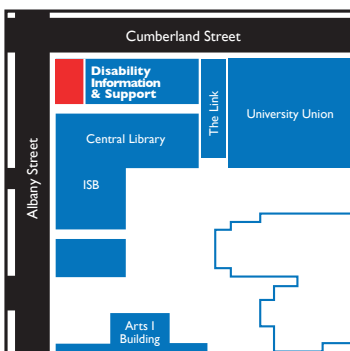


Imagine

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."

Eleanor Roosevelt (First Lady)

Disability Information & Support Newsletter: Issue 1 2016



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

Welcome to our first edition of 'Imagine' for 2016. It is my very real pleasure to welcome both new and returning students to Otago. The team at Disability Information and Support has met with a number of enthusiastic students in recent weeks and it is full steam ahead for us to ensure appropriate support is implemented in a timely manner.

Disability Information and Support's vision is 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. In this newsletter you will see many examples of our vision in action. You will also see examples of appreciation, collaboration, inspiration, determination and success.

During 2015, we had the privilege of working with 975 students. Despite the increase in numbers of students accessing our service, we remain committed to providing top quality learning support for students with a need. We are very resourceful as a team and enjoy working with departments to develop solutions to overcome barriers.

Finally, the third Australia and New Zealand University Mental Health and Well-being Day will take place on Wednesday, 27 April. This day aims to raise awareness of the mental health and well-being needs of those who study and work in higher education settings. A number of events have been planned for this day and will be advertised by the University and OUSA.

Melissa Lethaby, Manager



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Student Profile

“The student has got into the course due to their own merit, be there if they need you but understand that they need to stand alone in order to succeed in the next phase of their lives.”

SHAUN MARKHAM

Shaun Markham is a high achieving fourth year student majoring in Economics and Finance. His ambition is to complete post-graduate study and then work at Treasury. Shaun may also consider returning to University to complete a PhD in the future. However, it took a while for Shaun to prove he belongs in the academic world. Born with Athetoid Cerebral Palsy, which affects his speech and fine motor skills, it was his Year 10 economics teacher who was the first to really show an interest and give him great support.

“It was probably the first time a teacher saw my potential and pushed me, which triggered my interest and showed what I could achieve.” That interest in turn sparked Shaun’s desire to study economics and finance at the University of Otago.

Shaun is quite frank about the challenges he faced along the way. “Due to my Cerebral Palsy I require a writer and for a long time at high school it was thought that my writer helped me with my work. This probably didn’t stop until Year 13,” he says.

“Another thing was a lack of critical feedback. Teachers wouldn’t criticise my work in fear of hurting my feelings, however, you learn a lot more through mistakes.”

Overcoming challenges has made Shaun more determined. He is enjoying the greater support he now receives at University, while still being a lot more independent in his studies.

His relationships with his Student Adviser and writer have been important though. Shaun explains that “these people have been constant throughout my three years at uni. I have great relationships with these two people as we share the same interests and passions. It makes my study so much easier, I’ve got to know them well and they’re great sounding boards. Also when it comes to exams I don’t have to worry about gelling with my writer or her not understanding me, it just flows naturally.”

Asked what message he would give a student with an impairment who is either thinking about attending University or is currently studying, Shaun suggests they get as much support as possible – be it tutors, writers or study spaces. “Even if you feel that you don’t need it, adjusting to uni life is difficult. Put everything into your studies, you’re there to stand out and do well because chances are that you will be discriminated against in the labour market due to your disability. However, if you constantly prove yourself, you can’t be ignored for long.”

Shaun also has a simple message for lecturers and tutors who may have a student with an impairment in their class. “They’re no different to other students; they’re at university to succeed. If they need harsh feedback, give it. I’m unsure about others, but I react best when someone tells me some home truths. Praise can be easily shrugged off or makes the student too comfortable, don’t overcompensate by overpraising because you feel sorry for them.

“The student has got into the course due to their own merit, be there if they need you but understand that they need to stand alone in order to succeed in the next phase of their lives.”



