

**Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD)**  
**Annual Report 2007-2008**  
**Dr. Dianne P. Hengst, Director/Assistant Dean of Students**

## **1. Unit Profile Statement**

The Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) is committed to full participation of students with disabilities at The University of Texas at Arlington. The office works as a liaison between the University community and students needing academic accommodations. Those students who qualify for services will receive 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.

## **2. Introduction of Major Goals, Opportunities and Initiatives**

Over the past year, OSD worked diligently on several goals to improve services for students with disabilities through reorganization of department positions, the addition of a part-time staff member, ongoing staff development, and enhanced communication with students via the OSD Web site. Also, OSD has provided extensive alternative media and “state of the art” assistive technology in the Adaptive Resource Center which serves as an assistive technology lab and alternative testing center. As a service to the University and surrounding community, OSD continues to provide extensive disability awareness information through educational outreach and presentations. Finally, OSD is working extensively with first-time, first-year freshman to help ease some of the barriers that exists for students with disabilities as they attempt to navigate the differences between high school and postsecondary education.

## **3. Service Areas and Subcomponents**

Department highlights over the past academic year include the following list of accomplishments:

- Provided disability services to approximately 400 students and 755 hours of disability counseling. In addition, OSD was contacted by 593 students, parents and other various members of the community inquiring about services and/or resources for individuals with disabilities.
- Distributed 1,762 letters of accommodation written to faculty on students' behalf and reviewed 273 pieces of new documentation for students with disabilities.
- The Adaptive Resource Center converted 112 different textbooks into alternative formats for students who are blind or who have print disabilities and proctored 967 academic exams for students with disabilities.
- Provided consultative support and educational outreach for various on-campus offices/services (i.e., RA's/Apartment Managers, Counseling Services, Advising, Tutoring Services, Testing Services, Student Affairs, Distance Education, Health Center Services,

- Student Success Programs, TSI Liaison, Library Services, New Student Orientation, Office of Information Technology, Publications and Facilities Management).
- Staff members provided over 45 educational outreach programs, conference presentations and/or consultation with academic departments (e.g., Social Work, Nursing, Engineering, various Liberal Arts Departments, and New Faculty Orientation) to inform/educate faculty, staff and members of the surrounding community about issues related to access, technology and universal design of courses.
  - Co-sponsored a OneBook Program entitled *Economics, Eugenics, Euthanasia: Rhetorical Commonplaces for Disability*, by Dr. Brenda Jo Brueggemann from The Ohio State University.
  - Presented *What Every Advisor Needs to Know About Working with Students with Disabilities* at the UT Arlington Advising Association Conference.
  - Participated in the first annual UT Arlington Diversity Week through the showing and sponsorship of the Academy Award Winning Documentary Film called *King Gimp*.
  - Participated in the Leadership and Multicultural Leadership Retreats and provided information on disability awareness.
  - Consulted on campus-wide accessibility issues and on improvements to campus facilities (e.g., extension of sidewalks, access to buildings, elevator repairs, campus signage, fire alarm installations and new construction).
  - Participated in five different transition fairs with numerous regional school districts (including Region XI) through presentations, workshops and by providing transitional information for high school students with disabilities as well as for parents and high school transition specialists.
  - Hosted/sponsored three national audio conferences on “FERPA and Students with Disabilities”, “Understanding the Continuum of Care for Service Members who Sustain Traumatic Brain Injuries” and "From Combat to Classes: Serving Veterans with Disabilities in Higher Education."
  - Collaborated with Career Services on two Federal programs called the “Workforce Recruitment Program” and “EntryPoint!” 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).
  - Participated in the creation and served as an active member of the Behavior Intervention Team which is designed to help students in distress and serves as a resource to the UT Arlington community.
  - Participated as an active member of the Divisional Assessment Team to improve unit effectiveness and service delivery.
  - Participated in National Screening Days for depression, anxiety, eating disorders, alcohol/drug abuse with Counseling Services and Health Services.
  - Increased disability awareness by participating in the 2007-2008 “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.

- Provided a comprehensive “freshman orientation packet” which included tips for self-advocacy skills to all new freshmen who register for disability services.
- Successfully installed a new camera system within the Adaptive Resource Center to increase academic integrity and the safety/security of students with disabilities.
- Completed two national employee searches and increased the professional staff size by adding a part-time Receptionist.

## 4. Challenges

This past year’s challenges were notably characterized by the largest increase in the history of the University of students who are deaf or hard of hearing needing sign language interpreting services or real time captioning (otherwise referred to as CART). This increase was unprecedented and posed a significant challenge to resources required to provide this highly skilled service that is mandated by law. In addition, as the enrollment numbers increase, OSD will be challenged to continue to provide effective disability services in terms of space, staffing and adaptive technology. Furthermore, because disability services is federally mandated but is based on student’s self-identification, trends in disability needs and services are difficult to track. However, OSD continues to use and monitor every type of data available, search for improvements to data collection, and compare services provision on both the state and national levels. Through staff development and training, OSD staff is highly skilled and proficient in providing “best practices” for students with disabilities with limited resources.

## 5. Feature Story

This past year’s highlight was co-sponsoring a program with the OneBook Committee that focused on the novel *Maus*, a 2-volume graphic novel about the Holocaust by Art Spiegelman. OSD was excited about the idea of discussing the theme of prejudice and its relationship to people with disabilities. Dr. Brenda Jo Brueggemann from The Ohio State University presented on the topic of *Economics, Eugenics, Euthanasia: Rhetorical Commonplaces for Disability*. We were excited that the talk attracted a very diverse audience of students, faculty, staff, and community members. This talk highlighted how prejudice can be a phenomenon and produce an “us” vs. “them” way of thinking. Many persons, however, still fail to recognize the pervasive and damaging nature of disability prejudice. In the spirit of diversity and acceptance, the Office for Students with Disabilities at The University of Texas at Arlington hopes to be a leader in disability awareness by breaking the barriers of disability prejudice through ongoing programs, services, education and outreach!