KSC

In order to provide the best possible service to students with disabilities, Keene State College has an Office of Disability Services (ODS) which facilitates access for students with disabilities. Additionally, the College has an ADA Officer who assists with access issues for the College as a whole and who is available to assist with conflict resolution regarding access and accommodations.

Rights and Responsibilities of Students

Every student with a documented disability has the right to:

- Equal access to courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, and facilities offered at the College;
- Reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services determined on a case-by-case basis;
- Appropriate confidentiality of all information regarding a disability and the choice to whom a disability is disclosed except as required or permitted by law;
- Information, reasonably available in accessible formats.

Every student with a documented disability has the responsibility to:

- Meet qualifications and essential standards as determined by the College for courses, programs, jobs, services, and facilities;
- Identify as an individual with a disability to the Office of Disability Services in a timely manner when seeking an accommodation;
- When seeking accommodations, provide documentation of the disability from an appropriate professional including information about the functional limitations of the disability;
- Follow specific procedures for obtaining reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services;
- Communicate requests for accommodations to instructors by providing a letter of identification describing the reasonable accommodations

recommended by ODS as early in the semester as possible.

Rights and Responsibilities of KSC

Keene State College has the right to:

- Maintain essential standards for courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, and facilities;
- Request current documentation by an appropriate professional and supplied by the student that confirms disability status and supports the need for appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services;
- Deny a request for accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services if documentation does not support a need for the requested service, or if the documentation is not provided in a timely manner;
- Select among equally effective accommodations, academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids and services as judged by the College with consideration for cost and/or availability;
- Deny a request for an inappropriate or unreasonable accommodation, adjustment, and/or auxiliary aid or service including any that poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others, imposes a fundamental alteration to a course or program, or poses an undue financial or administrative burden on the College.

Keene State College has the responsibility to:

- Ensure that College courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, and facilities, when viewed in their entirety, are offered in the most integrated and appropriate settings;
- Provide information regarding policies and procedures to students with disabilities in accessible formats upon request;
- Evaluate students on the basis of their abilities and not their disabilities;
- Provide or arrange reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and auxiliary aids and/or services for students with

disabilities upon request;

- Maintain appropriate confidentiality of records and communication regarding students with disabilities, except where permitted or required by law; Inform students when requested accommodations are not available or beyond the College’s ability to provide.

Admissions

Keene State College seeks a student body that reflects diversity in society. Qualified persons may not, on the basis of disability, be denied admission to, enrollment in, or participation in College programs or activities, or be discriminated against in admissions or recruitment.

Financial Aid

The College will not discriminate against students with disabilities by limiting their eligibility for financial assistance or providing less assistance than to students without documented disabilities. Financial aid will be awarded to qualifying students to the extent permitted by federal guidelines. In addition, appropriate institutional funds will be awarded with respect to the fund guidelines and availability. Student Financial Services approves financial aid eligibility for qualifying students through the equivalent of five years (ten full-time semesters) to complete a four-year baccalaureate degree.

Confidentiality

Documentation and the nature of a student’s disability is confidential information. All copies of documentation of disabilities submitted by the student for the purpose of determining appropriate ADA accommodations must be centrally housed in the Office of Disability Services.

This information is treated as medical documentation and handled under the same rules of confidentiality as other medical information. Information regarding disability gained from medical and/or psychological evaluation will be considered confidential and shared within the institution on a need to know basis only. Unless there is a threat to an individual’s safety and/or emergency

situation, consent of the student will be requested before releasing medical or psychological documentation to a third party.

The Office of Disability Services may also release information with the student's permission on a need to know basis. Circumstances that may warrant such disclosure may include:

- Requests for a course substitution
- Concerns for the student's health
- Special circumstances in housing
- Grievance procedures
- Special financial aid considerations

Documentation

In order to establish eligibility for services, the Office of Disability Services may require documentation that both verifies the existence of disability and provides a rationale for reasonable accommodations. The responsibility and cost of obtaining documentation is borne by the student. If the documentation supplied by the student is insufficient to establish disability or determine appropriate accommodations, the Office of Disability Services will require the student to provide additional documentation at his/her expense.

ADA Grievance Procedure

Students who have a complaint about accommodations provided by Keene State College must attempt to resolve conflicts first by contacting the Director of Disability Services. If the results of this process are unsatisfactory to the student, he or she must contact the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, who is the College 504 and ADA Compliance Officer. An appointment can be arranged by calling 358-2842 or by visiting the Dean of Students Office, Elliot Center, Rm 256.

After a discussion with the Associate Vice President, a student may file an official grievance by submitting a description of the problem and specifically requested accommodation in writing to the Associate Vice President. This

complaint must be filed within 20 working days of the initial meeting with the Associate Vice President.

The Associate Vice President shall investigate the complaint as may be appropriate and make reasonable efforts to resolve the matter. The investigation shall be informal but thorough, affording all interested persons an opportunity to submit evidence or other relevant information. The Associate Vice President shall provide a written response to the student within 20 working days of receipt of the written complaint.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the Associate Vice President, a written appeal stating why the decision is incorrect may be made to the Chief Officer of Diversity and Multiculturalism's Office within 10 working days of receipt of the determination statement from the Associate Vice President. The Chief Officer of Diversity and Multiculturalism or his/her designee shall review the determination of the Associate Vice President and send a written decision to the complainant within 30 days of receipt.

The decision of the Chief Officer of Diversity and Multiculturalism shall be final. Use of this grievance procedure does not limit an individual's pursuit of other remedies, including the right to pursue a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights.