Disability Services for Students
Assessment of Test Modification

Submitted by Mika Watanabe-Taylor, DSS Coordinator, and Natalie Crazy, Graduate Student Intern

ABSTRACT
DSS assessed the efficacy of test modification practices at the College of Technology (COT) East and West campuses. The unit interviewed COT staff and collected information on policies and procedures regarding scheduling and taking of accommodated exams on COT campuses. Additionally, DSS implemented an online survey in order to receive feedback from those COT students currently served by DSS. The survey found student experience with test modification on COT campuses to be positive overall. Some responses suggested areas for improvement that DSS should consider including the greater communication regarding test accommodations, enhanced faculty and staff accessibility training at the COT, and improved test facilities on the COT West campus.

BACKGROUND
DSS provides services to students with disabilities on the COT campuses. The COT provides test modification services for students primarily through Perkins-funded staffing. COT policies and procedures have been developed in consultation with DSS to be consistent with and parallel to those of the DSS office on the UM Mountain campus. Given variations in staffing and space, however, the processes between the East and West COT campuses also vary.

To date, the efficacy of these processes and modifications at the COT has not been assessed. To assure that the policies and processes facilitate reasonable program modifications under the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), DSS and the COT collaborated to conduct an assessment of the test modification services.

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE
The assessment incorporated two methods for data collection. First, DSS interviewed and collected information from COT staff members who handle test modification requests on their campuses about the policies and procedures for scheduling accommodated exams.

Next, DSS collected student feedback through an online survey. A link to the Select Survey containing ten questions was emailed to students of the East and West COT. Due to difficulty identifying which COT students had been recommended for test modifications, all 183 COT students registered with DSS received the link. The survey asked students to rate their level of satisfaction with the test modifications delivered on the East and West COT campuses. The questions addressed communication and accessibility (see attached Appendix).

Thirty-nine students responded to the survey with an overall response rate of 21 percent for all DSS registered students. Students who required further assistance completing the survey were prompted to contact a designated member of the DSS staff. Responses were kept confidential and respondent names were not associated with the results.

FINDINGS
Policies and Procedures
The following were found to be the policies and procedures followed for test modification on the COT East and West campuses:

Students with disabilities on both the Mountain and COT campuses meet with a DSS coordinator to determine student disability and eligibility for reasonable modifications under ADA and Section 504. The coordinator verifies the disability and determines with student input how the disability’s functional limitations affect academic work. After disability and functional limitations are verified, the coordinator provides the student with information about reasonable modifications, possibly including test modifications.

The coordinator may write a “letter of verification” for students to distribute to their instructors. The letter summarizes the functional limitations and recommended reasonable program modifications. Students are responsible for disclosing their disabilities to instructors and for requesting reasonable modifications, including test modifications, from their instructors in a timely fashion. Faculty may request the “letter of verification” before providing reasonable modifications, including test modifications.
On the COT East campus, students and professors reach agreement on test modifications together and fill out the relevant information on the Test Modification Form, available from the Academic Support Center (ASC). For the convenience of the instructors, ASC serves as the central location on the East campus to administer exams with modifications. Instructors may also independently provide modifications.

ASC administers tests according to the directions on the Test Modification Form. The Test Modification Form allows for one test to be scheduled at a time. For that reason, students must turn in their forms for each test to the ASC Coordinator two days prior to the test. The ASC coordinator works with students to schedule appointments to take their tests. The ASC coordinator then arranges appropriate modifications such as quiet rooms, scribes, readers, and/or assistive technology as recommended by DSS and approved by the students’ instructors.

If a resource such as a private room is not available as requested, the student may contact the instructor to make alternate arrangements, either independently or with the ASC. Occasionally, students may go to the Mountain campus for test modifications when the ASC does not have specific equipment or auxiliary aids available. Otherwise, students take their tests in the ASC.

