

THE DASS INSIDER

A NEWSLETTER FOR SMU FACULTY

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



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DASS Data Snapshot Fall 2020

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	LD	ADHD	AUT	PSYCH	HI	MED	PHY	SI	VI	ALL	% of Population*
Fall 2020 UG	293	501	15	219	4	172	11	2	5	880	13%
Fall 2020 Grad	47	87	1	43	2	24	7	2	5	166	3%

Chart above describes the number of undergraduate and graduate students at SMU who report different disabilities. 13% of the population of undergraduate students is receiving an accommodation for a disability. 3% of the graduate student population is receiving an accommodation.

Key: LD—Learning Disabilities AUT—Autism PSYCH—Psychological HI—Hearing MED—Medical PHY—Physical SI—Speech VI—Vision
*Based on 12,085 total students (5,455 Graduate Students + 6,630 Undergraduate students)

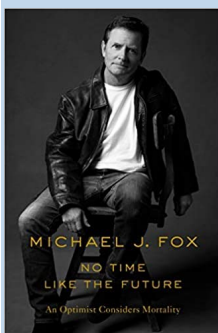
With the implementation of DASS Link, the office continues to greatly improve in the accuracy of counting/tracking how many students work with our office with specific conditions, and how many students have particular accommodations. The large majority of students are approved for some kind of extended testing time, although some students are not, and are approved for a separate accommodation such as housing/dining or possibly a reduced distraction environment for testing only. We have a small population of students who require less common accommodations such as communication services (CART or live captioning), an emotional support animal in campus housing, Second Language Substitution, or a reader/scribe for tests. We continue to see increases in the number of students requesting accommodations with the following conditions: ADHD, psychological conditions, and medical conditions. Most other categories remain fairly stable.

DASS Student Survey Responses—Fall 2020 Experiences

DASS surveyed our students at the close of Fall 2020 with a brief, 2-question survey about their experiences with accommodations in altered learning formats. Of the 200 responses received that have been reviewed so far (542 responses were ultimately received), 47 replied with positive comments about their experiences with access and accommodations at SMU; 13 shared negative experiences; 84 shared both positive and negative experiences; and 22 reported access/disability-related issues specifically with online learning environments. Not surprisingly, negative experiences centered on disconnection from peers and faculty in the classroom, focus and fatigue issues from screen time and virtual classrooms, and decreased access to in-person SMU resources on campus. Positive comments centered around faculty willingness to accommodate and create welcoming learning environments. Students appreciate the efforts of faculty and DASS to remove barriers to learning!

Book Corner

Parkinson's Disease and Perseverance



No Time Like the Future: An Optimist Considers Mortality
By Michael J. Fox

A look back and forward from an outspoken advocate for Parkinson's Disease! For a New York Times review of this book, visit [HERE](#).

An Ear to the Ground: Coaching in the Age of Covid

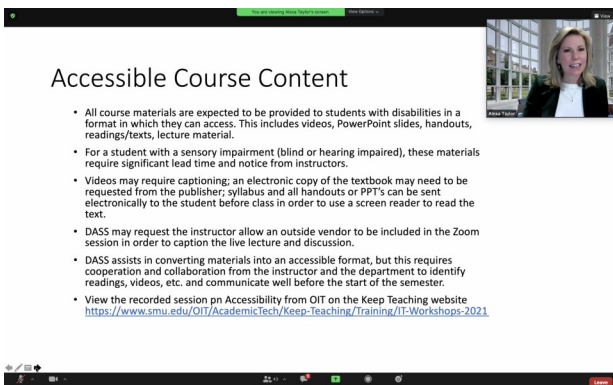
by David Tylicki

As an academic coach for SMU students with ADHD and Learning Differences, I hear a lot of stories – stories about classes, professors, great successes, and heartbreaking failures. The past year has been particularly enlightening, as you can imagine. Thankfully, not all of the students in the population with whom I work found online learning or flex problematic, but many did.

