

To: Online Learning Faculty
From: Dr. Jeremy Haefner, Provost

Subject: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, reaffirmed by the 1992 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), was created to protect the rights of people with disabilities. Section 504 of the Act specifically applies to colleges and universities. As well as requiring reasonable accommodations such as alternative testing methods and extended testing time, these Acts have a direct impact on the use of materials, media and technologies for online learning courses, particularly with respect to our deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

1. All online course materials and media with an audio component must be either captioned or transcribed before they are assigned (usually before the start of classes) to provide reasonable accommodation for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Since you may not know whether you have a deaf or hard-of-hearing student enrolled in your class until the end of the Drop/Add period, you should select and develop accessible materials when you design your course.

2. Reasonable accommodations for deaf and hard-of-hearing students do not currently exist when synchronous audio communication technologies are used within a course. Online Learning telephone conferencing systems, for example, must not be used when deaf and hard-of-hearing students are registered in a course, even when student participation is not required. In addition, internet live audio systems (e.g. Second Life and Adobe Connect) cannot be used in courses with deaf or hard-of-hearing students unless arrangements for accessibility are made with the Online Learning department. These systems usually include a text-based chat component that does provide equal access for all students. The Staff in Online Learning can assist you in exploring this and other accessible alternatives (call 475-5089 for more information).

For more information about the Act and its implications for education, you may want to consult:

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[American With Disabilities Act \(ADA\) Information](#)
[ADA: Nondiscrimination in Higher Education. What's the Law?](#)

