

# THE DASS INSIDER

A NEWSLETTER FOR SMU FACULTY

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



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## Inside this issue:

Current Issues on our campus 1

Ending the Semester Well 1

DASS Prepares Early for  
Final Exams—and Here's  
Why 2

Extra Mile Award 2

Autism and Stress Manage-  
ment 3

Faculty Resources on  
Dyslexia 4

Visit us at DASS 4

## The DASS Grapevine: Current Issues on the SMU Campus

As the semester comes to a close, it is a good time to reflect on and review some of the practices in providing accommodations. This semester, we have received questions and concerns from instructors about three of these in particular—the accommodation of note taking, student confidentiality, and talking to students about accommodations.

**Notes Accommodations:** One of the more common accommodations we authorize is for students to receive copies of peer notes. Some students are very uncomfortable with their peers knowing of their need for notes, and choose to have the notes delivered anonymously. One easy way to facilitate this is for the DASS student to set up a new email account, without name identifiers, to which the note-taker sends the class notes. This simplifies the instructor's role and allows the student and note-taker an easy way to communicate. DASS has received positive feedback on this method as utilized by a number of students on campus. This solution is great for a student who is very sensitive to anonymity but otherwise it is beneficial for faculty to remain involved to ensure notes are appropriately provided to DASS students. Also, students with the note taking accommodation need to have access to legible notes in a timely manner. At the minimum, weekly access to the peer notes is essential to the student's success. Copies of peer notes are not typically provided when the student does not attend class. The object is to supplement the student's own notes, not to replace them. In most circumstances, when a student with the note taking accommodation is absent from class, the student will need to use other methods to get lecture information just as a non-DASS student would.

**Confidentiality:** Please remember that both a student's identity and their accommodations need to remain confidential. Even something as simple as stating, "If you have accommodations, come up and talk to me after class," can easily violate a student's right to confidentiality. Requesting the student see you during office hours or discussing the accommodation over email will eliminate any possible compromise of confidentiality.

**Interactions with students:** Professors should never use demeaning language when discussing a DASS student's accommodations or performance. Statements such as, "What were you thinking?" or "Are you serious?" reflect a sarcastic and belittling tone that does not promote proactive self-advocacy by the student. Additionally, comments like these can create unnecessary risk for the university.

Remember, we at DASS are here to support faculty and staff in understanding and providing accommodations for our students with disabilities here at SMU. If you have any questions or concerns, please call or email!

## Ending the semester well

As finals approach, DASS offers these suggestions for helping your DASS students manage end-of-semester obligations and ongoing academic work.

\*Monitor repeated absences, late work, sudden dips in performance and refer these situations to the student's DASS coordinator. Students with disabilities, especially first years, often experience higher levels of stress and anxiety during this time of year. It can present in multiple ways.

\*Some DASS students use May Term and Summer Terms to build credit hours and GPA's. Select and announce textbooks early enough to be helpful for these students to preview material. Many DASS students rely on this strategy to compensate for lower processing speeds. This also allows time to pursue alternative formats which are helpful to students with reading disabilities. Also consider how accommodations like extended time will be affected by extended class hours.

\*For DASS students taking finals in our offices, please submit required forms and the test early enough to avoid last-minute stress. This required information includes your CELL PHONE in case questions arise on test day.

\*Acknowledge the success of your DASS students. Many are among our top SMU students!

Want to know more about the  
experience of students with dis-  
abilities in college?

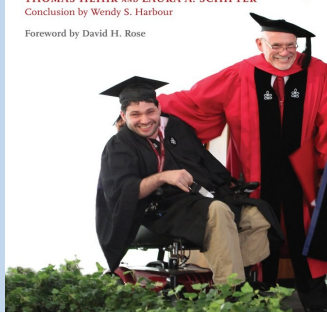
## How Did You Get Here?

