

*They face obstacles,
but their strength of spirit and resolve keeps them on course
to achieving their college education.*

***Listening to
Students with Mobility Limitations***

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Listening to Students with Mobility Limitations...

“Some times its hard to get around when your legs don’t work, but on a big campus I love how fast my wheelchair can go.”

—No student specifics given other than what is stated above

“I do not mind having to get around a large campus.

I do mind being in severe pain at times and holding back any physical reaction because I don’t want anyone to ask me about it.

(I like that) There are lots of places to sit down when I am in pain (sitting down helps)”

—physically impaired due to chronic pain

“It is hard, especially taking notes and getting the help you need.

I think that faculty should be considerate regardless of whether a student has documentation or not. It has happened to me where I have had letters of accommodation and professors wouldn’t allow them. It made it hard to be successful.

Right now I’m working with the 65th Corridor Project (helping at-risk middle school students). I like it. I have also been helping students who struggle with English, and looking into working with students with disabilities.

I like the fact that Sac State is diverse. Also, the first year seminars...I like the fact that you have another class with the same group of students and you get to know them better and that helped me.

I like that I was able to get my accommodations—I’m really grateful for that.

(What don’t I like?) If you were in a car accident, so with temporary disabilities, you might not know about SSWD accommodations available to you.

Maybe sometimes the faculty isn’t there for the students in terms of not being in their office hours, which makes it kind of hard for students to get hold of the teacher.”

—I am a first generation college student, with problems with my hands, especially my dominant hand, so I’ve been struggling

“I was born with spina bifida, but was able to become a gymnast and swimmer with physical therapy. But there are congenital issues in my family... my spine has now almost disintegrated, I have a seizure disorder, a pain disorder, and hereditary angio edema that could be fatal at any moment. I have neck trauma from being an emergency responder at Katrina. It’s a long list (kind of like a rap sheet!). But all of this collectively makes me who I am and makes me appreciate right now.

All together, I just want people to understand that I see all of these things as components that inform the human being that I am, but don’t define me. I like the human being that I am. These things inform that—and there’s freedom in that.

People get the visual, of my wheelchair, and there tend to be assumptions with that. So your response is a broad and friendly smile, and the purpose is to get them to see me as a human being beyond the chair. It’s a good way of connecting as human beings.

It’s been difficult as a disabled student and as a returning student to navigate here. People are silo-ed (sectioned off), and that makes it hard as a disabled student to navigate and obtain resources. Every step along the way has been difficult. Forms, processes, that aren’t accommodating, from admissions, orientation, classroom accessibility. I rolled out of one campus service ... crying because of lack of accessibility.

In class, I’m often denied access to technology because of seating, and then students have to help me each day. Every class there’s an issue with table placement for wheelchairs or tables that are broken. Finally a student came in one day with tools to fix things permanently. But after that, this was replaced with a table from facilities that was worse than the original one.

It feels like it’s past not caring, more like a slight to me because campus people won’t show up.... I don’t like that people here aren’t working together.

I’ve been impressed, enchanted, and empowered by my professors. That’s been terrific—being able to embrace ideas and being supported by them. A lot of them are just so excited and committed about what they do, and so available. I’ve been surprised. It’s been lovely.”

—48 disabled LGBTP

Students with Mobility Limitations

The National Center for Health Statistics reports that 16.3% of adults in the country have a physical functioning difficulty of some type, 40.7 million people.

The Centers for Disease Control states that 13.7% of Americans have a functional disability in mobility, with serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs.

In the realm of higher education, 1.0% of college students reported having a mobility or dexterity disability in the National College Health Assessment by the American College Health Association (Spring 2020).

Mobility impairment may be the result of injury, amputation, or a number of medical conditions, such as Multiple Sclerosis, Cerebral Palsy, Spina Bifida, and Muscular Dystrophy.

Mobility impairments may be permanent or temporary, and involve the upper and/or lower limbs. Students with mobility limitations may have extreme fatigue, muscle coordination problems, muscle weakness, stiffness, spasticity, paralysis, or loss of limb(s) that impairs their mobility. For some, this may result in low or no ability to use arms and/or hands, and for others the use of legs and/or feet. For some, it may be both.

This document will discuss what we can do to better serve students with mobility disabilities of legs and feet and arms and hands.

