

PATHWAYS TO POSSIBILITIES

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Welcome	1
No More Stares	1
Kudos	1
Stuff for Students	2
Stuff for Faculty	3
Mike On The Mic	4
A Little Inspiration	4

Kudos

Over the summer, Recreation Sport Management Major, Brian Purvis was elevated to the rank of "Runner" in the Tribe of Mic-O-Say. The Tribe of Mic-O-Say is the honor camping society for Boy Scouts at Camp Geiger. Becoming a Runner is highly coveted by younger scouts and this particular rank carries with it a great amount of respect and responsibility. It takes a lot of hard work and dedication to become a mighty Runner in the Tribe of Mic-O-Say and any Scout who achieves this goal is to be commended for their efforts and applauded for their dedication to the Scouting program. Brian is also nearing completion of the requirements to become an Eagle Scout which is the highest rank available in all of Scouting. From one Tribesman to another and from one Eagle Scout to a soon-to-be Eagle Scout, "Well done Brian". How, how!

*This information was published with Brian's permission.

WELCOME TO THE FALL SEMESTER OF 2009!

The beginning of the fall semester is always a bitter/sweet experience for me. With the arrival of cooler weather and brilliant colored leaves adorning Missouri's trees, autumn is absolutely my favorite season of the year. However, these climatic changes also signal the nasty winter weather that looms just around the corner. The fall semester in the ODS signals a time of change and transition as well. The excitement of meeting with dozens of new students and getting reacquainted with returning students is always balanced with the realization that many of *my* students have moved on and won't be back on campus this year. The fall semester is also the time of year when I get acquainted with new faculty, staff and administrators to discuss the numerous challenges that lie ahead for the students I serve.

Every fall I try to find ways to improve the delivery of services in the ODS. I think I get just enough rest over the summer to be reinvigorated to try to make things better than the previous year. This year is no different and there are some really exciting things going on behind the scenes in the department. Based on student feedback from the ODS Student Satisfaction Survey, the area of greatest concern is the length of time between service requests and service delivery. This concern was noted in all service areas from simple matters such as returning phone calls to more pressing concerns such as reviewing documentation and coordinating accommodations.

The slow turnaround time is caused primarily by a lack of sufficient staffing in the ODS. Throughout our history, it has been very apparent that a one-person department cannot adequately meet the demands of every applicant and student with a disability who requests services. My hope is to eventually expand the ODS to include a full-time director, full-time coordinator, and a full-time administrative assistant. HOWEVER, during a season of prolonged economic instability it is very unlikely that I will be able to increase my staff anytime soon.

In light of this situation, I have been working to make changes in policies and procedures that will improve my ability to provide more effective and efficient services. These changes are outlined in this newsletter. I want you to know that I have heard your concerns and I am working diligently to make the necessary improvements. For the time being, I will need students to be persistent in their pursuit of services. If you are waiting on me for any reason, please stop by the ODS and make an appointment and I will get to you as soon as I possibly can.

Wishing you a successful semester at MWSU,
Michael Ritter
Disability Services Coordinator

The Office of Disability Services is located in Eder Hall, Room 203N.

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STUFF FOR STUDENTS

WHAT'S NEW FOR THE FALL SEMESTER?

Digital Accommodation Request Forms

In an effort to provide more efficient services, I have created a digital version of your Academic Accommodation Request Form that can be sent to your MWSU email address. Just send me an email at mritter@missouriwestern.edu letting me know you need your forms for the semester. I will reply to your email with your forms attached. It will then be your responsibility to print off as many copies as you need for each of your instructors. When you deliver your forms to your instructors, please take advantage of this opportunity to discuss your disability as well as your accommodations. Most instructors are very willing to work with you if they are aware of your specific situation.

IMPORTANT NOTE - If you are a new student or if you are a returning student needing to discuss any changes to your Academic Accommodation Request Form, you will need to make an appointment with me in the ODS (Eder Hall, 203N).

Note-Takers

This semester, the ODS has once again resumed full responsibility for providing Note-Takers. If you need a Note-Taker, please come see me. Please **do not** seek out your own Note-Takers. Please **do not** ask your instructors to help you find Note-Takers. When too many people are attempting to provide the same service, it creates an administrative nightmare for yours truly! So, please do me a favor, if you need a Note-Taker, please come see me first. Thank You!

p.s. In an effort to improve the efficiency of delivering your notes, we will be sending your notes via email to your MWSU email address only. Please check your inbox frequently. If you have any trouble opening your notes, or if you are not receiving your notes in a timely manner, please contact me ASAP!

ADA Honor Society

For Members:

- The wait is almost over. The lapel pins have been ordered and they should be here by the first week of October. I can't wait to give them you. The pins (as well as the recipients) are awesome!
- The ADA constitution has been finalized and submitted for approval. This is the next step toward ADA becoming recognized as an official student organization. Woo Hoo!!!

