



Hunter College ■ Office of AccessABILITY ■ Student Services

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Helping Students with Disabilities Succeed since 1988

Issue 8, Fall 2009

Faculty and Staff Newsletter

TRANSITIONAL SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

What is a Disability?

Under Section 504 of the **Rehabilitation Act of 1973** and **Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990**, a disability is defined as any person who (i) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of his/her major life activities, (ii) has a record of such impairment, and (iii) is regarded as having such impairment.

Under the ADA, no otherwise qualified individual shall, solely by reason of such a disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity of a public entity.

In 1990, President George H.W. Bush, at the Rose Garden of the White House in Washington D.C., signed into the law the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) thereby, opening all doors even wider for people with disabilities throughout the United States. Throughout the country, colleges and universities, had begun to introduce services for student with disabilities on their campuses, and in particular to students with learning disabilities (LD) by this time. It was with that "this increase in the number of students with learning disabilities rose to a 173% attendance record for postsecondary institutions from 1989 to 1998." (*Henderson, 1999*) and is credited in part to the signing of this legislation. With that some students with disabilities, for the first time, began to make a transition from being on the outside to leaping hills and mountains for the opportunity to get to college.

Transition to college can be difficult for any freshman college student during these times, be it an adult or young student. That is why many colleges began to offer programs for Students with LD like "transitional" opportunities to enable Students to transition in the best way they can. Some of these programs even collaborate with local High Schools by way of effective programs like "college transition plans" (*Aune, 1991*) and in some cases may assist and prepare students with LD for transition to college like we do at Hunter College (<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/student-services/access/transitional-services-ats>). These high schools offer information on accommodations, counseling services and other support services that are now available in a majority of colleges and universities throughout the United States. Opportunities seem in abundance at present as opposed to past years, and in particular for H.S. students with learning disabilities. But to adults with learning disabilities these services and programs may not have been in abundance during their early years.

Transition is a term that may be interpreted as flight. But flight can also be seen as moving or going on to explore other places, or even seen as change. For adults with learning disabilities this "flight" can be overwhelming! Change for adults with LD in an academic environment of youth and intellect, at times, can be intimidating for some to say the least. Post-secondary transition may bring an added responsibility. For adults this can be included by independent living, (while adjusting to

society), and employment, amongst others. Thus, while many adults with LD in college settings appear to demonstrate appropriate social skills, internal personality problems maybe impacting significantly on daily living (*Gregg, Hoy, King, and Moreland, 1993*).

With transition comes new faculty/ teachers, new social circles, registration, curriculum, and testing, amongst others, to which all can add to the student's busy workload. With encouragement and assistance, this workload can be translated into a positive experience for Students with LD in their transition to college. Thereby, begin to participate in the exploration of the mind and academia; then maybe realizing that the sky is the limit.

The future is looking bright indeed not only for students with learning disabilities; but for all students with disabilities. Positive transitional experience may now be more "accessible" than ever.

References:

Anue, E. (1991). *A transitional model for postsecondary – bound students with learning disabilities*. Research & Practice, 6, 177-187.

Henderson, C. (1999). *College Freshmen with Disabilities. Statistical year 1998: A biennial statistical profile*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education, HEATH Resource Center.

Gregg, N. Hoy, C., King, M., Moreland C., & Jagota, M. (1992a). *The MMPI-2 profile of individuals with learning disabilities at a rehabilitation setting*. Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling, 23 (1), 52-59.

Student Profile

Luis Gutierrez



Luis Gutierrez started his college career at Borough of Manhattan Community College and received his associate's degree in Liberal Arts in the spring of 2007. He transferred to Hunter College in the fall of 2007 to pursue his bachelor's in social work.

Currently, Luis serves as the President of the PossAbilities Club which was established in 2006 by students and for students, is active in student government and is a member of CUNY Coalition for students with disabilities. Luis also served on a Hunter College Student Advisory Board in 2008 where he was a voice for student with disabilities.

