Welcome to Disability Service’s eighth newsletter.

We at Disability Services are excited to offer information that will help support you in your journey here 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.

Today you are you! That is truer than true! There is no one alive who is you-er than you! -Dr. Seuss
Continuous effort
—not strength
or intelligence
—is the key to unlocking
our potential.
~
Winston Churchill

Disability Services provides information, support services and reasonable accommodation in all of VIU’s programs to students with a wide range of documented permanent and temporary disabilities. Some possible supports include:

- Alternative Format Readers
- Note Takers
- Exam Accommodations
- Interpreter Services
- Assistive Technology
- Attendants
- Campus Orientation
- Grant Applications
Ready, Set, Go!

A series of workshops took place on Thursdays in January and February hosted by VIU Student Success Services.

Workshops included:

- Time management and avoiding procrastination
- Text book reading, note taking, study styles and skills
- Self-motivation/self-regulation, social media control
- Quiz and exam study strategies

These were small group, informal sessions that were open to all students and were facilitated by Denise Hook, Disability Services Education Counsellor.

More to Come...

VIU Student Success Services will be hosting future workshops... watch for posters with dates and topics or email studentsuccess@viu.ca
Stats Canada released the results of one of their most recent surveys on December 3rd lining up with International Day of Persons with Disabilities. There were some interesting findings in the survey and the numbers suggest that we need more opportunities for people with disabilities to get into the workforce.

- The employment rate of Canadians aged 25 to 64 with disabilities was 49% in 2011, compared with 79% for Canadians without a disability. Among those with a 'very severe' disability, the employment rate was 26%
- University graduates with a mild or moderate disability have employment rates similar to their counterparts without a disability
- Both severity of condition and level of education were important determining factors of employment among Canadians with disabilities, along with the type of condition

The article can be accessed at:
International Day of Persons with Disabilities

December 3rd was International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Worldwide, people gathered to meet with people with disabilities and promote an understanding of disability issues.

This day has been observed as International Day of Persons With Disabilities since 1992, when it was proclaimed by the United Nations as official.

AT VIU

On December 3rd, VIU’s Disability Services hosted its 2nd annual International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The theme for 2014 was Sustainable Development: the Promise of Technology. We had a number of community groups present to share knowledge, network and inform the VIU community about supportive services available in our community. Some of the participants included the Nanaimo Brain Injury Society (NBIS), Brooks Landing, Mental Health and Addiction Services, BC Schizophrenia Society, Vancouver Island Compassion Dogs, VIU’s Center for Innovation and Excellence in Learning (CIEL), Assistive Technology of British Columbia (ATBC) and Nanaimo Nitro Power Soccer.

Our VIU Community had opportunity to watch an example of the Power Soccer games, gather information from various groups, ask questions, interact with assistive technology and most importantly, make connections with the various groups. The feedback from staff, students and community groups has been extremely positive.

Be sure to join us on December 3rd, 2015 for our 3rd annual International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

If you would like to suggest a group, volunteer or host an activity please contact disabilityservices@viu.ca.
I sat down with Karen Armitage from Disability Services to discuss captioning and different ways to make the classroom more accessible to students with disabilities. Our aim is to promote Universal design in the classroom, and raise awareness of one of the best ways to implement it: Captioning.

**Simon:** What is captioning?

**Karen:** Captioning is providing a text based equivalent to all of the audio content of a video. Having a caption provides an alternative to oral material in a video so students who have trouble hearing can understand what is going on in the video fully.

**S:** What are qualities of a good caption?

**K:** In general, captions should be accurate, clear, and easy to read. There are “best practice” guidelines that lay out things like font size, contrast, and the length of captions. Many people don’t know that good captions represent sounds (i.e. Music, Laughter) as well as words. If the captioning is done properly, a person who is Deaf will receive the same value from the video as a hearing person.

**S:** What are some captioning no-nos?

**K:** My list would include: captions that aren’t in sync with the audio, captions that flash on the screen so quickly that you don’t have time to read them, and especially captions that are created automatically using speech-to-text software. YouTube is full of examples of this, where the caption text makes no sense. Inaccurate captions are very frustrating for students who rely on them.

Example of captioned video from Disability Services website

Check out Disability Services Website for Captioned Videos and information about Services
S: Who can benefit from captions?
K: Of course the main audience for captions are students who are Deaf and/or hard of hearing but there are many others who can enjoy the benefits too. Students with learning disabilities may find that having the words on screen helps them understand the content better. ESL students may find it helpful to be able to read along with the video and listen as they learn English. Captions help students in classes with technical words and jargon familiarize themselves with the spelling and pronunciation of these words.

