

# THE DASS INSIDER

A NEWSLETTER FOR SMU FACULTY

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



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## DID YOU KNOW?

- ◆ **Veteran Students are more likely to be disabled. One in five combat veterans attending college has some type of disability, compared to one in 10 in non-veterans.**
- ◆ **Veteran Students are more active. Non-veterans spend about 45 hours per week either studying, relaxing, or socializing, compared to 59 hours per week for combat veterans.**

## How our Veterans are impacted by disabilities

SMU has increased funding and support for students who have served in our country's military. With an increasing population of vets on campus some may arrive with complicated disability issues. Besides physical impairments that might be more obvious, vets often are coping with hidden conditions like traumatic brain injuries (TBI), as well as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Accommodations for TBI may include extended time for testing and a quiet space to reduce the distractions. Similar accommodations might be appropriate for PTSD, along with preferential seating. PTSD comes with a hyper-emotional recall of life-threatening or fearful memories of war, which can disrupt everyday civilian life.

Our wounded warriors have trained their minds and body to excel in high stakes AND high stress environments, and there is often a toll to pay after this kind of hyper-vigilance. Anxiety and stress may be a common experi-

ence for vets, even just transitioning from the military to college life.

The DASS office is a resource to our veterans who are coping with conditions that impact their academic lives, and can ensure they are connected with other staff members on campus who are here to support them. Some of these other campus resources include financial aid, MilVet student group, registrar and the Memorial Health Center.



## DASS Staff Updates: Welcome Christy Raines

DASS is pleased to welcome Christy Raines as the Accommodations Coordinator. Christy replaces Rebecca Marin, who retired in June.

Christy holds a Bachelor's Degree in Rehabilitation Services and a Master's Degree in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling, both from the University of North Texas.

She began volunteering at age 14, working with children with disabilities and discovered that disability services is the field that she is most passionate about. She has worked at summer camps, pain management clinics, higher education and in the mental health field. Christy will be with DASS full-time, working mostly with stu-

dents with physical and medical conditions, as well as psychiatric conditions. She is here as a resource to faculty and hopes you will introduce yourself if you make your way over to the LEC.

Christy's office is Room 202W in the A-LEC. Her phone is 214-768-4557 and email is [craines@smu.edu](mailto:craines@smu.edu).

## New at DASS - Online Test Scheduler for Students

If you have students with testing accommodations, such as extended testing time or a reduced distraction environment, chances are you have had to come up with creative ways to accommodate them within your department. Students are still encouraged to arrange for accommodations with their professors in their department. If testing within the department is not possible, please refer your student to DASS to schedule a proctored test.

Students will now be able to schedule their test using our **Online Scheduler** (OS) developed by OIT. They must now schedule 7 days out from the test date. Using the OS system will allow the student to select the course, instructor, and time and day of test. Once they submit the request, the OS system will automatically send an email to the student confirming the testing details.

The professor will still re-

ceive a Test Proctor Form from DASS 2-3 days before the test. Please use this information for your records of students testing with DASS. This is the best time to confirm that your student has scheduled the exam on the correct day and time. If your student has inappropriately scheduled with DASS before speaking with you, please direct your student to come see you and inform DASS. ***This should not take the place of the communication*** between you and your student when discussing his/her accommodations.

The purpose of the **Online Scheduler** is to streamline the very labor-intensive process of scheduling a test at DASS and also to minimize errors.



DASS Room 217—test proctoring area

**The deadline for students to arrange DASS test proctoring for FALL final exams is November 25.**

**Why am I notified about some students at the beginning of the semester, and others at the middle or end of the semester? Wouldn't it be better if I knew what their needs were before they started having problems?**

Students who have disclosed their disability are encouraged to notify their professors during the first two weeks of classes. Some students choose to begin their education at SMU without the stigma of having a disability. They may forego requesting accommodations until later. Newly diagnosed students present their documentation to us during the semester. Timing may vary among students so requiring all students to present letters to you by a certain date is not feasible. We strongly recommend that faculty members require students to give them seven (7) days notification for any accommodation arrangements.

## Faculty Focus: The Extra Mile Award Honoring SMU Faculty



SMU annually honors three faculty members who work well with students with learning differences by presenting them with Extra Mile Awards at the Awards Extravaganza. Since 2008, fifteen faculty members have been recognized. Students for New Learning (SNL), an organization chartered by Student Senate, helps identify the winners.

Funding and support for this award are provided by the President's Advisory Committee on the Needs of Persons with Disabilities (PACNPD), reflecting how much it values faculty sensitivity to students with Learning Disabilities or ADHD. Most of the winners would quickly acknowledge that what they do for students with learning differences is the same as what they do for all students: prepare a clear syllabus, be ready to meet with students in office hours, be sensitive to different learners and their needs, and treat students with respect and a belief that they can be successful.

**Our recent winners in 2013 were: Joci Caldwell-Ryan (Dedman) and Tony Pederson (Meadows), pictured above with Laura Buck, President of SNL, at the Awards Extravaganza.** Our students thank them!



*"I was, on the whole, considerably discouraged by my school days. It was not pleasant to feel oneself so completely outclassed and left behind at the beginning of the race."*

Winston Churchill

### Accommodation Focus: Reminders for Faculty

**Include** the current University approved disability statement in your syllabi (see page 4).

**Expect** a hand-delivered and current accommodation letter from students in a sealed envelope (no faxes or emails).

**Read** the letters carefully. They are not all the same.

**Discuss** the letter in private with the student. Be clear on how each accommodation will be implemented. Allow time for such discussion.

