

Insider Newsletter

Spring 2010

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

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Letter from Director



For returning students, welcome back to UT Austin! We hope you had a relaxing winter break! Welcome as well to those of you who are new to campus and to SSD.

We hope you find the 12th edition of our newsletter, the *Insider*, useful and informative. Included you will discover: important dates and deadlines, information about student support services on campus, student forum dates, workshop and group information, and more!

Once again, welcome back and best wishes for a successful semester!

Krista Schutz-Hampton, M.A.
Director, Services for Students with Disabilities

Closed Captions Provided At Several University Venues

When the UT football stadium underwent renovations not too long ago, they put in a new JumboTron screen. With recommendations from our office, they also put another panel to the top left of the screen for closed captions to be displayed. Since then, the newly renovated baseball stadium and current basketball stadiums now have their games captioned as well.

For the first time last year, the UT-wide Commencement program held on the Main and South Mall areas provided live captioning on LED screens below several video screens and via webcast for anyone who could view the program from their home computer.



Left: 2009 UT Commencement Captions

Bottom: 2009 UT Football Game JumboTron with Captions



Spring 2010 Walk-In Schedule/Hours

SSD Walk-In Hours

- Mondays:** Rotates
- Tuesdays:** Christy Shindell
- Wednesdays:** Lauren Kinast
- Thursdays:** Stephani Wolfe
- Fridays:** Rotates

SSD Spring 2010 Student Forums Scheduled

- Monday, February 1, 2:30pm-4:00pm, SSB 1.310 — Psychological & TBI
- Tuesday, February 2, 11:00am-12:30pm, SSB 1.310 — ADHD, LD, & Autism Spectrum
- Wednesday, February 3, 11:00am-12:30pm, SSB 4.212 — Deaf & Hard of Hearing
- Thursday, February 4, 12:00pm-1:30pm, SSB 1.310—Visual, Mobility, & Medical
- Friday, February 5, 2:00pm-3:30pm, SSB 1.310—Open to any Student registered

An Evening with Garrett Weber-Gale



Stephani Wolfe, Garrett Weber-Gale, Krista Schutz-Hampton, and Lauren Kinast with Garrett's Olympic medals.

As part of disability awareness month, Olympic medalist Garrett Weber-Gale spoke about his experiences managing a long-term medical disability while swimming competitively. After his 30-minute presentation, Weber-Gale signed autographs and answered questions from audience members.

Important Dates to Remember

- January 19—First Day of Spring 2010 Semester.
- January 22—Last official day for adds/drops without approval.
- February 3—12th class day. Last day to drop a class for a possible refund.
- February 15—Last day to drop a class without a possible academic penalty.
- March 15-20—SPRING BREAK
- March 29—Last day to drop a class with Dean's approval.
- March 29—Last day a student may change registration in a class to or from the pass/fail or credit/no credit basis.
- April 19-30—Registration for Summer & Fall Sessions 2010
- April 23—Last day to appeal for extension to drop class for urgent and substantiated non-academic reasons.
- May 7—Last day of classes! (except Law School)
- May 12-15 & 17-18—Final Exams (except Law School)
- May 22—UT Commencement



Who's New to Our Office? *Heather Kaplan*

Where are you from?

I grew up in Syracuse, New York, but have lived around this beautiful country. When I sport orange though, I'm sorry but it has to be the bright shade for my Syracuse Orangemen (not the local preferred burnt orange). Hmm, for first-time introductions to the UT community, I'm not painting myself in the best light possible, am I?

How did you get to UT Austin? I was applying for a job as a transcriber when I was informed of the available position at the front desk of the SSD office. I have administrative experience—I like being the person that helps you when you walk in the door—plus the goals and actions of the SSD department meshed with my personal and professional efforts of helping those in need, so I applied.

What do you like the most about working with college students?

Most of my working life I have assisted adolescents in therapy and educational settings. Changing over to working with young adults has been exciting, interesting, challenging. Communication is different, needs are different; my approach and listening skills are adjusting accordingly. I learn every day by interacting with these students.

What do you do for fun? My number one source of fun in this town is dancing. I am completely addicted to the world of swing dancing and intend to remain so for the rest of my days. Outdoors, since I don't need my beloved skis and snowshoes here, I trail walk/run and hike. I haven't started kayaking, rock climbing, biking or camping here yet, but hope to soon.

Services for Students with Disabilities

Mission Statement:

Based in the philosophy that all students should be assured equal access and opportunity, Services for Students with Disabilities works to eliminate physical, instructional, and attitudinal barriers by providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and fostering awareness within the University community.

