WHITE HOUSE CHAMPION OF CHANGE

Sophomore Brian Meersma (ILR ’18) was honored as a White House Champion of Change for Disability Advocacy Across Generations this past summer. The White House honors “individuals doing extraordinary things to empower and inspire members of their communities” as Champions of Change. Brian explains that it was a “humble experience to be recognized with such an amazing, accomplished group of people.” Brian and 8 other disability advocates were recognized at the White House on July 27th. Brian says, “I was struck by the commonality of some of [his and the other student Champions’] experiences as people with disabilities and the importance of supporting one another.” This was Brian’s first trip to the White House and his immediate family joined him for the exciting recognition.

(cont’d on page 3)
LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Welcome back to campus!

This semester marks a big systems change for Student Disability Services. In December we started using a new database to manage the use of our services. There are many enhancements for students, such as having an online student profile. Course enrollment information is loaded in the database for you to see making it easier to request accommodation letters. And you can customize your accommodation letters to show only the accommodations you need for a specific course. Alternate format materials can be accessed directly from this system.

There are also some drawbacks. There are some features of the system that we cannot change and terms used that do not exactly align with the terms we have used in the past. Some service requests such as the CULift and laptop loans cannot be integrated into this system so we will continue to use the SDS website. Overall, we believe the change will be a positive one for students and staff. Please let us know if you have any questions about, or difficulty using, the online system.

While system enhancements are important for the smooth operation of our services, our staff is the heart of our program. We are here to share in the experience of having a disability as a college student by assisting with access issues, providing guidance about self-advocacy and empowerment and listening to you about issues large and small. I encourage you to meet with your SDS Counselor each semester.

To keep in touch with you on a regular basis, we are starting a Facebook page where we will post information and opportunities that we think will be of interest to you. We hope you will check it out.

Best wishes for a great semester.

Sincerely,

Kappy Fahey
During Brian’s panel he discussed ‘the importance of accepting that not all people do things the same way.’”

Brian says that early in his schooling, his “teachers didn’t know much about assistive technology and didn’t understand its importance to [his] academic success.” Brian did extensive research to find technology that could read his course materials to him. After he discovered technologies that allowed him to “mitigate weaknesses, [he] wanted to share what [he] had learned with others who could also benefit.” He created a blog about assistive technology and has presented information at conferences and schools to spread the word. Brian enjoys “posting on the blog, making videos, giving presentations, beta testing new products, and learning about the latest assistive technologies.” Brian says, “My motivation comes from the gratification I get knowing that I am helping others. It is a great feeling to receive comments and emails from readers of the blog saying how thankful they are for the information that I provide.” Visit Brian’s blog at http://bdmtech.blogspot.com/.

Last, summer Brian also interned in Washington, D.C., at the Federal Emergency Management Agency in the Office of Disability Integration and Coordination. He helped support the Agency’s efforts to make emergency management programs and services accessible to people with disabilities.

*contributed by Jordan Berger
CAREER LINK: RECRUITING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Career Link Mentoring Program, presented by the U.S. Business Leadership Network in partnership with Cornell University, is an exclusive, no-cost opportunity for college students and recent graduates with disabilities. Once selected, student mentees are paired with an industry leading professional for six months of one-on-one mentoring on topics such as writing resumes, interviewing, career exploration, networking, and workplace disability related considerations such as requesting accommodations. Student mentees commit to participating in the program between April 1-September 30, spend some time each month on mentoring activities, and maintain collaboration and communication with their mentor. The application deadline is January 29th and can be accessed at:


For more information, visit:


INTERGROUP DIALOGUE PROJECT WILL OFFER DISABILITY CLASS AGAIN

Jonathan Goldstein, a junior ILR student, successfully completed The Intercultural Dialogue Project’s class focusing on ability/disability this past Fall semester. According to Jonathan, when the ability/disability dialogue was first offered, it was the last choice for students when they chose their topic preference. In the beginning of the semester, he could feel that his classmates seemed uncomfortable talking about disability. However, as the semester progressed, he was able to observe changes in his classmates. Students became more engaged and enthusiastic when talking about disability related topics, and as a result, could offer insights on class topics from much more diverse perspectives.

Jonathan thinks that students who register for the class in part because they heard some positive feedback about IDP’s classes; they are unique classes in which students are strongly encouraged to share his/her individual perspectives. As the class title indicates, the learning in the class centers around dialogue and sharing rather than lecture, and students are more encouraged to share their perspectives freely and candidly.

The class explores diverse categories of disabilities, including physical, learning, and mental health disabilities, along with others, and examined how people with various types of disabilities are portrayed different in society. For example, Jonathan mentioned that the group discussed that signs or symbols for representing persons with disabilities are often depicted as a wheelchair, but most people with disabilities do not use wheelchairs—many even have invisible disabilities. The participants viewed disability as a type of diversity and enjoyed an experience to explore that idea over the course of the semester.

The course will be offered again this Spring. If you are interested in EDUC 2610, find information about The Intercultural Dialogue Project at http://www.idp.cornell.edu/, or email your interest in the course to dialogue@cornell.edu

*contributed by Yejeong Choi

SAVE THE DATE!

