

Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) Biennial Report 2004/06

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The Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) at UT Arlington is committed to enhancing the experience of students with disabilities and ensure a comprehensively accessible University atmosphere where individuals with disabilities have the same opportunities and access to programs and activities as all others. While complying with the letter of the law, OSD also embraces its spirit by making every effort to help students with disabilities attain quality educational objectives, promote self-awareness and self-advocacy as well as maximize their potential in a comprehensively diverse and accessible environment.

As part of its commitment to a diverse campus culture which embraces inclusion of all students in a rich learning environment, The Office for Students with Disabilities envisions full participation and integration of students with disabilities in all student programs. In order to achieve this goal, OSD promotes the cooperative efforts of various departments, offices and personnel, which are essential in preparing students to work, live and contribute to an increasingly complex society. The Office for Students with Disabilities attempts to guarantee equal access by removing possible barriers, both in campus structures and in the classroom environment. This is done through disability counseling, referral services, assistive technology, alternative media, sign language interpreters, reasonable accommodations, and the sharing of disability related information.

Over the last year, The Office for Students with Disabilities:

- Moved into new facilities in the fall of 2005 which improved access for students with mobility impairments and provided increased efficiency for all disability services.
- Hosted an open house which displayed a wide array of assistive technology for all university staff, faculty and students.
- Provided disability services to approximately 448 students. In addition, OSD was contacted by 573 students, parents and other various members of the community inquiring about services for individuals with disabilities.
- Distributed 1,429 letters of accommodation written to faculty on students' behalf and reviewed 219 pieces of new documentation for students with disabilities.
- Converted 85 different textbooks into alternative formats for students who are blind or low vision and proctored 1,296 academic exams for students with disabilities.
- Continued to improve outreach, education and communication among OSD and various campus offices (e.g., RA's/Housing, Counseling Services, Advising, Tutoring Services, Financial Aid, Distance Education, Health Center Services, Student Success Programs, TSI Liaison, Library Services, Office of Information Technology, Publications and Facilities Management).
- Participated in numerous educational outreach programs with academic departments (e.g., Social Work, Nursing, Criminal Justice and various Liberal Arts Departments) and the new faculty orientation to inform/educate faculty and staff about issues related to access and universal design of courses.

- Sponsored two national audio conferences on disability and technical standards for academic programs and providing accommodations in distance education.
- Hosted the 1st annual VSA art exhibit which displayed artwork created by individuals with disabilities from around the state.
- Consulted on campus-wide accessibility issues and on improvements to campus facilities (e.g., extension of sidewalks, access to buildings, new construction).
- Participated in 5 different transition fairs with 8 different local school districts throughout the DFW metroplex, providing transitional information for high school students with disabilities as well as for parents and high school transition specialists.
- Collaborated with Career Services and a Federal Program called the Workforce Recruitment Program to help with career/internship placement for students with disabilities throughout the nation.
- Participated as an active member of the UT Arlington Campus Consortium in order to improve communication throughout the campus regarding various topics (e.g., alcohol use/abuse, behavior issues in classrooms and in housing, outreach to students at risk).
- Participated as an active member of the UT Arlington College Learning Team providing vital information on the retention and graduation rates of students with disabilities.
- Increased disability awareness by participating in the 2006-2007 “Parent Guide” and the “Survival Guide” for students applying to UT Arlington and by participating in all orientation sessions for parents during new student orientation. Also participated in all preview days sponsored by the Office of Admissions to supply information to prospective students and their parents.
- Added and upgraded assistive technology in the Adaptive Resource Center with new software and hardware purchases.
- Reorganized the supervision and organizational structure of OSD to increase office efficiency and effectiveness.

OSD Initiatives for 2006-2008

- Increase community outreach efforts by attending additional high school and regional transition fairs.
- Provide a comprehensive “freshman orientation packet” and teach advocacy skills to all freshman who register for disability services.
- Comply with the University mandate to convert all Social Security numbers to the new student identification numbers.
- Add a half-time support staff to provide more effective services to students with disabilities.
- Increase communication with students with disabilities by creating an accessible calendar on OSD’s website.
- Ensure student safety and academic integrity in The Adaptive Resource Center by installing a camera monitoring system.
- Enhance ADA outreach to the UT Arlington community through the reorganization of the department personnel as well as the position of the ADA Coordinator.