Dyslexia and Assistive Tech at Cornell

How do students with learning disabilities keep up with the rigorous academic expectations at Cornell? Common tasks that most people take for granted can be challenging, if not impossible. Can you imagine what it would be like if you struggled to read and didn’t know how to spell even the most basic words? For people like me with dyslexia these are not hypothetical questions, they are our reality. Yet, thanks to Student Disability Services and assistive technologies, these are obstacles that can be managed at Cornell.

Dyslexia can make reading a short paragraph—let alone an entire textbook—a tedious and frustrating process. Spelling and written expression can also be a challenge. Despite this, dyslexia does not impact intellectual ability. It doesn’t cause people to read backwards or see words upside down. It does make figuring out what sounds go with what letters very difficult, significantly compromising comprehension. So what do people with dyslexia do when they encounter printed text? Some simply avoid it or give up. Others work laboriously to remediate their weaknesses. Many use technology to help them work around their disabilities. (Continued on page 5)

Requesting Accommodation Letters

Each semester, students must provide advance notice to instructors of the accommodations needed in each course. Upon request from you, SDS will prepare letters that detail accommodations that have been approved for you and that you need to receive. You are responsible for delivering those letters to your instructors.

Using the online request form is the most efficient method for requesting letters. If you add courses after an initial letter request is submitted, an additional request must be submitted.

To ensure that accommodations will be in place throughout the semester, you should meet with your professors within the first two weeks of classes.

The following steps outline the process for requesting classroom accommodations:

1. If you are new to Cornell, call SDS at 607-254-4545 to schedule an appointment to meet with a SDS counselor, otherwise:

2. Complete a “Request for Accommodations Letter” form, preferably online at http://sds.cornell.edu/sdsregistration.php. This form can also be filled out at the SDS office.

3. Your individualized letters will be available for pick up from two days after you submit the form in item 2 above.

4. Within the first two weeks of the semester, meet privately with instructors (or their designated representatives), give them the accommodation letter pertaining to their course, and discuss the specific arrangements for your classroom accommodations.

Please contact SDS immediately if you have concerns about the accommodation process or about the administration of an exam.
A Fond Farewell

It seems strange to be writing this now, in January, when I won’t be actually retiring from Cornell until June. However, because SDS newsletters are published only twice per year, I do want to take this opportunity to say goodbye.

My journey at Cornell University began 35 years ago this month. I had been attending college but was not able to put together a full set of courses for the spring term in my chosen field – computer information systems. At the urging of friends who worked here, I applied to Cornell. I was hired the day of my interview (those were the good old days!) as a temporary secretary in the Computer Science Department.

In CS, I worked with some remarkable faculty and staff while computer science as a major was still in its infancy. Soon I was made assistant director for undergraduate programs where I had the privilege of working closely with bright and talented computer science students as they progressed through their programs. I was proud to hand students their diplomas on graduation day, and I am still in touch with many of them.

After 9 years in CS, I moved over to the Engineering Advising Office where I spent several years as an academic counselor and advisor. I continued to work with great faculty, staff and students. After completing my undergraduate degree in Social Work from Cornell through the Employee Degree Program, I was appointed the first Director of Women’s Programs in Engineering. During that time I oversaw the beginnings of Academic Excellence Workshops, Engineering Day at the Mall, and the Currie Academy for high school students, programs that still exist today.

In 2000, I was hired as an Assistant Director in the newly revamped and revitalized Student Disability Services office. While it is the most challenging position I’ve held at Cornell, it has also been the most rewarding. I continue to work with incredibly bright and talented students, as well as with dedicated staff and faculty in support of students with disabilities. I will miss the daily interactions with the amazing SDS staff very much.

Upon retirement, I plan to go back to what I first started college for in the first place – to work with computers. I hope to work as a database and web developer, utilizing the many technical skills I have honed in each of my campus positions, as well as in the CS 2300 web development course I plan to attend this spring (psyched!).

