



**NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM**  
*Dr. R. Scott Ralls, President*

June 4, 2008

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Disability Service Providers

**FROM:** Karen Yerby  
Associate Director, Student Development Services

**SUBJECT:** Disability Services Newsletter

The NCCCS Disability Services Advisory Board (DSAB) has completed its May 2008 newsletter for disability service providers. The newsletter is attached and will be posted to the Student Development Personnel website at [http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/Stu\\_Dev\\_Services/StudentDevPersonnel.htm](http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/Stu_Dev_Services/StudentDevPersonnel.htm).

If you have suggestions, contributions, or comments, please contact Monica Isbell, Coordinator of Special Needs, Alamance Community College at [isbellm@alamancecc.edu](mailto:isbellm@alamancecc.edu) or Karen Yerby at [yerbyk@ncccommunitycolleges.edu](mailto:yerbyk@ncccommunitycolleges.edu).

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Student Development Administrators

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CC08-128

# North Carolina Community College System

## Disability Services News

Sponsored by the NCCCS Disability Services Advisory Board

May 2008

### From the DSAB Chairperson

*Monica Isbell, Alamance Community College*

As the new chairperson, I want to thank you for the opportunity to serve and support the valuable work of disability services (DS) providers in the community college system.

The Disability Services Advisory Board meets quarterly at the NCCC Systems office. Current members of the board are:

Michael Bridgers, Pitt Community College  
Margo Gaddy, Montgomery Community College  
Wanda Horvath, Catawba Valley Community College  
Monica Isbell, Alamance Community College  
Nancy Leonard, Caldwell Community College & Technical Institute  
Nancy Massey, NCCC System Office  
Nancy Sizemore, Wilkes Community College  
Karen Yerby, NCCC System Office

Just as an update, Michael Bridgers, Wanda Horvath, and I will be presenting on the transition between high school and college at the 2008 NCCC System Conference in Raleigh in October. We had an opportunity to present on this topic at the Counselor's Conference in Raleigh in March 2008.

I want to encourage disability services providers to use the board to express concerns, comments, and questions. We, as DS providers are developing and implementing unique projects,

programs and other activities on our campuses, let's share that information with the board and providers across the state.

Again, thank you.

### Pitt CC's Checklist

*Contributed by Michael Bridgers, Pitt Community College*

Disability Services at Pitt CC asks potential students if they're ready for college by providing them with a checklist to "start them on the right track." Below are some items on the list.

- I am considered the person responsible for my education at postsecondary schools. No one will "hold my hand" or ask me if I need help. However, faculty and staff will be happy to help me once I ask for help.
- I understand I can discuss the content of the reports concerning my LD history and diagnosis.
- I can describe the types of classroom services (accommodations) I need in the classroom.
- I have practiced with and am familiar with the accommodations I plan to use at PCC.
- I use special accommodations to take tests. I plan to make arrangements to use these accommodations when I take postsecondary admissions related tests so my scores will accurately reflect what I know.
- I am aware that postsecondary schools do not have "resource rooms," special LD tutors, classroom assignments adapted only for the LD students, or reduced program standards and requirements.
- I plan to apply for special assistance at postsecondary schools in a timely fashion.

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## Fostering a Working Relationship with the School System

*Monica Isbell, Alamance Community College*

How do I work with the high schools? Where do I begin? Who do I contact? What information needs to be shared and with whom? These are questions that I pondered as I thought about how to establish a working relationship with school systems in Alamance County and surrounding areas.

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Listed below are some ways I have developed these relationships:

- Sent an introductory e-mail to the Director(s) of Exceptional Children's Services at the school system(s) regarding developing a working relationship;
- Followed up with a letter providing details where communication between our agencies would be beneficial to their students with disabilities. Examples of information that is critical to this student population are: understanding the differences between high school and postsecondary disability services, documentation criteria for services, preparing the student to make the transition from high school to college, and FERPA;
- Invited them to meet and discuss these or any other topics regarding services for students with disabilities.

As a result of the correspondence, I have met with Exceptional Children's (EC) representatives, participated in a Transition Fair, conducted a campus orientation for two high school Occupational Course of Study (OCS) programs, began a dialogue to develop an academic/vocational certificate for students who obtain the OCS diploma, and I am currently planning a presentation for middle and high school EC chairpersons.

