



FROM THE HEDSA CHAIRPERSON

Dr Anlia Pretorius

With the leaves turning colour and the air getting crisp without us even keeping track of how fast the year rushed past, I can only echo Shakespeare “the swiftest hours, as they flew”!

I am sure you are all extremely busy with exam preparations but hope that you will take a few minutes to enjoy the HEDSA newsletter and to read what our colleagues and students across the country are keeping themselves busy with. I always find the newsletter inspiring and brimming with ideas to try at our institutions since it worked so well at other places!

The past few months has been very busy but exhilarating and fruitful, as we serve the interests of students with disabilities through HEDSA. Behind the scenes, the HEDSA EXCO has been busy with all kinds of matters necessary to ensure the smooth running of HEDSA while also tending to their own day to day careers. We are planning and strategizing, sharing ideas and working with the other colleagues from other disability units in our quest to serve our students well.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to the **New HEDSA Executive Committee (EXCO)**:

- Dr Anlia Pretorius: Chairperson (University of the Witwatersrand)
- Marcia Lyner-Cleopas: Vice Chairperson (Stellenbosch University)
- Ms Jacqueline Lenting: Secretary (False Bay College)
- Ms Edwina Ghall: Financial Officer (University of Cape Town)
- Mr Ashmore Nkuna: Communications and Publicity Officer (University of Johannesburg)
- Ms Reinette Popplestone: Previous Chairperson (University of Cape Town)

A big word of thanks to the previous EXCO for all the work they did to leave HEDSA in an even stronger position for us to take forward and to ensure the continuation of the momentum, thereby ensuring that all strategic plans and goals will be achieved. I would also like to thank them for the excellent Biennial symposium they organised for us at Spier on 24-25 November 2016. Well done on a very successful symposium!

The following resolutions were taken at the HEDSA symposium and the EXCO already addressed many of these successfully

1. HEDSA requests the speedy progress of the Presidential Working Group on People with Disabilities' mandate for the completion of work set out;
2. A list serve will be created so that the PSET sector affiliated and collaborating with HEDSA will be able to discuss, share questions, good practice, suggestions and any relevant information to disability in this sector;
3. At regional level, HEDSA will work more closely with each other to support and share good practice between HEDSA symposium;
4. The Deaf sector gain clarity between their various bodies to provide a unified roadmap for the PSET sector
5. MapAbility will continue with its setting up process and continually update its online offering of service information for the South African PSET institutions.

The post school Education system in South Africa has come a long way in eliminating barriers that kept people apart and it is with great appreciation that we can say that in most instances, students with disabilities are no longer excluded from the mainstream post school life and are given the opportunity to showcase their academic potential. This does however not mean that we have arrived in Nirvana, there are still many mountains to climb and obstacles to clear, especially in the TVET sector where the support structures from the institutions are not always in place and our colleagues are doing amazing work with what is available.

HEDSA pledges to support all colleagues who is working in the field, please make contact and we will take your hands. I learnt a lot from the people working in this field as their dedication and enthusiasm is always inspiring.

Yours sincerely, Anlia.

Who is HEDSA?

Advocacy and rights-based NPO presenting disability rights services in
Higher and Further Education

www.hedsa.org.za | NPO no: 078-484 | South Africa



Higher and Further Education Disability Services Association

HEDSA
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Endorsed by DHET &
Universities of South Africa

A. WITS CAMPUS PERSONAL NAVIGATOR CHALLENGE

Lesley Donna Williams, Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct.



Caption: Brainstorming session during the WITS campus personal navigator challenge.

The challenge calls on innovators and entrepreneurs across Johannesburg to come forward with digital solutions that will help people with visual and physical disabilities to navigate their way around large built-up areas such as Wits University’s sprawling campuses.

Professor Barry Dwolatzky, Director of the Joburg Centre for Software Engineering (JCSE) at Wits University, says the Challenge presents a unique opportunity for inspired and creative thinkers to put their ideas into action. “The Challenge is about transforming great ideas into viable solutions while at the same time making a very real difference in the lives of hundreds of disabled people.”

