

THE DASS INSIDER

A NEWSLETTER FOR SMU FACULTY

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



FALL 2024

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Welcome Back to a new Semester!

As SMU welcomes returning and new students back to campus, DASS recognizes that some new faculty members may be starting their first classes at SMU, too. Welcome! Our office is the primary contact for all SMU students with disabilities and works with faculty and staff in making the accommodations process as seamless as possible. The abbreviated checklist on page 2 may be helpful as new faculty transition to the system we use on our campus to meet the access needs of students with disabilities. Additional suggestions for managing each of these items can be found on our website under FAQs and in our SOS (Start of Semester) issues of the DASS Insider, also found on our website. As always, our team of professionals is here to assist you in meeting the needs of your DASS students.



Director: *Alexa Taylor* Learning Specialist: *David Tylicki*
Accommodation Coordinators: *Michelle Bufkin, Jeanna Turay, Valiza Cameron-Patterson*
DASS Administrative Assistant: *Candy Brown*

DASS Collaborations on Campus

Alexa Taylor

Although DASS primarily focuses on determining accommodations for students with disabilities, this office serves the entire campus community and is an integral part of ensuring our campus is accessible to all. But we don't do it alone! Faculty, administrators, and staff all play a role in making our courses, facilities, curriculum, and policies accessible to those who experience barriers due to a disability. DASS staff reach out to various groups on campus to provide information and education on ways we can improve accessibility.

For faculty, DASS staff presented with OIT and CTE staff on the topic of [technology access](#) for all learners. We also met with staff from Lyle admissions, ADSA, and the RLSH office. For the first time, we participated in training new Resident Advisers (RAs) and Residential Commons Directors (RCDs). In those two sessions with RLSH staff and student employees, we discussed mental health issues for students living in residence, physical access and how an elevator repair could be managed while relocating a student with a mobility impairment, as well as why an animal may accompany a person with a disability (and what ISN'T allowed!).

DASS and Dining Services also collaborated on how to ensure food on campus is accessible to students with chronic health issues that impact eating. We learned a lot about how the top 9 allergens are avoided at the [True Balance station](#) in Arnold Dining Hall, as well as what limitations the dining halls may face when trying to assist students with more complex food allergies. In some rare cases, a student may need to be moved to a residence hall with a kitchen available to allow them to prepare their own food safely. This requires collaboration between DASS, Dining Services, and RLSH.

We also spent a lot of time this summer making our office known to new students and families. A [Family Guide](#) was refreshed and posted on our website. We hosted three ZOOM Open Houses to explain DASS services to new, incoming students. We also met new families at Mustang Stampede's Family Fest event over two days. For new graduate students, DASS staff attended the Moody Graduate School orientation fair along with the Perkins resource fair, and we also provided a tailored video to be played at multiple orientation events for other graduate programs. Students would have to try hard to miss us!

We encourage department Chairs to carve out 10-15 minutes in an upcoming departmental meeting to open the discussion about supporting students with disabilities. A DASS staff member is happy to join that meeting to answer questions. Being proactive is always recommended, and keeping our campus informed is critical to making SMU an inviting and accessible space for people with disabilities. Let's collaborate!

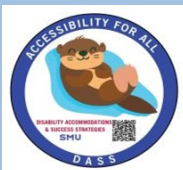
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DASSapalooza!

DASS held their first **DASSapalooza** on Thursday August 29th. New and returning students, faculty and staff were invited to mingle with the DASS staff who answered questions about semester requests, proctored testing and available resources. Faculty stopped by to see our physical space and ask questions about implementing accommodations. There was a tasty spread of food for all to enjoy!

We introduced our new DASS mascot and asked attendees to give input on naming our otter. Results will be announced soon!



Start of Semester Checklist for Faculty

Michelle Bufkin



The start of each semester is a good time to go over the basics related to DASS students and accommodations. The most urgent tasks are making plans for the Syllabus Statement (listed on page 4) and reviewing Accommodation Letters on DASS Link. The complete checklist of items is found on our website under the [FAQ section](#).

