

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!

As SMU welcomes returning and new students back to campus, DASS recognizes that some new faculty members may be starting their first classes at SMU, too. Welcome! Our office is the primary contact for all SMU students with disabilities and works with faculty and staff in making the accommodations process as seamless as possible. The abbreviated checklist on page 2 may be helpful as new faculty transition to the system we use on our campus to meet the access needs of students with disabilities.

Additional suggestions for managing each of these items can be found on our website under FAQs and in our SOS (Start of Semester) issues of the DASS Insider, also found on our website. As always, our team of professionals is here to assist you in meeting the needs of your DASS students.

Director: *Alexa Taylor* Learning Specialist: *David Tylicki*
Accommodation Coordinators: *Michelle Bufkin, Jeanna Turay, Valiza Cameron-Patterson*
DASS Administrative Assistant: *Candy Brown*

Our DASS Team is Growing!

Welcome to our new Coordinator and Graduate Assistant!

Over the summer, DASS added new faces to our team! Valiza Cameron-Patterson, a new Disability Coordinator to our team, replaces Dr. Robin Corbett, who left SMU to pursue other opportunities. We appreciate Robin's contributions to DASS and wish her all the best. Please welcome Valiza as our new Disability Coordinator! To assist with increasing demand for academic coaching services, we added JT Martin as a Graduate Assistant in that area.



Valiza Cameron-Patterson, Accommodations Coordinator, Disability Accommodations and Success Strategies (DASS) My path as an educator and counselor has been marked by a profound commitment to nurturing growth, resilience, and holistic well-being in diverse student populations. With a decade-long journey spanning charter, public, and private institutions, I've witnessed education's transformative power firsthand. As a Semi-Finalist for Texas School Counselor of the Year, I've guided students through personal, social, and behavioral challenges, facilitating not only academic progress but also vital life skills. I strive to foster empathy, resilience, and inclusivity. Continuing this voyage, I eagerly collaborate with colleagues to shape tomorrow's empowered leaders. In my free time, I love to travel the world while experiencing new things.



James Martin -known as JT, Graduate Assistant for Academic Coaching JT completed his Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies at SMU in December of 2021. He is currently a graduate student at Perkins School of Theology, studies focused on American Historical Theology and sexual ethics in contemporary dialogues. After interning as a study skills strategist with the DASS office this spring, he is now working as a Graduate Assistant for Academic Coaching. His objective is to help students reach their academic goals through coaching related to their academic strengths and weaknesses with a focus on time management practices and study strategies. He is excited to provide the same encouragement and support he received as an undergraduate.

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Book Corner



What happens when a determined polio survivor is repeatedly told "No, you can't do that"?

Libo Meyers' autobiography traces her journey as a young girl with polio in China to her position as a tech executive at Apple.

www.libomeyers.com

Start of Semester Checklist for Faculty

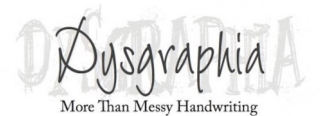


The start of each semester is a good time to go over the basics related to DASS students and accommodations. The most urgent are making plans for the Syllabus Statement (listed on page 4) and reviewing Accommodation Letters on DASS Link. The complete checklist of items is found on our website under the [FAQ section](#).

Disability Focus: Dysgraphia and Laptops

Michelle Bufkin

Dysgraphia is a specific learning disability that affects how easily students acquire written language and how well they use written language to express their thoughts. In early school years, it is commonly detected when handwriting instruction begins. Common markers are impaired spelling, unusual or uncomfortable pencil grip, slow or labored writing fluency or illegible handwriting. Students often describe it as the frustration of having ideas in mind that they cannot transmit to their hand to produce. They also often struggle with copying material from boards quickly enough to capture meaning. When handwriting remediation is ineffective, early introduction of keyboarding skills helps students develop simultaneous processing skills to keep up in the classroom and with assignments. The ability to audio record classroom learning or the provision of partially completed note templates reduces the motor fatigue and mental processing for students with dysgraphia. Dysgraphia may occur alone or with dyslexia (impaired reading disability) or with oral and written language learning disability (OWL LD). Students with impaired handwriting may also have attention-deficit disorder (ADHD) which adds an additional layer of processing speed, working memory or focus deficit in the demands of efficient written production.



