Working With Students with Hearing Impairments

Some students who are hard of hearing may hear only specific frequencies or sounds within a certain volume range. They may rely heavily upon hearing aids and lip reading. Some students who are hard of hearing may never learn sign language. Students who are hard of hearing may have speech impairments as a result of their inability to hear their own voices clearly.

Being deaf or hard of hearing can affect students in several ways:

- They may have difficulty following lectures in large halls, particularly if the acoustics cause echoes or if the speaker talks quietly, rapidly, or unclearly.
- People who have hearing impairments may find it difficult to simultaneously watch demonstrations and follow verbal descriptions, particularly if they are watching a sign language interpreter, a captioning screen, or a speaker's lips.
- Small group discussions may also be difficult to follow or participate in, particularly if the discussion is fast-paced and not moderated, since there is often lag time between a speaker's comments and interpretation.

There are several ways you can direct your speaking style and adjust the "pace" of instruction to make information more accessible to a student with a hearing impairment. Here are some suggestions:

- Face the class when speaking.
- When speaking, make sure the student can see your face and avoid unnecessary pacing and moving.
- Speak clearly and at a normal pace.
- When speaking, avoid obscuring your lips or face with hands, books, or other materials.
- Repeat discussion questions and statements made by other students.
- Write technical terms on the board.
- Write discussion questions/answers on the board.
- During group discussions, encourage students to speak one at a time.
- Use visual aids with few words and large images and fonts.
When possible, provide written outlines, assignments, instructions, and demonstration summaries, and distribute them before the class or other presentations.

- Do not lecture while asking students to fill out forms or attendance sheets.
- Do not lecture while students are reading handouts, watching a video, or reading slides.
- If a student does not understand your statements, please rephrase.
- Videos used in your course should be captioned.

Students who are hard of hearing may use hearing aids. Students who use hearing aids will likely benefit from amplification in other forms such as:

- Assistive listening devices (ALDs) like hearing aids
- Personal neck loops
- Audio induction loop assistive listening systems
- FM amplification systems, which require the presenter to wear a small microphone to transmit amplified sound to the student

Hearing impairments can affect each person in a unique way and therefore, accommodation strategies may also be unique. Please have a private conversation with your student before the first class, if possible, to find out what works best for their situation.

For questions or concerns, please contact Cindy Yamnitz, Assistive Technology Program Coordinator, at 314-246-4245 or cynthiayamnitz36@webster.edu.