

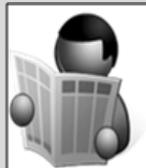
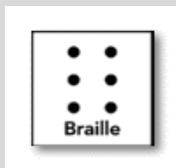
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Transformation Services Office

Disability Service

Annual Report

2011



DISABILITY SERVICE

Promoting Access and Developing Solutions

All documentation produced by the Disability Service is available in enlarged text, audio, Braille and e-text on request.

Vision

To establish a human rights culture at UCT with a special emphasis on disability.

To act within the University structures, providing advice and support both in terms of harnessing mainstream capabilities for the accommodation of people with disabilities, as well as providing specialist services where mainstreaming is not possible. To provide academically deserving disabled people with the opportunity for a fair and equal educational and work experience.

To be the sounding board, knowledge base and benchmark which deliver to the University the capacity to interact appropriately with students, staff, prospective students and visitors with disabilities.

Message from Glenda Wildschut
Director: UCT Transformation Services Office

It gives me great pleasure to write a forward to the annual report of the Disability Service at the University of Cape Town. I have colleagues that are dedicated and passionate about the work they do which is very evident in this report.

Disability need not be an obstacle to success. Many of our staff and students demonstrate this. They work hard, play hard and put much effort into advancing their careers as anyone else. Yet for many these achievements could not be possible without the support received from the Disability Service and the dedicated team. As Professor Stephen Hawking wrote in his forward to the world disability report, his success in a career in astrophysics is in part due to being supported by those who have made his workplace and home accessible and for the personal assistance he receives for his activities of daily living. The Disability Service provides more than just a service for reasonable accommodation. The emotional and physical support that students and staff receive cannot always be measured but is greatly appreciated.

I would like to add my thanks to all those who in turn support the work of the Disability Service and for your continued involvement with the Disability Service at UCT.

Annual Report 2011

Dear Valued Friends and Colleagues

Like the years before it, 2011 was a busy and productive year. As I sit down to write this report I am daunted not so much by finding material to include, but by deciding what to exclude. I could list every advocacy event we hosted, every access barrier we overcame, every service we provided, but I would run the risk of producing a laundry list. Instead, I see this report, as I have said elsewhere, as an opportunity to have a conversation with the University community and with our loyal donors who have supported our work through many years and who continue to do so. By giving a quantifiable account of the progress we have made, it is relatively easy to reassure colleagues and donors that the resources they put at our disposal are used to the benefit of people with disabilities. What is harder to convey, involving as it does experiences which are deeply personal, is the transformation we witness in the lives of disabled students. This transformation, we would like to believe, comes about partly as a result of the support and affirmation they receive as they interact with the Unit.

Towards the end of 2010 the Disability Service was incorporated into the newly-formed Transformation Services Office, organisationally situated in the Office of the Vice Chancellor. This repositioning inevitably forces one to ask questions about what exactly transformation means for our unit. Of course in an important sense it means for us what it means for the institution in general - a climate of mutual respect and sensitivity to differences, whatever they may be. Mostly though, when we think of the notion of transformation, it is in terms of a change of attitudes and behaviour to others, or at the level of an institutional climate and culture. But within our unit we are privileged often to see a radical transformation within an individual. We watch students growing in confidence in themselves and trust in others. We experience students reluctantly, even fearfully, coming to request support, and see them in time confidently claiming this safe space as their own. In this regard I have included with pleasure a short reflection by Denise Oldham, our Direct Services Co-ordinator.

Reinette Popplestone

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The Disability Service as a Transformational Space

By Denise Oldham (Disability Service Staff member)

The UCT Disability Service strives to provide disabled students with a safe space where personal transformation is encouraged, and we are often privileged to witness this transformation taking place in their lives. Many of these moments are by their nature deeply personal and it is hard to articulate these experiences. They are unique to each student. Although the number of students with disabilities at UCT remains relatively small, moments of personal achievement and personal transformation can never be described as small. They are born out of struggle and personal growth. Many of these moments involve an acceptance of things as they are and an ‘owning’ of the individual’s disability, discovering a pride in uniqueness and a solidarity with those who are prepared to engage with others with integrity and non-judgmental openness. We would need to ask the students themselves about their experiences, including any they may have had of feeling stigmatised or marginalised. Each student is unique and each personality interacts with the experience of disability in a unique way. Some students are fierce and angry activists; others, gentle and peace-loving, just wanting a chance to get on with their own lives without too much fuss and bother.

