



THE OFFICE OF SPECIAL SUPPORT SERVICES POLICIES & PROCEDURES

I. Statement of Purpose

The purpose of The Office of Special Support Services at Truett McConnell University is to provide prospective students, enrolled students, their families, administration, faculty, and staff with information regarding the following:

- (a) The University's policy regarding reasonable accommodation of students and employees with disabilities, and
- (b) The manner in which the institution will comply with federal and state laws such as the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and relevant sections of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

This office will act as a disabilities advocate; counsel students and their families of the University's policies related to disabilities; and counsel the institution's personnel of the legal rights and responsibilities of the University.

The Director of Special Support Services provides services and counsel related to such issues as the rights of disabled prospective students and their families. The rights of currently enrolled disabled students and their families, and the rights of applicants for employment with the University and of current University employees in relation to the institution's obligation to provide "reasonable accommodations" for their disabilities are addressed through Special Support Services.

The Office of Special Support Services also provides services and counsel related to the legal policy requirements for the institution in matters of Special Support Services for students and employees, as well as other topics—either directly or tangentially linked to disability issues—to the administration, faculty, staff, and students.

II. Administrative Design

1. The Office of Special Support Services is comprised of Special Support Services and Special Support Services Representatives.
2. The Director of the Office of Special Support Services is under the direct supervision of the Vice President for Academic Services.
3. The Director of Special Support Services insures policy and procedure coordination with the Vice President of Academic Services.

III. Policies

It is the policy of Truett McConnell University to provide reasonable accommodations for disabilities to all students and employees with disabilities. The accommodations will be provided in such a manner that will not impose an “undue hardship” on the institution. A reasonable accommodation that creates an “undue hardship” for the University is an action, policy, procedure, and an institutional expenditure that is not required by federal law. Truett McConnell University is under no obligation to provide reasonable accommodations unless an individual identifies him/herself as having a disability and provides the necessary documentation of the disability. An advisory committee will approve or disapprove all of the accommodations requested and the documentation presented by the individual with a disability. Truett McConnell University reserves the right to request additional medical or disability information if the University feels that the current information is invalid or insufficient. All information relevant to a disability issue is considered confidential. Records related to student and employee’s disabilities will be maintained in a locked fireproof cabinet, in a secure, non-public area.

A. Students

1. The admission requirements for students with disabilities are the same as those for all other students. The requirements are outlined in the Truett McConnell University Catalog. The college does accept ACT and SAT scores given under special circumstances (i.e., oral or extended time).
2. It is the responsibility of the student to inform the Office of Special Support Services of disability concerns and accommodation issues. If the Office of Special Support Services is not aware of the student’s disability issue(s), the office cannot make appropriate arrangements and is not liable.
3. Reasonable accommodations will be provided upon receipt of documentation.

4. A request for changes in accommodations must be submitted in writing to the Office of Special Support Services and approved by the Special Support Services Committee.
5. The student with a disability will participate in an intake interview with the Director of Special Support Services to discuss the purpose of the program and the student's obligations and responsibilities as a recipient of services. The interviews will be held prior to the academic term. For those students who disclose after initial enrollment, interviews will be held as soon as possible.
6. Various reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with disabilities through the Office of Special Support Services. These various accommodations will be provided on a case-by-case basis.
7. Students requiring accommodations, academic waivers, and various services through the Office of Special Support Services must notify the office three (3) weeks prior to every new semester. The Office of Special Support Services is not responsible for knowing if a student is returning every semester.
8. The student is responsible for informing the Office of Special Support Services of his/her class schedule three (3) weeks prior to every semester. This is to ensure that appropriate arrangements and accommodations are available before the beginning of classes.
9. Students requesting an academic waiver must submit the request in writing and explain in detail the reason for the request. An academic committee will approve or disapprove the request.
10. Students with disabilities needing accommodations for an exam must notify their professor five (5) days prior to the exam.
11. All psychological and disability information pertaining to students with disabilities is considered confidential and will be housed in a secure, locked, fireproof facility in the Office of Special Support Services.
12. If a student allows his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) to be in attendance during the intake interview, a release must be signed by student and parent(s)/guardian(s). The information discussed in the interview is confidential, therefore, students must approve of their parent(s)/guardian(s) being present.
13. Accommodations in registration may be possible, provided documentation is submitted and approved by the Special Support Services Committee.

