LEHMAN COLLEGE | CUNY

PROVOST AND SENIOR
VICE PRESIDENT FOR
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND
STUDENT SUCCESS

Shuster Hall, Room 379          Phone: 718-960-8222
250 Bedford Park Blvd West      Fax: 718-960-8042
Bronx, NY 10468                 www.lehman.edu

TO:        Lehman Students

FROM:      Peter O. Nwosu, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Success

SUBJECT:   **Guidance Memo to Faculty on Disability Services for Students**

DATE:      April 6, 2020

Dear Lehman Faculty,

This memo is designed to provide guidance during this COVID-19 crisis regarding access and equity for those students with disabilities who are enrolled in your classes and are registered with the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS).  OSDS will serve as a key resource to the college community so that we may find equitable solutions for this new learning environment together for all of our students.

The office has been actively working to help students acquire the equipment and software they may need to participate in your classes.  Most students who utilize screen readers or text-to-speech reading software already have these programs installed on their home devices, many with CUNY licenses.  Please refer any students who report that they need disability-related equipment to our office via email at disability.services@lehman.cuny.edu.

Students requesting accommodations who have registered with OSDS should have provided you with a letter from the office.  If they have not, simply ask the student to contact the office, and a Letter of Accommodation will be emailed to the student.  Under the law, students can request accommodations at any point in the semester and if eligible, they are entitled to receive accommodations.  However, if a student identifies to you as a person with a chronic medical issue or disability but is not registered with our office, please advise the student to go to Disability Services to complete an application and submit it to disability.services@lehman.cuny.edu, and the office will follow up.

As we move from classroom instruction to alternate modes of delivery, students with disabilities may encounter different barriers to access. Some accommodations used before may no longer apply in distance learning formats, and some accommodations not considered previously may need to be considered now. Since faculty are using a wide range of platforms to provide remote instruction (e.g., Blackboard, Zoom, email, or simply recording lectures), students' accommodation needs may change as well.  The intersectionality of disability and multiple forms of remote teaching will present new challenges for all.  Each situation will be different, and solutions will vary. We appreciate the faculty's flexibility and collaboration with our staff to meet these accommodation needs. Any student experiencing a disability-related barrier in your course who would like to discuss additional accommodations should contact the Lehman Office of Student Disability Services via email at disability.services@lehman.cuny.edu or phone 718 960-8441.

When implementing disability access in any environment, the best place to start is with the student.   Therefore, we recommend communicating with your student directly.  If you are unable to recall which students in your class receives accommodations, please send a general request to all students reminding those who require accommodations to be in contact with you.   Since disability information is confidential, it is important that this communication occurs privately.  If you determine that the platform you are using presents significant disability-related barriers for your student, please contact our office.  We will work with you.  It is important to remember that even in a distance-learning environment, under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), we are still required to provide equal access to our college's academic programs.

Extended testing time is the most frequently type of accommodation utilized by students and can easily be set up in Blackboard and Zoom.  If you are using Blackboard, go to: EDIT TEST OPTIONS > SCROLL DOWN TO ADD EXCEPTIONS and add the student and desired time for the test. If you have technical difficulties and need assistance setting up the quizzes or exams with extended time please contact Stephen Castellano at the IT Center.  His e-mail address is stephen.castellano@lehman.cuny.edu.  For those using Zoom, check out:   Zoom Accessibility.

The following resources pertaining to disability access may be useful as you implement your distant learning classes:

- Perhaps the best resource for access/technology info in CUNY is the CUNY CATS website. It provides information on making documents accessible, offers training videos for faculty, provides information about accessibility features within platforms, information about how to convert documents, software suggestions and video tutorials CUNY CATS
- Tips on Accessible Learning/Teaching:  Accessibility Features in Blackboard Learn
- Technology in the Classroom and for Online Courses CUNY CATS Technology in the Classroom
- Alternative Text for Students with Disabilities CUNY CATS ALTERNATIVE TEXT
- This article contains valuable information about students who are struggling.  The section on students with disabilities provides two very excellent resources that you can click on directly  Chronicle Article How-to-Help-Struggling Students Succeed Online
- The Office of On-Line education at Lehman College, is an invaluable resource for accessible online course design and delivery utilizing various educational technologies. For more information contact Office of Online Education

The Office of Student Disability (OSD) under the directorship of Merrill Parra is grateful for your efforts in trying to make this new learning environment equitable for all students.  We know that this episode with COVID 19 will eventually pass.  Until then periodically we will be posting additional tips and resources on our OSD website.   As always, we welcome any inquiries and can be reached at disability.services@lehman.cuny.edu.

Please stay well.