

# WHAT FACULTY NEED TO KNOW ABOUT OSWD AND DISABILITY-SUPPORT SERVICES AT GALLAUDET

## 1. SHARING RESPONSIBILITY MAKES EDUCATION ACCESSIBLE

The Office for Students with Disabilities, or “OSWD”, is the Gallaudet unit responsible for documenting students’ disabilities and determining students’ eligibility for reasonable accommodations, with the goal of providing equal access for all students. We do this by coordinating disability accommodations, but also by building collaborations and increasing awareness across campus with faculty and staff.

**Sharing Responsibility** is critical: creating and maintaining student-centered services increases retention and improves academic success.

An **Open and Responsive Approach** on the part of faculty helps students feel comfortable engaging in the accommodation process: stigma is frequently a concern for students with disabilities; sensitivity and confidentiality are a must.

**Maintaining High Standards** is essential: accommodating a disability must never fundamentally alter a program.

## 2. INVITE STUDENTS TO SUCCEED

Many disabilities are hidden, and not every student feels comfortable discussing disabilities with faculty. OSWD suggests that faculty add this statement to their syllabi:

Gallaudet University is committed to providing all students equal access to learning opportunities. The Office for Students with Disabilities (OSWD) is the campus unit that works with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. Students registered with OSWD, who have a letter requesting accommodations, are encouraged to contact the professor prior to the start of the semester. Students who have, or think they may have, a disability such as a psychological disorder, an attention deficit disorder, a learning disability, low vision loss, are deaf-blind, have a physical disability, or a chronic disability, are invited to contact OSWD for confidential guidance and consultation. Students may call 202-250-2059 (VP), or 202-651-5256 (V) or email OSWD at <oswd@gallaudet.edu>. OSWD is located in the Student Academic Center, room 1220. Additional information is available at the OSWD section of the Gallaudet website.

If a student discloses a disability to you and requests an accommodation, you may honor the request but you are not required to. Encourage the student to register with OSWD, who will assess the student's accommodation needs and provide accommodation information to individual faculty via a Faculty Accommodation Letter specifying the student's allowed accommodations. Please remember that all information regarding a student's disabilities must be treated as confidential.

### 3. MAINTAIN AN INCLUSIVE ATMOSPHERE

**Relax:** Disabilities may be obvious or hidden, permanent or temporary, but are always only one of the characteristics that define a person. Students with disabilities will exhibit the same range of characteristics found in the general student population: they will be as smart, funny, talkative, or shy as anyone else.

**Listen:** If an individual experiences a disability that affects communication, listen carefully. If you need to, clarify by asking questions that can be answered by yes or no; don't pretend to understand if you don't. If you can't understand a student, or they can't hear you, try writing responses on paper.

**Be Flexible:** Expect to interact in different ways with different students. Don't be afraid to ask for clarification of what methods will be most effective and most accessible for the student. Don't assume that a student with a disability is less capable or will automatically have certain needs, but let them tell you what they need.

**Be Fair:** Hold all students to the same standards; be clear in terms of expectations.

**Refer:** Any student who discloses a disability to you should have their immediate needs met, but also be referred to OSWD if they aren't already registered. Let students know we offer individualized support in a confidential setting and that we are here to help. Some will not want to engage, but all should be aware they have the option.