Students Rights and Responsibilities:
Disabilities and Section 504

Congress passed Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act in 1973. It is a civil rights statute designed to prevent discrimination against individuals with disabilities. It provides that, no otherwise qualified individual with disabilities in the United States shall, solely by reason of his/her disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. 29USC§794.

Bergen Community College, as an institution that receives federal funding, must comply with Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act by providing reasonable accommodations to all eligible students. The burden of proving whether an accommodation is considered unreasonable rests on the institution. This means that at Bergen, our top priority is to ensure that you have the accommodations necessary to be able to have an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from all programs offered by the College.

How does this apply to you?
If you are someone who: (1) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits a major life activity; (2) has a record or history of such an impairment; or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment, you qualify for accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

What are major life activities?
Well, think of anything that you may do or are not able to do comfortably or clearly on a daily basis. Major life activities include thinking, eating, sleeping, walking, talking, hearing, seeing, breathing, speaking, working, learning, caring for oneself, and performing manual tasks.

What about academic adjustments?
An institution of higher education must provide a student academic adjustments to ensure that she or he receives an equal opportunity to participate. Examples of academic adjustments may include (1) additional time to complete tests, course work, or graduation; (2) adaptation of course instruction; (3) tape recording of classes; (4) modification of test-taking and performance evaluations so as not to discriminate against students with sensory, manual or speaking impairments.
Bergen Community College’s priority deadline for Financial Aid applications for the 2013-2014 Academic Year is March 15, 2013. You may always apply after March 15, 2013, however, meeting the March 15 priority deadline allows enough time for your financial aid application to be:

1. Received by the federal government.
2. Sent to Bergen Community College’s Financial Aid Office by the federal government.
3. Evaluated by the Financial Aid Office.
4. Verified if your application is selected at random by the federal government.
5. Put on hold should there be additional documentation required by the federal government.
6. Completed, finalized, and posted to your account.

For assistance with financial aid, find the Financial Aid Doctor every Wednesday from 12 to 2 p.m. at the Student Center on the Paramus Campus. You must bring 2012 Tax Returns.

See the Calendar of Events section for Financial Aid Workshop information.

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Kayla Marquee Williams

Kayla Marquee Williams, of Englewood, is a second semester SGA Senator and chair of the SGA NJ Transit Committee.

I am a General Education and Natural Sciences major with a goal of becoming a veterinarian. I am a NJ Stars student who is dedicated to working in many areas on campus.

I work as a Trailblazer for the Admissions Office and am also the Treasurer of the Music Interactive Club.

The SGA Senator Retreat has been the most impactful Bergen experience because it helped me build character, meet new people and learn more about myself.

As committee chair, I hope to help NJ Transit have clearer and more open communication with Bergen and to uncover better ways to get students to class on time.

My advice to students is that “there is always someone here (at Bergen) to help you. You are not alone.”

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Why Attend Bergen?

It’s simple. Bergen provides high quality and affordable education with plenty of opportunities for student engagement through campus activities and student organizations. At Bergen each student is an individual, not a number. That’s the Bergen advantage. Call Admissions and Recruitment at 201-447-7200 to become a member of the Bergen community.
(unless such skills are the factors the test purports to measure); and (5) classroom and room changes.

An institution of higher education also must provide auxiliary aids and services to persons with disabilities such as: (1) qualified interpreters, notetakers, computer-aided transcription services, written materials, assistive listening systems, closed-caption decoders, open- and closed-captioning TDDs; (2) readers, taped texts, audio recordings, large-print and brained materials; and (3) acquisition or modification of equipment.

What is not required of institutions such as Bergen Community College?
An institution of higher education does not have to provide accommodations that would be considered of personal use. For instance, personal aides are to be afforded by the student. An FM Amplifier may be provided by the institution, but the FM Amplifier’s headphones must be purchased by the student. Accommodations become effective from the moment students give professors their accommodation forms—an accommodation is not retroactive. This means that if the student decides to provide his or her accommodation form the day of the final exam, the accommodation would only apply to the final exam and not to the tests, quizzes, and assignments given prior to the final.

What to do if you have or believe you have a disability?
To learn more about the services offered or to request accommodations, contact the Office of Specialized Services (OSS) at 201-612-5269. Students must provide documentation of their disability—for specific documentation criteria please visit the OSS website at: www.bergen.edu/oss.