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>> Wednesday, August 18, 2021, Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities, **Accommodations in College -- Successfully Navigating the Transition**, Presented by Kristie Orr and Alicia Guevara, 10:00 to 11:20 a.m.

>> *Randi*: Hello, everyone. We will get started in just a sec. I apologize for the little delay. We were trying to get the Spanish interpreters set up. So we will get started in just a moment.

If you hit record -- now, you will hear Spanish. You hit record and it will record on yours. Okay. Is that okay?

>> *Nancy*: Yes, ma'am. Put myself on mute.

>> *Randi*: All right, everyone. Welcome. And thanks for your patience. I am Randi Turner. I am the accessibility and disability rights coordinator on the Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities. We are here today with Dr. Kristie Orr one of our committee members. And Alicia Guevara, Lone Star College, I think I said it right. Dr. Orr is with the Texas A&M University.

A little bit about our Committee real quick. We are a committee of 12, appointed by the governor. And of those 12 individuals, seven must be people with disabilities. Currently we don't have any vacancies on the committee but we always are taking applications so if you go to Gov.Texas.gov and the appointments link under organizations you will find information about that.

Also we have a position open here at our office. So if you will contact us at GCPD@gov.Texas.gov we can send you information about that vacancy. It is our outreach coordinator.

Okay. With that said, I would like to welcome again Dr. Orr and Alicia Guevara. I am going to record this session. Please post your questions in the Q&A box, not the chat box. The chat box will be used to share information with you, such as a website that they talk about or a link to information they want you to have. Please put all of your questions in the Q&A box. We will take questions at the end of the session. And I think with that, we are ready to get started. I will go ahead and hit record and just say the name of the session again and then we will get rolling.

>> Recording in progress.

>> *Randi*: Welcome. I am Randi Turner with the Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities. I am the accessibility and disability rights coordinator. We are here today with Dr. Kristie Orr with Texas A&M University and Alicia Guevara with Lone Star College to talk about Accommodations in College, Successfully Navigating the Transition. I will turn it over to Dr. Orr.

>> *Kristie*: Thanks, Randi and if you could share our presentation, that would be great. Alicia and I are really excited to present today for you. As Randi said, I am from Texas A&M and Alicia from Lone Star College. We will give you the large university perspective and community college perspective. But we also are very familiar with other schools both in Texas and across the nation. So it is not really just about Texas A&M or Lone Star but just information that will help you in general to understand a little bit more about the transition to higher ed for students who have disabilities and are going to be going to any kind of college or university setting afterwards.

So we do have a few objectives for you. One is that as I mentioned, we want to discuss the transition from high school to college. Some of the differences between high school and college that you can expect and then just what that transition looks like in general as well as for someone who has a disability and will be seeking some services there.

We are going to talk a little bit about different kind of accommodations that you might see on the college level versus in high school. And then how to access accommodations. We know sometimes there is so much information being provided,

it can be a little confusing to figure out how you get what you need, what office to go to, and what you will be able to get there.

And then finally, we will talk a little bit about students' rights and responsibilities related to their accommodations in college. Because it is a little bit different and it is important for you to understand what the student's responsibilities are and then also the fact that you do have rights, that you need to be able to be aware of when you go to the college setting.

We do know that you may have questions that come up as we go through this presentation. We are going to ask you that hold those questions until the end. You can put them in the Q&A box at any point but we are going to answer them at the end. And I think we have left plenty of time for those questions. We do just ask that you keep them somewhat general versus about a specific student situation. Since that can vary quite a bit from student to student as well as from campus to campus.

So I will have Alicia talk a little bit about that transition.

>> *Alicia*: Thanks, Kristie. Okay. So we want to talk a little bit just about transition in general, and then we will talk specifically about transitioning for some students with disabilities. Knowing the transition from high school to college is a big transition for any student, any family. You know, it is not a simple process, I don't think, for anyone to experience. So just know going into this process that everyone has to make that transition and it can be very emotional. It can have a lot of challenges as you go through the process. So just be aware that you are not alone,

that what you are experiencing is probably common to everyone else that is going through this same situation as well.

So just know you are not alone and reach out if you need some support or assistance as you go through the process. So first, let's talk about some of these challenges familiar with everyone going through the process. Admissions questions or challenges. Depending on what school, college, or university the student attends they may encounter questions about the application process, and the admissions process. They may need to call and get those questions answered. Having the student do those things themselves, maybe the first time they have had to call and talk to a help line kind of process. Paying for college can be a challenge for a lot of families and a lot of students. You know, filling out the FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) form and the scholarship application, it can be challenging. There are questions that maybe students haven't ever had to answer before.

Learning time management is a big challenge for a lot of students. You are having to cook or prepare your own meals or go to a dining hall and get them. You are having to clean your own space. Do your own laundry. All of those life things that maybe your family or parents helped you with before that now it is kind of up to you to figure out how you are going to fit in your studying, your schoolwork on top of all of those other things as well.

Study skills is another one. It is really common for students to come in and say, you know, I never really had to study before. I never had to study in high school. I don't really know what that means. How do you study? So learning what that

means. And it is different for different people. It is different for different majors, different types of classes and different types of tests. You approach all of those different settings a little bit differently so learning all of those different skill sets. Adapting to more challenging class content. So not only can the content of the class be difficult -- more difficult than they are used to, maybe the class is presented in a style or a format that a student has never experienced before. So that might be a challenge for a student. Students have to select a major when they get to college.

