SERVICE ANIMAL ETIQUETTE

We have a student in our class who is accompanied by a service dog and there is some service animal etiquette that we would like all students to be aware of. These tips not only apply to the student in this course, but largely apply to all people who use service animals. Service animals are being utilized to mitigate many different types of disabilities, they accompany their handlers everywhere and are trained to guide them safely within the environment.

Service animals are defined by the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, mobility assist, alerting someone to the onset of a medical condition and protecting a person who is experiencing symptoms of a medical condition, reminding a person with a mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties. Service animals are working animals, not pets.

When you see a service animal, do not interact with the animal in any way. They are working animals and their focus needs to be on their job. Please do not make eye contact, address them directly, pet or touch them, distract them, or attempt to control them or offer them food or treats. There is a group on campus called Illini Service Dogs that occasionally *do* encourage dogs in-training to interact with the public for socialization, as part of their training. However, those dogs are in-training and they are not mitigating a disability like a working team. If you are in doubt about whether you should interact with a service dog the safest thing to do is to *not* interact directly with the dog and let the handler indicate whether you can interact with the animal.

There needs to be sufficient room for a service animal. In this class, the service dog generally sits to the left of his handler and rests on the ground. This space needs to be respected so that he isn’t tripped over, stepped on, or stepped over. When navigating the campus, be careful not to crowd service animals (especially in closed spaces like buses or elevators).

People with disabilities, who are part of a working team with a service animal, often will field dozens of questions daily about their animals, like “What's his name?” “What kind of dog is he?” “What does he do?” or comments about how much they like the service animal, or how beautiful they are. This kind of attention can often be distracting and time consuming to the student who, after all, is trying to go to school and learn just like everyone else. **It’s best not to ask a handler these questions.** Some handlers may volunteer information about their service animal, and if they do, that’s a sign that it’s ok to ask questions!