What I can share, from my experience of working in the Disability Service, is that some students experience great pain and a sense of brokenness as a result of becoming suddenly disabled. Students who have recently become disabled, as well as students who, because of the pressures of University life, have had to confront the effects of their impairment for the first time, have the opportunity to come to the Disability Service for help, support and advice on a way forward and to receive mentoring and encouragement from other disabled students and staff. The students may be unsure of how practically they will be able to continue with their degrees – the Disability Service is able to show them new and innovative ways to do things and then to provide support for them on their journey. This can involve adaptations to the built environment and working closely with academic departments to provide alternative study methods. It can also involve providing human support, and unbiased acceptance, understanding and compassion where needed.

Visitors to the recent launch of the Disability Policy saw a display of 22 outstanding disabled UCT graduates from the last 10 years. Each picture tells a story. Having worked closely with most of these students, I have an idea of the challenges faced and overcome by some of these graduates. Examples of their experiences include:

A student studying Science goes blind while at UCT, becomes adept at using assistive software, and then returns to graduate with a degree in Humanities; a high-achieving student has a sporting accident and becomes a quadriplegic, returns to UCT and continues to be a very high achiever, graduating with a Masters degree; students who are blind and partially-sighted graduate successfully, having passed all academic subjects within the same time-frame as their sighted peers.

I would ask the reader to think about what they would tell each of these students at the outset of their time at UCT, if the student had asked them: “How will I be able to continue studying and succeed?” What would you tell each student, and how would you implement practical solutions for them to access all aspects of their studies? If you have no idea of what you would suggest, we warmly invite you to spend some time in conversation with the staff of the Disability Service.

Student Achievements

Speaking of achievements: a brief look at some notable student achievements in 2011.

Readers may recall that we provided some funding for a visually-impaired post graduate student in the Health Sciences Faculty to present her poster at an international conference. We found out just too late for last year's report that Veronica had received a Collaborative Educational Practice Award. Her application for the award was based on inserting Human Rights education into the clinical curriculum of the MBChB and was found to be an excellent example of collaborative educational practice. The Awards Committee congratulated Veronica for the innovative way she addressed the development of awareness and sensitivity amongst her students. We add our belated congratulations to those of the Awards committee.

In this regard I also place an excerpt from a story by Gary Powell from the Schools'

Development Unit:

I have an interesting story about one of my GET Mathematics Advanced Certificate in Education [ACE] students. The ACE is a 2-year part-time 4th year teacher qualification for in-service teachers.

Teachers come from far and wide to participate in these ACE programmes. One of these students, Lisle Lourens, hails from Worcester. Lisle stands apart from the rest of her class in that she is Deaf. Bearing in mind that our lectures are all in English, Lisle is also Afrikaans-speaking.

During lectures Lisle would sometimes lip-read, but mainly depended on a Sign Language interpreter. UCT's Disability Service team was extremely supportive and provided financial support for a Sign Language interpreter in the person of Felicity Ford.

Lisle was also supported by friends and colleagues, as well as her husband, who acted on occasion as sign-interpreters.

Lisle suffered a set-back at the beginning of 2011, in that she became completely Deaf. Despite this, she has persevered, supported also by her classmates at UCT. Lisle's provisional results show that she may graduate with distinction at the end of this year!

And Gary's prediction proved correct. Lisle did graduate with a distinction and came third in a class of 56.

Lisle, we are extremely proud of you, and even prouder to have been involved in a small way in ensuring your success. I have some heated debates about what constitutes meaningful advocacy. Increasingly, I believe that the most effective advocates are those students and

members of staff with disabilities who succeed at their jobs, who compete with and often exceed the performance of their peers. The learners of De la Bat School are fortunate in having Lisle as their maths teacher, and one of these days we look forward to welcoming one of her learners to UCT – roll on the day!



Lisle Lourens, GET Mathematics Advanced Certificate in Education [ACE] student

Projects

So what do we do with the money you give us?

