

“I am not broken but merely a little different”

Celebrating 10 years of helping to level the playing field for our students with disabilities



Disability Unit 10-Year Anniversary

Centre for Student Counselling and Development
Student Affairs
Stellenbosch University



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Walking the path less travelled...

What does a higher education institution like Stellenbosch University (SU) do when asked to enrol its first blind Law student in the 1970s, a time when assistive technologies were unheard of in South Africa? We make a plan. Twenty years later and faced with the same request, we made a plan again – and this time a broad, embedded, comprehensive plan – with long-term and institutional impact and commitment.

These moments helped SU forge a new path and improved access for students with disabilities at our institution.

However, these efforts were not solely driven by what is today known as the Disability Unit (DU). From the outset, the DU has been supported by the university and the Centre for Student Counselling and Development (CSCD) in Student Affairs. Together the DU, CSCD and Student Affairs have relentlessly campaigned for the expansion of DU's services, the transformation of the culture and climate at SU and a fully-fledged disability unit. We were supported in our endeavours by the former Advice Forum for Students with Disabilities, a forum that facilitated support for students with disabilities. In 2007, the Office for Students with Special Learning Needs (Disabilities) (now DU) was established.

Today, the DU celebrates its 10th anniversary and many student and institutional successes along the way. "The CSCD and SU have always supported the endeavours of the Unit, and this support can only grow stronger. To

the next ten years!" wrote Dr Munita Dunn-Coetzee, the Director: CSCD.

"Congratulations to the team at the Disability Unit and all of Student Affairs for growing this important service and for changing the culture and climate at SU into an inclusive and embracing one. We are proud of you and will continue to develop with you," said Dr Birgit Schreiber, Senior Director: Student Affairs.

While we celebrate our 10th anniversary, the university will be 100 years old in 2018. As an institution, we strive to meet the basic human rights of all students who study here. Currently we have more than 300 students who have disclosed a disability while many more actively seek support at the DU. SU is also in the process of revising the disability policy to focus on universal access, an exercise that will allow the university to realise its goals of broadening access, becoming future-focused and innovative with regards to diversity through the DU.

A lot of the graduates that we have supported over the years have taken up various positions in South Africa and are making a meaningful contribution to society. In this celebratory publication, we share their stories and achievements. We will continue to deepen our footprint systemically at SU and foreground the issues that persons with disabilities face in everyday life in our work, thereby creating a culture where everyone on this campus works towards truly becoming disability inclusive.

Dr Marcia Lyner-Cleophas
Head: Disability Unit

Leading the way for disabled students



Photo: Stellenbosch University alumnus Annette Dollman works as a music teacher in Durbanville. Here she is with her guide dog, Phoebe.

step ahead of my fellow students when we had to make summaries of those lectures,” says Dollman.

Accessing content in her textbooks and printed studying material posed a huge challenge and Dollman often struggled to find volunteers who were willing to spend time making voice recordings of that content.

“It was time consuming and we were often not entirely sure

In 1970, Annette Dollman (néé Loubser) became one of a handful of students with disabilities over the years to register for a B.Mus degree at Stellenbosch University. Today she works as a music teacher in Durbanville and is the proud grandmother of five grandchildren.

“Music was my passion and teaching was my career. Studying as a blind person in 1970 was a different ball game all together. I had to carry heavy tape recorders – which I truly appreciated – across campus to record my lectures. Of course it also meant I was one

if those recordings would be ready in time for me to start studying. However, we made it work and I am still thankful that I was given the chance to study and that that opportunity has allowed me to live a fulfilling life.”

“When I look at the services offered to students today, I am amazed. They are living in a world that we could only dream of in the 1970s – the Promised Land for students living with disabilities.”

Dis-Maties: A new era dawns for students with disabilities



Photo: Toni Mould is living life on her own terms.

Student life, she says, was both “very challenging” and great.

“Getting to class on time, especially in rainy weather, being unable to take notes in lectures, and not having enough time to complete tests and exams were three of my main challenges.”

In spite of it, she joined the Maties Dance Society, the Maties Horse Riding Society and a few committees at her residence, Lydia. Between 2007 and 2009, her efforts to live her life on her own terms paid off when she received the Rector’s Award for Succeeding Against the Odds.