A lot of students when they get to college really don't know what they choose to major in, so they have go through the process of selecting a major, figuring out what they want to do with the rest of their lives, you know it is a big decision.

Learning how to access the resources available on campus, whether it is tutoring, counseling, meeting with professors, knowing what their professors' office hours are and then actually scheduling the time to go meet with them. All of those kinds of things can be challenging for students if they have never experienced any of those things before. And they are in a new campus, in a new setting, that they have never experienced before.

So all of these things are very common challenges that students are going to face regardless of whether they have a disability or not. So next we will talk about some things that are specific more to students with disabilities.

So students with disabilities will have some additional barriers that students without disabilities are probably not going to face. So figuring out the accommodation process. That can be a big one. Students may not always want to set up

accommodations proactively. Some students want to go to college and try it on their own, you know, before they set up the accommodations and that is fine. That is their right.

But whenever they decide to do the accommodation process, they still have to figure it out - whether it is halfway through semester, or before classes begin. They have to understand new or different accommodations sometimes. A student may not receive the same accommodations that they had in high school. So figuring out what those accommodations are and how they work can be something that a student has to work through.

Some students have software or new software as a part of their college accommodations. So you are having to learn how to use that software, all the functionality of it, how it works on your computer and things like that.

A lot of students have testing accommodations, things like extended time on tests and that kind of thing. So a testing center is often part of their accommodation process and they have to learn how to use that testing center on campus. And how to know where it is. Also, know how to schedule tests, et cetera, so that can be something that a student has to kind of work their way through that first semester.

And then a lot of times students may still encounter something that is inaccessible, whether that is maybe some kind of course materials that their -- maybe it is material that their professor posts. A student using a wheelchair or walker, whether some kind of experience on campus, in the residence hall or something that the student is experiencing and finding it is not an accessible situation for them. Students have to

learn who to contact for those things. It is not always centralized on every college campus. That can be a learning process. Your providers can help you get to the right person in any of those situations but it can be a learning process.

So I will turn it back over to Kristie to talk a little bit about the differences in high school and college.

>> *Kristie:* Yeah. So not only is the transition a little bit different for any disabled student, but also the laws that cover the kinds of accommodations that students get and that access issue for students are different.

So in high school, students either fall under IDEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Or some students are under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. People talk about having a 504 plan. But in general, in high school, the purpose is to make sure that students with disabilities have the availability of a free and appropriate public education that is designed to meet their unique needs.

So the wording is a little different than when you get to college. The rights of students are governed by the Americans with Disabilities Act and ADA Amendments Act. And Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. 504 is appropriate for both but it is applied a little bit differently in college. And the purpose of those is to provide equitable access to students with disabilities, depends on your framework there. Otherwise, qualified for the program or activity.

So it is really about access. And we talk a lot in colleges and universities about access. And the fact that when you get to that level, we are looking at removing barriers for students, to make sure that their educational experience doesn't have

barriers because of the fact that they have a disability. And I will put in the chat a link to a letter from the (DOE) Office for Civil Rights, it is a letter to parents. It is from 2007 but it is a helpful summary. It is short and just looking at the fact that it is different when students go to college.

So what that means is in college all students have to meet the same learning outcomes or objectives. Either with or without an accommodation. So there is not a different degree in general if you are going for a regular college program for someone who has what would be called in high school a 504 plan. If a student has accommodations through a disability services or disability resource office, they will get the same degree as everyone else and they have to meet those same learning objectives and outcomes.

How they do that can be a little bit different if they are using accommodations but they will go through the same kind of degree program. And what that means also is that in college, accommodations cannot fundamentally alter the class, program, or activity, or its requirements. So it really is looking at having that same educational experience, those same outcomes even though because of accommodations it might look slightly different, it will end up with the same learning objective, and students with disabilities will have the same degree as everyone else.

But it also does mean that the accommodations might look a little bit different, depending on what accommodations a student was provided in high school. Some examples of that would be things like different exam formats or less answer choices. So because you have those same learning objectives, there isn't usually the

opportunity to have maybe two answer choices instead of four on a multiple choice test. Typically we don't change the format of a test if someone is having multiple choice tests, we are not able to change that format into essay exams.

There are some exceptions though. In the world of disability a lot of time we say the answer is "it always depends." We are not going to say that never happens, but in general, the format of a test isn't going to change, the way the instruction is taught probably isn't going to change. But we will talk later about accommodations and what those look like. And sometimes we make the distinction between accommodations and modifications. So some students in high school may have had modifications. Where it has actually changed. Accommodations are adding on another way to have access.

Also keep in mind that in college, there are some settings that are not typically happening in a high school. So there may be needs that a student has in relation to residence hall or maybe dining facilities or parking. There are other things beyond the classroom that we may be looking at in a college setting when we are looking at accommodations.

I think Alicia will talk a little bit about where you go to discuss accommodations.

>> *Alicia:* So I think probably the first step for most people is figuring out where you need to go to set up your accommodations, right. Or how do you start that process? So for most colleges, if you go to their homepage, if you put disability in the search feature, it will pull up the right office or department that provides disabilities services or disability resources.