As I was growing up just a bit north of here in Lansing, I never dreamt that I would become a Cornell alumna (even though two of my grandparents were Cornellians) or retiree. While my educational journey took me in a different direction, I am very happy with where I ended up. I feel incredibly honored and grateful to have interacted with, and learned from, so many awesome people – students, staff, faculty, and administrators, as well as colleagues from across the state and around the country. Cornell has been a great place to learn, live and work – and to grow.

I wish you all a fond adieu.

—Michele Fish
A Change to LSAT Testing Accommodations

In May of 2014, the Law School Admissions Council agreed to systematic reforms that would benefit students with disabilities who are planning to take the Law School Admission Test. The Law School Admission Test, also known as the LSAT, is “a required examination for anyone seeking admission to an American Bar Association approved law school in the United States.” These reforms include ending the practice of flagging LSAT scores of individuals who used accommodations and streamlining the evaluation of requests for testing accommodations.

The Law School Admissions Council has previously engaged in the practice of flagging scores due to their belief that scores of exams given under accommodated circumstances would not predict a student’s success in law school the way they believe that the test does taken under regular conditions. This practice automatically identified students with disabilities to law schools during their applicant process.

The Law School Admissions Council had previously denied testing accommodation requests to students who had permanent physical disabilities or had submitted adequate supporting documentation that demonstrated a history of testing accommodations.

These changes came about as a result of an OCRD/DOJ settlement. This settlement also grants automatic approval for most accommodations that had been approved previously for a standardized exam related to post-secondary admission including the SAT I, SAT II, ACT, GED, GRE, GMAT, DAT and MCAT examinations. This automatic approval extends to people who have received double time on past examinations; however, the Law School Admissions Council will have to perform their own evaluation for requests greater than double time. This automatic approval also does not pertain to accommodations that require the examination to be administered on more than one day.

These systematic reforms to the LSAT will affect all future test takers.

—Jordan Berger ‘17

For more information:

- [http://www.lsac.org/jd/lsat/accommodated-testing](http://www.lsac.org/jd/lsat/accommodated-testing)

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**Accessible Housing for 2015-2016**

**Returning students:** If you plan to seek on-campus housing accommodations or adaptive housing for next year, you will need to:

- Register for housing selection by visiting the Living @ Cornell website between **January 21st** and **March 1st** at [http://living.sas.cornell.edu/live/apply/](http://living.sas.cornell.edu/live/apply/). This puts you in the system as planning to live on campus.
- Register or renew your housing accommodations by meeting with Student Disability Services by **February 13th**.
- If approved for accessible housing, you will contract before General Room Selection, which is **March 9-13**.
Intergroup Dialogue Project: Ability and Disability

The Intergroup Dialogue Project brings participants from different social identity groups together to explore ways of working toward greater equity and social justice around race, gender, religion, socio-economic status, sexuality, or disability status. It is listed in the course catalog as EDUC 2610 (3 credits) and can be used to fulfill distribution requirements in CALS and in Engineering.

There are still spots available for the Intergroup Dialogue class on the topic of disability that meets Fridays from 1:25-4:25pm. Each intergroup dialogue class is about a specific topic and the class makeup is designed to have a mixed group of individuals who identify with the topic in different ways. For the Ability/Disability Dialogue class, there needs to be a mix of students who identify as having a disability and who don’t, and there are still spots open for students who identify as having a disability.

If you are interested, please contact Amber George, Program Coordinator for the Intergroup Dialogue Project, to enroll as a student that identifies as having a disability. She can be reached at: (607) 255-4423 or at: aeg234@cornell.edu.

Concentration in Disability Studies

The ILR School offers the disability studies concentration for undergrads. It affords interested students the opportunity to examine the experience of persons with disabilities across all domains of life. A student must take a total of 18 credits (5-6 courses) to complete a specialized concentration in Disability Studies. For the Disability Studies Concentration/Track, a student is required to take a core course, followed by a series of customized electives, based on the student’s interests and preferences.

