Documentation Guidelines for a Physical, Mobility, or other Health Issue

To receive accommodation at UWRF for a difficult physical, mobility, or other health type of issue students should provide the Ability Services office enough information to allow a sufficient understanding of the issue and how it creates a substantial need for the accommodation. The information should be in writing and composed by an appropriately licensed expert (probably a doctor). It should include:

1. The expert’s name, phone number, name of the agency and postal address where the expert works, an indication of the expert’s credentials to confirm there’s sufficient expertise on the issue (some clinicians attach a vita for this purpose), and be signed and dated by the expert.

2. A historical summary of the issue, indicating how it arose and any significant developments over time.

3. A description of the clinical methods that were used to evaluate the issue.

4. A list of the student’s current symptoms, indicating their magnitudes, duration and frequency; outwardly assign a diagnosis; and, describe any other important circumstances that are needed to understand the issue, such as how it may be expected to change over time.

5. An explanation of how the issue will substantially limit the student in relation to an important aspect of college. For limitations related to learning the focus could be such things as: attending classes; taking notes during lectures; writing papers; performing reading assignments; giving speeches; taking tests, etc.. For limitations related to the physical aspects of a campus the explanation could focus on such things as: relatively small classroom desks; use of computers; traveling from one building to another; using stairways; living in a residential hall, etc..

6. A recommendation for the kinds of reasonable and appropriate accommodations that will be necessary to create equal access and opportunity for the student’s college education.

Concise statements on those topics may be sufficient if they adequately describe the circumstances. Pages copied directly from a medical file rarely meet all these guidelines (typically they don’t discuss the limitations or recommendations that pertain to a college education). Similarly, documentation may not meet the guidelines if it simply recommends how a student should be accommodated without adequately delineating the nature of the issue. The objective is that documentation should provide enough information that a lay person can understand the situation and make accurate decisions regarding the specific kinds of accommodations which seem necessary. Thus, the best documentation may be both the summary of a relatively recent evaluation along with an expert’s explanation regarding how the issue will limit the student in relation to a college education or environment.