During 2011 we invested a considerable chunk of our donor funding in two projects. We acquired a site licence agreement for the literacy support software, TextHELP Read&Write Gold. Using visual and audio aid, the tool assists users who are dyslexic or have literacy problems, with improving their reading and writing skills. Users who have difficulty typing or would simply like to improve their literacy skills also find the software useful. So as is the way with all really good products, it has a much broader application in that it is immensely useful also to anyone for whom English is not a first language. This describes a very large percentage of our student body but also applies to a significant percentage of our staff. We are looking forward with great anticipation to the response from students and staff alike as the programme is rolled out across campus. If this turns out to be as successful as we believe it will be, it will be resounding proof that in the principles of Universal Design, things that make the world more accessible to disabled people are likely to benefit society in general.

We also invested in 14 new computers for our dedicated computer lab and upgraded all the assistive technology software our students depend on. We are confident that by the time these

computers have to be replaced, this will have been mainstreamed into the University's ongoing budgeting process for renewal of information technology.

It may be worth saying a few words about this. The Disability Unit at UCT started small, with only the salary of its founder, the late Dr. Kate Jagoe, being funded by the University. She had to fundraise for all other costs.

The Unit grew under successive directors, and our operating budget and staff complement grew with it, but we had become so used to living on a shoe string - making use of every single resource we could lay our hands on - that for years we had been only too happy to scrounge computers that other units were discarding as their technology was replaced. But by the end of 2009 even our students were looking askance at the outdated and slow computers we were still using, especially seeing that they had to walk through a state of the art lab to get to ours. So we dipped into our discretionary funding, and *voilà!*

Support to Students and Staff with Disabilities

Because of the seasonal nature of volunteer attendance (when tests and exams loom and during holidays they disappear) we have begun employing student assistants in the computer lab to assist students and volunteers when Denise is out of the lab. Support to students by note takers, scribes and tutors is a relatively new feature of our support services, without which students with multiple or severe disabilities would battle. 17 students have assisted us as note takers, scribes and tutors in 2011. The arrival of two students with really significant and multiple disabilities have resulted in a growth in this support team. The departments have been extremely helpful in recommending their top tutors as scribes, and our volunteers have proven to be an invaluable source of support as note takers. We have a good database now of really solid and reliable students we can call on as part of our notetaker resource (fed by the volunteer programme) and scribe/tutor teams (recommended by the departments).

From discretionary donor funding we have been able to assist students and staff by purchasing access technology for students, including:

- A Merlin Desktop Enlarger for the use of a post grad student in the Law Faculty
- ZoomText Screen Enhancement Software for the use of a PhD student who is losing her vision as a result of a tumour behind her one remaining eye
- A motorized scooter for the use of a student who needs to cover large distances on campus and has a severe mobility impairment

- Dragon Naturally-speaking software for a PhD student who is a quadriplegic
- We funded a hearing aid and electronic stethoscope for Abraham Gwala, a medical student with a hearing impairment who we believe will serve the community in which he finally finds himself with dedication. We place, with their permission, an extract from one of his professors:

I interviewed Abram Gwala for his CPI portfolio assessment yesterday. It went very well indeed. He showed me his new hearing aid - on his right ear - fully sponsored. He says that his whole life has changed, and he intends completing his MBChB degree, and then studying P/G level in Chemical Pathology. So, I'm holding thumbs for him. Thanks to all who have assisted him!

We have agreed to pay for upgrading the hearing instruments of a member of staff who had given many years' loyal service to the University, battling on with her inadequate bottom-of-the-range instruments. She is trying them out at the moment.

We have also funded

- Students to have psychological assessments in support of their extra time application
- We have paid for sign language interpreters for all our advocacy events and for various other events including UCT Open Day, and of course, the support for Lisle Lourens, to whom we referred earlier
- Notetakers were funded for three students, and scribes for two students with severe upper limb function limitation
- One student with a traumatic brain injury is having one-on-one tuition funded by us.

