

N4A



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The landscape of higher education is changing rapidly, and increasingly, institutions are seeing a rise in students with education impacting disabilities (EID) who need academic accommodations. Institutions must address the needs of students within this population by learning about academic accommodations and providing the educational and technological tools their learning support staff needs in order to adequately help with these educational concerns. Federal law mandates, in Section 504 and Title II, that educational institutions provide equal access for individuals with disabilities to all educational benefits and opportunities.

Therefore, additional education for learning specialists must be supported by institutions and athletics administrators alike so that those working with that student population directly can continue to positively impact, and aid in, their academic growth and development.

Historically, accommodations have fallen into two categories: *instruction* and *examination*. Instructional accommodations refer to, and may impact, the way in which a student learns. These accommodations can include things such as note takers, faculty provided lecture notes, the ability to record lectures, and additional time to complete class assignments. Examination accommodations, by contrast, pertain to the ways in which students demonstrate their learning. These accommodations often include things like extended time on exams or quizzes, exam settings with reduced distractions, using a computer to type an exam instead of handwritten responses, taking breaks during exams, and more.

From these two original branches, accommodations have shifted to also include things like *technological* accommodations. These include assistive technology devices, software or hardware. Technology has led to more course-accessible materials, and a more inclusive environment within the classroom for both lectures and assessments. Moreover, technology plays an increasingly important role in education at all levels, and given its prevalence in our lives, technology is now being used to help improve instruction and support varying student populations. As the population of students with learning disabilities continues to increase, so does the need for athletics administrators and athletics academic support staff to engage in on-going training(s) to learn more about the needs of this population and the additional ways in which they can be supported.

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The words “technology” and “compliance” together in the same sentence can easily conjure negative feelings about phone call limits or the phrase, “click don’t type.” As technology continues to evolve, we need to be willing to adapt to make our jobs easier. In that spirit, I decided to pose the question, “How can athletics compliance embrace technology?” to see what ChatGPT recommends. See below for a list curated by AI and supplemented with ideas and examples of implementation. Hopefully this sparks creative ideas for your campus. If nothing else, based on some of the compliance scenarios I gave to the system, I can assure you AI can’t handle the nuances of athletics compliance quite yet. Hopefully this gives you the confidence to try to digitize and some comfort to know we aren’t being replaced anytime soon!

1. **Compliance Monitoring Software:** There are

always budget considerations, but if you can move away from paper, do it. The benefits of having a system to help identify issues and log activities across recruiting, eligibility, playing and practice seasons, and more is worth it. I also recommend engaging your software reps as an extended part of your team, connecting at least monthly to troubleshoot, plan, and devise creative monitoring solutions.

2. **Task Management Tools:** Make the old compliance calendar digital! At Pitt, we adopted Monday.com to track projects, investigations, and waivers. It also has boards that allow us to interact with other athletics units on shared projects. Many universities offer institutional and/or department licenses. Talk to IT and see if your institution has something similar.

3. **Communication and Education:** Whether it is automating dead period reminders, recording education sessions to limit make-ups, or building workflows, there are tons of ways to embrace technology in these areas. Be willing to try new things like an Adobe Spark website for recruiting certification rather than a PowerPoint. Ask your stakeholders how they want to receive information and tailor your approach.

4. **Data Analytics:** We track the number of interps per sport and bylaw to identify trends. If a sport isn’t asking questions, maybe we need to ask some ourselves? It’s also a great way to display office output or provide updates to sport administrators on a regular basis.

5. **Cloud Based Solutions and Digital Record Keeping:** Gone are the days of folders and storage cabinets. Scan in those old files and explore whether your institution offers systems like SharePoint or OneDrive. The ability for multiple people to access and edit a document simultaneously and on the go is a lifesaver.

6. **Virtual Reality:** Is the world ready for compliance VR? If someone out there is doing this, I would love to hear about it and nominate you for the annual NAAC Education Award!

Curiosity and creativity help drive innovation. For compliance professionals, embracing new and emerging tools doesn’t just help you keep up, but get ahead!

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