Students, especially those with ADHD, described their difficulty focusing on online lectures. They fixated on classmates, Zoom backgrounds, and fascinating people and pets appearing in other Zoom windows. I made several suggestions. Students could “pin” the instructor’s window, but this was not always effective, especially during class discussions. They might log the time that they became distracted and watch those parts of the recorded lecture. They could read or watch videos about the lecture topic beforehand, as familiarity increases interest and focus. These strategies helped; however, they also took time on top of an already increased workload. Many instructors shifted to less lecture and assigned additional homework, reading, videos, and online discussion boards, as well as reverse classroom techniques. For students who need more time to read and process information, effective time management strategies became critical.

For these students who needed to plan their time to be successful, confusing, minimal, or unreliable syllabi proved to be a huge detriment. Students showed me Canvas syllabi posted under the obvious (“Syllabus”), the not-so-obvious, (“Files”), and the obscure (a link in “Announcements,” or at the bottom of the home page). Some syllabi were divided, parts posted under different tabs. A spreadsheet might seem like a good way to organize a syllabus calendar, but adding different fonts, font-sizes, parentheses, brackets, colors, italics, bolding, and underlining to emphasize certain tasks, while well-intentioned, is incredibly difficult for students with a reading disorder or challenges to spatial reasoning to decipher. Some syllabi did the opposite and listed no due dates. These dates might be added in later, but many were introduced via email or Canvas Announcements, sometimes with less than a week’s notice, a disadvantage for students who try to plan ahead because they need longer to read and process information.

I share these stories to help you better understand what students with disabilities are facing at this time. My hope is that if a student comes to you with any of these issues, you’ll have some recommendations for them. Plus, making small but meaningful changes in course planning can make a huge difference and help all of our students.



Accessible Course Content

- All course materials are expected to be provided to students with disabilities in a format in which they can access. This includes videos, PowerPoint slides, handouts, readings/texts, lecture material.
- For a student with a sensory impairment (blind or hearing impaired), these materials require significant lead time and notice from instructors.
- Videos may require captioning; an electronic copy of the textbook may need to be requested from the publisher; syllabus and all handouts or PPT’s can be sent electronically to the student before class in order to use a screen reader to read the text.
- DASS may request the instructor allow an outside vendor to be included in the Zoom session in order to caption the live lecture and discussion.
- DASS assists in converting materials into an accessible format, but this requires cooperation and collaboration from the instructor and the department to identify readings, videos, etc. and communicate well before the start of the semester.
- View the recorded session on Accessibility from OIT on the Keep Teaching website <https://www.smu.edu/OIT/AcademicTech/Keep-Teaching/Training/IT-Workshops-2021>

Alexa Taylor, DASS Director, shares a short presentation with the Writing and Reasoning faculty in English before the Spring semester begins.

DASS Faculty Outreach on Campus and Online

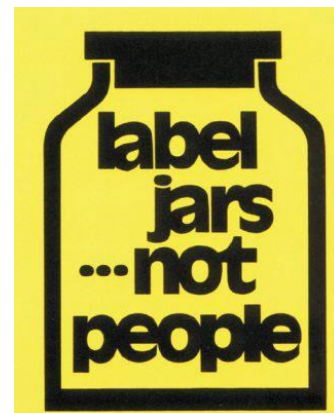
Thank you to the faculty who joined us for our DASS Zoom Drop In on January 22! DASS offers these digital meetings to answer faculty questions, brainstorm solutions to classroom and accommodation needs, and build community between DASS and faculty.

Our next Zoom Drop In is on February 8 at 4:00 pm CST (<https://smu.zoom.us/j/95768967472>), and we would love to see you there! A brief PPT resource is available for those who cannot join us.

How Do You Say....?

By Alexa Taylor

Many people are confused by the language used to describe impairments or disabilities, and the people who experience them. As disability studies has evolved, most agree that person-first language is the most respectful way to describe someone who also has an impairment that can be disabling. But, of course, there is a lot more to it! The two articles below highlight perspectives about how words matter, political correctness and its “well-meaningness”, and ultimately how we all may “learn to be disabled”.



- **Becoming Disabled:** Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *New York Times*, 2016

“Becoming disabled demands learning how to live effectively as a person with disabilities, not just living as a disabled person trying to become nondisabled. It also demands the awareness and cooperation of others who don’t experience these challenges. Becoming disabled means moving from isolation to community, from ignorance to knowledge about who we are, from exclusion to access, and from shame to pride.” Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, English Professor at Emory University

- **PC Labels Do a Diservice:** Stephen Stern, *Inside Higher Ed.*, 2020

“To call them “differently abled” may falsely attribute to them helpful qualities that would give them an advantage they do not really enjoy and diminishes the real struggles they endure and work around or overcome to succeed and present themselves as able. These people work harder in the nuts and bolts of “doing” college. They suffer emotionally from it and yet keep plugging away, trying to keep up with their peers in the seats around them. They deserve credit for this. Indeed, they deserve to be celebrated for it.” Stephen Stern, Chair of Jewish Studies at Gettysburg College.

Biomechanics, Bach and a Brazilian Musical Inspiration

by Michelle Bufkin



Brazilian pianist Joao Carlos Martins plays the piano while wearing mechanical gloves at his home in Sao Paulo, Brazil, on Jan. 29, 2020. (MIGUEL SCHINCARIOL/AFP via Getty Images)

Can a disability lead to even greater career success? An acclaimed Brazilian classical pianist and conductor, Joao Carlos Martins, is living proof of turning disability, tragedy and technology into a second chance at Carnegie Hall. His inspiring story can be found here: [PIANO](#)

Martins has performed for over 16 million people across the United States, Europe and South America in his 60-year musical career before his talented hands were stilled by a degenerative disorder called focal dystonia, a movement disorder that causes involuntary contractions of the muscles. How he turned that devastating loss into a second career and purpose can be heard in his own words through this YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/SGbk98HyjOI>

See page 4 for an organization working in the field of music, disability and technology.

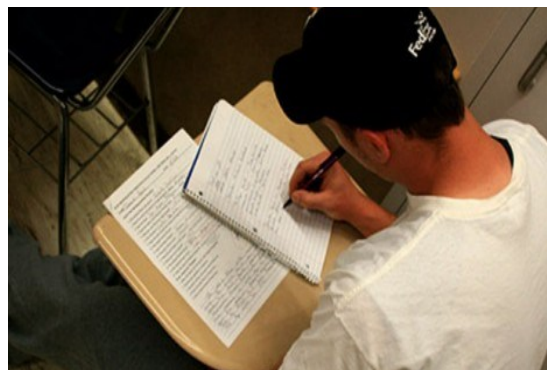


Faculty Q&A: Peer Notes for Online and Recorded Lectures

A student's DASS letter includes a copy of peer notes as an accommodation. I am posting all of my class lectures on Canvas for all of my students. Do I still need to get a peer note taker for this DASS student?

The accommodation of peer notes is designed to overcome the barrier of simultaneous processing in a finitely timed setting. The purpose of assigning notetakers for students is to make sure that students who, because of disability, were not able to take notes independently during an ongoing class lecture would have equal access. If your class is being offered in a format where EVERYONE gets to watch the recording on their own time (and during which a student with a disability can take their own notes, at their own speed), then the need for the peer notetaker may be unnecessary. Talk to your student to confirm this is the case.

For more FAQ's for faculty, see <http://www.smu.edu/Provost/ALEC/DASS/FAQ/ForFaculty>.



Faculty Resources for Online Learning: Videos and Handouts

What are the legal requirements for making online courses accessible?

In this short video the US Office of Civil Rights lays out our legal obligations for making online courses accessible to students with disabilities: [Online Education and Website Accessibility](#)

You can find quick tips and comprehensive resources for designing accessible and inclusive courses and programs at [Access DL](#).

Watch the recorded session from OIT Instructional Technology Workshop, titled "[Ensuring Accessibility and Accommodating for DASS Students in Canvas](#)".



Do you know Drake Music? "We are leaders in music, disability & technology. We believe in a world where disabled and non-disabled musicians can work together as equals.

Music is a human right and a powerful force for self-expression and change. It should be accessible to all." VIBE is a group of blind and partially sighted musicians and for anyone interested in accessible music, and audio technology. To learn more, visit vibe-request@freelists.org.



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 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



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>