



Higher and Further Education Disability Services Association

**HEDSA**

**HEDSA SECRETARIAT**  
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*Accepted as a community of practice by Universities South Africa.  
Registered as an NPO no. 078-484*

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August Edition

Dear HEDSA family and friends,

We begin this newsletter with a message of high importance. It has come to our notice that VC's have possibly not passed on the information to Funding Offices and Disability Units about the upcoming NSFAS roadshows.

A roadshow is planned with NSFAS, Disability Units and Financial Aid Officers to discuss the NSFAS Bursary Policy for Students with Disabilities. After much deliberation, a Roadshow has been planned for the following dates:

**Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, Venda and North West**

Date: 10 – 11 August 2016

**Western Cape and Southern Cape**

Date: 17- 18 August 2016

**Kwa- Zulu Natal**

Date: 29-30 August 2016

**Eastern Cape**

8-9 September 2016

Invitation letters have been sent to the Vice-Chancellors of the institutions requesting them to be forwarded to their respective Disability Units and Financial Aid Offices. It is vital that both Disability Units and Financial Aid Offices attend so if you have not received an invitation as yet, please contact Nafisa.

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Email: [nafisa.mayat@uct.ac.za](mailto:nafisa.mayat@uct.ac.za)

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HEDSA EXCO

*Mrs Reinette Popplestone (Chairperson, UCT); Dr Nina du Toit (Vice-Chairperson, CPUT);  
Ms Roshanti Subrayen (Secretary, UKZN); Dr Diane Bell (Treasurer, USB-ED); Mr Duncan Yates (Publicity and Communications,  
WITS- shared portfolio); Ms Maria Ramaahlo (Publicity and Communications, UP- shared portfolio).*

Website: [www.hedsa.org.za](http://www.hedsa.org.za)

## SYMPOSIUM

As you can imagine our main preoccupation at the moment is the upcoming HEDSA symposium taking place in November. We have some cause for concern – at the last count only eight institutions and three organisations had registered for the symposium. I have personally worked hard to ensure that we have a program rich with information we need to have and debates we need to be part of. Can I urge you to twist arms and bang on doors if necessary for funding from your institution to attend the symposium?

In order To assist us with planning, final budgeting etc. we would in fact like to hear from institutions receiving this newsletter who know for a fact that they **won't** be attending the conference. But having said this, let me remind you that unless your institution is represented at the Biennial General Meeting which forms an important part of the symposium, you cannot vote on the membership of the next Executive Committee, and neither would you be eligible for selection for a position onto the Executive Committee in your absence. But it is not my intention to have people attend the symposium for negative reasons. It's going to be **worth** attending – that's the big thing! An exciting addition to our program is a presentation by Eli Woolf from Brown University who is internationally well known in Paralympic and disability sports circles and played a major role in getting issues of sport and physical activity into the CRPD.

During the BGM in 2014 it was proposed that some aspects of the HEDSA constitution needed to be revised, and so there has been an extensive deliberation on updating our constitution over the course of the last two years. In order for amendments to the constitution to be considered at the Biennial General meeting the proposed amendments have to be distributed to members 90 days before the meeting, and it occurs to me that deadline is around the corner. So please look out for the document containing the suggested amendments, which we will circulate within the next two weeks.

And so on to some general news from various institutions.

## CPUT DISABILITY NEWS...

**Language Capturer** – a retired court stenographer, Gail Bredenkamp, joined the CPUT DU as a scribe during exams and then on an initiative to capture lecturers' words during classes for deaf and physically disabled students.

This impacted greatly on all the students as they all benefitted from this service in the class when the typed text was projected onto a screen. Gail still goes to the classroom with the more at risk students and our other students with different classes are able to record the lessons and email the files to her, which she then transcribes and emails back to the student.

**DU Resource Centre** – since 2013 we have used donor money to purchase assistive devices such as recorders, laptops and FM Systems to name a few, in order to assist our disadvantaged students. Most of our students rely on the NSFAS disability bursary for funding and because we cannot allow them to wait a whole year to be on par with the other students, we decided to help them.

We have implemented a loan system whereby they sign a loan agreement with us to use the assistive devices until they receive their own equipment from the bursary allocation. We have since increased our stock items and have about 35 recorders and 30 laptops out on the loan to these students. This helps them to not become an at risk student.

**Website, Blog & Facebook** – we have created a website page on our main CPUT website as well as a Blog. We have recently created a Facebook page as well and have asked staff and students to like our page.

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We have found that Facebook is a great medium to attract more attention and create more disability awareness as it is more interactive. We post interesting articles, information and career as well as bursary funding information on Facebook and can see within hours how many people we've reached.

**Graduates** – because of the protest upheavals late in 2015, our students wrote in January 2016 and therefore only graduated earlier this year. We are proud to announce that we have 69 graduates covering all disciplines! Well done to these hard working students that have succeeded despite all the challenges.

**BTech & MTechs** – another feather in our cap – we have 73 BTechs and 8 MTech currently.

As this goes to press, Nina is enjoying time with her family in Canada while CPUT anxiously awaits its new Head of the Disability Unit. It is interesting how we all find different ways of stepping into the breach left by late funding by NSFAS. At UCT we purchase equipment for students when they first register, and then we are refunded by NSFAS when the funding eventually comes through. We have to recognize though that unless Disability Units have access to donor funding most students will not benefit from interventions such as these, and so we have to keep advocating for the NSFAS funding process to be speeded up.

## WE NEED TO BE TALKING TO EACH OTHER

I have had a sense for a while now that over and above a formal newsletter which should ideally go out 4 times a year, there needs to be much more ongoing to-ing and fro-ing between HEDSA members. What has bothered me for a while is that there is so little communication between HEDSA members throughout the year. I am sure that it never was the intention that the Executive should be the ones doing most of the consulting, planning, decision making, discussing of problem issues should mainly happen within that small group. I would really value a discussion forum open to everyone who is a member of HEDSA, where we can ask and answer questions, vent, rejoice (occasionally!) seek guidance and so on. I know Deena Moodley has set up hundreds of Google groups and is reluctant to take on another one, but could we not see if there is someone who can set this up for us with a little tutoring from Deena? How about Andrew, or Duncan, or am I being sexist. Maybe there are some Google group gurus among our female colleagues. Shall we call them the Google girls?

It has also come to my attention that not all the staff in the Disability Units gets the HEDSA newsletters that we send to the contact person on our database. I would like to urge all of you to forward the newsletters to everyone in your unit, and in fact to anyone who you think should be taking an interest in our work.

Well, that is all for now, but we'll be back in September with more news and updates on the symposium.

Yours sincerely



**Reinette Popplestone**

HEDSA Chair

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