

### **Characteristics of Disability in the Writing Classroom**

*The writing classroom may present specific challenges to students with disabilities or disabling conditions. The following is a generalized list common issues and needs that may arise for these students. For more information, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (415) 422-2613.*

#### **Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD)**

- Difficulty organizing thought: priority, sequence
- Difficulty with thesis statements/main idea, need specific examples
- May have difficulty staying with original thesis
- May have difficulty criticizing/workshopping peers
- Need structured, consistent assignments with deadlines

#### **Psychological Disabilities**

- Need structured, consistent assignments
- Difficulty deviating from syllabus expectations
- Need balanced criticism, specific examples toward revision
- May have difficulty with consistent attendance—but place limits
- Difficulty interacting with peers, or giving/receiving constructive feedback
- Motivation—What to write about?

#### **Chronic Health Impairments**

- May have difficulty with consistent attendance due to sporadic health changes
- May need assignment deadline flexibility
- Medication and treatment schedules may alter attention and energy level

#### **Vision Impairments** (*see also, "Tips for Working with Visually Impaired Students"*)

- May need document conversion, use of assistive technology in classroom
- Particular attention paid to oral instruction/directives
- Group work/feedback must be made accessible to all group members
- Attention paid to right to confidentiality in giving feedback to peers

#### **Permanent and Temporary Physical Disabilities**

- May have difficulty with attendance or tardiness due to environmental barriers and transportation needs
- May need flexible deadlines when injury is new/unexpected
- May need to work with assistive technology, or a scribe or typist
- Class relocation may need to be considered

### **Hearing Impairments**

- May use assistance in the classroom: sign language interpreters, realtime captioning, assistive listening devices
- May have difficulty with English writing and grammar, specifically: understanding the connection between sound and writing/aural flow
- Misinterpretations of colloquialisms and social savvy in writing
- May have difficulty interacting with peers in feedback sessions

### **Learning Disabilities**

- Freezing up when trying to write
- Difficulty planning a topic and organizing thoughts on paper
- Difficulty with sentence structure (e.g., incomplete sentences, run-ons, poor use of grammar, missing inflectional grammar)
- Frequent spelling errors (e.g. omissions, substitutions, transpositions) especially in specialized and foreign language vocabulary
- Tendency to focus on specific parts of the paper instead of the overall picture and how each part relates to the whole
- “Perfect draft” syndrome
- Difficulty proofreading written work and making revisions
- Compositions are often limited in length
- Slow written production
- Poor penmanship
- Inability to copy accurately from the chalkboard