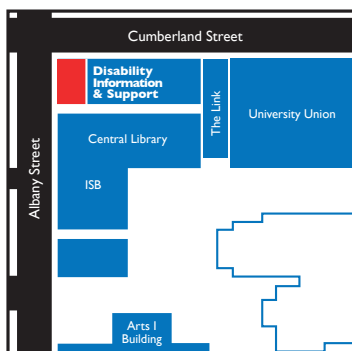


Imagine

'What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us'

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Disability Information & Support Newsletter: Issue 1 2015



Our physical address is:
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Dunedin

Welcome to the beginning of what I hope will be an exciting year and also to 'Imagine', Disability Information and Support's newsletter. I recently attended the Vice-Chancellor's Welcome Back Lecture where Professor Hayne stressed the importance of celebrating one another's successes. On this very note, I would like to congratulate the students we worked with during 2014 on their many accomplishments. The pass rate of students with disabilities tracked steadily at 91% and we are delighted to have played a small part in their academic success. In addition, I would also like to take a moment to celebrate the staff success. The team at Disability Information and Support worked with 885 students during the course of the year and a total of

35,388 hours of learning support was implemented, an increase of 28% on the previous year. 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. This is something our team remains firmly committed to and I thank them for their dedication, commitment and enthusiasm.

Student feedback via our Satisfaction Survey indicates that students are very satisfied with our service and Otago has a fine reputation for providing quality support for students with disabilities and/or impairments within the tertiary sector. We also provide support for University of



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Information

New to Otago?

If you are embarking on study at Otago you might find the following information useful!

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, renting 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 Kitty Brown, the Locals Programme Coordinator, at locals@otago.ac.nz or visit locals.otago.ac.nz for more information and to sign up to the programme for 2015.

STUDENT LEARNING CENTRE (SLC)

The SLC provides academic support to all students studying at the University. This support is free and confidential and available to both undergraduate and postgraduate students. Comprehensive information is available on their website at slc.otago.ac.nz/ and includes details about their workshops, PASS programme (Peer Assisted Study Sessions), Peer Writing support groups and Conversational English groups. Students are also able check out the SLC calendar to see which events and workshops are coming up.

STUDENT HEALTH AND COUNSELLING

Student Health and Counselling provides a comprehensive range of primary health care services to students, including medical, counselling, nursing, psychiatry, health education and specialty clinics, such as healthy lifestyle, travel, immigration and sexual health. For additional information about these services you can check out their website at otago.ac.nz/studenthealth. Student Health and Counselling can also be contacted on 0800 479 821 or 03 479 8212.

OUSA'S STUDENT SUPPORT CENTRE

The Student Support Centre at OUSA provides a free and confidential service designed to assist students who are experiencing issues that are impacting on their studies. You can find out more information about the support they provide by visiting their website at ousa.org.nz/main/support/ or contacting them at 479 5449. Also read the interview with Matt Tucker in this newsletter. Matt is the Manager of the Student Support Centre and he talks about the support available to students through the Centre.

OTHER STUDENT SERVICES

The Student Services Divisional Office is the administrative centre for all Student Services Departments. The office is responsible for the Career Development Centre, Disability Information and Support, Māori Centre, Pacific Islands Centre, Proctor, Recreation Centre, Student Health and Counselling, University Union and the University Volunteer Centre. Click on the following link for information about these support services. otago.ac.nz/studentsservices/

Continued from page 1

Otago students studying beyond the Dunedin campus, something that not everyone seems to be aware of. We are very well networked, extremely resourceful and can implement support at a distance with ease. I invite you to look at our website and welcome your feedback.

In addition, the University has a number of wonderful Departmental Disability Contacts. These people provide an important link between students, the department in which they are studying and Disability Information and Support. It is noteworthy that a number of these contacts have been recognised in our Annual Appreciation Awards.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all the very best with your studies this year and invite you to make an appointment with a Student Advisor if you would like to discuss your academic support requirements for the year. I have every confidence that we can build upon our previous success and look forward to working to ensure students have an outstanding student experience.

