

The UMaine Disabilities Insider



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University of Maine, Disability Support Services (DSS)

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Welcome to the first edition of our biannual *Disabilities Insider* Newsletter. Things change frequently in regard to Disability Law and Accommodation services and we are endeavoring to keep you updated on access issues that affect your students and your classes.

Who's Who at DSS

Ann Smith:

Ann is the Director of Disability Support Services (DSS) at the University of Maine and has worked here for 21 years. Ann coordinates accommodations for students with physical disabilities, mental health related disabilities, chronic health impairments, autism and Asperger syndrome. She co-chairs the UMaine President's Council on Disabilities and chairs the University of Maine System Disability Network of service providers. One of her major roles is to promote an inclusive and accessible UMaine environment. Ann strongly values the great friendships she has made over the years with many incredibly bright and caring faculty and staff. "I love to brainstorm solutions and the job lets me do that every hour of each day with these amazing people."

Sara Henry:

Sara is the Learning Specialist with DSS and has worked here since the fall of 2000. She coordinates accommodations for students who have a Learning Disability and/or ADHD as their primary disability. She also coordinates the Peer Mentor program at UMaine designed to assist students with disabilities who are part of the TRIO SSS program by providing one to one mentoring. Sara oversees the Workforce Recruitment Program through DSS. This federal program is designed to

help college students with disabilities break barriers to finding internships and permanent positions with the federal government. Sara loves the students she works with at UMaine and finds her work in the DSS office highly rewarding.

Susan Spaulding:

Sue works at the front desk in East Annex and is the first person you'll usually meet at DSS. Sue answers phones, greets people who come in for appointments, answers questions and prepares accommodation letters for students. She coordinates the test proctoring center and supervises work-study students who drive the Access Van and cover the desk. Her favorite things about working at DSS are, "The interaction with students and watching most of them grow from scared, shy, intimidated, low self-esteem first year students to confident, positive, self-assured graduates. That has been a very fulfilling part of my job." Sue describes herself as a positive, "glass half-full" person, with the mottos "this too shall pass" and "you gotta laugh!"

Maurice Burford:

Maurice started at UMaine in July of 2011 and goes by the nickname of Moe. His position title is Records Technician, and his essential functions here at DSS are to work with peer notetakers, prepare alternate format texts (e-books, audio books, etc.) and coordinate the accessible furniture in classrooms. This includes finding notetakers, scanning notes into the computer and loading notes into First Class folders for DSS students eligible to have note taking assistance as an accommodation. His favorite part of working at DSS is the collegiality of our office staff and the close connection between co-workers. A fun fact about Moe is that he is currently reading all of Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* this term – that's about 2500 pages of book!

[Peer Notetakers: A Necessary Accommodation for Some Students with a Disability](#)

Why Notetakers?

A student may not be able to take complete or accurate notes for a number of reasons, some of which are visible such as having an injured or non-functioning hand. The reason may not be visible however, such as having an auditory or language processing problem, a vision or hearing impairment. Many students with these kinds of problems find a classmate who will share their notes. But sometimes

it is embarrassing for the student to reveal the disability, or the student may just not know anyone well enough to ask.

The DSS staff meets with each student requesting notetaking support individually to review documentation, discuss the impact of their disability and the accommodation process. If we determine the student has a documented disability and is eligible for notetaking assistance, then the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act indicate that UMaine must find someone to assist in taking notes. Students receiving notes are expected to attend all classes, as notes are not meant to be a substitute for regular class attendance and to attempt to take notes to the best of their ability.

Who are Notetakers?

Notetakers are UMaine students, selected primarily based on GPA and class standing (senior, junior, etc.), who are enrolled in the same class as the student in need. Since the vast majority of students have taken notes in previous classes, everyone has some experience in this regard. We also monitor and assess the notes throughout the term to make sure they are working for the student in need. This varied group of voluntary notetakers makes it possible for many students on campus to succeed. Notetakers who send or copy their notes for a student with a disability on a regular basis for the entire semester are eligible to receive a \$50.00 notetaker scholarship toward a purchase at the UMaine bookstore.

