

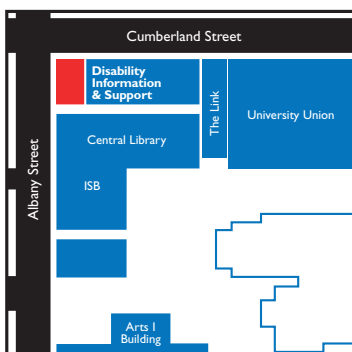
Imagine

“If we did the things we are capable of,
we would astound ourselves.”

Thomas Edison

Disability Information & Support Newsletter

ISSUE 2 2012



Our physical address is:
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Disability Information and Support (DI&S) is pleased to present another edition of our Newsletter 'Imagine', which we hope you will enjoy. Thus far it has been a busy year for us, having provided support, advice and information to 525 students who have made over 5,000 contacts with our office. As always, it has been a pleasure working with students and staff and we hope that you all enjoyed a successful semester one.

In April, we celebrated 20 years of formalised disability support at the University of Otago and we were delighted to launch two new scholarships for first year students who

experience disability. Once again our soup and rolls lunch was well attended, and this has prompted us to introduce a social gathering for students who use our service. The first social gathering, held on 27 July, was a success and we are pleased to advise that the next one will be held on 31 August.

We wish you all the best with your studies and invite you to make an appointment with a Student Advisor if you would like to discuss your academic support requirements for the remainder of semester two.

The Team

Disability Information and Support

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Graduate Profile

“With my disability I have limited arm strength and fatigue was a bit of a problem, so I needed helpers. They were basically my hands and did all the physical work for me while I instructed them on what I needed done.”



ANGIE ANDERSON

Becoming a dietitian has always been a passion for Angie Anderson although fulfilling that dream had its challenges.

At high school she was pointed towards clerical and office work – which she did for a number of years – but she missed out the core science subjects she needed to follow her passion.

After advice from DI&S, Angie went to Foundation Studies at the Otago Polytech where she spent a year studying chemistry and other science subjects. Angie then completed a bridging chemistry course at Summer School.

Although she was studying part-time she completed her BSc in Human Nutrition in five years and her postgraduate studies in dietetics (PGDipDiet) over two years.

One of the biggest challenges was the lab work and the kitchen practicals where DI&S was able to arrange for help.

“With my disability I have limited arm strength and fatigue was a bit of a problem, so I needed helpers. They were basically my hands and did all the physical work for me while I instructed them on what I needed done.”

Angie says the Department of Human Nutrition was always accommodating. “They often had the problems solved before I even approached them about it.”

Once she had completed her qualifications Angie started looking for a job through Workbridge, although in the end she found her own employment.

Two part-time rest home jobs provided around eight hours work per week, and this year Angie has also started working 15 hours a week as a research dietitian working on a weight-loss maintenance study.

Looking back, one of her personal keys to success was learning to pace herself and being prepared to accept help.

“When I first came to the University I really wanted to do things alone, so I could say I had achieved all this by myself. But it was really recognising that people like the disability office are there to help you be as independent as possible and you are no less of a person for accepting that help. It really is a means to an end to make that dream possible.”

Editors Footnote

Foundation Studies at the University of Otago also offers a Bridging Course in chemistry. Workbridge is a professional employment service for people with disabilities.

Disability Support

The Support Team



Pictured are (standing from left) Jackie Fox, Jacinta Latta, Melissa Lethaby, Eileen O'Regan, Helen Ingrams, Emma Holt, Jenny Weeks, Director of Student Services David Richardson, (front) Rachel 'Aluesi, Sarah Grant, Terrie Allpress, Guest Speaker Dr Tom Shakespeare, Head of Service Donna-Rose McKay, Vice-Chancellor Professor Harlene Hayne.

20 YEARS OF DISABILITY SUPPORT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

On 3 April, the University of Otago celebrated 20 years of providing support to Otago University students with impairments. To mark this milestone the University hosted a public lecture by Dr Tom Shakespeare. A function, which was attended by approximately 200 past and present staff and students, was held afterwards. During the function the Vice Chancellor, Professor Harlene Hayne, spoke of the University's commitment to creating an inclusive experience for students with impairments and acknowledged the work and achievements of Disability Information and Support. To mark this important occasion, Professor Hayne also announced the establishment of two Alumni Disability Support Scholarships. More information about the scholarships can be found in this newsletter.

The celebratory public lecture "Our Statures Touch the Skies": High Achievers with Disabilities will shortly be available as a podcast on iTunes U.

Two Alumni Disability Support Scholarships

Two scholarships were established this year to celebrate 20 years of formalised support at the University of Otago for students with impairments. These scholarships, made possible by the gifting of funds by Alumni and friends of the University of Otago, are offered to students who have demonstrated academic ability and who can show financial need arising from a disability.

Each scholarship contributes \$5,000 towards Residential College fees and/or tuition fees for a student's first year of study at the University of Otago.

Applications for scholarships open in mid-June and close in mid-August.

More information about the scholarships can be found at www.otago.ac.nz/study/scholarships/database/otago033024.html

Student Profile

“It’s always hard because people have their own way of writing notes but the person that I had was really detailed and used different colours for things, which was cool, because I like a combination.”