The name of that office can vary by college. And pretty widely. Some sample names are disabilities resource center, accessibility services, services for students with disabilities, office for disabilities access. So the name varies by whatever that college prefers. But it normally has words like disability, access, accessibility in the title. So that is kind of a clue that you have found the right place, at least to begin.

If you really search and you can't find anything that seems right, your academic advisors, your admissions offices, places like that, should be able to direct you to the right place or give you the right contact information for you to get connected.

So just know if your internet search doesn't produce what you think you should be getting, definitely reach out to one of those other offices to get the right contact information. The next question we often get is when can I apply for my accommodations or when can I request my accommodations?

It is usually best to do it no later than the summer before you start. It takes time to set up some accommodations. The amount of time it takes to set up accommodations can vary, depending on what those accommodation requests are. So you definitely don't want to wait past that summer before classes start. If you need things like housing accommodations, you probably want to start this process substantially earlier than that. Most colleges already have their housing set up prior to the summer starting.

So if you haven't set up housing accommodations by that point, you are limiting what your options are going to be in that realm. So just keep that in mind. Parking is another one that often is limited if you wait until the summer to set that up on most

college campuses. But most schools you can start setting in your accommodation requests as soon as you decide that you will attend - accepting your offer of admission. As soon as you accept that offer of admission and say, yes, I am going there, you can start that process of requesting your accommodations through the disabilities services or disabilities resource office.

Every college might kind of vary on when they recommend starting that. So I would suggest that you definitely reach out to that specific college's office and ask them about their process. Here at Lone Star College, we are a community college and we have a testing center that is not just for students with disabilities. It is for all students. A lot of students that are not Lone Star College students, they will complete their pre-college testing requirements. Whether that is an acuplacer for acceptance into a college or student who took maybe advanced political science and they want to take a CLEP test so they don't have to take a test in college, they can be taken on our campus and testing center. But if a student needs accommodations, they have to set them up through our office. Often students are connecting with our office even before they might be a student here at Lone Star College or even if they are never planning to become a student at Lone Star College. So you might be connecting with a disability services office earlier based on your specific needs or situations. Just keep that in mind. Definitely contact the office of the college to find out what that process looks like.

The next step is how do I make this request? How do I make my request to the offices? On the next slide we will talk about how to access accommodations in

college. You should definitely contact that office because it can vary again by campus.

But typically speaking, there is some kind of form or online form that you will fill out. Often it is a questionnaire and you answer the questions. We definitely recommend that students fill out this questionnaire, not parents. I know that is hard to kind of give that over to the students. But it helps us get the student's perspective, the student's language and kind of their experience. And then once they have filled that out, you will attach documentation typically to that online request or the physical form (if there is a physical form being filled out).

A lot of parents and students ask questions about what should my documentation be? What does appropriate documentation look like for me? And it is hard to give specifics for an individual in such a large group setting like this. But each college can set their own policies and requirements for documentation. But a kind of general, broad perspective is that it typically needs to be current. It typically needs to be provided and/or signed by a qualified evaluator or provider. So depending on what type of disability is, someone that is qualified to diagnosis and/or treat whatever that type of disability is.

And then it needs to describe the disability and the impacts of that disability so that the disability services providers can understand what the barriers are to access in the educational setting or in life in general, depending on what type of accommodations are being requested. But the goal with the documentation is that the disabilities service office can work with the student to really discuss what that college experience

is going to be like and figure out what the right accommodations are from to get go so that students don't have a negative experience or have to encounter that barrier to actually set up the accommodations like after a bad situation has happened to the student.

So the goal is, if we talk through those things that could potentially happen, you will have a positive experience from the start. Everything will go smoothly. So that is really our goal and that is the kind of point of having that self-report from the student on their form and then the documentation from the qualified provider.

>> *Kristie*: I will add to that. One place Alicia talked about finding the website for the disabilities office, most of those websites will have some more information about the kind of documentation that they are looking for. A lot of times I know, thinking what kind of questions might we get? So I know we get asked a lot, what is current? And that really varies. It varies by college or university, what they consider to be current. It also varies by disability. Because some disabilities, you know, very longstanding, nothing is really going to change and it may be that maybe even something from elementary school might be considered current, depending on what the disability is. Something like mental health, might need to be a little more current. It may not have gone away but it may have changed over time and we might want something to tell us how the student is doing right now so we can figure out the best accommodations.

Definitely being signed by a qualified evaluator goes across the board and that is something that everyone is going to want to see. We also get asked, I think,

sometimes the perception can be that we are trying to make a student prove that they have a disability or that we are making it difficult. And the disabilities offices are really trying to figure out the best way to accommodate the student. And as we talked about before, there is a lot of different environments across campus. The way that instruction is given is often different than in high school. And so we really want that information from the students and from the evaluator so that we can figure out for that specific student what kind of accommodations are going to remove those barriers so that they can have access.

So it really is not trying to be a challenging process. But it is trying to be a process where we can make the best choices to set the students up for success and remove those barriers. So I think it is important to understand that perspective. Definitely disability offices want students to have access and don't want the documentation to be a barrier.

And another piece to that is that students can always contact the office if they are having trouble with documentation and get some help. So asking, you know, this is what I have got. They may be told, submit what you have and let's see if that is enough. Sometimes their offices say, we will provide accommodations for a semester or a year or something while we work with you to try to get some more updated information.

