

## Increase in Number, cont. from p. 1

- More frequent contact with faculty when students who have a disability need flexible attendance.

During the 2007 – 2008 academic year we had a significant increase in the number of tests and exams administered in East Annex, thus we began to ask faculty to locate a quiet space where students can test instead of sending them to DSS if there were more than 5 students who needed tests proctored (see inside article for information about test proctoring).

This only tells part of the story though. In addition to working with students who have documented disabilities, staff from our office frequently meet with students who are struggling academically and suspect they have a disability as well as consult with students with disabilities who are still in high

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](mailto:bgrindle@maine.edu).

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school and considering coming to the University of Maine. In total last year our office met with over 500 students. This number is more than double what it was a decade ago.

It is our expectation that this trend will continue. Each year the number of students that we serve with disabilities will grow as advances in medicine, science, and education enable students previously excluded the opportunity of higher education. The faculty's active participation is essential to ensure that our classes and programs are accessible.

### Reminders

- Don't forget to include a statement in your syllabus about disability accommodation. A sample statement can be found at [www.umaine.edu/disability/information-for-faculty/](http://www.umaine.edu/disability/information-for-faculty/).
- Please share this newsletter or information on to any TAs you supervise.
- You are not expected to be an expert in disabilities. Remember, we are here to talk through any questions or concerns.

University of Maine, Disability Support Services

## The UMaine Disabilities Insider

August 27, 2012



Welcome to the fall 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.

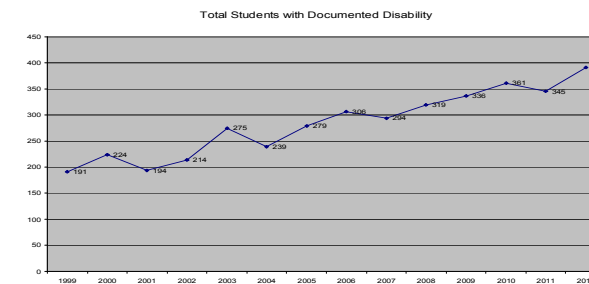
### Increase in Number of Students with Disabilities at UM

Since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, the number of students with disabilities attending college has increased steadily. At UMaine we have seen this trend first hand. DSS has tracked our student data for a number of years and over the past decade the number of students with documented disabilities served by DSS has increased 82.7%. During the 01-02 school year we assisted 214 students with

disabilities. Last year we worked with 391 students.

As you would expect, we have seen sharp increases in the number of students requesting accommodations such as:

- More students who need time and or environment related accommodations on tests and exams (last year over 200 students were approved for extra time or a separate location for exams, and DSS proctored 1310 tests in E. Annex);
- Increases in the number of student note takers needed (notetakers were provided in 234 classes to 94 students);
- More requests for texts in alternate format for students (DSS provided 82 texts in alternate format);



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### UMaine DSS



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[www.umaine.edu/disability](http://www.umaine.edu/disability)

### Meet Michael Dunn, DSS Records Technician

Michael joined DSS in July of 2012 as a Records Technician. He works with note-takers and note-receivers, prepares alternate format texts and coordinates the accessible furniture placed in classrooms. Excited to rejoin the UMaine community, Michael is an alumnus from the class of 2005, graduating with a bachelor's degree in English with a creative writing focus. Michael's life philosophy is one based upon the importance of giving, hard work and loyalty. "I truly grew during my time here at UMaine," he says, "and I look forward to doing all I can to make the current students' experience just as rewarding."



# Ins and Outs of Test Accommodations, plus “Do I really have to fill out the yellow test proctoring form 3 days before my exam?”

When a student requests test accommodations such as extra time or a quiet separate location where they can take tests, DSS reviews their documentation of disability and determines if the student is eligible for the accommodation. If we determine the student is eligible for test accommodations, a letter is prepared for each faculty member that informs them of the list of approved accommodations. The student with a disability is required to personally hand deliver the accommodation letters to each faculty member. We suggest to students that they visit faculty during posted office hours rather than try to catch an instructor at the beginning or end of class.

