

## My Experience at UCSC

by Nichol Baxter

I began my education at the University of California, Santa Cruz in the fall of 2001. I have always had an interest in science, so naturally I took general science courses (i.e. Chemistry, Biology). It took me longer to understand these subjects than my classmates, but the University provided me with ample resources such as the Academic Excellence Program (ACE) and Modified Supplemental Instruction (MSI). A lot of my fellow classmates also struggled with the same material.

When I made it to my junior

year of college, I had declared my major in Biochemistry. At that time I worked for an amazing Professor, Dr. Bakthan Singram, in his Organic Chemistry Lab. In working in this lab I had finally accomplished one of my major reasons for choosing UCSC over other colleges, in that it welcomed undergraduate research. I excelled in my lab work; however the same could not be said about my studies.

The course load I was taking was Physics 6A/L, Biochemistry 100A, and Math 22. I would study night after night, and attend all of the sections and classes. I scarcely would socialize or partake in any other activities out of class. Though, my friend, who was in Biochemistry class with me, would go out and study less and still manage a higher score on the exams. I would be too embarrassed to speak to my Biochemistry Professor due to the fact that I was drowning in his class. It was not until the last three weeks of the fall quarter of my junior year that I realized that something might be wrong with me.

Somehow I managed to find the Disability Resource Center (DRC) and talk to the Director. She listened to my story through my sobs of frustration and gave me a list of phone numbers to enable me to set up an appointment for disability testing. That quarter I received low marks in most of my classes. I was devastated. That winter break I was tested by Sybil Kline. My



results indicated that I did in fact have a learning disability.

This was bittersweet news. I was happy in that I was not going crazy, or that something was wrong with me. But in the same instance, I was angry and upset. Why had it taken this long to figure this out? In all my years in the academic field, none of my teachers had caught this problem and gradually my self-esteem had been replaced with self-loathing. I kept remembering my past experiences in the classroom, how my twin sister always performed better than me. Teachers told me that I was not trying hard enough, secretly comparing me to my sister.

The DRC provided resources for the rest of my academic career at UCSC, which were the following: a note-taker, a tape recorder, a separate testing room, and extra time for exams. These resources coupled with support from the staff helped me through that hard year. It was difficult to go back to school and face my peers knowing that I had not done well in my classes. Also it was hard to accept the fact

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# Director's Corner

by Peggy Church



Welcome back from spring break. As always I hope you are rejuvenated and ready to start the spring term. A new quarter provides the opportunity to adopt new strategies for success. Are there any areas of your study habits you plan to develop? I hope you will consider getting to know your instructors this quarter. Faculty members often comment that they hold their scheduled office hours but students rarely come to see them. Visiting your instructor during his/her office hours (or by appointment if you have a time conflict) is beneficial to your academic success in numerous ways:

1. You can ask questions about the course material and get clarification (instructors often appreciate it when you have first attempted to solve the problems prior to asking them for help).
2. You can learn more about the professor's areas of research and specialization. Isn't learning about their national or international

contributions to the field one of the exciting reasons why you chose UCSC?

3. You will likely become more engaged with lectures and class content after talking with an instructor. For students with auditory processing challenges or attention deficits, having a more personal connection with the lecturer can be very helpful.
4. Your instructor can put your name with your face. If you become a regular visitor he/she will discover more about you as an individual. This is very important should you ever need a letter of recommendation.

For all of these reasons, visiting your professor during office hours can have a positive impact. However, many students are shy about approaching faculty members. This becomes easier as you become a more experienced student. Here are a few ideas to consider which can help you get started:

1. Email or call the teacher ahead of time that you would like to come to office hours (or make an appointment), and indicate what you would like to discuss.
2. Record your questions from lecture or the reading and use them to start the conversation. Consider going with a friend from class.
3. Research your instructor on the department web site to learn more about his/her areas of interest (professional and personal). Do you share any of them?

DRC students have the ideal

opportunity to initiate a conversation when they request academic accommodations. Consider it a chance to tell the teacher about yourself as a student –your goals, why you are taking the class, your academic challenges, your learning talents, etc. This type of conversation cannot take place if you just pass the instructor a piece of paper (DRC Accommodation Authorization Letter) before lecture begins. DRC service coordinators are available to help you prepare for this interaction, if needed. For example, we can role play this communication together.