Here at Sacramento State

Some students' mobility limitations may be such that they are eligible for accommodations as they pursue their higher education. According to the California State University Policy for the Provision of Accommodations and Support Services to Students with Disabilities, one of nine categories of disabilities established for reporting purposes in the California State University system is: "Mobility Limitation: Limitation in locomotion or motor functions that indicates a need for accommodations, support services, or programs."

At Sacramento State, there are 57 students with mobility limitations as a primary disability, according to the Fall 2020 Census, and 166 students whose primary disability included other functional limitations.

Depending on the individual student's eligibility, SSWD accommodations may include: Voice recognition software that converts speech to written text; adjustable workstations, tables, and chairs; adaptive lab equipment and lab assistants; classrooms, labs, and fieldtrips in accessible locations; and tape-recorders, note-takers, readers, and test scribes.

What We Can Do

Students with Mobility Limitations to the Use of Legs or Feet

Students with physical disabilities in the form of loss or limitations to the use of legs or feet may use canes, braces, prosthetics, crutches, walkers, wheelchairs, or motorized carts to go about their daily activities. However, getting around the large college campus and crowded classroom can be especially tough for students who use mobility devices.

In addition to providing all accommodations necessarily for the student with physical disabilities, there are also other things you can do in the classroom setting and beyond for students with mobility limitations.

1. Keep in mind: You shouldn't view the wheelchair or motorized scooter as a confinement. To most of the people who use them, these are their means of freedom, their autonomy and independence, "an enabler not a disabler." Also, many people who use wheelchairs or scooters may walk, but choose not to because their level of pain or fatigue is high and/or their ease of movement is restricted, and a wheelchair or scooter is a far better alternative.
2. Understand that coming into class for the first time or any new location can be a real source of uncertainty for the student, so check that the room is easy for the student to get into and navigate around and, if not, then a request for a room change may be in order.

Make sure a wheelchair accessible desk is available and easy for the student to get to at all times and the pathway is kept clear, with the other students cautioned to not leave their backpacks or other belongings in the aisle way nearby, if need be.

3. Try to make sure that the student's cane, crutches, walker, or wheelchair is within arms' reach if the student sits in a chair in the room, and never move these without permission.
4. Ask the individual if they would like assistance, if you think this may be the case. Your help may well be appreciated, but so would offering assistance first to them, as they are the best judge of what they may need. A well-meaning person may grab an arm to help without realizing an individual with a cane or walking stick may need their arm for balance; may open a door from behind without realizing the individual may be leaning on that door for balance; or may inadvertently tip over a wheel chair or dislodge parts of it in attempting to help out without permission.
5. Understand that students with mobility limitations may be a few minutes late, due to the need to maneuver through crowds, take a circuitous route to class, wait for elevators, and so on. It might be helpful to save important announcements for a little later in the class once the student has arrived or help the student to catch up on key class material missed at a later time.

6. In conversation:

Try to position yourself so that you are at more of an eye-to-eye level with the student in a wheelchair or motorized scooter if you are talking for longer than a minute or so (e.g., find a nearby chair to sit in or lean against something close by).

Don't lean on, touch, or hang over a student's wheelchair or scooter because it is often considered a part of their personal space—a part of them—and, therefore, doing so would typically be viewed as inappropriate unless you have a very close relationship (because you are “in their space”). And prevent others from wanting to use the person's wheel chair to hold such things as drinks and coats, a not uncommon occurrence in the life of a person using a wheelchair.

7. In pair or group work in the room:

Make sure that the student finds a partner or group quickly. It is already awkward enough for most students to look around for a classmate to work with when all of the other students have grouped up, and it can be even worse for the student who can't easily move to find a partner or group.

8. In group projects:

Get them off to a good start by helping groups to build a foundation of support for one another and a structure where individual group member's skills, abilities, traits, and roles in the group are utilized and valued.

For in-class meetings, make sure from the start that the other students move to meet in the location of the room where the student is seated (and this becomes their regular meeting spot) so that the student doesn't have to wait uncertainly. For outside of class meetings, ensure the students arrange to meet at a location accessible to the student.

9. In presentations:

Make sure that the student can navigate to the front of the room freely, can operate any equipment needed for the presentation, such as slides or a clip (or have a fellow classmate or yourself ready to assist), and has what they need in terms of a table close by for notes and perhaps a chair to sit on in the case of students unsteady on their feet and without a wheelchair. Students with some mobility limitations might find it more comfortable or easier to present from wherever they typically sit. Presentations are already nerve-racking enough for most students without the added worry of these types of logistical concerns, so try to discuss with the student ahead of time what they would like.

