Welcome to Disability Services’ 7th Newsletter!

We are excited about providing you with valuable information that will help support your educational experience at VIU. We hope you will embrace the opportunity to submit stories about disability news, issues, websites, assistive technology, and upcoming events where students with a disability can be informed and supported.

Enjoy reading our Newsletter and be sure to spread the word that having a disability is not a barrier to education. Nothing is holding you back!

The Disability Services Office provides information, support services and reasonable accommodation in all of VIU’s programs to students with documented permanent and temporary disabilities ranging from attention deficit, learning disabilities, chronic health issues, hearing and visual impairments, to physical disabilities and temporary impairments due to accident, illness or injury.
International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Over one billion people, or approximately 15 per cent of the world’s population, live with some form of disability.

Around the world, persons with disabilities face physical, social, economic and attitudinal barriers that exclude them from participating fully and effectively as equal members of society. They are disproportionately represented among the world’s poorest, and lack equal access to basic resources, such as education, employment, healthcare and social and legal support systems, as well as having a higher rate of mortality. In spite of this situation, disability has remained largely invisible in the mainstream development agenda and its processes.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities was established by the United Nations. Since 1996 people around the whole world celebrate this day on Dec, 3rd.

VIU Disability Services took a part in International Day of Persons with Disabilities for a second time. This year the event was held in the Upper Cafeteria of VIU, 3rd of December, 2013 from 11:00 - 2:00 pm.

The following organizations attended:

- Peggy Hoult & Associates, which provide financial advocacy for seniors in transition, families living with disabilities, family caregivers.
- Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Society.
- Autism Society.
- Island Deaf and Hard of Hearing (IDHH).
- Workplace Essential Skills and Training (WEST), a VIU based program for students with developmental disabilities to gain workplace skills while working in local community-based business.
- Errington Therapeutic Riding Association provides its program of therapeutic horse riding for individuals with disabilities.
- Brain Injury Society.
- BC Schizophrenia Society.
- Nanaimo Association for Community Living supports people with developmental disabilities.
- Nanaimo Disability Resource Centre (NDRC), a charity that serves persons with disabilities.
- VIU Teaching and Learning.
- VIU Disability Awareness Club.
Welcome JANE HIBBERT

Jane Hibbert joined Disability Services in March of 2013 to assist Sheila Penny with part time reception duties. She has also worked as a casual employee since 2010, and can be found working in various faculties and departments around the Nanaimo and Parksville Campuses.

Jane and her husband moved to Parksville from Calgary 7 years ago, and enjoy the mild climate and beautiful ocean environment. She has two daughters; one lives in BC and the other in Cambridge, England. An avid reader, Jane also enjoys gardening, drawing and painting, as well as needlecrafts.

She enjoys working in Disability Services because the students are very positive and eager to succeed in their chosen areas of study.

Free Counselling Services for Students

⇒ Personal Counselling
⇒ Career & Learning Counselling
⇒ Study Skills Counselling

3rd floor of building 200. Appointments available between 9 am and 4:00 pm, Monday to Friday.

For information call 250-740-6416
Check the website: www.viu.ca/counselling

Academic Advising Services

- Clarification of career & educational goals
- Development of your academic & career plans
- Individualized academic support & problem solving
- Answers to your questions about VIU & your post-secondary options

Located: 3rd floor of building 200.
Call 250-740-6410 to discuss availability
or email: advising@viu.ca

Helpful Tips

Offer free, one-on-one assistance with writing essays, reports, resumes, proposals, and other forms. They help with grammar, punctuation, documenting sources, organization, expression, and any other concerns with writing. Students may sign up for a half-hour session, and drop-ins also welcome.

Library (build 300), 4th floor, room 447
NO LIMITS TO LEARNING

What are you capable of?

- Christie
  - Fan of the Vancouver Island Symphony
  - Loves to get together with family and friends
  - Enjoys aquasize at the pool
  - Bachelor of Music Program, minor in French
  - Has lupus, fibromyalgia and depressive disorder

- Lindsey
  - Loves animals—hopes to run a dog rescue one day
  - Creates jewelry and scrapbooks
  - Enjoys painting, sketching and cross-stitching
  - Practical Nursing Program
  - Has an acquired brain injury

- Josh
  - Love to travel
  - Enjoys learning about new cultures and people
  - Completed MBA and Master of Science in International Business
  - Has a hearing impairment

- Mark
  - Huge hockey fan
  - Loves reading and politics
  - Writes a blog about the Legion of Super-Heroes
  - BA, history major
  - Has Asperger's syndrome and a learning disability
NO LIMITS TO LEARNING

What are you capable of?

