As we prepare for the end of the spring semester, the Office of Disabilities Services (ODS) would like to introduce our new newsletter, ODS' Universal Access Update. The purpose of this publication is to raise awareness about campus accessibility and disability issues. It is our desire to open the doors for understanding and communication related to how disability affects us all. We will offer tips and strategies for the classroom environment and ways to enhance the academic experience. Our UAUs will be available at our website so this information can be accessed at your convenience.

If there are topics that you would like to read about in the future, or if you have suggestions for the newsletter, please submit those, and we will do our best to cover those issues. If you have a question or a submission for the newsletter, please email ods@pccc.edu.

Remember, there are no dumb questions, besides the one that is not asked! We are here to assist you with the accommodative process.

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The Law Lowdown
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is the civil rights guarantee for persons with disabilities in the United States. Under the ADA, colleges and universities have to provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations and academic adjustments to persons who submit documentation of the disability.

Current federal and state legislation (ADA Amendments Act of 2008, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) states that academically qualified students with disabilities need to be reasonably accommodated in instruction and academic assessment. In order to be eligible for services, students must have a documented disability.

A disability is legally defined as a physical or mental impairment substantially limiting one or more major life activities (e.g.: thinking, concentrating, learning, speaking, seeing, hearing, sitting, breathing, walking or caring for oneself).

Accommodations are intended to provide equal access as required by law; they are not intended to fundamentally alter the course/program or to create an undue financial or administrative burden to the faculty or college.
Promoting equal access is one of Passaic County Community College’s strategic goals, and with the increased diversity of our student body, evaluating how we ensure equal access (universal access) to students is valuable to the educational experience of all the students we serve.

Equal access does not stop with conscientious building design, but reaches into pedagogic philosophy as well. Universal design (UD) addresses the challenges of selecting curriculum and creating a learning environment that is welcoming and beneficial to students of a wide range of abilities and disabilities, learning styles, native languages, size, age and gender, among other characteristics.

The implementation of UD begins with the application of UD strategies to specific classroom activities. Begin by considering the diversity of students you will be instructing and think about how the activities and content of the class will be learned by people of different cultures, learning preferences, and abilities. Allow these considerations to inform your choices as you select and/or create course content, delivery and classroom discussion. If applying the philosophy of UD does not make sense in your class, conceptualize what tools you could supply your students with to optimize their learning experience.

Equal access applies to face-to-face, hybrid and online courses. It also applies to all course content, including making sure textbooks are available in alternate format and that videos are captioned, just to name two. With that in mind, we will bring you simple, proactive UD tips in each issue.

**Accessible and Affordable Textbooks Mandated**

booklook™ ([http://content.efollett.com/HEOA/](http://content.efollett.com/HEOA/)) is Follett’s solution for the Higher Education and Opportunity Act (HEOA) provision of course material information disclosure. The HEOA includes a provision designed to lower the costs of course materials and increase the transparency of their prices. The central features of this new provision are requirements for textbook publishers and institutions of higher education that will provide greater transparency of pricing information at the time faculty members select texts for the classes they teach and when students register for classes.

booklook™ ties directly to PCCC’s online course schedule, leveraging our bookstore and the efollett.com database to display author, title, ISBN and all the information required for full compliance with HEOA legislation at the time registration begins for each semester.

When searching PCCC’s online Credit Course Schedule, look for the blue link at the bottom of the Section Information page:

[Click here for prices of required textbook(s) and supplies](#)

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**Did you know?**

Over 50 million Americans, or 1 in 5 people, or 20% of the U.S. population, are living with at least one disability, and most Americans will experience a disability some time during the course of their lives. [http://m.cdc.gov/ADA](http://m.cdc.gov/ADA)
Universal design is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. –Ron Mace

“The intent of universal design is to simplify life for everyone by making products, communications, and the built environment more usable by as many people as possible at little or no extra cost. Universal design benefits people of all ages and abilities.”

