Faculty Spotlight ~ Disability Accommodations in Online Courses: The Graduate Student Experience by Dr. Katherine Terras

Research is beginning to demonstrate that online learning may afford students with disabilities enhanced opportunities for academic success. To date, most of the literature on accommodations in higher education references undergraduate students in face-to-face courses. To expand the scope of research, I recently led a study, along with Dr. Amy Phillips and Joe Leggio, that investigated experiences of graduate students with disabilities in receiving accommodations in online courses. This study is being published in the Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability in the December 2015 issue.

The study employed a qualitative methodology to interview 11 graduate students with diagnosed disabilities at one Midwestern university. The following disability categories were represented: psychological disorders (n=3), learning disabilities (n=4), chronic health (n=2), and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (n=2).

Two major themes emerged from the data. First, pre-enrollment fears of academic failure were minimized once in the graduate program due to: (a) the flexibility afforded by online classes; (b) the willingness of instructors to provide accommodations; (c) the personal efforts of students via self-accommodation.

- The leading fear amongst participants was “keeping up” due to the characteristics of their disability. The increased time needed for reading and writing was a common fear for those with learning disabilities. For participants challenged with psychological disorders, lack of time was also a fear, mainly due to the inability to concentrate. Intriguingly, none of the participants mentioned that these fears delayed or derailed their scholarly pursuits. Moreover, none of the participants mentioned fearing the technology aspect of an online course.
- All 11 participants concluded they had been successful in their online courses, as personally measured by having a high GPA, earning the degree, learning, or getting a job. Six participants declared their disability through disability services, yet 10 participants received accommodations from their instructors. The main reason for declaring was that it guaranteed accommodations to prevent failure. Seven requested these accommodations early in the semester, with participants noting the importance of ongoing communication with instructors regarding extensions and clarifications.

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The primary accommodation made by instructors was extended time on assignments. Some students stated they did not need the same accommodations as when they were undergraduates because of the nature of online learning. For example, copies of notes and lectures were not needed because they could print material posted in the course management system, as well as listen to lectures multiple times. Alternative settings were also not needed because of being able to complete assignments within their home setting. Participants found most instructors willing to work with them and to be supportive. The flexibility of asynchronous, online courses was influential for some participants’ success. They found online courses to be “easier” because they could review the content multiple times, unlike a face-to-face course.

All participants self-accommodated in their online courses. Some participants sought assistance from individuals whom they knew personally to read to them or to edit writing. Others asserted themselves by seeking additional assistance from the instructor for clarification of nebulous content. Organizational systems were constructed for due dates. Online tutorial services made available by the University were accessed. Lastly, some self-accommodated by simply being “up front” with instructors about their disability.

Second, successful online accommodations are a result of specific efforts made by students, instructors, and the institution.

- **Student responsibility.** All participants felt it was their responsibility to be knowledgeable about disability-specific needs and to initiate communication with instructors and/or disability services about how their needs could be met through accommodations. Even with all participants reporting they self-accommodated, not one explicitly mentioned it as every student’s responsibility. Although all participants accepted this responsibility for initiating the accommodation process, only seven were open about their disabilities and felt comfortable requesting accommodations. For those who were not comfortable, their reasons included: (a) became “anxious” about requesting accommodations because of a history of not getting work done and concerned a “disposition form will be completed” on her, and (b) did not want to be “set apart from the others.”

- **Instructor responsibility.** Most of the participants (8) believed it was the instructors’ responsibility to meet their needs by providing accommodations. Participant comments included: “fulfill needs within reason,” “ensure they are fair to all students,” “read and follow the plan developed with disability services,” “allow self-accommodations,” “provide clear expectations about what instructors are willing to do,” “allow assignments to be redone,” and “work with students in the area of disability.” Slightly over half felt it was also the instructors’ responsibility to perceive them as hard working and fulfilling the same obligations as other students.

- **University responsibility.** As for the institution, it was their responsibility to establish policies and procedures for communication and accountability purposes. Providing a disability service was essential for documenting disability and upholding the rights of students. Some participants mentioned the University needed to “look critically at how to improve” and to ensure instructors are providing accommodations.
We now have several options for creating presentations and adding narration to them so that viewers can get the full story. Many of us are familiar with using PowerPoint to develop presentation visual aids, but adding our voice is a new layer of media that brings more depth to the experience, and allows our audience to receive our message in an anytime, anywhere and any pace format.

New (or improved) software that supports narrated presentations can be grouped into two types of applications: narrated PowerPoint presentations, or screencasting applications.