A summary of core and elective courses follows:

- ILRLR 1200: Introduction to Disability Studies (Fall, 3 credits) – CORE REQUIREMENT
- ILRLR 2010/5010: Labor and Employment Law (Fall and Spring, 3 credits)
- ILRLR 2060: Writing Seminar in Law – Disability and Ethics (Fall, 3 credits)*, or Intersections of Disability Identity in the Law, Workplace, and Society (Spring, 3 credits)*, or Perspectives on Disability (Spring, 3 credits)*
- ILRST 3030: Policy by the Numbers (Fall, 4 crd.)
- ILRLR 4023: Disability and Employment Policy (Spring, 2 credits)
- ILRLR 4033: Disability Law (Spring, 4 credits)
- ILRIC 4360: Global Comparative Disability Policy (Fall, 4 credits)
- ILHR 6410: Disability Considerations in Human Resource Policy & Practice (Spring, 2 credits)
- ILRLR 6840: Employment Discrimination and the Law (Fall and Spring, 4 credits)

*Designates an ILR Sophomore Writing Seminar open only ILR sophomores and new transfers, students may only take ONE of these writing seminars.

Questions about the courses or the concentration can be addressed to:
Kate MacDowell
201L Dolgen Hall
kkm74@cornell.edu
(607) 255-7727
Audio and text-to-speech technologies provide access to printed words for those who cannot read in the conventional way; it allows them to read by listening. Accessibility features built into iOS, Android, Macs and PCs provide ways to have text read aloud, with the text highlighted as it is read. These and other features allow students with reading disabilities to independently read their course material—or just about anything else they may want to read.

To obtain hard copy books in accessible format, Cornell students who are registered with Student Disability Services—and need print material in alternative formats—can request books and course material in an electronic format after showing proof of purchase. In 20 business days or less SDS will make the requested material available.

There are also other options available for qualified students that do not require the purchase of the physical book. Bookshare, a free service for students with print disabilities, allows them to download accessible books to their computer, tablet, or smartphone. Then the books can be read with text-to-speech or the text can be enlarged. Bookshare.org has over 320,000 books available to download, and will add requested books to their collection within a three-four month time frame. Another source for getting books is Learning Ally, which provides human narrated audio books for download. Currently, Learning Ally has over 80,000 books and costs $119 annually.

Sometimes when print material is not readily available through these sources and it is necessary to read a short article or handout right away, iPhone apps can be used for almost instant access. Apps such as Prizmo, and KNFB Reader allow users to snap a picture of an article and within seconds, the app will be reading the article aloud using text-to-speech.

Many mainstream technologies and services can help to support people with disabilities too. Siri, for example, will spell words aloud. This is an enormous help to people who struggle with spelling. Dictation programs can make completing papers much easier for those who find writing a challenge.

Despite the number of technologies, devices, and services available, many people are not familiar with them, or they don’t realize the enormous benefits to people with disabilities. To address this void, I started a blog (bdmtech.blogspot.com) to try to spread the word about available assistive technologies, and the ways that they can help people with various disabilities. As someone who has benefited so much by using technology to manage my reading and writing difficulties, my goal is to share what I have learned so that others can benefit, and not have to struggle needlessly.

With this technology and support from Student Disability Services, Ezra Cornell’s promise of an “institution where any person can find instruction in any study” definitely applies to students with learning disabilities.

—Brian Meersma, ’18

Inclement Weather Plan

The winter weather is here! Planning ahead will make it easier to address the challenges of winter and get where you need to go.

If snow and ice will be a significant barrier as you travel around campus, fill out the Voluntary Inclement Weather Form. SDS will report your path of travel to Facilities Management and Grounds, and Building Care will make every effort to remove snow and ice in areas you travel on campus.

Submit completed forms to SDS at sds_cu@cornell.edu
sds.cornell.edu/Forms/Voluntary_Inclement_Weather_Questionnaire.pdf
As a college student, it can sometimes be incredibly hard to find food that is healthy and make good choices about what to eat. Add onto that being a person with a disability – whether allergy, physical, medical, sensory, or otherwise related – who needs to keep track of their diet and you may run into some trouble. However, there are many options available to you and the Cornell Healthy Eating Program is here to help!

If you need to watch salt intake, have restrictions on dairy, meat, or any other foods, Cornell has many different dining options that will allow you to accommodate for your needs.

