
Supporting Students with Disabilities

From On behalf of Alicia M. Alvero, Interim EVC & University Provost <University.Provost@cuny.edu>

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OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Dear Faculty,

I hope you had a productive and fulfilling winter session and are enjoying the start of the Spring 2026 semester. I write today with critical information about actions that are needed from all administrators, faculty, and instructional staff to support our students with disabilities at CUNY.

A. Background

CUNY is committed to providing access to higher education and ensuring equitable outcomes for all students, including qualified students with disabilities. This is consistent with our mission and required by a variety of state and federal laws, including Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which provides otherwise qualified students with the right to reasonable accommodation.

In 2023, CUNY entered into a Voluntary Compliance Agreement (VCA) with the United States Department of Justice that applies to every campus and requires further work across the institution in meeting the needs of students with disabilities. **Ongoing action by administrators, faculty, and instructional staff is needed to comply with the terms of the VCA.** CUNY's full set of ADA policies relating to students can be found here: [Effecting Reasonable Accommodations and Academic Adjustments Procedures Relating to Accommodations.](#)

B. Actions Required

We remind all administrators, faculty, and instructional staff of existing obligations under law and CUNY policy:

1. **Instructors:** In accordance with state law and existing CUNY policy, textbook and course materials information must be entered in Akademos, your school's bookstore, or CUNYfirst at least two weeks prior to the date the schedule of classes is made available (not two weeks prior to the start of the semester). Textbook information for Spring 2026 not previously entered must be entered immediately. Courses that do not require a textbook or that rely exclusively on Open Educational Resources (OER) or other no-cost materials must also be identified as such. This information is necessary to ensure that course materials are accessible to students with disabilities by the first day of class to the greatest extent possible.

2. Department Chairs and Provosts: Department chairs and provosts are responsible for ensuring textbook information is posted for all departmental courses. Provost offices and department chairs have access to textbook compliance reports through [CUNY's Insights site](#) (simply enter "textbook compliance" in the search tab at the top right of the home page). If a department chair does not have access to the report, please complete the [CUNY Tableau Server Access Request Form](#).

3. Instructors: Per Board of Trustees policy, all fully online courses, both synchronous and asynchronous, must be delivered in a University-supported LMS (Brightspace) or an alternative LMS that meets CUNY's cybersecurity policies and complies with data privacy laws. See the complete policy for additional information: [LMS Use Policy for Online Classes](#).

4. Instructors: We strongly recommend that instructors upload their course materials in the University-supported LMS (Brightspace) for each class, regardless of the course modality. A course site in the LMS currently being used by each college has been created for every CUNY class scheduled for Spring 2026. (Course sites must be activated to be visible to students.) Uploading course materials to the LMS will help instructors identify accessibility issues using Ally, a tool within Brightspace, and work with technical experts to improve the accessibility of those materials. Ally generates alternative formats that enable students to choose how to engage with the course's digital content. Resources on how to use Ally effectively can be found here:

- [Ally for LMS Help for Instructors](#)
- [Ally Quick Start for Instructors](#)
- [Instructor FAQs for Ally](#)
- [Ally for Websites Help Desk](#)

5. Instructors: In accordance with the updated ADA Title II Digital Accessibility regulations, the New York State IT Accessibility Policy, and other applicable laws, instructors are responsible for ensuring that all course materials, online learning products, platforms, and applications, including instructor-created content, are accessible prior to use in the course. These regulations require instructors to provide digital content that is accessible to individuals with disabilities and conforms to recognized accessibility standards, specifically [WCAG 2.2 Level AA](#). Instructors can use the [CUNY Accessibility Toolkit](#) as a practical resource for guidance, tools, and best practices on creating accessible digital course content. In addition, Ally will assist with this determination for content uploaded to Brightspace, and technical expertise will be made available to faculty as needed. In addition, you can seek technical assistance directly from D2L at 1-888-895-2511.

Moreover, CUNY CIS has announced its Spring 2026 CIS Training webinar schedule for the CUNY community, featuring an Accessibility Series aligned with upcoming ADA Title II updates and an expanded AI Series focused on practical, skill-building applications. [View full descriptions](#) and register here – [CIS Training 2026 Registration Form](#) (please note, you need to be logged into Microsoft 365 with your CUNY Login account in order to be able to access the registration form).

6. Provosts: Campus provosts must designate a point person to provide assistance with technical issues related to accessible course materials for students with disabilities. This contact information must be communicated to all students, faculty, and instructional staff at the beginning of each semester and posted in a prominent, easily accessible location on the college website. In addition, provosts should ensure that this point of contact coordinates with relevant campus units (e.g., disability services, IT, instructional design, CUNY Central) to support timely resolution and compliance with applicable accessibility requirements.

7. Students and Instructors: Students remain responsible for self-identifying their disability status to the campus's Office of Disability Services (ODS) to access necessary supports and services. Once notified of approved accommodations, the instructor is responsible for providing them as specified or must seek clarification from ODS regarding the appropriateness of an accommodation for a specific course. Instructors must follow the appropriate procedures with ODS before taking independent action to modify the accommodations. Instructors should direct all such questions to ODS, not the student.

To facilitate and manage student accommodation requests, CUNY utilizes [Accommodate](#), a university-wide information management system that organizes and securely stores student information. Faculty can expect official communications from the Accommodate platform prior to and at the start of each semester with accommodation requests. Faculty can access accommodation requests at any time in an organized manner on the faculty portal and additionally can submit exams to the Disability Service Office or testing centers through the system. We are committed to providing seamless support for all students with disabilities to bolster their academic achievement and advance equity across our institution.

Ultimately, the goal of our collective efforts is not simply to comply with the VCA and the ADA, which has been in effect for more than thirty years, but to fully meet the needs of our students with disabilities and ensure full access to equal educational opportunities. Thank you in advance for your efforts as we continue this important work together.

Best,

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Interim Executive Vice Chancellor & University Provost