

The Role of an Instructor in Managing Orientation and Mobility of Students with Visual Impairments at the University of Limpopo, South Africa

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ABSTRACT In South Africa, access to higher education is extremely difficult for students with disabilities, particularly those with visual impairments. The University of Limpopo, a historically disadvantaged University has established a Disability Students' Unit (DSU) in order to alleviate the problems of students with visual impairments on campus and recently appointed an Orientation and Mobility (O&M) instructor to provide assistance and skills to these students. Various modern disability facilities were installed into infrastructure to enable disabled students access to them. These strategic initiatives and interventions are now yielding remarkable results and having significant impacts on teaching and learning. To this end, over the years, the number of students with disabilities registered by the University has increased tremendously and majority of disabled students are now completing their degrees in record time. A major contributory factor for this success has been the appointment of a skilled instructor to oversee the students with visual impairments. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the significant role being played by the instructor in facilitating teaching and learning and the continuous mentoring of visually impaired students prior to admission and throughout their years of studies. The paper highlights various teething problems being faced daily by both students and the instructor and details various strategies that have been implemented to solve the problems. Numerous innovations introduced by the instructor to enhance teaching and learning at the University and the assistance received from the University management are also enumerated. Despite some occasional problems, significant successes have been recorded over the years. The paper concludes by recommending areas for improvement.