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Issue 1, October 2021

WELCOME

With Spring having finally arrived, and tender green leaves sprouting, we are looking forward to new beginnings and growth both in nature and at the Disability Rights Unit!

Like 2020, this year has once again posed several challenges, the biggest being that we miss seeing our students at the Disability Rights Unit (DRU). However, with vaccinations in full swing, we are hoping for a return to campus in the near future. Fortunately there were many positives to focus on in 2021. Ukwazi was successfully rolled out and many DRU students gave positive feedback about how accessible it is. The DRU team members were well equipped to continue with rendering services online and most importantly, our students in general excelled during the mid-year exams.

I hope that you enjoy DRU's very first newsletter, and invite you to share feedback with us about the type of content that you would like to see in future newsletters, which are planned for the beginning of every block.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to the DRU team:



Back (from left to right): Andrew Sam, Subhashini Eilan, Tsh Lumos White, Duncan Yates, Kobela Pejja, Khetha Makoatsane, Dr Anlia Pretorius. Front (from left to right): Alfred Tlou, Alan Mclachlan

There appears to be a greater awareness within the general community of the existence of services to students with disabilities, and it is important to build on this. There appears to be a greater awareness within the general community of the existence of services to students with disabilities, and it is important to build on this to ensure successful inclusion of all students in the university environment. Together, we are responsible to constantly serve as gatekeepers and to ensure that the rights of our students are always on the university's agenda.

Wishing you all the best with your studies. Keep safe.

Dr Anlia Pretorius (Head of DRU)

HOW CAN DRU HELP?



Students with disabilities have been an integral part of the Wits community for many years and DRU works to overcome the educational barriers and accessibility requirements facing students with visual, hearing, physical, learning, and psychological disabilities, as well as chronic illnesses.

DRU is a support unit dedicated to assisting all students and staff with a disability at Wits University. Support services are tailored to each individual and disability, and may include the use of state-of-the-art assistive technology and/ or other forms of human support, e.g. South African Sign Language interpreting.

At the same time, the DRU focuses on the design of innovative learning and working environments, as well as the promotion of disability awareness and the abilities of people with disabilities.

DRU offices are located in the Solomon Mahlangu House Building, First Floor, East Wing, Braamfontein East Campus. Our satellite office can be found in the Administration Block building, First Floor, School of Education Campus.

For more information on DRU and the various services offered, please visit: www.wits.ac.za/disability-rights-unit

"It's not enough just to enrol students with disabilities at Wits. Our commitment is to provide an enabling platform to promote academic success"

SRC DISABILITY REPRESENTATIVE



SRC DISABILITY REPRESENTATIVE

Ayesha Wadee is the Disability Representative at the SRC who was nominated into this position since April 2021.

The SRC looks forward to many more achievements together with the students and staff at the DRU.

MORE ALIKE THAN YOU THINK!



DAM is a student society representing students with disabilities across the various Wits campuses. DAM strives to recognise the injustices of our past, as well as honour those who committed themselves to the pursuit of social justice and freedom for all at Wits.

Through outreach activities and disability awareness events, DAM hopes to boost social awareness of persons with disabilities, and improve the public discourse surrounding disability related matters, with a key focus on creating an inclusive environment for students with disabilities.

But DAM can't do it alone. Will you help? Join DAM today contact wits.dam@gmail.com or 0796404978

Follow us on social media to learn more about disabilities:
Twitter: @WitsDam
Instagram: @WitsDam

Check out the short video on DAM and disability awareness

@TECHNOLOGY



NON VISUAL DESKTOP ACCESS (NVDA): NVDA is a screen reader that allows blind and visually impaired people to access their computers by providing feedback via synthetic speech and Braille, and is free to download and use. For more information, please visit the following link: <http://www.nvaccess.org/>



READ&WRITE: Read&Write is a text-to-speech, literacy and writing support software which integrates reading, writing, studying, and re-search support tools with common applications. Enhances accessibility by offering features like reading out loud, built-in dictionaries, summary highlighters, and turning text to audio. All Witsies have access to a full license of this software. Download and install the trial version for your device and then log in with a Microsoft account using your Wits credentials, Username: Wits email address and Password: Wits ICT password. For more information, please visit the following link: <http://www.texthelp.com/products/read-and-write-education/>



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Similarly, there is the Live Transcribe app for Android users which provides captions/subtitles on your smartphone or smart device. For more information, please visit the following link: <http://www.android.com/accessibility/live-transcribe/>



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GRADUATE FEATURE: DON'T DIS MY ABILITY - MORENA MOTSIRI



Q: Tell us about yourself. Where are you from and what did you study?

I am a Business Support Consultant in Financial Services specialising on research for building Platform Infrastructure. I studied a BA Honours in Human Geography focused thesis on the coffee commodity chain.

Q: How did you find studying at Wits and being a student registered with the DRU?

I attribute a great deal of my educational success to the Disability Rights Unit. I received educational support technologies, and concessions for exams, and in my Honours year I also received scholarships from various donors.

Q: What advice would you give current students with disabilities studying at Wits?

Never miss a lecture, even if it's with a pillow and a sleeping bag just show up. In the first half of undergrad don't be a nerd, have fun, read all you can, associate yourself with as many people, don't exist within one sub-culture find what makes you happy! In the second half of undergrad, study in 7th gear, work like a mule, and fourth year strive for excellence. Even if this means 4 days not leaving campus, using gym showers, and a balanced diet of fried chips and vending coffee do it! Most importantly, remain humble, remember your roots, all your friends should be smarter than you, if not, perhaps reconsider your life choices.

Q: What is your favourite quote?

"The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man."
- George Bernard Shaw

