

Office of Accessibility

Request for Accommodation for an Academic Internship

I. Siena College supports persons with disabilities and encourages their full participation in all academic programs, including internship programs. For the purposes of this policy, “internships” include all field placements and work experiences conducted for academic credit. In accordance with The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Siena College’s Office of Accessibility works to provide accommodations to students with disabilities so that they are afforded the same benefits, experiences, and opportunities as those without disabilities.

II. Internships

As all academic programs at Siena, internship programs must assess student interns on the basis of their ability to complete the internship program rather than on their status as disabled persons. Student interns with disabilities must be able to perform the “essential functions” or meet the “essential eligibility requirements” of the program after they have been provided with any needed accommodation or modification. Each internship site must determine the “essential functions” or “essential eligibility requirements” of its own training program. Pre-admission inquiries as to whether a person is disabled are not permitted, but an internship program may seek as much information as is needed to make a determination that an individual can perform the “essential functions” or meet its “essential eligibility requirements”.

The College has the ultimate responsibility for the student’s academic progress, yet the internship site generally provides all necessary accommodations at the site, and monitors the environment to ensure that no discrimination occurs against students with disabilities. If any concerns related to discrimination arise at the College or internship site, please contact the Equal Opportunity and Employee Relations Specialist/Title IX and ADA/Sec. 504 Coordinator at Siena College.

III. Site Selection

Selecting an internship site that can provide an optimal environment for academic and professional development is essential. It is important to choose a site that maximizes the strengths of each person with a disability and can accommodate individual learning and working styles. Students must identify their needs to assist in determining an appropriate placement. It is the responsibility of the Academic Department to secure the internship site.

IV. Requests for Accommodations

- A. The Director of the Office of Accessibility is responsible for facilitating an interactive process between the student and the Academic Department (those directly involved in administratively facilitating the internship, e.g. field placement coordinator and/or department faculty) and the internship site (persons at the internship site responsible for implementing an accommodation).
- B. A student with a disability is not required to seek an accommodation. Students with disabilities are not required to declare or register, nor may institutions inquire about the presence of a disability. However, if a student does not disclose the disability or request accommodations, an institution is not liable for failing to make accommodations or adjustments for a student's disability. It is imperative that, at this stage of the educational process, students become effective self-advocates, responsible for planning all aspects of their education, and ensuring that the proper faculty, administrators and staff know of any special needs. Accommodations cannot be made retroactive.
- C. If a student knows that he or she will require an accommodation, it is best that the student make a request for accommodation as early as possible, and preferably upon registration for the internship. This will allow for adequate consideration on possible placements and planning at the site. The student will indicate to the Director of the Office of Accessibility (in writing) the request for accommodations. If the student notifies the Academic Department of a disability, the Academic Department may notify the Director of the Office of Accessibility. The Director of the Office of Accessibility will assist with the interactive process with the Academic Department as well as discussing possible accommodations with the internship site, as needed.

V. Accommodations

- A. Accommodations are defined as any adjustment required for a student to have equal access to the college's programs and activities, inside or outside the classroom. Internship programs must make accommodations or adjustments for qualified individuals with known disabilities. The process of providing accommodations should proceed in an individualized, rational and systematic fashion. If a qualified student with a disability identifies the need for an accommodation, the internship site should make a fair attempt to provide an accommodation that will give the individual an opportunity to be equally effective in performing the position's essential functions and to enjoy benefits and privileges equal to those enjoyed by other individuals.
- B. Accommodations do not include the following:
 - Substantial modifications to academic or professional education standards,
 - Modification or adjustment of requirements "essential" to any program of instruction, program or activity, or
 - Modifications or adjustments that result in undue hardship.