If you’re on Central Campus, there are seventeen different locations to grab food and drinks during the day. Many of these locations offer healthy and unhealthy items alike. Here’s a quick guide to each of the eateries on Central:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dining Facility</th>
<th>Try this!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amit Bhatia’s Libe Café, Green</td>
<td>Grab-n-go items: pre-made salads, cut up vegetables, yogurt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dragon, Rusty’s</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Atrium Café</td>
<td>The Supply Chain sandwich</td>
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<tr>
<td>Big Red Barn</td>
<td>Istanbul Salad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cascadeli</td>
<td>Veg-O-Matic Sandwich</td>
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<tr>
<td>Café Jennie</td>
<td>Steel cut oatmeal with custom toppings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dairy Bar</td>
<td>Vegetable Gyro</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goldie’s</td>
<td>Grilled Portabella Wrapini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivy Room</td>
<td>Udon noodle soup</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manndibles</td>
<td>Poquito burrito bowl with tofu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martha’s Café</td>
<td>Grilled salmon on salad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mattins Café</td>
<td>Veggie Burgers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New World Café</td>
<td>Vegan and vegetarian sandwiches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okenshields</td>
<td>Brains and Grains Salad Bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synapsis</td>
<td>Mitochondria Salad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple of Zeus</td>
<td>Lentil Soup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trillium</td>
<td>Salads, grilled chicken sandwich</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One thing that is extremely difficult for students is finding healthy grab-and-go snacks. Cornellians lead a very active lifestyle and it is often easier to pick up a bag of chips and run out the door than find some fresh vegetables or fruit. However, many locations on campus sell to-go containers of vegetables and an assortment of fruit, including at Trillium, Libe Café, Martha’s, Synapsis, Jansen’s Market, and Bear Necessities. Picking vegetables and fruit over chips is an easy way to not only reduce calorie and fat intake, but to get much-needed vitamins as well!

Additionally, when possible make sure to drink water and stay away from consuming an excess amount of sodas and juices. Water helps the body to function properly and will allow all the nutrients you’ve received from eating healthily to be properly absorbed by the body. Water around campus is free at all eateries, too! It is truly budget and body friendly!

For more information on healthy eating at Cornell, see: [https://netnutrition.cbord.com/nn-prod/cornell](https://netnutrition.cbord.com/nn-prod/cornell) for nutritional information for campus food and: [http://www.gannett.cornell.edu/topics/nutrition/program/](http://www.gannett.cornell.edu/topics/nutrition/program/) for details about CHEP!

—Rebecca Mosner ’17
Using Capti Narrator for Text-to-Voice

Capti Narrator makes listening to your textbooks easy and convenient. Organize your readings into playlists to listen to your material in over 150 voices and in 26 languages. You can listen while walking between classes, working out, or travelling; Capti can even download content for listening offline.

When downloading Capti Narrator, it is best to sign up for a free account. Doing so will allow you to sync your playlist, access premium voice trials, and receive updates on future features.

Capti can create playlists from a variety of file formats, including .PDF, .DOC, and .PPT (PowerPoint). Using cloud-based storage, it is easy to sync your playlists between multiple portable devices, and Mac/Windows platforms. It also integrates with Bookshare, and popular cloud storages services such as Google Drive, Dropbox, and Pocket.

When starting Capti, you are immediately brought to your playlist. In addition to connecting to your personal cloud-based storage, there are several additional ways to begin adding content to your playlist. The first is by using the browser option to browse websites. The neat thing about this feature is the ability to take all the articles on a webpage and present them in link form for you to choose from. After you select an article, it is automatically added to your playlist.

Another option for getting material into Capti is by using the integrated Bookshare feature. If you have an account, you can sign-in via Capti and have access to all of your books. In addition, you can search for, and download books directly into Capti. Not a member of Bookshare? Contact our office to inquire about free membership.

Capti Narrator is a great way to get your reading done while on the go. It syncs with multiple devices across multiple platforms to ensure you always have access to your content. The ability to download content for offline reading gives you greater access, wherever you are.

For more information on Capti Narrator, visit www.captivoice.com.

—Cyrus Hamilton

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