CHLOE MANIHERA

Chloe Manihera's involvement with Disability Information & Support basically came out of the blue – the result of a week she'd rather forget.

Within the space of a few days she was hospitalised due to a bite from a white-tailed spider, lost a much-loved great grandmother, and then had to have all her wisdom teeth pulled out.

This all took place just before the now fourth-year human nutrition student returned to Dunedin for what would prove to be a challenging year of study in 2011.

“When I came back to Uni I was quite sick and ended up getting glandular fever. I also had an allergic reaction to something, and the doctors still don't know what it was, but it caused my eyes to swell up and become really irritated,” she says.

“I would go to class and even if I was in the front row I couldn't read what was on the slides. And because of my glandular fever I was just exhausted.”

Counsellors at the Māori Centre sent her to DI&S who helped her initially with a note taker and, later, a separate exam room so she could deal with her allergies and fatigue during exam time.

Chloe says the notes were really good and detailed: “It's always hard because people have their own way of writing notes but the person that I had was really detailed and used different colours for things, which was cool, because I like a combination.”

The support helped her get through that tough first semester and in the second semester she was able to be the note taker for someone else. “I kind of felt that was my way to give back.”

Chloe hopes to go into public health by doing a Postgraduate Diploma in Public Health, majoring in Māori and Pacific Health, possibly followed by a Masters in Dietetics.

Conference Articles

Future for assistive IT technology in the cloud



Conference

In 2011, DI&S co-hosted the inaugural *Disability Studies: Everybody In* conference at the University of Otago. In Issue 1, 2012 of the "Imagine" newsletter we included some interesting articles from delegates who presented at this conference. In this edition we have included two more articles for your interest.

Cloud computing could provide a massive boost to the availability and accessibility of assistive IT technologies, according to Michael O'Leary, founder of Australian company Inclusive Learning Technologies Pty Ltd, which trades as Spectronics.

He is particularly excited by a new initiative, GPII (Global Public Inclusive Infrastructure) which is working to develop personalised cloud-based assistive technologies that can be accessed from any electronic communication device in the world.

Users would be able to store their accessibility preferences in the cloud so that whenever a person with a disability accesses a networked device – be it a computer terminal, ATM or mobile phone – it would automatically be set up in a way that is familiar to them and easy to use.

The organisation can be found at GPII.net and an explanatory video and audio has been posted on YouTube.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHXSQvV39k

"The potential is huge," says Michael. "It's exciting and I'm not sure where it is going to take us but it is good that there's an organisation looking at this."

A former Telecom technical officer Michael retrained as an occupational therapist as a pathway into assistive technology.

"As a therapist I find assistive technology almost instantaneously rewarding. If I compare it to an occupational therapist, say in a spinal injury unit, you are looking at a rehab programme of 12 to 18 months."

"With assistive technology you come along and offer people a solution for access to computers and open up a whole new world to them."

But, he stresses, it is a specialist, postgraduate area.

"It's not just a matter of finding a switch or an alternative keyboard, you need to know the physiology and the nature of various disabilities to be able to do that successfully. In fact, as with many aids, they can be a hindrance if they are not prescribed and applied properly."

Michael says one of Spectronics catchphrases is: 'We don't sell products we provide solutions'.

He is more than happy to hear from anybody who is interested in assistive technology and has experience in supervising postgraduate students.

"There is still so much research to be done. A lot of people want evidence-based work to support the purchase of software but there is just not enough research done on the efficacy and success of assistive technology."

Injury no hindrance for conference performance



That old adage 'the show must go on' was put to the test when Hahna Briggs injured an ankle just hours before she was due to perform with fellow dancer Jenny Newstead.

As it worked out it only served to underscore part of their performance philosophy – that it should be hard for the audience to tell who is the dancer with a disability.

"I guess I want to be careful about not reinforcing old stereotypes of disability, and instead promote new, active, positive wellness," explains Hahna.

For example, things such as having non-disabled dancers always pushing disabled dancers around in chairs while they do pretty arm movements rather than pushing the boundaries and pushing the dancers.

"Jenny has a really good sense of balance and sense of how to use her body so in our performance she lifted me most of the time – changing the dynamics on stage so that I am not reinforcing stereotypes of passiveness and dependence."

Jenny says their focus was more on using the chair as a choreographic tool and actually deconstructing it as a mobility device, so it becomes a prop.

"We also had to be very mindful that it was my mobility device we were pulling apart, hence we were pulling me apart. We had to put me back together again at the end," she says.

"This sort of dance art is in its infancy, so we've got to be careful and not take the boundaries too far for what people can cope with. I hope we managed to achieve something that is quite playful."

Jenny started out in ballet, creative dance, and gymnastics as a child but was unable to complete her physical education degree with the onset of a form of muscular dystrophy. She instead pursued a highly successful paralympics career in swimming and only in more recent years met Hahna and returned to dance.

"It's been a really good ride. I don't like the word integrated because as far as I am concerned I am a dancer – I just dance. The good thing about Hahna is that she likes to collaborate so you end up doing some really interesting things."