**Paul**
- Wheelchair sports athlete—rugby and racing
- Loves music—all kinds
- BA, minor in Digital Media

Spinal cord injury resulting in quadriplegia

**Tshepo**
- Loves to watch movies and hang out with her future husband
- Enjoys reading historical novels and drawing
- BA with a major in First Nations Studies and a minor in Anthropology

Has a learning disability and social anxiety disorder

**Blind**

**Jessica**
- Enjoys being around people with big smiles
- Wants to be a stand-up comedian
- BA in Digital Media

**Paul**

A student never forgets an encouraging private word, when it is given with sincere respect and admiration.

- William Lyon Phelps
“DARK RESTAURANT” in Vancouver

**Dark Table** is a unique restaurant experience in Vancouver that offers diners the opportunity to gain some understanding into what it means to be without sight. Blind dining is already a hit in such trendy modern cities as London, Paris, New York, L.A. and Montreal.

⇒ You'll be led to your table in the dark dining room by a blind or visually impaired server who has been trained to ensure your comfort at all times.

⇒ Once seated, you'll have the opportunity to adjust to the darkness and truly give yourself to this extraordinary experience.

⇒ No light producing technologies are allowed in the dining room, including flashlights, cell phones, or luminous watches.

“The whole experience was amazing. Totally puts you out of your comfort zone.”

“Cool experience”

“It’s worth seeing what people deal with every day….it’s not about the food, it’s about using your senses and trying something different.”

“What we need to do is learn to respect and embrace our differences until our differences don’t make a difference in how we are treated.”

- Yolanda King

1366 exams, assessments, and quizzes were accommodated by Disability Services from January to December 2013

148 alternate format textbooks were ordered for students with disabilities during the fall 2013 semester

13 units on the Student Residences are accessible for students with disabilities.

680 students were registered with Disability Services in 2013

DID YOU KNOW
AT Fusion includes:

⇒ **Kurzweil** educational system is an assistive technology text to speech learning tool that supports the concept of Universal Design for Learning with a suite of powerful reading, writing, test-taking, and study skill tools that makes curricula accessible to all students. ([http://www.kurzweiledu.com/default.html](http://www.kurzweiledu.com/default.html))

⇒ **Inspiration** software has been created for visual mapping, outlining, writing and making presentations. ([http://www.inspiration.com/](http://www.inspiration.com/))

⇒ **Livescribe** is a smartpen, a ballpoint pen with an embedded computer and digital audio recorder. When used with special paper, it records audio while you write for later uploading to a computer. The notes are synchronized with any audio it has recorded. This allows users to replay portions of a recording by tapping on the notes they were taking at the time the recording was made. It is also possible to select a portion of a recording to replay by clicking on the relevant portion of a page on-screen, once it has been synced to the Livescribe desktop software. ([http://www.livescribe.com/en-us/](http://www.livescribe.com/en-us/))

⇒ **iPad** is a terrific device for individuals with disabilities. Built-in accessibility features are helpful to all learners. There are also many apps for the iPad that may be useful to students with disabilities in post-secondary. ([http://otswithapps.com](http://otswithapps.com))

If you would like to use Kurzweil and/or Inspiration, you may book one of the Accessibility Stations in the VIU Library > [http://libguides.viu.ca/accessibility](http://libguides.viu.ca/accessibility)
What I should know about *Autism* & VIU

**Autism** is known as a complex developmental disability. Experts believe that autism presents itself during the first three years of a person's life. The condition is the result of a neurological disorder that has an effect on normal brain function, affecting development of the person's communication and social interaction skills.

People with Autism have issues with non-verbal communication, a wide range of social interactions, and activities that include an element of play and/or banter. (http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/info/autism/)

### Autism Spectrum Thinking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(variable depending on the student)</th>
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<tr>
<td>♦ Often visual thinkers, but some also think well with word facts or patterns</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ Weak ability to generalize information</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ Social and communication difficulties</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ Tend to be more concrete vs. abstract thinkers</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ Often learn best with rote memory skills</td>
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<td>♦ May have difficulty with literary concepts such as metaphor and analogy</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ Difficulties with executive functioning skills:</td>
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<tr>
<td>⇒ Prioritizing, time-management, emotional and self-regulation</td>
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<td>♦ May have difficulty with self-reflection in assignments</td>
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### Academic Accommodation Tips

- Provide detailed instructions about expectations for assignments and testing
- With some students, it may be necessary to set limits on class participation, for example, 3 questions or comments per class
- Although students are often reluctant, working with an academic coach/tutor is frequently required
- Creativity in developing individualized accommodations (Disability Services staff are available for consultation)

