



**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**  
**TRANSFORMATION SERVICES OFFICE**  
**DISABILITY SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT**

**January 2013 - March 2014**

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN  
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.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Dear Friends and Colleagues

It's tough to come up with an introduction to this report that is both upbeat and novel, and so we have to say what we say more or less every year: 2013 was a busy and productive year, full of challenges and rewards, and we've embarked upon an even busier one in 2014. As usual I appeal to readers not to recycle before you've read our report from cover to cover. I'll do my best to hold your attention to the last paragraph, and win your support for the work we do.

This report is late and long – late because I am a compulsive editor and at times something of a procrastinator. But also because it occurs to me that a report running from April - March is more appropriate. That way we can cover the very important periods straddling the end of one year and the beginning of the next – exam results, graduation news, and news about new students, new plans and projects before they become old news. And so it will also be a bit longer as it will cover the 15 months from January 2013 - end of March 2014.

So let us have a quick look at the first quarter of 2014:

The period has been marked by feverish activity in the Disability Service (DS) as a result of a larger contingent of new students with disabilities who have either health conditions that put them at high risk or whose levels of impairment require complex support. The number of students in wheelchairs increased. We welcomed Lauren Presutti from Central Michigan University who, together with her two assistants, were housed in the accessible flat in A block of Forest Hill.

Sinikiwe Kademaunga from Zimbabwe has stolen the hearts and won the admiration of everyone she has dealt with.



***Sinikiwe Kademaunga***

Allen Petersen for whom we have had to make transport arrangements, as he is for various reasons, not able to make use of residence accommodation. He lives in Strandfontein, where his family provides the after hour care he needs.



*Hugo Ghall (CPS) Allen Petersen (student) & Graham Baartjies (carer)*

Jenna Lowe has joined the thousands of first years, despite a life-threatening respiratory condition; she uses a mobile scooter equipped with oxygen plus the life sustaining medication which she has to have on an ongoing basis. All of these students are already performing well academically as well as coping admirably with the challenging physical terrain that is this university. Everything was made more complicated as a result of the lift in our building being out of action over this period.

This year we have a total of four Deaf students requiring Sign Language Interpreters, and the two SLI's we have had to employ had their hands full (the metaphor acquires a new meaning) ensuring that all orientation and registration activities were covered, and that interpreters were in place for all four of them the day lectures commenced. Three of the four students have further challenged the ingenuity of both teaching staff and interpreters by choosing to enrol for foreign languages. Two have opted to do Latin and one Spanish.

We have had occasion before to pay tribute to our colleagues from CPS who are ever ready to come to the assistance of staff and students with disabilities. Unfailingly, when I (once again) get lost in the Robert Leslie Building which I still manage to do after having been on this campus as student and member of staff for 30+ years there he will be: a discreet offer of assistance by a CPS colleague. On this occasion we would like to single out especially Mr. Hugo Ghall who helps twice a day to transfer Allen in and out of our vehicle as he travels to and from Strandfontein.

## ***OUR THANKS TO HUMANITIES AND TO STUDENT HOUSING***

Because the admission of some students with disabilities are often finalised late in the application process, we often have to turn to Student Housing at the last moment to assist us with accommodating students who, because of their disability really need to be in residence. Student Housing come up trumps every time. Altogether 14 students were given a place in residence via this process for 2014, and it has made a huge difference in their ability to study successfully.

We also need to pay tribute to the past and present Deans of the Humanities Faculty who take seriously the need to use their discretion from time to time to admit disabled students who show potential but whose school leaving results does not reflect this potential. 8 students have been admitted via this process to the Faculty for the 2014 academic year, and we will watch their progress with interest. A special word of thanks also goes out to the staff of the Humanities Faculty who has provided excellent support to staff and students of the Disability Service.

## ***DS USED FOR BENCHMARKING***

Increasingly other HEI's are using our Disability Service for benchmarking and for advice and guidance on best practice around establishing and running a service for staff and students with disabilities. In February, I spent two days at NMMU at their invitation to assist as they prepared to provide support for the first time to five blind students. In March we hosted staff from four institutions coming to light candles from us around various aspects of disability support provision:

Central University of Technology in the Free State  
Mangosuthu University of Technology in UKZN  
Vaal University of Technology.

I also met with Mr George Mvalo, Head of Transformation at Cape Peninsula University of Technology, to exchange ideas on how to include disability into their Employment Equity Plan going forward. This is of course equally challenging for our own university.