“The solution proposed could be a simple standalone device that attaches to a walking cane or wheelchair, or even be a wearable device. It may provide visual or audible directions to navigate a campus,” he adds. “We might even see someone come up with a robotic guide-dog!”

Entrants will not only be mentored and supported in developing a technical solution, they will also be assisted in turning their idea into a start-up business in the incubator at Wits University’s Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct in Braamfontein.

Led by the JCSE with sponsorship from the Carl and Emily Fuchs Foundation (CEFF) the Challenge is open to any innovators and entrepreneurs, SMEs, professional developers, students and bright sparks alike.

An initial group of entrants will be selected to take part in a weekend-long hackathon. After this the top ten entrants will each be given three months' membership in the Tshimologong Precinct incubation programme, and the top three an additional seven months' membership.

The ultimate winner of the Challenge will be funded to send two team members to spend four weeks at one of the Tshimologong Precinct's international partner hubs located in the UK, Canada, USA, Netherlands or India.

B. WITS DISABILITY RIGHTS UNIT UPDATES

Dr Anlia Pretorius, University of the Witwatersrand.



Caption: Blind student with a guide dog on the WITS Great Hall steps

The DRU student number increased for 2017 with an approximately 10% increase in disabled student numbers compared to 2016, As at the beginning of March there were 1070 students registered with a disability (210 new students for 2017).

DRU services –

1. DRU implemented an online registration which is working well. We are currently in talks with relevant Wits stakeholders to extend functionality by integrating this into future Wits online application forms as well as the online student portal.
2. DRU with assistance from PIMD customised one of our motorised wheelchairs with a folding desk which helped increase access and independence for one of our students with a physical disability
3. There has been an Increase in requests for DRU’s real-time captioning service

DRU Students –

- SRC 2017 - DRU student (Wame Sere) is on the Wits SRC
- Graduations - notable graduations in 2017 – Deaf students Nyeleti Nkwini (MA) and Colin Venter (B Ed) completed their studies.

Colin Venter, a student with a hearing disability at Wits, graduates!

Colin recently received his Bachelor of Education degree and credited the Wits Disability Rights Unit team, saying that the DRU played a vital role in his success while supporting him with the challenges he had to overcome having a hearing disability. Congratulations, Colin!

C. STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY’S DISABILITY UNIT CELEBRATES ITS 10TH BIRTHDAY!

Dr Marcia Lyner-Cleopas, University of Stellenbosch.



The Disability Unit at Stellenbosch University is in celebratory mode. The Unit celebrates its 10th birthday this year since its establishment in 2007. Please visit the HEDSA website to read stories from their alumni and current students, about their experiences as students at the University (<https://www.hedsa.org.za/media>).

D. UNISA TRAINING WORKSHOP – A REVIEW

Ms Slindile Mavundla – Stellenbosch University, Disability Unit.

On 29th and 30th March 2017, UNISA’s Department of Inclusive Education hosted a workshop that saw many issues surrounding the functioning of disability units offering services to students with disabilities in higher education institutions being discussed. Members from institutions all over South Africa shared their current solutions to challenges they face and exchanged different views to tackling what they experience. Different perspectives to understanding where South Africa is regarding disability and inclusion within the higher education context were shared.

The workshop started by examining the education of students with disabilities in higher education institutions through the lens of the transformation discourse in South Africa. Understanding that disability is part of this discourse, laid a solid and productive foundation for discussions around awareness, advocacy, inclusion and support. The transformation discourse has taken centre space in many discussions on South African soil with the desire to bring together our many diversities and identities, from gender to culture. It is quite befitting to therefore not overlook the needs of disabled members of our society in our bid to transform our thinking, perceptions and actions towards minority groups.

The transformation discourse led the discussion to awareness and advocacy. This culminated in reflecting on methods currently used to create awareness of the disability units and disabled students with disabilities. Creating awareness at departmental level in institutions as opposed to mass awareness programmes was discussed as an angle to be explored. Inclusion from a rights-based approach and support discourse channelled thinking towards the creation of a universal design for learning within institutions. This also led the way to discussing universal access and universal design as conceptual frameworks conducive to a rights-based approach that accepts the dignity and rights for everyone to be included in society. This leads to the striving towards social justice in South Africa.