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**Increasing Population of Non-traditional Learners at VIU:**

**Students with Autism Spectrum Differences**

![Graph showing increasing population of non-traditional learners at VIU with a focus on students with Autism Spectrum Differences]
**MUST SEE MOVIES**

**ON THE ROAD... TO FIND OUT**

On the road... to find out is a documentary film that explores issues related to the re-location of people with mental illness from smaller communities on Vancouver Island to Nanaimo—in order to access mental health services. The film is intended to be a discussion starter... What happens when people are taken out of their natural social setting after they become mentally ill? What are the positive and negative effects of re-location? Where is home once someone has been relocated for an extended period?

Columbian Centre Society

A trailer for this movie can be accessed at: [http://www.columbiancentre.org/?page_id=5481](http://www.columbiancentre.org/?page_id=5481) and a copy of the movie is available through the VIU Library.

“Movies are like an expensive form of therapy for me.” — Tim Burton

“You know what your problem is, it’s that you haven’t seen enough movies - all of life’s riddles are answered in the movies.” — Steve Martin

**DOOR TO DOOR**

Door to Door is an inspiring movie that tells the story of salesman Bill Porter (William H. Macy), who came into contact with many people during his decades of knocking on doors. Porter, diagnosed with cerebral palsy, didn’t allow his condition to stop him from pursuing a career, and his story touched the hearts and lives of many of his potential customers.
VIU has more than 600 students registered with its disability services department, which provides equipment and other support to help ensure student’s success, such as interpreters for hearing impaired students, notetakers for the visually impaired, electronic devices, computer programs and quiet rooms for writing exams.

Lianne Smithaniuk, a braillist, transcriber and illustrator, carries out the meticulous and time-consuming task of converting textbooks for visually impaired students.

This semester Smithaniuk is converting textbooks for just one student taking chemistry and statistics.

Braille was never designed to create illustrations and its coded raised patterns representing letters and numbers take up far more space than conventional text. Smithaniuk often finds herself charting new territory when she tries to represent in braille illustrations and diagrams created for a visual world.

How does one represent a diagram with liquid in a flask as a raised textural pattern in braille? Even converting a simple direction arrow symbol is a challenge that must take into account the gap in frames of reference between Smithaniuk, who sees in the conventional sense, and a student living in a world without vision and “sees” characters through her fingertips.

“We take for granted that pictures give us more information and it certainly helps people learn concepts,” Smithaniuk said. “Arrows we take for granted as well, but a blind person has to learn how to read them. It doesn’t necessarily look like it’s pointing to something. She gets used to seeing them after a while and then sometimes I have to describe [objects in the diagram]. I can’t necessarily expect her to make sense of what these forms are.”

The pages of braille translations are first laid up with a computer, then printed on a specially coated paper, which is passed through a PIAF machine – a tactile image maker – that heats the paper coating and causes the printed dots to bulge up to form the braille word and illustration patterns.

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**Words Matter: Put People First NOT their Disability**

- The word “disabled” is an adjective, not a noun; people are not conditions. Use the term “people with disabilities” rather than “the disabled”. Similarly, you would say “student with autism” not “the autistic student.”

- Focus on a person with a disability as an individual with unique personality traits, preferences and strengths.

- Ask for information about the person’s disability only when it is pertinent to the discussion or when the relationship is such that asking a personal question is appropriate.

- Use direct language, not euphemisms. Terms such as handicapped, mentally different, physically inconvenienced and physically challenged are considered condescending.
FROM A STUDENT’S PERSPECTIVE...

My name is Janna, but friends call me Jenna and I'm in my second year of BA of Science at VIU. My career goal is to be a Nutritionist, so now I have a lot of Chemistry and Biology courses, which are not so easy. I always have been interested in health and like to be healthy.

I love VIU! I think it is an amazing university. And I find Disability Services very supportive: everything is done on time. They are very easy and friendly and they are super easy people to work with. I have had a very positive experience with this university, especially with Disability Services.

Before VIU I attended an online school; it was okay. But I would much rather go to class (VIU gives me this opportunity). VIU supplies me with Braille books, which are very expensive. There is a good fund for me and I’m thankful for it, since I’m studying Chemistry now and there are lot diagrams, so Braille books help me a lot.

I do well with my courses largely because I have a high level of support. In my first year, I took Biology and was very successful. Last semester, I took Chemistry and it worked out nicely, too. Also, when I get home I put in a lot of study time since I read Braille texts which can take longer to go through, particularly with the diagrams. I do my best and am really enjoying the courses.