## ***ACADEMIC SIGN LANGUAGE VOCABULARY PROJECT***

On 17 March we held our first exploratory meeting about a project for capturing signs agreed upon by Deaf students and their Interpreters for academic concepts. Providing SLI support to Deaf students in South Africa's HE environment is relatively new; traditionally people whose first language was Sign Language would not have been able to study at this level and so very little exists about agreed on signs for even the most basic academic concepts and the language of scholarship. We plan to collaborate with the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching to create an interactive online dictionary of Signs.

This resource could be used by both Deaf students and Interpreters as they prepare for lectures. Our hope is to expand this work to include other Universities

where Sign Language Interpretation is offered. Glenda Cox from CILT was able to provide invaluable guidance around applying for some funding from the teaching with technology grant, which we will be looking at later in 2014.



*Sign Language Interpretation at graduation*

## **EVIDENCE OF GROWING NUMBERS**

As the first quarter of 2014 draws to a close, our Direct Services Coordinator, Denise Oldham, has already had to send a cautionary message regarding the need to be very circumspect when offering students special accommodations for exams, given the very limited Disability Service lab and office space available. By the end of March she had registered 94 students who are likely to need to write exams at the DS in the May-June exam period. Given that there are usually at least 10 emergency short-term applications from injuries we may well end up having to accommodate as many as a hundred students, which is likely to take us well over the 300 exam mark.



*Volunteers & Staff team*



*Students & Volunteers*

## ***SOME PROVISIONAL STATISTICS: FIRST SEMESTER 2014***

### **Human Support**

All required notetakers and tutors were arranged. 12 students needed note taking support for 32 courses:

4 Deaf students, two Hard of Hearing, 1 Blind student, and 5 students with severe functional limitation of hands and arms.

30 “disability accommodation letters” have been written. These are documents prepared in collaboration with disabled students and distributed to teaching staff to acquaint them with individual student accommodation needs.

48 parking applications have been processed and approved. Altogether 16 students are making use of the accessible transport service. This includes providing transport for a student with quadriplegia who lives in Strandfontein, but for whom it wasn’t feasible to live in residence.

Between mid-January and end of March 2014 our consultant psychologist and our new intern, Aileen Klette, had seen 113 students who had a total of 152 appointments. This number is bound to increase radically as the deadline for submitting applications for exam accommodations draws near. These are all first time applicants, whereas the numbers referred to above who will be accommodated for exams in June of course include returning students.



***Margie Le Roux (Consultant Psychologist) & ReINETTE Popplestone  
Head of UCT Disability Service***

I had occasion yet again in the course of 2013 to reflect on the wide range of people who do not have disabilities whom we yet advise, encourage, inform, reassure, guide. They range from a growing number of under and postgraduate students choosing some aspect of disability on which to do their research, to parents with disabled children needing guidance and advice about the future of

these children. Very significant is the number of UCT colleagues with whom I engaged during the year in connection with their children with disabilities. This is a part of my work which hardly feels like work at all and which I feel privileged to be a part of. One of the most rewarding half-hours in my week has been teaching braille to a colleague who is the mother of two young blind children. Some of the research topics I was consulted on include:

Several students doing research on difference aspects of the influence of mobile technology on the lives of people with different disabilities;

The knowledge practices of people with sensory disabilities;

The educational benefits of applying Universal Design principles.

### ***THE CLASS OF 2013***

As we have come to expect, the class of 2013 did us proud. Altogether sixteen students who wrote their end of year exams in the Disability Service graduated in December, although the total number of graduates was greater than this, given that not all disabled students choose to write their exams with us, and of course this number would exclude those who received second and third degrees.

Among them were Elana Solomons, who has a significant hearing impairment and who graduated with a B.Sc in Occupational Therapy;

Justine Helberg, another student with a hearing impairment who obtained her B.Sc in Communication Sciences;

Alexandra Isaacs with a mobility impairment and Hiten Bawa, also with profound hearing loss who obtained a Masters degree in Architecture with distinction.



***Hiten Bawa***

The ceremony in June also saw several students with disabilities graduating. Shanaaz Majiet, well-known activist for Women's rights and disability rights received her M.Phil from the Disability Studies programme, and Emma McKinney, who has a hearing impairment, was awarded a PhD from the Faculty of Commerce. Also graduating in June with a Masters Degree in International Public Law was Narcisse Kimbassa, a student with Albinism. The Achiever of the Year for the 2013 slot must without doubt be dedicated to Hiten Bawa. Hiten joined the University in 2012 as an Honours student in the School of Architecture. On Monday 16 December he was awarded his M.Arch with distinction. Hiten has a significant hearing impairment.



