December 8, 2021

STEPHEN HOSBURG
Disability Resource Center Project & Policy Analyst

RE: Request for Faculty Feedback on Accommodate Faculty Notification Options

Dear Stephen,

The Academic Senate has reviewed the Disability Resource Center's (DRC) request for faculty feedback regarding the Accommodate notification system options. The following committees have responded: Affirmative Action and Diversity (CAAD), Courses of Instruction (CCI), Educational Policy (CEP), Information Technology (CIT), Teaching (COT), and Graduate Council (GC).

The responding Senate committees appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback and expressed great appreciation to the DRC for seeking to develop more effective mechanisms for instructors to receive and manage accommodation requests in ways that reduce the burden on students. While the committees felt that the information included in the proposal was too limited to enable a clear endorsement of any of the three options, they provided insight into the various strengths of each and suggestions for optimizing the potential of the new software. ***The responding committees were generally divided between Options 1 and 2 with a strong preference against Option 3, though there was genuine interest in the benefit of the master list of accommodations available with Option 3.*** The recommendation of the faculty Senate would be for the DRC to incorporate elements of each option that were identified by the committees as crucial and combine them in such a way as to best serve faculty and students. The necessary aspects of each option are detailed below with the following section identifying the concerns of the committees, and lastly a section listing specific questions raised by the reviewing committees.

Option 1: Students continue to email their letters directly to faculty the way we currently operate.
TAs are often the front-line contacts who frequently work with students on accommodations, and as such the new system would need to allow faculty the ability to coordinate accommodation letters with their TAs as easily at they can under the current system.

Option 2: Accommodate "requests" signatures from faculty. This will prompt faculty via email to open accommodate, navigate to the "accommodation letters" section, and view the letters for each student.
The committees strongly recommend that information about the specific accommodations for an individual student be more easily accessed in the notification letters in order for instructors to identify and ascertain how best to meet those accommodations.

Option 3: Faculty can view a list of their enrolled students in the "courses" section of Accommodate. Within that list of students, faculty can view the approved accommodations for all of the enrolled students in a particular course. This option will not directly notify faculty. Instead, faculty would be responsible for frequently checking this section throughout the quarter.
This option was seen as complicated and too labor and time intensive. Though committees were consistently opposed to the burden this option imposed on faculty for the need to frequently check in, they recognized its benefit of providing to faculty a master list of accommodations that instructors could reference organized by course. It is requested that the list be provided and that the system send notifications to instructors to alert them when changes have been made to the list.

Committee-Specific Comments and Concerns:

Committee on Affirmative Action and Diversity (CAAD)
CAAD would like reassurance that students will retain control over which professors will be able to view their confidential health information and disability status. The brief cover letter and video do not clarify whether the level of student control over disclosure, or the length of time for which a specific disclosure will be viewable to faculty, will remain the same as in the current system. Option 3 in particular seems as if it could involve a blanket notice of all instructors affiliated with each student who requests accommodation--an option the Senate does not at this time support without changes/clarifications to the process.

Committee on Information Technology (CIT)
Members noted that Option 1 (continuing to require students to email their letters directly to instructors) had the extremely valuable benefit of starting a conversation that ideally normalizes the need for accommodations. However, members recognized that reaching out to an instructor in this way may be intimidating for some students, and possibly result in a delay in notification, or a failure to notify the instructor at all. If Option 1 is adopted and a master list is provided, instructors should be made aware of potential privacy issues, and be provided with guidelines regarding how to utilize the master accommodation list. Members noted that Option 2 (a system notification to instructors prompting review of accommodation letters) has the benefit of simplicity for all involved, and does not force students to communicate directly with an instructor. However, this option does not open up a face-to-face (or in-writing) conversation between the student and instructor that may break the ice to future check-ins or additional support, and for this reason, members found this option less appealing.

Graduate Council (GC)
It is important to ensure that the instructor-facing side of online systems is user-friendly and entails a minimum of time and effort to navigate and access. Additionally, committee members feel that receiving letters at different moments during the quarter—and sometimes very late in the quarter—is cumbersome and can cause additional problems.

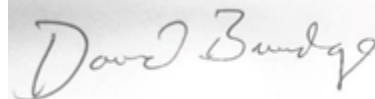**Committee questions/requests for clarification:**

1. Will teaching assistants have access to this information? Could Accommodate be tailored so that it will be clear to students whether an accommodation request to a given faculty member will automatically involve disclosure to a TA as well?
2. One item that faculty felt was not adequately explained is what faculty should do if they receive a request that the faculty member does not feel is a reasonable accommodation. For example, the accommodation request could ask for a waiver of something the faculty member considers a core part of the class. In such situations, should the faculty member talk to the student or to DRC staff members?
3. CIT additionally raised questions about privacy issues with regards to contacting students on the class list of accommodations who do not contact the instructor directly. The committee questioned whether there are privacy issues that instructors should be aware of with regards to contacting students who are on the list, but who do not notify the instructor of their need for accommodations.
4. Will students be able to opt out of having accommodation requests forwarded to instructors if they don't wish to use them in a course? It seems important for students to have a way not to share this information if they prefer not to do so, and for instructors to know if students do not want to use accommodations in a given course.
5. Members were unclear as to what a faculty "signature" indicates and if it is required. Does the digital signature serve as an agreement to provide the accommodation or is it simply an acknowledgement of receipt? As many student petitions are related to DRC accommodations, CCI is particularly concerned that if an instructor fails to "sign" this will be used as evidence that

accommodation was not provided. CCI recommends guidelines be drafted for instructors explaining the process and advising their possible responses.

6. What kind of outreach is the DRC planning to instructors on the rollout of the new system? Ensuring students and instructors know how the system will work and what it requires of them seems essential to making a successful shift to any new system. And timeline for rollout of new system.

7. Could the notification and documentation system be integrated with AIS, the enrollment portal that all instructors use for accessing class rosters and submitting grades? Could AIS course rosters include an additional column where accommodation letters could be linked? This would make it easier for instructors to scroll down the list and see immediately which students have accommodation letters.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback on these options.

Sincerely,

David Brundage, Chair
Academic Senate

cc: Lucy Rojas, Assistant Vice Chancellor and Chief of Staff, Student Affairs and Success
Jody Greene, Special Advisor on Educational Equity and Academic Success
Tom Thompson, DRC Interim Director
Kirsten Silva Gruesz, Chair, Committee on Affirmative Action and Diversity
Yat Li, Chair, Chair, Committee on Courses of Instruction
Tracy Larrabee, Chair, Committee on Educational Policy
Peter Alvaro, Chair, Committee on Information Technology
Catherine Jones, Chair, Committee on Teaching
Melissa Caldwell, Chair, Graduate Council
Matthew Mednick, Director, Academic Senate