

MOVING ON: Transitioning to College

disABILITY Services Newsletter for High Schools

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If I regarded my life from the point of view of the pessimist, I should be undone. I should seek in vain for the light that does not visit my eyes and the music that does not ring in my ears. I should beg night and day and never be satisfied. I should sit apart in awful solitude, a prey to fear and despair. But since I consider it a duty to myself and to others to be happy, I escape a misery worse than any physical deprivation.
—Helen Keller

Ready! Set! Go to College!

Preparing Students with Disabilities for College

For many students, moving on to college after high school can be more of a giant leap than a smooth transition. Help your students to prepare as early as possible in their final year by:

- updating psycho-educational assessments and/or other documentation, if necessary. See CNA's documentation guidelines here: www.cna.nl.ca
- encouraging them to practise SELF-advocacy as much as possible. In college, students are considered adults and, as such, they are responsible for ensuring that their needs are met.
- introducing assistive technology such as Kurzweil or Dragon Naturally Speaking. Human readers/scribes are not used in college unless there is a clearly documented reason why the student cannot use AT.
- contacting a Coordinator of Disability Services early in the school year to make sure your students are on track with all career choices (are they heading into the right program?), documentation requirements, funding applications, etc.
- gradually removing supports that will not be available in college such as one-to-one assistance from an Instructional Resource Teacher (IRT).
- helping students to acquire essential life skills such as time management, self-discipline, budgeting, etc.

Interview with CNA Student: Chris Duke

Chris Duke is a Business student at Prince Philip Drive campus. He began at the College in September 2013 in the CAS Transition program. Chris is a bright, outgoing student and enjoys classroom discussion. He hopes to one day secure a career in Marketing.

Chris also has dyslexia, a learning issue which makes it very difficult for him to get his ideas down on paper and to read at a level expected for his age and education level. Though he often knows the information, he finds it difficult expressing it through written word. I (Ted Power, CDS) spoke with Chris about his experience with dyslexia and what tools he uses to overcome it.

"When I was in K to 12, there was no actual way for me to be independent," says Chris, who relied on his teachers to act as scribe for his tests and assignments. "This took away my independence and, therefore, my will to work."

"When I was introduced to assistive technology (AT), I really had to redevelop my work ethic. Using it, I didn't have to depend on anyone else. I couldn't express my ideas on paper because I can't spell the vocabulary. I knew the words, I just couldn't spell them. I see words kind of as pictures; I can't spell them out phonetically."

One of the types of AT Chris uses is Dragon Dictation. It is a computer program that allows you to speak into a headset and your spoken words will appear on your computer screen. This technology was first utilized in the world of business where professionals could dictate letters and notes. Chris says that he uses Dragon for "everything" from testing to social media like Facebook and texting. On his personal computer, where the program is specifically trained to his voice, he estimates that it picks up approximately 97% of what he says correctly.

"I realized that, in the real world, I can't have an assistant follow me around and write everything for me," he says. "I had to figure out a way to become independent and the way to do that was to learn how to make AT work for me."

Chris says that things have really come a long way since he was first exposed to AT and it continues to get better. What is his advice to anyone wanting to make Dragon work for them? "Get a better quality headset than the one packaged with the software. Also, don't get frustrated. It takes time, but it's worth it."

Roles within Disability Services at CNA

Role of the Coordinator of Disability Services

The Coordinator of Disability Services (CDS) is responsible for the coordination of accommodations, supports, and services for those students who identify a disability and request accommodations. The Coordinator is responsible for meeting with students to discuss their accommodation needs, gathering other pertinent information that will help their transition to college and communicating the approved accommodations (verified by assessment/documentation information provided to the CDS) to the instructors and others, as appropriate.

For students with disabilities, the CDS is the point of contact to transition from high school to college. The Coordinator can advise on the use of assistive technology, funding for students with disabilities, and the study grants available through the Canada Student Loans program. The Coordinator works closely with college counsellors and Resource Facilitators who, together, provide supports and services through the Student Services Division of CNA.