Best wishes for a great spring quarter!  
Peggy

Important Note: Please remember that instructors need to receive your Accommodation Authorization within the first two weeks of the quarter. This newsletter's "Ask the DRC" column has more information about the accommodation request process.

## Mission Statement

The mission of the Disability Resource Center (DRC) is to ensure legally mandated equal educational access and to support the retention and graduation of UCSC students with disabilities.

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## **Call for Nominations!**



**If you know of faculty, staff or student employees who have demonstrated exceptional contributions toward disability accessibility and awareness on the UCSC campus, express your appreciation by nominating that person for recognition. Fill out the nomination form at the Disability Resource Center office or simply send us an e-mail at [drc@ucsc.edu](mailto:drc@ucsc.edu)**

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## **Exam Date Change?**

If you receive test accommodations and your professor announces a change in the exam date, be sure to contact the department assistant to let them know. These department assistants are working hard to find you rooms and proctors. Help them, and yourself, to provide the most optimal testing experience.

## **Apply for Services Online**

If you have filled out and signed an information sheet for the year you can apply for services at the Disability Resource Center Website:

**<http://drc.ucsc.edu>**

## **Notetaker Feedback?**

Email  
**Brendan:**  
**[drc@ucsc.edu](mailto:drc@ucsc.edu)**



## **Slug Club**

The Disability Alliance is the only student organization on campus that is registered to help bring awareness and tolerance about students with disabilities. The purpose of the organization is to educate our peers, professors and TAs about what it is like to have a disability, to provide support for students who have disabilities, and to generate an overall awareness to eliminate stereotypes.

The Disability Alliance will serve those with disabilities as well as anyone who interacts with students with disabilities.

We are planning an awareness fair for early next academic year, anyone who wants to help JOIN NOW!

**For any comments, concerns and questions, please contact us via e-mail:**

**[slugs@ucscdisabilityalliance.com](mailto:slugs@ucscdisabilityalliance.com)**



**<http://ucscdisabilityalliance.com/>**

# Disabilities

&

## Comedy:

*Some Questions to Ponder*



*“I had a crazy day today, man: I went to hail a taxi and I caught a pigeon.”*

--Stand-Up Comic Josh Blue, who has cerebral palsy and who illustrates this punch line with spastic arm movement mimicking his condition.

Josh Blue is one of the more successful and increasingly numerous stand-up comics whose humor focuses on the experience of being disabled. Josh is an audience favorite. In 2006 he was chosen as the winner in NBC’s stand-up comedy reality show, *Last Comic Standing*. What Josh says about his work in stand-up is positive and uplifting: “I’d rather go through life laughing than not.” Who could disagree?

But at the same time jokes about disabilities raise some important, interesting, and even disturbing questions. For example: What if the same joke were told by a comic who does not have cerebral palsy (“I saw this guy with cerebral palsy

trying to hail a cab, and he ended up catching a pigeon”)? Mean, insensitive, and discriminatory or just as funny? Is a joke just a joke, no matter who tells it, as long as it is well told, catches you off guard, surprises with its novelty, and entertains with its wit?

Is there such a thing as comic license, is free speech or political correctness an issue, should a comic have to worry about offending? Isn’t it the job of the comic—disabled or not-- to push the envelope, to identify and joke about sacred cows, and to explore new, sensitive, and taboo areas for comedic treatment?

If that is not the case, what gives a disabled comic the right to joke about his or her disability without pushing the same negative buttons as a non-disabled comic might? No matter who tells it, doesn’t the joke promote a negative stereotype about a disability and “send the wrong message” to an audience about what it is like to be disabled?

Some disabled people may be able to laugh, but isn’t it just as likely that such jokes would add to the burden of many who suffer real pain on a daily basis from living with a disability? Josh Blue’s contention is that “the best humor comes from truth, and the truer something is, the funnier it is.” That is a thought-provoking but more controversial claim.

Questions about comedy and disabilities tend to lead to other questions rather than answers. Suppose someone in the audience who does not have a particular disability laughs at a joke about the disability. Would that laughter mean something different if the comic had or did not have the disability? What

about the situation of a disabled comic who makes a joke about some other disability (say, a blind comic making a joke about someone confined to a wheelchair)? What about differently disabled audience members? What if we add the ingredients of race, gender, and class into the mix? Do jokes finding fun in something end up making fun of that something? In other words, is a joke about something a joke against something? Who gets to decide? The comic, the audience, or a person (perhaps a majority of persons) in the relevant category?

