



Sam Van Musschenbroek
HEDSA: Secretary
Physical Address:
Fort Hare University
50 Church Street
East London 5200
Tel: 043 7047002
E-mail: samvm@ufh.ac.za

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To HEDSA friends and colleagues

This is the first HEDSA Newsflash for 2019, but we hope to make up in good news for the lateness.

Before we look ahead let us just look back for a moment.

HEDSA SYMPOSIUM: 11 & 12 SEPTEMBER 2018

To update members who could not attend the symposium, HEDSA is pleased to report that the 2018 HEDSA Symposium was successful. The symposium was well attended by all the different types of educational institutions in the PSET sector. The topics covered were well received and allowed for meaningful discussions in the open space that was created. Feedback after the symposium was overwhelmingly positive.

The theme for the symposium was "Inclusion: good practices and how we can fill the gaps" and topics covered during the Symposium were:

- Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for the Post-School Education and Training System - implementation plan
- Accessible online learning
- Physical accessibility guidelines
- Copyright and Access to information
- NSFAS presentation on funding for Students with Disabilities

The new HEDSA Executive Committee for the period 2018-2020 is:

- Ms Martie Miranda: Chairperson (University of the Free State)
- Mr Nevil Balakrishna: Vice-Chairperson (University of KwaZulu Natal)
- Mr Sam van Musschenbroek: Secretary (University of Fort Hare)
- Ms Anneline Taljaard: Financial Officer (Boland College)
- Ms Subhashini Ellan: Communications and Publicity Officer (University of Witwatersrand)
- Dr Anlia Pretorius: Outgoing Chairperson (University of the Witwatersrand)

Focus Areas moving forward following resolutions taken at the Symposium are:

- Providing support to build capacity of and share best practices with TVET institutions.
- NSFAS to conduct a NSFAS experience audit and HEDSA to continue working with NSFAS, to advise the NSFAS Board, when requested and to implement new guidelines in the PSET sector.
- Developing guidelines for a uniform approach to delivering services to students with disabilities:
 - Accessible Study Material Guideline for Lecturers; and
 - Universal Access considerations for infrastructure development.
- Training around disability matters and establishing and effective running of a disability unit through HEDSA regional collaborations, with reference to implementation of the DHET's finalized national Disability Policy Framework for the Post School Education and Training sector.
- Continue institutional support to member institutions.

GOOD NEWS - CARL & EMILY FUCHS FOUNDATION GRANT RECEIVED

HEDSA has received a R50 000 grant towards support and training of TVET and Community Colleges. We are all well aware that there is a need to support and assist TVET and Community Colleges to build capacity and to share best practice. In doing this, more students with disabilities across all educational levels available in the PSET sector in SA can benefit and will be able to showcase their abilities in a fair and equal environment.

As HEDSA Exco we encourage regional collaborations, whilst utilizing these gatherings for training opportunities as well. The regions were mentioned as part of the proposal and in thinking of broader collaboration between different regions, we have combined regions to collaborate, as below:

- Eastern Cape
- Free State (to include North West and Northern Cape)
- Gauteng (including Limpopo and Mpumalanga)
- KwaZulu-Natal
- Western Cape

Each region has therefore have R10 000 for the year, which can be claimed for meetings / training at these meetings. We encourage regions to try to meet at least 3 times for the year. To obtain the available funds claims can be submitted to the Treasurer, Anneline Taljaard, by emailing her at annelinet@bolandcollege.com.

Possible themes for this year to be incorporated in the regional meetings, should be aligned to the HEDSA resolutions:

- sharing experiences regarding the production of accessible study material
- sharing DU establishments / history.

Each region must also elect a chairperson and a secretary with the responsibility to provide feedback/reporting to HEDSA from the regional meetings held. The first report to be submitted by end of **July 2019** for purposes of providing a progress report to CEFF. Your collaborations, cooperation and adherence to the deadline will be much appreciated.

