Dyslexia: A Learning Disability

By Melissa Finor

Dyslexia is a language processing disorder that can interfere with a person’s ability to learn how to read, write, spell and it sometimes even affects speech. Approximately 1 in 10 Americans are diagnosed with dyslexia. Dyslexia is not due to poor intelligence or laziness. Most people with dyslexia have average to above average intelligence. Having dyslexia does not mean that you see words backwards and does not affect your vision. This is a learning disability, which results in reading difficulties, “Due to problems identifying speech sounds and learning how they relate to letters and words” (Mayo Clinic, 2016). More specifically, with dyslexia the brain takes longer to make connections between the letters the student sees and the sounds the letters make. This condition results in poor word decoding, word reading, and spelling (Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity, 2016). Dyslexia can be hereditary, so parents who have dyslexia may have children with the same disability. Individuals with dyslexia are more likely to be creative thinkers and excel in academic areas such as art, design, math, music, and physics (American Dyslexia Association; American Dyslexia Association and Austin Learning Solutions, 2015).

Individuals with dyslexia have characteristics that are found in many other disabilities as well. They are known to have a slow rate of reading. They might not be as fluent with spelling and written composition compared to their peers. Individuals can struggle with grasping and writing down information presented to them. They continue to have difficulties with word recognition, which significantly affects the acquisition of knowledge and ability to analyse written material (Hardin-Simmons University, 2016). Dyslexia does not only affect the person’s academic ability but can also affect their self-image. Feeling “dumb” or less capable than they actually are is often an experience of a student who has dyslexia. Academic problems can create stress for the student, which may end up decreasing the likelihood that they enjoy or even continue in school (UBIDA, 2009). By no means does having a disability indicate that you will not be able to succeed academically.

“...We are the visionaries, inventors, and artists. We think differently, see the world differently, and solve problems differently. It is from this difference that the dyslexic brain derives its brilliance.”

-Tiffany Sunday, Author “Dyslexia’s Competitive Edge”

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Students with Disabilities Center: www.facebook.com/BUOSD

Assistance Animals and Residence Life

Bloomsburg University typically houses close to 4,000 students when we open our doors each fall semester. Every year we have a number of students who request to have an assistance animal with them while they live on campus. Through collaboration between Residence Life and the Students with Disabilities Center, our students have seen these accommodation requests come to fruition. These requests do come with some challenges. For example, a roommate or neighbor may be allergic to a particular assistance animal that a student needs. Communication is key for these accommodations to work for both the student making the request as well as all students within their immediate community that may be impacted. While the logistics can potentially be challenging, Residence Life has seen great success in our ability to meet our student’s needs. In our ever-changing environment, Residence Life will continue to focus on helping our students succeed while they choose to live on campus.

Quick Tips: Students with Disabilities Center

Located in the Warren Student Services Center – Room G043

REMINDER TIPS FOR SUMMER SESSIONS:

- Set up your appointment with either Dr. Wislock or Mrs. Fitzgerald ASAP to arrange accommodations.
- Remember to provide disclosure forms to your professors when you plan to use accommodations in their classes.
- Blue test forms are DUE 3 business/school days BEFORE the test is to be taken.
- Make sure you pick up your notes regularly if you receive notetaking services.
- LIKE our Facebook page to keep up-to-date on the Students with Disabilities Center (link listed above, under the picture).

REMINDER TIPS FOR THE FALL SEMESTER:

- Schedule your appointment with Dr. Wislock or Mrs. Fitzgerald in preparation for the fall semester.

Please contact or stop in the Students with Disabilities Center with any questions or concerns.

Contacts: Linda Tomashefski – x4265 or Denise Recla – x5205
Dyslexia: A Learning Disability

As a college student who was diagnosed with dyslexia when I was in first grade, I have learned my strengths and weaknesses. I have learned how to use my strengths to overcome my weaknesses. Being aware of what resources are available allows me to be a successful student. Many people do not understand what it is like to have dyslexia and have a hard time understanding what individuals who are diagnosed go through. However, they do need to understand that individuals who have dyslexia might not have the same characteristics. Like every other individual, students with dyslexia have strengths and weaknesses within different areas. Individuals with dyslexia can overcome their comprehension and reading deficiencies with the use of proper programs that have been proven effective. Multi-sensory, structured, and sequential approaches to phonics, such as The Wilson Program, have been proven to help individuals who have dyslexia succeed. Although more students are being identified as having dyslexia, there are also more resources available to support these students and in turn help them become successful.