S: If a student can’t hear the audio of a video in class what would you recommend they do?
K: I recommend consulting the professor. They may be able to help you track down a copy of the video with captions (try the library) or hopefully provide you with a transcript.

S: Why is it important to proactively resolve accessibility issues such as captioning before the course starts?
K: By getting the course compliable with the idea of universal design before the course begins the professor can reduce stress on themselves and their students and reduce the chaos that ensues at the beginning of the school year. It helps successfully engage the student body. Students with disabilities feel welcome knowing that they didn’t disturb the class by asking for accommodation. It helps the student understand that they belong here.

Karen raises some good points. Everyone benefits from captions. If everyone benefits from having captions it would make sense to caption all of your videos. This way everyone gets to use them, and then when a student who needs them takes the class, the teacher doesn’t need to worry about updating the course.

As a student I had always taken captioning for granted. Upon thinking about it, the ability to read about what was happening on screen, while having it orally described to me has helped me understand course content more thoroughly. I’ve found that it helps, especially when taking notes. So fellow students, how do you feel about captioning? Do you have any thoughts on how to make the classroom better for everyone?
Invisible Disabilities

When we use the term “disability,” many people think about the obvious, including mobility impairments and common sensory disabilities, such as blindness. However, disabilities also include a number of other conditions that typically are invisible to others. These include diabetes, dyslexia, hearing impairments, sleep disorders, chronic pain or arthritis, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

All of these conditions can disrupt everyday activities. You might have spotted someone with multiple sclerosis who looked “normal” but was using a parking space that was reserved for persons with disabilities. You might have seen a student with a learning disability request extra time for an exam and wondered whether the claimed disability was legitimate. No one really knows for sure whether someone has an invisible disability unless it is disclosed.

The decision about whether to disclose an invisible disability to others can weigh heavily on an individual, making social and work situations especially challenging (Clair, Beatty, & MacLean, 2005).

Moreover, people must formally disclose their disabilities to receive accommodations in school or at work. Not disclosing and requesting accommodations can be detrimental to the performance evaluations of a student or worker if the disability interferes with required tasks. Without knowing that a disability is involved, teachers, supervisors, and co-workers are left to assume that unexpected poor or inconsistent performance accurately reflects the person’s ability to do the tasks.
Research shows that the burden of concealing a disability creates strain in social and work situations that might negatively affect health and well-being (Chaudoir & Quinn, 2010). In contrast, disclosure relieves the strain of hiding the condition and increases the likelihood that the person will find and develop a social support network with others who might have similar conditions or experiences.

Despite the noted benefits of disclosing, research reports that individuals with invisible disabilities often do not disclose their conditions, especially if they are young and have recently acquired the disability (Baldridge & Swift, 2013).

There are a number of functional reasons why people with invisible disabilities might not tell others. First, even if protected by law from overt discrimination, they still face potential prejudice or negative evaluations from others. Research suggests that there is a social stigma attached to having a disability, especially for psychological or psychiatric conditions (Jones et al., 1984; Stone & Colella, 1996). Some people with invisible disabilities might be willing to conceal their conditions and forego accommodations to avoid being treated differently or negatively by others.

Second, disclosure can raise questions about whether the disability is legitimate. When someone who “looks normal” claims to have a disability and requests special accommodations, observers might question whether a real disability is involved. Instead, others might assume the person is only trying to gain special privileges (Colella, 2001; Paetzold et al., 2008). In addition to dealing with the potential stigma associated with having a disability, persons with invisible disabilities risk the additional stigma of being viewed as someone who is falsely seeking personal gain.

Here’s another factor that many people might not consider: Some people might experience symptoms of conditions that qualify as disabilities, but they do not realize that they are experiencing something more than just normal variation. For example, a student who has a learning disability might experience high levels of frustration and poor performance in school, but assumes that he or she is just low in ability (Licht, 1983). Someone who recently developed a hearing impairment might ask people to repeat sentences or to speak louder, but does not connect that experience to having a disability. That person might assume that it is just normal variation in hearing or that the environment was making hearing difficult (Southall, Gagné, & Jennings, 2010).

In summary, individuals who have (or think they have) invisible disabilities must carefully weigh the potential benefit of avoiding social stigma by not disclosing against the costs to health, well-being, and performance. It is clear, however, that employers, teachers, and others should be aware of the unique challenges related to invisible disabilities. The decision to disclose is not an easy one.
People with vision loss say the development of smartphone apps over the last five years have dramatically contributed to their independence, and one expert in Halifax is encouraging more people to test out the technology.

