

# Quarterly Newsletter



ACCESSIBILITY AND  
DISABILITY SERVICES



ADS AND SDS STAFF

## AVP's Corner

Welcome to the Accessibility and Disability Services (ADS) inaugural newsletter! I'm Tawny McManus, Assistant Vice President for Accessibility & Disability Services for both the Main and USG campuses at UMBC. If you are new to SDS, here's a little about who we are and what we do.

In ADS, our work ensures that students with disabilities have equal access to UMBC's programs, services, and activities by providing accommodations that foster inclusion and opportunity. Our goals are to:

- Create a welcoming, supportive environment;
- Recognize and build on students' strengths;
- Coordinate accommodations for full access to courses, programs, and campus life;
- Support student success, retention, and graduation.

We serve all UMBC students and employees who qualify under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Disabilities can be visible or invisible, temporary, or ongoing. Whatever your needs, our team works one-on-one with you to develop individualized accommodations.

Support can include:

- Proctored exams
- Note-taking assistance
- Sign language interpreting or transcription
- Assistive technology
- Accessible housing
- Workplace modifications

Stay connected with us on social media (@umbcsds) and follow our myUMBC pages for the latest updates on events, trainings, accessibility news, and more. We cannot wait for the year ahead!

**Tawny L. McManus**

Assistant Vice President,  
Accessibility & Disability Services,  
Division of Institutional Equity



In this newsletter you can expect:

Community News

Student Worker Spotlights

Fall 2025 Events

Staff Profile Highlights & Notes to Remember

Featured Spotlights

Faculty Accessibility Trailblazers



## Community News

This Fall, SDS introduced a new way to make accessing our information even easier for our students with disabilities, families, staff, and campus visitors through the use of NFC cards.

Whether you're visiting us in the Math/Psych building, stopping by one of our event tables, or attending orientation, you can now tap your phone against one of our display cases—just like “tap to pay”—and instantly connect to key resources, services, and contact information.

This touchless system lets you get what you need quickly, without waiting or handling printed materials. This touchless system lets you get what you need quickly, without waiting or handling printed materials.

We're also introducing OneNote as a companion notetaking tool alongside Otter. Students can now combine audio transcripts with organized notes for a more complete, accessible study experience. We invite you to try these tools out and share your feedback. Your input helps us keep improving access for the entire UMBC community.



## Student Worker Spotlight

In this edition of our newsletter, we're excited to spotlight two students from our new social media team (**Harshith Gudapati and Srikar Sistla**) who spearheaded the launch of our Instagram account [@umbcsds](https://www.instagram.com/umbcsds). Their vision and initiative have helped us create a dynamic platform to promote upcoming events, share important updates, highlight campus accessibility resources, and foster a stronger sense of community and awareness around disability services at UMBC. Be sure to follow us and stay informed!



## What's Happening?

Join us for a season of connection, discovery, and empowerment! Don't miss opportunities to engage, learn, and celebrate inclusivity on campus this fall. More events listings are posted on our myUMBC page.

- **You Got an Accommodation Letter, Now What? | Aug. 29th | 2-3pm**
- **Accessible Walk and Roll Tours | Aug. 29, Sep. 8, Sep. 24 | Noon @ Math/Psych 222**
- **ADA 101: Working with ADS/SDS, Requirements, Universal Design & Inclusion, Q&A | Sep. 12 | Noon**
- **Tea Time with Tori (Assistive Tools Workshop) | Sep. 25 | Noon**



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## Staff Profile Highlights



### Rich Dunlop

Rich joined the SDS Team this Summer! In his new role, he will handle case management, conduct initial student meetings, and meet one-on-one with students to provide individualized support. We are excited to welcome him to our team and look forward to the great work he will do with our students!



### Michael Canale

Michael, in addition to supporting our SDS students with sensory disabilities and providing faculty training on how to effectively create access for students with disabilities, he will also be teaching an Introduction to Disability Studies course again this Fall.



### Tori Jakpa

Tori, our Assistive Technology and Accessibility Specialist, traveled to Denver, Colorado, in July to present at the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD). Her research covers how Gen Z's constant online exposure to medical narratives and self-diagnosis trends can impact their mental health and create barriers to genuine disability support.