Disability Service November 2011 Exam Report

The number of students to whom we provide specialised support during exams has been growing steadily as shown below:

November 2008:	28 students wrote 95 exams
June 2009:	53 students wrote 169 exams
November 2011	65 students wrote 209 exams

A wide range of accommodations are offered to students, including:

Where possible and appropriate, providing private space with the use of a bed/couch to lie down. This was particularly the case for students with epilepsy. In the case of chronic back conditions, the use of a standing desk /podium, a kneeling chair and comfortable seating was also available.

34 students wrote on computers, 3 partially sighted students wrote using dedicated screen enhancement software, with a desktop Merlin Print Magnifier available and exams enlarged by 140% into A3 format.

2 students required the use of scribes for all exams (8 exams in total). Both students are unable to write by hand for extended periods. The scribes were post graduate tutors recommended by the departments for Computer Science, Mathematics, and Psychology.

There were 36 exam sessions (8am, 12.30pm and 5pm) for 12 of the 14 exam writing days. All exams started on time, and all students received the correct exam question paper. Our challenge with space remains a problem, especially for students requiring individual spaces. For many of the sessions colleagues vacated their offices to accommodate the exams. One exam session in particular presented a unique challenge, when all three students who record their exams orally were writing at the same time. Noise from the Cissy Gool Plaza is a continual challenge and potential disturbance to students. We are most grateful to the Exams Office for initiating and funding the addition of Assistant Invigilators to the team, and for ensuring that the exam papers were ready for collection each morning from Arts 118. Mrs Florence Curtis (Chief Invigilator funded by Exams Office) once again provided sterling professional invigilation support in the Lab. My thanks to the entire team for their support and assistance in ensuring exams went smoothly.

UCT's Policy on Disability

The Unit's work continues to be used as a benchmark for best practice at other institutions of higher education. An important milestone in entrenching rights for disabled members of the University community was attained on 26 March 2011, when the UCT Council ratified UCT's policy on disability. The policy was the product of a great deal of engagement with internal and external experts and took into consideration the concerns and comments offered by Senate and Council members. It represents four years' work and was built upon inputs from a wide range of stakeholders. The Disability Service acknowledges the invaluable contribution of the original reference team which comprised students and staff with disabilities; disability advocates drawn from the teaching staff; former transformation and employment equity managers; experts on psychological and psychiatric conditions; and representatives from Occupational Health, Student Wellness Services and Properties & Services. During the ceremony on 18 October when we officially launched the policy we

were pleased to have well-known disability activist Marlene Leroux and eminent disability scholar Brian Watermeyer as guest speakers. Marlene urged the University to do what it could to address the dire lack of quality education for disabled learners at all levels of education. The Remix Dance Company once again enriched the ceremony by their performance.



Left: Reinette Popplestone (Manager: Disability Service) introduces guest speakers Marlene Le Roux and Brian Watermeyer at the Launch (with African Studies Gallery exhibit in background – not related to Launch)

Barrier-Free Access

The Disability Service continues to make progress with retro-fitting projects rendering existing buildings and facilities accessible. During 2011 three significant projects were completed. They entailed providing wheelchair access to the School of Dance, as well as to the Old Administration Building which houses the Department of Alumni and Development, as well as providing access for The Cottage, which houses the Transformation Services Office. And although this was not our primary intention, upon reflection in all three cases an important symbolic statement was made which does not need spelling out to this readership!

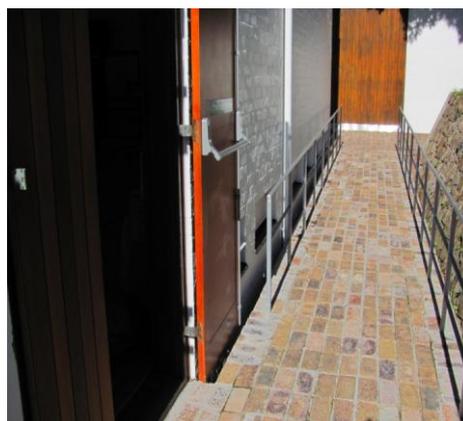
Five lecture venues were equipped with induction loop technology for students with hearing impairments – two on middle Campus and three more in the main teaching venues on the Health Sciences campus.

We conducted an audit of existing parking bays designated for staff and students with disabilities. Four new bays for visitors with disabilities have been created as well as several for staff and students around the new buildings on Middle Campus.

