Welcome to Disability Access Services

Disability Access Services is located in Building 200 on the Nanaimo Campus. The Disability Services team is pleased to provide services to students, staff and faculty at Vancouver Island University.

This newsletter is designed to give you some of the information that you need to make your experience at Vancouver Island University welcoming and adaptable to your educational needs. In this eleventh edition, you can find information about services available on campus, community programs, and exciting events that have taken place on campus.

The staff in Disability Access Services have been busier than usual this past year finding new and exciting ways to make school life on campus easier for everyone. This newsletter will highlight some of the amazing ways staff and students are making a difference.
Mantras

Mantras are words or phrases that are repeated. Mantras can help centre your mind, and are a great tool to use when feeling overwhelmed or stressed.

EXAMPLES:

* I am strong, and powerful
* I can do this
* I have done my best

First Annual New Student Orientation

Mary Stasiuk, Disability Access Services Specialist, with support from Student Assistant, Jaime Stephens, launched the first annual New Student Orientation for Disability Access Services students in September 2017 which was a great success.

Support from VIU’s Peer Access Coaches and Go-Getters Student Club was instrumental to ensuring that the event went well. Activities were supported by the Peer Access Coaches and the Go-Getters Student Club. Information was provided on the role of Disability Access Services in education, the importance of Mental Health supports, and essential information about exam requests.

A dozen students attended and enjoyed a complimentary BBQ. Are you a new student attending VIU in Fall 2018? Keep an eye out for more information on the next orientation.

“*The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.*”

- Nelson Mandela

Sheila Boyce

A huge welcome to Sheila Boyce who joined the Disability Access Services team in April 2017. Sheila arrived to Nanaimo campus after working in counselling and advising at VIU’s Cowichan Campus and specializes in Mental Health related disabilities.

In addition to helping students reach their full potential at Vancouver Island University, Sheila has also stepped in to help Mary Stasiuk with organizing and training students who have signed up to be a part of the peer access coach pilot program.

Sheila’s top piece of advice for new students is to be prepared to change your mind. You may arrive at university thinking that you know exactly what you want to do after you graduate, but odds are that you will change your mind many times along the way. This is completely normal! Parents, this advice applies to you too! Expect your student to change their mind. Once students arrive at university an entire new world of opportunity opens up!
Why Peer Access Coaches?

University can be an intimidating place when you first arrive. It can be really easy to get off track and fall behind in your classes. A peer access coach is someone who has been there before, they are successful upper level students who have been chosen, and trained by staff in Disability Access Services so that they can help you succeed.

Peer access coaches can provide support, help you prioritize your classwork and make a game plan.

Peer access coaches are not counsellors, academic advisors or tutors.

Think you might benefit from having a peer access coach? Email: disabilityservices@viu.ca

Peer Access Coaches Pilot Program

Peer Access Coaches have arrived at Vancouver Island University to help the transition to university easier for new students. The program currently has three peer access coaches, and one peer access coach coordinator.

Mary Stasiuk, Access Specialist says that her vision for the Peer Access Coach Pilot Program was to help overcome stigma and build a community within Vancouver Island University where students can find the support that they need to succeed.

The Peer Access Coach program is based on similar programs at Vancouver Island University developed by Janet Sinclair.

Mary would like to thank Binisha Giri, Jaime Stephens and Sheila Boyce for all of the hard work that went into getting this program off of the ground.

In addition, thank you to the first group of Peer Access Coaches who signed up when this program was still in its very first stages.
New School Year, New Name

Have you noticed that Disability Services has changed their name this school year? The change to Disability Access Services was overdue says department coordinator, Denise Hook.

According to Hook, a lot of the larger universities have already changed the name of the department, and VIU is one of the most recent to follow suit.

This new name more accurately reflects what we are trying to achieve, creating a school environment where there is equal access for all students, Hook said.

Giving Up Control, to Gain Control

Sometimes as students one of the most difficult things can be finding that balance between school, work and family. One of the major challenges that students face is trying to do everything. The stress of trying to control every aspect of your life can be daunting, and negatively impact your well-being. Access Specialist, Sheila Boyce notes that the only thing that you can control is yourself, and your reactions to events. Understanding that can allow a release and get you to get back to what is most important to you.