"The different technology that’s come out in the past number of years is endless," said Chris Judge, the assistive technology specialist at the CNIB in Halifax. "There’s no way to do it justice in a short period of time."

He says the iPhone in particular is an equalizer for people with vision loss. Unlike old, specialized equipment, they can buy phones in any store and use them right out of the box without having to spend money to adapt it to their needs.

"Once [people] started using the technology and they become comfortable with it ...they gain a lot of that independence back." The apps are also proving useful at home.

Judge has been experimenting with TapTapSee. He takes a picture of the food on his shelf, the app examines the phone and moments later, the products are identified out loud. Judge is constantly demonstrating how the programs work to his clients. "They think if [he] can do it, I can do it too."

For full article and more information on this visit: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/iphone-apps-creating-independence-for-people-with-vision-loss-1.2858113?cmp=rss

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Did you know?

More than ever, students are using assistive technology as an accommodation, where human assistance was previously required.

During the December 2014 final exam period, 39 exams were written with Dragon Naturally Speaking (Speech recognition), Kurzweil (text-to-speech), and/or Zoomtext (magnification) software.
Are you a student who has trouble with fine motor skills? Do you currently own a smartphone? Touchscreen phones can be frustrating to use, especially when they require gestures which might not always be easy. This can get even harder in Winter. Software developers in recent years have taken note of this and came out with some cool developments to make it easier for us to use our phones easier and more smoothly.

AssistiveTouch for Apple tablets/Phones and Touch Me for Android Tablets/Phones allow you to control your gestures using a button that appears on screen. This gives you easy access to features that might otherwise be hard to access. Assistive touch even lets you design your own gesture that works for you, and can function as a virtual home button if your physical home button is broken.

If either of these Interest you, Touch Me can be downloaded for free from the Google Play Store, or you can activate AssistiveTouch in Settings > General > Accessibility and sliding AssistiveTouch on.
Movies with Themes of Diversity

My Name Is Khan (2010)

“An Indian Muslim man with Asperger's syndrome takes a challenge to speak to the President seriously, and embarks on a cross-country journey.”
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1188996/

The Theory of Everything (2014)

“A look at the relationship between the famous physicist Stephen Hawking and his wife.”
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2980516/?ref_=nv_sr_1

I Am Sam (2001)

“A mentally handicapped man fights for custody of his 7-year-old daughter, and in the process teaches his cold hearted lawyer the value of love and family.”
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0277027/

A Beautiful Mind (2001)

“After a brilliant but asocial mathematician accepts secret work in cryptography, his life takes a turn for the nightmarish.”
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0268978/

My Left Foot (1989)

“Christy Brown, born with cerebral palsy, learns to paint and write with his only controllable limb - his left foot.”
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0097937/
A Different Take on Dining. ...

Signs, is a one-of-a-kind restaurant staffed almost entirely by people who are deaf. Located in downtown Toronto, this restaurant offers a unique dining experience. Customers from all over the world stop by during visits to beautiful Toronto. Signs reputation is starting to precede it.

So what’s all the hype about?

Interaction. At Signs, the patron is asked to order in American Sign Language. To all those non signers, there are cheat sheets on the menu, and a well trained, helpful staff. The learning experience, combined with the uber casual atmosphere, and the satisfaction that comes with ordering food in a new language have created a memorable experience that will have you coming back for more.

Find out more about signs at signsrestaurant.ca
Goabaone Montsho is more than pleased that he has successfully fulfilled a promise that he made years ago.

Montsho, who lost his eyesight at age 15 due to a medical condition called optic atrophy, is going home to Botswana on Friday after successfully completing a four-year anthropology degree at Vancouver Island University.

Before coming to VIU to study with a scholarship he received from his government, Montsho volunteered at Botswana’s Pudulogong Rehabilitation Centre for the Blind, the only school of its kind in the country to help visually impaired people achieve academic success, but the facility is in dire need of resources.

He promised the centre that he would seek help while studying in Canada, and VIU decided to answer the call.

Debra Hagen, VIU's coordinator of Disability Services, said the university has a math text for a first-year course that was translated into braille for a blind student many years ago.

The text, which cost thousands of dollars to be converted into braille and takes up four large boxes, is now obsolete as the course requirements have changed over time, so Hagen said VIU agreed for it to be shipped to the rehabilitation centre to help with its programs.
Hagen said there are other texts that have been transcribed into braille that are currently in use in some math and chemistry courses being taught at VIU, and there's a possibility that they may be sent to the centre once they are deemed out of date as well.

Most courses for blind people, other than math or some sciences, are usually facilitated through an e-text computer program that doesn't require the texts to be transcribed into braille.