Melissa Lethaby
Manager

Important dates

- ~ Alternative Examination Arrangement applications for Semester One papers due Friday 1 May.
- ~ Semester One Exams 3 June – 17 June.
- ~ The Donna-Rose Mckay Disability Scholarship closes 15 August.

Check out DI&S's new website

To find out more about DI&S please look at our website. You will find information about the services our office provides and the resources available to students and staff. It is a good starting point if you want to find out more about how we may be able to support you. Our website address is otago.ac.nz/disabilities. We regularly update this site and have recently included the profiles of current and graduate students. These students talk about their experiences of studying at the university and we thank them for providing an insight into their challenges and successes, as well as the support that has made a difference.

Student Profile

“Part of the reason I decided to come to Dunedin was that I heard that Disability Information and Support was good here – and it was.”



NATHAN HART

If Nathan Hart has one piece of advice for new students to the University of Otago it is to be specific about what sort of assistance you need from individual Departments. “Sometimes Departments don’t realise what they can do. That’s partly because there is a lack of awareness – they don’t know how to help, or they don’t even know that they can help.”

Nathan, who is nearing the end of a BA in Psychology, has a vision impairment which leaves him unable to read any text books or hand-outs. He needs these resources in a digital format so he can magnify them or use his iPad or computer to read them to him.

He has found that there is support available when you ask for it. The Psychology Department’s disability contact person is able to assist him with things like hand-outs, while Disability Information and Support organise exam arrangements and text books. “Jackie Fox would contact the publishers and get the digital copy – if there wasn’t a digital copy already available. Sometimes the publishers would say no, but most of the time they would get me a text book. It was extremely helpful,” he says. “I also needed something in place for exams because, obviously, I couldn’t answer the questions without knowing what the questions were. I needed a reader/writer for that.”

Nathan says the best papers were the ones which had no exams and were internally assessed. He found he “thrived on those papers.”

When it came to living arrangements Nathan opted to go flatting rather than live in a Residential College. “It was easy because it suited my particular circumstances, but I would encourage others to investigate all avenues.” Nathan has found flatting life good and his flatmates were unconcerned about his vision impairment.

All up, his Otago experience is one he would recommend to others. “Part of the reason I decided to come to Dunedin was that I heard that Disability Information and Support was good here – and it was.”

Awards

OUSA Disability Awareness and Inclusive Teaching Award 2014

In November 2014, Dr Gill Rutherford, Senior Lecturer, College of Education was presented with the OUSA Disability Awareness and Inclusive Teaching Award for the fifth consecutive year. Tony Zaharic, Senior Teaching Fellow, Biochemistry Department received a special mention as runner up. Student nominations made mention of both Gill and Tony's accessible teaching styles and how they encourage students to be engaged in their learning.

Gill received high accolades from a number of students, with one student commenting that "You can understand from her teaching that Gill has a clear passion and deep understanding and commitment towards inclusive education for all students". Another student made reference to the fact that "Gill lives by and exhibits all she lectures about in regard to inclusive education. She is friendly, approachable and relatable and I always feel an important part of her class".

We extend our congratulations to Gill and Tony!

DI&S Appreciation Award recipients 2014

Also in November 2014, the staff at Disability Information and Support (DI&S) acknowledged the support it had received from students and staff during the year. Awards were presented by Melissa Lethaby, Manager, at a ceremony held at The Staff Club. These awards acknowledge individuals who have contributed to our vision of working in partnership to promote an inclusive environment that celebrates diversity, promotes comprehensive academic support and empowers individuals with impairments to achieve their full potential.

The following Appreciation Awards were presented.