News Bites

Parafed Otago

Parafed Otago is the main provider of Disability/Para Sports such as boccia, wheelchair rugby, wheelchair basketball and adaptive snow sports. They are supported by organisations such as Paralympics NZ and the Halberg Disability Sports Foundation and have a rich history dating as far back as the 1960's. One of the original New Zealand Paralympians, who competed at the 1968 Paralympic Games in Israel, hailed from Otago. This tradition of developing elite para-athletes is still being seen today, with six of the eight members of the New Zealand team that travelled to the IPC World Athletics Championships in Doha last year, being based in Dunedin.

In 2014, Parafed Otago was able to appoint its first Sports Development Officer. Due to increased demand for sport and recreation opportunities this position has developed into a full-time Sports Manager role. This has enabled Parafed Otago to continue to develop and grow their membership base and to develop new and exciting opportunities for those within the disabled community to engage and benefit from sport and recreation.

Parafed Otago organises and runs competitions, training and coaching in a range of sports, including athletics, wheelchair basketball, boccia, snow sports, wheelchair rugby and more. They also work with a range of other sporting bodies to enable the delivery of adaptive sports.

If you are interested in finding out more information then please have a look at their website www.parafedotago.com or contact their Sports Manager:

Kieran Wall 022 0433 768 or
kwall@parafedotago.com

Pacific Islands Centre

The Pacific Islands Centre runs an Academic Mentoring Programme for Pacific Island students. This programme has been designed to assist students to get the most out of University. Students are allocated an academic mentor to help guide them with their subjects, courses and career aspirations. To register for the programme students can fill out a form at the following link www.otago.ac.nz/pacific/currentstudents/otago022940.html

For further information about the Pacific Islands Centre please visit their website at www.otago.ac.nz/pacific/index.html

The Māori Centre – Te Huka Mātauraka

The Māori Centre provides a free and confidential counselling service to all Māori students. Their counsellors have skills across a wide range of clinical fields to provide assistance or guidance with personal, academic or cultural issues including independent living, home sickness, relationships, identity, time and stress management, special consideration and advocacy. This service is confidential and free of charge. Please contact the Māori Centre to make an appointment by either emailing maori-centre@otago.ac.nz or phoning 03 479 8490.

For further information about The Māori Centre please click of the following link www.otago.ac.nz/maoricentre/index.html

The Career Development Centre

The Career Development Centre assists students with a wide range of career enquiries, including exploring career ideas and related course advice, career counselling and information about specific jobs and employers. On the OtagoCareerHub you can find all the information you need about workshops, seminars, graduate jobs and internship positions. Click here for additional information about the OtagoCareerHub <https://careerhub.otago.ac.nz/students/login?ReturnUrl=%2f>

For additional information about The Career Development Centre please click on the following link www.otago.ac.nz/careers/index.html

Research participants needed!

Jennifer Baxter, a PhD student from the University of Otago's Psychology department, is conducting research into the screening of social anxiety in adolescents on the Autism Spectrum, and how social anxiety affects their lives. If you are aged 11 to 18 years, and are diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), or if you are a parent/caregiver of a young person with ASD, we invite you to participate in the study. Information will be gathered through a short online survey which takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. In return for your time and effort, you will be offered a \$10 voucher for The Warehouse.

The aim of this research is to help create an understanding of how to know when an individual with ASD is experiencing social anxiety, and guide future development of a tool to assess for this, so individuals can be identified to receive help to manage or overcome the difficulties associated with this form of anxiety.

To take the survey or find out more, click here: https://otago.asia.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_bdYC4QGBZKCBELr

Alternatively, to receive an email with this link or if you have any questions regarding this research, please contact Jennifer at: jennifer.baxter@postgrad.otago.ac.nz

Note-taking

"I have seen my grades dramatically improve since becoming a note-taker and people comment that my notes are expressed differently from the lecture slides, providing more than one angle on a class concept."

Wish you had an incentive to take quality notes ... want to improve your grades ... contribute to the success of others ... have more spending power?

Become a Note-taker!

.....

Note-taking is a valuable part of a suite of services offered by DI&S.

Students receive a payment for lecture notes which can then be passed on to students who are unable to take effective notes of their own. We asked four Note-takers what they see as being the valuable aspects of being a note-taker, whether they would encourage others to get involved and also find out how the money they earned helped them.