## What if the student tries to talk to me in class when there are lots of other students around?

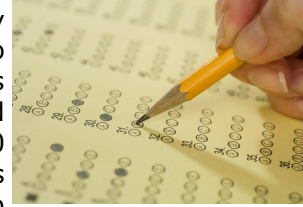
Our recommendation is that faculty suggest to the student that he or she meets at their office so that they can talk in private. This will allow the faculty and student to have a longer time to speak without the pressure of other students waiting for a turn, and will protect the student's privacy. At that time, faculty should inform the student if a spot is available in the department where the student can take tests OR if the student will need to be proctored at our testing center in East Annex.

## Who do we contact to arrange for our tests to be taken at DSS?

Our Administrative Assistant, Susan Spaulding, coordinates all the test proctoring arrangements. The test proctoring form the student gives each instructor when they bring their accommodation letters enables us to keep track of the important details about students who take exams in East Annex. You are welcome to bring the form to the DSS office or to give it to the student to return to us, but we need it 3 business days prior to the exam date. We only have 10 testing spots available, so if we need more spots than that on a particular day we will need to hire a proctor and reserve other rooms for testing purposes. This is extremely important if the student requires the use of a computer or a reader, since we only have two spots with computers and must hire readers as needed.

Some instructors will bring the testing forms over themselves

on the morning of testing when they drop off the exam. That could be too late if all the spots are already full! This is especially true for mid-terms and final exams! We proctor as many as 60 students each day during final exams week! In addition to helping us keep track of the number of students testing, the form lets us know how we will be receiving and returning the exam. We will gladly pick up an exam at your office or a department office, and return it to a location you specify.



## How do we let DSS know which materials the student can use during the test?

The proctoring form helps to make sure there's no confusion about what materials students are allowed to have with them during an exam. On the instructor's portion of the form there is a place to check off if the student is allowed any materials in addition to the exam (calculator, notes, book, etc.). If nothing is checked, the student only goes into the testing room with the exam and a pencil. We keep all book bags, cell phones, jackets, hats, etc. in the main office until they return the exam to the proctor.

## Can't I just call Susan and let her know who will be taking the test in my class?

Over the years the number of exams we proctor at Disability Services has exploded. Since the 2006 – 2007 academic year DSS has proctored between 600 – 1000 exams each semester. As a result, if the student is required to test at East Annex, it is imperative to have the instructor fill out, and have the student or instructor return, our Test Proctoring Request Form at least three business days before the exam. **THIS IS THE ONLY WAY WE CAN KEEP TRACK OF HOW MANY SPOTS WE WILL NEED TO PROVIDE EACH DAY!** Non-compliance with our testing policies will result in the student being sent back to the instructor for the accommodated testing in their department or office.

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## Faculty Questions and Answers that Help

The questions here were sent to DSS by faculty this summer. If you find this Q&A helpful you can submit questions of your own or view additional questions and answers at [www.umaine.edu/disability/information-for-faculty/](http://www.umaine.edu/disability/information-for-faculty/).

**When I receive an accommodation letter that states the student has an accommodation for a quiet room to take the test, but then he/she says, “it’s okay, I’ll take it in the room with other students” should I just say “OK,” or try to encourage the student to take advantage of the accommodation?**

If a student chooses not to utilize a disability accommodation, it's helpful in light of the legal mandates of the accommodation process that you communicate this information back to Disability Support Services. This will avoid the “he said, she said” issues that may arise if class performance isn't what was expected. Ultimately, it is the student's decision which accommodations they want to utilize, but it's appropriate for faculty to talk with the student if they believe he or she has concerns about how the accommodation is provided.

**What is the difference between providing an accommodation and lowering standards for a particular student ?**

An accommodation is any change in the learning environment or in the way things are customarily done that enables a person with a disability to have equal educational access. An accommodation is not meant to change the essential nature of a course but rather alter the environment or mechanics of the learning situation. If you believe that a mandated accommodation from the student's accommodation letter is a fundamental alteration of the curriculum or standards, please contact Disability Support Services to discuss the problem. Ferreting out the difference between the “essential nature” of a course and a professor's preferred format can sometimes be difficult. Instructors are not obligated to provide accommodations that are not specified in the accommodation letter. If a student makes a request beyond what we've included in the list of approved accommodations, or pushes for further adjustments beyond what is listed in the accommodation letter, contact Disability Services.