

**Northern Illinois University**  
**Centralized Disability Accommodations (CDA) Fund for Students**  
**Policy Statement and Procedures**

**Purpose:**

Students with disabilities, who require accommodations\* for equal access to their educational experiences and opportunities, are urged to connect with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) as soon as they are aware of the possible need of one or more accommodations. The staff at the DRC meets individually with each student, to engage in an interactive process in order to identify reasonable and appropriate accommodations. During this process, the access consultant asks questions to determine any barriers that exist and what reasonable accommodations will be granted. Once accommodations have been granted by the DRC, a *Letter of Accommodation* is created by the DRC. Each *Letter of Accommodation* stipulates what accommodations are required.

If a student makes an accommodation request to a faculty member without engaging with the DRC staff, the faculty member is encouraged to refer the student to the DRC. Northern Illinois University (NIU) has designated the DRC to determine reasonable academic and extra-curricular accommodations for all students.

At any time, should a faculty or staff member need assistance with identifying how best to provide a granted accommodation, he or she should contact the DRC at (815) 753-1303. The staff at the DRC are available to consult on various aspects of access and inclusion for students with disabilities, and are happy to partner with faculty and staff to ensure that the University not only meets its legal obligations, but that students with disabilities are able to have equal opportunities for student career success at NIU.

**Confidentiality:**

Strict confidentiality requirements pertain to disability disclosures, accommodation requests, and related procedures. Any documentation received by the DRC will be maintained in a separate file from the student's academic record located in the Office of Records and Registration. Thus, any and all accommodation information pertaining to the disability will be treated as confidential and will only be shared with University professors, and officials, on a need-to-know basis. The staff of the DRC will not disclose any information about a student's disability without the express written permission of that student. Additionally, faculty and staff with knowledge of a disability disclosure or accommodation made for a student must maintain strict confidentiality. Reported violations of these confidential protocols are subject to investigation by the Center for Affirmative Action and Diversity Resources (AADR), and may result in disciplinary procedures.

**Accommodation Financial Responsibilities:**

While the University has charged the DRC with granting accommodations for students with disabilities, the entire University community is charged with implementing those accommodations, both legally and financially. The DRC aids the campus community through financing components of accommodations that serve a wide number of students.

*\*In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), as amended to include accommodations based on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Fair Housing Act.*

Examples of such components include:

- Copy paper to print exams proctored within the DRC;
- Sign language interpreters for the classroom;
- Captionists for the classroom;
- Accessible software (e.g. ZoomText, Jaws) for testing accommodations provided within the DRC;
- Braille classroom materials (e.g. handouts, single page documents, diagrams).

Additionally, the DRC coordinates the obtaining and creation of alternate format of textbooks for students. Most alternately formatted textbooks can be obtained with little to no cost beyond Human Resource Services (HRS). The DRC finances such low cost options as CDs and online access for various electronic and/or audible versions of printed materials.

Academic departments also aid the campus community through financing components of accommodations related to specific course requirements through which the department ensures equability access, such that non-disabled students have. Examples of such components include:

- Accessible transportation to and from events, study abroad, class trips, etc.;
- Accessible software (e.g. ZoomText, Jaws) for department specific computers;
- Accessible lab equipment such as stethoscopes, microscopes, etc.

Additionally, academic departments are financially responsible for ensuring that academic experiences held off-campus are accessible. Examples of such academic experiences include:

- Trips and off-site experiences planned within a course (e.g. accessible transportation);
- Accessibility for study-abroad and exchange programs (e.g. interpreters, captionists, note-takers);
- Materials students must access during such experiences (e.g. alternate format, Braille).

At any time, should a faculty or staff member need assistance in identifying how to ensure access for students with disabilities, he or she should contact the DRC.

### **Centralized Student Accommodation Fund:**

As the University recognizes that one-time, unique, or difficult to predict, accommodations may arise at any point in time, a Centralized Student Accommodation (CDA) Fund has been established to assist both academic departments and the DRC by funding expenses with significant cost attached to them. For purposes of this fund, “significant cost” means \$500.00 or more per individual accommodation.

Accommodations with associated costs of less than \$500.00 will be funded directly by the appropriate academic department or the DRC, depending on the nature of the accommodation. Accommodations with costs of \$500.00 or more will be funded by the academic department, and/or the DRC, up to the \$500.00.

### **Request Process:**

Once the department and/or the DRC staff have determined that the cost of an accommodation exceeds \$500.00, a [request](#) for additional funds can be made to the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and Section 504 Compliance Officer, and/or the Associate Vice President for Administration and HR Compliance. The following information is required:

- A completed check request form;
- Documentation of the approved needs to fulfill the accommodation, which will include detailed information of equipment, cost, and vendor.

Upon approval and with the availability of funds, the requestor will receive additional funds. The department will be charged the total amount of the accommodation. The approved funds will be transferred over to the department via a journal voucher.

Every entity submitting a request has a legal obligation to fulfill the accommodation, despite the amount of additional costs. If the monies are granted, the requesting department may use those allocated. If the monies are not granted, the requesting department must still fulfill the original accommodation.