"Note-taking encourages you to write your notes in such a way that benefits your learning, explains Brittany. "You have to think – 'how would I explain this to someone else?'" I have seen my grades dramatically improve since becoming a note-taker and people comment that my notes are expressed differently from the lecture slides, providing more than one angle on a class concept."

Chrissy says the process has helped her understand how she learns and how others learn. "Being dyslexic I know what things (I think I know) that other students may have trouble with (those with learning difficulties), and the solutions I have to understanding things may help them. Using analogies, and underlining the important key words, drawing pictures and diagrams and attaching these to my notes."

According to Jared, the role gives him a strong sense of personal reward. "I feel I am contributing to a supportive sense of community within the University. The University has many systems in place to enable all its students to reach their full learning potential, and I'm happy to be able to contribute to one of these systems."

Michael would encourage other students to get involved. "You earn money for doing something you already should be doing and it improves the quality of your notes and provides incentives to attend class."

Chrissy, Brittany and Jared offer similar observations, saying it is a rewarding way to make some extra money which they have all found useful for important extras they may not have otherwise been able to afford such as running a car, getting out a bit more or even being able to head home for a mid-year break.

For more information, and to register your interest in becoming a note-taker, simply send Disability Information and Support an email advising of your enrolled papers for 2016.

Email: disabilities.notetaker@otago.ac.nz

Check out our website

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Check this out!

Did you know that you can provide confidential feedback on our service via our website at

otago.ac.nz/disabilities

Also, did you know you can access past Imagine newsletters via our website?

Teaching Profile

“I think there’s a really supportive environment at the University where students are becoming much more active about putting their hands up if they have a disability or impairment.”

Dr Brad Hurren, Department of Anatomy Teaching Fellow, and Melissa Lethaby, Manager of Disability Information and Support.



DR BRAD HURREN

Department of Anatomy Teaching Fellow Dr Brad Hurren thinks his tendency to “be a bit talkative by nature” may have helped pave the way for the ‘Most Inclusive Teacher Award’ he received last year at the Otago University Students’ Association awards.

“It was a bit of a surprise but I think maybe it’s because I like to talk to people quite a lot. So when I’m in a lab or lecture, I always like to ask students, either in a group or individually, how they are going, are there any issues or problems they are struggling with or things they are not understanding?”

Brad first began as a demonstrator in 2004 while completing his PgDipSci and then MSc in Anatomy, then became a Teaching Fellow in 2007. He went part-time in 2009 to work on a PhD, which he completed in 2013. Brad teaches the first year Human Body Systems papers, 200- and 300-level anatomy papers and, second year physiotherapy.

His teaching philosophy is consistent: “I like to make sure students have a really great experience. We have amazing resources such as the anatomy museum, dissection room and the fact that the human body itself is just so interesting. I like to encourage and foster more of that excitement by keeping it fun and hands on.”

In many ways looking after students with disabilities has been a natural part of that. “I think there’s a really supportive environment at the University where students are becoming much more active about putting their hands up if they have a disability or impairment,” he says.

“I think it is a matter of showing students someone cares in the first instance – then coming up with strategies to help them to succeed.”

A good example recently was a student who was profoundly colour blind – problematic in anatomy classes because many of the microscope slides use multi-coloured stains on the specimens. Modern text books with highly colourful illustrations were also a problem, so he has utilised older text books, such as Gray’s Anatomy, with their vivid black and white line drawings.

“Colour blind students may not be able to see everything clearly but by doing line drawings or using older texts that use black and white images of what they should be seeing down the microscope – we can give a similar experience and reinforce that understanding of structure and function.”

Technology

TextHelp can be made available freely to students at the University of Otago on the Student Desktop.

Providing Literacy Software Solutions – Text Help

TextHelp Read & Write Gold is a brilliant piece of software that helps users both create and read documents.

If you are writing a document TextHelp can read back what you've written, check spelling, and even predict what you are typing and offer suggestions.

Speech recognition features mean you can actually dictate while TextHelp puts your words down on the screen. It even offers help with homophones – words which have the same sound as another word but a different spelling.

