

THE DASS INSIDER

A NEWSLETTER FOR SMU FACULTY

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



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Welcome Back! Meet the DASS Office

DASS is the primary contact for all SMU students with disabilities. Our staff is dedicated to helping students receive equal opportunities to participate in the University's curriculum, programs and activities on campus. DASS supports students who are significantly impacted by a condition that is considered a disability. These conditions include learning disabilities, physical disabilities, psychiatric disorders and others.

In addition to putting accommodations in place for students, and providing back-up test proctoring for faculty, DASS also offers valuable academic counseling for undergraduates with learning and attention disorders.

Meet our DASS team



Alexa Taylor, DASS Lead & Senior Assoc. Director of A-LEC
Alexa supervises the other four full-time staff, collaborates with departments and faculty members on accommodation issues, reviews and revises operational processes, and handles special projects for DASS. She has been with SMU for 15 years.

Michelle Bufkin, Senior Accommodations Coordinator
Michelle primarily reviews accommodation requests from students with LD or ADHD. She is also a Certified Academic Language Therapist, a Licensed Dyslexia Therapist, an SMU Mom, and has been with SMU for nine years.

Karen Turbeville, Accommodations Coordinator
Karen primarily reviews accommodation requests from students with medical or psychiatric conditions. Her experience as an educator in special education gives her a unique perspective to help students transition from high school to SMU. She is also an SMU Mom and has been with SMU for two years.

David Tylicki, Learning Specialist

David primarily provides academic counseling and coaching to students with learning and attention disorders, assisting them with goal setting, time management, self-awareness and advocacy skills. He has been at SMU for four years.

Candy Brown, Administrative Assistant

Candy receives and directs all paperwork and correspondence coming to DASS, along with coordinating test proctoring for DASS students. She is the voice on the other end of the line or email when you contact DASS! She has been with SMU for four years.

Our team welcomes any questions from faculty to assist them in working with students with any disability-related need.

Save the Date: Disability Awareness Exhibit Coming in October



Join us on **Tuesday, Oct. 25th** in the lobby of Owen Fine Arts Center for a powerful exhibit that will highlight disabilities and encourage awareness and inclusion. When it comes to interacting with individuals with disabilities, people ask, "What should I do?", "How should I respond?", "Is it okay to say that?", or "How can I become an ally?". The Ability Exhibit will attempt to answer these questions and teach our SMU community a few things about living (and thriving) with a disability.

Please make a point to spend a few minutes walking through the exhibit on 10/25/16. The exhibit is sponsored jointly by the DASS office, SMU's President's Commission on the Needs of Persons with Disabilities (PCNPD), the Meadows School of the Arts, and Students for New Learning.

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Successful Professionals with Dyslexia: David Boies

*Watch a [short video](#) about how famed attorney David Boies learned of his dyslexia and how it has impacted his work within law.

"I think my dyslexia has helped me in a number of ways. Because I have difficulty reading, I had to learn to speak without notes, which in court can be much more effective. It also taught me to organize my thoughts in a clear and comprehensible way. That also can be a powerful tool."

Shedding Some Light on ADHD—Part One

Even with all of the publicity around Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADHD, I find most people don't really know what it is. The misconceptions start with the very name. First off, not everyone who has ADHD has hyperactivity. Second, "Attention Deficit" makes it sound like a person with ADHD lacks attention, when the fact is they are paying attention to so many things at the same time, that they can't focus on just one, and none with any depth. Finally, how much of ADHD is truly a "Disorder?" Some diagnosed with ADHD find ways to work around and manage symptoms without prescription medication, leading happy and productive lives. Others claim that

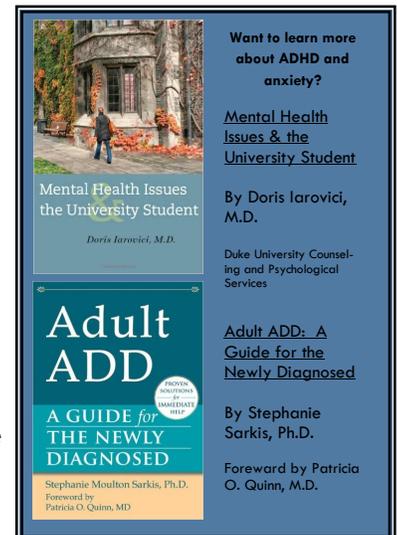
our society caters to so-called "neuro-typicals" rather than those with attentional and learning differences, thus the "disorder" label is cultural more than medical.

So really— what is it? Research over the past decade or so continues to support the theory that ADHD is a neurologically-based condition. In other words, it's in the brain itself, the hard-wiring. Therefore, ADHD is considered a developmental disorder, signs always appearing in childhood, even though it may not be formally diagnosed until later. At its most basic, ADHD is a substantial difficulty to manage one's attention and impulses. It sometimes, but not always, includes hyperactivity.

My favorite way to describe ADHD to a neuro-typical person is compare attention to a flashlight. A neuro-typical person turns on their flashlight in a dark room. It emits a bright, constant, tight beam. They shine it around the room in an orderly way, assessing floor, walls, ceiling and contents, and then they confidently move through the room. The person with ADHD has a different experience. Their flashlight flickers and the beam it emits changes from wide to narrow depending on where they shine it, causing anxiety and self-doubt about moving through this room. Rather than evaluate the room as a whole, they might just focus on things that look interesting, maybe not even checking to see if there's a hole in the floor before walking up to investigate one. They might

the whole room quickly, even randomly, before moving through it to see if there's something more interesting beyond. Or perhaps they give up, sit down, and say to themselves, "I'll never be able to do this." I paint with broad strokes here, but I think the analogy is a powerful one.

