October 25, 2010

To: Deans and Department Heads

From: Angelo Gomez, Director of the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity

Re: Video captioning and reasonable accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act

As we begin another busy academic year, it is important that we attend to our responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act to ensure that students with disabilities have equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from all of our programs, services, and activities.

One of these responsibilities extends to our communications. When we provide programs through videos we must ensure equal opportunity for success to students who are deaf or hard of hearing. This can be accomplished by using captioned video resources—by purchasing captioned video resources whenever possible and by working with Disability Access Services to provide captioning on uncaptioned video resources. Common types of videos that should be captioned include, but are not limited to: videos from internet resources, video sharing websites (e.g., YouTube), DVDs, and video cassettes.

Refusal of this form of accommodation is not reasonable unless it can be established after the appropriate deliberative process that this form of accommodation would fundamentally alter the course or program, or is unduly burdensome, or that there are reasonable alternatives. Only rarely can these justifications for refusal be demonstrated. It generally is not unduly burdensome that the faculty member may have to plan a little further in advance or spend the minimal time needed to request captioning.

For captioning of uncaptioned videos we ask that faculty please work with Disability Access Services (DAS)(7-4098) to arrange for captioning of videos that will be used in the course. If at all possible, please plan ahead as much as possible by giving at least two weeks notice of the need for captioning. If two weeks simply is not possible, DAS will try to meet your needs as their staffing capacity allows; however, the more notice the better. Funding for captioning of videos shown in the classroom is provided by Disability Access Services. There is a small cost for the captioning of videos used in department sponsored public events. If your department is unable to cover captioning costs or needs financial assistance, please contact the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity (7-3556).

We request that deans and department heads bring this issue to the attention of all teaching faculty. Please direct any questions regarding this memo to the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity (7-3556).

We thank you for cooperating in ensuring equality of educational opportunity.