Students on a panel from UNISA and the University of Pretoria spoke to the workshop attendees about how their students with disabilities are taking responsibility for their own teaching and learning. The panel spoke on the importance of the current student body of disabled students taking the responsibility to advocate for those still in school and completing their qualifications in record time so they too see the need to work towards a tertiary qualification.

The staff panel highlighted the history of the marginalisation of black people in education in South Africa and said our legacies as well as the road to inclusion can be expected to be a rough one, with disability inclusion also part of this process. The opportunities currently provided to support students with disabilities' to participation in their teaching and learning were discussed as means through which institutions assist the students. The UNISA library representative noted how they support their open distance learning students with reading material. The two days were appropriately closed with presentations on assistive technologies that assist in giving the disabled student equal chances at accessing education.

E. UJ TRANSFORMING LIVES WITH TECHNOLOGY FOR LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms Luyanda Ndaba (Photo Journalist), University of Johannesburg - Strategic Communication.



Assistive Technology Assistant, Mr Eric Mhlanga, demonstrating the use of the EyePal Solo to Ms Pearl Ramafola, UJ Wellness Department and Dr Hester Costa, Director: GDE Inclusion and Special Schools.

A regional centre to support communities with students with disabilities was launched at the Soweto Campus of the University of Johannesburg (UJ) on Monday 10 April. The Fuchs Regional Disability Resource Centre (FRDRC) was established by UJ Disability Unit within the Centre for Psychological Services and Career Development (PsyCaD), with generous funding from the Carl and Emily Fuchs Foundation.

“This is an exciting and significant community engagement project to support educators, lecturers and learners with disabilities. The FRDRC facilitates alternative access to study

resources, for example assistive technologies such as JAWS Screen Reader for people living with blindness,” said Dr Del Naidoo, Disability Unit Team Lead.

The centre aims to work with the Gauteng Department of Education and local Technical and Vocational Education and Training colleges (TVET) colleges.

“The launch of the Fuchs Centre is a response to the call from government to merge and share educational resources to address disability issues. Students with disabilities need support while completing their education,” added Dr Naidoo, “for example to get improved access to resources such as assistive devices to help them access their course content and achieve.

“The FRDRC will promote complete disability support in schools and colleges. It also aims to address any barriers that may confront students with disabilities, so that their effective learning and development can be supported and sustained,” concluded Naidoo.

At the event, visitors saw demonstrations of revolutionary assistive technology such as JAWS, Read&Write Gold, ZoomText and Super Magnifier. These products help the accessibility of computer-based educational material through screen enlarging, converting text-to-speech for ease of navigation for students with a visual impairment or learning difficulties support. Additionally, hardware at the centre such as printed text readers and magnifiers were available for the attendees to try out.

Dr Hester Costa, Inclusion and Special Schools, Gauteng Department of Education Director, said: “Congratulations with a well-organized and received launch of your Resource Centre. Thank you for your willingness to reach out to communities and organizations in the area.”

The event gave delegates the opportunity to explore the evolving and futuristic innovative ways that assistive technology can enhance the independence of students with disabilities. It also gave attendees from non-governmental, academic, tertiary education and governmental sectors the opportunity to interact with each other and enhance the network of support offered to learners and students with disabilities in the south Gauteng region.

F. SABC’S TRUFM INTERVIEWS DR ANLIA PRETORIUS ON BEHALF OF HEDSA

Dr Anlia Pretorius, University of the Witwatersrand.



On Friday 07th April, HEDSA’s chairperson Dr Anlia Pretorius participated in a radio interview with SABC’s TruFM. In case you missed the interview, the following is what transpired:

1. Give us a brief background of HEDSA and the work that it does.

HEDSA stands for Higher and Further Education Disability Services Association and was established in 2007 and is an advocacy and rights-based non-profit organisation representing disability services in Higher and Further Education Institutions in South Africa, and is recognised and endorsed by the Department of Higher Education and Training, as well as being accepted as a community of practice by Universities South Africa.