Today Mould still follows this philosophy. After starting para-cycling in 2013, she has represented the Maties/Helderberg Sports Club three times at the South African National Time Trial and Road Race Championships. She also represented South Africa twice at the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) Para World Cup.

“My passion for sport has also helped me form Bridging Abilities, a non-profit organisation that uses sport and recreation to enhance disabled persons’ lives.”

In 2005/2006, a group of disabled students came together in Helene Keyser’s office at Student Affairs to provide support to each other. Amongst them was Toni Mould. This is her story of how Dis-Maties changes disabled students’ lives.

“Except supporting one another, we wanted to become a legitimate voice for disabled students on campus by creating awareness about disability and voicing concerns that students with disabilities had.”

To do this, they formalised their structures and formed a sub-committee for Students with Disabilities under the SRC’s Community Service portfolio.

Two years later, they registered as Dis-Maties, the first student society for disabled students at Stellenbosch University (SU).

When advised not to pursue a degree in Social Work, she did the opposite and gained entry to the programme after three years at SU.

Dis-Maties Today



“Some of those SRC activities included placing able-bodied students in a wheelchair during a treasure hunt that involved collecting clues from different buildings. It showed students the difficulties experienced by wheelchair users when trying to access these buildings.”

Other fun awareness initiatives include Dis-Maties’ popular “Dinner in the Dark” during which guests eat a three course meal blindfolded.

It has been 11 years since Dis-Maties first registered as a student society for persons with disabilities and those interested to learn more about disabilities.

“Our goal today is to ensure that students with disabilities experience a student life that is as rich as that of any other student, both in a social and an academic context. This involves breaking down stereotypes and raising awareness on the one hand, and engaging in activism to address inequalities on the other,” says Sydney Berrington, a member of Dis-Maties.

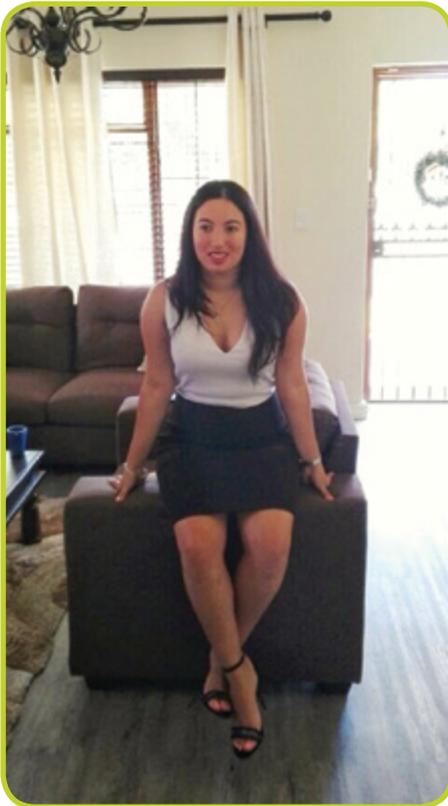
To that end, the society has hosted a number of successful events that include awareness days in collaboration with the SRC and providing restaurants around campus with Braille menus.

“Aside from raising funds for Dis-Maties, this dinner gives guests a vague idea of an everyday activity in the world of a blind person and brings able-bodied and disabled people into contact with one another. It helps break down stereotypes.”

The society also recently introduced Dis-Maties talks on disability-related topics.

For more information about Dis-Maties visit www.dismaties.co.za or mail us at dismaties@gmail.com.

Visually-impaired and leading the way



“Being a young student, I also feel empowered and can talk freely about my disability because I know there is nothing to be ashamed of. I aim to educate and encourage people to speak freely about different types of disabilities, whether it be at formal events or informal socials.”

– Luigia Nicholas (photo), a visually-impaired student completing her fourth year of a BAccountancy degree and the current chairperson of Dis-Maties, on her experience of studying at Stellenbosch University as a disabled student.

The right support can lead to amazing successes



Photo: Ilse Hayes in action during the Rio 2016 Paralympics.

Thanks to the Disability Unit's (DU) efforts, Hayes, like many other students with disabilities, had access to the braille room for visually-impaired students.

"It was always a treat being in the room with students who had guide dogs," she says.

"One day one of the dogs

She is one of South Africa's most decorated athletes with a disability and was voted the fastest female Paralympian in 2015, but 12 years ago, the visually-impaired Ilse Hayes had no idea that a BA degree in Sport Science at Stellenbosch University would also lead her to her coach, renowned South African paralympic coach Dr Suzanne Ferreira.

