

THE DASS INSIDER

A NEWSLETTER FOR SMU FACULTY

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

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The Power of American Sign Language



A Perfect Match

How universal is American Sign Language for communicating? Check out this inspiring story of a professor and a dog named Apollo.

[Apollo meets his Match](#)

For more details on ASL:

[The World of ASL](#)

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, Robin Corbett, Jeanna Turay*
DASS Administrative Assistant: *Candy Brown*

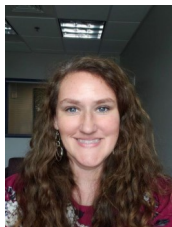
Our DASS Team is Growing

Welcome to our new Coordinators and Interns!

Over the summer, DASS added two new Disability Coordinators to our team to replace Tomasine Sam and Karen Turbeville, who left SMU to pursue other opportunities. We appreciate their contributions to DASS and wish them all the best. Please welcome Robin and Jeanna!



Robin Corbett, Accommodations Coordinator, *Disability Accommodations and Success Strategies (DASS)* Robin received her BBA from Baylor University, M.Ed from Abilene Christian University, and Ed.D from Lamar University. Her areas of academic study include Finance, Curriculum and Instruction, and Educational Leadership. Prior to joining SMU, she spent 16 years in K-12 public education, serving in various roles at all levels including classroom teacher, curriculum facilitator and assistant principal. In her free time, Robin enjoys spending time with her family, watching sports (especially the ones her sons are participating in or coaching), and relaxing. Robin's caseload includes primarily psychiatric conditions. rcorbett@smu.edu



Jeanna Turay, Accommodations Coordinator, *Disability Accommodations and Success Strategies (DASS)* Jeanna received her B.S. in Biology from Stephen F. Austin State University and her Masters in Organizational Leadership from Colorado Christian University. Jeanna finds joy in helping students recognize their potential and accomplish their educational goals. She enjoys being outdoors with her rescue dog, Tyson, hiking and experiencing new cultures. Jeanna's caseload primarily includes physical and medical conditions, including vision, hearing and mobility. jaturay@smu.edu

This fall, we are pleased to have three interns assisting DASS with academic coaching needs.

Sumaiya Ahmad, Dylan Pflum, and Melanie Peterman come to us from graduate programs in Simmons and are ready to hone their skills working with our DASS students. They will have flexible hours and look forward to working with DASS students.

So please welcome these newest additions to our DASS team and reach out with specific needs related to your students.

Start of Semester Checklist for Faculty



The start of each semester is a good time to go over the basics related to DASS student and accommodations. The most urgent 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](#).

Who Has Questions?

Who has questions?? Here are some answers to questions that may be enlightening when you consider how accommodation requests are handled on campus:

Why are accommodations approved in college different than accommodations approved in high school?

K-12 operates under a "Success Model", which often includes accommodations that are helpful, but not always necessary. Higher education operates under an "Access Model". Access to the educational experience is provided through reasonable accommodations. When a functional limitation has been demonstrated, a reasonable accommodation must be tied to the functional limitation and it is put in place to ensure that a student with a disability is not discriminated against. The laws governing K-12 and higher education are also different.

Why do some students have accommodations before the first day of class and others do not have theirs approved yet?

It is up to the student to make their formal request to the DASS office for accommodations. Documentation guidelines on our website outline the kind of information necessary for staff to determine 3 things: 1.) Is this a person with a disability? 2.) what are the impacts of the condition and functional limitations the student experiences due to the documented disability, and 3.) what reasonable accommodation would mitigate the impact of the disability?

If the student has not provided information for staff to answer all of those questions, the student may be asked to provide additional information. Some students provided all of the necessary information and received an invitation to an intake to finalize accommodations. Some don't follow up on the intake invitation immediately. Some students are not approved for an accommodation initially, but circle back with additional information and are approved at a later date. Reviews happen year-round, as do intakes, but accommodations are not retroactive. Instructors are only obligated to provide accommodations after the student has shared the DASS letter and communicated with you to plan how to implement the accommodation. Please make the process easier; hold clearly posted office hours, and create a welcoming environment for students to talk with you about the DASS accommodations.

How do we make decisions in an equitable and consistent way?

While we have guidelines to help the review, we also consider each case individually. Here is a simplified example of our decision-making process for a hypothetical student with disabilities:

Joan has dyslexia and food allergies to gluten, dairy, and nuts. Diagnostic codes are provided by a psychologist as well as her allergist in writing. Functional limitations in the documentation and the student's self-report are documented as: slow reading speed, poor phonetic decoding, tendency to re-read, low reading comprehension, poor spelling and slow to formulate written work. Regarding the chronic health condition, the student must avoid the allergens and she carries an epi-pen, but has never used it. The requests are: *1.5x extended time for tests, use of a word processor for lengthy writing-based tests, private testing room, and a housing exemption.*

The DASS decisions and the rationale: Approved-1.5x due to reading speed and poor reading comprehension; word processor for writing-based tests. No documented attention issues were established so the request for a private testing room or reduced distraction environment for tests was denied. DASS also recommended the student work with the campus dietitian to determine if she could safely eat regularly in the dining halls and with access to the gluten-free pantry. If, with feedback from the dietitian, it was determined she needs to cook her own food, we recommend she has access to a kitchen on campus and a referral is made to RLSH to implement this, based on availability. Therefore, an exemption to the 2-year live-on requirement was denied, but an on-campus configuration was recommended.