**Shanaaz Majiet**



**Alexandra Isaacs**

*Alex does not usually need to use a wheelchair, but managed to break her ankle just before graduation! We are sure that by now she is moving about again relatively freely.*

But it is not only the students with disabilities who achieved great things. Several members of the Disability Service team are to be congratulated on their achievements. In April Edwina Konghot received her Master's Degree in Social Work from the University of the Western Cape. Her research centred around inclusive education opportunities at secondary schools in the Cape Peninsula. Her findings are a great cause for concern, though not altogether surprising. Opportunities for inclusion of students with disabilities in secondary schools are more or less non-existent. Masibulele Zulu received a post graduate Diploma in the Disability Studies' programme in December.



***Edwina Konghot***

A member of our team who deserves more than honorable mention is Paballo Chauke, who has been volunteering in the Disability Service for several years.

He is invaluable at functions, managing to be everywhere at once. In his interactions with the Disability Service over the years he has absorbed an enormous amount of knowledge about and understanding of the needs of people with disabilities. Paballo has helped out at events such as Parent Orientation, assisting students with disabilities with orientation and registration and helps download and bind disability-related journals in the Resource Centre. I had occasion to ask Paballo earlier in the year when he ever had time to study as he seemed to be ubiquitous at the DS, helping out wherever we needed an extra pair of hands, a knowledgeable advocate. He just laughed at me, and well he might have, because during the December graduation ceremony Paballo was awarded his degree with distinction.

In March 2013, the University received a visit from the Hon. Deputy-Minister Henrietta Bogopane Zulu, of the Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities. During a pretty robust conversation the Honorable Deputy- Minister announced a Universal Access audit of all Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and that once the audit was completed, funding would be secured to assist HEI's to address any access challenges that such an audit revealed. We have enthusiastically embraced this project, viewing this as an extremely useful exercise, even if the funding ends up taking some time to materialize. Philip Thompson of IDC, one of the few architects in the country who specializes in Universal Design in the field of building and infrastructure has been commissioned to undertake the audit, and his interaction with the University Building and Development Committee has already borne fruit.

## **CLASSROOM RENEWAL PROJECT**

An opportunity to see our work integrated into larger University wide projects is always exciting. We were very pleased to obtain agreement that Hearing Loop Systems are to be integrated into the major Classroom Renewal project the university has undertaken. Finding budget for this still presents something of a challenge, but having the University recognize the benefits of Assistive Listening technology integrated into other teaching and learning technology in teaching venues is a huge step forward. We are hopeful that there will be no more embarrassing instances where the assistive hearing technology clashes with other audiovisual installations. Induction Loop Technology was installed in 12 teaching venues, 11 of which formed part of the Classroom Renewal Project: 5 on the Health Sciences Campus and 7 on Upper Campus.

## **SOME STATISTICS FOR 2013**

Feedback from those with an interest in our report indicates that we need to provide much more quantitative information and so as always we are happy to oblige. In 2013 a total of 500 students were registered on PeopleSoft, the University's student information system, across all years and across all faculties. By the end of August 2013, 316 students had registered with the Disability Service for the first time.

### **Parking**

We processed 109 applications during 2013, 61 for people with permanent disabilities and 48 for those with temporary disabilities. All the applicants were using disabled parking bays according to availability and on a first come first serve basis during our busiest times.

### **Accessible bus**

Altogether 37 staff and students with disabilities made use of the accessible bus service on a regular basis:

6 wheelchair users and three more with significant mobility impairments

5 blind and visually impaired people

23 staff and students with temporary mobility impairments.

### **Access to study material, assessments and Teaching and Learning**

40 volunteers and 3 paid student Assistants assisted with alternative format production, invigilation and advocacy projects.

We recruited and funded 17 notetakers for 9 disabled students in the first semester and 11 for 6 students in the second semester.

Five tutors assisted a student with Aspergers and a blind student in the course of the year.

During the first semester 113 tests were written in the DS (62 of these started after 3pm) and in the second semester 130 tests were written (which started after 3pm).

The late start to many tests is significant, as it entails either time off for DS staff in lieu of afterhours work, or paying student assistants to help us with invigilating tests.

### **Exams**

In June:                    79 Students wrote 226 exams  
                                  6 students required scribes for 18 exams

In November:            87 students wrote 283 exams  
                                  4 students required scibes for 13 exams

Exam total for the year:    509

### ***LEARNING DISABILITY AND PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT***

Our consultant psychologist saw 270 students in the course of 2013. By far the majority of those were applying for extra time, but a significant number of students also received ongoing psychological support. Some of her time was devoted to the supervision and training of the psychometry intern whom we had appointed in order to provide in-house assessments to those students who cannot afford the cost of the expensive psychometric evaluation required by the University before they would be eligible to apply for extra time concessions during tests and exams.