Another piece to that, you think of things while you are talking these through - standardized testing, we see that on our campus, a student after college will apply to graduate school, medical school or law school or some other they need to take a test

to be certified in something. When it comes to those, they have their own documentation requirements and they are typically much more strict. So we do want students to understand that just because they were provided accommodations in high school or college doesn't mean that it will happen the next step along the way. And we try to make sure that students understand that so that if they are going to need some updated testing or something like that, to get accommodations and standardized testing later that we give that information to them.

So with that, talking about the students' responsibilities. Once you get past high school the student has a lot more responsibility. And it is important to know that that is the student's responsibility. So when you get to college, the parent really kind of moves to the back burner. It doesn't mean that parents can't assist the student. We actually try to think of parents as partners to some extent. We know the parents know the student way better than we do. Reading a piece of paper that the student told us about their disability or reading a testing report is not the same as living with someone for 17 or 18 or 20 years. But at the same time, the student has become an adult. Once they move into college, their rights to privacy and information becomes their own information. So even if they are not 18 yet, when they become a college student, their privacy rights become their own.

So it is important to note that because parents can help. We highly encourage parents, if you want to help by looking at the website and figuring out what the process is and helping your student through the process if they need that, it is totally acceptable. But when it comes to making a request for accommodations or as Alicia

said, they will be getting accommodations, using those accommodations, determining if those accommodations are working for them.

So it is important to let the student be the main driver of those kinds of conversations.

As Alicia said, students do need to identify as early as possible. So when you get to the college level, the college is not responsible for seeking out who has a disability. The university doesn't have to look at who is not doing well in their classes and try to do an assessment to figure out if they have a disability or not. The student actually has to come discuss accessibility and disability rights and let the university know they have a disability and need accommodations. And they work with the disability office to talk about what those accommodations would be. And we talk about that as an interactive process.

So the student needs to tell us about what their needs are. And if they know what accommodations they need, that is it helpful. But the disability office will contribute based on the information from the documentation, maybe based on what they know other students have used, then they may have additional accommodations that are suggested to the student that might be helpful.

We see that a lot with assistive technology. There are a lot of students who may not have used assistive technology which we shall talk about a little bit later. That may be something that helps them when they get to the college level to become more independent in using accommodations and when they get to the working field, that will help them with that.

So after self-identifying the students do have to complete that process. So whatever it looks like at their college, to set up the accommodations. They have to submit the paperwork, meet with the staff. They do have to communicate with professors. So typically they have a letter that they will provide to the faculty members and may come directly from the disability office or from the student to the faculty member. And then if they have testing accommodations, they are responsible for scheduling those. One thing to note, sometimes there is a little bit of confusion if family submits, students submit documentation either like as part of their admissions process or they think that the high school is going to automatically send documentation to the college or university. And that doesn't happen. So because students have a right to privacy, if you share information with one office on campus, that information doesn't get shared with another office just automatically.

It is important if you have paperwork from high school that you want to submit to the college or university, it is good to ask for that early. If you don't have copies of your own, I would request those from the high school, even maybe before you have decided which school you are going to. Go ahead and request a copy of that paperwork so you have got it before everyone let's out for the summer. So in the spring semester, go ahead and ask for copies of paperwork, have it on hand and be ready to provide that to the college that you are going to attend.

Students are responsible for letting disability resources know if there are issues with their accommodation during semester. I saw a question in the Q&A that I will go ahead and answer here. Still on that slide but answer the question about the

accommodations and what happens if you don't get the accommodations that you need.

So it is a little bit of a challenging question to answer because it depends on what the specific situation is. But if a student goes through the disability office, has an approved accommodation and a professor is not providing that accommodation, it depends a little bit on the circumstances. So maybe in one situation the student is supposed to get extra time on an online exam and it didn't happen. So the first thing that would probably be the best thing to do in that situation is contact the professor directly because most likely, the professor forgot or something like that happened. And they can fix it.

If the student isn't comfortable with talking to the professor or maybe there is a different situation where the professor said I am not ongoing to provide that accommodation, then the student should go back to their disability services advisor, their contact person there, and let them know that the professor is not providing that accommodation so that they can then work with them and get that taken care of. If the situation is that -- for some reason the disability service office is not providing something that they were going to provide, then there should be some sort of grievance process or way to address that, that should be on their website. Every disability office falls under different chain of command. So you could go to the director of that office if you had a concern. Or you could go above that person if you needed to find out what was happening.

There could be other things that are happening as far as accommodations go. So if

it is a parking accommodation question, it may be that going to the parking department and getting that resolved there. You can always go to the disability office if it is related to an accommodation. If that doesn't answer your question, feel free to put more in the Q&A, not specific situation but it is something different than what I have addressed there, Alicia, do you have any different answer from that before I move on?

>> *Alicia:* No, I mean I was thinking the same thing that you said like typically the student doesn't let us know there is a problem. When it happens, if you wait until the end of the semester to say my professor never gave me my extended testing time or my professor didn't give me copies of PowerPoint, well, we can't go back through this at the end of the semester. You can't say I was never given the accommodations and the college will drop the class or remove it from the record. No, you have to let us know when it happens or we can't resolve the problem and the college isn't responsible for magically knowing that something wasn't happening in your class. You have to have let somebody know that that was going on so that we can resolve the issue.

