Confidentiality is important. It is critical that students, staff, and faculty feel confident that their stories and their personal information are maintained with the utmost security and confidentiality. They are. At the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC), we continually assess how we are conducting our business in order to maintain a high degree of integrity and meet our obligation to keep information secure. Recently, we remodeled our lobby because we realized that individuals waiting in the former waiting area could easily overhear conversations in staff offices. Concerned about customers, we moved our lobby to the front of the office, which provides sufficient space to optimize confidentiality.

Confidentiality is important, and disclosure of personal information is mostly optional. However, we have to remind people that having a disability and requesting accommodations does not come with a cloak of invisibility. Sometimes, by virtue of the accommodation, a person’s story unfolds. Certainly, people have the choice about how to handle disclosure and questions, but in some cases, it is unrealistic to assume that people will not know that someone has a disability. For example, a person who uses a service animal for a hidden disability will be asked about their animal—specifically, why they can have an animal and not someone else. Of course, an individual can explain that it is none of anyone’s business, which is true, but supervisors and administrators can and should answer that question, explaining that animals are only permitted when approved as reasonable accommodations. By virtue of the animal’s presence and the explanation of the policy, there is an unintended disclosure.

I wish that disability were not something that created so much fear and anxiety, and I wish that disclosure were not such a big deal. Disability is just another part of our story. It’s natural. It’s normal. And it does not come with a cloak of invisibility.
A genuine effort to include—not simply to accommodate—people with disabilities could have a radical effect on our teaching and working practices. What if a supervisor who is asked to consider an extra break took the opportunity to examine how an additional break could improve productivity? Or what if the instructor who was annoyed with a student asking multiple questions in class took the opportunity to consider alternative teaching approaches to enhance everyone’s learning?

When we consider our obligation to accommodate the end of our responsibility to include people with disabilities, we miss out on the opportunity to think critically about the assumptions we make about the way we are doing things—in the classroom or in the work environment. People with disabilities are tolerated. Tolerance is a good thing, but welcoming and including people is better. Not only does society benefit from inclusion of all citizens but, as an institution, it is more economical, efficient, and responsible to consider inclusion of people with disabilities rather than passively waiting to accommodate.

The Accessibility Resource Center website has a great deal of information about universal design, suggested teaching strategies, and guides to planning accessible events. Next time you are planning a class activity, or event, take a look and see if you can challenge yourself to include—rather than accommodate—members of our community with disabilities.
Workability

National Disability Employment Awareness Month is an annual awareness campaign that takes place each October. The purpose of National Disability Employment Awareness Month is to educate about disability employment issues and celebrate the many and varied contributions of America’s workers with disabilities.

The history of National Disability Employment Awareness Month traces back to 1945, when Congress enacted a law declaring the first week in October each year National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week. In 1962, the word “physically” was removed to acknowledge the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In 1988, Congress expanded the week to a month and changed the name to National Disability Employment Awareness Month. “Employers who ensure that inclusive workplace policies and practices are woven into the fabric and culture of the organization create an environment that encourages all workers—including those of us with disabilities—to work to their full capacity and contribute fully to the organization’s success,” said Kathy Martinez, assistant secretary of labor for disability employment policy, when announcing this year’s National Disability Employment Awareness Month theme, “A Strong Workforce Is an Inclusive Workforce: What Can YOU Do?” The U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy leads National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 17.8 percent of persons with a disability were employed in 2011. In contrast, the employment-population ratio for persons without a disability was 63.6 percent. The employment-population ratio for persons with a disability declined from 18.6 percent in 2010 to 17.8 percent in 2011. The ratio for persons without a disability was nearly unchanged. The unemployment rate of persons with a disability was 15.0 percent in 2011, higher than the rate for those with no disability, at 8.7 percent.

At Chico State, the ARC and the Career Center have joined the California State Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) to do our part to fill this gap. Workability IV is a cooperative agreement between Chico State and DOR to provide career development services specifically for students with disabilities. With extra services and funding for things like interview readiness, job placement, interview travel, and assistive technology for the job, we are determined to help students with disabilities compete with their peers for jobs!
Wellness Concierge Helps Students Avoid Falling Through the Cracks

We have a pretty good process for identifying students in crisis or at risk of crisis. Faculty and staff come together to talk about students who need help. The Behavioral Assessment Team meets weekly to address situations and to build a support around these students. We refer students to the Student Health Center (SHC), Accessibility Resource Center (ARC), the Counseling and Wellness Center (CWC), Campus Alcohol Drug Education Center (CADEC), and Safe Start. We suggest they meet with a physician, social worker, or county program. And by then, we have completely overwhelmed a student already in crisis. Therein lies the issue. Students in crisis have a very hard time navigating all of the support that is available. They are already overwhelmed, exhausted, and struggling.

