

THE DASS INSIDER

A NEWSLETTER FOR SMU FACULTY

INFORMATION ON DISABILITY SERVICES AND ACCESS ISSUES AFFECTING YOUR STUDENTS AND CLASSES



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May Term Reminders from DASS



*DASS has limited ability to proctor tests during May term. Please consider ways to manage this need in the classroom or your department.

*Early availability of syllabi allow students needing alternate formats of books to receive these in time for class.

*Consider how accommodations like extended time will be affected by longer class times.

Planning for Accommodations During Final Exams

DASS typically proctors over 200 exams during finals, most with different instructions. We are happy to continue providing test proctoring service to instructors who do not have the resources to test their students with accommodations within the department. However, it is important to consider a few things:



DASS Room 217 - test proctoring area

Students must schedule their final exam(s) with DASS using our Online Scheduler. The deadline to schedule with DASS is 4/20/16. This deadline allows for us to start our work on checking accuracy of test times, creating proctor forms, arranging proctor coverage for the heavy schedule, and planning for unique accommodation needs like readers and scribes. Please note a cell phone is required from faculty in order to process final exam proctoring requests.

If you have not already communicated with your DASS students about finals, please take them aside and discuss the plan. If testing at DASS is the only option, direct them to follow the procedures ASAP. If students fail to follow our procedures for testing, we will direct them back to their instructors to work out the necessary accommodations.

Just because DASS has denied a student to test at DASS because they missed our deadline does NOT mean the faculty member should necessarily deny the accommodation for the upcoming test. If it is reasonable for you to put the accommodation in place, then you should do so. Similar to procedures for DASS testing during the regular part of the semester, we have limitations for our back-up test proctoring. Please review our Test Proctoring page and the Finals document for faculty and students, found at the bottom of the page [HERE](#).

Roles & Responsibilities

During a recent presentation to the Perkins School of Theology faculty, DASS staff shared some information that was designed to help everyone understand the roles and responsibilities of us all, when working with students with disabilities. Although not exhaustive, it delineates what is expected of the University, the DASS office, the student, and faculty members and their departments.

For example, the University is responsible for ensuring our physical space is accessible to all, free from barriers that would prevent students with disabilities from participating or accessing their education. The faculty member and department is responsible for structuring degree programs, courses, materials, and physical space so that students with disabilities can participate equally. For the complete document, see [DASS Resources](#).

Reduced Distraction Testing: Helpful Tips

DASS answers many of our faculty members' Frequently Asked Questions on our website.

Here is one that relates to a very common accommodation for students with a variety of conditions.

How do I test students who need a reduced distraction testing space as an accommodation?

Putting easily distracted students (e.g., those with ADHD or anxiety disorders) in a controlled, small-group testing environment lessens distractions and lowers anxiety. We have such a testing environment here at DASS, but you can create one as well.

A closed space without foot traffic is ideal, such as an office, carrel, conference room, or small classroom. Phones, printers, copiers, computers, and the like should be turned off. Placing a sign on the testing room door asking people to keep voices down and not to knock helps considerably.

The accommodation does not require the stu-

dent to test alone (separately), but do keep the group testing numbers small and ensure that students have plenty of space between them. Avoid interrupting the test to move a student to another testing space; such a disruption runs counter to the idea of a reduced distraction environment.

Note that a reduced distraction testing space does not mean distraction-free; no such place exists on SMU's campus, nor is such a strict level of control required.

Do students taking an exam on ExamSoft need a reduced distraction testing environment, too?

If you use ExamSoft, students with this accommodation still need a reduced distraction location to take the test.

DASS can proctor the exam if it is reformatted to a paper version; otherwise, you should plan to test the student using the reduced distraction testing area tips above. Contact your ExamSoft rep or OIT (help@smu.edu) for instructions on how to import/export a test in ExamSoft.

You'll find other great FAQs at <http://www.smu.edu/Provost/ALEC/DASS/FAQ/ForFaculty#top>

2015 Extra Mile Award Recipients



Laurie Nuchereno



Steve Lee



Sheri Kunovich



"I felt like an alien. I always felt like I never belonged to any group that I wanted to belong to."
 Steven Spielberg, movie maker, dyslexic, struggled with math, dropped out of high school



Faculty Focus: Extra Mile Awards

We are happy to announce the 2016 Extra Mile Award recipients! Sheri Kunovich (Associate Professor, Dedman College, Sociology), Steve Lee (Adjunct Lecturer, Meadows School of the Arts, Communications), and Laurie Nuchereno (Adjunct Lecturer, Dedman College, Economics) join the twenty other faculty members to whom SMU has awarded this honor since 2008.

Students for New Learning, an organization chartered by the Student Senate to provide support and networking opportunities for students with LD and ADHD, identifies deserving faculty members to receive this award at the Hilltop Excellence Awards each year. The President's Commission on the Needs of Persons with Disabilities (PCNPD) provides funding and support for this award, demonstrating how much SMU values faculty sensitivity to this somewhat vulnerable, yet very capable population.

Please congratulate your colleagues in their continuing pursuit of excellent teaching, while showing sensitivity, kindness, and a welcoming nature. It makes a difference!

DASS Student Profile: Carlton Adams, Student Body President

What does a typical day for SMU's Student Body President hold? DASS Student and Hunt Scholar Carlton Adams describes it as a mix of meetings, presentations, class, homework, social events, networking, and a lot of fun! As he prepares to end his term as president, DASS asked Carlton to share his insights on successfully managing his many roles on campus as a student with a learning difference.



What impacts from your learning differences have required the most energy to manage at SMU? Can you share how you managed these at different times in your academic history?