Reflecting on her first year, Hayes says she "felt at ease that the department would be able to accommodate" her as a visually-impaired student.

"A big part of my amazing experience at Stellenbosch was due to their assistance and adaptations where necessary. Except for lecturers enlarging my class notes, I always had the option to write exams and tests with the whole class or separately with my own supervisor and use 20 minutes extra writing time for every hour to do so. It made a massive difference in some subjects where a lot of reading or calculations were required," says Hayes.

made a mess in the room and the two students who had guide dogs started arguing over whose dog had done it. The one said their dog would never misbehave like that and the other refused to clean up. The irony was that not one of them could see whose dog it was!"

Hayes was fortunate to study at the university at a time when Paralympic sport was growing and the institution was transforming into a hub for disabled sport.

"My training group has become my second family and a lot of character building and shaping happened with them by my side. I came to SU not knowing how things would look 10 years down the line. Honestly, I would not change a thing and I believe God had a plan for me here."

Funding support for disabled students vital for success



Photo: Bongani Mapumulo, with the Rector, Prof Wim de Villiers.

“By having access to technology and assistive devices on campus, one realises that when there are less disabling factors – physical barriers and/or attitudinal issues - within a particular environment, disability becomes minimised or even neutralised completely. This support has allowed me to look beyond my own situation and endeavour to make a difference for those who will follow me.”

– Bongani Mapumulo, a third-year BA Social Dynamics student, who now

focuses on making Stellenbosch University residences more accessible to the disabled and educates communities on disability issues.



Photo: Jeff Kao and his assistant, Brendine Johnsons, using WYNN software (for people with reading and writing challenges).

“During my second year at Stellenbosch University, I experienced small obstacles, but overcame them with the assistance of University staff, in particular one of my favourite lecturers, Dr Thomas Cousins. Up to now my SU experience has always been pleasant and a smooth one and I hope this generous assistance continues for the rest of my study journey.”

– Jeff Kao

Providing disability support that rejects “one size fits all”



Jody Bell (photo), a profoundly deaf Stellenbosch University (SU) alumnus who makes use of cochlear implants to hear, is currently enrolled for a Masters degree in Pathology at SU.

“I struggled a great deal to get the individualised support that I needed while studying at another institution,” says Bell as she reflects on the “one size fits all” support offered to disabled people despite differences in how people with similar disabilities learn.

“Despite having cochlear implants I still required verbatim notes of the lectures, because I miss out on at least 20% to 30% of

what is conveyed verbally in lectures and more so in group discussions,” explains Bell.

This is because sound dynamics are different in lectures and group contexts than in one-on-one contexts where speech-reading and proximity to a speaker improves sound.

“At another institution I was simply told to make use of a FM system, a sender and transmitter system that enhances hearing and sound transmission, to block out the background noises in class.”

As Bell relies on facial cues, gestures and sometimes lip reading, she often could not take notes and listen at the same time. When she enrolled for a postgraduate degree at SU, she was pleasantly surprised to find that the Disability Unit (DU) was interested in her exact support needs.

“When the DU told me they would meet my needs and actually did that, it changed my life. It was the moment someone heard me and understood what I truly needed to excel academically and to have a positive student learning experience. They did not make assumptions about what I required based on experiences with other hearing impaired students. It was that acceptance of my individuality within my disability, their open-mindedness, inclusive nature, and willingness to be innovative and truly embrace disabled students that changed my whole experience.”

Adjusting to limited vision after trauma



Photo: Helena Wiehahn was partially blinded in an accident, but refuses to let her disability define her life.

“I remember it was around 1998. I was in a primary school in my hometown and I had an accident which caused blunt force trauma to my face. The first few months I stayed at home doing my homework, waiting for my double vision to clear and the stitches to be removed. I subsequently ended up studying at home for the next few years until I went back to a public school in 2006,” says Helena Wiehahn as she reflects on how she became aware for the first time after her accident that she could not see very well or far, was unable to read written notes in class or learn to drive a car like other teenagers her age.

Soon after this discovery, she received her first pair of glasses. “It was only during my first year at Stellenbosch University that I realised that what started as a small impediment was quite a hindrance by the time I hit my twenties. With the vast amounts of reading and large class sizes at university my eyes were constantly tired and my vision remained out of focus. The muscles in my eyes would tire out by the afternoon and I would struggle immensely to concentrate on my studies.

