

## **VERMONT COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS**

### **ACADEMIC POLICIES**

#### **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES (ADA) POLICY FOR STUDENTS**

**Revised: June, 2016**

##### **POLICY:**

VCFA conducts its academic and residential programs in accordance with the provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and similar Vermont law. Disabilities may include physical or mental impairments that substantially limit one or more of an individual's major life activities, and which may require modifications to VCFA's facilities, programs, or services. These laws require, among other things, that:

- No student may be excluded from any program or any course solely on the basis of disability;
- Modifications in degree or course requirements that do not constitute a fundamental alteration of those degree or course requirements may be necessary to meet the needs of some students with disabilities;
- Auxiliary aids, such as tape recorders, note takers or amplification devices, must be permitted in the classroom when they are required to ensure the full participation of students with disabilities;
- Special teaching equipment or devices used in the classroom (and in some cases teaching techniques that rely upon the sight, hearing, or mobility of students) may require adaptation in individual cases;
- Alternate assessment and evaluation methods for measuring student achievement may be necessary for students with impaired sensory, manual, writing or speaking skills (except where those are skills being measured), so long as such alternate methods do not constitute a fundamental alteration of academic requirements;
- VCFA facilities must be accessible as required by law;
- Group meetings, classes, seminars, and/or lectures may have to be relocated to permit access for students with mobility impairments; and
- Counseling of students with disabilities toward more restrictive careers than students without disabilities is discriminatory; unless such counsel is based on strict licensing or certification requirements in a profession.

The law does not require VCFA to make accommodations that are unreasonable, unduly burdensome or that fundamentally alter the nature of VCFA's programs or services, changes to facilities are only required by law under certain circumstances, and VCFA is not responsible for services of a personal nature.

**PROCEDURE:**

Upon acceptance to a Vermont College of Fine Arts program, every student is sent a Disabilities Services Survey form ("DSS form") asking if the student seeks accommodations for any disability that has been officially diagnosed by a licensed professional. Even if a student does not seek accommodations or if a student chooses not to inform the College about a disability, the DSS form must still be signed, to indicate that the student has read and returned it to the student's program office. These forms will then be forwarded to the Program Director. Students who have not received this form should obtain one from their program's office. DSS forms should be completed and submitted as quickly as possible in order to facilitate the consideration of accommodation requests and the timely provision of reasonable accommodations.

**Review of Information:**

If a student submits a DSS form that indicates that a student seeks academic or other assistance or accommodations, the Program Director will forward that form and any accompanying documentation to the Disabilities Services Coordinator. The Disabilities Services Coordinator will consult with the student about their options, which may include, for example:

--- That the student could seek formal accommodations for a disability, by submitting appropriate professional assessment and documentation of a disability from an objective, qualified, licensed professional to the Disabilities Services Coordinator. The licensed professional should provide a comprehensive report, including diagnoses, a description of how the physical or mental impairment substantially limits one or more major life activities, and recommendations for academic or other accommodations. The report and documentation may be provided by the student when the DSS form is submitted to the Program Director, or it may be provided later in consultation with the Disabilities Services Coordinator. Even if some information is provided with the DSS form, the Disabilities Services Coordinator may request additional information, depending on the circumstances. All documentation must be reasonably current, depending on the nature of the condition(s) at issue. VCFA does not conduct or pay for such assessments or for the preparation of related documentation;

--- That professional assessment and documentation is not indicated or required, but that the student should seek out appropriate academic assistance from faculty and program staff; or

--- That some other approach is appropriate.

**Accommodation Profile:**

Upon receiving appropriate documentation of a disability as described above, the Disabilities Services Coordinator will, if a student so requests, work with relevant program staff and faculty as necessary to determine essential program requirements, make a decision about what reasonable accommodations can be provided without fundamentally altering the nature of the class and/or program at issue, develop an educational profile outlining accommodations and providing suggestions for students and faculty in the living/learning environment. The student must release this document to any individual by way of a signed

release form provided by the Disabilities Services Coordinator. It may not be distributed by any other means or discussed publicly for reasons of student confidentiality.

**Voluntary Nature of this System:**

Students are not compelled to report disabilities, or to follow up on referrals to the Disabilities Services Coordinator, or to seek and pay for professional assessments, or to release the educational profile for accommodations to the program. Unless the student voluntarily completes these actions, VCFA cannot make accommodations for the student.

**Confidentiality:**

The material provided by the student or by professionals who have been involved in the student's diagnosis, treatment, or accommodations requests will be treated as confidential information. Access will be granted only to the Disabilities Services Coordinator and those involved in the student's education as necessary to facilitate an understanding of essential program requirements and the facilitation of accommodations, or if a health or safety issue is presented.

**Appeal Process:**

Any student dissatisfied with the accommodations or adjustments offered or made to accommodate a disability will have the right to appeal. The appeal process will be as follows:

A written statement of the dispute will be sent by the student to the Academic Dean. This statement should include all relevant information and should request the desired remedial action. Based on this statement, the Academic Dean will either return the matter to the Disability Services Coordinator for further consideration (with or without a suggestion that further information or documentation may be necessary), activate changes to the individual accommodations, or decide that the profile as developed is appropriate. The Academic Dean level of appeal will be final.