References


Yale Center For Dyslexia & Creativity. (2016). Retrieved April 12, 2016, from http://dyslexia.yale.edu/
An Inside Look: My Son’s BU Experience

By Joseph Tloczynski

World Down Syndrome Day, used to gain attention and support for individuals who live their life with Trisomy 21 (i.e., three copies of chromosome 21 instead of two), is recognized on the 21st day of March each year. Attention and support for the challenges faced by those born with Down Syndrome is well warranted due to the fact that though Down Syndrome is the most common chromosomal disorder in the United States, it is the least research funded of major genetic disorders by the National Institutes of Health. Despite the challenges and obstacles faced by individuals born with Trisomy 21, their compassion for others and drive to maximize their own potentials can be amazing and inspiring.

The students, faculty, and campus community of Bloomsburg University have been given their own Down Syndrome Awareness Day, every day of this past academic year through the presence of Danny Tloczynski. Danny, 21 years of age and a graduate of Bloomsburg Area High School, has been auditing courses this year at BU. Danny audited Introduction to Theatre during the Fall Semester, and is currently auditing Beginning Jazz & Ballet during the Spring Semester. Danny is currently enrolled as a non-degree student. Although at present there are 246 college programs for students with intellectual disabilities in the United States, and 10 of those programs being in Pennsylvania, BU is currently not one of them. As with most aspects of Danny’s life, he plans on making the most of what BU can offer him as he audits classes and determines which courses that he may attempt at taking for credit.

In the meantime, Danny can be frequently seen on the BU campus with his habilitation services worker and brother Christian Tloczynski, himself a 2015 graduate of BU, double majoring in Psychology and History. He especially frequents the Student Rec Center where he engages in a rigorous weight training and fitness program. Danny has won several gold and silver medals for both the Bench Press and Shot Put in Special Olympics competition at the state level. Danny is enjoying his college experience and looking forward to finding additional avenues to explore academically, in regard to extra curricular activities and social opportunities. If you see him on campus be sure to stop and say hello. You’re sure to receive a smile and a warm response.
Assistive Listening Device Systems

By Dave Celli

Classrooms typically have very bad acoustics. Many students who use hearing aids effectively in quiet environments have a difficult time following information presented in large college classrooms. In the classroom, the instructor’s voice is competing with background noise, room echo, and distance. Therefore, the intelligibility of the instructor’s voice is degraded by the poor room acoustics as well as the hearing loss.

All of the fixed seating large auditoriums and classrooms at BU have Assistive Listening Device Systems (ALDS) installed and connected into the classroom instructor’s system. Those areas include Mitrani Auditorium, Haas; Gross Auditorium, Carver; Kuster Auditorium, Rooms G38, G40, G42 Hartline Science Center; Centennial 218; McCormick 1303, 2303; and Danny Litwhiler Field. We have Sennheiser wireless sound amplifiers (pictured on the right) available in all of the areas listed. Some areas also have the ability to tune directly into the individuals hearing aid. Contact the Technology Help Desk (x4357) if you would like more information on ALDS.

Assistive Listening Devices have proven to be an effective teaching tool for students with hearing loss. Providing a good listening environment will have a major impact on an individual’s academic performance.

Working Together: Continued Focus on Evacuation Safety

By Jeanne Fitzgerald

The Bloomsburg University Evacuation Committee strives to improve the safety of all individuals on campus and is comprised of representatives from the offices of Workplace Safety, University Police, Students with Disabilities Center, and Military and Veterans Resources, as well as several undergraduate and graduate students. This semester, the committee focused on designated areas of rescue, elevator access, and developing elevator/evacuation signage. Along with these discussions and initiatives, the committee continues to work toward increasing awareness and educating the campus community on evacuation safety.
Autism: Risk & Safety Management

By Tess Fosse

During this past fall semester, Dennis Debbaudt came to Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania to provide autism training and resources for law enforcement, emergency first responders, parents, educators, care providers, and the autism community. Debbaudt is a leading global voice on autism training. His presentation, sponsored by the Jones Center for Special Education Excellence and the University Disability Advisory Committee, brought together both members of the campus and the town community.

