



## Center for Disability Services “Better Together” Fall 2022

### From the Desk of the Director



*Anne Osowski*

I am thrilled to begin this new academic year as the Director of the Center for Disability Services at College of Charleston. I would like to thank so many people who have reached out to congratulate me on this new role; it's certainly been heart-warming. I have been at CofC since 2014 and have served in the roles as “SNAP Services Coordinator” (now this title is “Access Specialist”) and most recently, Assistant Director.

While I've been in Charleston since 2014, I am originally from New Jersey. Prior to my move south, I lived in New York (Hudson Valley) and worked at SUNY New Paltz in the Disability Resource Center. On a personal note, I enjoy spending time with my family and friends, traveling, reading, watching movies, playing the piano, and volunteering at Middleton Place.

How do I describe the disability services field within higher education? These words immediately come to mind: Energizing; Evolving; Challenging; Collaborative; Inclusive. These words describe the connections that are built with our diverse students, the team that makes up our department, and the incredible amount of support from faculty and staff within this campus community, and from my colleagues within the field. My passion for this work wouldn't be the same without all these individuals.

I have a number of goals for the Center for Disability Services. An important goal is to simplify our processes, making it easier for students to connect with our department and receive needed accommodations. Another is for each semester to be more rewarding than the semester before. These goals cannot be accomplished without your feedback. Please feel free to reach out to me and share your ideas and any suggestions for improving on our efforts moving forward.

I hope you enjoy reading our first edition of “Better Together,” and look forward to working with you.

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## CDS News

- In July, Anne Osowski had the opportunity to present with CofC Hispanic Studies faculty member, Allison Zaubi at the 104<sup>th</sup> American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP) conference. Our presentation was entitled: *Yes, You Can Learn a Foreign Language! An Accessible Spanish Classroom for Students with Learning Disabilities*.



We were so pleased with all the positive feedback received from our attendees and it was enjoyable to present on a topic we're equally passionate about.

- **Yvette Lambright** (CDS Student Services Coordinator) and **Redina Alston** (CDS Administrative Assistant) were recognized for their efforts by being nominated at the annual *Salute to Student Affairs* event earlier this month/
- This semester we will be working on filling two essential roles: **Assistant Director** and **Access Specialist**. Final candidates for both positions will be invited for on-campus interviews.

## Accessible Technology



Accessible technology (AT) can be used by people with a wide range of abilities and disabilities. It incorporates the principles of universal design. Each person can interact with the technology in ways that work best for them. Accessible Technology includes any piece of hardware, software, or system that is used to improve the functional capacities of people with disabilities.

**One campus-wide software we are always thrilled to talk with students about is Read & Write.**

Read & Write Literacy software is a customizable, easy-to-use toolbar that seamlessly integrates with mainstream computer applications and offers you help as you work. It highlights and reads text aloud using natural-sounding voices and includes a comprehensive set of support tools.

This software is **FREE TO ALL** within the CofC community so please use and promote.

Check out this [article](#) about Read & Write written by TLT Instructional Technologist, Mendi Benigni. It also includes information about installation of Read & Write.

## ***Neurodiversity Initiative Club***

This fall semester will be the start of a new student organization, the *Neurodiversity Initiative Club*. The Center for Disability Services is excited to collaborate with this organization! Anne Osowski, Director of CDS will be one of the co-advisors.

All college community members who have a passion for promoting inclusion and access and want to identify ways to increase these efforts are encouraged to be involved, too!

Dr. Cindi May from the Psychology Club is a co-advisor of the *Neurodiversity Initiative Club* and Sam Swartz is its President.

### **Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Cindi May**



*Dr. Cindi May, Psychology*

Dr. Cindi May is a Professor of Psychology whose research focuses on improving outcomes for individuals who experience challenges with cognitive functioning, including older adults and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Her work examines factors that affect a range of cognitive functions, including attention, memory, and curiosity. She is also the proud mother of six children, two of whom are neurodiverse. Dr. May is an advocate for inclusive communities and policies, particularly within the field of education and employment, and she serves on the Board of Disability Rights South Carolina, the Catholic Coalition for Special Education, and the Think College National Coordinating Center Accreditation Work Group.

Here at the College of Charleston, Dr. May was the Principal Investigator on two foundational grants that supported the development of the REACH Program. She now provides consultation and evaluation for other college programs that support students with intellectual disabilities across the country. Her current research examines biases against people with autism in the workplace, particularly in job interviews. She is honored to serve as a faculty advisor to the Neurodiversity Initiative Club at the College, and hopes that the club will increase awareness and understanding about neurodiverse individuals, expand conversations and initiatives around diversity to include neurodiversity and disability, and create a more inclusive, engaging, and accommodating community for all.