NEW HEDSA EXCO MEET FOR THE FIRST TIME 10 MAY 2019

The newly elected HEDSA Exco has met on 10 May 2019 for the first time since the Symposium to start, whilst overcoming challenges with the hand-over of financial and administrative responsibilities. We have now prioritized and planned the execution of resolutions taken. The current focus will be:

- Providing support to build capacity of and share best practices with TVET institutions through our list serve communication.
- Developing guidelines for a uniform approach to delivering services to students with disabilities by drafting an Accessible Study Material Guideline for Lecturers with inputs from all members.
- Encourage regional collaboration.

Exciting news is that we have a suggestion of who would be hosting our next HEDSA Symposium in 2020. So watch this space.....

We also want to 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.

This is a reminder that all Universities and Colleges should pay their membership fees by June of every year.

In addition, we received numerous payments in 2019 without a reference number. If your institution did not receive a receipt, kindly forward proof of payment to annelinet@bolandcollege.com.

NEWS FROM DISABILITY UNITS

Thank you for the contributions received towards this Newsflash. Nothing wrong in sharing the good work that is done at our institutions.

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University: THISABILITY: A graduation from acceptance to embracing – 24 April 2019

The NMMU Universal Accessibility and Disability Services Unit (UADS) hosted Musa E. Zulu on 24 April 2019.

This inspirational person is a man of many talents. A motor vehicle accident in 1995 resulted in him being paralysed at the age of 23. His opening line was that any word starting with “dis” has a negative connotation and he therefore referred to his disability as THISABILITY.

His frank advice to the disabled community is that failure is not an option if you put your mind to succeeding. A person has no excuse not to succeed because of his disability. There are challenges facing the disabled community and the acceptance of disabled persons as part of the mainstream. Activists must clear the path for universal acceptance.

Our new democracy has established legislation assisting to advance the disabled in the workplace. There is no reason for a qualified graduate to not be employed. Starting out rendering service, even for no remuneration, will pay off handsomely in the long run. He gave the example of a BComm graduate unable to find formal employment offering his services as a consultant to schools where book keeping is non-existent – even if the service is rendered for no charge in the beginning. A person with passion will always find his place in his chosen career and find fulfilment in life.

At the end of his talk he signed off personalised free copies of one of his books for the students. To learn more about this highly motivated person, one can look at his YouTube clips. The visit was also posted on Facebook – see our Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/NMUUADS/>



In picture: from left to right, Nosiphiwo Delubom–Deputy Director/HOD-UADS, MUSA E.ZULU – Guest Speaker, Mr Luthando Jack– Dean of Students, Estelle Broekhuizen – Braille Transcription services, Ross Dakin – 2nd Year PR Student/Communications Manager for UADS (in Access Route for Employment Programme (AREP))

Article compiled by: Ross Dakin (UADS Communications Manager under AREP at NMMU)

University of Witwatersrand

Wits shared its consolidated Disability Rights Unit report, which was presented at a recent Student Services Advisory Committee meeting. We would like to congratulate Wits for the work they are doing under the leadership of Dr Anlia Pretorius and for the example they are, for many of us.

SRC Disability representative: For the first time Wits has a Disability portfolio on their SRC. At the beginning of April, an introductory meeting was held at the DRU with the newly elected SRC representative. This person in this role will assist in promoting disability inclusion and a greater awareness at Wits.

Disability Interest group meetings: The Disability Rights Unit hosts quarterly Disability Interest group meetings. This group is open to anyone from the Wits community, who has an interest in disability related matters. The May meeting is aimed at creating an awareness of accessible transport of campus and evacuation and safety of persons with mobility challenges, in particular. The first Interest group meeting for the year was well received with a focus on Mental Health in the workplace. The Interest group meetings are scheduled over a common lunchtime period, to allow for as many students, academic, professional and support staff to attend.

Student support & wellness: With the registration of Deaf students, the DRU continues to support these students in the classroom, with a combination of South African Sign Language interpreting and real-time capture support. The latter, which not so well known in SA tertiary institutions, involves adaptive software, which allows a captioner to capture lecture notes whilst the Deaf student follows in real-time on a tablet. This is an inclusive practice for Deaf students to ensure that they are accommodated in the classroom. It also involves prior preparation, through consultation with lecturers.