Counselling Services on Campus

A Place To Turn When You Need Help

Professional, Safe and Confidential

Counselling Services offers free, confidential and professional support to enrolled VIU students. Counsellors collaborate with students in a compassionate setting to clarify concerns, establish goals and explore resources for well-being. We offer a variety of services which can assist in the management of personal challenges allowing students to have the best university experience possible.

To set up an appointment, drop by the Health & Wellness Centre on the 3rd floor of Building 200 or call 250 740-6416 from 8:30-4:00 pm
Jeremy the Dud

What would a world look like if those living “without specialty” were in the minority. Jeremy the Dud is a short film that seeks to answer that question as it turns the way we look at disability upside down. Examining the “prejudice, stigma and condescending attitudes people with disabilities face in our own society” (Jeremy the Dud Official).

Jeremy, the Dud, was born without a disability in this short film from Australia. To help those around him understand that he is “without specialty”, Jeremy is forced to wear a lanyard and tag that identify him as a dud.

Within the film, Jeremy, played by Nick Boshier, is the only main star that doesn’t have a disability. The remainder of the main cast is comprised with actors who have some sort of disability.

Early on in the short film we see Jeremy being questioned if it was okay for him to be travelling on his own, experiencing awkward situations where pre-conceived notions surrounding his abilities are more important than what he can do. Wheelchair pushing, bottom wiper and reacher are job options that are presented as being acceptable for duds, which highlights the difficulties that people with disability may face in trying to find employment.

Jeremy the Dud shows how discrimination changes the lives of those who live it, and seeks to change the viewpoint of the public surrounding disability and discrimination. The viewpoint of those without a disability doing a good deed by taking on care of someone with a disability is examined, as well as the tendency to treat those with a disability as a child, regardless of their age.


You can watch the full short-film here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFcFpWzIQNk

“Why do you automatically think you know what’s best for me? But you don’t even know me. You just see the thing hanging around my neck. My aspirations transcend wiping bums and getting ice cream.”

- Jeremy the Dud Film
Fifth Annual International Day of Persons With Disabilities

The fifth annual International Day of Persons with Disabilities event at Vancouver University was a huge success. With community partners from across Vancouver Island and Vancouver coming together on November 30, 2017 this was the largest day to date. Disability Access Services Coordinator, Denise Hook, was once again at the helm, with the entire staff of Disability Access Services providing support.

Guests included:
* Aids Vancouver Island
* Accessible Art
* BC Schizophrenia Society
* Nanaimo Brain Injury Society
* CNIB
* Canadian Council for the Blind
* Go Getters Club and Peer Access Coaches
* MS Society of Canada
* Nanaimo Association for Community Living
* Nanaimo Mental Health and Substance Treatment Services
* Nanaimo Nitro Power Soccer
* Nanaimo Organization for the Vision Impaired
* Narcolepsy Group
* Special Olympics of BC—Nanaimo Branch
* Supportive Apartment Living
* Self-Advocates of Nanaimo
* Nanaimo Food Box
* Assistive Technology BC
* VIU Counselling
* WEST
* Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society
* Haven House
* Pathways to Wellness
Community Feedback on International Day of Persons With Disabilities

Ahmad Briz from the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society, a first time participant in the International Day of Persons With Disabilities, was able to discover a variety of services and agencies that his team hadn’t been previously been aware of. Briz said, “I brought back to my team a lot of useful information which will be the foundation of mutually beneficial collaborations between CVIMS and other participants.”

Similarly, Ashley Bell, from the Go-Getters Student Club and Peer Access Coaches Program felt that the event was a huge benefit as it connects people with the “larger disability community to raise awareness with each other.” Bell also felt that another key benefit of the event was that it shows students with disabilities that they are not alone.

Denise Hook, Disability Access Services Coordinator mirrored the feelings of other participants about the value of the event to students, staff and community members.

Jaime Stephens, Student Assistant, has been involved with the event for three years and has seen the huge changes in the event from year to year. “Our community partners really seem to value the opportunity to come out and educate each other, students and the community on the services that are available within Nanaimo.” Having a space to come together is key, Stephens says.

Thank you to everyone for helping make this event such a success!

“I love that the International Day gives community partners the opportunity to discover what other services are available to their clients.”
Missing Something?
If you’ve misplaced any items recently, consider checking the Lost and Found, located in Building 315, Room 110.