For Prospective Members

- Alpha Delta Alpha (ADA) is an honor society that was created at MWSU to recognize students with disabilities who have achieved academic excellence. To be eligible for membership, students must have completed at least 60 credit hours, must be carrying a cumulative grade point average of 2.75 or higher, and must currently be in good academic standing. For more information, please stop by the ODS.

Join the CIA

A colleague at another university sponsors a student organization called *Citizens for Integration and Access (CIA)*. The group's main focus is to improve physical access for people with disabilities on their campus. We could expand our CIA to include access to information and access to technology. Their group is composed of students with disabilities as well as students without disabilities who are interested in improving their campus. Just stop by the ODS and let me know you are interested. If enough students express an interest, I will be happy to serve as the faculty advisor.

5K Postponed

The *5K Run, Walk, and Roll* that was tentatively scheduled for the first week in October has been postponed until further notice. With the help of some highly energetic, highly organized student volunteers, we may still be able to pull it off before the weather gets too cold. If you are interested in organizing this event, please contact me ASAP.

Other Events

Throughout the semester, I would like to organize events to raise funds for students with disabilities. I am thinking about everything from on-campus bake sales to a fundraiser bowl-a-thon. If you are interested in helping organize any of these events, or if you have creative ideas for other events, please contact me ASAP.

Helpful Hint!

One of the best resources on our campus is the Center for Academic Support (CAS). The CAS, located in the northeast corner of the Hearnes Center, offers free tutoring in math, writing, specific courses, reading and study skills. In addition to these services, students have access to online assistance, Supplemental Instruction (SI), and workshops sponsored by the Center. Flashcards and handouts are also available. They have an outstanding staff of really great people just waiting to help you. I really encourage you to stop by the CAS to discuss their services in person.

STUFF FOR FACULTY

WHAT'S NEW FOR THE FALL SEMESTER?

Electronic Accommodation Request Forms

Beginning this semester, students receive their *Academic Accommodation Request Forms* electronically. After a few glitches, this system seems to be working very well. It is the student's responsibility to deliver a copy of the form to each instructor. I have also reminded students to privately discuss their disability and accommodations with each of their instructors. Students are strongly discouraged from using the *hand and turn approach* where they hand their forms to their instructors and then immediately turn and walk away. It is my belief that mutual understanding only happens as a result of mutual communication.

Note-Takers

This semester, the ODS has once again resumed full responsibility for providing Note-Takers. If a student requests the services of a Note-Taker or if a student requests your assistance in finding a Note-Taker, please refer that student to the ODS. I have discovered that when too many people attempt to provide the same service for the same student, it creates an administrative nightmare for the ODS. Hopefully, I will eventually discover a Note-Taking system that actually works. :-)

Syllabus Statement

Please check your syllabi to make sure they contain the following statement regarding services for students with disabilities: "If a student has a disability which prevents the full expression of his or her abilities, please see the instructor before or after class to privately discuss the requirements of this course."

When students come forward to discuss their disabilities, please let them know that you will be happy to work with them but they must first become eligible for services through the ODS. It is the sole responsibility of the ODS to review disability documentation submitted by students and then determine the reasonableness of their requests. Approved accommodations are then relayed to instructors via the Academic Accommodation Request Forms that will be delivered by each student.

Recording Lectures

I am seeing an increase in the number of students requesting permission to record lectures as a means of capturing the information presented in lectures and discussions. This request is almost always considered to be a reasonable accommodation and for many students, the recorded lectures serve as an effective tool for reviewing the course materials presented in class.

Granting students permission to record lectures is one of the most fiercely debated accommodations amongst Disability Service Providers, Faculty, and Administrators across the country. Copyright infringement is usually the impetus for these debates. However, one could make an argument that students with excellent note-taking or listening skills could also effectively "share" lectures without permission to do so.

The Office for Civil Rights is pretty clear on this matter. Colleges and universities must provide an effective means of communication between students and instructors. If a student has a disability that does not allow him or her to capture the contents of a class lecture or class discussion in a traditional manner (taking notes), then the university must provide an alternative and equally effective means of communicating that information. Permission to use auxiliary aids such as digital recorders has been upheld by numerous court cases.

*While it is not permissible to deny a student the accommodation of recording lectures, it is allowable to ask **all** students to turn off their recorders during times of class discussion as long as the conversation is not relevant to the course objectives.

Policy and Procedure Guide

The ODS has existed in one form or another on our campus for over 20 years and has functioned reasonably well with very few published policies and procedures. However, the provision of academic accommodations has become much more complicated since the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. In addition to the increased complexity, the ever-looming litigious nature of civil rights issues has prompted me to begin the daunting task of writing policy and procedure guides for students, faculty and staff.