>> *Kristie:* That is a great point. And I am just going say it again because it happens all the time. And it is really hard for us in the profession if a student doesn't let us know there is a problem. And sometimes you don't really realize when you are in high school, and are walking through the halls, you may be seeing teachers. It is a little bit easier to say, hey, there is a problem or for someone to notice, depending on how things are set up, your teachers may be talking about students, if there is an

issue. When you come to college, Texas A&M, you probably know, is one of the largest universities in the country. We have multiple buildings and hundreds of acres. We don't know if a student is struggling unless they let us know. If there is an issue with an accommodation or a student just is not doing well and they think maybe they need another kind of accommodation or they need another resource, going back to that disability resources office and saying, I am struggling. Even if the student doesn't know what they need, you could still ask and say, here is what is happening. Is there something else? Maybe there is another accommodation? Or we are very good at knowing all the resources that are available on campus. So if you are struggling in a class, it may not be that you need a different accommodation but it may be that you need to have some tutoring and that tutoring may come from the disabilities services office or may be that we refer you to another office on campus that does that.

Or providing some academic support in another way. Or maybe we talk to you and there is something happening with some depression or anxiety and we can refer you to the counseling office on campus. So definitely if you are struggling, a good place to go back to is to go back to the disability office and say, I need some help. Can you help me figure it out because we potentially can but only if you let us know that there is an issue.

On most campuses, students do need to renew their request each semester that they need accommodations so just usually just kind of touching base, easy process. Sometimes you may need to meet with the office again. Some campus you don't

need to do that but some campuses you have to ask each semester. It can look different depending on the campus.

So those are kind of the student's responsibilities but the students have rights too. It is important to recognize that. Students can request accommodations at any point. So if they go through their first round of tests, I think Alicia mentioned this. You take your first round of tests, we have a lot of students who say I just didn't want to use accommodations. I wanted to try it without. I will point out that it is not the best logic usually because of all those transition things that we wanted earlier. You can definitely get connected with a disability office and not use accommodations if you end up not needing them but it is good get set up just in case.

But say you go through the first round of tests and you figure out that you need accommodations, you are not able to finish your tests on time or getting very distracted because you are in big classes or there may be some other accommodation that you need. Then you can still submit documentation to the office and you can get accommodations but they start at that point. So if you make the decision not to request accommodations at the beginning of the semester, your accommodations won't start until you get set up with the disabilities office. They won't go back and change your grade or remove a grade from earlier in the semester. The one kind of caveat to that is when you get to the end of the semester, there is only a week left of school or something like that, depending on what kind of accommodations you need, they may not be able to be set up for that semester. Say you need note-taking accommodations but there is only one week left of the semester. There may not be

enough time to get a note taker set up that will be of any help to you before the final exam.

But again, you don't have to do everything. Sometimes you hear you have to do everything by the third week of the semester, and that is not the case. You can submit information at any point.

You also can expect that your disability information will remain confidential. So the fact that you are working with a disability office does not go on your transcript. Your faculty members will not know that you have accommodations or that you are connected with the office unless you tell them. So if you need accommodations and maybe you need it for one class but not another, then the class that you ask for accommodations in, that faculty member will know that. But not for another class that you have not requested any accommodations. And as I mentioned earlier, because of FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), which is a privacy law, students information is confidential even from their parent. Because the students now are the adults. Even if they are 16 or 17 when they become a student, those privacy rights are for them.

The students have the right to their accommodations being provided. So if they are approved by the disability center, they must be provided unless there is a fundamental alteration of the course because of the accommodations. If there is something fundamental to the course that we are saying has to be altered, then that can be -- there will have to be a lot of discussion and a whole process you go through with that. But that is when an accommodation can be denied. That does not mean a

faculty member can get a letter from a student and say, oh, I will not provide this accommodation to you, student, because it is a fundamental alteration. We do like to make that caveat because the vast majority of accommodations, if they are on the letter, they have to be provided to the student.

>> *Alicia*: I think we mentioned this earlier that sometimes students know exactly what they need. Sometimes students aren't sure exactly what to ask for when they come to the college setting because there are situations they haven't thought through or thought about. So some of the most common accommodations that we see in the college setting number one is extended testing time. Almost every type of disability can impact that testing experience, the amount of time it takes you to get through the test whether it because it impact your ability to process the information, specifically write the information to process it and get it back out on the paper, whether -- you know, a variety of reasons. Whatever the case may, there are so many reasons it can take a little bit longer to get tests finish you had. So extended testing time is definitely the most common accommodation that we see.

Closely related to that is either a reduced distraction environment or some colleges call it a quiet testing environment for tests. So having a place not in your classroom setting typically but separated area, like a testing center or small group setting to reduce the distractions that are involved in the coming and going of people as they complete their test. Making noises in a classroom setting that are not involved in a smaller testing center environment. That is very common as well.

Breaks. So that student might need to get up and leave the classroom for some

reason, whether that is restroom needs, whether that is anxiety or panic attack type needs. There is a variety of needs that could cause the need to get up and leave the classroom occasionally.