### Emily Won

We're also thrilled to introduce Emily, who joined us in April as a Disability Specialist. Emily comes to us with a lot of hands-on experience supporting students with a range of learning and physical disabilities in the educational environment. Emily will be coordinating accommodations and conducting disability support meetings with students.



## A Few Notes To Remember

- **Connect with Your Faculty Early:** Be proactive in discussing your accommodation needs. For example, if you need to reschedule a test or adjust the time, email your professor in advance.
  - **Semester Requests:** Don't forget to submit your Semester Request in Accommodate each term to ensure your instructors receive your accommodation letters.
  - **New Student Registration:** New to SDS? Complete your registration online, upload documentation, and schedule your initial meeting appointment to get started.
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## Featured Spotlight: Valerie Valentine



### A Legacy of Advocacy: Honoring Over 20 Years of Service

For more than two decades, Valerie Valentine has been a steady voice and fierce advocate within the Student Disability Services office.

As a Disability Specialist, her commitment went far beyond policies and paperwork—she became a trusted mentor, confidante, and champion for thousands of students with disabilities navigating their academic journeys with disabilities.

*For over 20 years, I've had the privilege of walking alongside students with disabilities—advocating for access, celebrating milestones, and reminding each of you that you truly belong at UMBC.*

Her approach was deeply personal. Every interaction, every meeting, every late-night email wasn't just about accommodations; it was about creating an inclusive path to success. For her, it was never just about logistics or law; it was always about the people. Her collection of thank-you notes is enviable, proof that she didn't just do her job—she made a lasting impact on everyone she encountered.

Her legacy is one of quiet strength and unwavering belief in others. Through challenges and triumphs, her message never changed: You matter. You are capable. You are seen.

*My work was never just about accommodations—it was about helping students recognize their own resilience, strength, and potential. Watching students persevere, grow, and succeed has been the greatest honor of my career.*

Valerie is a Baltimore native, a dedicated AKA sorority sister, and a proud graduate of two HBCUs, Coppin State and Howard University. Her love for her community is evident in her Maryland pride wherever she goes. As she enters the next chapter of her life, the UMBC community and all of us in Accessibility and Disability Services (ADS) send her off with immense gratitude and love. She'll be truly missed, not just for her knowledge and experience, but for the warmth, compassion, and authenticity she brought to our office every single day.

*If you remember anything about me, I hope it's this: I saw you. I listened to you. I believed in you, especially on the days you couldn't quite believe in yourself."*

We wish her the very best in retirement, many joyful vacations, restful mornings, and spontaneous adventures. And above all, we hope she visits often because SDS just won't be the same without her. Thank you for everything.

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## Making a Difference: Faculty Leaders Advancing Accessibility and Inclusion

This Fall, the Office of Accessibility & Disability Services, in partnership with the Division of Institutional Equity, proudly recognized the following outstanding faculty members for their exemplary commitment to accessibility and inclusion:





- **Carlton Crabtree** (Information Systems)
- **Mercedes Dunn-Gallier** (Sociology, Anthropology, & Public Health)
- **Nicole Belfiore** (Social Work, USG campus)
- **Eric Anderson** (Physics)

Each of these individuals received a Faculty Accessibility Trailblazer certificate in acknowledgment of their dedication to creating accessible course materials, implementing inclusive teaching practices, and/or embracing the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

Their leadership sets a powerful example for the UMBC community, demonstrating a deep commitment to ensuring that all students, regardless of ability, have access to meaningful and equitable educational experiences. Through their ongoing efforts, they not only remove barriers but also foster a culture that values diversity, promotes belonging, and empowers every student to reach their full potential. Their dedication serves as a continual reminder of the importance of designing inclusive learning environments where all members of the community feel respected, supported, and equipped to succeed. Join us in celebrating their unwavering commitment to creating a campus where every student can fully engage, contribute, and thrive.

Nominations for the 2025/2026 Faculty Trailblazer Awards will be accepted in the Spring semester.

*Thank you for reading!*

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