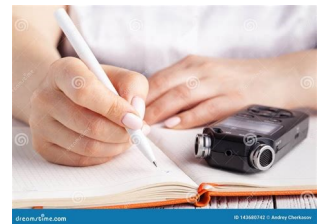
Here are a few reminders that help the accommodation process with your students go smoothly:

1. **DASS Accommodation Letters:** The accommodation letter from our office is the only official grant of accommodations authorized by the university. If a student asks you to grant accommodations informally based on doctor's report or previous history, please refer to their DASS letter to ensure those accommodations were approved by SMU. If not, refer them to our office. This protects you, the university and the student from unnecessary risk.
2. **Meetings with DASS Students:** DASS students are advised on how to set up and plan for this meeting to discuss their accommodations. Please sign their letter in your DASS Link portal after this communication occurs. This helps our office track timelines should issues arise.
3. **Extended Time:** For extended time testing when possible, it is easier on all concerned for a firm start and end time to be established and communicated to all students. This step allows for clear expectations on total available testing time for DASS students with this accommodation, based on the time for the general class.
4. **Flexibility:** DASS processes requests and meets with students throughout the year. Some of these intake meetings may occur very close to test days and outside of the 7-day notice period. If a student has communicated to you they are working with our office, please feel free to confirm with us the student's status with our office if you are open to providing some flexibility.

Accommodation Spotlight: Audio Recording of Lectures

Michelle Bufkin

At DASS, we work with many students whose diagnosed conditions make the use of technology a necessary bridge to mitigate barriers to equal access. These conditions include visible disabilities, (such as limited limb usage, vision and hearing impairments), temporary injuries, (such as broken arms, wrists or hands), and invisible conditions (such as stroke, PTSD, brain injuries, learning disorders and processing disorders). One of the most frequently assigned accommodations in these cases is the ability to audio record lectures, usually through a laptop or other device. The disability-based barriers we seek to minimize for these students include the simultaneous and timely processing of auditory, visual and motor activity, motor strength and stamina, impaired listening comprehension, psychological disorders and sometimes spelling and grammar weaknesses. The audio record accommodation offers maximum independence for the DASS student and minimum logistical challenges for faculty. DASS students occasionally encounter classroom policies which prohibit the use of audio recordings of lectures for reasons of controversial content or dilution of open discussions. Here are some suggestions for balancing classroom needs with this accommodation grant:



1. Signal to the class when devices should be turned off, during open discussion. When discussion ends, signal that devices can be turned on again. This mirrors how faculty often manage laptops: "Screens down." (during discussion). "Screens up." (during lecture) or the equivalent "pencils down".
2. Execute a Recording Policy contract with DASS students approved for this accommodation which outlines your expectations for this accommodation in your classroom. Our website offers ideas in the [Faculty FAQs](#). If the terms are violated, students risk loss of recording for that class.
3. Before denying this accommodation, reach out to DASS. Any potential denial based on fundamental alteration must be based on convening a committee to include faculty, Dept Chair, Dean and DASS Director to examine the merits of that basis.
4. We recommend against professors making a statement such as "No one may audio record except those with disabilities." This essentially requires a student with a disability to identify himself to others by using his device. You want to avoid putting students in this position.

If you receive an accommodation letter that includes audio recordings and you have concerns, we encourage faculty to reach out to the Coordinator who is listed in the letter. Our office can begin a conversation to determine if there might be alternatives to the accommodation granted or offer suggestions to help faculty honor the accommodation and maintain their classroom standards. We are always available for collaboration with faculty on how to troubleshoot accommodation implementation or concerns.

Faculty Recognition: 2024 Extra Mile Awardees

David Tylicki

It is my pleasure to introduce you to the three instructors who received the 2024 Extra Mile Award for their exceptional work helping and inspiring students who learn differently. The Students for New Learning organization accepts nominations and selects the recipients.



Students describe **Dr. Pamela Corley**, Associate Professor in Dedman College's Department of Political Science, as "exceptional," praising her for encouraging them to push their boundaries and find meaningful ways to tackle difficult material. Her thoughtfulness shows in her well-designed course layouts, plus she has a knack for making subject matter memorable and interesting. She actively engages with and advocates for her students with disabilities.



As an Adjunct Lecturer in Dedman College's Department of English and the Coordinator of SMU's Writing Center, **Shon Phillips's** guidance has helped many neurodiverse students to become better writers. Over the years, they have praised her for her reliability and her positive attitude, always being approachable, patient, and full of encouragement. She makes it clear that all students are welcome and that she is passionate about helping them improve.