Recording of the lectures is a big one as well. And this looks different for different people with different types of needs or different types of technologies. So if you think about how different types of disabilities might impact the note-taking experience, whether that is your ability to physically take the notes, whether that is the speed with which you can take down the notes, whether it is your ability to see what is on the board and accurately capture that information. Recording lectures can really support a lot of different types of note-taking. So whether you are using a digital recorder, whether you are using a smart pen, whether you are using a variety of different types of apps that are available for your computer, for your phone, things that will link to the recording with what you are typing or what you are writing, all of those things can really support that note-taking process so that it is a less stressful experience for you as the note taker. So instead of, I got to capture every moment, every note, you can really kind of calm yourself down and focus more on I am taking my notes but I know that I am getting this recording as backup that is really supporting my note-taking process.

That can be a really great one again for a variety of needs. Also similar to that, or kind of working in conjunction with that is often copies of PowerPoints or other displayed materials. Again, so that instead of the student just sitting there totally focused on copying down the information that is being displayed, they can actually

focus on that additional information that the professor is explaining or is saying about the information that is displayed. Because if you are so focused on copying down words you are not actually hearing all of that information sometimes that the professor is talking about or you are not able to capture some way that you can use later to study with.

So this next one is a little bit complicated for a one kind of PowerPoint. But a lot of students have alternative formats. So that is often referred to as audio books, but it can look different for different students. Most of the time it is some type of electronic format. Sometimes it is textbooks and sometimes textbooks and materials. Handouts in class, you know, articles that maybe the teacher wants the students to access for an assignment, whatever the case may be.

Most of the time it is electronic in nature but sometimes it could potentially be something like Braille. We really encourage students to learn an electronic format. Most students will not want a Braille textbook because a Braille textbook if you have never seen it is about 30 volumes that are like this thick and would fill up my entire desk. It is really hard to carry that around with you. It is not very functional in the real world. So if a student comes in being a solid Braille user, there are times where Braille is effective.

But in terms of a textbook, carrying around a Braille textbook or using a Braille textbook is just not the most functional thing in the world. So we really encourage students to learn how to use electronic formats and the software that goes with those before they get to college because that can be a really rough transition if you have

never used the software that you need to access all of your course materials before you get to college, that is going to be a difficult semester.

So some of the most common software that we see, for students that are blind or visually impaired would typically be using JAWS or Zoom text if you have a functional need. The most common ones we see are Kurzweil, or Read and Write. Some of them are simple and easy to use and quick and easy to learn. Others this are more complicated and complex.

Have much more functionality. It is worth it using complicated version of the software but if you aren't functional in the software that you need, that is definitely a learning curve that a student has to pick up and learn how to handle and there is training available for that in most disabilities services offices. There is an assistive technology provider office, department, lab, something, that will work with a student to teach them how to use the software that will provide their textbooks and their materials in an accessible format for them. But that isn't going to just magically make that knowledge of that software happen. So there is a practice area there. That is another reason it might be valuable to connect with your disability service office early so if decide you need to learn the software you have plenty of time to practice it and use it over the summer. Do it on your own time so you won't have to do it during the semester.

Some other accommodations are sign language interpreters and real time transcription for our deaf and hard of hearing population. Particularly for students who have medical health related disabilities, sometimes disability related absences,

which is something called flexible attendance or modified attendance can be helpful if they are having a disability flare on a particular day or something like that. That can be helpful. As we mentioned, there are other situations and settings in college that maybe you don't think about such as housing-related, needs in that realm, parking, those kinds of things. Definitely we see that quite a bit. Dining. Don't forget to think about those things as you enter that college setting. And don't forget to request those things if are going to need something in that -- outside of the classroom setting essentially.

And then if you have any questions, go ahead and put those in the Q&A and we will try to address as many of those as we can. We both have our email addresses here as well. So if we don't get to something today, you are welcome to reach out to us and we will try to get to that as we can on the email as well.

>> *Kristie*: So I have the Q&A box up and I am -- we will both address them, depending on what the questions are. The first one is that I heard that some post-secondary institutions have a list of accommodations for each type of disability and that is why certain accommodations are denied by some and can institutions take this approach? I think Alicia and I would both say that would not be the correct approach to take.

Definitely students accommodations are supposed to be determined on a case by case basis. When we talk about documentation themselves, it is looking at what is appropriate for each student. Some schools might start with ideas of what kind of accommodations typically work for a certain disability and kind of go from there.

But it doesn't mean that they can't consider other accommodations. What may happen sometimes is that -- I will give this example that might be helpful. So if a student comes in and says they have some history from high school that they had a calculator for their classes but the only information that they have provided is that they have a reading disorder. So when you get to college, if all we have is a reading disorder and they were able to use a calculator and there is no other information really connecting why they were allowed to use a calculator then we would deny and say you can give us more information why a calculator is what you need. That information may exist but if it is not provided to the university, then we may have trouble making that connection. That could look like we won't ever give a calculator if you have a reading disorder. But it is because the information isn't supporting it. If you add for extra time and have a reading disorder, that makes sense. That will almost be appropriate all the time. If you are looking at we only provide certain accommodations for certain disabilities, it is really the information that is provided isn't really supporting the accommodation.

But if a university is hard and fast, you have ADHD, we give you time in a reduced environment and that's it, that is not the right approach to take.

>> *Alicia:* There has to be an accommodation appeal process at every college. Would say those students need to follow that process and worst case scenario, they could always file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights.

