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 the DASS Staff**

**Alexa Taylor, DASS Lead & Senior Associate Director of ALEC**
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 14 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 eight 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 one year.

**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 three 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 three years.

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

**DASS By the Numbers: Disabilities on our Campus**

Here is some recent and historical data about the numbers of students identified to the university as having a disability, along with some information about particular types of support services provided by DASS. (cont. p. 4)
Access Issues: Online Course Content and Publications

**Online Course Content:**
If you administer any course content to your students through an online modality, consider how a student with a disability might access the material. Students with visual or hearing impairments in particular may experience barriers with written or auditory materials that prevents them from participating in the course. The University and its faculty members should make attempts to create accessible course content from the beginning, which will eliminate frustration and scrambling in the middle of a semester.

Here is a tutorial outlining 10 simple steps toward universal design of online courses:

http://ualr.edu/pace/tenstepsud/.

**Books and Publications:**
For SMU faculty who are in the process of publishing a book, DASS encourages you to consider your role with publishers to make text that is accessible to people with disabilities. The goal is a universal design that allows anyone to access your book, especially those with print disabilities who require an electronic version of the text.

A group of scholars are attempting to clarify what makes a book accessible and they’ve provided some direction for faculty to utilize when working with publishers. The Inside Higher Ed article noted, “their guidelines recommend publishers waive digital rights management restrictions for readers with disabilities so the restrictions won’t interfere with accessibility software.”

Review the suggested template letter (linked in the article) and consider using it when communicating with your publisher.

Also, view this 3 minute video that helps us all understand the true barriers a college student might experience when text is not made accessible.

Removing barriers on campus, in class and online creates a collaborative learning environment for everyone in the SMU community.

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**Syllabus Tip**
Consider putting a “trigger warning” on your syllabus if your course content contains material that could be traumatic to some. As more veterans with PTSD enroll in higher education, these warnings could be helpful to students to prepare themselves to deal with content that could trigger a strong emotional reaction, such as a panic attack or flashback.

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**Faculty Going Above & Beyond**

The Extra Mile Award is given to three faculty members each year who have exhibited exceptional sensitivity and care when teaching students who learn differently. These recipients acknowledge the needs of students with learning and attention disorders and make sure to be accommodating while still challenging them to excel. In April, 2015, Students for New Learning awarded Ian Harris, Martin Camp and Michele Houston with plaques and a very big thank you for going the extra mile for students who learn differently.

Extra Mile recipient Ian Harris with SNL President Victoria Serrano at the Awards Extravaganza in Hughes-Trigg

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Animals on Campus: What does the law say about allowing service animals into public spaces?

“Generally, a public entity shall modify its policies, practices, or procedures to permit the use of a service animal by an individual with a disability.” U.S. Department of Justice

SMU is currently in the process of developing and revising policies in this area in order to provide guidance to departments. Stay tuned.
DASS By the Numbers: Disabilities on our Campus (conc.)

During the Fall 2014 semester, 526 students were identified to DASS as having a disability and were approved for some type of accommodation. Graduates students made up 50 of the 526.

About 7% of the undergraduate population is approved for a disability-related accommodation. Most (more than half) have identified with a learning or attention disorder, less than 100 identified with a psychiatric condition, 44 identified with a medical condition, and around 20 other students identified with either a hearing or visual impairment or a physical/mobility impairment.

DASS also provides support to those with learning and attention disorders. Over 200 sessions of academic counseling were conducted in the fall semester to help these students with organizational strategies and goal setting, as well as improving self-awareness.

Additionally, DASS does proctor tests when a faculty member is unable to do so himself/herself, assuming the student has disability accommodations that require such proctoring. In the fall, 170 students took at least one test at DASS as we administered over 700 tests. This service is especially useful during finals and for students who have complicated accommodations such as a reader and scribe, but DASS appreciates the faculty’s efforts to test as many students within the department as possible.

Lastly, some of the most common accommodations provided to DASS students are extended time (typically 1.5x), note-taking assistance, a reduced distraction environment for testing, and priority enrollment. Other less common accommodations may be appropriate at times, such as allowing the student to use a laptop for note-taking or test-taking, housing or dining accommodations, or providing some flexibility in attendance due to the impact of their medical condition.

For more information on DASS support and the students we serve, don’t hesitate to contact us to learn more.