At the COT West campus, resources such as quiet rooms, scribes, readers, assistive technology, and a proctor for testing are in short supply. Students and their instructors may seek out alternatives that include going to East campus or working with instructors individually for test modifications. Instructors at the West COT often administer and proctor their tests independently from DSS and the ASC, providing accommodations with the resources they have. There is space available in the West COT campus library for student testing. The ASC may also serve as a test modification resource for the West campus.

*Feedback from the COT Staff*

The COT administrator and COT staff commented on policies and procedures for test modifications at the COT campuses as follows:

Some students were unaware of where they should go to request test modifications and how they might request these test modifications on the COT campuses. The DSS and the COT web pages might be used as effective tools in disseminating clearer information.

Due to the lack of available assistive technology or auxiliary aids on the East campus, a small number of students are sent to the Mountain campus for modified testing. Additionally, some students have had to adjust their exam times around the availability of the ASC quiet room. To meet student demands, the COT staff hopes to secure auxiliary aids and assistive technology at the East Campus as well as additional testing space when the South Campus master plan is implemented.

On the other hand, as previously noted, no designated private testing rooms are available at the West COT campus. It will be necessary to secure this adequate testing space at the West COT in order to provide appropriate test modifications.

Additionally, only a small number of students have requested test modifications on the West campus. COT staff suspects that more students with disabilities will disclose their disabilities and request modifications if the on-campus presence of DSS becomes consistent at the West COT.

In past years, DSS staff worked with COT faculty to provide training for ADA and other reasonable modifications, most often at semester Faculty/Staff Orientations. DSS will continue to maintain a presence at Orientation.

The ASC has been covering most of the operational costs to administer test modifications at the East campus. The ASC would like to discuss with DSS the possibility of shared funding to cover this function when the ASC’s funding stream changes in the future.

*Feedback from Students*

A link to the Select Survey with ten questions was emailed to the students of the East and West COT. The survey asked students to rate their level of satisfaction for test modifications delivered on the East and West COT campuses.
Of the 39 survey participants, 22 respondents (56 percent) reported that they currently request test modifications. Of these 39 participants, 44 percent reported they did not request test modifications in spring 2011. In response to whether students had requested test modifications in the past, though they did not request in the spring of 2011, 11 of the 19 responders (58 percent) reported they had. Overall, 89 percent of the respondents who said they use or have used test modifications in the past agreed that their experiences with requesting and receiving such modifications were positive.

Responses to questions concerning staff and faculty identified that 91 percent of students indicated they were informed of their responsibilities regarding test modifications by either their DSS coordinator, the ASC at the COT East campus, or by their instructor (figure 1).

As shown in the above chart, 87 percent of the students strongly agreed or agreed that the test modification services at the COT campuses complied with their request for test modifications, which included access to auxiliary aids, extended time, private rooms, and assistive technologies, including computers. In addition, 79 percent of the students strongly agreed or agreed that professors complied with test modification requests.

An analysis of the qualitative data found the students were well informed of their responsibilities for test modifications and that the COT services were able to comply with the student requests for test modifications. However, some students indicated that they had communication problems with their professors in regards to test modifications, which resulted in some test modifications not being received.

Eighty-six percent of the students strongly agreed or agreed that tests were scheduled in a timely manner. Seventy-two percent of the students strongly agreed or agreed that the testing rooms were accessible, free of distractions, and suited for test modifications. Fifty-seven percent indicated that scribes, readers, and sign language interpreters were well-trained and performed their tasks well.