I became extremely light sensitive and tried various glasses, lenses and eye drops to try and combat this.”

It was only midway through her studies that she heard of the Disability Unit (DU) and was introduced to Dr Marcia Lynner-Cleophas, the Head of the DU.

Thanks to the DU and Wiehahn’s optometrist, who provided her with the necessary documentation, she received permission to register as a visually-impaired student at Stellenbosch University. “This road has not been easy. I have encountered many people who are blinded by their ignorance and treat you poorly because of it. It also feels as if there is very little empathy in South African society for the struggles of a person who is not blind but merely has a partial visual disability. Often others cannot see our struggles and it made me feel like my disability was not as important as the struggles of others. It is also why I denied myself the help I desperately needed.

“I am now an alumnus of Stellenbosch University and while I still encounter the same prejudice and ignorance from people in public spaces, I carry it with more grace and patience for I am not broken but merely a little different.”



Dinner in the Dark 2016



Dinner in the Dark 2013



Sign Language classes



Braille Office



Human Rights Day celebrations



Dis-Maties t-shirt

Loop die minder berese pad...

Wat doen 'n hoër opvoedingsinstansie soos die Universiteit Stellenbosch (US) as (soos in die 1970's) sy eerste blinde regsstudent wil inskryf, in 'n tyd toe bystand-technologieë ongehoord was in Suid-Afrika? Ons maak 'n plan. Twintig jaar later, toe ons weer dieselfde versoek ontvang, het ons weer 'n plan gemaak – en hierdie keer 'n breë, inklusiewe, omvattende plan – met langtermyn- en institusionele impak en toewyding.

Hierdie momente het die US gehelp om 'n nuwe pad en verbeterde toegang vir studente met gestremdhede by ons instelling te skep.

Dit is egter nie bloot gedryf deur wat vandag bekend staan as die Eenheid vir Gestremdhede (EG) nie. Vanuit die staanspoor is die EG ondersteun deur die US en die Sentrum vir Studentevoorigting en -ontwikkeling (SSVO) in Studentesake. Saam het die EG, SSVO en Studentesake 'n meedoënlose veldtog gevoer vir die uitbreiding van EG se dienste, die transformasie van die kultuur en klimaat aan US, en 'n volwaardige eenheid vir gestremdhede. Ons is ondersteun deur die voormalige Adviesforum vir Studente met Gestremdhede, wat ondersteuning vir studente met gestremdhede fasiliteer. In 2007 is die Kantoor vir Studente met Spesiale Leerbehoefes (Gestremdhede) (nou EG) gevestig.

Vandag vier die EG sy 10de bestaansjaar, en baie studente- en institusionele suksesse langs die pad. “Die SSVO en US het altyd die strewes van die Eenheid ondersteun, en hierdie ondersteuning word net sterker. Op die volgende tien jaar!”, skryf dr. Munita Dunn-Coetzee, Direkteur van die SSVO.

“Geluk aan die span van die Eenheid vir Gestremdhede en almal by Studentesake met die groei van hierdie belangrike diens en die verandering van die kultuur en klimaat aan US tot inklusief en omarmend. Ons is trots op julle en wil saam met julle ontwikkel,” sê dr. Birgit Schreiber, Senior Direkteur: Studentesake.

Terwyl ons ons 10de herdenking vier, sal die universiteit in 2018 100 jaar oud wees. As instelling streef ons daarna om die basiese menseregte van alle US-studente te handhaaf. Tans het ons meer as 300 studente wat 'n gestremdheid aangemeld het, terwyl vele ander aktief ondersteuning versoek van die EG. Die US is ook in die proses om die gestremdeheidsbeleid te hersien om te fokus op algemene toegang. Dit sal die universiteit toelaat om sy doelstellings vir die verbreding van toegang te verwesenlik, toekomsgefokus te word, en innoverend deur die EG op te tree rakende diversiteit.

Baie graduandi vir wie ons deur die jare ondersteun het, beklee nou verskeie posisies in Suid-Afrika en lewer tans 'n betekenisvolle bydrae tot die gemeenskap. In hierdie feespublikasie deel ons hul verhale en prestasies. Ons sal voortgaan om ons voetspoor stelselmatig by US uit te brei en die kwessies wat persone met gestremdhede in die daaglikse lewe in die gesig staar, te belig, om daardeur 'n kultuur te skep waar almal op hierdie kampus hulle toewy daaraan om werklik gestremdheid-inklusief te word.