Please note: Not all campuses have an on-site Coordinator of Disability Services. There are 7.5 positions for 17 campuses. Coordinators are based at one campus in a region, but are responsible for other campuses within that region.

Role of the Resource Facilitator

At CNA, we have positions at some of our campuses called Resource Facilitators (RFs). The RF may be responsible for assisting the CDS in communicating the approved accommodations to instructors, training students to use assistive technology programs, supporting students with alternate format materials, assisting instructors with invigilation of exams when technologies are required, and other duties, as required.

CNA does not provide the one-to-one academic support that students may be accustomed to in high school. College does not employ Instructional Resource Teachers (formerly special education) nor do we employ student assistants. Resource Facilitators are not instructors or Instructional Assistants and will not provide any one-to-one academic support to students nor are they personal care attendants. Students who require personal care while at college must secure that support themselves.

Resource Facilitators support the CDS, instructors, and students and are an integral part of the Student Services team in supporting students with disabilities at CNA.

Note-Taking as an Academic Accommodation

CNA will approve note-taking as an accommodation if it is supported by the students' documentation. Students should be advised, however, that class notes are a personal undertaking and how one perceives, interprets, and records information is a critical academic skill to develop. This will assist not only in post-secondary, but in the student's professional life as well. Effective notes capture the key aspects of a class and can be a useful study tool. As note-taking is personalized to the student, we encourage students to develop this skill as much as possible while still in high school. There are, however, alternative note-taking strategies utilized at the college which may be useful for students to consider and explore if they choose to request copies of notes:

- keyboarding using a portable device as opposed to handwriting
- online PowerPoint or slides provided by the instructors
- use of a peer note-taker
- smart pens such as Livescribe (<http://www.livescribe.com/en-ca/>)
- OneNote (<http://www.onenote.com/>)

Students should be encouraged to discuss the options above with the Coordinator of Disability Services so the appropriate level of note-taking support can be determined and arranged in a timely manner.

Assistive Technology in College

College is a very different experience from high school and the world of work! It can be very fast-paced, making it important to prepare ahead of time. CNA is committed to providing services to students with disabilities to help maximize success; however, these services may differ from those received in high school. CNA does not provide the one-to-one academic support that students may be accustomed to in high school. At the College, getting accommodations for a reader or a scribe are provided through the use of assistive technology (AT). The selection of appropriate assistive technology is usually guided by the student's educational assessment.

Some common examples of AT used at CNA include:

- text to speech software—verbalizes or “speaks” everything on a computer screen including alternate format textbooks, website text, etc. (i.e. Kurzweil, JAWS)
- voice recognition software—allows the user to voice computer commands and enter text using his/her voice rather than a mouse or a keyboard (i.e. Dragon Naturally Speaking)
- reading pens—allow the user to hear words and definitions spoken aloud
- smart pens—ballpoint pens with an embedded computer and digital audio recorder. When used with digital paper, they record what they write for later uploading to a computer and synchronize those notes with any audio that has been recorded.

It would be ideal if students fully understand how to operate the AT that they require prior to entering College of the North Atlantic.

Dates and Deadlines: Apply Now!!

Our programs fill up fast. Please encourage your students to apply now to ensure they have the best chance to get into their program of choice. Some programs have long wait lists and if students wait until the last minute to apply, they may not get in.

High school students can send in their applications once they have started Grade12. Students with disabilities should take particular care to apply early as some academic accommodations may take time to arrange, there are deadlines to apply for disability-related funding, and students may be offered the opportunity to shadow the programs they are interested in to ensure a good fit.

Know me by my name, strengths, abilities, hopes and dreams, not my diagnosis.

www.disabilityisnatural.com

For copies of previous issues or to view further information, please visit our website at www.cna.nl.ca/Student-Support/Disability-Services.aspx.

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