Hagen said the shipping process to Botswana is made much easier due to a program with Canada Post that allows educational materials for visually impaired people to be sent anywhere in the world for free.

"I'm very thankful that VIU has agreed to help visually impaired children in my country learn braille," said Montsho, who had continued his efforts to help other students by volunteering as a peer-success coach through VIU's student ambassador program.

As for his plans for when he returns to Botswana, Montsho said he hopes to be picked for an internship program with his country's Ministry of Culture, but he will continue to volunteer at the centre to teach computers and Braille.

"I will always remember VIU and Nanaimo, and I hope to return to visit one day," he said.

Hagen said the donation is a "win-win" for everyone.

"We've spent lots of money to get these texts transcribed, so it's great that someone else can benefit from them once they are no longer useful to us."
In 2013 Education Counsellor Mary Stasiuk, in collaboration with Student Affairs coordinator Dr. Nancy Twynam, conducted a survey to evaluate VIU’s efforts in providing a smooth transition into university, to gain a better understanding from students and parents of the transition experience and to develop recommendations. They surveyed 6 male first-year students. Three parents also completed a survey.

The student participants consisted of 6 male students whose area majors included: Visual Arts, Theatre, Geology and Liberal Arts. Three parents completed surveys and were vocal about the need for more education about autism on Campus. All six students successfully completed their first year, although 50% reduced their course load during the academic year.

The student responses revealed that, although there was a level of awareness of the need to develop skills such as time management, overcoming procrastination, communication and planning, there was a low response rate regarding actually accessing resources such as tutoring and personal counselling.

One question explored what students were most looking forward to at university. Interestingly, there was a relatively low response rate to looking forward to earning a diploma or degree. Students did not see degree completion as important, compared to gaining more independence from family or increasing knowledge.

Another question was asked about the students level of acceptance of their autism, based partly on Tony Atwood’s Stage of Acceptance of Autism Diagnosis (2003). While one student was proud of his autism identity, two sought to modify their behaviors and symptoms to be accepted as “normal,” and two preferred not to think about their diagnosis, preferring instead to escape into activities that used imagination.

The successful retention of all 6 participants was an unexpected finding. It leads one to wonder if students with autism are at less risk of dropping out than other students with disabilities. You may have noticed that more and more people are aware of autism due to an abundance of books and films based on characters with autism. It should be noted that the media often likes to exotize stereotypical autistic characteristics for entertainment purposes. Although the media rarely portrays the challenging side of autism, perhaps the media is doing a good job of increasing awareness of autism through portrayals of characters with stereotypical ASD characteristics. This begs the social model of disability question, “As society becomes more Autism-Friendly, are autism differences less of a disability?”
Many of the students registered with Disability Service are approved to receive some sort of exam accommodation. Depending on the students’ needs and documentation, exam accommodations can include extra time, a distraction-reduced room, or assistive technology (such as speech-to-text and /or text-to-speech software). These accommodations help students overcome the challenges presented by a disability, and allow them to more accurately “show what they know.” For example, a student with a broken dominant arm may need assistance with writing answers. A student with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) may not be able to write a final exam in the gym, with all the extra noise and movement. Each situation is unique, and exam accommodations are tailored to the individual student.

Sometimes, instructors are able to accommodate a student directly in the class, or nearby. Most students, however, write accommodated exams in the Disability Services office area.

Some Quick Facts:

- Between September and December 2014, Disability Services arranged over 630 accommodated exams.
- On busy days during the final exam period, we can have over 50 exams a day to organize (so thank you for your patience!).
- In December 2014, 80% of students used our online exam request system to schedule exams, instead of paper request forms.
- Exam accommodations are intended to “level the playing field” for students with a disability, not provide an unfair advantage.
Have You Lost Anything?
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 110. 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.

Bus Passes!
If you are 18-64 years of age and are receiving “person with disability (PWD) assistance” from the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation, or living on a First Nations reserve and receiving disability assistance from the Band office, you are eligible for a discount bus pass. For $45 you can apply for a bus pass that will last until December 31.

Visit http://www.mhr.gov.bc.ca/programs/bus-pass.html for instructions on how to apply online, by mail, phone or fax.

Counselling Services
Counselling Services offer free, confidential counselling to currently registered VIU students. The counselling team helps students address personal and learning concerns in order to increase student engagement and success. The team of clinical counsellors are here to listen and provide skills to help you work through whatever is troubling you! We invite you to make an appointment and we look forward to helping you meet the challenges of achieving your academic and personal potential.

Counselling Services Building 200, 3rd floor Phone 250-740-6416

With questions or comments about our Newsletter please contact Disability Services by email at disabilityservices@viu.ca