Faculty Tip Sheet

NOTE-TAKING SERVICES

Note taking is the single support most frequently used by students with disabilities. Note taking provides students access to course content in a way no other service can duplicate. Students who are blind or who have low vision experience difficulty with writing notes especially if there is board work involved. By using a note taker, the student is able to obtain a copy of class notes.

NOTE TAKING SERVICES

Volunteers

Most note takers are student peers, usually classmates, who provide an NCR copy or photocopy of notes to the student with the disability.

The student with the disability, Disability Services Office, or the professor may recruit the note taker. This process is confidential, and the student with the disability should only be identified to the person agreeing to provide notes.

The note taker may receive training from the Disability Services Office.

More than one note taker may be required, in order to ensure that the student gets class notes in the event of the designated note taker’s absence.

Paid Note Takers

Occasionally, it is not possible to obtain a volunteer note taker. If the professor and student with the disability were unable to locate a volunteer note taker, the Disability Services Office should be contacted immediately so that a note taker can be hired.

A paid note taker may be full or part-time staff. Often the paid note taker is a student worker who previously took the class, did well, and possesses good note taking skills.

Paid note takers often “clean up” notes after class and may convert the notes to an alternate format if needed.

Paid note takers may also function as a reader/scribe for students who are blind or who have low vision. This is most likely to occur in a class that focuses heavily on in-class reading/writing and/or is highly visual in content.

Tips for Creating Better Notes

When writing on the board, speak specifically about what you are writing. For example, say 2+2=4, not “this plus that equals this.”

During class discussions, identify student that you call on by name so that the student who is blind can identify who is speaking.

Provide students who are blind or who have low vision a copy or electronic version of all overheads.

Speak clearly and use transitions to signal topic changes and relationships.

Be sure to leave notes, diagrams, graphs, etc. on the board long enough for the note takers to copy them or provide a handout.

Write numbers and difficult or foreign names and vocabulary on the board.

Write complete assignments on the board, including dates, page and exercise numbers (applicable).

Provide the note taker a copy of all handouts, including syllabi agendas, and assignment sheets.

Some professors may find it convenient and useful to provide a copy of lecture notes to the paid note taker. (Note: These notes should not be copied or distributed without the professor’s permission).

Encourage the use of assistive technology for note taking, when appropriate. Note taking technology includes, but is not limited to, tape recorders, Braille note taking devices, slate and stylus for Braille, low vision aids (such as magnifying devices), and laptop computers.

Encourage students to ask questions if they do not understand or need to have information repeated.

Invite students to meet with you during office hours if there are questions or concerns that are best discussed in private.

References:

Northeast Technical Assistance Center; Rochester Institute of Technology; National Technical Institute for the Deaf
521 Lomb Memorial Drive; Rochester, NY 14623-5604

Lone Star College-Tomball Disability Services
www.lonestar.edu/disability-services