

THE DASS INSIDER

A NEWSLETTER FOR SMU FACULTY

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



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Year in Review—Disability Support at SMU

It's been a doozy! Here are some things we've been working on over the past year, from the DASS office's perspective:

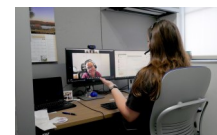
New student requests - Because we had implemented the digital *DASS Link* system for all disability files, our staff was luckily able to review files from anywhere during the summer of 2020, in preparation for the incoming class of students. We also shifted to all virtual intakes and pushed students to complete their intake during the summer, if approved and able to do so. We conducted 126 intakes for newly approved students in the summer in order to minimize the bottleneck of new students in late August/early September. In all, we completed 311 intakes for students approved for the first time for fall 2020 (most were new to SMU, some were continuing students but new to DASS).



We processed 593 Semester Requests for the fall semester. That means 593 students shared their already approved accommodations with their instructors by way of an accommodation letter in *DASS Link*. Most of those were from continuing students, but some were new first year students who had been approved in the summer and then requested their letters be shared in August or September, after their schedules were finalized.



Meetings with students-Other than the initial intake appointment (311) where the accommodations are finalized in the system, Coordinators conducted 306 meetings to discuss accommodations. This usually entails gathering more information from the student about the impact of their disability (before approving or denying the request), or responding to a student's request for additional support, or reviewing a denied case as an appeal. We also outreached 134 times (phones calls, emails, Zoom meetings) with people related to the students' needs. This is either a parent, a medical professional, a faculty member or another staff member on campus (advisor, financial aid counselor, Dean of Students, etc.). Lastly, five-hundred and thirty-seven academic counseling sessions (up more than 50% from the previous fall semester) were conducted with students in the Fall 2020 semester (to work on time management, self-advocacy, organizational skills, etc.). All of these areas of contact reflect an increase from past fall semesters.



Education, training, and outreach-We added FAQ's on our website that were COVID-related to allow for students to quickly get answers to those pressing questions. Most students' requests related to COVID-19 impacted their housing situation, so we reviewed all requests and collaborated with RLSH to ensure students with disabilities had the appropriate housing placement. Last summer, DASS published an orientation video for all new incoming students to get to know our office since they did not come to campus for AARO. We held

Zoom open house sessions for (new) faculty to learn more about working with their students with disabilities and our office as well as attended departmental meetings in August. For students who might have been experiencing new and different barriers due to COVID and their disability, such as those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, we worked with OIT and Purchasing to identify technological solutions. We collaborated with Facilities, Planning and Management on new construction projects on the radar and how accessibility will be provided in those new spaces. We also worked with Facilities on an initiative to bring an exciting digital, interactive map to campus (coming soon!). We reached out to all DASS students with at least one failing EPR or MPR to offer support and resources. We continued holding Students for New Learning (SNL) meetings virtually to encourage students with learning differences to connect with each other.

Currently, the office is starting to receive requests from new incoming fall 2021 students, but we're prioritizing any files for current students while still trying to address housing requests for those new students AND continuing students (housing deadlines are now for some and in early summer for others!). Along with hosting Zoom open-house sessions this summer for newly admitted students, we will have a short video in the Canvas module for those going through Pre-Advising with the UAC. This ensures that all students are made aware of the DASS office and the process for requesting accommodations, even if they're not on campus for an orientation experience.



Looking ahead, DASS hopes to be part of faculty orientation in late summer or early fall and we always welcome an invitation to speak briefly at any departmental meeting. We wish you all a wonderful end to the spring semester!



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The Axis of Dance and Disability



When contemporary dancer Marc Brew sustained a disabling injury in a car crash at the age of twenty, he was disheartened by friends who told him he couldn't be a professional dancer anymore and urged him to return to school to study something else.

To learn more of Brew's inspiring journey, visit [HERE](#).