### **Student Spotlight: Sam Swartz**



*Sam Swartz, Junior  
majoring in Public Health  
with Minors in  
Psychology; Medical  
Humanities*

My name is Sam Swartz and I am a junior at the College of Charleston with a major in public health and a minor in psychology as well as Medical Humanities. I am originally from Los Angeles Ca, a bit far away from Charleston but I absolutely love it. When I am not studying or working in the emergency department, I love to golf, try new foods, and since I have my student pilots license, spending an afternoon up in the clouds. Since being diagnosed with Dyslexia in the second grade, school has always been harder for me. I have always had to work harder than my peers to achieve the same results. Growing up, I have realized that my Dyslexia is more of a gift than a disadvantage. It has taught me to think outside the box and that I can achieve anything in life that I put my mind to, despite what the stigmatizing community says around me. I am super excited to take on the role of being president of the Neurodiversity Initiative club but even more excited to make the college a more inclusive campus for the Neurodivergent community. Our initiative's goal is to create a safe community on campus for individuals who consider themselves neurodivergent with the hopes of destigmatizing disabilities of all kinds as well as educating the community about neurodiversity. I hope you all would consider joining our initiative.

If you have any questions or would like additional information about the *Neurodiversity Initiative Club*, please email Sam Swartz at [swartzsj@g.cofc.edu](mailto:swartzsj@g.cofc.edu).

If you would like to become a member of the *Neurodiversity Initiative Club*, please complete our [Sign-up form](#) or email [cofcneurodiversity@gmail.com](mailto:cofcneurodiversity@gmail.com).

## **Did You Know?**

### **Student Corner**

**... that your Professor Notification Letter (PNL) must be shared with each professor each semester if you anticipate needing accommodations?**

Once you receive your PNL via email, we recommend you save it to your Google Drive or another location on your computer where you will remember where it is so you can provide it to your professors each semester accommodations are needed. We also recommend you meet with each professor (regardless of the type of class as it can be done in-person or virtually) during their office hours (or arranged at another agreeable time) to provide them with your PNL and discuss the accommodations listed on the letter that you will need to use for their class.

**... about our Alternative Testing Site?**

This is a distraction-reduced environment where students connected with the Center for Disability Services can take their tests.

Students must sign up for any test that they want to take in the ATS at least five (5) business days in advance. This notice is important as we need to communicate this request to your professor in enough time to receive your test to administer, in addition to receiving information about how we are to administer the test.

Please read about the ATS Process.

**... these important dates/times?**

- The add/drop period for full semester classes ends on Monday, August 29 (academic calendar).
- The Academic Advising and Planning Center offers quick question drop-in advising hours daily Monday-Friday throughout the academic year.
- Tutoring and Supplemental Instruction offered by the Center for Student Learning will begin Monday, September 5.

## Did You Know?

### Faculty Corner

#### **... that a student might not share a Professor Notification Letter (PNL) with their professors at the beginning of the semester?**

Ideally, students who have a PNL will share the letter with each professor at the beginning of the semester. However, some students don't do this, and for different reasons. Below are just two scenarios.

1. They might not have a PNL to provide at the beginning of a semester because they did not connect with our department before the semester began.
2. A student might have had a PNL at the beginning of a semester, but for whatever reason didn't think they'd need accommodations in a particular class. Maybe the student has taken one or two tests and did poorly. For the third test, they know utilizing their accommodations would be best. At that point, they share the PNL with their professor. Accommodations are not retroactive.

In either scenario, if a student would like to use their accommodations in a class, they need to provide their professor with advanced notice (typically one week) so that any preparation needed can be taken care of.

#### **... about our current processes regarding the Alternative Testing Site (ATS)?**

Check out the Alternative Testing Site website with the latest information on the processes.

#### **... that CDS works closely with our Instructional Technologists in TLT?**

We are always looking for ways to collaborate more to ensure that faculty feel supported in their efforts to ensure access within the classroom.

During the Summer of 2021, Debby Marindin, Anne Osowski, and Gretchen Scronce, all from CofC, presented at the TLTCon on inclusive teaching practices. This session also included an OAKS showcase of faculty from numerous academic disciplines sharing ways they incorporate universal design for learning into their teaching.

Most recently, we have worked together at identifying accessibility topics that have been incorporated into the TLT Mega Memo, *Six Things You can Do NOW for a Successful Semester*. Some of the topics include:

- Setting up testing-accommodations within OAKS;
- Instructions on how to make electronic documents (such as PDFs) accessible for those who use screen readers;
- Ensuring that audio-visual materials are captioned.