At SMU, our office works with many students with long-standing diagnoses of dysgraphia, many of whom request accommodations related to note-taking in class or writing essay exams. Faculty may receive accommodation letters with a variety of note-taking accommodations, including audio recordings, laptop usage or peer notes. Many times, these are granted based on conditions such as dysgraphia and are fine-tuned to meet the student's specific access barrier(s). The disability-based barriers we seek to minimize for these students include the simultaneous processing of auditory, visual and motor activity, motor strength and stamina, and sometimes spelling and grammar weaknesses.

DASS students occasionally encounter classroom policies which prohibit the use of laptops or other technology for note taking assistance. The current trend of faculty members limiting or prohibiting electronic devices in the classroom is understandable, given the increasingly disruptive habits of students accessing non-class related material during class. However, for students who need to take notes on their laptops as a disability-related accommodation, the issue becomes sticky.

We recommend against professors making a statement such as "No one may use laptops except those with disabilities." This essentially requires a student with a disability to identify himself to others just by using his laptop. You want to avoid putting students in this position. If you are considering prohibiting laptops, one professor used the following wording in her syllabus:

"The use of Laptops/Netbooks/iPads, etc. is strictly prohibited for use during all class sessions...Failure to follow this technology policy without prior approval of the Instructor can result in dismissal from that class session."

This professor then met with students individually and discussed their issue. If there was a documented need for laptop usage, she allowed it and had them sign an agreement that laid out the expected behavior (i.e., use only for class related purposes, wireless internet will be turned off, and will sit on an aisle or front row in order to be less distracting to other students). She could then enforce her classroom policy, while still providing the appropriate accommodation. If someone asks why others are allowed to use laptops, she simply says that they made special arrangements with her, with no further details given.

If you receive an accommodation letter that includes laptop usage and you have concerns, we encourage faculty to reach out to the Coordinator who is listed in the letter. Our office can begin a conversation to determine if there might be alternatives to the accommodation granted or offer suggestions to help faculty honor the accommodation and maintain their classroom standards. We are always available for collaboration with faculty on how to troubleshoot accommodation implementation or concerns.

Faculty Recognition: 2023 Extra Mile Awardees

David Tylicki

It is my pleasure to introduce you to the three instructors who received the 2023 Extra Mile Award for their exceptional work helping and inspiring students who learn differently.



First, Professor Andrea Arterbery, Visiting Professor of Practice in the Department of Journalism in the Meadows School of the Arts, is an engaging instructor who is accommodating and understanding towards students with learning differences. Her teaching style works well for all students, and she is knowledgeable, positive, and genuinely invested in her students' success. Her enthusiasm and energy make classes fun and inclusive, and she is approachable and willing to help whenever needed. One student said, "I loved her class so much that I wish I could have taken it every day." High praise Indeed.



Next, Professor Patricia Rawlins, Adjunct Professor of Latin and Latin Area Chair of the World Languages Department of Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences is committed to supporting students who learn differently, always willing to go the extra mile to help them to succeed. Students praised her for setting up testing accommodations in advance, adjusting test time limits and locations, and providing closed captions on videos. It is clear that she goes above and beyond to make all students feel welcome and like an integral part of the class.



And finally, Dr. Helen Reynolds, Senior Lecturer and Maguire Teaching Fellow in the Department of Economics of Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences has won an Extra Mile Award this year for her engaging teaching style, dedication to teaching and learning, and her caring demeanor. She explains topics thoroughly and uses visual aids to help visual learners. She also helps students with accommodations for tests, working around their schedules and making herself available for questions.

Dr. Reynolds and Professor Rawlins both have the distinction of being nominated for this award by an SMU staff member in addition to many students. Congratulations to our 2023 Extra Mile Award recipients! Thank you for going the extra mile for SMU students who learn differently. Please congratulate your colleagues in their continuing pursuit of excellent teaching, while showing sensitivity, kindness, and a welcoming nature. It makes a difference! These three professors join the forty other faculty members to whom SMU has awarded this honor since 2008. Students for New Learning, a chartered student organization, accepts nominations each year and ultimately selects the three deserving instructors for this award.

