Access and Accommodations for Student-Athletes with Disabilities

Connecting With a Campus Disability Office

- **The disability office website.** Most universities have a disability office/center with website information and steps on how to connect.

- **The process for accessing services.** Each campus may have different/specific requirements and procedures to access services, and may be dependent on the academic calendar and the students they serve. The disability office website is a great place to learn about process basics.

- **Timelines for connection.** Timelines for connecting with a disability office can vary. Some offices may have a one- to two-week delay in obtaining an appointment.

- **Who is served?** Disability offices commonly work with students who have the following disabilities: attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, learning disabilities, autism, blind/low vision, deaf and hard of hearing, psychological disabilities and chronic health conditions (e.g., Crohn's disease, chronic migraines, fibromyalgia).

- **Common accommodations.** Examples of accommodations include extra time for assignments and/or exams, distraction-reduced environment, alternative format materials, note taking and potential flexible attendance and flexible assignment submission when necessary for medical reasons.

- **Processes and responsibilities.** Coordinating accommodations often requires student initiative and active input. Processes and responsibilities will vary based on systems and specific accommodations being used.

- **Confidential process.** Students concerned about confidentiality and what connecting with a disability office may mean (e.g., awareness, information shared) should talk with the disability resource personnel to understand how confidentiality is applied on campus.

NCAA INCLUSION

- **Reasonable accommodations.** Not all accommodation requests are reasonable relative to the disability or the academic experience. The disability office should offer rationale when accommodations are not approved.
- **Disability office liaisons.** Athletics support offices should consider having mutual liaisons with the disability office to facilitate communication and connection between student-athletes and the disability office.

Building Connections Across Campus to Support Student-Athletes With a Disability

- **Who/how:** Academic support centers, academic advisors and counseling centers can serve as a resource for exploring ways to guide disabled athletes. These offices will refer students to the disability office when deemed necessary.
- **Where:** If a student disability organization exists on campus, consider ways in which disabled athletes can be actively involved. These organizations are often proactive in elevating disability awareness and addressing disability issues.
- **Why it's important:** Students with disabilities are students first and foremost. Disability impacts academic experiences differently. At the same time, students with disabilities have other experiences and challenges similar to all students. Awareness of broad-level resources allows staff and coaches to guide students based on specific situations.

How Universal Design Contributes to Access for Everyone

At its core, universal design recognizes that all people learn, process and express differently. Universal design promotes the use of varied strategies for sharing and receiving information that allow individuals to tap into their strengths.

Universal design for instruction is a proactive, educational framework for applying universal design principles to learning environments with a goal toward greater accessibility for everyone.

Broadly, universal design is achieved when processes and experiences offer a variety of means with which to accomplish a goal or a specific outcome.

For instance, requiring all students to meet with a staff member in person could be a barrier for a variety of reasons, especially when phone or video meetings can be easily scheduled.

General Universal Design Strategies

- Students absorb information in various ways (e.g., auditory, visual, hands-on). **Athletics coaches and academic coaches/tutors should offer critical information using different approaches.** Consider when to adapt core content for student-athletes who may not be grasping information in the current format of delivery. For example, offer alternatives to audio and visual information as a general strategy and especially when necessary. **Ask students if the information could be shared in a more effective way.**

- Keep in mind that challenges with learning may be more reflective of the presentation style used than actual difficulty with the content.

- Share critical information in advance. Everyone processes information at different rates, and some need minimal distractions to thoroughly review the information initially. Providing information in advance of a meeting can create more valuable discussions.

- Add appropriate captions on all videos posted on websites or shared for public review.

- Use systems that encourage routine feedback on student performance and communication of expectations.

- Explore with the disability office various software tools (e.g., reading and writing technology) that may benefit students in their academic learning.

Resources

washington.edu/doit/universal-design-process-principles-and-applications

udlguidelines.cast.org/

adainfo.org/hospitality/accessible-meetings-events-conferences-guide/

appliedsportpsych.org/resources/resources-for-coaches/tips-for-including-athletes-with-disabilities/

INCLUSION