Dr Marcia Lyner-Cleophas

Hoof: Eenheid vir Gestremdhede

Sy neem die voortou vir studente met gestremdhede



Foto: Universiteit Stellenbosch alumna Annette Dollman werk as musiekonderwyser in Durbanville. Hier is sy by haar gidshond, Phoebe.

van daardie lesings moes maak,” sê Dollman.

Om toegang te kry tot die inhoud van haar handboeke en gedrukte studiemateriaal was ’n groot uitdaging en Dollman het dikwels gesukkel om vrywilligers te kry wat bereid was om tyd te spandeer om stemopnames te maak van daardie inhoud.

“Dit was tydrowend en ons was dikwels nie heeltemal se-

In 1970 het Annette Dollman (née Loubser) een van ’n handvol studente met gestremdhede geword wat oor die jare geregistreer het vir ’n BMus-graad aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch. Vandag werk sy as musiekonderwyser in Durbanville en is die trotse ouma van vyf kleinkinders.

“Musiek was my passie en onderwys my beroep. Om in 1970 as ’n blinde persoon te studeer was ’n perd van ’n heeltemal ander kleur. Ek moes swaar bandopnemers – wat ek opreg waardeur het – oor die kampus dra om my lesings op te neem. Dit het natuurlik beteken dat ek ’n stappie voor my medestudente was wanneer ons opsommings

ker of daardie opnames betyds gereed sou wees vir my om te begin studeer nie. Ons het dit egter maak werk en ek is steeds dankbaar dat ek die geleentheid gegee is om te studeer en dat daardie geleentheid my toegelaat het om ’n vervulde lewe te lei.

“Wanneer ek kyk na die dienste wat vandag aan studente gebied word, is ek verstom. Hulle leef in ’n wêreld waarvan ek slegs kon droom in die 1970’s – die Beloofde Land vir studente wat leef met gestremdhede.”

Dis-Maties: Nuwe era vir studente met gestremdhede skop af



Foto: Toni Mould leef haar lewe op haar eie voorwaardes.

sy die teenoorgestelde gedoen en toegang verkry tot die program na drie jaar by die US.

Studentelewe, sê sy, was terselfdertyd “baie uitdagend” en heerlik.

“Om betyds by die klas te kom, veral in reënweer, om nie in staat te wees om notas by lesings te

In 2005/2006 het ’n groep studente met gestremdhede byeengekom in Helene Keyser se kantoor by Studentesake om ondersteuning aan mekaar te verleen. Onder hulle was Toni Mould. Hierdie is haar verhaal oor hoe Dis-Maties gestremde studente se lewens verander.

“Afgesien van onderlinge ondersteuning, wou ons ’n legitieme stem vir studente met gestremdhede op kampus word, deur bewusheid te skep oor gestremdheid en om die bekommernisse wat studente met gestremdhede gehad het, te lug.”

Om dit te doen, het hulle hul strukture geformaliseer en ’n subkomitee vir Studente met Gestremdhede gevorm onder die SR se Gemeenskapsdiens-portefeulje.

Twee jaar later het hulle Dis-Maties geregistreer, die eerste studentevereniging vir studente met gestremdhede aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch (US).

As dit kom by eerstes, is Mould aan die voerpunt. Toe sy aangeraai is om nie in te skryf vir ’n graad in Maatskaplike Werk nie, het

neem nie, en nie genoeg tyd te hê om toetse en eksamens af te lê nie, was drie van my grootste uitdagings.”

Ten spyte van hierdie uitdagings het sy by die Maties Dansvereniging, die Maties Perdery-vereniging en ’n paar komitees by haar koshuis, Lydia aangesluit. Tussen 2007 en 2009 het haar pogings om haar lewe op haar eie voorwaardes te lei vrugte afgewerp toe sy die Rektor se Uitstygtoekenning ontvang het.

Vandag volg Mould steeds hierdie filosofie. Nadat sy in 2013 parafietsry begin doen het, het sy drie maal die Maties/Helderberg Sportklub verteenwoordig by die Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Tydtoets- en Padrenkampioenskappe. Sy het ook Suid-Afrika twee maal by die Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) Para Wêreldbeker verteenwoordig.

