

# ACCOMMODATIONS & SELF- ADVOCACY FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFERENCES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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# Why self-advocacy?

- Humans thrive on predictability and routine
- Disruption makes us uncomfortable
  - *Ex. Current state of affairs - Living through times of rapid change and unpredictability*
  - *Difficulties happen to even the best functioning during such times*

Self-advocacy provides the mechanisms that allow us to recognize when we are not working at our fullest potential and to seek the resources we need to get there.

Yet...

Asking for help is not something individuals are necessarily comfortable doing.

When the winds of change blow,  
some people build walls, others  
build windmills.

Chinese Proverb



# The Transition to College:

- College staff report: Students with learning differences are not prepared for the different level of support received in college (Janiga and Costenbader, 2002)

High School = Lots of external support	College = Less external supports and greater need to self-advocate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Structured schedule</li><li>-Immediate feedback</li><li>-Resource room/learning specialists/tutors</li><li>-Specially trained teachers</li><li>-Parental involvement</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Self-monitoring</li><li>-Help-seeking</li><li>-Professors/employers not specifically trained in differentiation, UDL, etc.</li><li>-Becomes an access system, rather than an entitlement system</li></ul>

# What are Accommodations?

- Accommodations:
  - *Adaptations to an academic program that allow students to access curriculum and demonstrate knowledge*
  - *Make adjustments in how students engage with the classroom material*
  - *Allow for flexibility in how students demonstrate that learning has occurred*
- Accommodations do NOT change the expectation of what a student is expected to learn
- Utilizing accommodations have a positive impact on students' overall GPA (Kim & Lee, 2015)

## The Responsibility of the Institution

- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
- Institutions need to provide access to accommodations

## The Responsibility of the Student

- Students need to disclose a disability
- Need to provide documentation demonstrating a qualifying need

# Barriers to Receiving Accommodations in Higher Education

1. Issues with identity
2. Avoidance of negative social consequences
3. Insufficient knowledge base about the process
4. The perceived overall quality of the services
5. Negative experiences with faculty

# Overcoming the Barriers through Self-Advocacy

- Self-advocacy: One's ability to speak on behalf of oneself
  - *Self-awareness*
  - *Communication*
  - *Executive function skills*
  - *Self-monitoring and generalization*
- Students should transition to college with an understanding of:
  - *Purpose of accommodations*
  - *How specific accommodations relate to one's learning style*
  - *Where to go to discuss options for accommodations*

# Self-Advocacy Development

- Proactive strategies
  - *Set one's own appointments*
  - *Practice asking questions*
  - *Practice communicating one's strengths and needs*
  - *Identify who can help in different scenarios*
  - *Practice using different modes of communication (phone, text email, etc.)*
- Reactive strategies (Direct instruction – model – practice)
  - *Seek help after specific challenges (i.e., low grade – meet with teacher)*
  - *Use different resources (i.e., tutors, writing center)*

# Process for Obtaining and Utilizing Accommodations

## ■ Obtaining

- *Schedule an intake meeting with the Office of Disability Services on campus*
- *Confirm and submit qualifying documentation*

## ■ Utilizing

- *Identify during the intake meeting exactly how to utilize accommodations*
- *Students initiate setting them up*

# Questions, Comments, & Final Thoughts...

*Thank you!*

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