http://www.ncsu.edu/ncsu/design/cud/about_ud/about_ud.htm

UD Quick Tips

There are many methods by which you can begin introducing UD into your day to day instructional routine. *Have lecture outlines available ahead of time for all students. This enables students with or without disabilities to prepare for your class ahead of time, pay closer attention to your lecture, and engage more in the classroom discourse as the skeleton of the notes already exists. *Activate the captions for all videos you watch in class—you do not have to be deaf to benefit from captions. *Don’t use your PCCC Mailcruiser email address? Forward it to the email you do check, this way if students/faculty/staff email your portal account, you will still receive the message! ■

Evolution of Access Symbols

Accessibility → Universal Access

A bit of Da Vinci’s “Vitruvian Man” and the ancient symbol of the ankh make for a more iconic symbol. From http://joeclark.org/access/resources/symbolizing.html ■

P.I.R.A.T.E.S.

Strategic Test-Taking

The University of Kansas’ Center for Research on Learning has researched, developed, and tweaked the Strategic Instruction Model®, or SIM®, over the past 25 years. Their Test-Taking Strategy is an instructional model whereby students learn an effective and efficient way to improve performance on tests through mnemonics and using time wisely.

Students use the mnemonic PIRATES to help them to remember the steps. The mnemonic PIRATES has other mnemonics to further assist the student during the test-taking process. The use of mnemonics, paying attention to instructions, stating an affirmation, rationalizing options, allocating time, guessing, item analysis and evaluation are all skills a student will learn with the Test-Taking Strategy.

An integral part of this strategy is the active role the students take while engaging in the test. It is empowering for students who are test-phobic and/or low achieving. Teaching students a strategy to pass tests is very powerful since passing most courses relies on it. Many students feel passing a test is “out of their hands” and there is nothing they can do. Their fears can be calmed and confidence boosted as they see quick & significant gains in their test scores.

More on all their strategies available at http://www.kucrl.org/sim/strategies.shtml

3-page PDF available on our LibGuide or email us for a copy ■
Universal Access via Assistive Technology

Interpretype®, also known as an ITY™, is a communication system that provides "Universal Access to Conversation." Interpretype is used to make our office more accessible by lowering communication barriers. It levels the playing field when necessary qualities for face-to-face dialog are lacking; such as hearing, speech, or language comprehension. It is easy to use, requiring only basic keyboard skills and the ability to understand a common written language. The Language Translation Program assures language comprehension by translating, in real time, conversations between Spanish or French speaking people and English speaking people. ODS purchased the devices in order to meet new ADAAA communication requirements. The two laptops communicate wirelessly or via USB cable, and are completely portable. Please let us know if you’d like a demo!

Quick Q&A / Scenario

Q: Can students apply for accommodations at any point during the semester?

A: Yes, there is no cut-off date for requesting accommodations, but they are not retroactive. However, accommodations can be negotiated and altered/modified at any point throughout the semester.

Example: A student presents their instructor with a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) for extended testing time on the third day of class. After failing the first test, the student negotiates with the instructor to have the remaining tests broken up by chapter (chapter 5 questions on the 1st page, chapter 6 questions on the 2nd page, etc.)—since this does not fundamentally alter the class, this is a reasonable & appropriate academic accommodation. Also, since most instructors teach subject content sequentially, it makes more sense to test sequentially. The test arranged for the student with disability has essentially been universally designed!

Questions for ODS?
Please email ods@pccc.edu and we may include your question in our next edition of Update!

To reach a disabilities specialist, call 973-684-6395, or email:
Gina Carson gcgarson@pccc.edu
Gayle Eklund geklund@pccc.edu

To reach the office coordinator, call 973-684-5215, or email:
Therese Slusser tslusser@pccc.edu

A wealth of information is available online in three (3) places:

- PCCC webpage – pccc.edu/ods
- Faculty/Staff LibGuide – pccc.libguides.com/access
- Student LibGuide – pccc.libguides.com/dss