Students with Disabilities and Their Journeys to Harvard

THOMAS HEHIR AND LAURA A. SCHIFTER

Conclusion by Wendy S. Harbour

Foreword by David H. Rose



**How Did You Get Here?**  
**Students with Disabilities and  
Their Journeys to Harvard**

By Thomas Hehir and  
Laura A. Schifter

## DASS prepares early for final exams—and here's why!

Students with testing accommodations should make final exam arrangements with their professors as early as possible. We recommend that students test within their professors' departments, but if a professor doesn't have the resources to test a student, then we can usually proctor the student's final exam here at DASS. While we strive to accommodate all of our students who need testing, DASS has limited seating during the three final exam timeslots that we offer:

9:00am, 11:30am, and 2:30pm. For this reason, it is important for your students to plan early and know when and where they will take their final exam. Review our document online about the limitations of testing at DASS.

Near the end of the semester, DASS gives students 3 full weeks to visit the DASS Online Scheduler and schedule their final exams at the ALEC. After this 3-week window closes, we compare the date and time of every final exam scheduled in our center (approximately 225-250 of them) to the Registrar's official Final Exam Schedule. We then email both the student and professor with any discrepancies. These discrepancies are usually from students who encounter conflicts with their exam schedule, i.e., two exams scheduled at the same time or back-to-back, not allowing for extended time. We work to solve these problems, but ultimately, all

changes must be authorized by the instructor and sent to us at DASS. To make a change from the official exam time, *the student must get written approval from the professor, and DASS must be copied on or forwarded a copy of the email or note.*

A few days before the scheduled final, we create and send Final Exam Proctor Forms and requests for electronic or hard copies of your exams. *It helps us tremendously to receive your approval to test a student at a day/time different from the official exam schedule **before** we send these proctor forms and exam requests—we can then minimize the last-minute adjustments to the DASS testing calendar.*

Once the exam schedule is set, DASS hires graduate student proctors. Getting the proctors and the finals schedule to fit together can be compared to assembling a big puzzle. For starters, DASS students requesting readers and scribes must be

must be scheduled with proctors first, and only then can the remaining schedule be completed.

Planning is extensive and changes occur daily, resulting in multiple time changes, cancellations, and additions. Even after the schedule is "complete," students cancel at the last minute, usually when they learn from their professor that they should test within the department for some reason. *This is important information to share with the student early in the planning process, as it avoids last-minute disruptions to the DASS testing calendar.*

DASS is here to support students and faculty. When planning for final exams, timely communication between all three parties benefits everyone.

### 2015 Extra Mile Award Recipients



Assistant Dean Martin Camp, Dedman Law



Michele Houston, Meadows, Journalism



Ian Harris, Dedman College, Statistics

## Faculty Focus: Extra Mile Awards

What does it take to receive the Extra Mile Award from students who learn differently? Patience, sensitivity, and good teaching techniques! That is what all three recipients are described as exhibiting with ALL of their students, especially appreciated by those with learning differences. Students for New Learning, an organization chartered by the Student Senate and designed to provide support and networking opportunities for students with LD/ADHD, identifies deserving faculty members from across campus to receive this award each year. The faculty members are acknowledged at the Awards Extravaganza in front of the entire University. Funding and support for this award are provided by the President's Commission on the Needs of Persons with Disabilities (PCNPD), reflecting how much SMU values faculty sensitivity to this somewhat vulnerable, yet very capable population. (CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)



## Disability Focus: What can autism teach us about stress management?



When we think about people with disabilities, we often focus on what's wrong with them, what they need help with, how we can help them. But at MIT's Media Lab, researchers are trying to learn stress management from people with autism.

Autism's symptoms often include paralyzing anxiety. The rocking and hand flapping associated with the condition is one sign; meltdowns are another. In adulthood, though, many people on the spectrum better manage their anxieties.

So recently, Media Lab professor Rosalind Picard hosted Temple Grandin to get some tips on managing stress. Grandin, an accomplished author and animal sciences professor who has autism, said she used to live with constant fear. Her life, she said, felt like being trapped in a closed building with 100 poisonous snakes. She never knew when she might open a drawer and find one inside, or a turn a corner and meet one face-to-face.

Grandin, who was played by Claire Danes in a 2010 TV biopic about her life, said she believes that a lot of people who are visual thinkers like her suffer from anxiety, even if they're not on the autism spectrum.

Low-dose antidepressant medication, which she started in her 30s, helped tremendously — essentially ridding the building of snakes. The 100 sit-ups she does every night keeps them away.

