Requesting Accommodations Letters

Each semester, students must provide advance notice to instructors of the accommodations needed in each course. Upon request from you, SDS will prepare letters that detail accommodations that have been approved for you and that you need to receive. You are responsible for delivering those letters to your instructors.

Using the online request form is the most efficient method for requesting letters. If you add courses after an initial letter request is submitted, an additional request must be submitted.

Your SDS Counselor may want to meet with you to discuss specific accommodation requests.

To ensure that accommodations will be in place throughout the semester, you should meet with your professors within the first two weeks of classes.

The following steps outline the process for requesting classroom accommodations:

1. If you are new to Cornell, call SDS at 607-254-4545 to schedule an appointment to meet with a SDS counselor, otherwise:

2. Complete a “Request for Accommodations Letter” form, preferably online at: http://sds.cornell.edu/sdsregistration.php. This form can also be filled out at the SDS office.

3. Your individualized letters will be available for pick up two business days after you submit the form in item 2 above.

4. Within the first two weeks of the semester, meet privately with instructors (or their designated representatives), give them the accommodation letter pertaining to their course, and discuss the specific arrangements for your classroom accommodations.

Please contact SDS immediately if you have concerns about the accommodation process or about the administration of an exam.
Important Dates:

August 21, 2015
SDS Orientation 3-4pm
RPCC 103/105

August 25, 2015
Classes begin

September 7, 2015
Labor Day Holiday - No classes

September 8, 2015
Add Period Ends

October 10-13, 2015
Fall Break

October 20, 2015
Drop period ends

November 25-29, 2015
Thanksgiving Break

December 4, 2015
Last day of classes

December 5-8, 2015
Study period

December 9-12, 2015
Final exams

December 13, 2015
Study day

December 14-17, 2015
Final exams

December 19, 2015
Winter Commencement

Letter from the Director

Dear Students,

Welcome to the 2015-16 academic year.

This summer our country has been celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA is one of several important civil rights laws that guarantee full participation in education and society for individuals with disabilities. It is important to take note of the advancements in civil rights that have occurred because of the ADA. Erin Sember-Chase outlines many of these in her newsletter article on page 6.

The rich history of the disability rights movement is not as well-known as that of other civil rights movements. Grass roots activism has played a key role in advancements in inclusion and in the passage of disability rights laws. Many times this activism took shape at a local level as parents fought for mainstream education for their children, people with disabilities demanded access to transportation and communication services and activists with and without disabilities protested for implementation of disability laws.

Student activism has improved access and inclusion in higher education. At Cornell, there are several groups that provide support and education about disability awareness issues. The Cornell University Deaf Awareness Project has an initiative to add American sign-language to the curriculum. The Cornell Union for Disabilities Awareness has raised consciousness among students, faculty, and staff about physical and attitudinal barriers to full participation. The Crohn’s and Colitis Support Group has both an educational component and mission to connect individuals with these conditions to others on campus as a means of support. Cornell Minds Matter is an active group that educates and offers support for maximizing good mental health.

Many college students live with disabilities in isolation. By reaching out to others and sharing this part of your identity, you may be surprised to find students, faculty and staff who have similar experiences. You will find groups on campus that are working to educate about disability awareness and making a real difference in creating a community of respect and inclusion. Being open about your disability may seem like a risk but the benefit is enabling others to understand you, to understand the lived experience of having disability and potentially cultivate the development of more allies for inclusion.

Wishing you a great semester.

Kappy Fahey
Welcome to New SDS Assistant Directors

We are excited to welcome Erin Sember-Chase as a new Assistant Director! Erin is looking forward to working directly with students as they navigate their college experience. She is also excited to partner with other Cornell offices, faculty, and staff to increase Cornell’s inclusion of people with disabilities.

Erin transitioned to our office from the ILR Employment and Disability Institute (EDI) in March. At EDI, she provided information assistance and training on the Americans with Disabilities Act to a large variety of people beyond Cornell. She co-taught Disability Studies classes in the ILR School. Before EDI, she served as a Residential Special Programs Administrator with Residential Programs and worked closely with the Prefreshman Summer Program. She has previously served as Residence Hall Director at both Cornell University and Alfred University.

During her time at Cornell, Erin has watched the immersion of disability into the broader diversity discussions, particularly through her role as advisor to the Cornell Union for Disability Awareness (CUDA). She is excited that increasingly, faculty and staff are considering disability access in their course and program design. Erin hopes that we will all look at how far we have come in over the past few years and use that progress to motivate and guide us to continue making physical and attitudinal improvements around disability access and inclusion.

Erin explained, “I have a hearing disability. I also have a physical difference that has presented a unique set of challenges.” While she recognizes that every person with a disability has their own unique experience, she hopes that she can share with students the perspective that she gained from having once been a college student with a disability herself.

