2010 Disability Support Service Survey

An email invitation with electronic link to complete the web based Disability Support Services Survey was emailed out to 638 students in September along with the AccessAbility Newsletter. Paper based copies of the survey were also available from the Disability Support Service Office for any students wishing to complete in this format. 45 students responded making a response rate of 7.05%. 39 responses were via the web-based questionnaire, the remaining 6 were paper-based. Despite a reminder email sent to all students the response rate remained poor. DSS will offer a competition in 2011 to respondents who would like to go into a draw to see if a better response can be achieved.

95% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the Disability Support Service with 80% quantifying their level of satisfaction as ‘Very Satisfied’. Two students were dissatisfied with the Disability Support Service. One stated an off-putting experience with support-services in 2005 as their reason for not accessing services and the other student had no contact with DSS except through the newsletter and felt the service should have made direct contact.

The key area students expressed dissatisfaction with was Mobility Parking with 14% of responses stating they were not satisfied. This was further reflected in the students comments about a need for more parking, better access to buildings and consideration of the need for students to move significant distances in order to attend lectures at opposite ends of the campus.

There was a significant increase in respondents who felt that Social Facilities (lab and BBQ’s) were not important. Students are noticeably using home based computers for completing their studies and in the process utilising lab facilities less. This trend will be monitored in 2011 as part of wider considerations in relation to DSS/Uni provision of equipment/ technology for students. In particular DSS continues to experience a space shortage for use in administering test support. One consideration would be reconfiguring the existing Social space/Lab facilities into several smaller rooms for use by students sitting tests or bookable for lab use. While no immediate changes are envisaged, consideration of this need will remain a priority for the service in the near future and Social space utilisation and importance will be reviewed again in 2011.

Service provision at the Tauranga campus continues to be made with staff from DSS travelling to Tauranga to meet with students and administer tests on an as needed basis. Significant support was also offered as part of the service level agreement between the University and Bay of Plenty Polytechnic. DSS students regularly have contact and administrative support through Kahurangi Student Services Disability Support Staff. There continues to be classes taught on both the Bongard and Windermere campuses, which further challenges service provision for DSS. Ongoing discussion with the Polytechnic and University staff based at Tauranga on support mechanisms will be made in 2011.

Student dissatisfaction with mobility parking, and awareness of support services (Contact Network and Web based information) has been noted. Feedback on parking will be relayed to Facilities Management for consideration as part of the library upgrade due for completion in 2011. DSS will explore ways of better engaging students awareness of support services (in particular the web pages, equipment loan scheme, and departmental contact network) in 2011. The request for a pedestrian crossing on Knighton road will be referred to the Hamilton City Council.
Respondents were asked to assess the importance of support services to their educational experience, satisfaction with those support services and comment on any services other than those listed which contributed to their success at University. Other services students felt were beneficial which were not listed in the survey were:

- Mobility parking and counselling helpful.
- Dictaphone borrowed from DSS
- They are all important but I have had no contact except through newsletter, feel like I have to chase you guys up. I have tried on two occasions, but in the end I gave up simply because of frustration. When I have stated my disability down on the form, don't you guys make contact?? Otherwise what’s the point of stating your disability?

How important were the following services:

How satisfied were you with the following services:
Respondents’ comments on how the University was not meeting their needs or could better support them in their studies included:

