

MOBILITY IMPAIRMENT

There are a variety of mobility impairments. Diseases such as Multiple Sclerosis, Muscular Dystrophy, Cerebral Palsy, birth disorders, and accidents are generally responsible for these disabilities.

Access is one of the major concerns of the student who uses a wheelchair or crutches. The student must learn routes to and from classes and across campus that do not present barriers. A barrier may be a stair, a curb, a narrow walkway, a heavy door, an elevator door that has no delay mechanism or one that is too fast, a vehicle blocking a curb cut or a ramp, a sign in the middle of what would otherwise be a wide enough walkway, etc.. Hence, faculty should be aware that mobility impaired students sometimes encounter unavoidable situations that may cause them to be late or absent from class. They require more travel time between classes; they are dependent on slow, busy elevators and indirect but accessible travel routes; and they can't run to make up for lost time when an earlier class runs overtime. Your understanding and willingness to make allowances when these circumstances arise are appreciated.

Classrooms and all course equipment must be accessible to these students. If any course includes travel to other locations, that must also be accessible.

It is not unusual for students with mobility limitations to be hospitalized more than others. DRS will try to arrange notetakers, test proctoring, and/or act as a liaison if the student has to miss class.

It is difficult to make generalizations about the classroom needs of students who use wheelchairs or crutches. The student should make an appointment with you to discuss possible accommodations privately. At that time, the student can explain appropriate services DRS offers and the proper procedures and responsibilities.

Additional guidelines to consider while working with a physically disabled student:

1. Most students who use wheelchairs will ask for assistance if they need it. Do not assume automatically that assistance is required. Offer assistance if you wish, but do not insist, and accept a "No, thank you" graciously.
2. A wheelchair is part of the person's body space. Do not automatically hang or lean on the chair--it is similar to hanging or leaning on the person.
3. Students are not "confined" to wheelchairs. They often transfer to automobiles and to furniture. Some people who use wheelchairs can walk with the aid of canes, braces, crutches, or walkers. Using a wheelchair may be a means to conserve energy or move about more quickly.
4. If a classroom or faculty office is inaccessible, it will be necessary to find an accessible location or alternate class section that is held in an accessible location.

5. Those students who may not be able to participate in a laboratory class without an assistant should be allowed to benefit from the actual lab work to the fullest extent. The student can give all instructions to an assistant from what chemical to add, to what type of test tube to use, to where to dispose of used chemicals. The student will learn everything except the physical manipulation of the project.