I became aware of my learning differences late my sophomore year, thanks to the support and resources of the Disability Accommodations and Success Strategies Office, particularly Michele Bufkin and Alexa Taylor. Learning disabilities for any student on campus require more attention than your average member of the SMU community may realize. External correspondence with Professors through communication is key, an art I have had to learn and am still learning. Learning differences require more attention and more time to work through a traditional course load or curriculum a student without differences pursue with ease. Late my junior year, I decided to run for Student Body President on top of working through my understanding of my newly discovered learning differences. Time management was a key skill the DASS office alongside the demands of ultimately being elected Student Body President has taught me. Putting extra hours into my academics as well as scheduling and completing assignments both for class and for my role combined required an understanding and acknowledgement of the management any learning disability requires.

What advice would you give students on being a successful student at SMU with a learning disability?

My #1 piece of advice for a student with a learning disability at SMU is to be sure to get on top of your communication with your professors at the beginning of the school year, whether that is after class or during office hours, to discuss your accommodations and be transparent with your expectations. Do not be ashamed or embarrassed that you struggle with learning differences, embrace what you know about yourself and the accommodations that aid your academic success, and don't be afraid to use your accommodations to the fullest extent.

How has being a student leader particularly affected how you manage the impacts from your learning differences? Has it offered any different perspectives on the SMU experience?

Being in a student leadership role has given me an opportunity to spread awareness of the struggles college-aged students face with learning disabilities. My leadership role as Student Body President has given me the confidence to speak about these differences that have led to academic struggles. The sooner anyone facing learning disabilities can acknowledge the differences are a part of who you are, and not what defines you, you will be on a path for success. This experience and my continual coping with learning disabilities have offered a unique perspective of the SMU experience. This has taught me that no matter what assumptions or preconceived notions a faculty, staff, administrator or peer has, no one ever knows the struggles students face behind the facade. Whether these struggles are learning differences or mental health issues, such as depression, alcohol/substance abuse, any setback in a college-aged student's life, the role of the institution is to support and provide necessary resources. Being a part of the improved awareness of opportunities for these students have been a privilege, and hope it continues in the years to come. My experience couldn't have been better, and the opportunity to share my story to those who continually work to improve the experience is a reward for me. If one student has a better experience because of the conversations myself and University leadership has had surrounding these issues, my leadership was worthwhile.

DASS Student Profile: Carlton Adams, Student Body President (cont.)

How have accommodations and SMU support services helped you manage these impacts?

Working through the steps of acknowledging and working through learning disabilities is not simple, but SMU support services have been there the entire way. Without their office and the individuals that play a crucial role in aiding students, I would not be where I am today. College students, at times including myself, often believe we have the answers to any questions—but we don't. This is when the DASS office and all SMU support services stepped in and provided the support. The support and needs of Mustangs are a case-by-case basis, an individual experience different from the next peer. These devoted individuals and offices steer us back to our own path of success. Accommodations build a knowledge and awareness that help all SMU students with learning differences, including myself, far beyond our time on the Hilltop.

What advice would you give SMU faculty about working with students with disabilities?

My piece of advice would be to understand that no matter the struggle, there is a reason the student you educate needs their accommodations. Whatever the disability may be, the process to provide accommodation letters for faculty at the beginning of every semester is not an easy one. Encouraging and showing support of your understanding, paired with aiding in the facilitation of communication is your role. The SMU faculty has displayed this to me (and then some), but all students have differing experiences. Professor Reynolds, one of my Economics Professors, was an incredible advocate and played a vital role in my confidence surrounding my learning differences. Her discussion with me following one of my exams was uplifting, and shed a positive light on learning disabilities. The incredible Dr. Helen Reynolds helped me realize that accommodations are in place for a reason, and to never underestimate my potential for success in the classroom.

What are your plans after graduation?

I will be pursuing graduation in December 2016 to (hopefully) receive 2 Bachelor's of Arts and one Bachelor's of Science. Following graduation in December, my plans include applying for a Master's program at SMU. Where will I be after that? To be determined!

Health, Safety and Risk Walk—Thursday, April 28

Students will be implementing the first **Health, Safety, and Risk Walk** at SMU and we need faculty volunteers! The purpose of the walk is to highlight observations in regards to the health, safety, and risk of students, particularly those with disabilities. Students without physical disabilities can easily walk through mud to get to class or maneuver around newly placed construction signs if need be, but not all students are able to bypass these barriers with such ease. This event will serve as a catalyst for getting the SMU faculty, staff, administration and students involved in accommodating the needs of all students, both with and without disabilities.

Participants will meet at the flagpole between 10:50AM-11:00AM to receive materials and instructions, and the walk itself will occur between 11:00am and 12:15pm. Group leaders will guide participants assigned to one of six campus quadrants. Thank you to Student Senate for helping to make SMU the most accepting and accommodating campus for all students! To volunteer, email adiew@smu.edu.

VISIT US ONLINE AT
WWW.SMU.EDU/ALEC/DASS.ASP

VISIT US AT DASS

Please include this statement in your syllabus:

Disability Accommodations: Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS). Students can call 214-768-1470 or visit <http://www.smu.edu/Provost/ALEC/DASS> to begin the process. Once registered, students should then schedule an appointment with the professor as early in the semester as possible, present a DASS Accommodation Letter, and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retro-active and require advance notice to implement.

5800 Ownby Drive—Suite 202 Loyd Center
2nd Floor - Altshuler Learning Enhancement Center
Entrance near Gate 3 of Ford Stadium
Parking in the Meadows Garage

Phone: 214-768-1470
Email: dass@smu.edu



DASS IS MORE THAN ACCOMMODATIONS.

For resources that may be helpful to faculty and staff, please visit:
<http://www.smu.edu/Provost/ALEC/DASS/Resources/ForFaculty>