Welcome to the Student Accommodation and Resources (StAR) semester newsletter. This newsletter is sent at the beginning of every semester to update the JJC community on changes, and great things happening in the StAR Department.

**StAR Welcomes New StAR Coordinator**

Due to the upcoming retirement of current StAR Coordinator, Peggy Doom, StAR welcomes Mindy Diaz as her replacement. Mindy will begin her new position on September 1. During the month of September she will be training and working with Peggy to enable a smooth transition for the department and the students it serves. Mindy was formerly the StAR Intake and Outreach Specialist. Please welcome Mindy to her new position when you see her!

**New StAR Students**

Since the last published Newsletter in January 2015, StAR welcomed 374 new students into the program. StAR continues to meet and add new students to the program on a daily basis. This brings StAR’s enrollment to 715 currently registered students for Fall, 2016. Every new StAR student must attend a mandatory StAR Orientation to become familiar with the StAR office, the use of their accommodations, and the importance of communicating with their instructors who play a vital role in accommodating students.

**StAR Obtains Automatic Door Opener**

The StAR office is now more easily accessible with the installation of an automatic door opener! Students and visitors with mobility issues can now enter the StAR office with greater ease.

**StAR Welcomes New Coordinator**

Mindy Diaz, current Star Intake and Outreach Specialist, has been hired as the new StAR Coordinator.

**New StAR Students**

374 (and counting) new StAR students were welcomed into the StAR Department since January.

**StAR Obtains Automatic Door Opener**

The StAR office door can now be opened by the push of a button making access much more manageable for students!
ReadSpeaker – Screen Reader

ReadSpeaker is a Text to Speech tool that has been integrated into the Canvas Learning Management System and some of the JJC website.

Content simultaneously presented in both audio and visual formats enables students to improve reading comprehension, fluency, accuracy, and concentration. ReadSpeaker benefits students in the following additional ways:

- Meets the needs of students with reading difficulties (dyslexia).
- Helps visually impaired students by reading the text out loud.
- Helps non-native speakers who may have difficulty reading English.
- Helps older and returning students improve their literacy skills.
- Content is accessible anytime, anywhere, and with any connected device.
- Increases retention (Audio format often helps students do better in school).
- Increases the accessibility of online courses and textbooks.

Students can use the service by selecting text on the screen and then clicking on the floating listen-button.

When the button is clicked on, the toolbar will expand.

By clicking on the orange arrow the text will be read aloud and highlighted simultaneously.

ReadSpeaker is compatible with Lockdown browsers, therefore students can take tests online without the need for a reader or for separate text-reading software. As a teaching and learning aid both online and in the classroom, ReadSpeaker gives all students the option to listen to coursework via computers, mobile phones, or tablets. They don’t have to download any extra software, but rather can simply just click and listen to the content.

If you would like a demo, feel free to come to STAR; we would be happy to demonstrate it for you!

StAR Faculty/Staff Survey

StAR would like to gather information regarding faculty and staff’s knowledge of StAR, its services and its purpose. Also, StAR wants to know the level of satisfaction of faculty and staff when working with StAR. Please take a few moments to complete the following survey. Thank you.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/star92016

Accessibility 101

Since access is a civil right, and the right thing to do, it is extremely important that all materials and documents be accessible for all students. Videos that are shown to students or to the public must be captioned. Printed material must be accessible by a screen reader. All students must be able to interact with the college website and the LMS, as well as having access to course assignments, textbooks, and graphical materials. In summary:

- If you haven’t done captioning or audio description for a video…. *then your video is not finished and can’t be released!*
- If your flyer or website can’t be read by people with screen readers…. *then it’s a draft that can’t be shared yet!*
- If your course materials aren’t accessible to all students… *then no students should be using them!*

Accommodation – Flexibility in Attendance

Within each newsletter, StAR highlights an accommodation that some of the StAR students are eligible to receive. This semester’s highlighted accommodation is “Flexibility in Attendance.” There are students who have a documented disability that may cause them to miss more class than is allowed by the course syllabus. This accommodation grants the student a reasonable number of excused absences. However, this adjustment to the attendance policy cannot negatively impact or compromise the essential components or learning outcomes of the class. Exception to the attendance policy does not mean exception to any of the academic requirements of the course.

When students are granted this accommodation, instructors will be sent a letter containing questions set forth by Office of Civil Rights (OCR) that should be taken into consideration when determining the “essential course requirement.” Should you have any questions regarding this accommodation, please do not hesitate to contact the StAR office.

Helpful Instructional Strategies

Many college students with disabilities do not self-advocate or seek StAR support. Statistics have shown that more than half of students identified with a disability in high school do not consider themselves to have a disability when they transition to college. Following are some general instructional strategies that can help all students; those with disabilities and those without:

- Begin each course meeting with an agenda. This helps students maintain attention and focus, as they know what to anticipate next in the class.
- Restate information that is important and remind students often of information they may see on a test.
- Allow specific wait time after an important concept is introduced to provide time for students to process and think about the information.
- Avoid the use of pop quizzes, as these can ultimately evaluate a student’s disability and not his/her knowledge.
- Share PowerPoint presentations to help students focus on the most important ideas and concepts.

StAR Statistics

Some StAR statistics for Spring, 2016 include:

- 1,046 tests were administered.
- 4702 student visits to the StAR office.
- 76% of all StAR students are in “Good Standing” according to the Academic Standards of Progress.

StAR wishes everyone a great Fall semester!