Found items can be turned in at the Cafeteria, the Library Loans Desk or directly to Security in Building 315, Room 100.

If checking the Lost and Found for your items, please note that items often do not make it there until the end of the week, so you may need to wait a few days to claim them.

There is no greater disability in society, than the inability to see a person as more.

- Robert M. Hensel

Work-Able

Are you graduating from post-secondary education, or graduated within the past three years? Are you interested in the possibility of working within the public service in British Columbia? If you answered yes to these questions then Work-Able might be the perfect program for you.

Work-Able is a twelve month internship program through the Province of BC that gives up to fifteen individuals who self-identify as having a disability the opportunity to gain valuable work experience.

According to their website, Interns working with Work-Able gain:

- Public service experience
- Understanding of public service roles in the provincial government
- Increased knowledge and skills
- Mentoring, coaching and support
- Possible future employment opportunities in the provincial government

Applications for 2018 will be launched online in March 2018. After the deadline passes, all applications will be reviewed and those selected for interview will be contacted. The hiring committee which is made up of provincial hiring managers and a Work-Able representative conducts the interviews and is responsible for final selections.

“The objective of Work-Able is to increase the number of people who identify as having a disability in government….people with disabilities are either underemployed or unemployed. This program allows them to get that meaningful work experience so that they can apply for positions within the public service

- Odette Dantzer Work-Able Program Lead

You can get more information on the Work-Able program here: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/careers-myhr/job-seekers/internship-co-op-opportunities/work-able
Sheila Penny—the One and Only

When I first started working in Disability Access Services three years ago I was faced with the challenge of adjusting to a new university and adjusting to a new job. Sheila’s kindness made that transition so much easier and it will be hard to lose her as she retires.

*What is the biggest change that you’ve seen in your time in Disability Access Services?*

The number of students that are now accessing services has increased dramatically. I believe that is due to reducing the stigmas associated with disabilities.

*What are you looking forward to the most in your retirement?*

Relaxing and taking time for me. I find that while working I lost the time for hobbies and I’m looking forward to getting back into them.

*When you first started with Disability Access Services, did you ever expect that the department would grow so large?*

No, never, but I am so glad that it has.

*Over the past year, there have been a lot of staffing changes within the department, but you have remained a steady as the first person students see when they arrive. What will you miss the most?*

The people, seeing the differences in students as they grow and succeed.

*If you could give just one piece of advice to students coming in what would that piece of information be?*

Ask for help right away, even if you don’t think that you’re going to use the service, then at least the services are available when and if you need them instead of having to be arranged at the last minute.

*What does resiliency mean to you?*

Understanding yourself, your abilities and what causes you stress, and being able to say I need a break.

*Who will you miss the most? I’m just kidding. I know it’s me!*

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**Sheila Penny**

Who is Sheila Penny?

I asked the staff for one word to describe Sheila and the fact that they couldn't just pick one word speaks volume about who Sheila is to the department.

Her are the words that the staff picked:

- Laughter
- Remembering things no one else does
- Caring
- Sense of Humour
- Really smart
- Honest
- Supportive
- Real

The thing that I heard the most is how infectious her laugh is.

We will miss you Sheila Penny!!!

Calling all Exam Writers

Do you write your examinations in Disability Access Services? Reminder that effective immediately all exams require two weeks notice. Final Exam requests for Spring 2018 semester are due by March 20, 2018. This is due to the large number of students who write exams in Disability Access Services which requires a lot of coordinating. You can submit your requests through the Online System or with paper forms.

During the 2016/17 school year 1644 Tests/Midterms and Finals were written in Disability Access Services.

In Fall semester alone we saw 866 students!

A Note from Binisha Giri

Hello,

My name is Binisha Giri, I am currently a fourth-year student in the Bachelor of Arts programme. I have been a part of Disability Access Services (DAS) family since the very first day of my university career. With the help of the faculty members at DAS I have been able to overcome many challenges and obstacles.

However, there were still times where I felt as though I had a problem I could not discuss with the advisors because I either believed that my issues were insignificant or they would not be able to relate to me. This is why I decided to be a part of the pilot project called Peer Access Coaches (PAC). PAC is a student and faculty lead project where four third and fourth year students (including myself) are helping first-year students with their transition from high school life to university life.