- Help funding laptop for class notes.
- Would be cool if there was transcribing software for dictaphone recordings. As I am deaf it would prove quite valuable.
- More disability parking would be very helpful, there are more cardholders now (staff and students), making it very difficult to obtain a park on campus (especially when you have a lot of books to take also).
- Allocation of the number of disability parks - still have trouble at times with access for example the new library.
- Sometimes access to buildings can be difficult (especially the library, but I can understand that it's difficult with building work).
- Some rooms not accessible
- Would like back-door swipe passes into the University Library or access cards where the disability car parks are situated.
- different and diverse issues faced by vision impaired students accessing independently the DSS BBQ and coffee lounge.
- Everything is located over in the Hamilton campus
- More information online in one spot so don't have to go round in circles on Uni website.
- By making contact and making your services better known. Email catalogue explaining what you provide in detail.
- Just keeping in touch with students.
- Library staff need to be more accommodating
- Law school could release all recorded lectures to students with disability
- By understanding the conditions are not catching
- May be easier if lecturers understand you have a disability then inconsistency may not appear to be laziness.
- Offer quiet space away from noise
- Would be good to know who is the disability contact in department/school
- Concerned that I don't know who disability contact person is in my school.
- Increasing number of disability parking around the library complex - it is most difficult trying to access this resource - especially in bad weather - no drop off eg. for 10-15 min right outside it.
- Pay my student loans.
- Disability Support helps me enough.
- I have all the support I need here. Thank you.

Some of the additional comments made included:
- Interested in knowing how many students have epilepsy (In response: this data is not accurately gathered as it is not an impairment category set by the Ministry of Education).
- The University does a good job. Staff are understanding and try to help :)
- Not tried to locate support services since a bad experience years ago.
- My disability only effects me sometimes. I have found the lift and self opening doors really helpful and have felt supported knowing there is support available.
- Pedestrian crossing needed on Knighton Road outside Gate 2A. 10 min time allowance between classes is inadequate for slower moving students like myself. Text course readings must be standardly available to all students electronically as my readings were delayed at busy start of semester. This would also force lecturers to ensure readings were in a simple scanable format eg. no notes or circled text. DSS should be relocated to the central location of eg the revamped library.
- Service not used.
- I am very satisfied with the services that are provided thus far from DSS.
- Since I found out about disability services at university my grades and health improved dramatically. I went from a failing student to an A+ student simply because my needs were recognised and I was given the support and understanding I needed. I learned to ask for help when I needed it and this contributed to my recovery because it helped me to rebuild my confidence after the trauma which led to my anxiety. I am so grateful that the people who work at Disability Support have taken the time to help me and to make me feel as though I deserve the help I am getting. The disability support staff are wonderful people and without thier support these past two years I wouldn't have managed to stay at University. This is a valuable service which is much appreciated.
- When I needed help it was given and I was always treated with dignity and compassion. I will always be grateful that this help was available and I was able to complete my academic papers - even though it has taken an operation and physio to allow me to complete my degree in Music.
In addition many students proffered thanks:

- Appreciate brilliant support. helped me achieve academic part of degree
- Brilliant service. Staff are amazing. Could not ask for more
- Disability Support Staff are wonderful people who engage in conversations and I find their friendliness particularly encouraging.
- Doing all they can now.
- DSS provide a service that has helped me become comfortable with my studies and the environment
- DSS staff wonderful but really need a bigger room.
- have used DSS at Victoria found DSS Waikato accommodating and study room is a great idea.
- I don’t think I have used support properly/ accessed all that is available as at time I have struggled due to my energy levels
- I have found the disability centre invaluable. Especially Marg Dobson.
- I would like to commend the Disability Support Service for the caring and thoughtful attitude constantly provided on behalf of the staff, the confidentiality maintained with regard to student disability recognition and an improved upgrade in services supplied by the service. I would also like to acknowledge the never-ending commitment delivered by the University of Waikato Student Disability Support Service Staff.
- It has been a great service, thanks to all.
- No further comments at this stage except to endorse my satisfaction with the services and support that I do receive DSS and the University collectively.
- Overall I would like to say how accommodating the staff are at this Hamilton campus - as a disabled student it is reassuring to find such levels of help - and the disability support service that Marg and her team delivers is wonderful - thank you - sure does make things that bit easier at times of high and complex demands.
- Thanks to the team they certainly made my first year at Waikato a lot easier
- The Disability Dept does a fantastic job (I think they all deserve a pay rise!!!)
- The staff are all friendly and helpful.
- very thankful for service DSS is amazing.