David Tylicki,
DASS Learning Specialist



Managing Anxiety and Depression in the Classroom

Anxiety and depression are prevalent problems in colleges across the country. During college, students experience new and unique stressors. College students experience significant transitions and many firsts, including a new lifestyle, friends, roommates, exposure to new social activities and new freedoms. When students can't manage these firsts, they're more likely to struggle. If students don't have adequate coping skills or come to school with heightened anxiety, they can encounter significant issues. Often anxiety will present as part of other disorders, including ADHD, depression, and autism spectrum disorders. Often, it is faculty who first see the indications of anxiety.

Many students are willing to be open and forthcoming about their anxiety and how it affects them in class. They may come to you and tell you how anxiety impacts class attendance, note taking and test taking. The best approach is to offer acceptance and understanding. Acknowledge that you understand they are feeling anxious and overwhelmed. Remind the student that CAPS and DASS are available to assist them if needed.

Students may exhibit anxiety in a variety of ways. Some students will sit in the back of the room, head down, never utter a word, and be the first to leave class. Others will pepper you with questions, during and after class, spend great amounts of time in your office to try to understand every word said in class. No two students will present anxiety in the same way. Again, DASS is here to assist both the student and the professor to find a happy medium and assist the student in finding accommodations, when appropriate, which can help minimize the impact of anxiety.

Faculty Interview: Brita Andercheck

DASS enjoys collaborating with faculty to solve classroom needs for DASS students.

This issue, we highlight Professor Brita Andercheck in the Department of Sociology, and her willingness to use methods to assist students in reaching their potential.

As a fairly new instructor at SMU, what have you learned about disability support here?

The open house at the A-LEC ** at the beginning of the year was a great primer to learn about the services SMU provides to students. It was very helpful not only to hear about the services offered by DASS, but also to get to meet the staff members there.

It really helped open lines of communication when I had questions about certain accommodations or what would be the best approach to take to help a student with a specific learning challenge.

I appreciate that DASS has an individualized approach to each student's learning situation. It's valuable for me, as a faculty member in the classroom, to have the benefit of the DASS staff members specialized knowledge about students and their situations, so that I can ensure I am delivering the information in the most accessible way possible.

What would you like to know more about?

There is always more to learn! In particular, I would love to learn about strategies for reaching students with the most common accommodations that we see here at SMU.

It would be great to workshop with DASS staff and other faculty to find out creative solutions they have used to address different learning styles in their own classrooms.

Describe an interaction with a student with a disability that led you to learn something about that person or about how to help your students.

I had a student who had difficulty focusing and processing information. This student worked very hard and came to my office hours weekly for help. We would review the material we had covered in the past week and make sure he was understanding major concepts. Despite our extra session, this student still did not perform as well on his first exam as I had anticipated, based on the extra time we were spending on the material.

So I called over to the DASS office to see if they had any suggestions for things I could do to help this student internalize the information better. They mentioned that this student could focus better if he was also physically moving. So we started walking. First, to the printer, then around the building and eventually on the boulevard while discussing key concepts and theories from class. Even something as simple as this walking really made a measurable difference in the student's class performance.

What can DASS do to support faculty when working with their students with disabilities?

It's so important for DASS to be there as an expert advisor for faculty, especially when dealing with complicated cases. As faculty members, our expertise is in a subject area, not in identifying and addressing various learning challenges and psychological conditions that may affect the student's ability as a learner. Being able to be in a real partnership with DASS to talk about ways to facilitate student success is essential to helping serve our students with accommodations.



Prof. Brita Andercheck
Visiting Lecturer
Department of
Sociology

**** SAVE THE DATE!**

Faculty Open House at the Altshuler Learning Enhancement Center (A-LEC)

Please stop in to visit DASS along with other LEC academic support for all students.

Thursday, Sept 8th 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Flexible Attendance Accommodations

Previous issues of the *DASS Insider* featured the facts and myths surrounding a flexible attendance accommodation. (see [Jan 2014](#) issue) As one of the trickier accommodations to implement, it often generates questions from faculty when reasonable limits are exceeded or expectations are not clearly established in advance. It remains an accommodation where early discussion and clear expectations are critical.



DASS recently updated its policies and procedures regarding this accommodation in an effort to help faculty and students better clarify expectations when this accommodation is implemented. During their intake appointment at DASS, students will receive and sign the [Student Responsibilities](#) document. A copy is provided for them and one is retained in their DASS file. They will also receive a [Flexible Attendance Agreement](#) form for each of their classes. This document now accompanies the student's letter of accommodation and should be signed during your meeting with the student. Its purpose is to fend off the sticky situations we learn about from faculty when absences become an issue. Should a DASS student present this during their meeting with you, please be familiar with the items listed and be prepared to discuss your expectations in each area. During this meeting, both student and faculty should discuss, sign and retain a copy of this agreement.

DASS also developed [Guidelines](#) for helping faculty and students implement this accommodation. This document outlines the responsibilities of the involved parties—student, faculty, DASS – and provides legal guidance and common scenarios which may be helpful for faculty preview. All of these documents are available on the DASS web site, and the Faculty FAQ area includes updated information as well.

As with all accommodations, flexible attendance levels the playing field for students whose disability creates unexpected and uncontrollable interference in accessing information in class. Managed correctly, this accommodation provides equal access without penalizing a student for their disability impacts while also not jeopardizing course integrity. DASS hopes the new documents will be of benefit to faculty and students. Please let us know if we can answer questions!

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 retroactive 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>