HEDSA comprises of institutions of Higher and Further Education and Training, striving to ensure equal opportunities for all students with disabilities by:

- Promoting equity, diversity and inclusivity within all Higher Education institutions
- Facilitating collaboration at a national level, and promoting the creation of an inclusive environment in all HEDSA activities

HEDSA assists Higher and Further Education Institutions by:

- Supporting them in advocacy and disability-related areas of change management
- Identifying current issues and areas of need, with specific reference to students with disabilities in higher education

2. Are South African universities doing enough to meet the needs of students with disabilities?

Disability sadly lags behind in SA when looking at the transformation agenda, with most attention still focused on race and gender.

However, most universities now have services in place for students with disabilities, but this is in many instances not true for TVET and Community Colleges. All universities are also not supporting different types of disabilities - an example about is support for Deaf students who need SLI.

Universities in SA are mostly old, with buildings not always that accessible, with the effect that SwD still need to make use of alternative or back door entrances. When designing new buildings or renovating buildings, universal access principles should be applied.

Another important factor is to ensure that academic material is accessible for all students.

Academics should receive ongoing training and awareness on ways to accommodate student with disabilities, in their classrooms.

Also important to note is that there are many different disabilities, including hidden/silent disabilities such as psychological, chronic illnesses e.g. epilepsy where it is important to ensure that appropriate reasonable accommodation measures are put in place.

DHET is very serious about including SwD in all further education institutions. There is a section on addressing disability in the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training framework. The DHET Minister appointed a Ministerial Committee to develop a Strategic Policy Framework for Disability in the Post-School Education and Training system. The purpose is to submit this report to the Minister of Higher Education and Training, a Disability Policy Framework.

The work on this was completed some time ago and the policy framework is currently awaiting cabinet approval before implementation will start. This will ensure uniform and minimum standards for all post-school education and training institutions and ensure that SwD will have better access to all post school training

3. Can you highlight some of the challenges still faced by students living with disabilities in South African universities?

Physical access issues, transport difficulties, lecturers not providing accessible study material timeously and the lack of sensitivity to disability-related issues.

4. Research shows that the few students with disabilities that are admitted at South African universities still feel excluded. What exactly does this mean?

According to HEMIS (Higher Education Management Information System) statistics and reports from universities, many more students with disabilities are studying at universities and graduating. It is important to ensure that students are not only supported with regards to the formal university programme but also need to be included in the social and sporting activities.

5. What initiatives can/should universities put in place to improve their systems for students with disabilities?

Awareness and advocacy drives form a big part of educating the university community. Also training with lecturers and all support staff as to the best way to teach and support students with different disabilities.

