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To HEDSA friends and colleagues

We are overjoyed to announce that 2020 (the year of plenty) is HEDSA's 10th Anniversary. It is during 2010 that HEDSA constituted itself as an independent national body, and was established as a voluntary, non-profit organization. All the more reason to be excited about our 2020 Symposium.

HEDSA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE PROGRESS

HEDSA's Executive Committee has met for the third time on 30 October 2019 and met via teleconference on 17 January 2020 to focus on the Symposium planning since the previous Newsflash and the following matters of relevance:

- After a long struggle to sort out the HEDSA website domain, the website has been updated with relevant documents eg. links to the White Paper 2016 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Implementation Matrix, NSFAS disability policy 2019, Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for the PSET Systems (March 2018) <https://www.hedsa.org.za/policies--legal-documents>
- Drafting of guidelines for a more uniform approach to delivering services to students with disabilities and lecturers.

As per our previous Newsflash, the 2020 Symposium will be hosted by Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (Eastern Cape region) with the theme of focusing on Mental Health and accommodating students with Mental Health challenges. We encourage you to start planning and preparing to attend the Symposium on 21 and 22 September 2020. Watch this space for programme details.

The EXCO will be meeting again at the end of February 2020, to continue planning for the 2020 Symposium. We are extremely excited and hope that institutions apply for membership for 2020 again, in order to attend the Symposium.

As the current EXCO we want to kindly remind and again request members to please pay membership fees as per emails communicated in this regard. All Higher Education and TVET institutions may affiliate with HEDSA. Membership has the following advantages:

- To form part of the "list serve", which is a platform used to share experiences and obtain valuable information to assist institutions to benchmark and set-up services in a more cost effective way.
- To obtain funding towards collaboration in regions.
- To obtain guidelines / procedures / policies towards the provision of services by Disability Units.

If your institution would like to become a member, application forms for 2020 can be obtained from our Treasurer – Mrs Anneline Taljaard at annelinet@bolandcollege.com.

CARL & EMILY FUCHS FOUNDATION GRANT RECEIVED

Another grant of R50 000 was received from the Carl & Emily Fuchs Foundation, which was received towards the 2020 HEDSA Symposium.

NEWS FROM DISABILITY UNITS

Stellenbosch University

LEAD WITH DISABILITY

We successfully developed and ran two four-week sessions of a developed and accredited Lead with Disability course in 2019 by one of our Disability Unit staff. Students are accredited with this on their academic transcripts, once they have met all the outcomes of the course. The sessions consisted of theoretical inputs as well as experiential exercises. Some of the themes covered were universal access, universal access design, reasonable accommodation and progressive realisation. This workshop series was co-facilitated by students with disabilities.



STELLENBOSCH DISABILITY NETWORK

The Stellenbosch Disability Network is a constructive collaboration between Stellenbosch University (SU) and its town. You will know that SU is integrated with Stellenbosch town. Challenges faced sometimes by our students and staff on campus that impact on daily functioning and the safety of getting around, involve pavement conditions, pedestrian crossings with their buzzers and parking. These are functions of the Stellenbosch Municipality. We liaise with them closely about these. One exciting event that takes place each year in celebration the International Day for Persons with Disabilities, is a walk that we do around the Stellenbosch CBD, to raise awareness around disability matters in Stellenbosch and its surrounds.



AFRINEAD 2020 AND THE 2020 YEAR FOR DISABILITY (see notice of AfriNEAD conference)

The African Network of Evidence to Action will be holding their 6th annual conference in Cape Town from 30 November 2020 until 3 December 2020. The theme of the conference is “**Disability unplugged – Beyond Conventions and Charters: what really matters to persons with disabilities in Africa**”. You have a chance to present your research, project or disability inclusive practices as these fit into the theme of the conference – find information attached.

Additionally, Stellenbosch University is choosing to spotlight disability inclusive practices and programmes and highlight the road travelled and the way ahead, during 2020. Look out for the range of activities that will take place.

