

# 2023-2024 Disability Studies Interdepartmental Degree Program *Annual Report*

## **Disability Studies IDP Faculty Advisory Committee**

Victoria Marks (Chair), *World Arts and Cultures/Dance*  
Juliann T. Anesi, *Gender Studies*  
Salih Can Aciksoz, *Anthropology*  
Bruce Baker, *Psychology*  
Lauren Clark, *Nursing*  
Linda Demer, *David Geffen School of Medicine & Bioengineering*  
Helen Deutsch, *English*  
Raymond Knapp, *Musicology*  
Lauren McCarthy, *Design | Media Arts*

## **Disability Studies IDP Administrative Team Undergraduate Education Initiatives**

Leigh Harris, *Assistant Dean*  
Lonnell Edwards, *Undergraduate Student Advisor*  
Alice Lee, *Administrative Assistant*  
Pia Palomo, *Academic Coordinator*  
Charlotte Vo, *Manager*  
Brooke Wilkinson, *Director for Academic Initiatives*



# 2023-2024 in Review

## By the Numbers

3

majors graduated

29

minors graduated

899

seats filled in DS classes

- 208 in Fall
- 372 in Winter
- 153 in Spring
- 166 in Summer

347

seats filled for Writing II requirement

29

DS classes offered

- 5 in Fall
- 7 in Winter
- 8 in Spring
- 9 in Summer

24

community partners engaged

## Our Events

2023-2024 was marked by a series of transformative events. In addition to the events highlighted below, we also hosted a variety of workshops, book talks, graduate student and faculty mixers, and more, as a means of expanding and strengthening our community.

### Launch Event, Fall 2023

This academic year, UCLA introduced its B.A. in Disability Studies, the first of its kind in the UC and CSU systems. The launch event, hosted by UCLA's Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Darnell Hunt and Dean Adriana Galván, celebrated this milestone by acknowledging UCLA's legacy in advancing disability rights.



### Game On, Winter 2024

DS participated in 'Game On,' part of UCLA's First Thursdays series. Westwood Village was turned into a sports extravaganza. The collaboration with Blizzard Entertainment and UCLA Rec Esports showcased accessibility features to participants through games like Valorant and Overwatch, promoting the idea that sports and gaming are for everyone.



### Takkyu Volley Rec Day, Spring 2024

Takkyu Volley Rec Day, part of UCLA's DS Sports Lab Rec Day Series, partnered with UCLA Recreation and Adaptive Recreation Programs to introduce inclusive sports to the UCLA community and beyond. Participants were able to engage with each other in an accessible play space and have discussions on equitable recreation opportunities.



### Graduation Celebration, Spring 2024

The IDP hosted an end-of-year graduation celebration for graduating Disability Studies minors and majors. Chair Vic Marks and Dean Adriana Galván celebrated the many achievements of the Disability Studies graduating class who themselves gave heartwarming speeches that emphasized the importance of advancing the field.



## New Classes

### DIS STD 1, Winter 2024

*Construction of (Dis)ability and Ableism in U.S.*



With the launch of the new Disability Studies B.A., a new lower division core class was offered in Winter 2024. This course, created by Dr. Caitlin Solone, introduces students to topics and frameworks of DS with an emphasis on US history as it connects to the construction of disability and ableism. The course satisfies the Historical Analysis and Social Analysis GE requirements.

### DIS STD 187, Spring 2024

*DeafBlind Storytelling: History, Society, and Culture*

Dr. Solone and Doug Roland, creator of the Feeling Through Studio, co-taught a course focused on the DeafBlind community using Roland's pilot educational platform. Students engaged with the DeafBlind perspective through video interviews that covered family life, mental health, and assistive technology.

### DIS STD Fiat Lux, Spring 2024

DS faculty offered two Fiat Lux seminars. Professor Lauren Clark taught "Sexual and Reproductive Health Care for People with Disabilities." Professor Linda Demer taught "Understanding the Autism Spectrum and Neurodiversity." Read more in this [Daily Bruin article](#).

## Short Takes on disability and sexual and reproductive health



Students in Lauren Clark's Fiat Lux presented their findings as part of the UCLA Tarjan Center Lecture Series.

## Faculty Search

Following the launch of the DS IDP in Fall 2023, the Disability Studies IDP invited proposals from departments that wished to serve as primary homes for two Senate faculty.

Letters of interest were received from 10 departments across College Divisions and Professional Schools. The wide range of departments with interest in providing a home for DS Scholars was tremendous and led DS faculty to consider requesting additional FTE in the future from the EVCP.

Disability Studies faculty will be conducting joint faculty searches in collaboration with two departments during the 2024-25 AY.

## Awards & Contributions

### Faculty Highlights

- **Raymond Knapp** awarded the Distinguished Teaching Award
- **Helen Deutsch & Rachel Lee** hosted the Canary Knowledge Conference in Fall 2024



*Raymond Knapp, professor of musicology and humanities, won the Distinguished Teaching Award.*

### Student Highlights

- **Arezo Ahmadi** awarded Dean's Prize for Excellence in Research and Creative Inquiry during Undergraduate Research Week
- **Adam Kipust** awarded first prize for the Jessie Alpaugh Senior Prize
- **Faith Lee** awarded second prize for the Jessie Alpaugh Senior Prize
- **Arezo Ahmadi** awarded first prize of the Shapiro Family Scholarship
- **Rachel Rothschild** awarded second prize of the Shapiro Family Scholarship



# Disability Studies Inclusion Labs

## Sports and Society



The Sports and Society Lab officially launched in Fall 2022 by welcoming a sports scholar from Waseda University in Tokyo, Japan - Professor Atsushi Nakazawa. He shared a lecture titled *Sports are for Everybody: Histories of Extracurricular Athletics and Disability Inclusion in Japan and US* and was joined by UC Berkeley Professor Karen Nakamura for a conversation on sports and Japan. Since then, the Sports Lab continued to build connections within UCLA and the Los Angeles community. During Winter 2024, the lab collaborated with Blizzard Entertainment and UCLA Rec Esports to showcase video game accessibility features. In Spring 2024, the Sports Lab teamed up with UCLA Adaptive Recreation Programs to host the US premier of Takkyu Volley, a universal sport designed in Japan.