Who can fairly say what effect, if any, Josh Blue’s act has on audiences and their perception of people with disabilities? Is such humor prejudicial and stultifying or empowering and liberating? It could be argued that a child who sees Blue joking about his disability might think it’s okay to make fun of a classmate with a disability. Or perhaps children—disabled or not-- might be drawn in by Blue’s jokes and helped to see past disabilities as stigmas. One thing seems certain, however, that Blue will serve as an inspiration to others with disabilities to take it to the stage. Is that a good thing, a negative trend, or a mixed blessing?

In my view, these are tough, complex questions with no easy answers. Should comics and their audiences walk on egg shells and just hope to avoid the banana peel?



# ParaCruz

Do you have a disability that makes getting to campus a challenge? Do you have a mobility impairment preventing you from using standard Metro bus services? While the UCSC Disability Van Service does not operate off campus, Santa Cruz County has its own version of a disability van, ParaCruz, for eligible riders. For more information on disability transportation options with the Metro, contact **John Daugherty** at 423-3868 or [jdaugher@scmtd.com](mailto:jdaugher@scmtd.com)



## *How do I let my instructors know of my accommodation needs?*

After you meet with your DRC Service Coordinator, necessary paperwork is generated for you to give to your instructor. You can pick up your paperwork at the DRC two business days after your

appointment with your Coordinator. Included in the paperwork are “Accommodation Authorization” forms which you will hand to your instructor. The forms state what your accommodation needs are. Plan to give your instructor the form during office hours to allow time to discuss your needs. Be sure to request accommodations as early in the quarter as possible so that you can deliver the appropriate paperwork to your instructor with plenty of time to allow for accommodations to be implemented. Instructors must receive your Accommodation Authorization 7 business days prior to an exam.

*I have been authorized by the DRC for extra time for exams and my mid-term is scheduled for next week. Where am I supposed to go?*

After requesting services through the DRC the first step is to give your instructor an “Accommodation Authorization” letter that has been generated by your DRC coordinator. Your instructor usually notifies the department of the exam specifics such as time and date. The department then makes arrangements for a room and a proctor and sends an email to you with the information such as test location, time, etc.

If you have not received an email informing you of the details of your test at least a week before your scheduled exam we advise you to talk to your instructor and call the department for that information. You may call the DRC for department contact names and phone numbers if necessary. Do not wait until the last minute; otherwise you may not receive the accommodation.

*Help! I have two finals scheduled on the same day and because I have an accommodation of extra time they will overlap. What can I do?*

The first thing you need to do is check your final exam times during the first week of school. Yes, that is very early to be thinking of finals but if you do it will save you a lot of hassle later on in the quarter. If you determine that your finals will overlap, talk to your DRC service Coordinator ASAP so that they can help resolve the conflict. Typically, your Coordinator will help you work out an alternate plan.

**Do you have a question that you would like answered in our upcoming Ask The DRC? Email it to [drc@ucsc.edu](mailto:drc@ucsc.edu)**

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Now students looking to get organized have many free options on the web. Here is a collection of different websites

### FLASHCARDS

<http://www.flashcardexchange.com/>  
<http://www.flashcardmachine.com/>  
<http://www.proprofs.com/flashcards/>  
<http://www.memorable.com/>

### NOTETAKING

<http://www.notesake.com/>  
<http://www.mynoteit.com/>  
<http://www.universitynotes.net/>

# Justifying Discrimination? The Effort to Restore the ADA

by Karen Keen



Stephen Orr, a former pharmacist at Wal-Mart, is diabetic and requires multiple insulin injections each day. When hired, he informed his boss that he would need to take regular uninterrupted lunch breaks. Without proper care of his condition, Stephen can experience seizures, trouble talking, loss of consciousness and other problems. His boss agreed to authorize him for a 30 minute lunch break during his ten hour shift. This worked fine until a new district manager took over and told Stephen he needed to keep the pharmacy open at all times and would have to eat on the go. As a result Stephen's health suffered and ultimately he was fired.