Accommodation Spotlight: Flexible Attendance

By Alexa Taylor

When a student's disabling condition is so severe and intermittently very impactful, DASS may recommend some flexibility with attendance, when reasonable for the particular course. Like other accommodations, the student will share their Letter of Accommodation (LOA) with each instructor. Those LOA's with the Flexible Attendance accommodation also come with three attached documents for review. One lays out the student's responsibility if they need to implement this accommodation. The next document provides guidance to both student and instructor on thinking through the essential elements of the course and how some flexibility might be allowed. Office for Civil Rights has provided suggestions to consider when making these decisions about what is reasonable for a particular course, in relation to allowing absences due to a disability. The third document is an agreement template that the instructor and student should use to document their plan for implementing the accommodation for a particular course. This guide is meant to be helpful in thinking through all of the elements of the course (classroom attendance, quizzes, homework assignments, tests/exams, method of communication that is expected and the time frame of that communication, etc.). Each course is different (labs vs. lecture, performance classes, classes with lots of student interaction and classes with very little interaction among students) and we are here to assist instructors in thinking through how this accommodation is best implemented in their course. Students who have been approved for this accommodation typically experience serious and chronic health conditions that could prevent them from attending at times. Students with diabetes, epilepsy, Cystic Fibrosis, Sickle Cell disease, Multiple Sclerosis, Crohn's disease, Lupus, Cancer, severe Migraines and others may be so impacted in unpredictable, but chronic ways, that the DASS office recommends some flexibility with attendance.

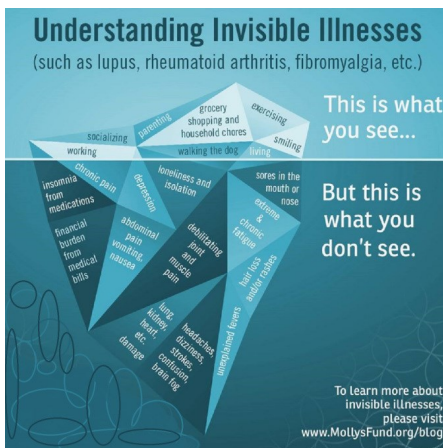


Below is the language you'll find in the Letter of Accommodation, if you were to have a student with this accommodation in your class:

Below is the language you'll find in the Letter of Accommodation, if you were to have a student with this accommodation in your class:

"Flexible Attendance: granted flexibility in making up disability-related absences due to a medical condition. Since this disability significantly impairs the student's functioning intermittently and without notice, your professor's understanding and flexibility are being requested to allow the student a reasonable opportunity to make up work without being penalized for a few absences. In essence, the student's grade should not be negatively affected on the basis of an attendance or missed exam policy IF agreed-upon arrangements are met. This accommodation does not sanction unlimited absences or lack of timely notification from the student when absent. The student remains responsible for completing course work and coordinating with you on meeting adjusted deadlines, if any. If the professor believes absences are becoming excessive, please contact DASS. Review the 3 attached documents please."

The documents can also be found on our website: <https://www.smu.edu/Provost/ProvostOffice/SAES/StudentSupport/SASP/Services/DASS/ApplyingforAccommodations/Accommodations#tardiness>



Currently, DASS is working with 43 undergraduate students with this accommodation and 11 graduate students. We fully understand that this accommodation may be difficult for some instructors to implement. It is important that each instructor goes through the "interactive process" when there is dispute or disagreement about providing the recommended flexibility. Most issues arise when instructors fail to finalize a written agreement with their student and then things get complicated near the end of the semester. We strongly recommend you meet with each student privately to discuss this accommodation, document your plan, and follow up with your student if the student is approaching the limits in the agreement. We always welcome calls and questions about how to best implement this accommodation as it is important that students are given equivalent assignments and tests (if they miss a test) and are not retaliated against for requesting this accommodation. We understand that some courses will have less flexibility than others and students are expected to follow the agreement closely.

Faculty Recognition: 2021 Extra Mile Award Winners

By David Tylicki

Spring is the time that DASS loves to acknowledge the recipients of a student-based teaching award called The Extra Mile. Students for New Learning (SNL), a chartered student organization, nominates 2-3 faculty members each year who have proven themselves to be strong advocates for students with learning differences. The President's Commission on the Needs of Persons with Disabilities (PCNPD) helps fund the awards each year to show support to the SNL organization AND faculty members who receive this award. At this year's awards program, Sydney Atlss, President of Students for New Learning and student member of PCNPD, introduced the three who received the Extra Mile Award for their exceptional work helping and inspiring students who learn differently. Comments from the students who nominated each professor were included in her remarks.