Written by Jordan Berger ‘17

A warm welcome to Beth O’Connell who joined the SDS staff as an Assistant Director on July 1st. Beth has been working with incoming students over the summer with their registration for disability services and is very eager for the fall semester to begin.

Most recently, Beth worked in Student Accessibility Services at Ithaca College. She also worked in Rochester area high schools as a mental health consultant for three years. She has a Master of Science degree in Counseling and has had several other positions in the field of education. She enjoys working in disability services because she able to work with students to help them identify their learning strengths as the work to achieve their academic goals. Beth also enjoys partnering with faculty on exploring effective learning strategies for students with disabilities.

Of particular interest to Beth is working with new students in making a successful transition from high school to college. She prefers to connect with students before they arrive on campus, so that they are informed about how to access the resources available to them before their classes even begin. She will be working closely with students with mental health conditions, learning disabilities, and ADHD with implementing appropriate accommodations as well as identifying resources on campus that will assist students in achieving their academics goals.

Written by Yejeong Choi ‘16
The Division of Infrastructure Property and Planning has been hard at work to make sure that Cornell is an inclusive campus for individuals with disabilities. Andrea Haenlin-Mott, the ADA Coordinator for Infrastructure Properties and Planning, informed us about a few of the many access projects around campus that will be happening before the fall semester.

Over the summer, work will be taking place in Sage Chapel to build a new accessible bathroom on the main level. The bathrooms were previously located in the basement but will be moved to a repurposed custodial closet on the ground floor. This project will be completed in September.

A new path of travel into Uris library will be under construction this summer. Individuals who are unable to use stairs will be given ID proximity access outside of the computer lab to the library. This new system will allow students, faculty and staff to have independent access to the library without having to buzz in or ask to leave the building. Please contact your SDS Counselor if you need proximity access to Uris.

The Tower Road entrance to the Plant Sciences Building has been improved as well as the sidewalk near Minns Garden.

Work is being done by Facilities Services to add additional single user universal restrooms. Single use bathrooms improve access for individuals with disabilities as well as being available to anyone in the community. The restrooms are located in Gutterman Lab, the Biotechnology Building, Uris Library, Emerson Hall, and Barton Hall Olin Library among other buildings.

More projects that are in the planning stages include additional accessible pathways and ramps on the Arts Quad, accessible seating on the crescent side of Schoellkopf Field’s bleachers and an accessible entrance to Risley Dining Hall.

Assistive Listening Devices have been added to several lecture halls and signs identifying the devices have been installed.

While there are still many places on campus that have access challenges, Haenlin-Mott establishes a list of projects each year to improve access to our physical campus.

If you would like to learn more about the Infrastructure Properties and Planning department at Cornell, visit their website: www.fs.cornell.edu/

*Written by Rebecca Mosner ’17*
As you gear up for your sophomore, junior, or senior year, you may be thinking about taking the 2015 spring semester or summer term to leave the Cornell campus and venture overseas for a study abroad, or international service learning or internship experience. Cornell values international experiences greatly. In fact, in 2014, former President David Skorton set a goal that 50 percent of students would study or have meaningful educational experiences abroad by the year 2020. Your years at Cornell may provide you the most opportune time in your life to have transformative international experiences.

When starting to plan your abroad experience, consider when and what type of international experience fits best with your college career. Utilize the Cornell Abroad office, your college advisors, and trusted professors and mentors to help you determine the opportunity that best matches your academic, career, and personal interests. Utilize your personal knowledge and experience, along with the SDS counselors and resources, to plan an experience that will be most conducive to, your disability and accessibility needs. By starting your planning process early, and utilizing the many available resources and offices on campus, you can set yourself up well to have a most meaningful international experience!

Consider the following as part of your decision making process:

- Will my disability accommodations be provided abroad, and specifically in the country I’m interested in going to?
- What is the current level of physical accessibility in that country?
- What are my accessible housing needs and how might I find that for my time there?
- Will the language barrier present any communication issues related to my disability or needs?
- How long will I be there and how will that impact my ability to maintain my health and manage my disability (i.e. continuing physical or mental health appointments/care either from a distance or while in-country and/or staying on proper medication schedule and accessing refills as needed)?
- What are my transportation needs and how will that coincide with the available transportation options in country?
- What immunizations will I need and are there any related health concerns to be mindful of that could impact my disability, medical condition, or effectiveness of my current medications?
- What types of food are typically eaten in country and are they conducive to my dietary needs?
- What is the climate like and will it cooperate with or exacerbate my condition?

While some of these questions may be daunting, asking them is as necessary to the travel preparation process as getting your passport or making flight arrangements. For more information and resources, visit our Study Abroad webpage at: [http://sds.cornell.edu/Resources/StudyAbroad.html](http://sds.cornell.edu/Resources/StudyAbroad.html).

