

# 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 to a new Semester!

Welcome back to Spring Semester! The start of each semester is a good time to go over the basics of managing DASS accommodations for your students. The most urgent at this point are meeting with students to confirm arrangements for their accommodations and deciding how extended time tests will be managed. Additional suggestions for managing DASS-related semester items can be found on our [website](#).

We look forward to working with you this semester!

Director: *Alexa Taylor* Learning Specialist: *David Tylicki*

Accommodation Coordinators: *Michelle Bufkin, Robin Corbett, Jeanna Turay*

DASS Administrative Assistant: *Candy Brown*



## DASS Campus Projects: Wayfinding Map

Alexa Taylor

The Office of Facilities, Planning and Management initiated a project in 2020 to implement a digital map for SMU. In collaboration with the DASS office, Parking and ID Services, Marketing and Communication and others, Facilities contracted with Concept3D to create a digital, interactive map that can be updated in real-time and includes all of SMU's campus.

The map was launched a couple of years ago and serves our community in many ways. Accessibility features include accessible entrances on buildings (both manual and automated doors), accessible parking, as well as a new feature—wayfinding for wheelchair users.

The map also makes it easy to find dining on campus, construction projects, as well as events such as move-in day, athletic events, and places of interest. New elements have been added like water-bottle filling stations and gender-neutral restrooms. Less obvious to the casual user, but very valuable to Facilities is the integration for all buildings and infrastructure. This data imbedded in the map can be critical for repairs and construction as well as during an emergency. We are grateful to the University for supporting this initiative and we hope our Mustangs enjoy using the [map](#)!

## Seeing is Believing



Jim Hansel is one of the most collected artists in North America. He is renowned for his paintings of nature, landscapes and Americana.

He is not your ordinary artist, though. His story comes with a fascinating twist.

"I don't think of my vision issues as a disability, I like to think of it as discovering one's abilities." [Vimeo Documentary](#)



Search: name, keyword or use categories be



- Accessibility Information
- Admission
- Buildings and Venues
- Construction

Users can select from a variety of categories to determine the best route on campus. Searches can be done by name, keyword or category.

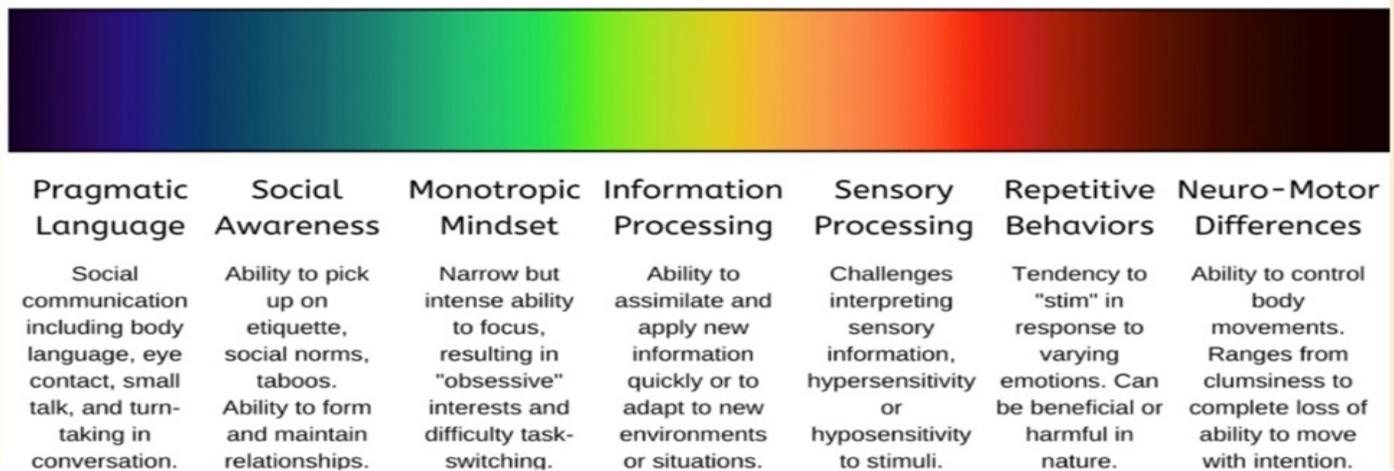


## Diagnosis Deep Dive: Autism in Higher Education

Robin Corbett

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a brain-based developmental disability that can impact how students behave, communicate, interact and learn. As an invisible disability, it may not be obvious to others depending on the person or situation involved. Autism is known as a spectrum disorder because the type, severity and presentation of symptoms vary widely. For example, some students with ASD have advanced conversation skills while others may be nonverbal. Some students with ASD require significant assistance with daily living activities while others work and live with little to no support.

