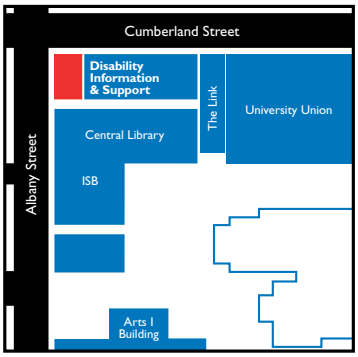
Imagine

"We are each gifted in a unique and important way. It is our privilege and our adventure to discover our own special light" Mary Dunbar



Our physical address is:
Disability Information & Support
West Lane
Information Services Building
Cnr Cumberland and Albany Streets
Dunedin

Welcome to the 2014 edition of 'Imagine', Disability Information and Support's newsletter, which we hope you will enjoy. The end of 2013 was a very difficult time for us as a team and we were deeply saddened by the sudden passing of our Head of Service, Donna-Rose McKay. As many of you will know, Donna-Rose was a pioneering woman and an absolute champion in the field of disability support in tertiary education. She has left a huge gap in our service and it would be fair to say that most of 2014 has been spent rebuilding our team. Melissa Lethaby has been appointed to the position of Manager and Jackie Fox as Learning Support Manager. Both Melissa and Jackie are very keen continue the good work started by Donna-Rose and look forward to working together, and with others, to ensure the supports offered at Otago remain cutting edge. More recently Rebecca McFadyen has been appointed to the position of Student Advisor and we know Rebecca will be a huge asset to the team.

Closely associated with the rebuilding of our team has been the increased demand for service. All support services offered by Disability Information and Support have experienced growth and we are delighted by this! The Student Advisors greatly enjoy travelling the academic journey with students and they have been delighted to hear how well students have performed in their recent exams. Clearly students with disabilities and/or impairments are doing extremely well at Otago.

UNIVERSITY of OTAGO
Te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo
NEW ZEALAND
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IN THIS ISSUE:

Introducing The team

Disability Information and Support consists of a team of warm and caring professionals who are committed to providing an exceptional service. At present we have a dedicated team of 14 staff:

THE TEAM

Melissa Lethaby	Manager
Jackie Fox	Learning Support Manager
Emma Holt	Student Advisor
Jenny Weeks	Student Advisor
Rebecca McFadyen	Student Advisor
Toni Patterson-Gallagher	Note-taker Administrator
Scott Nolan	Note-taker Administrator
Megan Kruskopf	Note-taker Assistant
Ali Charlton	Tutor Co-ordinator
Juliet Powell	Tutor Co-ordinator Assistant
Rachel 'Aluesi	Learning Support Assistant
Peter Zessin	Administrator
Eileen O'Regan	Administrative Assistant / Receptionist
Kerry Twemlow	Administrative Assistant

The values we operate by and the positive environment we foster derives from our vision to work in partnership to promote an inclusive environment that celebrates diversity, promotes comprehensive academic support, and empowers individuals with impairments to achieve their full potential.

Continued from page 1

For those of you who are new to our service, our vision is to work in partnership to promote an inclusive environment that celebrates diversity, promotes academic support, and empowers individuals with impairments to achieve their full potential. We realise that no two people are the same and pride ourselves in tailoring solutions to meet individual needs. We are also encouraged to be receiving enquiries from students and their families in relation to study and support in 2015. Transition to university can be a big leap but early planning is key to success. Please have a look at our new website **otago.ac.nz/disabilities** and see what we have to offer. As always, feedback is welcome and this can be provided anonymously via our website at any time.

All the very best for the remainder of the year!

The Team
Disability Information and Support

Important Dates

- The Donna-Rose McKay Disability Scholarship closes 15 August 2014.
- Alternative Examination Arrangement applications for Semester Two and Full-Year papers due by Monday 1 September 2014
- Semester Two Exams
  15 October – 8 November 2014

Student Profile

"Disability Support Services allow me to negotiate the nature of the support they give me and they make it very clear about whether they can or they can't. If they can't help they tend to put me in contact with someone who can."