Peer Access coaches are here to help guide the students, to assist them in having a more full university experience. We help set goals for their semester (students decide on their goals), discuss issues and create an action plan in order to achieve them. We are here to listen to the students and help them to find a solution. We also share our knowledge and experiences with the students so that they are aware of campus life as well as how to deal with classes. Although, we many not always be in the same field of study as the first-year students we collaboratively access the situations and create a solution.
Spotlight on Lupus

Lupus is an auto-immune disease that involves the immune system going into a hyper-active state. It this hyper-active state the immune system attacks what are considered to be normal, healthy tissues. This is caused by anti-bodies not being able to distinguish between healthy tissue and antigens. The result of the healthy tissues being attacked can include inflammation, swelling, as well as damage to joints, skin, kidney, blood, the heart and lungs.

An estimated five million people in the world have a variation of Lupus, of those more than 90% are women. While there is no definite reason for Lupus to occur, doctors believe that Lupus is caused by both genetic and environmental causes.

“There is only way to look at things, until someone shows us how to look at them with different eyes.”

- Pablo Picasso

Services for Aboriginal Students

Located in Shq’apthut— A Gathering Place, the Services for Aboriginal Students Team is available to support Aboriginal students in making a successful transition to Vancouver Island University and to assist students to succeed in their academic endeavours by providing direct services and appropriate referrals.

Staff are available to listen and support students with academic or personal concerns and promote academic, cultural, recreational and social activities in partnership with Aboriginal Students.

Celebration feasts, potlucks and community events are supported by Services for Aboriginal Students.

Location: Building 170.
Tel: 250-740-6510. Fax: 250-740-6385 Email: sas@viu.ca

Phone, email or drop by to make an appointment.
What does resiliency mean to you?

This year we have focused a lot on resiliency and what it means to students and community members. One thing that became apparent as we continued asking this question is that resiliency means something different to every person and this is key when looking at the benefit of knowing yourself. What works well for one person will not work well for everyone, and that is to be expected, and is part of what makes the staff in Disability Access Services a key component to the success of students at Vancouver Island University.
Awards and Scholarships

The next deadline for submitting your application for the numerous Awards & Scholarships available through the Vancouver Island University is quickly approaching. Be sure to log onto your Student Account and complete your Scholarship, Award & Bursary Profile before March 31/2018 to be considered!

For more information on Awards & Scholarships contact the Financial Aid Department.

**Location:** Building 200, Room 205  
**Contact Information:** Tel: 250-740-6423  Fax: 250-740-6229  
**Email:** FinancialAidInfo@viu.ca

“There is no greater disability in society, than the inability to see a person as more”

Welcome to VIU Advising

Educational Advisors can help you achieve a more fulfilling educational experience through an advising relationship. While post-secondary education can be one of life’s most rewarding experiences, it can be a confusing adventure for some, and an intimidating process for others.

* With an Educational Advisor you can:
  * Explore career and post-secondary options
  * Choose or change your program or courses
  * Select courses that will help you clarify your options
  * Clarify your educational goals
  * Develop your educational plans
  * Explore the impacts of dropping a course
  * Make a switch to a new program
  * Get connected with appropriate resources

**The Advising Centre is located on the top floor of Building 200 on the Nanaimo Campus!**

**Email:** advising@viu.ca or **Phone:** 250-740-6410
Thank You, from the Editor
This marks the final issue of the Disability Access Services Newsletter that I will complete. It is hard to believe that this is my third and final year of being a part of the family in Disability Access Services. In these past three years I have seen many faces come and go, I have created dozens of bulletin boards and participated in so many meaningful projects to help uplift the students at Vancouver Island University. The past three years have been amazing, and I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to the staff and students at Vancouver Island University to helping make my time here so memorable.

Best of luck to the next Disability Access Services Student Assistant.

Jaime Stephens

How Can Disability Services Help you?
The Disability Services Team is here to help ensure that you have the best possible university experience. Whether you have a permanent disability or something more temporary like a broken arm or a concussion, Disability Services is here to help.

We can help with:

* Campus Orientation  * Tutors  
  * Exam Accommodation  
  * Note Taking Support  * Priority Registration  
  * Alternate Format Texts  * Interpreter Services  
  * Assistive Technology  * Grant Applications

Nanaimo Campus, Building 200—Second Floor
Room 214
Phone (250) 740-6446
Email: disabilityservices@viu.ca