Members of the Behavioral Assessment Team and Vice President of Student Affairs (VPSA) realize that we need someone to coordinate all of the services for students in crisis or to help guide students so that they can take advantage of support without getting overwhelmed. Through some creative collaboration, ARC, Student Judicial Affairs (SJA) and SHC have agreed to transfer Lauri Evans to the SHC to assume the critical role of wellness concierge. The primary function of the wellness concierge is to combine resources, services, and opportunities from the campus and surrounding community to benefit at-risk students and improve their chances for success here at Chico State. Lauri will function as an extension of the Behavioral Assessment Team and will assist with implementation of the referral and support recommendations of the team.

Lauri has been part of the campus community for years. She is the ideal person to take on this very important role. Although we miss Lauri’s everyday guidance at ARC, we are pleased to share her with the SHC in this capacity. This has been a great opportunity to look at a gap in services, come together as a division and develop a strategic solution—putting the students first.
Apps, Apps, and More Apps

By Jeremy Olquin

It’s no secret that technology is moving very swiftly in the direction of mobile applications. It seems as if every third person is carrying a mobile device. Aside from the popular apps (you Angry Birds fans know who you are), there are plenty of apps available that help the disability community. There are apps for every type of disability from visual impairment to autism. Below are apps that can supplement your already existing technology.

Audio Books: These apps are great for doing some casual reading, or you may even find a novel you are reading in class.
- Learning Ally
- Audible
- iBooks
- Bookshare
- Kindle
- Borders

Note Taking and Study Skills: Nearly all of the following apps are available on both Apple products and Androids. The apps are built to be a supplement to your already existing technology.
- Firefly K3000 (pair this with your Kurzweil cloud for all your mobile content)
- Speak It (text to speech, with an option to purchase other quality voices)
- Zoom Reader (magnify and read)
- Notetaker HD (quick notes on the fly)
- Flash Cards
- SoundNote (note taking with recording)

App technology is the fastest growing technology right now. The apps I have given you are just a small portion of the apps available. Give these a try and make a game out of hunting for new apps.

Student Learning Center Offers Many Resources

By Van Alexander

The Student Learning Center in Student Services Center Room 340 offers a wide range of services. Some services are available online. Students who work well on the computer but may not seek out interpersonal assistance during business hours may try low-risk opportunities for improving study skills. We all have some behaviors that enhance academic performance and other behaviors that impair academic performance. It might be good to consider what behaviors to increase and what behaviors to diminish to achieve success.

One area we all contend with is managing time. Having a strategy for efficiently getting things from the “in” basket to the “out” basket is a valuable tool. You may engage with a brief lesson in time management by just clicking on http://studygs.net/timman.htm.

For more information on study skills, please contact the Student Learning Center at 530-898-6839 or consider attending a study skills workshop by clicking on http://www.csuchico.edu/slc/ssworkshops.shtml.
New App to Help With PTSD

WASHINGTON – The PTSD Coach smartphone application (app), launched in April by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD), has already helped more than 5,000 users connect with important mental health information and resources.

“This new tool is about helping Veterans and Servicemembers when and where they need it,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “We are encouraged so many have already downloaded this resource and hope many more will utilize this convenient tool to access VA services.”

Since its launch, the PTSD Coach app has been downloaded by thousands of individuals. While 96 percent of the users so far are located in the United States, the app has also been downloaded in 25 other countries. The app lets users track their PTSD symptoms, links them with public and personalized sources of support, provides accurate information about PTSD, and teaches helpful strategies for managing PTSD symptoms on the go.

Currently, the PTSD Coach app has received perfect customer review scores on the iTunes App Store. Comments from veterans and family members are overwhelmingly positive, and one user describes the app as “a must for every spouse who has a family member with PTSD.” Professionals have sent positive reviews, suggestions, and offers to collaborate on research evaluating the PTSD Coach app.

The app has also already proven to be a useful tool for the staff at the Veterans Crisis Line. Within the first two hours of the app’s official launch, the Crisis Line staff were contacted by a distressed veteran who reported being instructed by the app to call the crisis line and was subsequently given an appointment at the local VA medical center. Crisis Line staff have begun to regularly recommend this resource to callers.

The app is one of the first in a series of jointly designed resources by the VA National Center for PTSD and DoD’s National Center for Telehealth and Technology to help service members and veterans manage their readjustment challenges and get anonymous assistance. Given the popularity of mobile devices, VA and DoD hope to reach tens of thousands of veterans, service members, and their family members with the new suite of apps.

Information on the PTSD Coach app is on the VA’s National Center for PTSD Website: http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/PTSDCoach.asp. More apps from DoD’s National Center for Telehealth and Technology can be found at http://www.t2health.org/apps.