>> *Kristie:* Okay. The next question was back to if the student is not getting the accommodations that they need. So just a little bit more information. So the

student is not consistently getting accommodations so they have a note taker as an accommodation and extra time and not getting it in all their classes. So I would encourage, one -- I am not sure if the student or parent has called the office. What I would encourage and Alicia I will get your input on this too, I think the student putting in writing in an email to the director of the office what the concerns are would probably be the best place to start. I will say in this time that we had with COVID and people remote and in person, sometimes phoning things has been a challenge for all of us, not just in disability offices but academic advisors and I know a lot of people putting things in writing is always a better idea. So I would encourage the student, not the parent, the student to put in writing what the concerns are and send to it directly to the director of that office. And if you do not get a response, I would find out who is the supervisor for that director and send it to them.

So it is always good to start with the office because if we don't know that there is a problem, we might not be able to fix it. But then if you don't get a response, then going above them would probably be the best way to go.

And Alicia is nodding her head.

>> *Alicia:* Exactly.

>> *Kristie:* We will go on to the next one and I will let Alicia start with that.

What kind of accessible academic supports, beside tutoring can the office of disabilities suggest?

>> *Alicia:* I would say counseling or career services. Sometimes our academic department have things in their departmental areas that can support students within

their areas. On our campus they call them hot spots. They might call them other things at other places. The academic department has some supportive structure at certain places on campus. So you know, being able to get those people connected. That way they can get connected with their academic department in a way that I can't necessarily support them with whatever it is that they are needing. Those are the most common things that I do.

>> *Kristie*: Yeah. And I would add, and again this is like varies a lot depending on the university and they have a lot of different names. A lot of places there is an academic success center or a student success center or something along those lines. They probably have tutoring but they also may have academic coaching or workshops on things like time management or study skills or taking finals or things like that. Also especially at the four-year universities, there are usually pretty large counseling centers. And community college level also but usually a lot smaller. But in those places, sometimes they have things like workshops. Information online. So with moving everything virtual, a lot of places now have information online. So for someone experiencing anxiety, they may not have to go in and speak to a counselor. They can find information on the website and get information there. There is a variety of supports depending on what it is that the student needs and what they are experiencing. So that is where I think going back to -- they may be able to find that on their own. Or you could refer them back to the disability services office to say, here is the challenge I am having and that office can help them figure out what the appropriate places are to refer them to.

Okay. Next question. What are your thoughts on a disabilities service office only making recommendations of accommodations for classes in writing, but the recommendations in writing but the recommended accommodation is not an accommodation plan or letter? So they have a hard time prevailing on a disability discrimination complaint because the accommodation was not actually approved?

I think we are both maybe a little bit confused on that one. Not having seen recommendation that aren't officially approved, I think that is probably a challenge. The student need to have officially approved accommodations in writing.

>> *Alicia*: I think we probably at some point in time said, well, I don't think that is an accommodation necessarily but you could work with your professor to see if they will do that for you. I think we have all probably had those kinds of conversations before, whether that is verbally or in writing. I could see that even where a student thinks that is an accommodation but really it was just a recommendation to contact your professor and see if they can do something for you. But yeah, to me if it is not on the letter, it is not an accommodation.

>> *Kristie*: Right. So I think that the student really would need to -- if it is an accommodation, a formally approved accommodation, the student needs to make sure that it is in the accommodation letter. And if for some reason they are recommending something they won't put in the accommodation letter, the student may need to clarify, is this an accommodation or is it something different? We have a couple of questions about Braille and tactile graphics.

So those are accommodations that definitely could be provided. I don't know,

Alicia, do you want to share anything?

>> *Alicia:* I mean, again, I will definitely suggest that if you use Braille as your go to, you probably need to start helping those students transition over to some type of electronic format. That being said, like I mentioned before, there are times when Braille is very, very helpful, like tactile graphics. You know, it can be really helpful in maybe a statistics class or a math class or something where you are having to look at graphs and charts, being able to see those, those things that are visual in nature, being able to actually tactilely feel those kinds of things. So I am not saying that Braille doesn't have a place and doesn't have a time and doesn't have a function. I am just saying it can be very difficult to function in a fully Braille-immersed world in a college or workplace just to be perfectly honest. My father, just so you know, is completely blind and if he functioned in a Braille world and didn't use -- wasn't electronically savvy, it would be very difficult for him to do what he does every day. And so I mean I think moving forward, students really have to become proficient in using the appropriate technology. Again not saying they will not use Braille because I think it has a place and a time and a function.

But just knowing when it is appropriate and when it is not.

>> *Kristie:* Yeah, I would say another piece to that would be this would be exactly when you would need to make sure that they are connecting early with a disability office. So some places, such as a large university like ours, we have the capacity to do some Braille in-house and we do have capacity to do some tactile graphics. But that is pretty rare because the equipment that is needed to do those things is very

pricey. And if there is a university or college that has not had to do that for many years, they probably haven't purchased that technology. So they will have to outsource that. So there needs to be a lead time there. So it is not that it can't be done. If a student needs that and that is what they need, that is the university's responsibility and it may take longer to get it done. Tactile graphics, it is almost like an art than a science. You have to figure out what will work for the students. The conversations need to happen early on when students know what their classes are and those conversations need to happen over the summer so that they aren't behind because of the time it takes to be able to convert material.