First, Dr. Mark Chancey, Professor in the Department of Religious Studies of Dedman College School of Humanities and Sciences collaborates with students to ensure their accommodations are effective in his classes, and this year, modifying them to fit with the remote learning environment. Students said that they appreciate his proactively reaching out, anticipating their needs, and checking in with them throughout the semester.

Next, Dr. Kara Sutton, Lecturer in the Sociology Department of Dedman College School of Humanities and Sciences creates a welcoming environment for students to discuss implementing their accommodations. New SMU students said they were thankful to have had her as one of their 1st professors because her caring demeanor and knowledge of the accommodation process helped them feel safe to advocate for themselves.

And finally, Samantha Thomson-LoCoco, Adjunct Lecturer in the Department of English's Writing and Reading Program of Dedman College School of Humanities and Sciences, was praised by students with ADHD for preparing "extremely engaging" lectures that kept their focus. In addition, students with testing accommodations and demanding schedules appreciated her availability outside of class and office hours to proctor their exams herself.

This marks the 14th year that Students for New Learning have honored outstanding faculty at SMU. Congratulations to our 2021 Extra Mile Award recipients! Thank you for going the extra mile for SMU students who learn differently.



Dr. Mark A. Chancey,
Professor in the Dept
of Religious Studies of
Dedman College
School of Humanities
and Sciences



Dr. Kara Sutton,
Lecturer in the Soci-
ology Dept of Ded-
man College School
of Humanities and
Sciences



Samantha Thomson-
LoCoco,
Adjunct Lecturer in
the Department of
English's Writing and
Reading Program of
Dedman College
School of Humanities

Alternate Format of Text

For students who are blind, printed materials are a barrier to accessing the information in the course.

DASS Coordinator, Karen Turbeville, identifies all of the textbooks, articles, PPT's, syllabus, etc. that need to be converted to a more accessible format for our students. This spring semester, she converted more than 40 textbooks/ portions of books/long articles. Often this requires requesting a PDF copy of the text from the publisher, converting it into an accessible pdf or sometimes into a Word document, and then editing the document so a screen reader can accurately read it. Converted material can include charts, footnotes, diagrams, musical scores, unusual text placements and various other elements that require extra manipulation in order to be converted into PDF.

This process requires a great deal of time and a lot of coordination between the student, the instructor and the DASS office. We appreciate instructors working well ahead of time to identify text and sharing it with us in order for our staff to provide good access to our students!

DASS Collaborations on Campus: Managing Extended Time in Online Tests

In a recent student meeting between DASS, the Provost's office and OIT, several items important to students were discussed. When a student's extended time is not properly implemented on a Canvas test, it creates angst during the test, and obviously a lot of confusion as to how to resolve the issue after others have completed the test. We strongly encourage instructors to double (and triple) check that the extended time is correctly implemented on each student's quiz/test in Canvas.



Here are some tips to help in these areas.

*If you have approved 1.5x for a student, set yourself a personal reminder to make sure your settings are correct in the online platform. Consult with your OIT Academic Computing rep to ensure that it is set correctly, given any other systems you're using (Lockdown Browser, etc.).

Here is a link for instructions from Canvas: <https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Instructor-Guide/Once-I-publish-a-timed-quiz-how-can-I-give-my-students-extra/ta-p/999>

* Make sure the clock is visible at the start of the test on the student's side. This is a strategy to combat their anxiety about their accommodations on tests. If the extended time is not set correctly, the student will likely notice it right away by looking at the total minutes available.

*Create a system that is in one place to allow you to verify you have done all that is necessary for accommodated online testing to go smoothly for your DASS students. One ECO professor employs such a system to make sure all accommodations for her DASS students are in place before each test. With large sections, she consistently meets these needs without added stress on the student or herself. Forgetting something in the process creates stress for everyone!

Technology Tips: Did you know?

You can change your Zoom settings so that automated captions are generated in your live ZOOM session. Just go to Settings>> In Meeting (Advanced). Make sure "Closed captioning" is set to ON, and check both boxes below that heading (Allow use of captions...AND Enable live transcription service...). Now your users/students can just click on the CC button at the bottom of their Zoom window and see live automated captions! They're computer-generated, so they're not perfect, but they can be VERY helpful to lots of students, but especially those who are hard of hearing.

VISIT US ONLINE AT
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



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>