### The autism spectrum looks more like this:



Students with ASD have a multitude of classroom strengths, including exceptional memory for facts and figures, innovative approaches to problem solving, and excellent attention to detail and accuracy in following instructions or rules.

The transition to a higher education setting can present unique challenges to students with ASD. Residence life with increased stimuli and compressed spaces can often create additional stress. Managing multiple obligations, activities and academic deadlines can overwhelm students with ASD. Rigid, black-or-white thinking can exacerbate these challenges.

In our work with students with ASD, DASS has found the following suggestions helpful:

<p><i>For Communication Skills:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responding to rigid presentation with patience</li> <li>Clear and concise language in syllabi</li> </ul>	<p><i>For Social Skills:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short breaks or allowance for pacing</li> <li>Assistance with group project expectations</li> </ul>
<p><i>For Sensory and Motor Skills:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan seating to provide ample space/student</li> <li>Laptop notes and lab assistance for fine motor control</li> </ul>	<p><i>For Managing Overwhelm:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic Coaching referral</li> <li>Cues, if needed, for class participation</li> </ul>

For additional information on this topic, please visit the [Faculty FAQ](#) on our website.

## In the News: Long COVID may be on the Rise

Jeanna Turay

You may or may not have heard the term Long COVID. Long term effects of COVID are still creating prominent struggles for some of those who contracted COVID-19. Long COVID has emerged as a pressing concern for university students nationwide.



Thirty-two higher education experts from large, public 4-year schools and smaller, community colleges, convened to form a Long COVID Task Force Research Team. They created *A Workbook for Disability Service Providers for Supporting Students with Long COVID in Higher Education*. Since this is a relatively new field for most disability coordinators, the Long COVID Task Force has provided invaluable resources on how to evaluate students on a case-by-case basis depending on the impact of their conditions. At DASS, students are evaluated on the severity of their symptoms to determine if the functional limitations they present rise to the level of a disability that impacts access in their academics.

While symptoms may greatly vary between students, some of the more common symptoms could have an impact on a student's academic pursuits. Typical symptoms can include: long-term medical complications (immunocompromised), decreased energy levels, muscle weakness and mental health difficulties. In the classroom, students with Long COVID may appear mentally foggy and have issues with memory or concentration, increased emotionality or sleepiness, and decreased stamina after physical effort. These symptoms may be intermittent, constant or evolving.

The Long COVID Task Force has created a short (2-minute) [video](#) to assist in providing understanding on what students with Long COVID may be experiencing. We hope you will take a few minutes to watch it and feel free to direct students who may mention having Long COVID to our DASS office for further guidance.

## College Students with Multiple Disabilities

David Tylicki

When I started working with college students with disabilities in the late 1990s, they made up, on average, only 3-4% of college populations. Now, we typically see them making up between 10-14% of the total. The numbers are growing across the board, but one subset of students has outpaced the overall growth—students with multiple diagnosed disabilities.



Our in-house stats say that if you've worked with two DASS students, chances are good that one of them has more than one disability. While students are not required to share their diagnoses with faculty and staff, keep in mind that the accommodations that you're helping to put in place may be aiding students like these to manage complex and substantial needs. For example, students with ADHD and dyslexia may have several testing accommodations in place to help give them the same chance to show their knowledge as their peers. These might include a distraction reduced testing environment to help with external distractions, a laptop with word processing and spellcheck to help organize thoughts and correct spelling, and/or double extended time to help mitigate cognitive processing being slowed in two (or more!) different ways.

