

# THE DASS INSIDER

A NEWSLETTER FOR SMU FACULTY

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



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## Meet the DASS Staff

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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 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**

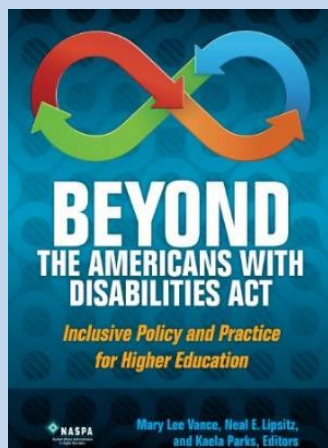
Candy receives and directs all paperwork and correspondence coming to DASS, along with coordinating test proctoring for DASS students. She is the voice on the other end of the line or email when you contact DASS! She has been with SMU for three years.

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



L to R: Michelle Bufkin, Karen Turbeville, David Tylicki, Alexa Taylor, Candy Brown

Want to know more about the role of Universal Design in higher education?



**Beyond the Americans with Disabilities Act: Inclusive Policy and Practice for Higher Education** By Mary Lee Vance, Neil Lipsitz and Kaela Parks

## 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.

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## 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.

### 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.

## 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.

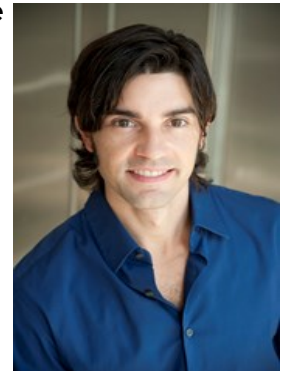


Extra Mile recipient Ian Harris with SNL President Victoria Serrano at the Awards Extravaganza in Hughes-Trigg

**Campus-wide commission on disability issues**

The President’s Commission on the Needs of Persons with Disabilities (PCNPD) functions to advise the University President on the special needs of disabled persons. The Commission is made up of faculty, staff and students from across campus and meets monthly during the fall and the spring semesters.

Each year, PCNPD discusses issues pertinent to our community and makes recommendations to the President in the form of an annual report. Denton Bricker, Director of Operations, McFarlin Auditorium, is starting his second year as chairman of PCNPD. When asked why PCNPD is important, he says, “This commission has been tasked with the resources to help make campus accessible for all students, faculty, and staff including those with disabilities whether physical, medical, invisible, etc. We are doing exactly that by raising awareness through the support of student events, webinars, and conferences. The group also helps to remove actual physical barriers by maintaining close contact with those working on construction projects across campus.”



Denton Bricker,  
2015-2016  
Chairman of PACNPD

This past year the commission hosted two webinars and invited all University departments to attend to better understand two separate and emerging topics: food allergies and service animals. The educational materials have been donated as digital resource to the Central University Libraries. Every year the commission spends significant funds on the barrier removal project, which identifies and addresses exterior mobility issues. Recently the committee allocated funds to install an automatic door this fall at the LEC where many DASS students visit.

The commission also funds the Extra Mile Award (see facing page). This award is given to deserving faculty members who show patience and encouragement to students with learning disabilities. Another tangible step the commission took this year is the purchase of five wheelchairs to serve our large venues. These will benefit visitors as well as the SMU community during events in Moody Coliseum, McFarlin Auditorium, Ford Stadium, and Hughes-Trigg Student Center.

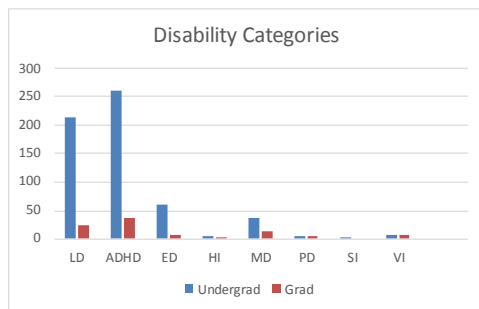
Faculty and staff can get involved by volunteering to serve as a member of the commission (email [jdbricker@smu.edu](mailto:jdbricker@smu.edu)) or by attending any awareness events put on by the commission or a student organization. Bricker says, “Next time you see a campus e-mail advertising a special training or an event designed to raise awareness about a disability from a student organization, consider attending to LEARN and show your support.”

**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.

### SAVE THE DATES!

Faculty Open House at the Altshuler Learning Enhancement Center (LEC)  
Please stop in to visit DASS along with other LEC academic support for all students.  
**Wed, Sept 9 1:30-2:30pm and Tues, Sept 15 3-4pm**

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 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.

### 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)



### 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>