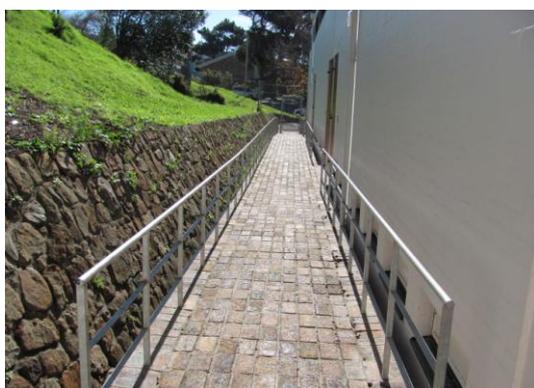
The Unit's Barrier-Free Access Coordinator is busy updating a manual on the specification for accessibility as well as way finding and safety standards, which will hopefully serve as a universal Access protocol which the University can agree to and we hope will eventually be approved and adopted by the Building and Development Committee.



*Department of Alumni and Development:
Accessible Walkway*



School of Dance: Accessible Entrance



Ramp at the School of Dance



*Department of Alumni and Development:
Fully accessible toilet installed*

Advocacy Awareness and Outreach

Aside from the routine advocacy we are involved in annually, such as the mad dash during Orientation to speak to as many as 20 different groups of students about the services we offer, we hosted several successful advocacy events. I'll mention just three of them here.

The University earmarked March as Transformation month. As part of the Transformation Services Office (TSO), members of the University community were invited to a performance by the Remix Integrated Dance Company, followed by a talk by Gerard Samson, Head of the School of Dance. There was lively discussion on the role disabled people are increasingly playing in the creative and performing arts.

Staying with the creative arts - in early May we hosted a screening of the movies of Shelley Barry, a disabled film producer. This event proved immensely powerful for those who were fortunate enough (and wise enough) to attend it.

And then in August we collaborated with SLED (Sign Language Educational Development) to host a seminar during which Professor Kristina Svartholm from the University of Stockholm presented a paper on the linguistics of Sign Language. As is the case with all aspects of Disability Scholarship this is a fascinating field. We were pleased to welcome both Premier Zille and the Deputy Minister for Women, Children and People with Disabilities to this event.



Reinette Popplestone and Professor Kristina Svartholm at the seminar

Graduation

Activities in the Disability Service more or less came to a standstill during the week of 12-17 December as all my colleagues got involved in ensuring that not only students with disabilities who were graduating, but all visitors who had mobility limitations were delivered to their seating in the hall with tact and dignity. Under the auspices of the Disability Service, and with generous help from the Traffic Department, busloads of people who were frail and those with temporary or mobility impairments, were ferried from accessible parking areas to Jameson Hall, to share in their loved one's big day – perhaps their biggest day ever! This

iconic venue counts among our less accessible venues. My colleagues maintained a high profile and I believe lent something special to the already very special graduation ceremonies. The renowned Disability Scholar, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, who paid a too-brief visit to our University on 9 December, said very many important things, some of which I may have occasion to refer to again, but one of the messages she shared with us is particularly apposite in this regard. “Disability is everywhere”, she reminded us, “once you know to look for it”. Congratulations to the team, headed up by Edwina Konghot, our Barrier-Free Access Coordinator, for the great job you did. You performed what I have increasingly come to realise is advocacy in action. Edwina would be quick though to remind me that we need also to pay a very special tribute to our colleagues in the UCT Traffic Department and those in Campus Protection Services who assist us in important but unobtrusive ways throughout the year. Speaking of graduation, the class of 2011 once again did the university proud. Chris Day received his Masters degree in Mechanical Engineering degree, Michelle Botha was awarded her Honours degree in Gender Studies and a whole host received Bachelor degrees. Among them were several students on whose behalf we had successfully motivated for admission, despite not quite making the minimum entrance requirements. Many of these names will be familiar to regular readers of our report, as we have had occasion to tell their stories. These include Jacques Lourens, Eamon Looney, Adnaan Fakir, and Gadija Edwards.



Chris Day receives his MSc Degree in Mechanical Engineering



Michelle Botha, accompanied by guide dog Emma, receives her Honours Degree in Gender Studies

Barriers

Barriers entail more than stairways, narrow doors and inaccessible bathrooms.