B. Employees

1. Reasonable accommodations will be provided for employees with disabilities. A committee will review an accommodation request from an employee with a disability before an accommodation is granted. The committee will approve or disapprove of the accommodation made by the employee.
2. It is the responsibility of the employee to inform the Office of Special Support Services of disability concerns and accommodation issues. If the Office of Special Support Services is not aware of the employee's disability issue(s), the office cannot make appropriate arrangements and is not held liable.
3. Reasonable accommodations will be provided for employees with disabilities upon appropriate documentation of disability and the need for accommodation(s).
4. New employees with disabilities requesting accommodations must notify the Office of Special Support Services as soon as employment begins. Current employees with disabilities should also notify the Office of Special Support Services as soon as possible. A committee will approve accommodations requested from the employee.
5. All psychological and disability information pertaining to employees with disabilities is considered confidential and will be housed in a locked fireproof cabinet in the Office of Special Support Services.

C. Applicants

1. Pre-employment: An applicant is not required to participate in a medical examination unless it is job-related and only after an offer of employment. Should such an examination be required for all employees, the information obtained will be confidential and kept in separate files.
2. Applicants will not be subjected to inquiries concerning a disability or the severity of the disability.

D. Reporting Disability

1. Instructors, administration, and staff should report disability disclosures made from students on an informal basis and also indicate students who are experiencing difficulty in achieving academic success to the Office of Special Support Services. Employees should not assume that a student has a disability or instruct them to seek testing.

2. The Office of Special Support Services will not provide testing for students. However, a list of licensed physicians and licensed psychologists in the area will be available. The list is not a recommendation or a referral by the University, but a list of professionals that students may choose.
3. Once students or employees with disabilities have appropriately disclosed information about their disability, this information will not be released to other employees or students. The only person aware of the information will be those who serve on the committee that reviews the case.

E. Documentation of Disability

1. Documentation must be prepared by a professional qualified to diagnose disabilities. Such professionals include the following: certified or licensed physicians; psychologists; a team of licensed psychologists or vocational evaluators; or a school psychologist. If initial documentation presented does not verify a student's disability, the student's original documentation may be subjected to further verification.
2. Documentation must include the testing procedures followed, instruments used, test results, and interpretation of the results.
3. If an academic waiver is requested, documentation from a qualified professional (outlined in D1) specifying recommended academic accommodations must be provided along with the eligibility for academic accommodations forms.
4. Documentation must be dated no more than three (3) years prior to the student's matriculation. Documentation for former students being readmitted to the University must be dated no more than two (2) years prior to matriculation.
5. Documentation should include the results of an assessment of intellectual functioning, test of psychological/cognitive process, and other instruments used to determine attention, learning, and other cognitive disorders.
6. A list of current medication(s) should be documented.
7. Additional testing may be required as determined by the committee reviewing the information.

F. Miscellaneous

1. Facilities and buildings located on all of the various campuses will be evaluated by the Director of Special Support Services and other administrative personnel to determine architectural barriers. Once the physical obstacles that limit the accessibility for persons with disabilities have been identified, a transition plan will be implemented. This plan will give a detailed description of methods used to make facilities accessible and the steps used to achieve this transition.
2. The transition plan will be updated continually to reflect institutional progress in completing modifications to its campuses.
3. Instructors refusing to accommodate a student with a disability must present a legitimate reason for denying the student's request. A committee will determine if the reason is sufficient enough for denying the student's request.

IV. Procedures

A. Students

1. The admissions office will enclose a disclosure form to new students with their acceptance letter. The student will complete the form and return it to the Office of Special Support Services. Students currently enrolled at the University will obtain the same disclosure form from the Office of Special Support Services and return it once it is completed.
2. Once the letter has been returned, a meeting will be arranged in order to discuss the process of the program and services that are offered.
3. Students requesting an academic waiver will complete an eligibility request for academic accommodations form and return it to the Office of Special Support Services. Students will also need academic recommendations from a qualified professional.
4. The committee responsible for reviewing academic waivers will examine the documentation from the professional and make a decision on the request. After the decision has been made, the student will be notified of the results.

Employees

1. Employees with disabilities will inform the Office of Special Support Services of their disability.
2. After notification, the Office of Special Support Services will provide the employee with a disability disclosure form and a reasonable accommodations request form to complete. After the forms have been completed, a committee will determine if the accommodations are reasonable.

C. Re-admittance of Students with Academic Dismissal

1. The student is required to submit a letter to the Vice President for Academic Services outlining the reasons why they should be re-admitted.
2. If the letter includes reasons pertaining to some form of disability or handicap, the letter is sent to the Director of Special Support Services.
3. The Director sets up an interview with the student. The student must meet all requirements and be admitted into the program.
4. Once the student has a documented condition(s) warranting the need for Special Support Services, the Director will make a recommendation on re-admittance in writing to the Vice President for Academic Services.
5. If the student is readmitted to the University, a contractual agreement must be signed by the student before they can register.