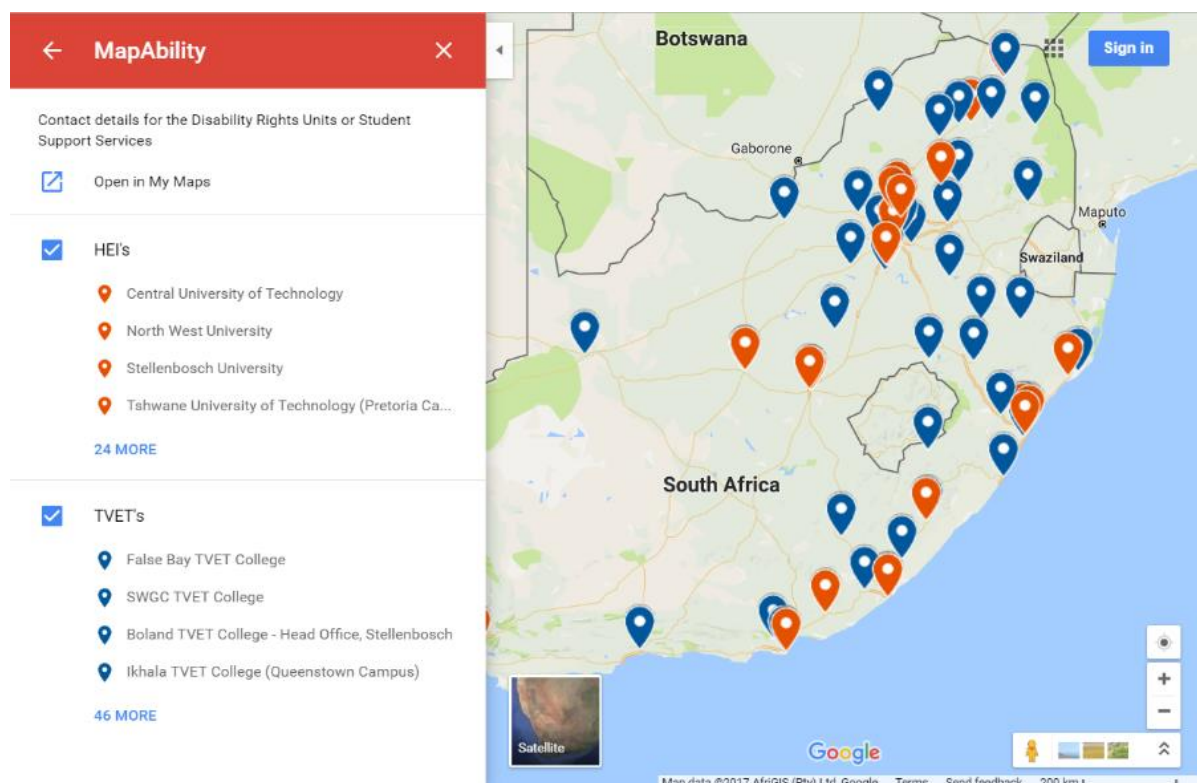
There is more funding available for students with disabilities through the corporate sector and also through NSFAS bursaries where students can get funding for assistive devices and equipment, (e.g. motorized wheelchairs to move around campuses) to ensure that they can access study material, lectures etc. in the best way for their particular needs.

Fully accessible residences are needed for the integration of SwDs. The co-curricular development of our students is as critical as the curricular development.

The University Transformation agenda to speak to disability as one of the key aspects of inclusion and ensure proper policy and funding in place for Disability Rights Units. All University policies should be aligned, in terms of disability inclusion, from staff to student policies.

HEDSA INITIATIVES:

A. MAPABILITY



The MapAbility project aims at **mapping the accessibility** of South African Tertiary Education Institutions including Universities and Technical Vocational Education and Training Colleges (TVETs) to students with disabilities.

The main aim planned for the project is to **evaluate the process of integration for students with disabilities** and to enhance their inclusion to the local community. In South Africa the promotion of student accessibility in Tertiary Education is of great necessity. The project aims to eventually list all 26 Universities and 50 TVETs on a map of South Africa hereby mapping out available accessibility and services at the various institutions of learning.

The MapAbility project will be launched within the next few weeks! A link to the website will be sent out soon. The final phase is currently being worked on whereby the data still needs to be populated with regards to the TVET's and Universities that completed questionnaires. Categories have been created in order to group the information into smaller segments.

Future plans include making the higher education institutions campus specific for those that have multiple campuses. Separate campuses can then be listed on the map for more accurate accessibility information. We will need to update this on the survey. In the future there will also be the possibility of listing specific secondary schools (for students with disabilities) to the map.

All the pins of the TVET's and Universities have been populated on the map. We encourage any Higher Education institution that has not completed the questionnaire to contact HEDSA. This will be an ongoing project with constant updates as institutions make these available.

B. LIST SERVE

HEDSA is developing a list serve so that we can constantly share, ask, confirm and just vent any disability-related matter that can be of benefit to us and our disability unit communities.

Watch this space!!

SHARE WITH HEDSA:

HEDSA enjoys working with you so that the most appropriate support for students with disabilities can be realised across all institutions. Remember that you are HEDSA and we represent what you bring to it! Please feel free to share with us any stories that we can place on our newsletters and/or website (info@hedsa.org.za or ashmoren@uj.ac.za)

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