I know this report is to some extent intended to be a showcase – for the Unit and for the University more generally – in the strides we have made to remove various kinds of barriers for disabled people, but I do also consider it a once-a-year opportunity to talk about the hard things: to do uncomfortable advocacy work.

We tend to speak glibly of attitudinal barriers, as if they are just one more among a number of surmountable barriers, such as barriers to accessing buildings, text books, work information. But attitudinal barriers are deeply, deeply rooted in the unconscious fabric of all societies. I am not sure that they can be overcome with sensitization initiatives and advocacy as we understand it. Because every time you sit at a table with a group of colleagues or fellow students, you cannot help but be aware of how they chat to each other about everyday things – the movies, shopping, restaurants; and to you, if you're lucky, they talk about your disability. Even highly-educated people find it hard to imagine the world you inhabit, and so they find it hard to imagine that that world has much more in common with theirs than they can ever imagine. And if this is still sometimes painful for me as a mature person closer to the end of my life than to its beginning, how much harder is this for students who are still desperate to belong, to matter in the way that other students matter.

For all the gains we have made, individuals have suffered in the worst possible way from the cruelty of fellow students. A disabled student was photographed and her photo displayed on Facebook for the edification and merriment of the perpetrator's friends. The person was reported and dealt with, but painful as this is, I feel it is necessary to mention it in this report. Another student confessed to me that he wishes he had his dog on campus with him, because at least his dog doesn't constantly judge him the way his fellow students do.

And yes, this is also, I believe, the reason why it has not been possible to keep the Disabled Student Movement going. There were quite specific circumstances that led to the formation of the very promising DSM on which we reported in the 2010 report. Mainly it had to do with the fact that at the time there were three disabled students with strong personalities and innate leadership qualities - and who were close friends. I think the last was the crucial trigger. Over the years students have mostly been very reluctant to get into any kind of formal or even informal disability organizations. I suspect that when a minority becomes too much of a minority, its members want to stay invisible and be allowed to get on with their lives and

keep, if possible, under the radar. It is for this reason that the Disability Service continues to strive to be a truly safe space for students and staff with disabilities. Important as integration and inclusion is, until it really happens, if it ever truly happens, this is an important role we must continue to play.

Sign Language

But let me not conclude on a gloomy note ... As we move into 2012 we have every reason to feel both proud and optimistic. We have admitted the first student with South African Sign Language as her mother tongue. We have appointed our first full-time Sign Language interpreter – not only for Robyn, but for several students and staff members for whom in the past we made *ad hoc* arrangements by contracting with interpreters. But hopefully those days are behind us. The number of students with significant hearing impairments admitted this year has also increased, and we will be installing many more induction loop systems to meet their access needs. We have contracted with 20 note takers for this group of students as well as for students who are not able to make notes during lectures.

It is all too easy to forget about the many people who make use of UCT facilities who may be neither staff nor students. It is our intention in 2012 to make all venues used for Summer School accessible to people with hearing impairments. Likewise, we are investigating what we can do about Jameson Hall – which must have the worst acoustics of any facility I have encountered in my long life. This is the site of many high profile occasions.

Learning Disabled Support

We are saying a reluctant goodbye to Dr. Rosemary Exner, who since 2009 has been providing support to the large number of students with specific learning disabilities. She has laid a sound foundation for what we hope will become in time a full-time post. Not least among her contributions has been a practical guide for students with various learning disabilities, which we believe in time will be used by all students. It gives practical tips on note taking and study methods, exam writing skills, time management, organisational skills, and much more. Margie Leroux will be joining us in that capacity.

A Word of Thanks

And so as always it remains for me firstly to thank my colleagues in the unit for their hard work and unstinting support to me personally and their dedication to the work we do. I also

want to thank our larger Transformation family in which we have found an affirming and supportive home.

The last word of thanks go to our loyal band of donors, which I have to admit is dwindling a bit, partially I fear as a result of being so neglected except for this annual report. We gratefully acknowledge the following:

Carl and Emily Fuchs Foundation

Kaplin Kushlick Foundation

The Suiderland Fisheries