College students with disabilities can make the decision whether or not to disclose a diagnosis to their University. Students with disabilities are encouraged to disclose to Disability Support Services and follow a formal DSS registration process in order to officially receive necessary accommodations. However, some students may choose to disclose their disability and details of how they are affected by this disability to instructors. While not inherently wrong to do this, students could put instructors in a challenging position of responding.

Georgetown University recently entered into a resolution agreement with the Office of Civil Rights over a situation involving a student who chose to disclose their disability. The complainant alleged that after disclosing his disability to a faculty member, his ability to succeed in the program was questioned and he was encouraged to leave the program. As a result of the OCR involvement, he was refunded more than $50,000 in tuition and fees and reinstated in the program. While the faculty member made some questionable choices, it does highlight the importance of responding carefully when a student discloses to an instructor.

DSS would encourage an instructor to consider these tips if a student discloses a disability to you:

- If the student is requesting accommodations and hasn’t provided you with a DSS Faculty Notification Letter, refer the student to DSS
- Let the student know that you do not need to know specifics about their disability since that information is confidential
- Be careful not to ask further questions about the specifics of a diagnosis
- Do not disclose or discuss information about a student’s disability with others
- Contact DSS to talk through any next steps that may involve any disclosure from a student
The Disability Support Services office has found a new home in the Hill Student Center. With an inviting lobby, private/spacious testing rooms and study areas, students will find the new space a home away from home. The newly renovated office offers modern, yet comfortable seating and spaces. Students have the opportunity to study in the cubicle areas and take exams in the testing room. There are multiple computers in the cubicles for students to use while waiting for their exams. We also have a dedicated technology lab to assist in training for students using assistive technology. The Disability Support Services office is on the fourth floor of the Hill Student Center and provides a quiet area for providing accommodations to students.

Technology and Note taking:
How a student may minimize the use of peer notetaking

During the fall semester, Disability Support Services trialed Sonocent Notetaking Software with a group of students to get their feedback. The software allows students to create audio recordings of lectures, while interacting with the recording in real time to highlight important sections, and pairing with PowerPoint slides. The student can use the app on a smart phone or a computer to create an interactive recording. An audio recorder can also be used to record the lecture and can be transferred to the software program to allow for interaction. Students’ ability to interact with the program increases engagement in the material.

The responses were overwhelmingly positive and DSS is purchasing the software for the spring semester. The software will be available to students eligible to use an audio recorder and/or a peer notetaker. Some faculty have mentioned an interest in learning more about the program and how it engages different types of learning. Please let DSS know if you would like to learn more.
Spring 2017 has brought numerous changes to Disability Support Services, including launching a new Student Portal. So how does the new Student Portal impact faculty? What changes can you expect to see?

Some accommodations, such as ‘Reasonable Number of Disability-Related Absences’, will require the student to complete an Agreement with Instructor form. Students are required to discuss these forms, which outlines the parameters of the accommodation, with the instructor during their meeting. After the meeting, the student electronically signs the agreement and a copy is sent to the instructor once it is submitted. This should help in highlighting the responsibilities of a student utilizing accommodations.

A major change that faculty will notice are the changes to testing procedure and the automation of the process. Here are some key features you will see:

* A link to the Alternative Testing Agreement will be in the Faculty Notification Letter if the student is eligible for testing accommodations. If you are proctoring your own tests, please follow the link and make the selection indicating you will be proctoring your tests.
* If you complete the testing agreement, approving quizzes/tests/exams to be proctored at the DSS Testing Center, you will receive updates such as:
  ◊ When a student schedules a test
  ◊ Reminders to submit the test
  ◊ Notification in real time when the student completes the test
  ◊ You can choose to utilize the systems secure online drop-off system to deliver your test to DSS. The other options are personal drop-off, email, etc. will remain available.

Many faculty have been responsive and helpful on how we can improve. We want the portal to be as useful to faculty as possible and minimize administrative burden. **Thanks to collaboration with the Division of Student Affairs and the Office of the Provost, we will be launching the Faculty DSS Portal very soon.** The faculty specific portal will have features that allow the faculty member to manage accommodations and automate much of the tasks related to ensuring access. We will continue to update faculty and staff as we continue implementation of the new portal.

Thank you for continuing to make UAB accessible.

UAB Disability Support Services (DSS) is seeking the input of faculty and staff regarding their impressions of the DSS services at UAB. Your feedback is important to us. The survey should take approximately 3-5 minutes of your time. Please respond candidly to the survey items. The information that you provide will remain confidential and will be used for the purpose of assisting DSS staff in improving the quality of services provided to faculty.

[Follow the link to complete the survey.](#)