MARTIN BURKE

Being an adult student can be enough of a challenge but for Martin he has the added challenge of a mental health disability which brings with it periods of extreme anxiety and depression.

In practical terms this means there are times when it affects his ability to interact, his ability to concentrate, his ability to focus and his ability to write.

"I think my disability is one of those unseen disabilities. Like any disability there are parts that can be seen and identified and then there are parts that are almost anonymous. More often than not it's the anonymous parts that give you the trouble because you tend to behave or act in a way that people can't rationalise."

Martin took up his tertiary studies in his 40s after having worked in the demolition industry and even having a stint working in the North Sea.

He began with a degree in sport coaching, then a postgraduate diploma at the Phys Ed School completing a dissertation on exercise psychology.

During that time he became increasingly interested in public health and completed a Diploma in Public Health and is now working towards his Masters, looking at the use of exercise as a therapeutic treatment within forensic mental health.

As an older person he found it difficult initially to make use of or even find out about some of the support that's available – but that has all changed now.

"Disability Support Services allow me to negotiate the nature of the support they give me and they make it very clear about whether they can or they can't. If they can't help they tend to put me in contact with someone who can," he says.

"They are very skilled and they treat people with dignity."

Donna-Rose McKay's Memorial Lecture

Donna-Rose McKay, Head of the University's Disability Information and Support Service, passed away in December 2013 after a short illness. Donna-Rose started working at the University in 1992 and was a much loved and highly respected member of staff. It was most fitting that Paul Gibson, Disability Rights Commissioner with the Human Rights Commission offered to give a memorial lecture for Donna-Rose titled Te mana o uenuku: The critic and conscience of an increasingly diverse society.

Memorial Lecture

It seemed more than fitting that the inaugural Donna-Rose McKay memorial lecture on 29 May was something of a rallying call for a Centre for Disability Studies in New Zealand.

Paul Gibson, the Disability Rights Commissioner from the Human Rights Commission, told an audience that during the Every Body In conference in Dunedin in 2011, Donna-Rose seeded the need for New Zealand to have a focal point for disability studies.

"The Human Rights Commission would love to partner with an institution like Otago. The idea of a Chair in Disability Studies [at Otago] might be a long shot but let's not lose the dream."

He talked about the recognised role of universities as the critics and conscience of society, but from a Human Rights perspective he said universities need greater diversity for them to identify with society.

To monitor human rights the Human Rights Commission needs the great research connections that universities have.

"We need to better partner with those who can research with some credibility and critique and get some depth – and get to the quantitative and qualitative truth about what's happening in New Zealand. I think there are opportunities for Otago to be a national leader."

In talking about the evolution of tertiary institutions and human rights he drew a parallel with Kate Shepherd and her battle to make New Zealand the first place in the world where women were allowed to vote.

Shepherd once said: "We must be ourselves at all risk. We must be natural."

Paul said these are the aspirations of the disability rights movement as well.

"It means inclusion as opposed to assimilation. Be who we are and be part of something at the same time."

While there is change and great things are happening, he told the audience that attitudes remain challenging, including in centres of higher learning.

"Disability studies has moved forward to incorporate broader understandings of diversity and inclusionment and human rights. It's not one group and then another group and another group – there are ways of including everyone."

Paul said the need for diversity needs to involve not just recruiting disabled students, but also disabled staff and having diversity in governance. Including disability and diversity content across various disciplines taught at Otago is also important.

He identified Otago's 150th anniversary celebrations in five years as an opportunity to set some targets and advance Donna-Rose's vision for Disability Studies.

Fittingly Paul ended by giving the last word to Donna-Rose who was often known to say: "We've just got to bloody get on with it."

Gill Rutherford talks about inclusive teaching

Even though she now has three OUSA 'Most Inclusive Teacher' awards to her name, Dr Gill Rutherford, College of Education senior lecturer in inclusive education, explains that, "I am very much a work in progress."