And finally, neurodiverse college students often find learning a second language challenging, so it always pleases us to award an Extra Mile Award to a faculty member in Dedman College's Department of World Languages and Literature. **Dr. C.J. Enloe**, a Lecturer of Spanish, is accommodating and adaptable. Students said that she not only went above and beyond to make sure their accommodations were provided correctly, but also to tailor her teaching style to diverse learning preferences. Being understanding and supportive, but also challenging, she instills confidence in her students, helping them to find success and advocate for themselves.

Congratulations to SMU's 2024 Extra Mile Award recipients! Thank you for going the extra mile for SMU students who learn differently.

Service Animal Reminders

Alexa Taylor

Have you had a student with a service animal in your classroom? If not, you may be hesitant about how you might respond. Will the animal be disruptive? Is it even allowed in your space? DASS is a resource if you have a student bring in a service animal to your classroom. We encourage you to contact our office to talk through the situation. If we know the student and animal, we can verify some information and guide you on how to manage any concerns, like space, lab equipment, etc. If we don't know the student, we will reach out to verify the animal is indeed a service animal and make sure the student knows about our office, as well. Service dogs are expected to always be under the handler's control and not disruptive to the environment.



It is important to note that no other animal would be allowed in the classroom, so no pets of any kind, or Emotional Support Animals (ESAs) unless approved by DASS as an actual accommodation. Please call our office for ANY questions on this topic!

<https://www.ada.gov/resources/service-animals-faqs/>

Empower All Learners, a Faculty Technology Workshop

David Tylicki

During SMU's 2024 Back-to-School Bootcamp, I had the pleasure of collaborating with Jennifer Mayes of OIT and Dr. Francesca Go of the Simmons School of Education and Human Development to present "Empower All Learners: Strategies for Diverse Learners," a Faculty Technology Workshop. Our three goals were to help participants identify the unique needs and characteristics of diverse learners, apply specific strategies to make Canvas materials more accessible, and use PopeTech software to identify accessibility areas of improvements on their Canvas pages. If you want to learn more about this or any other 2024 Faculty Technology Workshop, OIT has posted all [the videos on their blog](#).

Expanded Testing Services and Updated Policies at the University Testing Center

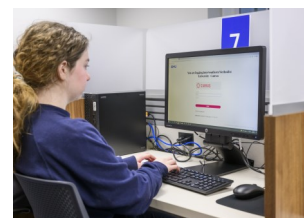
Lori Krone



As the UTC embarks on their third year of operation, the [University Testing Center \(UTC\)](#) has news to share related to their phased opening, new policies, and recertification. Please read all the news in this [recent blog post](#).

SMU University Testing Center

The UTC is in phase three of their phased opening, and have expanded credit-by-exam offerings for SMU students and community members this summer. They also began supporting placement tests for Chemistry, Math, and Second Language courses, helping incoming and current students find the correct course to enroll in based on their demonstrated knowledge. This fall, UTC staff will offer limited make-up testing services to support faculty with test administration, as well.



Finally, you'll find updated policies for students and faculty users of the [UTC Portal](#) for test registration and test submission. Students register at least **3 business days** before the testing date, and exam submissions are due from professors at least **5 business days** before the testing date. Testing documents are not required to be uploaded at the time of submission but must be received no later than 2 business days before the testing date. The new policies will permit the maximizing of the testing seats and enable more students to be served by the center. User videos and step-by-step instructions for using the UTC Portal are available for both [students](#) and [professors](#) on the [UTC website](#).

The UTC staff are here to help! UTC staff members are available for in-person or virtual appointments during UTC operating hours, 8:00 – 4:00 p.m. weekdays. You'll find the UTC located at the west end of the Clements Hall basement in G28.

For more information, please phone 214-768-6064 or email at universitytestingcenter@smu.edu.

VISIT US ONLINE AT WWW.SMU.EDU/DASS

Please include this statement in your syllabus:

Students who need 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/SASP/DASS> to begin the process. Once they are registered and approved, students then submit a DASS Accommodation Letter through the electronic portal, *DASS Link*, and then communicate directly with each of their instructors to make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, but rather require advance notice in order 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



DASS IS MORE THAN ACCOMMODATIONS.

For resources that may be helpful to faculty and staff, please visit:
<http://www.smu.edu/Provost/SASP/DASS/Resources/ForFaculty>