

# Differently Abled

The Learning Assistance Programs function as a part of the Student Academic Services that were established to assist students who require a broad range of academic aid. Learning Assistance Programs offer a variety of services for all students at Oberlin College but also design and coordinate instructional programs and services for students with specific learning needs.

Some of the programs offered to all students include: tutorial services, classes related to basic mathematical skills improvement, classes designed to improve reading comprehension and reading rate, classes developed to improve specific study skills and vocabulary, and seminars on time management and the analysis of individual learning styles as well as personalized study technique.

The Houck Computing Center offers one hour courses for all students to familiarize them with the variety of computer applications which are available on campus.

The Expository Writing Department provides tutors to assist students in writing papers. These tutors are located in the Mudd Learning Center.

Finally, incoming students have the option of being assigned a specifically trained student liaison to assist with orientation to the College and to advise in coursework and problem areas.

For Oberlin College students with disabilities, specific accommodations can be arranged on an individual basis, based on documentation that the student provides. Some of the specific services used by Oberlin students with special needs include readers, scribes, testing accommodations, Braille, Braille music, scanned texts, Kurzweil electronic text readers, CCTVs, and note-takers. Students with special needs are encouraged to take advantage of the services whenever appropriate.

## **Adaptive Technologies Center**

Located in Rooms 203 and 204 of the Main Library, the Center is designated for use by students with a disability who have authorization from the Coordinator of Services for

Students with Disabilities. The furniture and work space are designed to accommodate various disabilities. Various computer equipment is housed in the center, including voice recognition software and interactive video.

Approximately three hundred students with disabilities attend Oberlin College each year. Most find Oberlin College a stimulating environment where attitudinal and physical barriers can be overcome or circumvented. Personnel at the College work hard to comply with legislation that requires colleges and universities to make their campuses and programs accessible to all. The following description is an honest assessment of conditions here which prospective students with disabilities may wish to consider.

## **Physical Aspects of the Campus**

Oberlin's campus is compact and located on level ground. Most dormitories and classrooms are clustered within a square half-mile area. There is no campus transportation system. The weather tends to be wet and cold from November through March. Icy sidewalks and rain work against motorized wheelchairs or carts; however, one student who uses crutches recently remarked, "Being from the snowbelt myself, this seems quite accessible compared with most places I've been. No high-rise buildings, and the flatness are the things that help the most." A mixture of architectural styles and periods means that some buildings are fairly accessible, while others are not.

Visually impaired students will find the campus is laid out in a logical pattern of pathways. There are some braille elevator controls with additional braille markers. Most areas of the campus are well illuminated and all stairways have railings.

## **Committee and Support Groups**

The Overcoming Barriers in Instruction and Education (OBIE) Committee was established to identify educational or institutional barriers that discourage differently-abled students, faculty or staff from full participation in the life of the Oberlin College community and to oversee the elimination of these obstacles. The Facilities Accessibility Needs (FAN) Committee was established on an ad hoc basis

to identify the present facilities accessibility needs, to identify physical barriers, to develop immediate and long-range action plans to eliminate barriers, and to present findings and recommendations to the President. Students Overcoming Barriers in Education (SOBIE) was established as a student support group organized to provide peer support for differently-abled students.

## **What's it really like at Oberlin College?**

Some comments from students who enrolled will probably give the most honest view. "To tell the truth, I am attracted to Oberlin because Oberlin is attracted to people like myself. I was made to feel welcome – not courted, nor demeaned, but welcome. It is flattering that Oberlin College seeks handicapped students in this honest, straightforward manner . . . . I believe the only way to be successful in life is to learn to live with the impairment and overcome it, to use the impairment as a strength, not a weakness. I know that I can be successful, having the experience of a handicap."

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