10. In test situations:

Have any exam accommodations in place for the student:

For on-ground examinations, make tests available for the student in the Testing Center at least five business days before the scheduled exam date for conversion to accessible formats for students with print-related disabilities.

[Testing Center Website](https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/testing-center/) <https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/testing-center/>

Remember that online exams might require creation of extended time for the student, as well. Instructions for how to do so may be found on Canvas.

You might also consider allowing students to turn in exams via electronic mail or disk, which may be helpful to some.

11. In fieldwork or a field trip:

Make sure that the planned destination is easily accessible to the student in terms of transportation to and back from the site and access to the actual building, room, or outside venue. A location without a long distance to traverse from the public transit or parking area to the actual site is ideal for students whose mobility or condition comes with pain or exhaustion, and available benches or seating along the way can help when rests are needed, as well. Be sure to let the student know ahead of time the specifics of where they can enter and sit in the specific venue.

Discuss in advance all aspects of performing the fieldwork or experiencing the field trip in order to anticipate where the student might encounter barriers; implement accommodations and/or make adjustments as needed.

Consider alternative sites or an alternative assignment that meets the course goals, outcomes, and requirements if clear difficulties for the student who has this mobility impairment are likely. This typically would be a last resort, because ideally you want to provide the student as much as possible with the same opportunities given to their classmates, for the student's maximum learning and sense of inclusion in the class.

Students with Mobility or Dexterity Limitations of Hands or Arms

Students with physical disabilities in the form of loss or limitations to the use of arms, hands, and/or fingers may find college work especially difficult. They might find it hard to carry around backpacks, turn the pages of books or handouts, write or type papers, conduct research, handle equipment, or reach out to take papers from you or pass along handouts in the classroom.

In addition to providing all accommodations necessarily for the student's success, there are also other things you can do in the classroom setting and beyond:

1. In written work:

Take into account that for some students, the demands of the keyboard and mouse will be hindered by such conditions as arthritis, carpal tunnel, or decline of fine-motor control. This may impact writing grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Difficulties, as well as pain or exhaustion, could also adversely impact assignment length and quality.

Take into account that the student with low to no ability to write or type will likely be using either a scribe for short written work (often in class) or adaptive speech-to-text software for longer written work, where the student dictates the content into print, using sound commands for punctuation, new paragraphs, and so on. Neither method is fail-safe.

2. In presentations:

Make sure that the student can operate any equipment needed for the presentation, such as slides or a clip (or have a fellow classmate or yourself ready to assist) and has whatever else they might need. Presentations are already nerve-wracking enough for most students without the added worry of these types of logistical concerns, so try to discuss with the student ahead of time what they would like.

3. In test situations:

Have any exam accommodations in place for the student:

For on-ground exams, make tests available for the student in the Testing Center at least five business days before the scheduled exam date for conversion to accessible formats for students with print-related disabilities.

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Remember that online exams might require creation of extended time for the student, as well. Instructions for how to do so may be found on Canvas.

You might also consider allowing students to turn in exams via electronic mail or disk, which may be helpful to some.

4. In fieldwork or field trips:

Anticipate in advance all aspects of performance of the fieldwork or experience of the field trip where the student might encounter barriers; implement accommodations or make adjustments as needed.

Consider alternative sites or an alternative assignment that meets the course goals, outcomes, and requirements if clear difficulties for the student who has this mobility impairment. This typically would be a last resort, because ideally you want to provide the student as much as possible with the same opportunities given to their classmates, for the student's maximum learning and sense of inclusion in the class.

With regard to student accommodations: Please note that students will give professors an official approved accommodation letter from SSWD and at that point those accommodations for the student's disabilities are required. If professors feel any of the accommodations constitute a fundamental alteration of their course, they should consult with SSWD to discuss their concerns and potential alternatives for access.

With regard to the suggestions here for all students with any physical impairment: You might want to remind yourself every single time you are about to enter a classroom or meeting with the student until practices such as these become customary. While some of the suggestions may seem to be primarily common sense, sometimes the things that should be entirely evident can fall to the wayside due precisely to that fact. In the classroom or other situations, it might also be helpful to glance often at the student as a reminder to yourself and a way to double-check that you are doing what you need to make things as conducive to the student's learning needs as possible.