### ***ADVOCACY AND OUTREACH***

A highlight of our advocacy activities in 2013 and the biggest event we had yet hosted was a three-day event from 25-27 March which consisted of a 2 day colloquium which we called "At The Intersection". Followed by a whole day workshop around Specific Learning Disability in a Higher Education setting.

The colloquium had as its theme Intersectionality, a key theoretical tool devised originally by Feminist theorists to interrogate multiple forms of oppression impacting negatively on the lives of women, and which has become a powerful framework within which to interrogate social justice issues more generally, showing that the whole proves to be greater than the sum of its parts. Disability, Poverty, HIV, Gender and Race, to name but a few identity categories which impact negatively on people's lives, are likely to create a powerful negative force field at their point of intersection.

In her keynote address Prof Rashieda Manjoo, UN Rapporteur on violence against women provided an international perspective on violence specifically

against women with disabilities. Other topics included:

Deaf youth with Disabilities and HIV, reflections on ethics of care, HIV and infertility, to name but a few. This was followed on the third day by a workshop on Learning and psycho-social Disabilities, a topic which clamours increasingly to be addressed in all its facets at all levels of education, but has particular consequences in Higher Education settings.



***March 2013 Colloquium "At The Intersection"***

The SRC of 2013 really did us proud by adopting disability as a top priority. In collaboration with the Chaeli Campaign early in the year, they arranged an extremely successful advocacy function during which two wheelchairs were donated to the Disability Service. Speakers at this event included the VC and Chaeli Mycroft who has wasted no time in making her mark as a fiery young disability activist. Hearts were stolen by the dance performance of Bhutha, one of the young wheelchair dancers. As part of Women's month celebrations the SRC also hosted the Look at Me! Exhibition originally hosted by UCT in 2009.

August was a busy month for advocacy events. On the 11<sup>th</sup> Rachel Gadsden a celebrated UK artist with multiple disabilities presented a visual art workshop for UCT Staff and Students. 66 participants attended the workshop, among them Fine Arts students and several members of staff Gadsden, who has a life threatening respiratory condition and is visually impaired, is a British visual and performance Artist who has exhibited internationally and works across the main and disability sectors. During her workshop Gadsden discussed her creative ideas referencing her two recent International commissions for the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad, and her 2013 "This Breathing World" exhibition presented at Katara Cultural Village, Qatar, for the first ever Art and Disability Festival in the Middle East.



***Visual art workshop for UCT Staff and Students***

From the evaluation documentation it is clear that the workshop was very well received.

One of our most fascinating *buzza* events to date was the one on people with albinism which took place in September. It was unfortunately rather poorly attended but those who did attend all attested to the fact that it had been one of the most instructive events which they had ever attended. It remains a challenge for most of us, especially in the sphere of transformation, to compete for people's time and attention in such a very busy environment which makes many demands and at the same time offers a myriad of opportunities for engaging with a wide range of events and activities. Or am I being too forgiving?

In the course of 2013 I was given several opportunities to present on various aspects of people with disabilities. In January Margie Le Roux, our consultant psychologist, and I presented at the biennial conference of the South African Association of Campus Health Care Professionals (SAACHS). Margie's presentation dealt with students with Specific Learning and psycho-social disabilities, while I gave a conceptual and reflective talk on "being-blind-in-the-world."

In June I was invited to deliver a paper on designing accessible residential accommodation for the HE Sector. Universities represented at this event included the International University of Botswana, the Universities of the North West, Free State, Western Cape, Stellenbosch, Rhodes University, Wits and others. Other institutions which were represented included the development Bank of South Africa and several private property developers and companies in the private sector.

In August I presented to the HESA Education Dean's forum on introducing specialist teaching for learners with sensory and communication disabilities. I presented in a similar vein in a short presentation during UCT's very popular Teaching and Learning conference in November.

I was also proud to represent the Transformation Services office in May at the HESA Transformation Colloquium, where I participated in a panel discussion, and presented on UCT's engagement with the larger Cape Town community.

### ***UCT DISABILITY POLICY***

Work on refining the Disability Policy Action Plan is going well, and although HEART (Higher Education Access Response Team) is still finding its feet and getting into its stride (if I may so yoke metaphors) the core team is unifying and providing valuable input to both the Action Plan and to the challenges we share in those meetings.

### ***DONATIONS 2013***

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