Written by Erin Sember-Chase
Did you ever wonder why curb cuts on sidewalks or ramps to buildings were made? Did you know that there wasn’t always wheelchair lifts on buses, or Braille signs by elevators, or closed caption options on televisions? Did you realize that people of your parents’ or professors’ generations probably did not get disability services or accommodations in college? If you’re like me, you never really thought about these things before and just assumed they were always there and available to anyone who needed them. The fact is we wouldn’t have this type of access, and so much more, if it weren’t for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The ADA is a civil rights law that was passed in 1990 under President George H.W. Bush with the overwhelming bi-partisan support of Congress. Prior to this, there was no law that really offered legal recourse to individuals who were being discriminated against, or denied access, because of their disability. There were some disability related laws that addressed specific settings such as the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) that offered air travel access, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that ensured students with disabilities received equal access to primary and secondary public education. But there was actually no law that offered the most fundamental civil rights and access to all aspects of community living for individuals with physical or mental disabilities.

Individuals with disabilities, and their supporters, came to realize that while their disability may pose some undeniable physical and medical challenges to manage every day, that should not automatically mean they didn’t deserve to get into public buildings, go out to stores or restaurants, ride buses, go to college, or get a job. They realized, and fought hard through protests, lobbying, and public speaking to get others to realize, that our government, society, schools, and workplaces also had a responsibility to make the physical and procedural changes and adaptations necessary to welcome and serve people with disabilities. As with any civil rights battle though, this was not an easily fought one and it resulted in many individuals with disabilities putting their health and lives on the line at times in order to get others to see how inaccessible our environment was, and to commit to changing that. Thanks to them, and to all who actively and passionately supported the cause both personally and politically, the people of today’s generation have a level of access that feels as naturally afforded to them as it does to their nondisabled peers.

In this 25th anniversary year of the ADA, we hope everyone will take some time to reflect on the history of our disability rights movement in America, learn more about where we’ve come from, and be inspired by this past to consider what still needs to be done, and what our role can be in the next 25 years to keep improving disability access and inclusion for all. For more information on the ADA and 25th anniversary, visit: http://www.ada.gov/ada_25th_anniversary/index.html.

Written by Erin Sember-Chase
In March, Cornell students had the opportunity to meet with Jennifer LaRusso-Leung, the Director of Engagement for Lime Connect. Lime Connect is a not-for-profit organization that works to connect high achieving students with disabilities with future employers.

“I believe that a connection with Lime Connect is extremely valuable for Cornell students, as it allows them to benefit from professional development and mentoring networks that encourage and embrace the perspectives of students with disabilities,” stated Jonathan Goldstein, the President of CUDA.

Lime Connect is a small team of people that serves many students in the United States and Canada. As the Director of Engagement, Jennifer helps students navigate the resources that Lime Connect has available to them to be successful in recruiting and in future employment opportunities. She also works closely with different university partners to promote Lime Connect and share resources. The Lime Connect Team includes Jennifer, the CEO and Founder, Susan Lang, and the three other core members. Lime Connect is a primarily virtual organization; however, they consider themselves to be “headquartered” in New York City which is where many of their events take place.

Lime Connect is constantly expanding and growing. When Lime Connect was created there were no other organizations like it that represented high achieving students with disabilities. Lime Connect found that many students with disabilities shy away from campus recruiting for a variety of reasons. They try to educate their partners about some of the challenges faced by people with disabilities such as when students need to take time off, have a lower GPA, or face various challenges during the hiring process. Companies often miss out on top talent because they have had little exposure to working with people with disabilities and the benefits of having employees with disabilities in their workplace. Many of the students who use Lime Connect are not necessarily people who “need” help getting a job but benefit from the extra close look at applications that Lime expects of their partners.

Lime Connect offers various programs throughout the year both virtually and in New York City. Some of these programs include the Lime Internship Connection and a NYC recruiting event in the fall. In addition, Lime Connect offers a fellowship for students completing their sophomore year that focuses on leadership and development. Lime Connect’s partners such as Google and Goldman Sachs also offer diversity or disability events throughout the year that introduce people with disabilities to their companies in small group settings.

Lime Connect is excited to continue partnering with Cornell University. They have previously had a few students from Cornell participate in their various programs and look forward to welcoming more students to their Network.

“As more Cornell students join the Lime network, we will be able serve as mentors to current and future generations of students who try to navigate the difficult terrain that is the job and internship recruiting process, and I am confident that we are already moving on the right track,” stated Goldstein.

For more information, visit Lime Connect’s website: http://limeconnect.com/.

Written by Jordan Berger ’17