For providing exceptional support for students

Paul Trebilco (Department of Theology)

Brad Hurren (Department of Anatomy)

Rob Burns (Department of Music)

For providing exceptional support to DI&S

Margaret Perley (Student Health and Counselling)

For being an exceptional Departmental Contact

Margie Lazar (School of Physical Education)

Jo Forrester (Department of Zoology)

For providing exceptional support to students and staff

Mark Henaghan (Faculty of Law)

Greg Hughson (Chaplain)

For providing a top quality service for a sustained period

Timetable Services

Campus Temps

For providing exceptional support and guidance to staff and students

Gary Peacock (Information Technology Services)

Ruth Chapman (University Mediation)

For providing exceptional tutoring support for students

Maria Pozza (Graduate student)

Rajni Wilson (Graduate student)

For being an exceptional supervisor for alternative arrangements

Jane Ashman (Graduate student)

For being an exceptional note-taker

Stephanie Knowler (Undergraduate student)

Christina Bright (Undergraduate student)

Anna Rachel McBride (Undergraduate student)

For being an exceptional note-taker (Wellington)

Ashley Uhm (Undergraduate student)

Injury

If an Injury is keeping you from achieving your academic goals support is available

If you sustain an injury that may impact on your study for a short period of time talk to your Lecturer or Course Coordinator about available support. However, if your recovery is likely to take a period of four weeks or more (or if it will affect your ability to sit tests or examinations) Disability Information and Support may be able to help. Our team is committed to providing learning support, advice, advocacy and information for students who experience academic challenges due to injury.



Two students who have, with careful planning and support, been able to manage their recovery and study commitments share their stories below:

Tom

I was competing at the UCI Mountain Bike World Cup in Cairns, Australia and had a major crash down a rock garden. Initial reports from the hospital suggested I had broken my neck; fortunately I only broke my collarbone, ruptured my AC joint, broke my wrist and sustained a major concussion.

The injury was sustained in the mid semester break and I did not return to lectures until the last week of class. The head injury was the most difficult to overcome, sleeping 16 hours + a day for 6 weeks and not being able to focus for more than 5 minutes made lectures impossible.

The best support I got was from the tutors supplied [by Disability Information and Support] to help teach me a course that I had not attended for 2 months. Plus the constant physiotherapy and hand therapy.

The invisible injury of the head knock was the hardest. I had surgeries on my wrist which was easy for lectures/tutors to understand; however, the head was harder to explain and understand.

I would suggest students get in contact with Disability Information and Support ASAP as they are so good at understanding the extent of head injuries.

Lydia

I was in my final semester of a Bachelor's degree in science and I was playing in the varsity rugby team's final when I broke my ankle. A fracture dislocation, six pinged ligaments, a plate and nine screws, a week in hospital and a month off university and I was back in the classroom with exams in a month. I found myself having to catch up and understand work when my peers were beginning exam revision. I underestimated the trauma of the injury and how it limited me, not only physically but also mentally, as I could no longer be physically active to relieve stress. I found myself stuck in the library day in and day out. What helped me a lot was the support I received. The understanding of Course Coordinators with managing assignments and workload helped, as did the support and guidance from Disability Information and Support who organised notes for me when I was at home and a tutor for when I returned to class. ACC covered taxi costs to get me to university each day and physiotherapy helped me understand my injury and encouraged me to be positive knowing that things were going to get better with rehab.

I ended up passing my final exams with flying colours, but a lot of it came down to me being motivated and determined and to not let the injury define me. No matter how big or small, an injury can always affect you in the most profound and unexpected ways and that was one thing I found myself coming to terms with. However, I couldn't have found my constant courage without the ongoing support I received, not only by services but by family and friends as well.

“We see people as individuals. It is easy to group 100 people together and think that they are the same but actually there are 100 individuals who are all unique”.



OUSA's Student Support Centre

“We are like the student version of the Community Advice Bureau.”

If you wanted a simple 11 word summary of the role of the Student Support Centre then Manager Matt Tucker's description would suffice. But dig a little deeper and you find that the cottage in Ethel Benjamin Place, just behind the OUSA's Clubs and Societies building, is a portal to a whole lot of help.