Autism Spectrum Disorders: A New Demographic in Services for Students with Disabilities

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) refer to the continuum of symptoms and specific diagnoses that are identified by impairment in thinking, feeling, language and the ability to relate to others. The ASD diagnoses most commonly seen in higher education are high-functioning autism and Asperger syndrome (National Institute on Mental Health, 2009).

There has been an increase in ASD diagnoses in the last 20 years and subsequently an increase in the number of students on college campuses with ASD diagnoses. Because of this it is important that we, as a campus, work together to determine what supports will be helpful for these students in the college setting.

Students who fit this diagnostic category may display characteristic such as:

- Difficulty with nonverbal behavior such as eye-to-eye contact, facial expressions, body posture
- Difficulty developing peer relationships
- May not seek shared enjoyment, interest, or achievement with others
- Lack of social/emotional reciprocity
- Repetitive patterns of behaviors, interests, and activities
- Inflexibility in routines and rituals
- Repetitive motor movements (i.e., hand/finger flapping or twisting, whole body movements)

Not all students with ASD diagnoses will present in the same way. They will come to the University with different strengths and challenges. Below are some of the commonalities that are seen in this population. However, how and to what extent these are present will vary greatly between individuals.

Strengths Of Students With ASD:

- Average, or above average, intelligence
- Excellent rote memory
- Very detail-oriented
- Often savant-like knowledge in certain areas
- Works well with concrete, rather than abstract or ambiguous, information
- Extensive vocabulary
- Incredible gifts/talents in certain areas (arts, math, sciences, etc.)
- Unique ability to perceive things in new ways, out of the box thinking

Challenges For Students With ASD:

- Difficulty interpreting nonverbal cues
- Minimal expression of emotion in speech
- Withdrawal from other people and difficulty sustaining conversations
- Difficulty developing peer relationships
- Difficulty seeing the overall picture
- May be bluntly honest
- Difficulty understanding figures of speech
- Can be over stimulated by sound, crowds, lights, smells
- Inside feelings do not always match outside behavior
- Difficulty recognizing faces out of the usual setting

Suggestions For Working With Students With ASD Communication:

- Provide advance notice of topics to be discussed
- Provide advance notice of meetings or changes in schedules
- Allow written responses in lieu of verbal responses

Organization/Concentration/Focus

- Help student develop checklists for assignments
- Reduce auditory/sensory distractions
- Facilitate discussions around prioritizing tasks
- Provide written instructions
- Social dynamics
- Review classroom policies and expectations
- Provide concrete examples to explain appropriate behavior and "rules" of the classroom

SSD is continuing to explore the best ways to meet the needs of these students, much of which is being learned from the students themselves. One thing SSD knows will be helpful is to provide better information and outreach so that the UT campus is a more understanding and supportive environment. As Stephen Shore once said, "If you've met one person with autism—you've met one person with autism."

If you are interested in receiving more information about these set of diagnoses and/or working with these students please contact Stephani Wolfe / swolfe@austin.utexas.edu / 512-471-6259.

Time Management Workshop

- February 10,
3:30 – 5:00 PM
SSB 4.212
- February 16,
3:30 – 5:00 PM
SSB 4.212

STUDY TIPS

Study Tip #1:

Did you know your ability to retain information improves after light exercise? Consider eating a high protein snack, exercising for 5 minutes, and then going straight to work studying!

Study Tip #2

If you find it difficult studying in a particular environment (e.g., your room or apartment), change locations. Try the library or a quiet area on campus.

Study Tip #3

Pulling all-nighters is NOT effective. You might feel alright, but you'll likely be physically and mentally exhausted, leading to poor concentration and memory. Get a consistent good night's sleep, study in regular intervals, and watch your grades improve!

Stress Recess

Stressed by papers? Tests? Relationship issues? Graduation? For these and other stressors, take a few minutes to check out a new interactive Web site called "Stress Recess" <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/stressrecess/index.html>, a component of the UT Counseling and Mental Health Center. This site is loaded with videos, animation, video games, body scans, quizzes, clickable charts and graphics and practical information tailored to YOU. Learn what causes stress, the signs of stress, and most importantly, what you can do to manage stress in healthy ways!