In qualitative responses, seven students commented that the chairs in the testing rooms were uncomfortable, they wished to have had a clock in the testing room, the private room in the ASC was difficult to reserve because of the high numbers of students who were in need of it, and outside noises distracted students while taking tests.
Participants were given the opportunity to offer additional comments outside of the preliminaries of the survey questions. Students responded with more positive remarks about test modifications services. There were also a couple responses that indicated communication problems with DSS, ASC staff, and professors regarding reasonable program modifications.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

This test modification assessment conducted in collaboration with the COT and DSS examined the efficacy of processes and modifications at the COT campuses. The survey findings have been shared with COT administrators and staff so they may be aware of the student feedback. Based on the findings, DSS identified the following areas for improvement in test modification services at the COT campuses:

1. **Information Dissemination**
   Information on test modifications on the COT campuses needs to be improved. DSS should add test modification services specific to the COT campuses to the DSS and COT websites. Examples of information include a description of the ASC as the central location for test modifications on the COT East Campus; names of the contact staff at the West campus; and a video describing how to request test modifications on the COT campuses, similar to the captioned video DSS created for students and faculty who use the test modification services available on the Mountain campus.

2. **Faculty and Staff Training**
   DSS should offer continuing training at COT Faculty/Staff Orientations to facilitate an understanding of ADA, reasonable accommodations, and other topics which will enhance staff interactions with students. COT will continue to involve DSS and other campus professionals knowledgeable of ADA in such training.

3. **Test modifications at the West campus**
   Lack of space for test modifications at the West campus is a significant concern for DSS and the COT West campus. As a priority, DSS should work closely with the associate dean on the West campus to create short and long-term solutions for improvement of processes, procedures, and resources that ensure continued availability of test modifications on campus.

4. **Survey administration**
   A small number of students participated in the online survey for this assessment. Though they had been encouraged by the COT staff to participate in the survey, some students told staff that they did not check their UM email account. The use of email and online survey for COT students, therefore, was not as effective as desired. DSS might consider using a different method to administer assessments for COT students. For example, the office might conduct a focus group to obtain more in-depth student feedback.
Appendix
Survey Instrument

1. Do you currently request test modifications?
   - Yes
   - No

2. If you answered “No”, have you requested test modifications in the past?
   - Yes
   - No

3. My DSS Coordinator, DSS Test Coordinator at the Mountain Campus, the Academic Support Center at the COT East campus, or my instructors have informed me that it is my responsibility to request test modifications to my instructors at the COT campuses. The students are also responsible for working with the Academic Support Center and/or their instructors to schedule tests.

   - 1- Strongly Agree
   - 2- Agree
   - 3- Neutral
   - 4- Disagree
   - 5- Strongly Disagree

   Below is an opportunity to explain your answer:

   

4. Test modification services delivered at the COT campuses complied with my request for test modifications. Test modifications may include auxiliary aids, extended time, private room, and assistive technologies including a computer.

   - 1- Strongly Agree
   - 2- Agree
   - 3- Neutral
   - 4- Disagree
   - 5- Strongly Disagree

   Below is an opportunity to explain your answer:

   

5. Professor(s) complied with my request for test modifications. Test modifications may include auxiliary aids, extended time, private room, and assistive technologies including a computer.
1- Strongly Agree
2- Agree
3- Neutral
4- Disagree
5- Strongly Disagree

Below is an opportunity to explain your answer:

6. Tests were scheduled in a timely manner.

1 – Strongly Agree
2 – Agree
3 – Neutral
4 – Disagree
5 – Strongly Disagree

Below is an opportunity to explain your answer:

7. Testing room was accessible, free of distractions, and suited for test modifications.

1 – Strongly Agree
2 – Agree
3 – Neutral
4 – Disagree
5 – Strongly Disagree

Below is an opportunity to explain your answer:

8. Any auxiliary aids such as scribes, readers, sign language interpreters I used were well-trained and did perform their tasks well.

1 – Strongly Agree
2 – Agree
3 – Neutral
4 – Disagree
5 – Strongly Disagree
9. Overall, my experience with requesting and receiving test modifications was positive.

    1 – Strongly Agree
    2 – Agree
    3 – Neutral
    4 – Disagree
    5 – Strongly Disagree

Below is an opportunity to explain your answer:

10. Additional comments: