

DesJarlais continued . . .

"A common misconception about the disabled is that they are less intelligent or less capable than the able bodied. People need to learn how to look past an individual's disability and develop a respect for what they can do."

Q: Has your disability affected your academic decisions?

A: I'm realistic about my disability. Part of my hesitation to commit myself to the physical therapy program lies in the fact that as an amputee, I do not have the same physical capabilities as my counterparts in certain situations. I realize that I may not always be able to depend on my artificial leg because some days it's just uncomfortable to wear. However, there are some areas in physical therapy that I could work in with no problem at all and that's what I'm in the process of investigating.

Q: Have you found the CSU, Fresno campus to be accessible?

A: The campus in general is great. It isn't too large and all of the buildings have elevators. It's particularly good for people in wheelchairs because the terrain is flat, and ramps and curb cuts make all areas of the campus accessible.

Q: Would you encourage disabled students to attend CSU, Fresno?

A: I would encourage anyone to come here. I've had some very good experiences at this campus. I enjoy meeting people and have found that there is an interesting mixture of students going to school here. If a student has a disability, I would especially encourage them to contact the Disabled Students Office where I work as a part-time receptionist. We are able to assist students with almost every aspect of attending the university. For example, we provide handicapped parking stickers, interpreters, and notetakers. If there is a problem that we are unable to handle, we know where to refer them. We also offer a lot of moral support.

Q: Has working with disabled students changed you in any way?

A: I'm more comfortable around people with disabilities now and I've discovered how interesting and fun they can be. Working with these students has taught me not to judge a person by their appearance, but rather take the time to know them for who they are. I think now I'm more aware of societal biases towards people with disabilities.

A common misconception about the disabled is that they are less intelligent or less capable than the able bodied. People need to learn how to look past an individual's disability and develop a respect for what they *can* do. That's why I make it a point to talk to little kids who stare at me and try to make them feel comfortable with who I am. If I can communicate with them now, perhaps when they grow up they will have an accepting attitude towards disabled people.

Q: As a full-time student, why did you decide to work, too?

A: Working does limit your time to some degree, but I think it is a positive experience to be able to help support myself through school. It gives me a feeling of independence and responsibility. However, I strongly believe that there is more to life than studying and working all of the time. I swim, or go to the lake with friends, or get involved in some activity away from school and that helps me to maintain some kind of balance in my life.