Applications which support the ability to narrate PowerPoint presentations, and then review and edit them, can provide users with the ability to quickly make minor changes to presentations if information needs updating. These applications usually include PowerPoint slides as a foundation for the visual component of the presentation, but may also include screencasts, images, or videos. PowerPoint 2013 for Windows is now a more versatile presentation application, as it has added narration features and screencasting capabilities; and the completed presentation can be saved as a PDF or uploaded as a video file to your YouTube channel. PowerPoint 2011 for Macs, however, does not offer the screencasting feature. Adobe Presenter is an add-on to PowerPoint (Windows only) which supports narration and editing, and the completed product can be uploaded to UND’s servers for streaming, or saved as a PDF. Note that while recording can only be done in PowerPoint on Windows, the finished recordings can be viewed on both Window and Mac computers.

For iPad and Android tablet users, Explain Everything supports imported PowerPoint slides, live Web page scrolling, video, and images while adding both narration and annotation—you can record your writing as you are speaking. These applications offer narration and editing to presentations for easy updates.

Screencasting applications capture all actions on a computer screen while you are recording your narration of the actions. Users can display and capture the entire screen or a smaller, selected area of the screen. The narration is usually a one-time recording and there are different levels of editing capabilities. Common, free and easy-to-use applications are Jing and Screencast-O-Matic. Jing, from TechSmith, has a recording limit of five minutes and is saved as a file or uploaded to their server. Screencast-O-Matic has a limit of 15 minutes for the free version, or unlimited time for the Pro version, allows minor annotations, and can be saved as a file, or uploaded to their server or a YouTube channel. Adobe Captivate or TechSmith’s Camtasia are more advanced screen-capture and recording applications which also allow editing. UND offers Tegrity lecture capture software for in-class recording, but it can also be used for creating recordings from the comfort of your office. Live, interactive web-conferencing applications such as Adobe Connect and Blackboard Collaborate can also be used to create recordings for later viewing.

The next time you are creating a presentation, consider how using one of these applications to add your voice can amplify your message and reach a wider audience.
It is not too much of a stretch to imagine that you have been in a spot where you just needed a quick answer to a technical question to put your task to bed. For those times when you just need a quick how-to on many of the applications and services that UND uses, UND Tech Support has a solution for you. That solution is called RightAnswers.

RightAnswers is our knowledgebase service. We have uploaded a wide variety of content into this vast, searchable database for any UND community member to use. We add content for most all of our supported systems and services. RightAnswers has even posted additional content on products you may use, but are not necessarily supported by UND such as: operating systems, web browsers, Microsoft Office, or Adobe Photoshop, among many others.

You may be asking yourself, "How do I find this?" Well that is easy; just go to techsupport.UND.edu (our Tech Support homepage) and click on the button on the right that says Search for answers. That button will take you into RightAnswers. From here, you can use the SEARCH field to find information on your particular task. Using the login button (using your email address and password) should allow you access to even more content, as some has not been flagged for public availability.

Can’t find what you are looking for? Click on the “Chat with us” link; and we will assist you or you can email us at techsupport@UND.edu. We are always working on adding new information to assist our UND community. Our contact information and hours can be found on the UND Tech Support homepage at techsupport.UND.edu.

**Meet Our Staff**

**Stephen Miller**
I was a student worker for CILT at the Memorial Union Service Desk for three years before leaving to work at the Amazon call center here in Grand Forks where I worked full time for a little under a year. I am now employed by CILT as of January as an Instructional Support Technologist. I enjoy the challenges that are created when human beings interface with software and I aspire to help people cultivate their own skills with technology. I am looking to finish my degree in Electrical Engineering while working at CILT.

Outside of work, I am a board game enthusiast and have developed a taste for ice fishing when the weather permits. I enjoy fellowship with my coworkers and friends and the occasional retreat back to the family dairy farm to help my folks. I’m Instructional Support Technologist Miller and this is my favorite newsletter at UND.

**James Richter**
I joined UND at the end of December 2015 as a CILT Instructional Support Technologist. I previously attended UND as a student before moving on to SEI (later Xerox), where I worked as a Help Desk Support supervisor for 12 years. In my spare time I’m an avid runner, participating in the Grand Forks Marathon the last few years. I have two boys at home, ages 3 and 5, along with my wife who works as a para-educator for the Grand Forks School District.

**Naomi Hanson**
I graduated from the University of North Dakota with a master’s in Instructional Design and Technology in 2009 and have worked at UND for the past two years at the School of Graduate Studies. I joined CILT as an Instructional Support Technologist in October 2014 and recently accepted an Instructional Design position at CILT in April 2015. I am excited to start this new opportunity.

I received my bachelor’s degree in Information Technology Management and Plant Industries Management from the University of Minnesota in 2005. I grew up in Fargo, ND and now live in Grand Forks, ND. I enjoy nature and gardening.

**Tech Tid-bitz: Finding the RightAnswers to Your Questions**

by Ted Storkson

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Important Information Regarding Computer Safety by IT Security Officer Brad Miller & UND Tech Support

We’ve received reports of phishing attempts and malware targeted to UND faculty, staff and students. These email messages contain attachments and/or links that if clicked will infect a person’s computer.

PLEASE, do not open any attachments without being certain that they are legitimate. If you get an email that seems suspicious - even if it appears to come from inside the system or a coworker.