Hahna, a dancer since she was a small child, became interested in the area of disability at the University of Otago's School of Physical Education and took adapted physical education papers. Her Masters focused on contemporary dance and integrated dance involving people with and without disabilities.

She says dancing offers the opportunity to be creative, get exercise, be part of a group and enjoy the exhilaration of performance.

It also provides a voice for people with disabilities and Jenny says she has always been a bit naughty with it. There is the opportunity to poke fun at the stereotypes and she enjoys being able to turn things upside down and have people guessing.

Hahna would ultimately like to see people with disabilities as part of mainstream companies.

"It can create new and interesting movements, rather than working with the traditional, tall, thin flexible dancers who have full use of their legs and arms. People are looking for new avenues."

Hands-on Science Grants

Disability Information and Support Hands-On Science Grant 2013

Disability Information and Support is proud to be sponsoring two grants to the value of \$1,500 each to enable students with impairments to participate in Hands-On Science. Each grant covers the Hands-On Science fee of \$620 and travel costs of up to \$880.

Hands-On Science is designed to support and show interested students what research scientists do, why they do these things and to encourage talented young New Zealanders to consider science as a career. This is achieved by bringing students to the University of Otago, to experience science first hand in a supportive environment.

Each morning students participate in a research project based in a University department.

In the afternoon the Science Snack programme allows students to have a small taste of a variety of other science activities, both on and off campus. Students are given the opportunity to see scientists in action in real-life situations and are introduced to the exciting diversity of scientific research and its countless practical applications.

Jenna Cheesman, a recipient of one of last year's grants had this to say about her experience:

Before attending Hands-On Science I was a little apprehensive about applying for university, not sure if I would be able to cope.

But now after what was one of the best weeks of my life I am looking forward to applying for Otago and believe I will be able to achieve all my goals with the support of the team at Disability Information and Support. Give it a go! Hands-On Science is amazing and the Disability Information and Support Team are friendly and reassuring.

If you, someone you know, or a student you are working with is in Year 12 or 13 next year, is keen on science and would like to apply for a Hands-On Science grant in 2013, please visit the Hands-On Science website

<http://handsonscience.otago.ac.nz/>

for further information.



Important Dates 2012

- ~ Social Gathering
31 August between 4 – 6pm
Disability Information and Support's staff room
- ~ Alternative Arrangement Forms for Semester Two and Full-Year papers
Due on Monday 3 September 2012
- ~ Semester Two Exams
15 October – 3 November 2012

Alternative Examination Arrangements - Deadline 3 September 2012

Alternative Examination Arrangements are designed to assist students with impairments who may experience difficulty sitting exams under conventional circumstances.

Disability Information and Support can arrange readers, writers, additional time (the standard time extension is 10 minutes per hour of examination), ergonomic equipment, alternative formatting of exam papers, the use of a computer, as well as other arrangements that best meet the individual needs of students.

Please note that documentation from a relevant health professional or specialist (for example a doctor, physiotherapist or psychologist) is required before Alternative Examination Arrangements can be put in place.

If a student is already registered with Disability Information and Support an Alternative Arrangements application form will have been sent to them. If you have not received an application form, please collect one from Disability Information and Support.

The final deadline for applications for Semester Two Alternative arrangements is Monday 3 September.

Feeling stressed about exams?

Most people experience increased anxiety as they get closer to exam time. Here are some tips to help you keep that stress in check.



TIPS TO KEEP YOUR COOL

STUDY WITH A TIME TABLE, this will keep you on track and you can build in breaks to take guilt free rests.

EAT WELL, your body needs regular fuel to keep that brain working. Be prepared, if you know you are heading into a full on study week, head to the supermarket and pick up some healthy study snacks. Healthy snack ideas could include fruit, banana chips, pretzels, nuts, carrots, humus, salsa and muesli bars.

KEEP HYDRATED, keep a water bottle with you at all times. Try to avoid having too many drinks that contain high levels of caffeine and sugar, these can affect your sleep and lead to an energy crash later in the day.

EXERCISE, you may be thinking that you have no time for exercise, but even a ten minute stroll around the block could help to clear your head.

HAVE A LAUGH, sometimes a good laugh is the best way to unwind. Balance out all that serious studying with a comedy film or stream some comedy festival clips on YouTube.

TRY TO GET A FULL NIGHT'S SLEEP, set up a relaxing routine before bed. This will help switch your mind from study-mode to sleep-mode.

TALK ABOUT IT, if you are feeling stressed talk it through with a mate, a family member, or one of the counsellors at Student Health. They may have ideas or helpful strategies and sometimes just talking it out can help lighten the load.

HAVE A CHANGE OF SCENERY, try taking your readings to a café. Dunedin also has beautiful botanical gardens which make a lovely spot to sit and read on a sunny day.

KEEP IT IN PERSPECTIVE, you can only do your best so set realistic goals and be proud that you are doing the best you can. When exams are over try not to dwell on things you may have missed, instead look for the positives.

PLAN FOR FUN, start planning your holidays or what you'll do to celebrate when that last exam is completed. It's great to have something to look forward to.