The following is a brief description of each of the modules in the three levels:

- What is Stress? A definition and description of stress and eustress and symptoms of stress.
- What Do You Eat? A discussion of what foods affect stress as well as other things that we expose ourselves to that affect stress; e.g., people we associate with, media or activities.
- Fight or Flight: 1) An animated movie that describes the fight or flight response, including the physiological mechanisms, and how this can manifest in a student's world 2) A video game designed to help students build on their physiological understanding and provide practice with manipulating the body's "machinery" in order to cope with stress in a healthy way.
- Stress' Effects on the Body: 1) 2 graphic student images that students can "roll over" the body parts to find out about stress at those places 2) A 2-minute "body scan" with a built-in timer and graphic body that students can "color in" their stress before and after thinking stressful thoughts.
- Perfectionism: 1) An animated movie describing the vicious cycle of perfectionism 2) An animated movie describing the cycle of healthy striving 3) A puzzle exercise that illustrates the difference between realistic goals and perfectionistic goals.
- Stress Cycles: 1) An animated movie describing the negative stress cycle 2) An animated movie describing the positive stress cycle and 3) PDF worksheets for the negative and positive stress cycles to identify unhealthy patterns and practice new ones.
- Training: Cognitive Distortions: 1) A scenario-based quiz to practice identifying types of cognitive distortions with a 2-minute buzzer to solicit automatic thoughts.
- The Anxiety Spiral: A video movie game that prompts students to choose various options to interrupt anxious thinking. The objective is to help students realize that it is better to stop the anxiety spiral before it grows.
- Priority Pie: 1) A clickable "pie" for four stereotypical students (athlete, over-achiever, party animal and studious) shows how these students might spend their time in 9 categories over a typical 24-hour period. 2) A downloadable priority pie chart that students can use to track their own time use to help them prioritize their resources.
- Training: Diaphragmatic Breathing: A video demonstration.
- Training: Progressive Muscle Relaxation: A video demonstration.
- Training: Yoga: A 1.5 hour video demonstration of basic yoga techniques.

In summary, The University of Texas at Austin Counseling and Mental Health Center hopes that Stress Recess will not only be of great value to our students but that other universities will also find it helpful and link to it from their counseling center Web sites.

Taken from an article by Dr. Jane Bost, Associate Director, Counseling and Mental Health Center





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On our Web site, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>, we will launch a new section to assist our students, their families and potential employers with resources focused on helping students transition from college to the world of work. These resources will include links to individual college resources on campus, opportunities for students with disabilities to learn about effective transition to the next phase of their life.

Disability Disclosure

What is disclosure? Disclosure is the process of informing a potential employer that you have a disability. Many people are unsure as to whether or not they should inform potential employers about their disabilities, and at what point it would be appropriate to disclose this information.

Although you are not required to tell potential employers about your disability, and they cannot ask you about your condition, you may find it important to disclose your individual situation to a potential employer. Disclosure is a personal choice dependent upon type of disability, how the disability will effect your work and your personal feelings. Explaining your disability and how it will effect your work is recommended, because most potential employers feel very positively towards applicants whom they feel have been completely honest with them.

There are several appropriate times to disclose your disability to a potential employer. You should decide when you would feel the most comfortable making this disclosure. Here are some tips regarding disclosure of your disability:

- **Application** - Never state your disability under the health section of an employment application. This reinforces the stereotype that people with disabilities are unhealthy.
- **Resumé** - If you have had work experience (paid or volunteer) that is related to your disability, be sure to include it on your resumé. However, never state your disability at the top of your resumé, since this implies that you feel that it is a very important aspect of the job search process.
- **Cover Letter** - Disclosing in a cover letter is appropriate, especially if your work experience clearly indicates that you have a disability. (See example). If you choose to disclose in your cover letter, you may want to staple the letter to the back of your resumé so that the employer reads about your abilities before learning the specifics about your disability. Be aware that disclosing in a cover letter may lessen your chances of being granted an interview in some cases.
- **Interview Confirmation** - Many people choose to disclose at this point. It would be very difficult for the employer to back out of the interview at this late time. Also, employers react more favorably to this type of disclosure than to the "shock" tactic. (See #5). When you call to confirm your interview, be sure to talk directly to the person who will be interviewing you. (See example).
- **Interview** - Some people do not disclose their disabilities, and simply show up at the interview, "shocking" the interviewer. This tactic is not recommended, since employers often feel unprepared, embarrassed, and even hostile. The first five minutes of the interview are the most important, and you do not want to spend them in uncomfortable silence.

No matter when you decide to disclose, you will want to present your disability in the most positive way possible. Make sure to discuss the following:

1. Disclose your disability - you do not need to go into extensive detail.
2. Describe your skills and specifically how you will do the job.
3. Show that you are aware of attitudinal barriers that you may encounter in an office, and be prepared to discuss how you make others feel more comfortable around you.
4. Mention that you do not expect special treatment.
5. Specify that you have references to verify your work experience upon request.

The most important aspect of disclosing your disability is presenting yourself as a problem-solver rather than a problem-creator. You are someone who can do the job and help work towards greater productivity. Above all, you can compete on equal terms with people who do not have disabilities.

If you have any questions about disclosing your disability to a potential employer, please feel free to contact one of the counselors in the SSD to discuss your individual situation and develop a plan to disclose that will meet your individual needs.