TextHelp has a Word Wizard which can be used to provide a quick 'spot-check' of a word's meaning and there is also a choice of a basic or full dictionary, as well as a web definition function that can be used when you require more in-depth information about a word. A pronunciation tutor means you can also get the correct pronunciation of words, using a variety of voices enabling easy understanding.

The scanning facility can read a page of text in a book, or from some other source including photographs, and turn it into text. It can then be saved as a Word, PDF or HTML file, depending on what you need it for.

The Speech Maker function is a popular one with students. It can take a selection of text from any document and produce an audio file from it. This means you can scan assignments and revision notes and listen to them as MP3 files on your computer or on a portable MP3 player.

TextHelp also provides help with research. The fact Finder function enlists the help of several search engines to find information off the web that is relevant to your assignment. There is also the Fact Mapper research tool that allows you to capture text or images from any application, classify it, attach pictures and bibliography information and record its source.

TextHelp can be made available freely to students at the University of Otago on the Student Desktop. If you want to use it, send an email to studentIT@otago.ac.nz and TextHelp will then be added to the Student Desktop for you.

The Student IT Advisor's in the libraries are available to help with IT enquiries, and can help with TextHelp as required.



Awards



All of the 2015 winners of Disability Information and Support Appreciation Awards. Front Row (from left): Jessica McTavish, Dan Porter, Pauline Brook, Katy Falcous, Melissa Lethaby, Andrea Howard, Alison Stewart, Philippa Keaney and Vice-Chancellor Professor Harlene Hayne. Back Row (from left): Sam Sinclair, Michelle Moss, Jane Patterson, Rosemary Tarbotton, Nicky Ryan, Dr Gareth Treharne, Sandra Wheeler, Mike Conroy and David Wilson. Absent: Dyna Seng, Jared Papps and Kalyani Dixit.

Appreciation Awards

Each year the team at DI&S acknowledges the support received from students and staff by presenting them with an appreciation award. In 2015, the following appreciation awards were presented by the Vice-Chancellor Professor Harlene Hayne at a ceremony held at the Staff Club.

For providing exemplary support for students
Gareth Treharne (Department of Psychology)

For providing exceptional support and advice to DI&S
Nicky Ryan (Student Finance)

For striving to achieve inclusive recreational opportunities for students
Dan Porter (UNIPOL)
Sam Sinclair (UNIPOL)

For working in a truly collaborative manner to meet the needs of staff and students
Alison Stewart (Academic Leadership Development Programme)

For providing exceptional guidance and support for staff
Andrea Howard (Health Sciences Academic Administration)

For providing first-class proofreading support for students
Katy Falcous (Graduate student)

For providing exceptional tutoring support and test/examination supervision for students
Jessica McTavish (Postgraduate student)

For being an outstanding note-taker
Jared Papps (Undergraduate student)
Kalyani Dixit (Undergraduate student)

For being an outstanding Departmental Disability Contact
Michelle Moss (Department of Psychology)
Dyna Seng (Department of Accountancy and Finance)
Rosemary Tarbotton (Cumberland College)

For providing exemplary support to students and staff over a sustained period
Pauline Brook (Student Learning Centre)

For providing exceptional support and advice to students and staff
Philippa Keaney (OUSA)

For providing effective database management solutions for a sustained period
Mike Conroy, Sandra Wheeler, Jane Patterson and David Wilson (Infrastructure & Applications)

OUSA Teaching Awards

In September 2015, Dr Brad Hurren was presented with the OUSA Disability Awareness and Inclusive Teaching Award. It is evident from the student nominations that Brad is held in high regard by the students he works with. One student stated that Brad was an "Amazing lecturer! Helpful, caring and makes you feel interested in the topics. Goes above and beyond what he is required to do".

Other comments included "He's got an awesome way of communicating", "... very approachable lecturer", "always includes diverse way of learning. HE IS AWESOME".

And we agree! Congratulations Brad.

Contact Details

Please contact us directly if you have any enquiries.

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Web: otago.ac.nz/disabilities
Office Hours: Monday – Friday 8.30am – 5.00pm