With a 2.8 grade point average, Luis knows how important it is to work hard to reach academic success. He received the Dedication Award from CUNY Coalition for Student with Disabilities. He also wrote an article about his experience at the "New York State Black, Puerto Rican, Asian Conference" which will be featured in the upcoming CUNY newsletter.

Luis has turned his passion for helping others into a reality at Hunter College. He has developed and implemented programs such as the Accessible Restroom Project which its mission is to establish more accessible restrooms throughout CUNY campuses and devotes his spare time to other organizations like Undergraduate Student Government.

Luis says, "I have come to view my life full of opportunities and limitless possibilities," and with that in mind he believes his degree in Social Work will allow him to continue to help students with special needs for years to come.

Currently Luis is involved in the STEM project, a program that explores careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics for Students With Disabilities. He is also to take part in the Disability Mentoring Day project which is sponsored by New York Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities.

"I hope to use my degree to educate the community especially those with special needs about the potential we all have to become productive members of society. I want to educate, inspire and provide a positive role model to other students with disabilities and let them know that we can become whatever we set our minds to."

Way to go Luis!!
We are all very proud of you.

Disability As Diversity: Recommended Reads

***By Prof. David J. Connor,
Learning Disabilities Program,
School of Education***

College Confidence with ADD: The ultimate success manual of ADD students from applying to academics, preparation to social success and everything else you need to know.

—by M. Sandler

Calling attention to the fact that only 5% of people with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) graduate from college, the author assures us that the situation does not have to be this way. In a straightforward, informal tone, Sandler 'tells it like it is,' namely that "...college classes are harder than high school for several key reasons. First off, class periods are now longer, and more information is thrown at you. Secondly, the information isn't spoon fed to you—you have to figure out what's important and what's not. Third, professors, unlike teachers, may offer you little hands on attention; college classes are very much sink or swim situations" (p. 148).

Not only is this book a lifeboat to help students stay afloat in what can be unpredictable—often tumultuous—waters, but one which provides direction before, during, and after college. In many ways, *College Confidence with ADD* can be seen as a self-help text, written by "one of us, for us." Disarmingly open about his own ADD and its impact on every aspect of his life's journey so far, Sandler's personal account is extensively woven throughout sixteen chapters.

College Confidence with ADD makes a welcome contribution to the growing literature written by people with disabilities who succeeded in what

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Invitation to Holiday Party

You are invited to join The Office of AccessABILITY for its annual Holiday Party on Thursday December 3rd, from 4:00pm to 6:00pm in the Faculty Cafeteria located in the West Building on the 8th Floor. Come and join us in this festive event, meet our staff and students and enjoy great food and refreshments.

Disability As Diversity: Recommended Reads (continued)

*By Prof. David J. Connor,
Learning Disabilities Program, School of Education*

Challenges such as focusing on academic and non-academic responsibilities, managing time, organizing simple to complex tasks, grappling with impulsivity, and feeling not quite “normal” are some of the staple features that emerge over several chapters.

College Confidence with ADD makes a welcome contribution to the growing literature written by people with disabilities who succeeded in what many describe as a hostile school system. By shedding light on a misunderstood and underestimated population in schools and colleges, Sandler offers important ways for students with ADD to plan and manage their education and, in turn, their lives. Ultimately, Sandler’s work offers both creative and commonsense answers to the problem of “only 5%,” helping us all move forward toward a time in which more than one in twenty students with ADD graduate from college.

Sandler, M. (2008). *College confidence with ADD: The ultimate success manual of ADD students from applying to academics, preparation to social success and everything else you need to know*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc.

Look Me in the Eye: My Life with Aspergers.

— J.E. Robinson

Over several publications, the brother of acclaimed writer Augusten Burroughs appeared in his works variously portrayed as reclusive, creative, anti-social, egocentric, functional, and seemingly indifferent to much of what transpired around him. After giving public readings,

Burrough’s realized that many questions asked of him pertained to his brother’s late diagnosis of Aspergers syndrome. This book is the result of Burrough’s encouragement of his brother to describe his life with Aspergers. Becoming a best seller in its own right, the autobiographical work is divided into short, usually funny vignettes, each serving as a piece of the puzzle to John Elder Robison’s personality (his functionality means he did not change his name like Burroughs).

