

# THE DASS INSIDER

A NEWSLETTER FOR SMU FACULTY

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



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## Planning for Accommodations During Final Exams

DASS typically proctors over 200 exams during finals, most with different instructions. We are happy to continue providing test proctoring service to instructors who do not have the resources to test their students with accommodations within the department. However, it is important to consider a few things:



DASS Room 217 - test proctoring area

Students must schedule their final exam(s) with DASS using our Online Scheduler. The deadline to schedule with DASS is 4/26/17; however, the time blocks often fill before the 26<sup>th</sup> so students should contact us ASAP. This deadline allows DASS to start our work on checking accuracy of test times, creating proctor forms, arranging proctor coverage for the heavy schedule, and planning for unique accommodation needs like readers and scribes. Please note a cell phone is required from faculty in order to process final exam proctoring requests.

If you have not already communicated with your DASS students about finals, please take them aside and discuss the plan. If testing at DASS is the only option, direct them to follow the procedures ASAP. If students fail to follow our procedures for testing, we will direct them back to their instructors to work out the necessary accommodations.

Just because DASS has denied a student to test at DASS because they missed our deadline does NOT mean the faculty member should necessarily deny the accommodation for the upcoming test. If it is reasonable for you to put the accommodation in place, then you should do so. Similar to procedures for DASS testing during the regular part of the semester, we have limitations for our back-up test proctoring. Please review our Test Proctoring page and the Finals document for faculty and students, found at the bottom of the page [HERE](#).

## Faculty Spotlight: 2017 Extra Mile Awards

We are happy to announce the 2017 Extra Mile Award recipients! Brita Andercheck (Associate Professor, Dedman College, Sociology), Matthew Lockard (Associate Professor, Dedman College, Philosophy), and David Willis (Associate Professor, Lyle Engineering, ME) join the twenty-three other faculty members to whom SMU has awarded this honor since 2008.



Students for New Learning, an organization chartered by the Student Senate to provide support and networking opportunities for students with LD and ADHD, identifies deserving faculty members to receive this award at the Hilltop Excellence Awards each year. The President's Commission on the Needs of Persons with Disabilities (PCNPD) provides funding and support for this award, demonstrating how much SMU values faculty sensitivity to this somewhat vulnerable, yet very capable population.

Please congratulate your colleagues in their continuing pursuit of excellent teaching, while showing sensitivity, kindness, and a welcoming nature. It makes a difference!

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### 2017 Extra Mile Awardees



Brita Andercheck



Matthew Lockard



David Willis

## DASS visits Religious Studies Ph.D. students for in-service workshop

DASS team lead, Alexa Taylor, presented alongside SMU alumnus Rev. Justin Hancock on the topic of creating an accessible and inclusive classroom. The 15 or so graduate students gather monthly for discussion and educational opportunities and since many may follow the path to college-level teaching, this topic was of interest.



### May Term Reminders from DASS

\*DASS has limited ability to proctor tests during May term. Please consider ways to manage this need in the classroom or your department.

\*Early availability of syllabi allow students needing alternate formats of books to receive these in time for class.

\*Consider how accommodations like extended time will be affected by longer class times.

The presentation briefly covered the basics of the ADA, the ADA-Amendment Act, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, since we all must know what laws we are governed by. Discussion then led into using the school's syllabus statement as a start to open the door for interaction with students with disabilities. We also discussed the many kinds of barriers students might face, whether it is with course content like videos or texts, or the physical space or the technology being used in the classroom. The Rev. Hancock emphasized lessons from his own undergraduate and graduate experience where faculty members were creative in ways that allowed him to learn and be assessed equally but sometimes different-

ly than his peers.

His experience with Cerebral Palsy and dyslexia has led him to have a unique perspective on the needs of people with both visible and invisible disabilities and emphasized openness and willingness to learn from students. However, both he and Ms. Taylor reminded the future instructors to not expect less from their students with disabilities and when accommodated, these students should be performing and participating fully.

Questions overheard at the session:

"How do I reconcile my need for good, strong mechanics of writing in a humanities-type course, especially with a student who struggles with writing due to a learning disability like dyslexia?";

"What is the best way to handle a student who doesn't want to go through the proper channels (disability services) but asks for informal accommodations from me?";

"What are some simple ways to include Universal Design elements in my course?";

If your graduate program or department would like a DASS team member to visit or present, we would love to join you—just name the time and place!



Rev. Justin Hancock and DASS lead Alexa Taylor, presenters to Religious Studies Ph.D. students

## Looking for information about college students with disabilities?

Whether you're a faculty member wanting to learn how to help a student in your class on the Autism spectrum or a staff member in RLSH interacting with and supporting students who have mental illness, check out the new federally-funded project under the U.S. Dept. of Education called National Center for College Students with Disabilities. <http://www.nccsonline.org/>

The Clearinghouse on the NCCSD side has articles on a range of issues, such as working with library patrons with disabilities, teaching college classes to students with disabilities, food allergy information, service animals and their presence on a college campus, housing issues, and the laws protecting this population. They keep the resource list contained so it isn't overwhelming so we encourage our faculty and staff to browse this site.