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Disability Support Unit staff conduct a Capacity Building Programme focusing on Awareness, Training and Interventions

Staff at the UKZN's Disability Support Unit (DSU) conducted a capacity building programme on the Westville campus on 4 October 2019. Participants included various DSU staff inclusive of DSU Coordinators, Officers and Trainers across 5 campuses.

The objectives of the Programme were to discuss services provided to students with disabilities, the challenges confronting students living with various disabilities and to explore appropriate interventions. Some of these services and interventions include reasonable accommodation requests, assessments, academic and social counselling, one to one in-depth consultation/intervention with students and access to appropriate services for students who are deaf such as sign language interpreters. Other services also entailed liaising with structures both on and off campus to meet the needs of students with visual challenges inclusive of referrals internal to UKZN as well as external (such as specialised hospitals)

Presentations were made by DSU staff and an external guest speaker. The informative presentations included *University Students living with Autism Spectrum Disorder* (Dr Faaiza Shaikh); *Somatoform Disorder: A Case Study for Psycho Social Concessions for Examinations* (Dr Rosh Subrayen); *Disability Equity Training* (Mr Nevil Balakrishna); *Supporting the learning of Deaf Students in higher education: A case study of the University of KwaZulu-Natal* (Mr Mongezi Zondo and Ephraim Shabane); and *Visual Impairment and Low Vision* (Guest Optometrist Dr Casandra Helen Seethal).

Some of the challenges experienced by the Disability Support Unit staff included low levels of awareness among the university community on the various types of disabilities. This included cases such as Autism Spectrum Disorder and Somatoform Disorder. In addition, engagement with internal and external stakeholders was minimal when it came to supporting the learning of students who are deaf. Other challenges related to a lack of a structured referral system and an advisory committee for students with visual challenges, variations in the application of reasonable accommodations for student with disabilities and low levels of computer awareness and usage by students with disabilities. Discussions also included the possibility of re-evaluating the frameworks utilised by DSU presently, when dealing with students' issues.

It was recommended that steps be taken to raise awareness on the issues experienced by students with disabilities including key issues of confidentiality, disclosure and stigma. There needed to be more engagement of internal stakeholders such as College departments, College Student Support and Campus Eye Clinic among others. External collaboration and engagement was equally important and

this included the KZN Mental Health Advocacy Group, Natal, Blind and Deaf Society and schools. In addition, there is a need for strategies and interventions in relation to establishing appropriate referral structures for students with disabilities and establishing committees such as a Reasonable Accommodation Committee. The importance of computer training for students with disabilities and the safeguarding assessment documents was also emphasised. Furthermore, Disability in itself needed to be underpinned by a respective framework such as a Disability Equality Framework.

Participants found the session extremely useful. Mr Mongezi Zondo (PMB Disability Coordinator) conveyed that he thoroughly enjoyed this programme and felt that he gained knowledge on various aspects of disability which can be implemented in his daily engagements with students.

From left to right in the picture below: Dr Ashley Subbiah, Dr Rosh Subrayen, Mr Ephraim Shabane, Mr Nevil Balakrishna, Dr Casandra Helen Seethal, Mr Mongezi Zondo, Ms Tahitha Pillay, Ms Margie Naidoo and Mr Derrick Munyai



College of Cape Town

College of Cape Town Inclusive Partnership Forum Meeting (25 November 2019) - Compiled by Ntombekhaya Nhose, Student Support Officer: Crawford Campus

The Student Support Services hosted representatives from different organizations in the area of disability on the 25 November 2019. The meeting was held at the Crawford Campus, New ECD building in the Art Room.

The aim of the meeting was merely for introduction, meet and greet with the intention of establishing partnership with the organizations so they could act as an advisory body to the Student Support Services as well as the college at large. The other aim was to give the organizations a little bit of information on who we are as the college and where we are in terms of Disability and Inclusion. Mr Halls (Acting Vice Principal: Innovation & Development) gave the background of the area of disability at the College of Cape Town and also shared a little about our future plans with this area.