Oscar-winning actress and passionate advocate for the deaf community Marlee Matlin will be speaking on campus on Monday, February 8th, 2016. Cornell Hillel is sponsoring this event—follow Cornell Hillel on Facebook or visit hillel.cornell.edu for more information when available!
HELPFUL CAMPUS PARTNERS KEEP CULIFT RUNNING

You have likely seen one of the vans around campus displaying the CULift sticker on its side, dropping students off in front of buildings. CULift is one of several transportation accommodations that are available to students with temporary or permanent mobility impairments. Student must register with SDS and be approved to use CULift as an accommodation. CULift is unique because it is a door-to-door service helping students on-campus get to and from their on, or near, campus housing, campus buildings, and parking lots. There is no cost for eligible students to utilize CULift; it runs Monday through Friday between 7:45am and 9:30pm. CULift is a sub-division of Red Runner, Cornell’s Courier Service. The smooth operation of CULift is a result of the collaborative efforts of many staff members on campus, including SDS’ Transportation Manager, CULift Dispatch operators, drivers, and many more!

Students who qualify for CULift must adhere to guidelines while using the service. Rides must be schedule online the day before the students’ need the rides. For more information on the guidelines of CULift, please visit http://sds.cornell.edu/Forms/CuLift_Guidelines.pdf. For more information about other transportation services that SDS provides, please visit http://sds.cornell.edu/Other_Accommodations/Transportation.html or talk to your SDS Counselor.

*DID YOU KNOW?*

Students with temporary, as well as permanent, disabilities may be eligible to use CULIFT.

*contributed by Rebecca Mosner*

PARTNERING STAFF PROFILES

**Mindy Reeves**

Mindy is one of the CULift drivers. Her favorite thing about working with CULift is meeting and getting to know the students one on one. She really loves helping and making a difference in their lives. Mindy has been working at Cornell University for 27 years, specifically with CULift for 10 years. In the Transportation Department, she has driven buses, delivered mail, worked with Red Runner Services, and CULift. A fun fact about Mindy is that she has 10 grandkids with the 11th due is January and they are her biggest joy!

**Todd Butler**

Todd is the current Assistant Manager of Cornell Mail and Courier Services, but he has been with the University since April 1999 (almost 17 years!) with the first 15 ½ in transportation services. Todd’s favorite thing about his position is the opportunity to greet and help many different people, from staff to students, to visiting V.I.P.S. and dignitaries through mail and couriers services. Particularly, he loves the ability to meet so many great students and the opportunity to interact with them and help make their day easier through the CULift program. A fun fact about Todd is that he is the father of 2 wonderful children, Madison and Mason, whom he enjoys spending all his with and in the spare time he does have, he volunteers as a NYS EMT for the Candor Emergency Squad.
DID YOU KNOW?

DAPi’s Greek letters have special meaning:

**Delta** – D for Disability, but also the triangle, symbol of strength. Members of Delta Alpha Pi Honor Society demonstrate strength as leaders on campus to help break down the barriers of negativism. Also, they serve as mentors and role models for other students with disabilities.

**Alpha** – A stands for Achievement. Alpha achievement must come first. But A also stands for advocacy because students must advocate for themselves before they can advocate for others. Members of Delta Alpha Pi Honor Society enhance advocacy skills for themselves and for the rights of all individuals with disabilities to be included fully in society.

**Pi** – P represents Pride, pride in academic achievement and in other accomplishments, not just as students with disabilities, but as members of the university community. Members of Delta Alpha Pi Honor Society participate in activities designed to educate the community and society regarding disability issues and the need to apply the principles of universal design in learning.

JOIN DELTA ALPHA PI

DAPi (Delta Alpha Pi) is an international honor society that celebrates and supports the achievement, leadership, and impact of students with disabilities. Daniel Rosenfeld ’18 and Jonathan Goldstein ’17 are very excited to bring DAPi to Cornell, and to hold social and professional programs and opportunities for new members. Our goals are to foster personal, academic, and professional development and to create a welcoming community for all interested students with disabilities.

In order to grow our network, DAPi will be having an information session in the beginning of the spring semester. To keep updated DAPi and this event, please like our Facebook page, “Cornell University – Delta Alpha Pi.” For more information, feel free to contact Co-Presidents, Daniel Rosenfeld (dlr248@cornell.edu) and Jonathan Goldstein (jfg97@cornell.edu).

SDS ONLINE SERVICES:
REQUESTING LETTERS

1. Log in to SDS Online Services
   - Go to: http://sds.cornell.edu/Forms/
   - Click on the “SDS Online Services” button
   - Log-in with your netID/password

2. Sign E-forms.
   - If you haven’t already, you will need to read, electronically sign, and “submit form” to complete any required forms (i.e. Accommodations Plan Agreement)

3. Customize and Request Accommodations
   - On the menu on the left, under “My Accommodations,” click on “List Accommodations.”
   - A list of the classes you are officially registered for will appear. Check the box for each class you would like a Faculty Notification Letter for.
   - Click “Step 2 – Continue to Customize Your Accommodations.”
   - In the “Select Accommodations” box, check the accommodations you are requesting for that course. You need to do this for each course. Click
   - “Submit Your Accommodations Requests.”

*all pictures contributed by SDS students/staff

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