So when you receive a DASS accommodations letter from a student listing numerous accommodations, remember that each one is addressing documented challenges that likely stem from more than one diagnosed condition.

If questions arise about a student's approved accommodations, our staff welcomes your outreach. Please consider us your partner in successfully implementing accommodations for DASS students.

## DASS Student Success Stories

Melanie Peterman

Adjusting to life as a college student is difficult for everyone. Drowning in homework for fast-paced classes while living independently for the first time isn't exactly a walk in the park. Yet, for some students, this educational transition can be additionally challenging. In fact, the prospect of success in higher education can feel almost unattainable. When I was an incoming freshman, I experienced some of these concerns myself.

I have two learning disabilities: Processing Speed Disorder and Dyscalculia (a mathematics disorder). Due to these diagnoses, I work much more slowly than a typical student, and I struggle with understanding and retaining mathematical concepts. Growing up, I had to work much harder than my classmates in order to reach the same point of achievement. I was always the last one finishing a test, I would spend painstaking hours at home studying and receiving tutoring, and I required extended time to complete a seemingly simple math assignment in class. Despite these challenges, I was determined to succeed scholastically at SMU as a neurodivergent student. Academics have always been of the utmost importance to me.

Looking for an on-campus support system, I came across SMU's office of Disability Accommodations and Success Strategies (DASS). I signed up for "weekly academic coaching" with the Senior Learning Specialist, David Tylicki, who focuses on working with neurodivergent students like myself. When I signed up, I had no idea of the tremendous impact that this process would have on my life.

Academic coaching consists of one-on-one sessions that aim to foster academic growth and provide an equitable experience for students with learning disabilities. The coaching process is different for every student. Sessions can focus on scheduling, time management, organization, study skills, learning strategies, and more. In doing so, a student can come to a greater understanding of how their brain functions best in an educational environment, and they can adopt skills and techniques catered to their individual needs.

Personally, this one-on-one coaching was the cornerstone of my academic success as a college student. My weekly appointments laid the foundation for a productive four years, and they provided continual support throughout my undergraduate journey. In May 2022, I was able to graduate Summa Cum Laude with a 3.9 GPA. I then enrolled in graduate school at SMU to begin that summer.

Now, as a graduate student, I have the incredible privilege to work as a DASS Study Strategist, providing undergraduate students with the same coaching that guided me through those momentous years of my academic life. I am so grateful that I can use my personal experiences with learning disabilities to help create a safe and welcoming space for other students like me. I firmly believe that if students are provided with equitable opportunity and the proper resources, they can reach their full potential. Everyone has a valuable, unique skillset to share. By remaining open-minded and supportive as academic coaches and educators, we can help build a more vibrant and thriving campus for all students.



## UNIVERSITY TESTING CENTER REMINDERS

LAUREN HORTON

**Welcome to the Spring Semester!**

We are the **new center for proctoring exams** and supporting student success.

**What does that mean?** This year, the DASS students have shifted to us, using our **new physical location** to take their exams. We use **same website**, DASSLink, for students to request bookings and for instructors to approve and submit exams.

**Contact us to see how the UTC can support you!**

**Key Information:**

- 7 Day Window: students must submit their requests no later than 7 days in advance of the test date in order to test with us
- Only supporting DASS students at this time
- Support for computer based exams **and** paper based exams - no student laptops
- No support for Lockdown Browser - we use our own remote desktop monitoring to proctor
- 24/7 overhead camera surveillance

[universitytestingcenter@smu.edu](mailto:universitytestingcenter@smu.edu)
[smu.edu/testing](http://smu.edu/testing)


 G15 Clements Hall (Basement) -  
 3100 Dyer St, Dallas, TX 75205

214-768-6064

## VISIT US AT DASS

**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](mailto:dass@smu.edu)  
 Fax: 214-768-1255**

**DASS IS MORE THAN  
 ACCOMMODATIONS.**

**For resources that may be helpful to faculty and  
 staff, please visit:  
[http://www.smu.edu/Provost/SASP/DASS/  
 Resources/ForFaculty](http://www.smu.edu/Provost/SASP/DASS/Resources/ForFaculty)**