What could have been a self-serving, shallow spin off akin to a character in a popular sitcom getting a show turns out, in fact, to be a person who stands alone in his own right. Robison reveals how a “quirky” personality influenced him dropping out of school and going into a succession of unsatisfying jobs, until he invented the flame throwing guitars used by Kiss and had a fun-filled career traveling with them around the country. Eventually, he became an engineer, and finally moved on to specialized restoration of antique cars. More to the point, he poignantly describes coming to be formally diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome at age 40. Much to his relief, his doctor tells him, “It’s not a disease...It doesn’t need curing. It’s just how you are” (p. 236).

Entertaining and witty, thoughtful and provocative, the twenty-nine episodes of John’s life reveal an individual who has come to know the world in his own, distinct way, giving readers a rare and eloquent account of life with Asperger’s. A recommendation on the book jacket from Temple Grandin, an inventor with autism, describes the autobiographical work as “A fascinating

glimpse into the mind of an engineer that should be on the reading list of anyone who is interested in the human mind.”

Robison, J. E. (2007). *Look me in the eye: My life with Aspergers*. New York: Crown.

AccessABILITY Workshops

The Office of AccessABILITY offers workshops for registered students that are designed to assist students with disabilities in developing their academic and compensatory skills. These workshops are held throughout the year, twice per month during dean’s hours on Wednesdays. Please encourage your students to take advantage of these workshops.

Q & A

Do you have any questions?

Please send your queries to:

Sudi.shayesteh@hunter.cuny.edu

Contact Information

Hunter College

Office of AccessABILITY

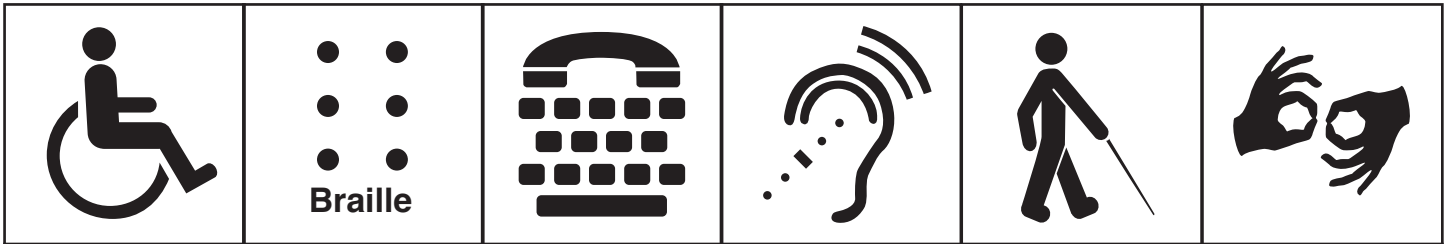
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November 2009 Calendar of Activities

Wednesday, November 4

Career Planning Day
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm
TH 205 (Main Room)

Students will meet with representatives' from Hunter College Career Development Services, LEADS Project, Enable Network and VESID to explore internship and employment options, learn new skills to develop resume & cover letter writing and plan their future career. Benefit Planning will also be explored.

**Refreshments will be served.*

Monday, November 9

Open House
10:00 am – 7:00 pm
TH 205 (Main Room)

This will be a great opportunity for Faculty and Staff to ask questions, discuss issues and learn more about how we provide accommodations to students registered with the Office of AccessABILITY.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

Wednesday, November 18

Test Anxiety Workshop
1:00 pm – 2:00 pm
TH 205
(Main Room)

A great opportunity for students to learn how to deal with their test anxiety, and overcome issues that prevents them from getting better test scores.

HUNTER
The City University of New York

Thursday, November 26 – Sunday, November 29

Thanksgiving:
College is Closed

Monday, November 30

ADA Accommodation Day
12:00 pm – 2:00 pm & 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm
TH 205 (Main Room)

All students registered with AccessABILITY must come to fill out a Semester (orange or green) Card to update your accommodations for the Spring 2010 semester!