I hope these tips provide useful insight as you work with your school system(s).

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## From Raleigh...

*Karen Yerby, NCCCS*

- As summer approaches many campuses are offering special programs and activities for their communities such as computer camps and quiz bowls. What do you do if a participant in these activities requests accommodations? Are you going to give meds to a child with ADHD at Drama Camp? Do you provide extra time for a middle school student in a science bowl contest? What about interpreters, notetakers, readers, calculators, etc.? These are cost factors and liability issues that will need to be addressed. So, it is in everyone's (college's, participant's, and your) best interest to develop policies and procedures for community programs and activities being sponsored by your college and/or on your campus. By being proactive, you can save a lot of last minute frustration.
- Another way to ease your frustration level is to make sure your administration understands disability services as it relates to the law, documentation, accommodations, liability, and expense. You might want to consider making an appointment to talk with your vice president and/or president to give them an overview of disability services. Administrators need to understand that the number of disabled students enrolling in community colleges is only going to increase and we need to be prepared to provide them with equal access. Statistics show that one in six children born today will have a learning disability and one in every one hundred and fifty will have some type of autism. Everyone must be on the same page as we face the reality of the future.

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# Calculator Usage

Contributed by Michael Bridgers, Pitt Community College

(The following is taken from the Calculator Usage Policy at Pitt Community College.)

## PCC Calculator Usage Policy

The College has designated the Office of Disability Services to certify whether a request for an accommodation due to a disability is reasonable and necessary. The decision to approve the use of a calculator or formulas sheet as an accommodation is based on the student's documentation of disability. The use of a calculator or formula sheet is not an appropriate accommodation when provision of either one alters the nature of the exam.

Initially, the student and instructor should meet on the first day of class or arrange a meeting at a convenient time for both to discuss the use of a calculator or formula sheet. If there are concerns about the accommodation, the student or instructor may ask a professional from Disability Services to attend the meeting.

The Office of Disability Services has developed a Calculator Usage Policy to address the use of a calculator or formula sheet as an appropriate accommodation.

1. If a student has been approved to use a calculator as an accommodation for an exam or in class assignment, the College will provide the accommodation.
2. Calculator usage as an accommodation on exams is prohibited for the following: test one and the fraction test in Math 060, and test one in Math 070.
3. Students should discuss with their instructors what type of calculator is appropriate for more advanced classes.
4. In some cases, especially when testing percentages, square root, and distributive properties, a formula sheet may be used as an accommodation instead of a calculator. When this is determined, the student, instructor, and Disability Services provider will consult regarding the contents of the formula sheet used during testing.
5. If other students in the class are not allowed to use a calculator or formula sheet during an exam, the instructor may prefer that the student with a disability complete the test or in-class assignment in the Office of Disability Services.
6. Due to the specific nature of some disabilities such as visual impairments and physical impairments, a calculator may be the only way students can have equal access.

**“Education, then,  
beyond all other  
devices of human  
origin, is the great  
equalizer of the  
conditions of men—  
the balance wheel of  
the social machinery.”**

***-Horace Mann***

**The NCCC System Conference will be held  
October 12 – 14, 2008 at the Raleigh Convention Center.**

Sessions relating to disability services include:

“Walk a Mile in My Shoes:  
A Fun Disability Awareness Program Students Actually Learn From.”

“Traumatic Brain Injury: Determining Best Practices”

“Building a Blueprint to Transition”

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## Tips on Dealing with Agitated or Aggressive Students

Nancy Sizemore, Wilkes Community College

Faculty and staff may be familiar, and therefore more comfortable, with students with learning disabilities; however, many instructors and staff members are not comfortable with students with psychiatric disabilities due to the fear that these students may be dangerous or hard to manage in class. Unfortunately, many people, including staff and instructors, have an image of persons with psychiatric disorders as being drugged out in “zombie-like” states or as violent. This is rarely the case. No two students with psychiatric disorders are alike and the types of psychiatric disabilities are far-ranging. In the majority of cases, it is **not** true that students with psychiatric disabilities are dangerous or disruptive. **It is also not true that all disruptive students have a psychiatric disorder.**

Sometimes students act out from nervousness, lack of self esteem, being frightened, or being new to the learning environment. Not all students understand proper behavior and social boundaries. This being said there may be times when it is necessary to defuse a classroom or office situation when a student may become disruptive, agitated, or aggressive. On that note, here are a few tips on intervention and dealing with and diffusing these difficult situations.

