

## **SAINT JOSEPH'S COLLEGE OF MAINE**

### **SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:**

#### Specific Learning Disabilities

Saint Joseph's College of Maine is committed to providing equal education opportunity and full participation for persons with disabilities. It is the College's policy that no qualified person be excluded from participating in any College program or activity, be denied the benefits of any College program or activity, or otherwise be subject to discrimination with regard to any college program or activity. Toward this end, and in conjunction with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504, the College both accepts, and provides reasonable accommodations for, qualified students with various types of disabilities.

While the College is ready to provide reasonable accommodations, the students must make an effort to advocate for and avail himself/herself of all services and agreed upon modifications.

#### **PROCEDURES FOR ACCESSING ADA ACCOMMODATIONS:**

Students with disabilities who need accommodations and services must follow these procedures:

- The student contacts the ADA Accommodations Coordinator upon admission to Saint Joseph's College to receive the guidelines for documentation of a disability. The ADA Accommodations Coordinator explains to the student the College's policies and procedures regarding accommodations.
- The student provides current documentation, within 5 years, according to the written guidelines regarding the disability. Documentation should indicate that the impairment is a disability that substantially limits a major life activity. School plans such as an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 Plan are useful but do not provide sufficient documentation to establish the rationale for accommodations. All files and information are confidential. These should be forwarded to the ADA Accommodations Coordinator in a timely manner to allow review prior to the start of school.
- Based on the nature of the disability, according to the documentation, reasonable accommodations are determined by the ADA Accommodations Coordinator. Determination of accommodations is provided to the student in writing.
- The student has the responsibility to inform and provide his/her faculty of any agreed upon accommodation(s) in writing.

### *Guidelines for Documentation of a Specific Learning Disability*

It is the policy and practice of Saint Joseph's College to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and state and local requirements regarding students with disabilities. Under these laws, no qualified individual with a disability shall be denied access to or participation in services, programs, and activities of the College. Academic accommodations are provided to otherwise qualified students with documented learning disabilities so that these students are viewed according to their abilities, not disabilities.

The following guidelines are provided in the interest of assuring that evaluation reports are appropriate to document eligibility on the basis of a learning disability that substantially limits learning. The ADA Accommodations Coordinator is available to consult with diagnosticians regarding any of these guidelines.

1. Testing must be comprehensive. It is not acceptable to administer only one test for the purpose of diagnosis. Minimally, domains to be addressed must include (but not limited to):

**a) Aptitude.** The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised (WAIS-R) with subtest scaled scores is the preferred instrument. The Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-Revised: Tests of Cognitive Ability or the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale: Fourth Edition is acceptable.

**b) Achievement.** Current levels of functioning in reading, mathematics and written language is required. Acceptable instruments include the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-Revised: Test of Achievements: Standard Test of Academic Skills (TASK); Scholastic Abilities Test for Adults; or specific achievement tests such as the test of Written Language-2 (TOWL-2), Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised, or the Stanford Diagnostic Mathematics Test. The Wide Range Achievement Test-Revised is NOT a comprehensive measure of achievement and therefore is not suitable.

**c) Information processing.** Specific area of information processing (e.g. short and long term memory; sequential memory; auditory and visual perception/processing; processing speed) must be assessed. Use of subtests from the WAIS-R or the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Ability is acceptable.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list or to restrict assessment in other pertinent and helpful areas such as vocational interests and aptitudes.

2. Testing must be current. In most cases, this means within the past five years. Since assessment constitutes the basis for determining reasonable accommodations, it is in a student's best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation to serve as the

basis for decision making about a student's current needs for accommodations in a college environment which is academically very competitive.

3. There must be clear and specific evidence and identification of a learning disability. Individual "learning styles" and "learning differences" in and of themselves do not constitute learning disabilities.
4. Test scores/data should be included. This is important since certain College policies and procedures (e.g., petitioning for permission to substitute courses) require actual data to substantiate eligibility.
5. Professionals conducting assessment and rendering diagnoses of specific learning disabilities must be qualified to do so. Trained and certified and/or licensed psychologists, learning disabilities specialists, and educational therapists are typically involved in the process of assessment. Experience in working with an adult population is essential.
6. Evaluators should be able to demonstrate that the selection of assessment instruments is based upon their suitability.
7. Diagnostic reports must include the names and titles of the evaluators as well as the date(s) of testing. The report also must contain the following information:
  - a) Background information on the student and reason for referral, including: current areas of difficulty, medical history, employment history, psychological history, processing abilities, interpersonal skills, education history, family history, developmental history, academic strengths and weaknesses, study skills and work habits, and personal issues.
  - b) A statement concerning the evaluation measures that were used and a brief description of each.
  - c) Information concerning the student's behavior during the assessment including, but not limited to, the following area: attitude toward testing, physical appearance, attention, visual/auditory/motor problems, language, affect/mood, and unusual behaviors/verbalizations.
  - d) An analysis and interpretation of the results of the assessment, including both a narrative explanation and illustrative test scores.
  - e) A summary of the entire assessment process which specifically addresses the concerns raised in the reason for referral and that includes a determination of the presence of a learning disability.

f) **Recommendations which include the student's strengths and weaknesses in order to determine appropriate strategies to assist the student to become a more efficient learner and to be successful in personal career endeavors.** In recommending support services, modifications, or accommodations, it is critical for a diagnostician to identify the areas that are affected by a student's learning disability and to substantiate those conclusions with hard diagnostic data. Diagnosticians also must provide suggestions for specific techniques that would allow the student to be successful in a postsecondary setting.

*All documentation is confidential and should be submitted to:*

Holly Sanborn  
Advising and ADA Accommodations Coordinator

Saint Joseph's College of Maine  
309, Alford Hall  
278 Whites Bridge Road  
Standish, ME 04084-5236

Tel. (207) 893-7562  
Fax (207) 893-7866

Documentation that is submitted must originate with the evaluator(s), and will not be accepted from any other individual, including the student on whom the evaluation was conducted.

These guidelines have been adapted from Brinckerhoff, Shaw & McGuire's text *Promoting Postsecondary Education for Students with Learning Disabilities* (PRO-Ed publishers, Austin, TX 1993), *Consortium on ADHD Documentation* and from a copy of "University of Southern Maine Guidelines for Documentation of a Specific Learning disability".