“My passie vir sport het my ook genoeg om Bridging Abilities, ’n nie-winsgewende organisasie wat sport en ontspanning gebruik om gestremde persone se lewens te verryk te stig.”

Dis-Maties Vandag



met die SR en voorsiening van Braille-spyskaarte aan restaurante om die kampus.

“Sommige van die SR-aktiwiteit sluit in die plasing van studente sonder gestremdhede in ’n rolstoel tydens ’n skattejag wat die versameling van leidrade by verskillende geboue behels. Dit het aan die studente die probleme getoon wat rolstoelgebruikers het met toegang tot hierdie geboue.”

Dit is nou 11 jaar sedert Dis-Maties vir die eerste keer geregistreer is as ’n studentevereniging vir persone met gestremdhede en diene wat meer wil leer oor gestremdhede.

“Ons doel vandag is om te verseker dat studente met gestremdhede ’n studentelewe ervaar wat so ryk is as dié van enige ander student, in sosiale sowel as akademiese konteks. Dit behels om stereotipes af te breek en bewusmaking te bevorder aan die een kant, en om betrokke te raak by aktivisme om ongelykhede aan te spreek, aan die ander kant,” sê Sydney Berrington, ’n lid van Dis-Maties.

Met hierdie doel voor oë het die vereniging ’n aantal suksesvolle geleenthede aangebied wat insluit bewusmakingsdae in samewerking

Ander pret-aktiwiteit sluit in Dis-Maties se gewilde “Dinee in die Donker” waar gaste ’n driegangmaaltyd geniet terwyl hulle geblinddoek is.

“Afgesien van fondswerwing vir Dis-Maties gee hierdie ete aan gaste ’n vae idee van ’n alledaagse aktiwiteit in die wêreld van ’n blinde persoon en bring nie-gestremde en gestremde mense in kontak met mekaar. Dit help om stereotipes af te breek.”

Die vereniging het ook onlangs Dis-Maties praatjies oor gestremdhedsverwante onderwerpe geloods. Vir meer inligting oor Dis-Maties, besoek www.dismaties.co.za of e-pos ons by dismaties@gmail.com.

Siggestremd en neem leiding



As 'n jong student voel ek ook bemagtig en kan ek vrylik praat oor my gestremdheid, omdat ek weet daar is niks om voor skaam te wees nie. Ek beoog om mense op te voed en aan te moedig om vryelik te praat oor verskillende soorte gestremdhede, of dit by formele geleenthede of informele sosiale funksies is.

– Luigia Nicholas (foto), 'n siggestremde student wat tans haar vierde jaar BRek-kursus voltooi en die huidige voorsitter van Dis-Maties, oor haar ondervinding om aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch as gestremde student te studeer.

Die regte ondersteuning kan lei tot ongelooflike suksesse



Foto: Ilse Hayes in aksie tydens die Rio 2016 Paralimpiese Spele.

baie leeswerk of berekenings vereis word, gemaak” sê Hayes.

Danksy die pogings van die Eenheid vir Gestremdhede (EG) het Hayes, soos vele ander studente met gestremdhede, toegang tot die braille-kamer vir siggestremde studente.

“Dit was altyd pret om in die

Sy is een van Suid-Afrika se mees bekroonde atlete met ’n gestremdheid en is aangewys as die vinnigste vroulike Paralimpiese atleet in 2015, maar 12 jaar gelede het die siggestremde Ilse Hayes geen idee gehad dat ’n BA-graad in Sportwetenskap aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch haar ook na haar afrigter, die bekende Suid-Afrikaanse Paralimpiese afrigter, dr Suzanne Ferreira, sou lei nie.

Ná haar eerste jaar, sê Hayes, het sy op haar gemak gevoel dat die departement haar as ’n siggestremde student sou kon akkommodeer.

“’n Groot deel van my ongelooflike ondervinding op Stellenbosch was weens hul bystand en aanpassings waar nodig. Behalwe dat lektore my klasnotas vergroot het, het ek altyd die opsie gehad om eksamens en toetse saam met die hele klas te skryf, of afsonderlik saam met my toesighouer, en kon 20 minute ekstra skryftyd vir elke uur of so kry. Dit het ’n massiewe verskil in sommige vakke waar

kamer te wees met studente wat gidshonde gehad het,” sê sy.

“Eendag het een van die honde in die kamer gemors en die twee studente met gidshonde het gestry oor wie se hond die skuldige was. Die een het gesê sy hond sou nooit oortree het nie, en die ander het geweier om skoon te maak. Die ironie was dat nie een van hulle kon sien wie se hond dit gedoen het nie!”

Hayes was bevoorreg om aan die universiteit te studeer in ’n tyd toe Paralimpiese sport gegroei het en die instelling besig was om te transformeer tot ’n sentrum vir sport vir gestremdes.

“My oefengroep het my tweede familie geword en heelwat karakterbou en vorming het plaasgevind met hulle aan my sy. Ek het na US gekom sonder om te weet hoe dinge 10 jaar later sou lyk. Eerlikwaar, ek sou niks verander nie en glo God het hier ’n plan met my gehad.”

Befondsing vir gestremde studente noodsaaklik vir sukses



Foto: Bongani Mapumulo, by die Rektor, prof Wim de Villiers.

“Deur toegang te hê tot tegnologie en hulpmiddels op kampus besef ’n mens dat wanneer daar minder stremmende faktore – fisiese hindernisse en/of houdingskwessies – is binne ’n spesifieke omgewing, word gestremdheid beperk of selfs heeltemal geneutraliseer. Hierdie ondersteuning het my toegelaat om verby my eie situasie te kyk en te poog om ’n verskil namens diegene wat ná my kom te maak.”

– Bongani Mapumulo, ’n derdejaar BA Sosiale Dinamika student, wat

nou fokus daarop om koshuise aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch meer toeganklik vir persone met gestremdhede te maak en gemeenskappe opvoed oor gestremdheidskwessies.



Foto: Jeff Kao en sy assistent, Brendine Johnsons besig om WYNN sagteware (vir mense met lees en skryf uitdagings) te gebruik.

“Tydens my tweede jaar aan Universiteit Stellenbosch het ek klein struikelblokke teëgekomp, maar hulle oorkom met die bystand van die Universiteitspersoneel, veral van een van my gunsteling-lektore, dr Thomas Cousins. Tot op hede was my US ondervinding altyd ’n aangename en voorspoedige een en ek hoop hierdie milde bystand sal vir die res van my studiereis voortduur.”

– Jeff Kao

Verskaffing van pasgemaakte ondersteuning vir gestremdheid



Jody Bell (foto), 'n uiters gehoorgestremde alumna van Universiteit Stellenbosch (US) wat kogleëre inplantings gebruik om te hoor, is tans ingeskryf vir 'n meestersgraad in Patologie aan die US.

“Ek het erg gesukkel om geïndividuele ondersteuning te kry toe ek gestudeer het aan 'n ander instelling,” sê Bell, terwyl sy besin oor die “een grootte pas almal” ondersteuning wat daar aan gestremde mense gebied is, ten spyte van verskille in hoe mense met soortgelyke gestremdhede leer.

“Ten spyte van kogleëre inplantings het ek steeds verbatim-notas van die lesings nodig, omdat ek minstens 20% tot 30% van wat verbaal in lesings oorgedra word, misloop, en selfs meer tydens groepbesprekings,” verduidelik Bell.

Dit is omdat klankdinamiek by lesings en in groep-konteks verskil van een-op-een kontekste waar liples en nabyheid aan die spreker klank verbeter.

“By 'n ander instelling is ek bloot ingelig om gebruik te maak van 'n FM-stelsel, 'n sender/versenderstelsel wat gehoor en klankoordrag verbeter, om die agtergrondgeraas in die klas te blokkeer.”

Aangesien Bell afhanklik is van gesigsuitdrukkings, gebare en soms liples kon sy dikwels nie notas afneem en terselfdertyd luister nie. Toe sy vir nagraadse studie aan US ingeskryf het, was sy aangenaam verras om te vind dat die Eenheid vir Gestremdhede (EG) belanggestel het in haar presiese ondersteuningsbehoefte.

“Toe EG my inlig dat hulle aan my behoeftes sal voldoen, en dit inderdaad gedoen het, het dit my lewe verander. Dit was die oomblik toe iemand my gehoor en verstaan het wat ek werklik nodig het om akademies uit te blink en 'n positiewe studenteleerondervinding te hê. Hulle het nie net besluit wat ek benodig het, gemeet aan ander gehoorgestremde studente nie. Dit was daardie aanvaarding van my individualiteit binne my gestremdheid, hul oopkop-houding, inklusiewe aard, en bereidheid om te innoveer en werklik gestremde studente te omarm wat my hele ondervinding verander het.”