**Privately address** issues related to the student's disability, not in class or around other students. **Never identify** students with disabilities as such in front of others.

**Expect** ample advance request by students for testing arrangements. Provide advance notice and all required forms to DASS when requested.

If questions arise, **call DASS** or the Coordinator listed on the letter of accommodation. We are here to help!

### FERPA and Confidentiality: Protecting Students' Privacy

All disability-related information is protected by FERPA guidelines. Each accommodation letter you receive contains a reminder about maintaining this confidentiality for students with disabilities (SWD). Here are some common scenarios where confidentiality is unintentionally broken, with damaging results for DASS students.

- ◆ A stated laptop policy that prohibits laptops except for SWD
  - ◆ Accepting or discussing an accommodation letter before or after class while other students are present
  - ◆ Connecting other students to a SWD for advice or assistance without the permission of the SWD.
  - ◆ Revealing a SWD's identity with other faculty members when they do not have a need to know.
  - ◆ Identifying a SWD as the receiver of peer notes to other students
  - ◆ Leaving letters of accommodation exposed on a desk where others may see them.
- For additional information, visit: <http://smu.edu/alec/FAQ%20re%20Confidentiality.pdf>

### What Students Want SMU Faculty to Know

Over the years DASS staff have compiled some tips from students which we thought would be helpful for faculty. A few of these tips are listed below.

- ◆ *Understand that students probably know more about their disability than professors do! I've had professors in the past try to tell me what is wrong with me when I delivered my letter.*
- ◆ *I think professors should convey openness, instead of making students feel like they are being judged.*
- ◆ *The most important thing to remember is that students with disabilities know they have a problem; most likely, it is embarrassing to them; and they'd rather not have the class know.*

The entire list is available here: <http://www.smu.edu/alec/dassforfaculty.asp>.

## Accessible Texts: A Tale of Two Professors

DASS advises students each semester to promptly communicate their needs to professors so accommodations are in place when needed. For some accommodations, like accessible texts, advance preparation by both student and professors is particularly important. The following scenario highlights the difficulties created by delays in implementing accommodations.

Scott is a responsible student. He works hard and gets high grades while maintaining leadership positions and a job on campus. Scott is also dyslexic and needs assistance reading his textbooks. Through DASS, he gets his books as alternative textbooks which can be read to him via computer. Scott knows that to get accessible books takes time and requires early identification of the necessary text.

For his first class, Scott learns three weeks before class that there are 2 required books. He quickly purchases them, and then gives DASS notification of the professor's selection. The first

arrives just before his first day of class. Scott starts his class with confidence.

For his second class, the book choices are not finalized by the professor until the last minute. This semester the professor decides to require just one textbook, one week before the beginning of classes. The book is a specialized one and is on back order—but he's not worried, it should be available by the first week of classes. Scott, however, is very worried. Once he sees that the textbook is announced, he immediately notifies DASS using the ISBN information available on the bookstore's website. Given the rarity of the book, DASS staff email the obscure private publisher. At the end of the first week of classes, Scott purchases the book.

Thankfully, his friend Mark is willing to read the book out loud to him, while he waits. The second week of classes comes and there is still no word from the publisher. DASS offers to 'scan' the book,

Scott agrees and drops off the book to DASS. He hopes to have it back before he falls even further behind. Given the size and configuration of the textbook, it takes a full week. Scott is now more than a week behind on the readings. With an upcoming exam, he has to cram in what he missed, while keeping up with the current week's reading.

Scott spends many sleepless nights reviewing his notes and listening to the computer read the missing and current chapters to him. On the day of the exam, Scott is exhausted. His grade no longer reflects his academic abilities, all because the selection of the text book was too late for him to gain equal access.

(Source: Univ of Maine Disability Services)

### *The moral of the story:*

Professors expect students to prepare in advance for their classes. Students with disabilities especially benefit when professors do the same.

***"Disability is a matter of perception. If you can do just one thing well, you're needed by someone." - Martina Navratilova***

## VISIT US AT DASS

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

Phone: 214-768-1470  
Email: [dass@smu.edu](mailto:dass@smu.edu)  
Fax: 214-768-1255



VISIT US ONLINE AT  
[WWW.SMU.EDU/ALEC/DASS.ASP](http://WWW.SMU.EDU/ALEC/DASS.ASP)

***Please include this statement in your syllabus:***  
***Disability Accommodations: Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first be registered with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS) to verify the disability and to establish eligibility for accommodations. Students may call 214-768-1470 or visit [www.smu.edu/alec/dass.asp](http://www.smu.edu/alec/dass.asp) to begin the process. Once registered, students should then schedule an appointment with the professor to make appropriate arrangements.***

## October is Disability Awareness Month

Did you know:

**ADHD is real.** Nearly every mainstream medical, psychological, and educational organization in the US has concluded that ADHD is a real, brain-based medical disorder.

**ADHD is a common, non-discriminatory disorder.** It affects people of all ages, both genders, regardless of IQ or religious or socio-economic background. (Source: ADDitudeMat.com, Fall 2013)

**Dyslexia is the most common learning difference** in students (1 in 5) yet the most publicly misunderstood. Dyslexics are bright yet struggle with reading. (From The Big Picture Movie, directed by James Redford) See: <http://blogs.wsj.com/juggle/2013/04/02/a-gifted-student-learns-to-thrive-with-dyslexia/>.

**Visually impaired college students** benefit when professors verbalize as much as possible when writing on the board or on projectors. For more tips, visit: <http://smu.edu/alec/dassfacultyfaq.asp#visual>.



**DASS IS MORE THAN ACCOMMODATIONS.**