- An important key to being able to defuse a difficult situation with a student is to make the effort to create an environment of trust up front, before a situation occurs. You will not always know which students may be disruptive, but if you have already formed a professional relationship that involves **mutual respect** and sets the tone of concern and caring you will be much better able to communicate with the student during a crisis situation. The key here is often nonverbal communication which really doesn't take much time or effort. Make eye contact and smile. Give praise. If the student approaches you wanting to discuss personal problems, let the student know that you are concerned, then refer the student to one of the counseling staff.
- Convey interest, caring, and concern through body posture and facial expression.
- Maintain appropriate eye contact with the student without appearing to stare or glare.
- Be aware of personal boundaries and space. Stay at a comfortable physical distance from the student, close enough to communicate directly, but not invading his/her space or compromising your own comfort level.
- Do not touch the student.
- Stay calm and be direct when addressing the student. You can show calmness by lowering your voice both in level and in octave. A low, monotone voice is much more soothing to an agitated person than a high, squeaky, or loud voice.
- Keep your own anger in check. Do not get into a shouting match or power struggle with the student. If the student is agitated, this may not be the time to make demands of the student. You could say, “I hear what you are saying and I see you are upset; but, I need you to be calm enough so that we can discuss this. I can't understand much when you are yelling.”
- If possible speak with the student one-on-one so you do not embarrass the student. Do so discreetly in a quiet space, but a place that is also openly accessible. Do not shut your door.
- Use few hand gestures. Keep your hands in sight and still. Do not shake your finger at the student or make pointing gestures.
- Often a student just needs to vent and will talk excessively, sometimes loudly, with crying and hand gestures. As long as the student is just talking, the communication is open, and there

are no signs of physical aggression or violence, let the student vent for a short period of time. The student may then be more cooperative and receptive to your instructions.

- Be aware of your own anxiety about how the student is acting. Use your own instinct in deciding whether to call security. Realize that the security officers are a type of intervention also. Sometimes we feel like we are failing a student if we have to “get them in trouble” or cause unwanted attention. Just realize that there may be cases that will be beyond what we need to manage ourselves and that security involvement may be appropriate.
- Use good judgment in asking another staff/faculty member or department chair to be present. It is a good idea to have another person present or within hearing/sight distance especially if the student is the opposite sex or has a history of inappropriate behavior, delusions, or making untrue statements.
- Clearly document the incident with the date, time, person, and situation. Include the remedy or intervention used.

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If the behavior recurs or was threatening to others, the student may be removed from the classroom. Removal may not necessarily be on a permanent basis, but until the problem can be resolved. A good documentation trail is essential.

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## **Alamance CC Implements the “Career College” for OCS Students**

*Information submitted by Monica Isbell, Alamance Community College*

This summer, Alamance Community College (ACC) begins its Career College which is targeted to serve occupational course of study (OCS) students graduating from high school and others who are referred by high schools and appropriate agencies. Enrollees will receive job-specific training, learn job hunting strategies, and improve basic skills in reading and math. Potential students must be referrals from high school OCS teachers, transitional coordinators, or from Vocational Rehabilitation. The college will not accept “public” or “drop-in” registrations without a referral.

The job-specific training will vary each semester with Automotive Assistant and Health Services Assistant being the first two programs offered. Classes will meet for 15 weeks from 1pm-5pm for a total of 300 hours. Spring and fall classes will meet Monday through Friday and summer classes will meet Monday through Thursday. All classes will be held on the main campus of ACC.

The application process includes:

- a letter of referral from an appropriate teacher, school staff member, or agency representative
- a completed Career College application form
- a TABE assessment test offered through the Basic Skills program
- a high school transcript

The registration process includes:

- a meeting with Monica Isbell (students should bring their portfolios with them for this meeting)
- a completed Continuing Education registration form
- an orientation session at ACC for Career College participants

The Career College is free to qualifying students. However, students are expected to provide their own school supplies as well as any other supplies or tools required for the class. In addition, if accident insurance is required, students are expected to pay the current fee or sign a waiver indicating they already have accident insurance, or that they decline the accident insurance available through ACC.

To submit articles or information for this newsletter, contact Karen Yerby at  
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