My typical Chemistry lab is usually three hours, but I come in a couple days before the lab and do Lab preparation. During this time, I learn more about the equipment we are going to use that week. That way, if I go to Lab and I’m super-ready, I finish my Lab on time. I also have an awesome tutor and he is also my captionist. He makes detailed notes for me because lots of notes need to be taken from projectors and I’m not able to see them. Disability Services then translates the notes to Braille for later study. As well, after the class my tutor and I usually review the class work. He explains everything to me, especially what was visual. We work very well together and are a good team.

My tips for people with Disabilities – never say that you cannot do it unless you try first; go ahead, do your best.

I do not look at my disability as a handicap; rather, I look at it as just a characteristic. It’s not the only thing that matters; it’s just a small part of who I am.

Janna-Lynn Faris

DID YOU KNOW?

In June 2012 - 27 students with disabilities received degrees at Convocation. 20 received diplomas, 7 received certificates, 15 graduated from trades and 3 graduated with a Masters degree.

Programs included:

- Business Administration
- Criminology
- Liberal Studies
- Nursing
- Education
- Welding
- Early Childhood Development
- Social Services
- School and Community Support
The VIU Disability Awareness Club was created in September, 2012 by Richard Harlow, Club President.

I’m working on my Bachelor degree and my major is Psychology. I’ve been legally blind for the past 4 years. As a result of optic neoplasia, I lost my central vision. After that I noticed that the way people interacted with me was completely different from before. Technologies on my phone or PC help me a lot. I’m pretty comfortable and adaptable with my disability. I saw how Disability Services works and decided bring some awareness and created this club.

VIU Disability Awareness Club is just in its second year.
There are currently 10 active members and 20 signed up members.
The club is looking for members with or without disabilities.
The club would like to increase mental health awareness

WHAT WE DO:

VIU Disability Awareness Club acts as a support group for people with disabilities. It’s an opportunity to build social connections, educate others, and spread awareness. As an activist club, we advocate for people with disabilities and work toward increased accessibility while challenging ableism.

As a club, we hold social events, like potlucks or movie nights. We fundraise and donate to local non-profit charities that help people with disabilities; have guest speakers on campus; and help run special events, such as International Persons with Disabilities Day on December 3rd.

The biggest project we are working on is a campaign called “Ramp up the Access,” which is a petition to make a BC Persons with Disabilities Act, which would increase accessibility in BC and provide more rights.

MEETING TIMES AND CONTACT INFORMATION:

Contact Richard Harlow at: VIUDisabilityAwarenessClub@gmail.com
TIPS FOR COMMUNICATION WITH

PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF

Get the person’s attention before you speak.
Talk to, not about, the deaf, deafened or hard of hearing person.
Maintain eye contact, and minimize head and body movement.
Speak clearly and at a normal or slightly slower pace.
Sit as closely together as is comfortable and professional.

Facial expressions should match words and are helpful when a tone of voice can't be heard.
Your visual attention, facial expressions and physical contact are all very important in creating a bond between you and the deaf, deafened or hard of hearing person.
Do not shout or over-enunciate, which distorts the face and lips.
Do not indulge in side chat. Although second nature to hearing people, side conversations make deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people feel they are missing important information, which may indeed be the case.
Don't do anything unexpected from behind the person.
Don't restrict the person’s hands (for writing and/or signing purposes).
Do not put obstacles in front of your face (i.e. your hands), and refrain from chewing gum or smoking.
Moustaches and beards on a speaker can make speech reading difficult for some people.
Give clues when changing the conversation subject.
Rephrase, rather than repeat, when you are not understood. If you have trouble understanding a person with a hearing loss, ask him or her to repeat what they have said.
Patience and flexibility are important when establishing communication with a deaf, deafened or hard of hearing person.

“Nine tenths of education is encouragement”

- Anatole France
Changing Your Brain

Your brain is more flexible than you think! It changes because it is constantly optimizing and reorganizing itself. After a stroke, for example, the brain can reorganize itself to move functions to undamaged areas. Brain plasticity is the common term used by neuroscientists. It refers to the brain's ability to change at any age – for better or worse. As you can imagine, this flexibility plays an incredibly important role in our brain development (or decline).

Brain plasticity, or neuroplasticity as it is also known, refers to changes in neural pathways and synapses which are due to changes in behavior, environment and neural processes, as well as changes resulting from bodily injury. Neuroplasticity has replaced the old idea that the brain is physiologically static, and explores how the brain changes throughout life.

