

# Disability Services Office

## *A Message from the Provider of Services*

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As we make our way to the end of the semester I want to take this opportunity to remind everyone about final exams! This is probably the last thing you want to think about as you get ready for the summer, but in order to have a smooth final exam week these tips may be helpful.

Final exams should have been scheduled by April 1, 2011. We ask you to schedule these exams in advance because of the large number of students that take tests in our office. If you did not schedule by this date you will be unable to take your final exams in our office and should make arrangements with your professor. Please make sure you report to the testing center in room 205 Stratton when you are scheduled to take a final. Most importantly, relax and take a deep breath. Before you know it you'll be relaxing in the warm weather. If you have any questions about testing, please contact me at 610-683-4108.

To our students graduating, I want to wish you luck in everything and anything you decide to pursue after college. I know you will be successful in whatever you choose to do. I know that I will miss seeing you and it was my pleasure to help you through your educational journey.

**To faculty:** please be advised that the students who take tests in our office for finals may be requesting information about testing procedures well in advance. As mentioned above, finals can be a very busy time and we need to bring in outside volunteers to proctor and read the many exams that come through our office. This requires extensive advanced planning. Please don't hesitate to contact me with questions or concerns.

**A note on cheating:** If a student is caught cheating or committing acts of academic dishonesty, the student could face possible failure of the course. If there are previous violations, a formal process will be initiated that could result in a suspension or dismissal from the university. *(Adapted from the KU Undergraduate Course Catalogue.)*

—Maggie McLaughlin Yannes, Provider of Services, DSO

### Upcoming Events

- **April 21** Appreciation Reception and Delta Alpha Pi Honor Society Induction Ceremony
- **Stereotypes Workshop**, hosted by the Phoenix Group, will be held Wednesday, **April 27**, 2011 from 7-9 p.m. in the SUB Multipurpose Room.
- **May 2-6** Final Examinations
- **May 7** Spring Commencement

## *Kutztown University Phoenix Group*



The Kutztown University Phoenix Group is a campus club that spreads disability awareness in the KU community.

Although the Phoenix Group recruits mainly students with disabilities and special education/education majors, all students from any major are eligible and welcome to join.

Being a part of an organization like Phoenix really helps students feel included and part of something that's bigger than themselves. For students with disabilities, this club breaks them out of their shell and helps them gain new friends. For students without disabilities, it gives them great experience working alongside a diverse range of people with disabilities.

The group implements several disability awareness-related

activities each semester. They have worked with other clubs/organizations, co-hosted events with the DSO, participated in volunteer activities, and even encouraged their members with disabilities to speak about their specific disability.

Some people don't understand why a group dedicated to disability awareness is named after a bird. The phoenix bird, according to one account, lived 500 years, burned itself to ashes on a pyre, and rose alive from the ashes to live another period of time. This symbolizes how students and persons with disabilities can overcome challenges. For a student group specifically, it is a clever title because students face many challenges while in college—whether one has a disability or not.

The Stereotypes Workshop is an event that the Phoenix Group started last year to help students with disabilities and other diversified interest groups break myths about certain types of people. The event is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served through catering at Kutztown University. This year the event will take place on Wednesday, April 27, 2011 at 7 p.m. in the SUB Multipurpose Room.



*Jackie Conley served as the President of the Phoenix Group for the past two years and will be the Commencement Speaker at graduation in May.*

### Did You Know...

To assist a person with a vision impairment with mobility, you should identify yourself first and ask if he/she would like your assistance.

**DO-IT at the University of Washington**

## Student Spotlight: Elaine Mara, '12



Elaine Mara is a graduate student studying **Student Affairs in Higher Education – Administration**. She obtained her bachelor's degree at Kutztown University in English/Professional Writing with a concentration in Public Relations and a minor in Women's Studies.

Elaine was born with Optic Nerve Hypoplasia, a condition in which the optic nerves are underdeveloped. She also has Nystagmus, which is involuntary movement of the eyes. This makes reading and focusing on an object quite difficult. In addition, she has astigmatism and light focuses on two points of her eye instead of one, which blurs her vision. Her visual acuity measures 20/50 with both eyes open (meaning what she sees at 20 feet away, someone with 20/20 vision sees from 50 feet away). Elaine is 20/50 in the left eye and 20/70 in the right eye; so, she has no depth perception, therefore, she uses a white cane to help her detect

obstacles.

Currently the Graduate Assistant (GA) in the Disability Services Office (DSO), Elaine serves as the Note taking Coordinator. She hires and supervises student note takers in addition to working closely with the DSO student worker with regards to note takers and the note taking procedures. Elaine also provides office support when needed.

The graduate program in which Elaine is enrolled allows students to choose a service office and focus many of their projects and professional experiences around ultimately landing a job in that particular professional area. Elaine's interest is in Disability Services, which is why she wanted and was granted the graduate assistantship. She will also complete her practicum hours this semester at the DSO. While in practicum, Elaine will set goals to gain experience in the operation and delivery of services with the DSO and use the skills that she learned in her graduate classes to help with higher-level responsibilities in the office.

Campus clubs and organizations that promote disability awareness are also very important to Elaine. She has been in the Phoenix Group for about five and a half years and served as president

from fall 2005–spring 2007. She also serves on the ADA Task Force, which is currently focusing on veterans issues. She has been a member of the task force since fall 2005. Finally, Elaine just joined the Kutztown chapter of Toastmasters, International, which teaches students how to speak when running meetings, leading an organization, and in a professional setting.

In addition to working, taking classes, and being involved in campus clubs, Elaine is a member of two learning communities. In fall 2010, she joined a faculty learning community at Alvernia University called "Addressing the Differences in All." These meetings are held by Alvernia's ADA Coordinator. Elaine teaches and shares information with the Alvernia faculty about students with disabilities and how to better serve them due to her own experiences as a student with a disability. Elaine also joined the Learning Community for Students with Disabilities at Kutztown University in fall 2010. The community is currently working toward obtaining a Disability Oasis Center on KU's campus.

Upon graduating from Kutztown with her master's degree, Elaine would like to work in a campus disability services office.

## Student Spotlight: Genevieve Smith, '12



Genevieve Smith has had only one goal on her mind since entering college: to eventually become an orientation and mobility instructor. This career path allows professionals to teach blind or visually impaired students how to travel safely. Genevieve describes it as, "teaching blind people where they are and their immediate surroundings and showing them how to get to where they need to go."

Although she herself is blind, she is not going to let that stop her. Genevieve found a graduate school in Louisiana that teaches blind people how to teach orientation and mobility. And travelling to a new state to get an education doesn't worry Genevieve at all.

Originally from Leavenworth, Kansas, Genevieve knew she had to find a school that would allow her to work towards her main career goal. She was fully

aware that graduate school was required for this field, but she still wanted an undergraduate career that would give her additional knowledge about and experience with teaching visually impaired students. When she found KU's **Special Education Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) major**, she knew it would provide her with some background knowledge for graduate school. She is now in her junior year at Kutztown working towards obtaining her undergraduate degree.

Genevieve has a few tips for blind students. Communication with your professors and the DSO as well as submitting requests to the DSO early is important. However, her main piece of advice is to have a plan before coming to college. Genevieve trained for 6 hours a day the week prior to the start of the fall semester so that she could familiarize herself with the campus. It is crucial to know the campus before school starts. Lastly, Genevieve suggests not getting a guide dog during the first year of college because one needs to learn where she is going first, before she can train a guide dog.

Because she was born blind, Genevieve has a few accommodations that she receives from the DSO. Since she cannot see, she can't read printed tests; therefore, Genevieve often has a reader and scribe.

This means that someone in the office will read Genevieve's tests to her and then record her answers as she dictates them. Occasionally she will use the computer program JAWS which reads her tests to her by computing the text to speech, so she also receives extra test time.

Genevieve has another accommodation that was given to her not by the DSO, but by Guide Dogs for the Blind. She received a guide dog last year in order to help her obtain maximum mobility. Her black lab, Peru, helps her everywhere. When comparing a guide dog to a white cane, Genevieve said that guide dogs are more efficient because, "they lead you through crowds better; they remember stuff like streets, trash cans, stairs, chairs, etc."

"I want to do things myself," Genevieve said. "I want to be as independent as I can." Peru really helps her obtain this independence. A few things that she wants people to know is that they shouldn't touch, feed, or call Peru. When a guide dog is with its owner, it is working and should not be distracted. Also, if a student wants to help Genevieve, he/she should introduce themselves **first**, and, Genevieve says, "If I tell you I don't need help, don't insist that I do."

This newsletter was written by Writing Intern Jacqueline M. Conley, '11, for the Disability Services Office at Kutztown University.

To contact the DSO, please call 610-683-4108. This document also available online: <http://www.kutztown.edu/admin/humandiversity/disabilityservices/index.shtml>