

One of the key areas of focus for the WCNR Office of Diversity and Inclusion this year has been looking at accessibility in natural resources. An important aspect of this is ensuring students have access to both academic and workplace accommodations here on CSU's campus. We've interviewed Justin Dove, Director of the Student Disability Center, and Katherine Castañeda, the Interim Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity and Assistant Director for Complaints and Disabilities, to get more information on what both offices have to support CSU students.



**STUDENT
DISABILITY CENTER
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY**

Justin Dove, SDC

1) What is the role of the Student Disability Center?

“The office offers assistance for disabled students with accommodations for academics, housing, and activities. We can provide referrals to other offices on campus as needed. We strive to be present on campus to educate others and encourage others to be inclusive of those who have disabilities. We want to encourage those on campus to make the environment more inclusive from the get-go. Promoting and emphasizing inclusion is really what we want to do more of across campus.”

2) Would you be able to share what types of academic accommodations are often available for student employees here on campus?

“It's important to note that accommodations are based on individual needs. We really try to tailor accommodations to each student. Some common academic accommodations we've provided include extra exam time, note taking assistance, smaller rooms for exams, breaks during classes, and housing assistance [ex: a student may request a single room]. We can also help refer students to the Assistive Technology Resource center to help increase their access in the classroom.”

3) What is the best way for students to get in contact with your office?

“A phone call is the best way for students to get in touch with us, although they can also [email](#) us. If a student has already established a connection with us, they can reach out to their accommodation specialist via email and work with them directly to change or add an accommodation.”

4) Can you please walk me through the steps students would need to take in order to receive academic accommodations?

“The best way is to start by calling the office and working with the front desk to schedule an appointment with an accommodation specialist. The student would be able to meet with their specialist via phone, virtual session, or in person. During the meeting, they will have a conversation about their disability with the accommodation specialist. The specialist may ask about previous accommodations, impacts of their disability, and may request documentation. Any documentation can be useful [ex: 504 plan, IEP], to provide information related to their disability. We don't want documentation to be a gatekeeper for students to come talk to us. We believe students with disabilities are the best expert on living with their disability and rely heavily on the conversation we have with the student. The accommodation specialist then works with the student to send out an accommodation letter to their instructors. The letter does not tell the instructor about what disability the student has, only the accommodations they are requesting. We encourage the students to have a conversation with their instructor about their accommodations. For example, instead of sending a student to the testing center, the instructor may be able to provide that student with extra time or their own exam space outside of the classroom. The accommodation specialist can always address concerns or issues that arise from the instructor”.

5) Are there any misconceptions about student academic accommodations you'd want to address?

“We want students to know that coming into college with a disability is different from what it was for them going into K-12. In K-12, they came into the classroom with the teacher already knowing about their disability and their accommodations. College really allows students to advocate for themselves and tell their story. We want students to know that they are in control of their story and we want them to be proud of their disability and their identity. We also recognize that some may not want their disability identity to be widely known. We give students the ability to decide who gets to know about their disability. The accommodation letters only state the accommodation, not the disability. That is up to the students to tell and discuss with instructors if they choose. Another misconception is that unlike K-12, parents are not in charge of the accommodations process. They can help offer support but ultimately it is up to the student to take the lead on requesting accommodations. Also, using our center does not show up on your degree, transcript, etc. We will not tell employers about accommodations unless the student signs a release. We want to protect your information as much as possible. It's also important for students to know that IEP/504 from high school doesn't transfer automatically, as some accommodations they may have had in the past may not be acceptable in a college setting. However, that information is extremely helpful in assisting us in determining a new related accommodation that will be more appropriate for college. Finally, we also allow students to choose which instructors get the accommodation letters and when students choose to use their accommodations. We want them to be in control of their story.”

6) Is there anything else you'd like students to know about your office, academic accommodations, or anything else related to this topic?

“We are approachable and friendly! We know it can be weird [for students] talking to a stranger about their condition but disability is a natural part of life and students are not alone. Sometimes students feel alone, when there's actually many disabled students, and some that share similar diagnoses. We currently serve 3,000 disabled students! We want students to feel like they can just come talk to us and don't have to worry about lack of medical documentation as a barrier to supporting students. We are just another colleague on campus here to provide that support to them and enable them to be as successful as possible”.

To learn more about the SDC and their resources, visit their [website](#)

To make an appointment, please call (970) 491-6485 or email sdc_csu@colostate.edu.



**OFFICE OF EQUAL
OPPORTUNITY**
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Katherine Castañeda, OEO

1) What is the role of the Office of Equal Opportunity?

“The role of our office is to ensure compliance with laws and policies while preventing discrimination and harassment. We work to manage all ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] requests for employees and student employees. We also work to ensure Section 504 compliance, which allows our office to work well in partnership with the SDC [Student Disability Center]”.

2) Would you be able to share what types of employment accommodations are often available for student employees here on campus?

“Employment accommodations are very unique to individuals and all requests are evaluated on an individual basis. For example, we can work to review student accommodations related to work schedule accommodations that allow for breaks or a sit-stand schedule if needed. We can also work with lighting, air quality, and we work with the Assistive Technology Resource Center on campus to work with mobility and visual accommodations for computers and other technology”.

3) What is the best way for students to get in contact with your office?

“Students can email our group email [oeo@colostate.edu] to set up an office hour appointment with us. Students will need to have an appointment to meet with us but they can also call our office [(970) 491-5836] and get connected with staff members.

4) Can you please walk me through the steps students would need to take in order to receive employment accommodations?

“Our office works collaboratively with the SDC but we do not share confidential information about a health condition without the consent of the individual. Students can give OEO permission to reach out to SDC to get paperwork if needed; however, for a work-related accommodation, OEO generally uses two forms with the 1st form being what accommodations the student is asking for and why. The 2nd form will be given to their licensed healthcare provider to fill out health-related information of the student employee and describe the limitations that it poses on the individual. The healthcare provider can also list any recommendations here, such as what might be their recommendation for an accommodation within their work environment.”

5) Are there any misconceptions about student employment accommodations you'd want to address?

“Employers may not know what information the student has provided to the SDC. Our office won't reach out to SDC unless given permission by the student. We also want students to know that we recognize that they might have different accommodations between an academic environment and their employment environment. It is important for a student employee to contact our office to pursue a workplace accommodation, if needed”.

6) Is there anything else you'd like students to know about your office, employment accommodations, or anything else related to this topic?

“Our office is always here to help and [students] should always feel open and welcome to seek assistance. We want to be able to help and support students in their work environment. OEO's role will be as impartial facilitators of the interactive process under the ADA. We welcome anyone who has questions about the process”.

To learn more about what OEO does, feel free to visit their [website](#)

To make an appointment with the team, reach out to them via email [oeo@colostate.edu] or at (970) 491-5836.