



# Disability Services Newsletter

A publication for students, faculty and staff at  
North Shore Community College

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## Important Dates

3/16—3/22

Spring Recess

4/18

Last day to withdraw with "w" grade

4/21

Patriot's Day—no classes

5/9

Day classes end

5/12

Evening classes end

5/22

Commencement

## Director's Corner

Greetings to all!

I am pleased to share with all of you the spring publication of the Disability Services newsletter. This edition showcases a variety of informational articles for faculty, students and staff. Also included, are several new endeavors we have embarked upon over the past semester. Most exciting is our newly developed Facebook page which provides the Disability Services department with another means to effectively communicate and share information with our students as well as the college community.

As always, we are here to provide support to faculty, students and staff so as to offer the best possible services for students with disabilities. In doing so, we hope that you find our semester newsletters both valuable and informative. Please also know that we welcome your thoughts and ideas for future newsletters.

For faculty and staff, information is available through Pipeline under My Northshore—Disability Services. For students and community members, please visit our website [NSCC Disability Services](http://NSCCDisabilityServices.com) or our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/DisabilityServicesNSCC>. Please feel free to call upon us with your questions.

Best wishes for an enjoyable and successful semester!

Susan Graham  
Director of Disability Services



## Coming Back from Break

Returning to classes after a break can definitely be a difficult transition. During the time away your schedule is likely to have changed as you spent more time with family and friends, participating in holiday activities or working extra hours. Upon returning, you may feel overwhelmed, as if time is somehow moving more slowly. Below are a few tricks that may help to make the return back a bit more smooth.

- ◆ Start your day right: well-rested and with a good breakfast. Even if all you have time for is a quick bowl of oatmeal or some fruit, it will make the day get off to a better start. Get in some stretching or exercise too if you can.
- ◆ Plan to arrive on campus early. This will give you some time to get situated before your class starts, before you have to take a test, or meet with a classmate to work on a project or study together. You never know if there will be a delay on your way in, so this will provide some extra time for those unexpected stresses, if needed.
- ◆ Get organized! Choose the most essential things that you need to do, and create a list. Schedule the less urgent tasks throughout the week. Make sure there is something easy, but important, at the top of your list. It will feel great to check it off when you're done!
- ◆ Create a study plan and routine. Use a planner or online calendar to track not only your classes but also study times, due dates, and appointments.



Is there a topic you would like to see covered in one of our future newsletters? Kindly send your topic ideas to [disability@northshore.edu](mailto:disability@northshore.edu).

We look forward to hearing from you!

## Serving as a Note-Taker Can Actually Improve A Student's Performance In Class

There are many different reasons why a student registered with Disability Services is approved for the note taker accommodation. The student may be hard of hearing or deaf, they may have low vision or blindness, dexterity or motor skill difficulty or be diagnosed with a learning disability. This accommodation provides many benefits for the students receiving it including access to class information that may have been missed, increased class participation and enhanced confidence through the knowledge gained from the notes. But there are also several benefits for the student who has volunteered to be the note taker.

According to a survey at Boise State University in 2012, these are some of the benefits and outcomes for the note taker:

- \* The student recognizes an improved quality of their note pertaining to essential course information.
- \* With the delivery of notes being required for all scheduled class sessions, attendance is increased along with preparedness for class lessons.
- \* The student has a sense of accountability, not only to themselves but to others as well.
- \* It provides the note taker with an overall satisfaction that comes from a service learning experience.
- \* Students who have provided the note taking service report that they received a better grades from being a note taker.

At the University of Vermont, peer note takers report that they developed transferable skills such as :

- \* Organization
- \* Time management
- \* Attention to detail
- \* Responsibility and reliability
- \* Volunteerism and helping others
- \* Leadership and community involvement

Participation as a note taker can also result in references that may be used for job applications and resume building.

A peer note taker from Academic Support Programs at the University of Vermont stated, "As a volunteer note taker at the University of Vermont, I grew as a scholar and an individual. I was responsible for diligently recording, organizing and delivering high quality notes for other students on campus who needed academic support. I learned and practiced time management and honed my attention to detail."

At NSCC, all of the above benefits of being a note taker are possible. In addition, note takers will receive a tuition voucher for 50% the cost of a 3 credit course. If you are interested in volunteering to be a note taker, please stop by Disability Services for more information.



