



March 2017

Dear Parents and Families,

As we inch closer toward the mid-way point in the spring semester and the pace of courses picks up, I wanted to say hello and introduce you to a resource that may be helpful to your student. I joined Tufts last June as the director of the Student Accessibility Services (SAS) office. It has been a wonderful experience getting to know the Tufts community over the past 7 months, and I can assure you, as one of the “newbies,” that Tufts is incredibly committed to supporting students throughout their postsecondary educational journey.

One of those supports is the Student Accessibility Services (SAS) office. Our goal is simple: to support students with any type of disability as they navigate their way through the university. And I do mean *any*. Our work is governed by the American’s with Disabilities Act (ADA), which defines a disability as any condition “affecting one or more major life activities.” As you can probably imagine, that means my office helps students with almost everything. Our students have a range of diagnoses, including but not limited to learning disabilities and Attention Deficit Disorders; physical disabilities like broken bones, sprained ankles, and concussions; chronic health disabilities like diabetes, migraines, and epilepsy; mental health disabilities such as depression, anxiety, bi-polar, and obsessive compulsive disorder; and Autism and sensory disabilities. While there are some commonalities in the students we work with, we treat every student as an individual because no two experiences are alike.

SAS supports students with permanent or temporary disabilities in all aspects of their Tufts experience. We provide [academic accommodations](#), for example: [extended time to take exams](#), use of [assistive technology](#), and peer note takers. We also provide [housing accommodations](#) and access to campus events and buildings. Our goal is to level the playing field for students with disabilities and ensure that they have the same opportunities as their peers.

We realize that your student may worry about working with a disability-related office. Importantly, SAS keeps all of your student’s information private. The only thing we ever share is the accommodations that they will receive. And even that is up to your student. Once we meet with them and approve accommodations, it is up to your student to decide who they would like to give their Accommodation Letters too. We believe strongly in empowering students to take control of their college experience and to utilize the services they need the most.

The process of registering with SAS is simpler than most students think. Students go to our website and fill out a [Student Identification of Accommodations Needs form](#). We also need some type of verification of your student’s disability. The type will vary according to the nature of the disability, but may include a neuropsychological report done in high school, hospital discharge paperwork, or a letter from a psychologist who is actively working with your student. Your student can also ask a doctor to fill out our online [Verification of Disability form for Medical Providers](#). Once we receive this information, we reach out to your student and encourage them to come and talk to us so that we can determine what accommodations are appropriate for them.

So how can you help? Great question! Start by empowering your student. Let them know that SAS is a resource here to support them if they need it – even if just for a few weeks or a semester. Have your student fill out the paperwork and call us to schedule an appointment. Remind them to come and visit us, but remember that ultimately the decision is theirs. We don't put any restrictions on when students can register with our office. Some decide to try the semester without accommodations and then come visit the week before finals. That's fine. Some are newer to their diagnosis and are grappling with it as a disability. That's fine too. Encourage them to come and find out what we can do for them. Whether or not they use their accommodations is completely up to them. But either way, we'd love to meet them.

[The SAS team](#) sincerely looks forward to working with your student and helping to make their experience at Tufts a truly great one. Please feel free to call us anytime with questions.

Best,

Kirsten Behling
Director
Student Accessibility Services