Stephen sued Wal-Mart under the ADA. However, Wal-Mart argued that Stephen did not have a "disability" because Stephen

could manage his diabetes with mitigating measures: insulin and diet. The court agreed and ruled in favor of Wal-Mart. Thus, Stephen was caught in a catch-22. His employer would not give him the accommodations he needed and fired him when he began to have resulting problems. Yet, the court decided he did not have a disability because when managed properly, his diabetes is not a "substantial limitation." Stephen is only one of many individuals who has been fired or denied employment due to an actual impairment, only to not have it qualify in the courts as a "disability."

Currently, a bill, the ADA Restoration Act (ADARA), is before Congress that seeks to protect people with disabilities from job discrimination. Such protections were promised by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. However the National Council on Disability reports that "because of a number of Supreme Court decisions, many people with disabilities have experienced discrimination and have been denied ADA protections. Much of society has lost sight of the ADA's overall purpose to establish a clear and comprehensive prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability."

The ADA Restoration Act was written to restore the intentions of the ADA. However, there is opposition to the bill. According to Andrew Grossman, a Legal Policy Analyst in the Center for Legal and Judicial Studies at The Heritage Foundation, "The ADA Restoration Act (ADARA, S. 1881, H.R. 3195) would . . . [make] disability status and protections available to nearly all Americans, such as those who wear eyeglasses or suffer 'tennis elbow.' This loose standard would hit

employers especially hard, because they would have to go to great lengths, at potentially great expense, to accommodate minor 'impairments' and would face tremendous risks in disciplining or firing employees suffering from such minor impairments." Of primary concern to the Heritage Foundation are three changes ADARA would make to the ADA:

1. Changes to the definition of disability from "substantial limitation" to "limitation" and eliminates "major life activities" as a qualification (this makes it the same definition as for the Rehabilitation Act).
2. Defines "physical impairment" and "mental impairment."
3. Prohibits courts from considering whether a person uses a mitigating measure (e.g. insulin, prosthesis, glasses, etc).

By removing "substantial" and "major life activity" from the definition of disability, advocates hope to restore the intention of the ADA—to protect people with disabilities from discrimination. Yet, those who oppose the bill fear that the broadened definition will cause problems for employers. Stephen Meyer, CEO of Business 21 Publishing, writes, "Opponents are saying you could end up spending hours every week trying to accommodate 'disabled' employees with neck strains, headaches and sore feet."

Advocates of ADARA insist that  
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this line of argument is fear-based and merely justifies discrimination. Proponents state that the Act does, in fact, define “physical limitation” and “mental impairment,” and people with disabilities still have to show why a reasonable accommodation is needed.

The National Council on Disability states, “By focusing on the severity of disability instead of on the conduct of discrimination, the Supreme Court has permitted disability-based discrimination, even when the entity involved admits taking an adverse action against an individual because of that individual’s disability. People who Congress expressly intended to be protected from disability discrimination are no longer protected.”

The civil rights of one people group in this country is important for all people to be concerned about. So, what does the current debate on the ADA Restoration Act reveal about Americans’ attitudes on disability? How might the discussion sound different if the bill was related to women or racial minorities? What personal responsibility do we each have in bringing equality to the work place for people with disabilities?

To find out more about the debate on ADARA check out the following links:

<http://adarestoration.blogspot.com/>

<http://heritage.org/Research/LegalIssues/wm1785.cfm>

[http://aapd-dc.org/News/adai the/indexada\\_restore.php](http://aapd-dc.org/News/adai the/indexada_restore.php)

## Disability Blogs

There are all kinds of blogs on the Internet dedicated to many different issues and experiences related to disability. These blogs give raw and first hand accounts. But of course, you need to be wary of the information contained in blogs since it is not vetted for accuracy and might be biased, misleading, or incorrect. Also you should be careful about being drawn into any online responses or dialogues as a result of reading a blog. What you write online can stay out there beyond your control and might come back to haunt you someday. If you want to participate in the online world on sensitive and personal issues, try to protect your anonymity when you do.

<http://disabilitiesunlimited.org/blogs/>  
<http://deaflawyers.org.uk/blawg/?p=123>

<http://mybignoise.blogspot.com/>  
<http://disabilitylaw.blogspot.com/>  
<http://disstud.blogspot.com/>  
<http://myaddblog.com/>  
<http://adhdguide.blogspot.com/>  
<http://ldbog.com/>  
<http://collegeinternshipprogram.com/blog/>

If you follow any of these blogs or any others you find related to disabilities, let us at the DRC know about your experience. We are always looking for good resources to recommend to members of our community, and we would also like to be able to warn people about bad and worthless material out there.