## Extended Testing Time Makes Sense, But Why Should Students Test in CAS?

The most common accommodation at North Shore Community College is Extended Testing Time in a reduced distraction setting. Extended Time is usually 1.5 the amount of time given to other students. This extra time allows students with chronic pain, anxiety, ADHD, a learning disability, or another condition to have what is considered an equal amount of time to complete testing.

But why is testing in CAS (The Center for Alternative Studies) an essential part of this accommodation? Distraction in the classroom is one answer. Tapping pencils, talking classmates, slamming doors—these all can add extra stress and decrease focus for students with disabilities. The awareness that everyone else has finished testing can also cause students approved for this accommodation to feel pressured to turn in the test without using extended time. Furthermore, professors are not expected to stay in the classroom beyond the scheduled hours of class. Some classrooms have back-to-back classes, so having a student remain in the classroom beyond the end of class to complete testing is not logistically possible in many cases.

CAS is the designated site for using Extended Testing Time because it is a secure and consistent environment. The testing rooms in CAS are closely monitored to ensure that students cannot cheat. The testing conditions in CAS are the same for all students and will not present an advantage or distraction, as a professor's office, empty classroom, or conference room could. In short, CAS is the only testing environment that will give all students with Extended Testing Time an equal testing opportunity.

We appreciate the time professors take to provide accommodations as requested. For answers to any questions about testing accommodations, please contact us.

## Universal design for learning discussion groups

Universal design for learning (UDL) is a set of principles which promote a proactive approach to developing curriculum and teaching practices to benefit students with multiple learning styles and abilities.

These principles include multiple means of:

- Representation - presenting content in a variety of methods
- Action and Expression - providing various formats to demonstrate knowledge learned
- Engagement - providing multiple ways for students to access content based on their skill and interest level

### **Why incorporate UDL principles in discussion groups?**

Small group discussion reinforces knowledge learned in class lecture and assigned readings. Reflecting on content learned and engaging in active learning in small and large group discussions, benefits all students, specifically students with learning disabilities. Providing variety and differentiated learning specific to student's' needs and skill level is beneficial since there is no one way to engage all learners.

### **Examples of UDL based discussion groups include:**

- A “feedback” group with opportunities for students to discuss and receive input on assignments before they are submitted, view examples of projects, and to discuss optional readings which can provide background information on a topic.
- A “review” group which allows students to ask questions about content presented during the week from lectures and readings. Students who find the content in the readings or lectures to be challenging or abstract may benefit from this style of discussion.
- An “advanced” group to encourage students who read and understood the week’s content to discuss a topic that extends beyond the material and connects to other ideas and similar knowledge in a meaningful and challenging way. A new relevant reading may be assigned, presented, and discussed that is opposing in view.

Discussion groups may also occur in various formats, such as face-to-face or online, if appropriate to the course format and structure. Providing both formats for discussion encourages students with differing learning and personality styles to engage in dialogue and demonstrate knowledge learned in a context most suitable to their learning style.

For additional information, please visit:

<http://www.udlcenter.org/>

# Assistive Technology at NSCC



Often times, our office hears from students that they cannot afford to buy a Microsoft Word license and for their homework they have to use an alternative word processor, like MS Works, whose features are limited compared to MS Word. Some students have interoperability issues—that is, documents created at home using MS Works do not open or lose formatting when opened on college computers, which causes a lot of frustration.

A solution for such students could be a free program called **Apache OpenOffice**; people often abbreviate it to Open Office or OO in writing. Compatible with other major office suites, **Apache OpenOffice** is free to download, use and distribute. Download is available on the program's web site [www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org). Installation is easy and takes two minutes. The program is available in more than 170 languages and has improved interoperability. The program's functionality and layout is very similar to MS Word so if you ever used MS Word, you should be able to use Open Office. Also, there are video tutorials available on YouTube and printed tutorials available on the web (here is an example [www.tutorialsforopenoffice.org](http://www.tutorialsforopenoffice.org))

The program is compatible with Windows and Mac operating systems.

This is about everything you need to know to start your own trial of OpenOffice. One little tip: if you decide to save your homework as an OpenOffice document with .odt file extension, make sure when you retrieve your homework on a college computer to first launch MS Word and then use Open button to view the .odt file. From our Adaptive Learning Specialist's experience, it works better this way.

Good luck!

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