## Upcoming Events

- The lab is exploring a research opportunity with Los Angeles County to help prepare for the LA28 Paralympic Games.
- The lab is building ties with organizers of the international Deaflympics games and will welcome Donaldda Ammons, President Emerita of Deaflympics, on Oct. 8 for a public lecture.
- The lab will host a Tobitate! grant recipient, Nono Sasai, a master's student in Physical Education in the Dance Lab at the University of Tsukuba, Ibaraki, Japan.

## Social Media Access for All

The Social Media Access for All Lab (SoMAA) began in Fall 2021 with a grant from [Ability Central](#) and a focus on exploring the accessibility features of popular social media platforms. With a cohort of UCLA students from Spring 2022 to Winter 2023, Dr. Caitlin Solone led the research to survey the disability community on their engagement with social media. In Spring 2023, students presented some of their findings at an international conference held in Costa Rica.

## Disability and Ecology Performance Exchange

Disability and Ecology Performance Exchange (D.E.P.E.) supported disability-led artistic community, advocating for aesthetic perspectives informed by diverse corporeal experience. From July 8-15, 2024, a group of artists and scholars gathered to share inquiry and creativity, working to tie disability wisdom to environmental justice. Organized around a participant-leadership structure, the week began with an invitation to each participant to offer a presentation/workshop/inquiry placing their creative practice in relationship to environmental issues. D.E.P.E., led by Dr. Vic Marks, is influenced and inspired by the Dancing Disability Lab, which culminated in 2023.



## Legacy & Futures: Judith E. Heumann Community Partnerships

The Heumann Community Partnerships Lab advances disability visibility and justice through discourse and new knowledge, challenging conventional hierarchies and amplifying voices that radicalize the systems that hold power in place. Faculty-community partnerships explore ideas and develop activities that decenter the ableism permeating institutions.

### Judith E. Heumann



Judith E. Heumann was a lifelong advocate for the rights of disabled people. She was instrumental in the development and implementation of legislation and spoke at the UCLA Regents' Lecture, "Disrupting Ableism in Higher Education

and Beyond". She regarded UCLA as a place where students, faculty, and staff can continue to do reflective and meaningful work that would advance access and inclusion for all.

### Judith L. Smith



Judith L. Smith, former vice provost for undergraduate education, provided the administrative home and initial resources that made the minor possible in 2007. She was particularly moved by the tributes to Judith Heumann at the time of her

death in March 2023. Judi was motivated to honor her legacy by supporting the disability studies faculty in their efforts to strengthen the community engagement focus within the new Disability Studies major.

### Pilot-Year Partnership (2023-2024)

with Professor Lauren Clark and Keris Jän Myrick

**Lauren Clark** is a Shapiro Endowed Chair in Development Disabilities Studies at the UCLA School of Nursing.

**Keris Jän Myrick** is a leading mental health advocate and executive, known for her innovative and inclusive approach to mental health reform and disability justice. She is the developer and host of the podcast *Unapologetically Black Unicorns*.

**Project:** Develop 3 podcasts as part of *Unapologetically Black Unicorns*, with a focus on the chasms in the continuum of care for people with psychiatric disabilities. A public screening of the documentary UNSEEN is planned for November 2024 and will welcome Pedro, the film's blind, undocumented protagonist and Set Hernandez, the director, writer, and UCLA Alum.

### Year-Two Partnership (2024-2025)

with Professor Lauren Lee McCarthy and Alison O'Daniel

**Lauren Lee McCarthy** is an Associate Professor of Design Media Arts.

**Alison O'Daniel** is a visual artist, filmmaker, and disability activist who works across sounds, moving image, sculpture, installation, and performance.

**Focus:** Focus on Social Soundware, a multi-pronged project dedicated to examining the politics of sound in Los Angeles. Examine questions through a series of artist residencies and public interventions taking place at UCLA and in various sites around Los Angeles.

## Upcoming Developments for Disability Studies

### Collaboration with LMU

Our connection with LMU's Coelho Center for Disability Law Policy and Innovation is growing with the help of Dr. Amanda Apgar, PhD '18, former UCLA DS lecturer and current LMU assistant professor. DS will collaborate with Apgar, Alex Sturm, and Tony Coehlo for a conference on February 21, 2025 titled A Neighborly Conversation: Disability Studies in West LA. Apgar and Sturm are also working on a proposal for a DS minor at LMU.

### Robert's App by Sydney Tiedt

Sydney Tiedt, a first year MBA student at UCLA Anderson, is being coached by Startup UCLA to develop Robert's App, a platform for communication and care coordination for non-speaking communicators. Robert's App is built by parents and care teams so it is fully customized to fit users' unique expression of language. Tiedt is connecting with DS faculty and applying for grants in hopes of creating a DS Lab.

### Regents' Lecturer

In collaboration with the Department of World Arts and Culture/Dance, DS will welcome Alice Sheppard, a choreographer and dancer, for a residency as a Regents' Lecturer in late Winter 2025. Chair Vic Marks looks forward to the ways Sheppard's residency can inform members of the UCLA dance community as well as amplify the role of the arts for the new Disability Studies major.