Administrative Policy

Policy Type: Environmental Health and Safety/Risk Management and ACCESS
Policy Title: Service Animals Safety in Laboratories Guidance for Students, Faculty & Staff
Office Responsible: Environmental Health and Safety/Risk Management and ACCESS
Related Procedure: Service Animals Procedure
Related Laws: Americans with Disabilities Act as amended in 2010; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Michigan PA 144 of 2015

Purpose
This guidance is to be used in conjunction with the College’s current Service Animals Procedure which also provides the definitions of Service Animals. The College strives to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for all of its students, faculty, and staff. These guidelines adhere to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as amended in 2010, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as applicable, and the Michigan PA 144 of 2015. The College is committed to allowing persons with disabilities the use of a Service Animal on campus to facilitate their full participation and equal access to the College’s programs and activities.

Scope
The College’s Environmental Health & Safety/Risk Management team has developed this guidance to ensure the safety of students, faculty, staff and Service Animals at OCC laboratories. For students who anticipate working with a Service Animal in the laboratory at any time over the course of their enrollment, the College strives to provide that opportunity without endangering the safety of the student, fellow students, faculty, staff, and the Service Animal.

For its laboratories or any place where there are reasonable and legitimate safety concerns for the student, the Service Animal, or others, the College requires the student to seek advance permission from ACCESS to seek review and provide for appropriate safety arrangements.

Educational Laboratory Legitimate Safety Concerns
a. The College’s laboratories and procedures are designed for the safe use of the facilities by students, faculty, or staff. They are not designed for Service Animals. As such, Service Animals may be exposed to hazards that would otherwise be controlled for human users.

b. Depending on the class, laboratory hazards may include chemical hazards, fire hazards, electrical hazards, or physical hazards.
   i. Chemical hazards include strong acids and/or bases, heavy metals, organic solvents, and other chemicals that may be corrosive, flammable, or toxic, among other things.
   ii. Fire hazards include the use of Bunsen and Fischer burners, or other heating devices.
   iii. Electrical hazards may be present especially in Physics labs, but may be present anywhere electrical equipment is used.
iv. Physical hazards include water or ice on floors creating a slipping hazard, or broken glass.

c. Hazards within the laboratories can result in illness or permanent injuries to the Service Animal, including toxic reactions, blindness, chemical burns, or death.

d. Service Animals are not allowed in a laboratory if they pose a direct or indirect risk of injury to other students and employees. Direct risks include aggressive behavior, or even innocent interactions with classmates during chemical or mechanical manipulations. Indirect risks include being underfoot and creating a trip hazard, urinating in the classroom creating a slip hazard, among other things.

e. In determining whether reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures can be made to allow a miniature horse or other Service Animal into a specific College facility including a laboratory, the College will consider the type, size and weight of the Service Animal, whether the Service Animal is housebroken, whether the handler has sufficient control of the Service Animal, and whether the Service Animal’s presence in a specific facility compromises legitimate safety requirements necessary for the safe operation of the facility.

f. Under normal circumstances, the College is not responsible for any injuries or illnesses suffered by a Service Animal in College facilities.

Student Responsibilities and Required Precautions to Reduce the Risk of Injury

a. Students utilizing the assistance of a Service Animal are responsible for the behavior of the animal and are expected to take steps to ensure that negative impacts to fellow students, faculty, and staff are minimized.

b. If a Service Animal becomes disruptive to a class, the student and Service Animal may be asked to leave the lab until the disruption can be remedied. Similarly, if the Service Animal is not housebroken, the student may be asked to remove the Service Animal from the premises.

c. Service Animals must be under the control of the student and shall have a harness, leash or other tether, unless the student is unable because of a disability to use a harness, leash, or other tether, or the use of a harness, leash, or other tether would interfere with the Service Animal’s safe and effective performance of work or tasks, in which case, the Service Animal shall be otherwise under the student’s control. “Otherwise under the student’s control” includes, but is not limited to, voice control or signals.

d. Service Animals are required to wear the equivalent personal protective equipment as students in the lab as a precaution to reduce the risks of illness or injury. Students must acquire goggles, foot coverings, and a raincoat to help prevent contact with spilled or splashed chemicals, or broken glass. The purchase of this equipment is the sole responsibility of the student and the College cannot ensure the adequacy of such equipment in protecting against all hazards within the laboratory.

Change Log
1-21-2020 Effective date