

## **POLICY ON EDUCATIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

### **Introduction**

- Palmer Theological Seminary has adopted this policy not only to satisfy legal requirements but also to respond ethically to students with learning disabilities who have been or will be admitted into degree programs.
- An operational assumption is that the students in question have the essential competencies of the educational program in which they are or will be registered.

### **Confidentiality**

- Confidential information provided by a student as part of the documentation will be handled in keeping with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It will be shared only as needed to make necessary evaluations and only to persons involved in the process of evaluation, unless the Seminary has the student's informed and written consent to release it.

### **Documentation**

- As the basis for accommodations, a student must provide type-written documentation of specific disabilities. Documentation must be based upon a current evaluation completed within the last three (3) years.
- The evaluation must have been conducted by a qualified professional with a terminal degree in his or her profession, fully trained in differential diagnosis and experienced in working with adults with learning disabilities. For this reason, the documentation must state the name, title and professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about license or certification and area of specialization.
- The procedures used must conform to prevailing standards of practice. These include: 1) conducting a comprehensive diagnostic interview; 2) an assessment of aptitude, academic achievement, and information processing; and 3) a diagnosis that provides clear and specific evidence that a learning disability exists.
- The documentation must: 1) state the diagnosis (indicating specific functional limitations, the comprehensive battery of tests and methods of diagnosis used and the test scores received); 2) provide an adequate assessment of how the disability impacts learning; and 3) make recommendations of specific accommodations that are reasonable, given the nature of the impairment. It should also include a rationale for each recommended accommodation (indicating how the accommodations would reduce or eliminate the impact of the impairment). As needed, the Seminary will contact the diagnostician or other resource persons for interpretation of the data.
- The documentation must not be more than three (3) years old, and preferably less if it is about disabilities that might change over a shorter period of time. Therefore, the diagnosis must be dated, and the student is advised to provide recent and appropriate documentation.
- This policy may be shared with a diagnostician to ensure adequate documentation.

### **Documentation Review Procedures**

- Written requests, and documentation as necessary, must be submitted to the Registrar's Office no later than one week before the first day of the semester/term.
- Requests for accommodations and supporting documentation will be considered by the Associate Registrar, the Dean of the Seminary and, as needed, the Review and Guidance Committee.
- Decisions will be reported to the student with copies provided to each of his or her instructors.

### **Decisions on Accommodations**

- Accommodations will be made on a course-by-course basis only for specific learning tasks that are impacted by a functional impairment that substantially limits academic performance.
- Accommodations may include measures such as the following: extra time for written work and/or tests, auxiliary aids (like taped tests), alternative methods of evaluation (like oral vs written), no penalty for misspelling, priority seating, the use of a tape recorder, and clarification of directions and questions for assignments when the student does not seem to understand.
- Only accommodations that are reasonable will be granted given the diagnosis, the skills and abilities of the student, the impairment the disability causes, the nature of the program or services, and the impact the proposed accommodations would have on the program or services.
- The Seminary reserves the right to review and revise its decisions if there are indications that the diagnosis has changed.

### **Implementation of Procedures**

- The Registrar's Office will place a copy of the decision in the student's file for the record.
- The Registrar's Office will send a copy of the decision to his/her professors.
- The Seminary will distribute a copy of this policy to all instructors and publish it in an official document.
- The Associate Registrar or the Dean of the Seminary will assist in interpreting the decision to professors, as needed.

### **Assurance of Nondiscrimination**

- The Seminary will attempt to implement this policy in keeping with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- The primary goal is to provide equal access to programs and services.

### **Grievance Procedures**

- Grievances may be processed according to grievance policies and procedures stipulated in the Student Handbook.