To protect yourself from this type of attack:

1. Do not open or preview attachments that you are not expecting
2. Make sure your important documents and files are backed up in a secure location
3. Keep your Operating System and other applications like Java and Flash up to date

More about spear-phishing emails
Spear-phishing is a very well thought-out, targeted attack, which may include emails directed to you and could possibly contain information you may think is significant to your work. Spear-phishing attempts may appear to come from people you know, or from organizations or systems you recognize.

More about ransomware and other malware
Ransomware is typically software that locks your computer until you pay a ransom. The ransomware that recently appeared on campus, Cryptolocker, encrypts many different files on an infected computer – including files that are saved to drives in UND’s central file services system (H:, P:, S: and U: drives) or on portable drives connected to the computer. Once files are encrypted, a screen appears with information on how to recover the files by paying a ransom. Recipients are warned that if the ransom is not paid within 72 hours, files will no longer be recoverable, unless they are backed up in another location.

If you suspect your computer is infected with a virus, or if you have questions about an email you’ve received, contact your local IT support personnel, UND Tech support at 701.777.6305 or at und.techsupport@UND.edu, or the UND IT Security Officer at 701.777.3587 or at itsecurity@UND.edu.

Upcoming Workshops

10th Annual Teaching with Technology

May 18-21 and May 26-29, 2015
8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

or

June 8-11 and 15-18, 2015
12:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Robertson-Sayre Hall, Room 204 & 207

Sponsored by: Center for Instructional & Learning Technologies (CILT) in collaboration with Office of Instructional Development (OID)

Center for Instructional & Learning Technologies 5
**More Upcoming Workshops**

**Active Learning Workshop**  
*(For the Classroom you Find Yourself In)*

May 19-21, 2015  
12:30-4:30 pm  
SCALE-UP Classroom  
O’Kelly 61

In this three day workshop you’ll learn about implementing active learning strategies and evidence-based practice appropriate to the classroom you find yourself teaching in – be it a large fixed-seat lecture bowl, an intimate seminar room, a virtual classroom online or a specially designed active learning space like O’Kelly 310 or Merrifield 312.

Workshop participants will design a teachable component for a course and have the opportunity for feedback on its implementation.

Deadline for registration is May 7 at noon. Register online at oid.UND.edu.

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**Writing-Across-the-Curriculum: Teaching with Writing Workshop**

May 18, 20, 22, 26, & 27, 2015  
8:30 am-12:30 pm

How would you like to have that new prep for fall 2015 completed before the end of May? If you are planning to use writing in a new course or a revision of a course, apply to participate in this year’s Teaching with Writing WAC Workshop. This workshop provides an opportunity to work on course development with the input of colleagues from across campus. Along the way, you’ll learn about best practices for teaching with writing, including ways to use writing to promote learning and ways to teach students the writing conventions of their disciplines. Writing can be used in the course in a variety of ways - from quick, in-class journal entries to dissertation proposals and everything in between. Any course can qualify if the instructor plans to use writing as a learning tool, a learning outcome, or an assessment tool.

The workshop is open to all UND faculty and participants receive a $500 stipend (subject to standard deductions) and workshop materials. Each workshop is limited to 12 participants and applications are reviewed as they are received. The registration form is available at oid.UND.edu.

For more information, contact Christopher Basgier, Acting Co-Coordinator of Writing Across the Curriculum at christopher.basgier@UND.edu or at 701.777.2765.

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**Online Course Design Workshop**

Friday, April 24 from 1-4 pm  
SCALE-UP Classroom (O’Kelly 61)

Thinking about putting a course online? Or have one online that you’d like to re-think? If so, please join us for an afternoon of online course design.

In this workshop, we will cover the basics of online pedagogy, describe the components and structure of an online course, and offer a pathway for getting started. At the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:

- Identify essential components & related technologies of an online course
- Apply a model of course design to the outline of an online course
- Recognize common decision points in developing an online course

Book included with registration: Conquering the Content: A Blueprint for Online Course Design and Development by Robin M. Smith.

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**Student Engagement in Online Learning Workshop**

Saturday, April 25 from 9 am-12 pm  
SCALE-UP Classroom (O’Kelly 61)

Online learning offers more possibilities for student engagement than you might think. In this workshop, you will learn how to create and cultivate “presence” in an online course. And you will see how teaching strategies and instructional technologies can come together to support active, engaged student learning. At the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:

- Apply Moore’s framework of student interaction to an existing or planned online course
- Identify tools and technologies for use in creating active learning opportunities for students
- Describe strategies for creating and sustaining student engagement in online courses.

Book included with registration: Continuing to Engage the Online Learner: More Activities and Resources for Creative Instruction by Rita-Marie Conrad and J. Ana Donaldson.

**Presenter** — Dr. Lorna Richey Kearns, Director of Online Programs, Center for Instructional Development and Distance Education at the University of Pittsburgh.