Like many people with autism, Grandin said she's sensitive to sensory overload from sights, sounds, and smells, which wear her out. So having a regular sleep schedule is crucial. She told a group of MIT students that she planned her schedule weeks ahead in college so she wouldn't have to pull all-nighters and still tries to avoid early flights that throw off her 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. sleep schedule.

Back in college, Grandin used to decompress during the late afternoons — her most stressed-out time of day — by watching "Star Trek." Spock was her favorite character.

Making friends who have shared interests was also crucial, Grandin said. She was bullied mercilessly as a child and early in her career, leaving her struggling with depression. Friendships she made riding horses and in the electronics lab helped her bounce back.

Now 67, Grandin said her anxiety has been transformed into hyper-vigilance. She's aware of every little movement the airplane she's riding on makes, but isn't worried that the plane might crash.

"What's gone is the fear response," she said..

Source: The Boston Globe, 3/27/2015 Karen Weintraub

### *Did you know....*

**Microsoft has launched a pilot program to hire workers with autism? To learn more, visit: [Microsoft and Autism](#).**

**Thank you** to all the faculty members who completed Early & Midterm Progress Reports. This gives DASS a chance to reach out to those struggling students and offer support at a critical time. The time you take to prepare and submit these reports makes a difference!

## Faculty Focus: Extra Mile Awards

Our recent winners of the 2015 Extra Mile Award include: Martin Camp (Assistant Dean & adjunct professor, Dedman Law), Michele Houston (Senior Lecturer, Meadows, Journalism) and Ian Harris (Associate Professor, Dedman, Statistics). They are pictured at left. Please congratulate your fellow colleagues in their continuing pursuit of excellent teaching, while showing sensitivity, kindness, and an open door. It makes a difference!

## Faculty Training and Education: Resources on Dyslexia

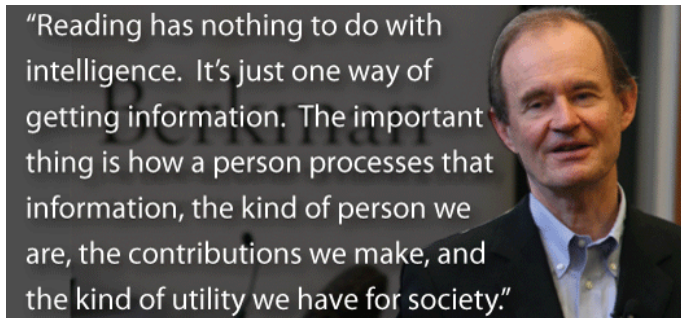
“Friends of Quinn” website with lots of information for young adults with LD. Excellent, short videos with professionals with LD, including David Boies, attorney, Richard Branson, & Gavin Newsome (Lt. Gov. of Calif).

**For a 6 minute video of David Boies, Attorney of the Year in 2000, on dealing with dyslexia as a professional, visit:**

<http://www.friendsofquinn.com/blog/post/exclusive-video-interview-with-famed-lawyer-david-boies/0>

**If you haven't heard of David Boies, here is a quick bio:**

David Boies has racked up victory after victory, defending IBM, CBS, and George Steinbrenner. Brilliant and tireless, he may be the greatest trial lawyer alive. Yet somehow, when Boies led the government's anti-trustsuit against Microsoft, Bill Gates, the world's wealthiest man, made the dreadful mistake of underestimating him. (Vanity Fair, March 2003)



“Reading has nothing to do with intelligence. It's just one way of getting information. The important thing is how a person processes that information, the kind of person we are, the contributions we make, and the kind of utility we have for society.”

**University of Washington, Do-IT website**, with the Faculty Room and videos to assist postsecondary institutions maximize the learning of all students, including those with disabilities

<http://www.washington.edu/doit/videos/index.php?vid=36&t=1>

Good information for faculty regarding different types of conditions and the common accommodations that are helpful to students. <http://disability.tamu.edu/facultyguide/teaching>

Basic myths about dyslexia – Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity <http://dyslexia.yale.edu/Myths.html>

<http://www.smu.edu/Provost/ALEC/DASS/Resources/ForFaculty/DASS%20Faculty%20Newsletter>

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

VISIT US AT DASS

***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 retro-active and require advance notice 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](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>