One of Gill's favourite quotes comes from Parker Palmer: 'Teaching is a daily act of vulnerability.'

"You never know how a class will go, no matter how organised you are."

Gill is a strong advocate of disability studies and inclusive education and believes strongly in the right of every child and young person to receive an education. Part of achieving that involves questioning attitudes and beliefs about disability.

"I ask my students to question what they know about disability and how they came to 'know' that. I then ask them to look at other ways of thinking about disability and to open up the possibility that there are other ways of 'knowing' that are legitimate."

Gill likes the approach laid out in the Universal Design for Learning framework which involves planning, teaching and assessing with everyone in mind from the start.

"It's about teaching that lines up with students' interests so they are motivated to learn. It also means making our assessments more relevant and engaging."

In practical terms that may mean thinking beyond books and texts by adding good documentaries or interesting websites. And when it comes to assessment time, giving students a choice in how they present their work.

For example, someone who is a strong writer might produce a blog or an article, while a student with artistic strengths could produce a poster or artwork to show their understanding.

"Students tell us they find it much more engaging than just writing an essay that involves following the script, getting the tick, and forgetting about it."

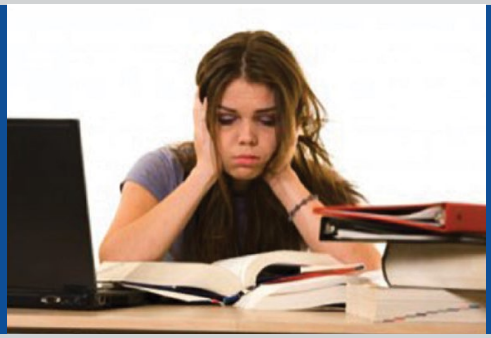
Gill says that with as many as one in five people being affected by disability, she is very aware that teacher education can be part of the problem or part of the solution.

Her hope is that every teacher graduating from the College of Education will have the understanding and the will to teach inclusively, and "that they are thinking that every student can learn, every student has the right to learn and that as teachers it is our job to do the best for every student."

"If we deny education to some children then we are closing doors to them in later life. As teachers, we need to provide students with opportunities to show us how they can shine."

"How we think about disability creates the biggest barrier to students' education. Shifting our thinking is essential."

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.

The LOCALS programme

If you are in your first year of study at the University of Otago, the Locals Programme may interest you!

The Locals programme is for any University of Otago student who is in their first year of study and living in Dunedin either at home, boarding or flatting. It is designed to create an enjoyable and supportive first year experience for new students who are not living in Residential Colleges. Students are able to access academic, social, sporting and community-based opportunities through the programme. It is a great way to make new friends and find out more about the academic support available to students.

For more information please contact Hayley Horwood, the Locals Programme Coordinator, at locals@otago.ac.nz or 03 479 8801. You can also visit **locals.otago.ac.nz**

2014 OUSA Disability Awareness and Inclusive Teaching Award

Voting for the 2014 OUSA Disability Awareness and Inclusive Teaching Award will be open towards the end of Semester Two. This award recognises excellence in inclusive teaching and a commitment to understanding disability as a human rights issue, thus enriching the Otago experience for students who have a disability, impairment or medical condition. It honours a staff member whose teaching and actions exemplify the ideals of inclusivity and advances equity and opportunities for all students. If this sounds like someone you have had teaching you, please make sure you vote for them!

The Donna-Rose McKay Disability Scholarship

If you are considering studying at the University of Otago for the first time in 2015 and you have a disability, impairment or medical condition you may be eligible to apply for the Alumni Disability Support Scholarship, valued at $5000. This is an undergraduate entrance scholarship for New Zealand citizens or permanent residents who have demonstrated academic ability and who can show financial need arising from a disability.

Online applications are now open and will close on Friday, August 15 2014. More information can be found at **otago.ac.nz/study/scholarships/otago005507121226 1.pdf**