Eaton Arrowsmith Schools hosted a conference in the fall on Neuroplasticity and Education. Various presenters spoke about brain plasticity from a wide range of perspectives. For example, Dr. John Ratey spoke about how exercise can improve cognition, Barbara Arrowsmith Young talked about the connection between mental health issues and learning disabilities, and Dr. Rick Hansen presented on “hardwiring happiness” and ways to train our brains to focus less on the negatives and more on the positives. Videos of all the speakers have been posted on the Eaton Arrowsmith website. You can watch them here:


If you are interested in reading more about brain plasticity, a good place to start is a book called “The Brain That Changes Itself” by Dr. Norman Doidge. Dr. Doidge tells the personal stories of many individuals who were able to “change their brains”.

D I S A B I L I T Y S E R V I C E S
Last spring, I applied for a Learning, Innovation and Teaching Enhancement (LITE) grant from the Center for Innovation and Excellence in Learning (CIEL), and received funding to purchase Camtasia software. Camtasia is a screen-casting program, which facilitates the production of instructional videos. Last spring and summer, I was able to make several videos to add to our website. The first screencasts were short tutorials showing students how to use Disability Service’s online booking system for accommodated exams. Shawn O’Toole from Advising acted as “voice talent” for these videos, which can be found at http://www.viu.ca/disabilityservices/students/studentexams.asp. VIU’s website will be updated soon, so I may need to re-do these screencasts eventually. With the help of an interpreter, I also added an American Sign Language (ASL) video for students who are Deaf, giving an overview of the exam booking system. I used Camtasia to add captions to all of these videos, to increase accessibility.

The online tutor registry for students registered with Disability Services is another process we receive a lot of questions about, so I also produced a tutorial to guide students through the steps. The Tutor Registry Training video is available at http://www.viu.ca/disabilityservices/students/

The next project involved interviewing several students registered with Disability Services for a “Student to Student Advice” section on our website. I filmed these interviews using a camera from the library, and then used Camtasia to edit and caption the results. Thanks to Richard, Shauna, and Anne for sharing their experiences, which can be found at http://www.viu.ca/disabilityservices/students/index.asp. I hope to eventually add to this collection.

My final project last summer was to create a “Meet the Staff” presentation for our website. Disability Counsellor Denise Hook and I worked together on this project, using captioned videos and the “Prezi” presentation platform. Our staff had some good laughs in the filming process, and I ended up with some “bloopers” videos which were not included in the final version. This is a good presentation to watch if you want to get a quick sense of what we do, or you can’t remember the name of the person you saw the last time you were in. The presentation can be found at http://www.viu.ca/disabilityservices/index.asp.

By providing information in a multi-modal manner, we hope students are able to quickly and efficiently find the answers they need to some commonly asked questions.

Contributed by Karen Armitage, Exam Coordinator
Hello everyone!

My name is Victoria, I’m an international student here at VIU; taking Post-Diploma Degree Program in Business Studies, currently in my second semester. In addition, I work as a work-op student in Disability Services and actually my main duty was to put together this Newsletter.

I’m Ukrainian, but I love Nanaimo so much and I’m looking forward to seeing more interesting places on Vancouver Island. I simply adore VIU, it provides lots of opportunities for International students, especially different means of learning language support, since English isn’t my native language, this has been extremely useful. I used to find it hard to study but all the mediums which the University provides have come in handy, they include: Writing Centers, Coaching, Advisory & Counselling Centers.

Most importantly, VIU has given me this great opportunity to work in Disability Services, which I’m finding very interesting. This has fostered an improvement in my language skills, increased my knowledge about other cultures and has helped me be a more patient and understandable. Disability Services has a great team, that is willing to support students in need of some assistance. People who work here are very open and friendly. And I’m happy that I got this chance to work and be a part of this team.

The Disability Services team created this Newsletter and I hope you love it; we did our best. Remember, Never Give Up and Never Stop Achieving.

Viktoriia Tkachenko, PDDB student;
Work-op position, Student Office Assistant, Disability Services

AWARD OPPORTUNITIES

Scholarship & Bursary Resources

VIU Financial Aid & Awards website: http://www.viu.ca/Financial Aid
contains information on internal VIU scholarships & awards and external awards such as:

- NEADS http://www.needs.ca
- Student Awards http://www.studentawards.com
- Canadian Mental Health Association http://www.cmha.ca/youreducation/funding.html

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Phone: 250 740 6446 (Reception); E-mail: disabilityservices@viu.ca
Visit our Website: http://www.viu.ca/disabilityservices/