

Attendance Policy Accommodations

It is not uncommon for students who are otherwise academically qualified to have serious health or psychiatric conditions that will pose legitimate barriers to their ability to attend class on a regular basis. Modifying a program or a professor's attendance standards need to be viewed in terms of the "essential" course requirements.. Sitting in a class for lecture may or may not be considered essential. However, in many courses, class participation is an essential element of the educational goal of the course.

Neither the Americans with Disabilities Act nor the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, addresses excusing a student from attending class as an accommodation. Attendance requirements need to be viewed in the context of academic freedom. If a professor can articulate a legitimate, pedagogical rationale for the student's attendance requirement, the attendance policy will not be altered.

In *Cabrillo College*, the **Office of Civil Rights** listed a number of factors that should be considered in determining whether attendance is an essential aspect of a course:

- ❑ Is there classroom interaction between the instructor and students, and among students?
- ❑ Do student's contributions constitute a significant component of the learning process?
- ❑ Does the fundamental nature of the course rely upon students' participation as an essential method for learning?
- ❑ To what degree does a student's failure to attend constitute a significant loss to the educational experience of other students in the class?
- ❑ What do the course description and syllabus say?
- ❑ What method is used to calculate the final grade? And what are the classroom practices and policies regarding attendance? (Has the faculty made any acceptations to non-disabled student in the past)

Policy note: Note takers are not a substitution for class attendance unless the absence is disability related.

Resource: Kincaid, J., Do Students really have to go to class?, *Disability Compliance for Higher Education*, 9/01, v2,1 p.1