Aanpassing by beperkte visie ná trauma



“**E**k onthou dit was ongeveer 1998. Ek was in ’n laerskool in my tuisdorp en ek het ’n ongeluk gehad wat botsing-trauma aan my gesig veroorsaak het. Die eerste paar maande het ek tuis gebly en my huiswerk gedoen, terwyl ek gewag het vir my dubbelvisie om op te klaar en die verwydering van die steke. Uiteindelik het ek vir die volgende paar jaar tuis gestudeer totdat ek teruggekeer het na ’n openbare skool in 2006,” sê Helena Wiehahn, terwyl sy vertel hoe sy vir die eerste keer na haar ongeluk besef het dat sy nie baie goed of ver kon sien nie, en nie in staat was om geskrewe notas in die klas te neem of ’n motor te leer bestuur soos ander tieners van haar ouderdom nie.

Kort na hierdie ontdekking het sy haar eerste bril ontvang. “Dit was eers tydens my eerste jaar aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch wat ek besef het dat wat as ’n klein hindernis begin het, teen my twintigerjare problematies was. Met die groot hoeveelhede leeswerk en die groot klasse aan die Universiteit was my oë konstant moeg en my visie uit fokus. Die spiere in my oë sou teen die middag uitgeput

Foto: Helena Wiehahn is gedeeltelik verblind in ’n ongeluk, maar weier om toe te laat dat die gestremdheid haar lewe bepaal.

wees en ek het ontsettend gesukkel om op my studies te konsentreer. Ek het uiters ligsensitief geword en het verskillende brille, lense en oogdruppels probeer om dit teen te werk.”

Dit was eers halfpad deur haar studies dat sy van die Eenheid vir Gestremdhede (EG) verneem het en voorgestel is aan dr Marcia Lyner-Cleophas, Hoof van die EG.

Danksy die EG en Wiehahn se oogkundige, wat aan haar die nodige dokumentasie verskaf het, het sy toestemming verkry om te registreer as siggestremde student aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch. “Hierdie pad was nie maklik nie. Ek het baie mense teëgekom wat verblind is deur hul eie onkunde en my gevolglik sleg behandel het. Dit voel ook asof daar baie min empatie in die Suid-Afrikaanse gemeenskap is vir die stryd van ’n persoon wat nie blind is nie, maar slegs gedeeltelik siggestremd is. Dikwels kan ander nie ons stryd waarneem nie en dit het my laat voel asof my gestremdheid nie so belangrik was as die stryd van ander nie. Dit is ook hoekom ek myself die hulp wat ek so dringend nodig gehad het, misken het.

“Ek is nou ’n alumnus van die Universiteit Stellenbosch en terwyl ek steeds dieselfde vooroordele en onkunde van mense in openbare ruimtes teëkom, verdra ek dit met meer grasia en geduld, want ek is nie gebroke nie, bloot net ’n bietjie anders.”

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Contributors:

Annette Dollman (Stellenbosch University alumnus and music teacher)

Luigia Nicholas (third-year student completing a BAcc degree)

Sydney Berrington (former Chairperson: Dis-Maties)

Bongani Mapumulo (final-year student completing a BA Social Dynamics degree)

Ilse Hayes (Stellenbosch University alumnus and paralympian)

Helena Wiehahn (Stellenbosch University alumnus)

Jeff Kao (third-year student completing a BA Humanities degree)

Toni Mould (Stellenbosch University alumnus)

Jody Bell (currently enrolled for a Masters degree in Pathology at SU)

Copywriter: Lynne Rippenaar-Moses

Translator: Anne Kruger

Graphic Designer: Janienke van Zyl





The Disability Unit

Back row (from the left): Ms Meagan Stevens, Ms Melanie Willems,
Ms Pippa Louw, Ms Ilse van Wyk, Dr Birgit Schreiber.

Front row (from the left): Dr Marcia Lyner-Cleophas & Dr Munita Dunn-Coetzee.



Visit us at: Disability Unit, Centre for Student Counselling and Development,
Student Affairs, 37 Victoria Street, Stellenbosch University



Contact us at:
021 808 4707



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