Matt says they offer a range of services, including advocacy (covering academic concerns, dealing with flatmates and landlords), queer support services, budgeting advice and even a food bank.

They also support the Locals programme, which is operated in association with the Student Learning Centre. The Locals programme is for first year students who are not living in a Residential College. “About 80% of students are from out of town and the majority of first year students are in Halls (Residential Colleges), so they are getting care, support and tutorials. You're disadvantaged if you're not at a Hall in your first year.”

OUSA's Student Support Centre enjoys a great working relationship with Disability Information & Support and back up the work they do in advocacy. “We have a close working relationship with Disabilities. We may send students to them and they may send students here – in much the same way we would with International or Māori and Pacific support services,” says Matt.

“We see people as individuals. It is easy to group 100 people together and think that they are the same but actually there are 100 individuals who are all unique”.

OUSA's Student Support Centre provides an array of services to meet the individual needs of students and will work with students to provide support. “It's not about making life easier – it's about equity and making it an equal playing field for everyone.”

The Student Support Centre is staffed by five people, including three full-time positions. Matt says if you want help or support, just make contact by email, through the website or simply drop by.

You can contact the Student Support Centre on 479 5449 or via their website at ousa.org.nz/main/support/

Hands-On Science

Each year Disability Information and Support provides two grants for secondary school students to attend the University's Hands-On Science Week. This year, Harry Woodyear-Smith and Rose Arnold were the recipients. They spent an exciting and stimulating week in January experiencing a variety of science programmes.

For Harry, it was an experience he said he wouldn't forget. "I learnt so much while at Otago University; even though it was a short time I have more of an idea of what fields I enjoy in science, but also about other areas that I had never previously considered".

Rose described Hands-On Science as an "amazing opportunity; it really encouraged me to pursue a career in science and gave me a sense of direction about what I'm going to do next year".

For more information about Hands-On Science please visit their website at handsonscience.otago.ac.nz/



Parafed Otago

Parafed Otago is keen to ensure University of Otago students with disabilities have an opportunity to explore their sporting potential and experience all the physical and social benefits of sport.

Sport Development Officer at Parafed Otago, Kieran Wall says he is keen to grow the relationship between them, DI&S and the broader University.

"For the majority of students, particularly Kiwis, sport is a huge part of University life, so my vision is that we are here to support individuals and the University to direct people into sporting clubs and pursuits to ensure they are having the best experience of Otago possible.

"I know it can be daunting for some students with a disability to go into those environments and we are here to try and keep the door ajar to existing clubs and throw the door open to new clubs."

Parafed already run wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby at the Edgar Centre and have an adaptive snowsports programme during the winter. There is also Boccia – a paralympic sport primarily for people with cerebral palsy – which is a cross between bowls and petanque.

Kieran is keen to see sports like Boccia introduced to highly visible spaces like Unipol, rather than being hidden away in church halls at the weekend. "We should be using the same spaces in the same way as everyone else."

He is happy to do everything he can to help people into individual sports and already has an existing relationship with a local shooting club, for example, and the North East Valley Bowling Club which Parafed has found really welcoming.

"Getting involved in sport allows students with a disability to have similar University opportunities and experiences to everyone else," says Kieran.

"I believe it is also going to have a positive impact on their academic work. If you're happy, active and social then your academic work is probably going to pick up as well."

New membership to Parafed Otago is free this year and it is only \$40 per year for returning members. Feel free to contact Kieran if you want to know more. His contact details are below.

Meanwhile, Unipol is in the early stages of adding adaptive sports to its programme which it plans to develop over the coming year. Keep an eye on the Unipol website for updates.

Kieran Wall, Sports Development Officer, at Parafed Otago can be contacted at kwall@parafedotago.co.nz or (03) 474 6347. You may also be interested in looking at Parafed Otago's website at parafedotago.co.nz. For more information about the programmes offered at Unipol look at their website at otago.ac.nz/recreation

Contact Details

Please contact us directly if you have any enquiries.

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