Mrs Koli who is the Student Support Manager managing this area shared the purpose for the Inclusive Partnership Forum as well as what the college has done thus far in supporting our students with disabilities. Success stories and challenges encountered in the area were also shared with the forum. The following organizations were in attendance: **Cape Town Society for the Blind, Edit Microsystems, Athlone School for the Blind, Cape Town Association for the Physical Disabled, Western Cape Forum for Intellectual Disability**. Two students with disability from Business Studies who received assistive devices were also part of the meeting. Students were given an opportunity to share their testimonies as well as the challenges they encountered before and after the support they received from the college. This circle might become bigger as the suggestion to invite more organizations and experts in the disability area was brought forward.

Student Support Services is looking forward to working with these organization and the organizations also shared the same sentiments with the SSS. The organizations expressed their excitement with the journey the SSS unit and the college is about to embark on come 2020 and confirmed that they are more than willing to assist the college in their endeavours.



Disability Assistive Device Official Handover - Article by Ntombekhaya Nhose (Student Support Officer: Crawford Campus & Coordinator: Disability & Inclusive Education)

It was a great day filled with joy and excitement when the Student Support Services Unit handed over three assistive devices to three students with disabilities from Crawford Campus on the 19 July 2019. The names of the recipients are Xolani Williams (Business Management: N5), Asameodwa Ndimlana (Business Management: N5) and Nikho Qubayo (Office Administration: L2). Xolani received a brand new wheelchair, Asameodwa received a brand new mini laptop programmed with programs to cater for his needs and Nikho received a brand new hearing aid.

The event was not going to be possible if it was not for the assistance from the Senior Manager: Disability Support Unit -Mr Hirohito Dikobo from NSFAS as well as the support staff from NSFAS

Disability Support Unit. NSFAS through their private funding managed to provide our students with assistive devices and also made funds available for Human Support for Asameodwa.

The parents of the recipients were also in attendance when the SSS Unit handed over the devices to the students and they couldn't hold back their tears with excitement. " I don't know how to thank you, words are not enough to thank you for what you have done for my son", said one of the excited parent. The response and appreciation from the students was really heart-warming and encouraging to the SSS unit and the institution at large. These are the responses from our excited students :

I appreciate the support that I am getting from the staff of college of Cape Town and the college as a whole. I will never forget this day. I feel over whelmed. To my lectures thank you for understanding and showing love in what you are doing. NSFAS Thank you the device will be useful for my studies- Asameodwa Ndimlana

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to NSFAS, The College of Cape Town and all stakeholders for the device (Wheelchair). It came at the perfect time .I had been struggling with the previous wheelchair. Hopefully this does not end with us. Keep doing the great work- Xolani Williams.

In conclusion, The SSS Unit would like to thank Mr Deon Halls, Vice Principal: Innovation and Development for his continued support, Ms Raefa Gamielien, Programme Manager: Business Studies for ensuring that the students are well supported and accommodated in their respective classes. A big thank you goes to our guest speaker Mr Sedick from the Cape Town Society for the Blind who shared words of encouragement and motivation to the students, parents and the college officials as well. Below is the glimpse of what transpired on that day.



HEDSA'S WAY OF SHARING INFORMATION

As the HEDSA community we make use of a list serve to share best practices, ask questions, advise, guide learn from others and just share knowledge and information. Please make contact with Subhashini Ellan (Publicity and Communications) at Subhashini.Ellan@wits.ac.za if you would like to be added to the list serve.

Again in concluding this newsletter, I would like to urge colleagues to send us your news for this publication. Share with us your achievements, your challenges and your plans. Please also share photos of regional meetings held.

With sincere best wishes

Martie Miranda
Chair
Higher and Further Education Disability Services Association