DASS Collaborations on Campus

Alexa Taylor

Although DASS primarily focuses on determining accommodations for students with disabilities, this office serves the entire campus community and is an integral part of ensuring our campus is accessible to all. But we don't do it alone! Faculty, administrators, and staff all play a role in making our courses, facilities, curriculum, and policies accessible to those who experience barriers due to a disability. DASS staff reach out to various groups on campus to provide information and education on ways we can improve accessibility. Sometimes this is with new faculty onboarding to SMU (in August), or with the staff in offices like the University Advising Center or the University Testing Center. We regularly communicate with Residence Life and Student Housing staff since many disability issues intersect with housing needs (and dining!) and Institutional Access & Equity. In the past six months, we have worked directly with the office Academic Development for Student Athletes (ADSA), Financial Aid, Counseling Services, World Languages, WRTR department, Prelude orientation, Moody School of Graduate Studies orientation, and many others.



We encourage department Chairs to carve out 10-15 minutes in an upcoming departmental meeting to open the discussion about supporting students with disabilities. A DASS staff member is happy to join that meeting to answer questions. Being proactive is always recommended, and keeping our campus informed is critical to making SMU an inviting and accessible space for people with disabilities.

Test Proctoring Reminders: University Testing Center replaces DASS Testing

Since Fall, 2022, test proctoring services are managed by the University Testing Center, located in the basement of Clements Hall. All accommodated test proctoring (other than Cox School of Business and Dedman School of Law) will require students to schedule via the SMU University Testing Center portal accessible through the UTC website. Students can only schedule test appointments after their instructor has set up their tests within the platform. Scheduling will go through the UTC Portal, which can be found on the UTC website. Faculty are still expected to proctor their students when possible, and the UTC has limited space and hours. In rare cases where the accommodation requires a one-on-one proctor, such as a reader or a scribe, the DASS office will assist the faculty member to proctor the exam. www.smu.edu/



Student Success: Meet a World-Class Gymnast with Tourette Syndrome



Lisa Dieker, Ph.D., is a professor at the University of Central Florida and shared this story about her son, Josh, in ADDitude Magazine.

Lisa: Our story is personal, singular, and, perhaps, familiar. We decided to share it now that Josh, 27, is grown and we've all moved from survival to reflection. Josh was the cutest kid, and he was always in trouble. From daycare through high school, the story rarely changed. School was impossible, breaking routines was hard, and getting out the door in the morning presented a daily challenge. But getting Josh to do anything physical was a breeze. I should have known my son, Josh, had Tourette Syndrome (TS). I taught special education and have a Ph.D. My husband and I both grew up with siblings with disabilities. We felt that something was wrong, but we had no experience with TS.

Josh: Before we figured out that I had TS, dysgraphia and dyslexia, I did not know what was wrong except that school was impossible. No matter the teacher, the tutor, or the reward, I never got excited about anything other than recess and seeing my friends. My only satisfaction came from physical activity. By the age of 10, I was a skateboarder, biker, rock climber, baseball player, soccer player, runner, skier, and snowboarder. The sport I stuck with for the long haul was gymnastics. No matter the sport, it came easily; and no matter the school assignment, it was hard. By middle school, I disliked almost everything, including myself. I was a male gymnast who could not read or write and who made odd sounds and had facial tics.

Lisa: Josh was amazing at using his abilities to compensate for his struggles; through sports, he was building his self-esteem and his self-worth to survive school. My husband and I were so proud of him and yet so frustrated. It took time to learn that better routines, less stress, more laughter, and the "right" teacher, tutor, or life coach would change his life and ours.

Josh: Today I am happy and successful. I received the bronze medal in the Junior Olympics on the rings. I got a college degree. I competed four years in a row at the NCAA championships. I took second place in the Eastern Atlantic Conference. I live on my own and work as a manager for the largest indoor rope climbing facility in the United States. How did I get here? I trusted that I knew best what I needed.

My advice for parents: Let your kid share their feelings and listen to what they need. If routine or physical movement is needed, let them have it. My advice for kids like me: Tell people what you are good at and let them get to know you. Then share your challenges (everyone has challenges). Meet others with the same disability. Celebrate everything positive.

VISIT US ONLINE AT WWW.SMU.EDU/DASS

VISIT US AT DASS

Please include this statement in your syllabus:

Students who need 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/SASP/DASS> to begin the process. Once they are registered and approved, students then submit a DASS Accommodation Letter through the electronic portal, *DASS Link*, and then communicate directly with each of their instructors to make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, but rather require advance notice in order 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/SASP/DASS/Resources/ForFaculty>