What Constitutes a Fundamental Alteration?

A fundamental alteration means any change to a course curriculum or course of study that is so significant that it alters the required objectives or content of the curriculum in the approved course outline of record. (Title 5 section 56001)

Disability law requires that institutions provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities; however, disability law also requires that students with disabilities meet the “essential,” “academic,” and “technical” standards of the class/program/college.

There may be times when a student requests an accommodation that an instructor believes may compromise the academic integrity or create a fundamental alteration of the course and/or program. In such cases, the college must objectively seek to determine whether an accommodation fundamentally alters the nature of the course. To undertake this process, faculty and DESP staff will work together to:

- Identify the essential academic standards of the course as delineated in the course outline of record rather than in a syllabus for a particular class.
- Articulate specific requirements that individual instructors believe are fundamental to teaching the course/program.
- Identify the unique qualities of the course/program in relation to its overall objectives and any program in which the course is required.
- Engage in “reasoned deliberation” as to whether modification of an assignment, course/program would change the fundamental academic standards.