It will likely be next summer before the guides are completed. I promise to develop these guides with the Law of Parsimony ever present in my thoughts. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding anything related to disability issues.

Helpful Hint!

Many students find it helpful to have a hard-copy outline of upcoming course lectures. This allows them to bring the outline to class and take notes right on the outline. For students who have disabilities that make it difficult to outline and organize their notes, having an outline ahead of time can make a huge difference. Just a reminder... when you improve the classroom experience for a student with a disability, you are simultaneously improving the classroom experience for students without disabilities as well.

MIKE ON THE MIC

Parking Shmarking

Every semester I hear the same complaints about the lack of sufficient parking spaces on campus. I hear these complaints from the students I serve, as well as their non-disabled peers. Admittedly, for some students, not being able to park close to their destination is a minor irritation and inconvenience. However, for some students with physical disabilities, a lack of sufficient *accessible parking* spaces (formerly known as "handicap parking") can mean that the student has to miss class on any given day. For example, if a student has a mobility impairment which makes it difficult to walk any further than a very short distance, asking that person to park at Potter Hall to attend class in Eder Hall is not an effective solution.

I feel like I have done everything in my power short of renting a cement truck and building the parking spaces myself! Unfortunately, nothing is quite that easy. So here is what is going on behind the scenes to address the problem:

- I have submitted a proposal, (including a stack of signed petitions and student's personal stories related to accessible parking) that asks for a significant increase in the number of accessible parking spaces on our campus.
- I will be working with a student artist to create a drawing of a completely renovated parking lot that would encompass the space between Hearnese and Popplewell.
- I have recently begun the process of determining the magnitude of the problem. I have met with people on campus who are willing to discuss the issue but I first need to be able to calculate the need for accessible parking spaces vs. the number of accessible parking spaces currently available.

For the time being, here a few helpful hints that may improve your parking experience:

- Plan to arrive on campus as early as possible. Competition for the limited number of accessible parking spaces is fierce especially at Eder, Popplewell, and Agenstein.
- Take advantage of the parking spaces that *are* available. Accessible parking spaces are frequently open on the north side of Potter and the east and west sides of Wilson.
- There are also 2 spaces available on the west side of Agenstein. Please use extreme caution if you choose to park here. This is still part of the construction zone and as such is very busy with vehicular traffic and construction equipment.
- Carpool whenever possible. It saves gas, saves money, and saves door dings!
- If possible, have someone bring you to campus so you can be dropped off and picked up at the front door of any building (with the exception of Murphy).
- Consider taking public transportation. The public bus system is very cost effective and we have a bus stop directly across from Eder Hall. Local cab companies can drop you off and pick you up at the front door of any building (with the exception of Murphy).

I realize that some things are out of your control. But, if you will take as much responsibility as possible for those things you *can* control, I promise to work diligently to make improvements to our campus on your behalf.

A Little Inspiration...

What started as a summer camp for 75 children with intellectual disabilities in 1958, grew into what we now know as the Special Olympics which currently serves 3.1 million Special Olympians in 228 countries. The founder of Special Olympics, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, passed away last month at the age of 88. Mrs. Shriver's son Tim recently wrote, "My mother's greatest legacy may be this: that she made it possible for us each to feel our own power to be the difference, to be the change, to be ambassadors of acceptance for all. That is the challenge of our times."

For more information about how you can support Special Olympics, visit their website at www.specialolympics.org.

No More Stares

Disability Conference Set To Inspire

The 16th Annual *No More Stares* Conference will be held on October 29th at the Downtown Riverfront Holiday Inn. No More Stares is a conference created by and for people with disabilities. The keynote speaker this year is Jessica Cox.

Jessica is recognized internationally as an inspirational keynote speaker. Born without arms, Jessica now flies airplanes, drives cars, and otherwise lives a normal life using her feet as others use their hands. She holds the title of the first person without arms in the American Tae Kwon-Do Association to get a black belt and the first woman pilot in aviation history to fly with her feet. Convinced that the way we think has a greater impact on our lives than our physical constraints, she chose to pursue a degree in psychology while in college at the University of Arizona. Jessica's greatest challenges are not the ordinary daily tasks required for her to live independently. Putting in contact lenses, washing and brushing her hair, and fixing breakfast in the morning are all tasks that come second-nature to her as they would to anyone else. Her greatest triumph in life stands far above any physical feat. It is her unrepentant regard for herself as a whole person, her high degree of self-acceptance that gives her the freedom and power to insist that society accept her, too, just as she is.

For more information about Jessica Cox, visit www.rightfooted.com. For more information about No More Stares, visit www.nomorestares.org

Conference brochures with registration forms are available on the table under the ODS bulletin board in Eder Hall.