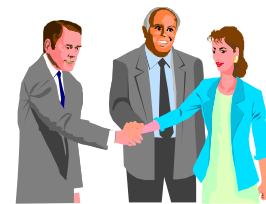


# STRAIGHT TALK



VOLUME 8

A PUBLICATION FROM THE OFFICE OF EEO/AA SERVICES

FALL 2002

## FROM THE DIRECTOR...

The theme of our Fall Newsletter is awareness, patience and appreciation for people with disabilities. In light of this past year, it's especially important to remain united, work together and let our differences shine. It is, therefore, our intention to renew awareness and promote equality and respect for all faculty, staff and students regardless of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or sexual orientation. The Office of EEO/AA Services is committed to enforcing an equal opportunity campus for all.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Velma Jackson-Williams".

Velma Jackson-Williams  
Director of EEO/AA Services

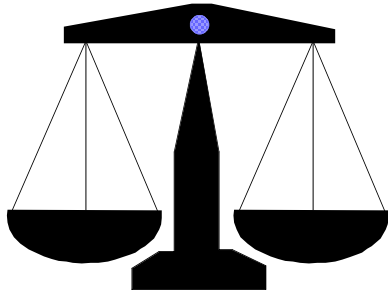


According to the National Organization on Disability (NOD) in Washington, D.C., there are more than 54 million disabled Americans, applicants and employees with disabilities. Since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, more than a million more disabled persons are now employed due to a wide range of factors, including Assistive Technology (AT) and the general economy.

In 1988, Congress wrote the Technology Related Assistance Act which defined Assistive Technology for Disabled Persons. Assistive Technology Devices have been developed with electronics, microprocessors and high performance materials which allow powered mobility, augmentative communication and environmental control. The use of microcomputers requires training and can be customized to fit the individual's needs.

An Assistive Technology Device is defined as "any item, piece of equipment or product system, (whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified or customized), that is used to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities."

There are various computer technologies available to individuals who are blind, have low vision, hearing impairments, learning disabilities and/or physical and mobility challenges. VCU is ready to work with applicants, employees and students to accommodate their disabilities.



## **THE LAW**

On July 26, 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (the "Act" or "ADA") was signed into law. Its purpose is to remove barriers preventing "qualified individuals with disabilities" from enjoying equal opportunities. In summary, the Act contains requirements for new construction, alterations or renovations to buildings and facilities, as well as improving access to the existing facilities of private companies providing goods or services to the public. It also requires that state and local governments provide access to programs offered to the public.

The ADA provides for effective communication with people with disabilities, and requires reasonable modifications of policies and practices that may be discriminatory. Comprehensive civil rights protections are also included in the ADA for individuals with disabilities in the employment arena.

Title I of the Act, which covers employment, became effective on July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1992 for employers with 25 or more employees. On July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1994, that threshold was reduced to 15 or more employees. Title 1 prohibits employment discrimination by employers against "qualified individuals with disabilities" with respect to hiring and all terms, conditions, and privileges of employment. Private employers, state and local governments, employment agencies, labor unions and joint labor-management committees all must comply with Title I of the ADA.

A person with a disability, as defined by the ADA is an individual who:

1. has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of his/her major life activities;
2. has a record of such an impairment (designed to protect people with a history of a disability from discrimination, such as persons with a history of cancer, heart disease or mental illness, whose illnesses are controlled, cured or in remission); or,
3. is regarded as having such an impairment (designed to protect people who are not substantially limited in a major life activity from discrimination but are perceived to have such a limitation, i.e., an employee discharged based on a rumor that the individual has AIDS).

Disabilities may include, but are not limited to, mental, physical, and emotional disabilities; mobility and speech impairments; and illnesses and diseases including AIDS, cancer and seizure disorders.

"Success is to be measured not so much by the position one has reached in life, as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed."

--Booker T. Washington

## HOW DOES THE LAW PERTAIN TO VCU?

### **FACULTY and STAFF:**

It is almost certain that during an academic year, our faculty will encounter students with disabilities in their classrooms. These students may require academic adjustments to ensure equal access to all programs, services and activities at Virginia Commonwealth University.

For this reason, VCU has published a handbook to heighten the awareness of faculty concerning the rights of students with disabilities, as mandated by federal and state laws. The handbook provides suggestions for ensuring equal opportunities on our campuses. This information is available on the University's website at <http://www.vcu.edu/eeoaa/facada.html>. For a copy of this handbook in an alternate format, please contact the Office of EEO/AA Services at (804) 828-1347.

### **STUDENTS:**

Our primary goal is to ensure that VCU students with disabilities have an opportunity to participate in all educational programs and activities in the most appropriate integrated setting. To meet this goal, we have made several resources available to students. All students who view themselves as having a disability are encouraged to contact the Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities on their campus. The Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities will provide assistance to ensure access to classes, programs and activities and will provide academic adjustments on a case-by-case basis.

Services for Students with Disabilities can be reached at the Academic Campus at Voice/TTY: (804) 828-2253. For the MCV Campus: Voice: (804) 828-9782; TTY: (804) 828-4608



### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY & AFFIRMATIVE ACTION MISSION:**

VCU is committed to equal opportunity in education and employment for everyone on campus, without regard to race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or sexual orientation. In addition, VCU takes affirmative action in employment and advancement of covered veterans, individuals with disabilities, women, and minorities. We focus on providing an environment that is free from discrimination, harassment and retaliation. Moreover, we take great pride in treating all of our faculty, staff and students fairly, equally and with the utmost respect.

Students and employees who feel they have been discriminated against or harassed should contact the Office of EEO/AA Services for information on their rights, options, and resources. We may be reached at (804) 828-1347.



**IF YOU DIDN'T KNOW:**

**ACCEPTABLE TERMS:**

A person is **DISABLED**

A person is **VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

A person **USES A WHEEL CHAIR**

A Person has a **SPEECH DISABILITY**,  
has **LIMITED SPEECH**, is **WITHOUT SPEECH**

People who **ARE DEAF**

A Person is **BLIND**

People **WITH MENTAL ILLNESS**

People **WITH MENTAL RETARDATION**

A person has a **SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY**

**UNACCEPTABLE TERMS:**

NOT "handicapped", or "crippled" or "deformed"

NOT "the visually impaired" or "partly blind"

NOT "wheelchair bound" or "confined to a wheel chair"

NOT "mute", or "unable to speak" or "speech impaired"

NOT "the deaf", or "deaf mute"

NOT "the blind", or "person who suffers from blindness"

NOT "the mentally ill", or "mentally ill people"

NOT "the retarded", or "the mentally retarded"

NOT "learning disabled"

**Remember: ALWAYS PUT THE PERSON FIRST!**

***(Not The Disability!)***



"What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matter compared to what lies within us."

--Ralph Waldo Emerson