(With appreciation to all who work with students with disabilities on our campus, including Services to Students with Disabilities, for assistance.)

Campus Resources

Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD)—

Offers a wide range of support services to ensure students with disabilities have equal access and opportunity to pursue their educational goals. Application instructions are provided on the website for students with mobility or other physical disabilities, blindness/visual impairment, psychological disorders/cognitive disabilities, learning disabilities, and ADD/ADHD, and students who are deaf/hard of hearing. Services and accommodations for students may include, but are not limited to: specialized educational materials, adaptive equipment, adaptive computer training and use, note-taker services, testing accommodations, consultation with faculty for students with special academic needs, library assistance, disability management advising/counseling, on-campus housing accommodation, and graduate and professional program assistance and information referrals. Students with questions and faculty with inquiries or wanting to make a referral are welcome to contact or come by the office for more information.

Location: Lassen Hall 1008

Phone: (916) 278-6955

[SSWD Website](https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/services-students-disabilities/) <https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/services-students-disabilities/>

Assistive Technology Lab (ATL)—

Provides technological services to students with disabilities referred by SSWD counselors/specialists, including: a lab with alternative access to computers for students with disabilities to work on coursework and a training room for students to receive instruction on the adaptive technology appropriate to the student's disability (such as screen magnification and reading, scan/read programs). The ATL also provides consultation and assistance to faculty to convert course textbooks, syllabi, exams, class web content, slides, and handouts into alternative formatted instructional materials for students (such as Braille).

Phone: (916) 278-7915

ATL Computer Lab: Academic Information Resource Center 2011

ATL Training Lab: Academic Information Resource Center 2010

Maryjane Rees Language, Speech and Hearing Center—

Offers speech, language and hearing services for people with communication challenges and/or cognitive disorders, including but not limited to: hearing loss, reading disorders, speech sound disorders, stuttering, cleft palate, voice disorders, and conditions associated with stroke, brain injury, concussion, progressive disorders, and other neurological impairment. Services are free to all, and those interested may get further information on the website, call, or stop by.

Location: Folsom Hall (7667 Folsom Blvd.) Room 2203 Phone: (916) 278-6601

[Center Website](https://www.csus.edu/college/health-human-services/community-services/language-speech-hearing-center.html) <https://www.csus.edu/college/health-human-services/community-services/language-speech-hearing-center.html>

TRiO Student Support Services Program (through SSWD)—

Provides to students with disabilities, who meet TRiO eligibility requirements and are in need of academic support to better stay and succeed in college, services that include: supplemental instruction, tutoring, adaptive equipment, readers, note-takers, proctors and test arrangements, specialized instruction materials, individualized counseling, transition coaching, assistance with graduate school admission, and more.

Location: Lassen Hall 1008

Phone: (916) 278-6955

[TRiO Website](https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/services-students-disabilities/student-resources.html) <https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/services-students-disabilities/student-resources.html>

Counseling (Student Health and Counseling Services)—

Helps students to cope with such things as stress, academic difficulties, cultural adjustment, relationship issues, anxiety, depression, bereavement, post-traumatic symptoms, questioning sexuality and coming out, eating disorders, addiction and alcohol abuse. The privacy and confidentiality of all who use Counseling Services is maintained fully within the bounds of law and professional ethics.

Location of Counseling Services: The WELL, Second Floor

Phone: (916) 278-6461

Location of Urgent Care Clinic: The WELL, First Floor

[Counseling Services Website](https://www.csus.edu/student-life/health-counseling/counseling/) <https://www.csus.edu/student-life/health-counseling/counseling/>

Students in an immediate crisis should contact 911 or the Suicide Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

Students with urgent concerns who would like to see someone right away may walk in to receive counseling at the Urgent Care Clinic (WELL, First Floor) any time during its hours of operation or call to speak with the After Hours Nurse at: (916) 278-6461.

Students who want to receive counseling or explore if counseling is right for them may schedule an appointment by calling or coming in Counseling Services, or going online through the Patient Portal. This typically begins with a consultation appointment, where the student can talk about their concerns and receive support and feedback. Many students find that they feel better and their needs are met in just one session. Students who want to continue counseling may choose individual counseling in follow-up single session appointments (to meet their needs in the moment) or short-term individual therapy (more than one session with the same mental health clinician). Students may also join group therapy (with five to ten other students).