As a parent of a young man with autism, Debbaudt was able to share both humorous and insightful anecdotes from his perspective. His background as a professional investigator allows him to relate to a unique audience that may encounter people with autism and need to know how to best engage with them.

Debbaudt Legacy Productions offers these “Tips for interactions with persons with autism:

• Display calming body language; give extra personal space
• Use simple language
• Speak slowly, repeat and rephrase questions
• Use concrete terms and ideas; avoid slang
• Allow extra time for response
• Give praise and encouragement
• Exercise caution during restraint
• Person may have seizure disorders and low muscle tone
• Avoid positional asphyxia. Keep airway clear. Turn person on side often.
• Given time and space, person may deescalate their behavior
• Seek advice from others on the scene who know the person with autism

REMEMBER: Each individual with autism is unique and may act or react differently."

The turn out was fantastic as we had officers from Bloomsburg University, Mainville, Locust Township, Bloomsburg, Danville, and other surrounding areas. Employees from the local 911 call center and school districts participated in the training. University students, parents of children with autism and adults who identified themselves as on the spectrum were in attendance as well. The presentation was offered on different nights to allow for more attendance. The feedback from the community was positive as the training seemed to highlight an important topic in our community.

“The most interesting people you’ll find are ones that don’t fit into your average cardboard box. They’ll make what they need, they’ll make their own boxes.”

—Dr. Temple Grandin
Evacu-Trac Chairs for Bloomsburg University

By Tabitha Bolinsky

Everyone has been through a fire drill at least once in their life. You exit the classroom, head to the stairs, make your way outside and wait for the okay to proceed back inside and go about your day. But what if it wasn’t as simple as walking down the stairs to the exit? For many people with mobility difficulties, exiting a building for an emergency or drill can be daunting and frightening; not knowing if you would be able to escape without the use of an elevator. This is where an Evacu-Trac chair comes into place.

An Evacu-Trac chair is an evacuation chair used to move people with a disability or injury down stairways quickly and safely during an emergency. The chair is fairly simple to operate. It is compact for storage and opens in one swift motion; clicking into place. The individual is then transferred onto the chair and strapped in for safety and support. Once the individual is comfortably in place, the person assisting is able to maneuver the device down the stairs. The device is stable enough to completely stop on the stairs and stay in place.

At Bloomsburg University we currently have two of these chairs. These devices are located in the back of police cruisers, and secured in protectant covers to prevent damage. The University Police Officers, who are trained on the Evacu-Trac chairs, are able to drive to any building on campus, unload the evacuation chair, and then proceed with the evacuation of an individual with mobility difficulties.

Several other colleges have obtained these devices including Kutztown University, Eastern College, University of Maryland and Northern Virginia Community College. While evacuation chairs come in varying shapes and sizes, the purpose of all is to ensure the safety of individuals with mobility issues in an emergency.

As colleges become more diverse in their student body, new advances in technology and devices such as the EvacuTrak chair will be seen not just at Bloomsburg University, but at more places of higher education across the country.
Honor Society Opportunity for Students with Disabilities

By Melissa Finor and Marybeth Bergen

Delta Alpha Pi Honors Society is spreading awareness and changing the perception of students with disabilities by recognizing them for their accomplishments through our service projects. We have started to integrate service opportunities into our monthly meetings that our members can participate in. Recently, we came together to create cards for sick children in hospitals all around the world. We made about 50 cards to send to the company Cards for Hospitalized Kids, who then sends our cards out to hospitals around the world. As a group, Delta Alpha Pi members are also collecting soda tabs. At each meeting, members are filling containers with tabs to send off to help the Ronald McDonald House in Philadelphia. Overall, we are working to unite as a group and participate in activities that benefit others. We are planning for future semester activities, working to get recognized throughout campus, and trying to get more people involved in our projects!