So question about if they had an accommodation in high school to get notes from the teacher, would be sufficient to request and receive an accommodation for a note taker in college? This goes back to the documentation, the requests and the student reports. Definitely note takers in college are a thing and that is an option as well as technology to help with note-taking. But depending on the campus, they may need to have some sort of documentation versus sometimes you may get a 504 plan that just has a list of accommodations that doesn't really tell what the student's disability is or what those scores are to tell the strengths and weaknesses. People will most likely want the testing report that showed how the student was diagnosed, whether it is from the school or done privately or whatever. Typically for that kind of request, you know, we would want to get that information.

But that is something that can be done -- it is done differently on different campuses. But note-taking is an option.

Question about non-class accommodations such as face masks and support person in meetings. The face mask is not something within the university's control. So that is something that, you know, we can't require masks. That is not something that we really have any control over. Support person in meetings, I guess I would have to get more information about that. But typically, most campuses, if a student wants someone to be in a meeting with them, that can happen. If it is just a meeting in an office, that could be different if you are talking about something different like a conduct issue or something like that. There may need to be an accommodation made, if there is something different than the typical process. But in general, I don't think that most schools will object to someone to be in a meeting with a student. Those are things that definitely you could ask the office, if you have questions. Whatever campus it is that you are going to, it would be asking them those questions to find out what are the rules, what are the policies and do you need any kind of accommodation to those?

Anything else to add to that, Alicia?

>> *Alicia*: I wasn't sure what the support person. We typically have that in our accommodation letter to notify the professor that be there a personal attendant to help that student or whatever.

>> *Kristie*: Is there an assistive technology for a student with handwriting difficulties? I would say in general, students use computers. Most college assignments are not being done handwritten. If they are, then we could look at technology to be able to meet those needs, but typically if a student was having

issues with handwriting, we would approve using a computer for their exams or their essays. If it is just handwriting, we typically would do a computer instead of the handwriting. Alicia, that is what you would probably do?

>> *Alicia:* Yep.

>> *Kristie:* Okay. If the recommendation -- going back to the request about a recommendation versus an accommodation. If the student gets told two times but the student is told to tell the professors. I would encourage the student to go through the process and if the student is approved for double time, that should be on this letter. If they are approved for time and a half but they have been asked to ask for double time. Would I tell the student they need to file an appeal to that accommodation or ask to speak to the director or do something, if they are being told two different things, then they need to get that cleared up. And the formal accommodation should read what it is supposed to be.

>> *Alicia:* And I mean again, if they were told no, they can't have double time and they should just ask their professors, then they have been denied and they should follow the appeals process for that accommodation denial. Every college can have their own process. So I can't tell you what that looks like. But you know, every college does have to have a process for that. So I would definitely encourage that person to follow that process at their college.

>> *Randi:* This is Randi, just real quick, about the appeals process. Can you maybe explain what that might look like so people understand? And is there a time limit where decisions have to be made? I am just curious because for these students,

a lot of this -- to appeal like time and a half compared to double time, if it takes too long then it could affect their grades. So how, in general, does that work?

>> *Kristie*: Alicia, do you want to go first?

>> *Alicia*: Sure. On our campus, once an accommodation is denied, you only have a few weeks to actually submit an appeal. There is a form you fill out where you explain what your request was, what the response was from your disability services office and that appeal actually comes to me because I am not involved in the making of this accommodation decisions at my college. That is made at the campus level and I work in what is called our system office.

And so those appeals come to me and I would review the documentation, the students appeal, note, letter, I would actually talk to the student through virtual meeting, phone, in person meeting, whatever the case would be. If I had questions, would I get clarification. I would speak to the campus that made that decision and go through the process to determine if their request was appropriate or the college made the right decision in denying that accommodation. That is what our process looks likes but you have a limited amount of time to submit the appeal. You can't come back a semester later and say I want to appeal this decision. It has to be done within a few weeks of that decision being made.

>> *Kristie*: Yeah. I would say on our campus it is slightly different. We don't have timeline. But nothing will change with the accommodation until the appeal is made. I am not involved in that. The appeals do go to me as a director and then the final appeal. So, I will meet with the students and talk to them about their

reasoning for their request. I will review the documentation. I will review why the accommodation was denied. And then invite the student to provide any additional information that they might have, like anything that they think maybe they didn't tell us originally that would be helpful in that decision, we will take that into consideration.

And then make a decision from there. So that is in general. So that happens -- if a student still feels like maybe they are being discriminated against because we denied their appeal, they can file a civil rights complaint where they say that our office actually discriminated against them.

And that would be like any other civil rights complaint on our campus. And there is a process for doing that.

That would look different on every campus but students should be able to appeal within their campus if they feel like they were discriminated against, whether it is from a faculty member or from the disability office, or from parking or from anyone, they should be able to file a complaint.

And then if they want to go outside of campus, then they can file a complaint with the (DOE) Office for Civil Rights and that is also perfectly acceptable. And we try to make sure that students know that those are all their options. So we are not trying to hide from them that they have the ability to file those complaints.

>> *Randi:* Ladies, thank you both very much. We are out of time. It was an excellent session. We already got several comments from people that had to jump off early for other meetings that they really enjoyed the presentation. So we will get the materials posted to our website. And the link to the recording, we post to our

YouTube channel. I would like to thank the sign language interpreters, the Spanish interpreters, as well as our real time captioning provider. And to the rest of you, have a wonderful afternoon. Thank you so much.

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