How do students receive their notes?

The process of transferring the notes to students in need is fairly simple. The notetakers have two options for delivering their notes to our office: send typed or scanned notes to us electronically via email, or copy their handwritten notes in our office. After that the notes are put into a private conference for the student on First Class. This process is meant to be as little a burden as possible for the student taking the notes.

So what are the faculty responsibilities?

The first step is understanding the process and knowing that our notetakers may be at work in your classes without you even knowing. If we have difficulty securing a notetaker for your class, DSS staff may get in touch to request your assistance finding a notetaker. Our job is to keep the University of Maine in compliance with federal and state laws, and any help you could provide would be much appreciated. Our goal is to make the whole process as seamless as possible for faculty, students with disabilities and student notetakers.

Faculty Technology Survey: Helping Us Helps You!

Later this spring you'll find in your email inbox a link to the Disability Support Services instructional technology survey. The survey is a quick way for you to let us know what kind of technology and information is being provided to the students in your courses. We'll use this information to reduce redundancies when hiring notetakers, and direct students toward available resources.

To fill out our very brief survey, please go to www.umaine.edu/disability and click on the last link on the right-hand column of the homepage entitled "Disability Support Services Faculty Survey."

Save My Seat

Remember 3rd Grade, when every student had their own desk and chair? The ideal University classroom would resemble that design. However, we still have numerous classrooms with tablet attached arm chairs that are not accessible to many of our students.

Disability Services (DSS) moves accessible furniture around campus each semester, leaving supportive chairs and desks for students with disabling back or mobility impairments. The extra furniture in your classrooms that have "Disability Services" or the handicapped decal on them are placed there VERY deliberately. It may not be for a student in your class but rather for a student in a later class. Some faculty and staff have seen these very comfy chairs that are not being used in their class and assumed they are extra unneeded furniture. Many have found their way into student lounges, offices and the hallway. Or the "extra" table seems perfect to move by the door to hold handouts or laptops. When the student with the disability arrives for class they may not have the physical strength to return their desk and chair into the classroom configuration. Your help is requested and appreciated in keeping this special furniture in place to make our UMaine classrooms accessible to all students.



I Always Want to Know if There's a Student with a Disability in My Class!

Faculty often question why they aren't always informed when there is a student with a disability enrolled in their class. When students request accommodations some of those accommodations directly need faculty involvement, for example, the accommodation of extended time on a test. For these accommodations a request letter would be brought to the faculty by the student. However, there are accommodations that do not typically require faculty action. Obtaining a peer notetaker is one example where DSS would do the work without informing faculty about the student. The student may be receiving mentoring to assist them with college transition and time management. Faculty would not necessarily be informed about these services either. The rule of thumb is that unless the student requests something that requires participation or action by the faculty member, then disclosing them as student with a disability is not done. Further if we do inform faculty of a disability accommodation need we do so without revealing the disability diagnosis, unless it is essential to understanding and arranging that accommodation. All that being said, the student has the right to self-disclose disability information at any time they wish. Please be sensitive to those students who are entitled to disability accommodations and services but are not comfortable revealing the details of the disability.

Disability Support Services serves UMaine students with a disability. For faculty and staff disability services and accommodations, please contact Bonita Grindle at the Office of Equal Opportunity, 581-1227 or bgrindle@maine.edu.

NON-DISCRIMINATION NOTICE:

In complying with the letter and spirit of applicable laws and pursuing its own goals of diversity, the University of Maine shall not discriminate on the grounds of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, including transgender status or gender expression, national origin, citizenship status, age, disability, genetic information or veteran's status in employment, education, and all other areas of the University of Maine. The University provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities upon request.

Questions and complaints about discrimination in any area of the University should be directed to Karen Kemble, Esq., Director of Equal Opportunity, ADA Coordinator, Title IX Coordinator, Rehabilitation Act Section 504 Coordinator, The University of Maine, 5754 North Stevens Hall, Room 101, Orono, ME 04469-5754, telephone (207) 581-1226, TTY (207) 581-9484.