Another significant resource for those whose disability is related to a medical condition, the website “Patients Like Me”:

<http://patientslikeme.com/>

Some of you may find it particularly valuable to join a relevant online community in the website “Patients

Like Me,” which was written up in detail in a recent issue of the Sunday magazine section of The New York Times (3/23/2008; see <http://blog.patientslikeme.com/>). Their tagline is “patients helping patients live better every day.” New communities are in the process of being formed, and they already have communities of people discussing with each other the experience of ALS, Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson’s Disease, HIV/AIDS, Depression, Bipolar, Anxiety, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Here’s some of what the website says about itself:

“Founded in 2004 by three MIT engineers whose collective experience spans from running the world’s only non-profit biotechnology laboratory to large-scale online commerce applications, PatientsLikeMe is a privately funded company dedicated to making a difference in the lives of patients diagnosed with life-changing diseases. Our personal experiences with ALS (Lou Gehrig’s disease) inspired us to create a community of patients, doctors, and organizations that inspires, informs, and empowers individuals. We’re committed to providing patients with access to the tools, information, and experiences that they need to take control of their disease. ... We’re here to give patients the power to control their disease and to share what they learn with others. We’re here to help you. Our goal is to enable people to share information that can improve the lives of patients diagnosed with life-changing diseases. To make this happen, we’ve created a platform for collecting and sharing real world, outcome-based patient data ([patientslikeme.com](http://patientslikeme.com)) and are establishing data-sharing partnerships with doctors, pharmaceutical and medical device companies, research organizations, and non-profits.”

...EXPERIENCE continued from page 1 that I was a DRC student. Due to my own negative stereotypes and stigmas, it was hard to grapple with my new status. In addition, I was apprehensive to share this new found knowledge with my fellow classmates, because they might share my own ignorant views of being a DRC student.

The following year, I did not go back to school because I was offered a lab technician job at University of California, San Francisco with Assistant Professor Ben Cheyette MD/PhD. Moreover, I needed time off from school, to revive my love for science. The lab experience at UCSF was exactly what I needed, not only did it increase my self esteem in academia but restored my thirst for knowledge thus putting me back on track for my university studies.

When I returned back to the University of California, Santa Cruz, I changed my major to Neuroscience, which was a new-found passion that had awakened within me while researching at UCSF. That year I met a dear supporter and friend, the new Director of DRC, Mrs. Peggy Church. I wanted to come to terms with my learning disability, which I had not fully accepted, and wanted to speak with others about how they had dealt with it. I searched the campus for an organization that focused on learning disabilities but I came up with nothing.

As I talked with Mrs. Church, I became more excited about creating an organization that would help fight my own intolerance for those who were suffering with learning disabilities.

My hope was this organization would be able to create a new awareness not only around campus, but also inside the classroom for more tolerance and understanding. This fleeting idea became solidified with the encouragement of Mrs. Church, and Slugs with Learning Challenges was created. Though we were a small group we all had the drive to accomplish big ideas. With our member's charisma and motivation, we were able to get the ball rolling on spreading awareness and tolerance around the UCSC campus for students with learning disabilities.



Here is some of my life's wisdom that was gained through my sweat and tears: it is okay to feel frustrated, but do not allow that emotion to take over your life. Focus on your positives, and use them for your advantage. For example, I put a lot of time in my laboratory experiences. That alone helped me land a job at a Pharmaceutical/Biotech company right out of school in South San Francisco, Ca. To those students who "live" in the library, do not let college pass you by. One cannot study 24 hours a day and be effective in retaining information. Do not feel guilty in taking time for yourself and experiencing college life. Last but not least, BREATHE!



## Don't Forget!!!

Last Day to Add/Drop or apply for part-time is **April 24th**

Last Day to Withdraw from a class is **April 25th**

Need Tutoring? Contact the Learning Support Services at: 459-4333. LSS has a new website: [www2.ucsc.edu/lss/](http://www2.ucsc.edu/lss/)

The Math Department also offers drop-in tutoring. Check them out at: [www.math.ucsc.edu](http://www.math.ucsc.edu)

Need a writing and research mentor? Are you a transfer or re-entry student? Contact STARS at: <http://stars.ucsc.edu/>