New Beginnings: DASS Collaborations on Campus

The beginning of a new school year brings an opportunity to inform and educate, while refreshing ideas and approaches. We've been working all summer with new, incoming students with disabilities and will continue reviewing requests and finalizing accommodations over the semester. We onboarded over 125 new students to our system just this summer, and intakes will continue all throughout the semester. We had two new staff members join our ranks, as well, so training and orientation happened internally as well as across campus. DASS also worked closely with the staff at the new University Testing Center to learn how to utilize the DASS Link system for test proctoring scheduling and assisted in fine-tuning systems. The DASS office also participates in a variety of orientations, from students to faculty members to staff across campus.

DASS staff attended the following sessions to welcome new folks to campus while also establishing clear expectations about the roles of students, instructors, DASS staff, and the campus community.

- Counseling Services orientation for new interns and post-docs (staff)
- Teaching Effectiveness Symposium (faculty)
- New Faculty Orientation (faculty)
- WRTR departmental meeting (faculty)
- Prelude orientation (students)
- PACC: Pre-Advising Canvas Course (students)
- Stampede Resource Fair (students)
- International and Transfer Student Resource Fair (students)
- University Testing Center training and orientation (staff)



If you think your department or group would benefit from a DASS staff member joining your next departmental meeting, please contact the DASS director at alexat@smu.edu. We wish everyone a smooth Fall semester!

Faculty Recognition: Extra Mile Awardees

We are happy to announce the 2022 Extra Mile Award recipients! Students for New Learning, an organization chartered by the Student Senate to provide support and networking opportunities for students with learning differences 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.



Professor Denver Brittain, Adjunct Professor in the Department of Computer Science in the Lyle School of Engineering



Dr. Alejandro D'Brot, Lecturer in the Department of Biological Sciences of Dedman



Professor Madhura Kulkarni, Adjunct Professor in the Marketing Department of Cox School of Business

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

These three instructors join the forty other faculty members to whom SMU has awarded this honor since 2008.

University Testing Center Operational for Fall 2022

In 2018, conversations about establishing a testing center to serve the entire SMU community began to take place. The Provost Office formed the Testing Center Strategic Committee and, working with the University Space Committee, identified space to establish the University Testing Center (UTC) in the basement of Clements Hall (G15). On August 22, 2022, a three-phased opening of the center began. Currently, in Phase One, the UTC is handling most of the testing for Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS) students with testing accommodations.



Accommodated testing is now being conducted by the UTC as a backup to instructors and academic departments. The test proctoring process and reservations of testing seats remains the same, utilizing the DASS Link digital system. In spring 2023, Phase Two will see the expansion of services to student athletes during their sports' competitive seasons. The final phase, depending on space, usage, and demand, will be to add placement testing and evaluation services. A handful of other campus test proctoring services are and will remain operational as resources to instructors. Learn more about the new testing center, eligibility for testing, policies, and booking processes at smu.edu/testing.

Resources and Troubleshooting

From time to time, faculty or staff may have questions about accommodations or concerns about a student whose difficulties may be disability-based. DASS encourages you to consult the resources below and to reach out to our office for assistance. We are here to help students gain equal access to their education at SMU, and to increase understanding of disabilities among our community. Here are some resources to manage common issues with accommodations:



Extended time tests on Canvas: Detailed instructions are found [HERE](#).

DASS website/Faculty FAQs: These include your most common questions regarding working with your students with disabilities, as well as policies and procedures of the DASS office. Check out the [site](#) for the complete list.

DASS Staff: for issues with implementing accommodations OR increasing department awareness of accommodations. Our Director is happy to visit departmental meetings.

Academic coaching: This is a unique resource with proven benefits to students with disabilities. 1:1 sessions available to DASS students with a Learning Specialist to work on a variety of needs. Details are found [HERE](#).

Kurzweil 3000: All SMU students have access to this technology which converts printed text to spoken text. If students report difficulties with keeping up with readings, refer them to this tool, available from Fondren Librarians. All DASS students can access Kurzweil 3000 through their Accommodations Coordinator. Other campus resources are [HERE](#).

A-LEC Resources: Tutoring, Writing Center, Study Skills Workshops, Academic Counseling are described [HERE](#).

Archive of [Faculty Newsletters](#) with in-depth articles on topics of interest

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>