## DASS Student Profile: Arslan Memon

This month, DASS highlights Arslan Memon. An SMU student since Fall 2014, Arslan has made High Distinction Honor Roll every semester while taking between 15-18 hours and double majoring in Math and Computer Science. During his three years at SMU, Arslan has participated in Alternate Breaks, the Muslim Student Association, the Entrepreneurship Club and the SMU Ubiquitous Computing Lab. Arslan is a charming and positive student, who overcomes barriers he encounters with hard work, good humor and perseverance. DASS asked Arslan to share his insights on successfully managing his many roles on campus as a student with a mobility impairment.



Arslan Memon, with his 3-year-old sister, Isra

### **Tell us a little about yourself – your background, academic history, your disability, and why you chose SMU.**

*My name is Arslan Memon and I'm doing a double major in Computer Science and Math. I came to the U.S with my family in 2001 when I was 5 years old to get treatment for my cerebral palsy. Even though we had planned to stay in the U.S for only 6 months on visa, my parents decided to stay because they saw how much better my life would be here. I've lived and grown up in the DFW area and attended public school from elementary to high school. I graduated valedictorian from my high school, Singley Academy. The reason I chose SMU was because I heard good things about the school from my counselor and friends. Also, SMU is one of the highest ranked universities in Texas. When I arrived on campus, the beauty of the campus took me in, and I knew I wanted to be here.*

### **In what ways does your typical day on campus look different than for other students?**

*My day on campus basically consists of going to classes, eating lunch, hanging out with friends, and trying to get work done, which usually doesn't happen most of the time until I get home. I commute to and from campus, so trying to go to organization meetings is difficult because most happen at night. Overall, however, I would say my typical day is similar to many other students.*

### **Are there elements at SMU that are particularly difficult or easy for you?**

*I think the amount of work I have to do for classes is pretty reasonable and life at SMU, in general, is easy going until one month before the end of each semester when projects are due. I haven't had much difficulty at SMU, but it does require me to spend a lot of time working on assignments, so I guess it is kind of difficult. I have had challenging professors in the Lyle School who have pushed me to excel—but that is why I came to SMU. One thing that other students might not experience is the amount of work it requires to use my accommodations. I have to schedule tests with the DASS office, and planning around heavy course load, taking into consideration my transportation issues, can be challenging to say the least. Also, I use the elevators all across campus, and the elevator in Dallas Hall is not ideal in my motorized wheelchair! Some of the bathrooms on campus are not accessible to wheelchair users, so I find myself having to go to buildings/floors with accessible bathrooms. Life is easier with accessible bathrooms.*

### **What are your academic and career plans? How will you define success in these areas?**

*My goal is to earn a Master's degree in Computer Science from Stanford or MIT and likely study robotics and machine learning. I'm interested in how they can have an impact on health care. I want to eventually open my own company that creates software to help people with disabilities, as well as create software and robots for the healthcare industry. I've been selected to intern at Microsoft over the summer, so I think the experience I gain will help put me one step closer towards my goal.*

## DASS Student Profile: Arslan Memon (cont.)

### Have you required any special supports in order to be successful at SMU?

*Since my CP impacts my mobility and fine motor control, I have accommodations from DASS such as extra time on exams and a transcriber to help me write on tests. Other than that, my sisters help me write most of my math homework.*

### What keeps you busy outside the classroom? Any special activities at SMU you have enjoyed?

*I'm usually doing homework, but when I'm not, I love watching anime, Pakistani and Korean dramas. I also enjoy being in the Muslim Student Association at SMU and planning events and hanging out with friends. I also try to be involved at my mosque as much as I can.*

### What advice would you give faculty about working with students with disabilities?

*Treat them the same as any other student. Try to understand their point of view and work with them. They might not realize it, but the way faculty deal with students with disabilities has a huge impact on the student. I've been fortunate to have amazing mentors, most of whom are teachers and counselors, that have guided me to become who I am today.*

### What advice would you give students about managing a disability at SMU?

*I think the best advice I can give is to reach out to DASS for accommodations if you need support. There are resources out there for any problem you might have; all you need to do is ask. SMU has many wonderful people who are always willing to help.*

### Are there suggestions specific to your disability you'd like to offer for future students?

*You're capable of doing many things that you might not think you can, so strive to fulfill your dreams and never give up.*

## 2nd Annual Health, Safety and Risk Walk—Friday, April 21

Student Senate, along with the Office of Risk Management and various participating departments, will be implementing the second **Health, Safety, and Risk Walk** at SMU and we need faculty and staff volunteers! The purpose of the walk is to highlight observations in regards to the health, safety, and risk of students as they move about the campus. Walkways, overhanging limbs, and paths around construction will be looked at closely for issues that could pose a safety risk to the community. Students without physical disabilities can easily walk through mud to get to class or maneuver around newly placed construction signs if need be, but not all students are able to bypass these barriers with such ease. This event will serve as a catalyst for getting the SMU faculty, staff, administration and students involved in accommodating the needs of all students, both with and without disabilities.



Participants will meet at the flagpole by 12:30pm to receive materials and instructions, and the walk itself will occur between 12:30pm-2:00pm. Group leaders will guide participants assigned to one of eight campus quadrants. Thank you to Student Senate for helping to make SMU the most accepting and safe campus for all students! To volunteer, email Emily Jones, Risk Control Coordinator in the Office of Risk Management, [erjones@smu.edu](mailto:erjones@smu.edu).

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 retroactive 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>