Wellness support groups will be run from May at the DRU. These groups will be guided by the happy café action for happiness movement. As many institutions are experiencing, as had Wits experienced a growth in students with a learning or psychosocial disability since 2016. More students are willing to disclose mental disorders, reasons not very clear but some assumptions that may be drawn:

- Less of a stigma
- Age group where one first recognise some of the signs and symptoms
- Post student protests (2016)

Students graduating: DRU is proud of the following students with disabilities who graduated in March:

- Amine Boukrout (BSc Honours in Computer Science)
- Mpho Kgoadi (BSC Honours in Physics)
- Anna Chrysostomou (BSc Astrophysics)
- Ryan Clingman (BSc Mathematics)
- Sharon Mkhwanazi (BA Social Work)
- Nomthandazo Msibi (BA Drama and Performing Arts)



The birth of Boland College's Disability Unit

For conception to happen, everything needs to be in place. Two potentials merge. All conditions need to be right so that growth can start. And then, long before the mother is aware, a new life is developing. The birth of the Disability Unit at Boland College followed the same process. Long before the management was aware of it, a new unit was developing.

A few internal factors were in place: The right condition: A Disability Policy was adopted by the College council quite a number of years ago, which states that Boland College is an inclusive institution who fosters reasonable access to staff and students with disabilities.

The internal potential: a staff member, who has a disability herself, with a passion to support students with disabilities, and whose job description entails the coordination of special concessions to qualifying students.

The external potential: An organisation, HEDSA, who endeavors themselves to upskill staff members and uplift the support services to students in Higher Educational institutions in South Africa.

The rest was easy: During 2016 HEDSA had its biannual symposium at the Spier conference Centre in. Anneline Taljaard, Psychometrist at Boland College, attended the symposium. It was then that she realized the need for organized support, and she saw the potential of support that could be rendered to students. Understanding the challenges that lecturing staff face when they have to lecture students with a vast variety of disabilities, Anneline decided to change this.

"I developed a strategy", Anneline said. "Being a lecturer myself, I fully understand the challenges in class. But I also know that being absent from school for long periods with my disability, there were times that my teachers had to adopt to a different education mode in order to help me to master the work and to progress to a next level. So my strategy to implement change at Boland College was based on two pillars: the first was that I had to learn as much as possible about what Disability Units do, and what are the challenges faced by students with disabilities in the TVET sector. Therefore I attended every opportunity that I could, to empower myself. Two of the mind-changing events that I attended during the following year was the Universal Access seminar at Stellenbosch University, and the Feuerstein Mediation course which focused on support to students with academic challenges. Recently, I accepted a position on the Exco of HEDSA, where I can be exposed to many different sources of information and learning from those who have well established Disability Units. Secondly, I had to change the mind set of our colleagues. Although Inclusivity is a core value of Boland College, individual staff members do not have knowledge on how to deal with people with disabilities. So, to address this, I volunteered to be on the Staff Wellness committee. Apart from arranging year end functions, I took the responsibility to arrange motivational speakers who are differently abled, on Casual Day. Our first speaker was Nicky Abdinor, a clinical psychologist who has no arms and shortened legs. She inspired the staff members with her message that she has an independent, fulfilled life, and that she was born without arms, not without attitude. The next year Gerhard Erasmus inspired us with his independence although he was born blind. Staff members were astonished to realize that with technology, voice over software, braille laptops and i-phone technology, Gerhard has a high-level marketing job in the IT industry. This opened up the tunnel vision for all the possibilities that technology bring to change disabled-ness to this-abledness. In January 2018, I informed my line managers that Boland College is actually having a Disability unit, and that I am having meetings with every student who might have a physical or academic challenge in January and July every year. In January, to assess the support needs of new students, and in July to follow up. My managers welcomed this initiative as it is in line with the College Policy and the Disability Unit as part of the Student Support and Development Services division was officially 'born'. Although we have only started and the Disability Unit at Boland College is still a new-born baby, and there is so much to learn, the Exco of Boland College fully supports the direction that we took."

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.

In concluding this newsletter, let me 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