Student succeeds with help of Services for Students with Disabilities

Contact:

- Bill Foy[1]
- 540-231-5258
- fwill55@vt.edu

BLACKSBURG, Va., Jan. 12, 2016 – It wasn't until high school that Bryan Faulkner realized something wasn't right.

"I hit honors math classes, and it wasn't hard - I just wasn't able to complete the workload I needed," said **Faulkner of Blacksburg, Virginia**, a Virginia Tech senior majoring in electrical engineering in the College of Engineering. "It wasn't that I couldn't comprehend it. I just wasn't going to ever get sleep if I had to get everything done by the due dates they gave me."

He learned that the fact that he was born premature - at just under two pounds - affected the time it took him process information, so he reached out to his high school to receive some help. The accommodations his high school provided made a world of difference, so, in the process of looking at colleges, Faulkner also looked at what his top choices had available for students with disabilities. Virginia Tech's opportunities outshone the others.

Even before the first day of classes in his first year at Virginia Tech, Faulkner reached out to Services for Students with Disabilities.

A department within the Division of Student Affairs, Services for Students with Disabilities facilitates access and inclusion in the academic and co-curricular settings at Virginia Tech. The department works with each student individually to determine what accommodations and services will work for them, and the office partners with that student in a collaborative process of self-understanding, skill development, and personal and professional growth.

Services for Students with Disabilities provides alternate text formats for students, note-taking services, a full testing center, sign language interpreting, c-print captioning, and academic coaching.

"The Americans with Disabilities Act is the foundation of the work done at Services for Students with Disabilities, but the staff and our many faculty and campus partners have a strong motivation to remove physical and attitudinal barriers that prevent individuals with disabilities from full participation," said Robyn Hudson, associate director for Services for Students with Disabilities.

Faulkner begins each semester by introducing himself to professors and letting them know about his relationship with Services for Students with Disabilities. He takes the lead in receiving his accommodations, but, for the most part, Faulkner has been pleased with academic collaboration with Services for Students with Disabilities.

This past semester, for example, Faulkner was taking a test in Services for Students with Disabilities'

Invent the Future

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution

testing center while his classmates concurrently tested in the classroom. His professor wrote extra equations on the board in the classroom, but, not forgetting Faulkner, also sent those equations to Services for Students with Disabilities to assist Faulkner in taking his test.

Faulkner noted that it's important for students to be proactive about their services. For example, tests must be submitted to Services for Students with Disabilities three days in advance to be approved for accommodations, so Faulkner makes certain that everything is in place on time to receive his services.

Services for Students with Disabilities "is the glue that holds everything together for me when it comes to academic success," said Faulkner. "They've been a fantastic resource, but they're fantastic people, too."

During his first two years at Virginia Tech, Faulkner served on the Services for Students with Disabilities student advisory committee. He has worked with numerous staff members in the office and is an advocate for the department's work with students.

"Bryan has always been open to building relationships with Services for Students with Disabilities staff and other students with disabilities," said Hudson. "He has done well academically and has provided leadership for other students. His positive attitude, authenticity, and care for others is evident in all the interactions Bryan has with faculty and staff."

This spring, Faulkner will participate in a co-op with General Electric Transportation, and, in the summer, he'll intern with Boeing. Following graduation in the spring of 2017, Faulkner has considered continuing his education and pursuing a Ph.D., but he said he is mostly just looking forward to the next eight months getting hands-on experience in the field he loves.

"I'm not a fan of the word 'disability,'" said Faulkner. "It's an 'ability' in a different way. If a track runner breaks their leg, they're going to do everything they can to get back to health so that they can succeed. But everyone sees that broken leg-and they know you need help. Not everyone sees a learning disability, but [Services for Students with Disabilities] is here to help. Why would you not try and maximize your potential?

"Oftentimes, people see this as a negative stigma, but it's only a negative stigma if you see it that way. I just see it as it is: I was born premature, and there's nothing I can do about that. It takes me a little while longer on tests. That's it."

Students can e-mail the Services for Students with Disabilities office[2] or call 540-231-3788. Students interested in providing notes for students with disabilities can find more information on the Services for Students with Disabilities[3] website.

The Services for Students with Disabilities office is a safe and confidential place for students to discuss questions they might have about the presence of a disability, said Hudson. "Many students acquire a condition or learn that a condition they have qualifies as a disability after their freshman year-even in graduate school. Speaking with Services for Students with Disabilities and using services does not hinder a student's academic or professional future."
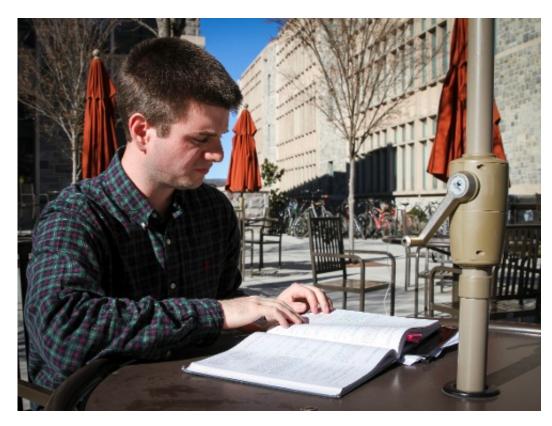
Written by Holly Paulette.

Invent the Future

Bryan Faulkner studies outside of Lavery Hall, where the office for Services for Students with Disabilities is housed.

Related Links

- [Student internships 'open doors and raise ceilings'](#)[4]
- [Virginia Tech student survey captures attitudes on experiential learning and mentoring](#)[5]

Links

[1]. http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/media-contact/foy-bill-res.html
[2]. mailto:ssd@vt.edu
[3]. http://www.ssd.vt.edu/accommodations/note-taking_accommodations.html
[4]. http://www.vt.edu/spotlight/impact/2015-08-03-interns/careers.html
[5]. http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2015/09/091015-dsa-gallupstudents.html

Invent the Future

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution