

Jim Springer 0:00

The following podcast is presented by Webster University's Academic Resource Center in collaboration with Starkloff Disability Institute to provide information on resources and support for students with disabilities specifically in supporting students ability to reach their college and career goals.

Nellie Hopmann 0:17

Hi, my name is Nelly Hopmann. I'm the Academic ADA Coordinator with Webster University. Today I'm sitting with two individuals from Starkloff Disability Institute to talk about student self advocacy, specifically with students with disabilities can do to advocate for themselves and their needs on campus. And my core responsibilities at Webster I work with students to set up their accommodations in the classroom as well as in housing and in campus activities. I also do a good amount of work training and providing education for faculty and staff about implementation of various accommodations and the accommodations process in general. So today, I have Katie fields, and Sarah Schwegel from Starkloff Disability Institute. I'm going to give them a moment to introduce themselves and tell us a little bit about what they do.

Katie Fields 0:59

Hi, I'm Katie fields. I'm actually a graduate of Webster University, I received a BS in Business Administration and a BA in management in May of 2019. I am now the College Outreach Coordinator at the Starkloff Disability Institute. And I run our brand new access you program, which is designed to empower college students with disabilities, and helping them overcome academic, social and physical barriers that they encounter on campus. And the goal of the program is just to assist students and empower them to meet their graduation of employment and independent schools.

Sarah Schwegel 1:32

Thanks. My name is Sarah Schwegel, and I am the youth transition coordinator. At Starkloff Disability Institute, I run the Dream Big Program for transition age youth who are planning on going to either college or trade or tech school, and I help them just navigate between high school and higher education.

Nellie Hopmann 1:54

Wonderful, thank you for being with us. To get us started off what is or what do you define as students self advocacy.

Sarah Schwegel 2:00

I define self advocacy as the ability to articulate your needs in either a formal or informal setting. So whether that's formally requesting accommodations or asking for help opening doors, or getting food in the cafeteria.

Katie Fields 2:17

And to add on to that I think that self advocacy includes being vocal and communicating your needs in order to succeed, but also making informed decisions for oneself and asking the right questions to know what resources you have available to you.

Nellie Hopmanm 2:32

Hmm, sounds like it's a lot about communication.

Sarah Schwegel 2:34

Yes, very much so.

Nellie Hopmanm 2:35

And so in getting to this communication, and students being able to, you know, speak to what they need, what are someone's rights and responsibilities as a student with a disability?

Katie Fields 2:46

Sure, so students rights, especially with ADA protocol, you know, you have equal access to academic content and educational opportunities. So you should be able to fully participate in an academic setting, but also full participation in student activities as well. The ADA extends to all campus activities, so not just in the classroom. You should, you know, be allowed reasonable accommodations for a verified disability. And that's done through going to Nellie, the Academic ADA coordinator. And at the end of the day, you also, one of your rights is confidential confidentiality, about your disability. So information on your disability remains confidential, and is kept private, as private as you want. The only info shared is about the accommodations you need.

Sarah Schwegel 3:31

Yeah, and you are responsible for connecting with campus resources, and professors when you need it. So in high school, a lot of times your accommodations are just given to you. you don't really have to ask. In college, you have to request it. You have to

provide verification, verification of your disability and show that you need academic accommodations. You have to be able to request your accommodations in a timely manner. If you wait until the end of the semester, to request testing accommodations on a final, you might not be able to get that. And you need to know what your needs are and what you need to be able to be a successful college student.

Nellie Hopmanm 4:14

Yeah, and I know on my end, we do a lot of work in communicating to students with the resources that are available to them, and really trying to get them into the Academic Resource Resource Center, the ARC or into my office to talk to them about what their rights are, but then also communicate what they need to do on their end to make sure that their accommodations are properly in place and that they get the support that they need. Third question, how can a student become successful at self advocating,

Katie Fields 4:40

I think the first thing a student needs to know is that high school support that they received is going to be a lot different than the support they're going to receive in college. So it's now up to students to get the accommodations that they need. The support is it's just different. And I think it's important for students to know that going into college.

Sarah Schwegel 4:59

You need to know your your rights and your resources, and important contacts. So what offices in the University are going to be super helpful for you? Is it going to be facilities? If you have a mobility impairment? Is it going to be the Academic Resource Center? You know, what, what do you need to know to be successful. And then you need to know your strengths and challenges, and identify goals and what you need to succeed.

Katie Fields 5:26

I think another good thing is making sure your parents understand boundaries, because one key to success is the ability to advocate for yourself. And sometimes that means, you know, your parents letting loose their reins a little bit because, you know at Starkloff, it's about college to career and in the workplace. You can't bring your parents on an interview. So we want them practiced in college too. But also knowing that being a self advocate means having a network of support. So it doesn't mean being alone, you don't have to do anything alone, you can have that network of support. And I think that's probably for students to remember.

Sarah Schwegel 6:01

Yeah, and parents can be a great resource too. You just have to know when they need to stop. And I think that can be hard for a lot of students and something they need to be mindful of. And then you need to know that the ADA extends to all campus activities. So as an individual with a mobility impairment, I actually had no idea in college that student involvement was covered under the ADA. I didn't realize that they had to make it events accessible for me. I didn't figure that out until like my third year. And if I had known as an incoming freshmen, that everything on campus should be accessible to me, I would have had a very different experience.

Nellie Hopmann 6:44

Yeah, you know, speaking to how high school is different from college. I know again, it's a conversation that we're really trying to have with students as they're coming through even as prospective enrollees touring the campus and just having an honest conversation about in general, how K-12 is different from higher education and what to expect as far as Disability Support goes. And also taking the opportunity to speak with parents about, you know, pretty explicitly about what their rights are as a parent, right? In the but also, I think honoring more of the spirit of what we tried to do for students rather than just strictly the law that we want students and parents to be engaged, but defining for them what the roles and responsibilities are, once they get to Webster's really important. What's an example of a time when you were able to self advocate?

Katie Fields 7:26

So I think it's important that we all know that self advocacy is about making decisions about what's best for oneself. So what's good for me might not be good for other people. And I think that's important to stay ahead of time. So as somebody with celiac disease, it's an autoimmune disease, and my symptoms flare up, making it impossible to sometimes get out of bed. And so that means when I was in college, I had to miss class sometimes. And so whenever I would start a new semester with new professors, I would either come early the first day, or stay late the first day and just let them know, like, Hey, I have an autoimmune disease. This might affect my attendance. And I need you to know that I'm like a straight A student, I really care about my grades. And so my absence is probably going to bother me more than it does you. But I just want them to know that, that I respect them. And that missing classes, not something I want to do, but it's something that has to happen sometimes, and and I think it was good to just prepare them so that on the days that I couldn't come, I could just send an email and say, Hey, I can't be in today. And it was not a big deal. And just explaining that to them. So they knew how much I cared. I think was important for me, and it just made that communication a lot easier.

Nellie Hopmanm 8:33

Yeah, I think you know, specifically with your experience, you know, you we've talked about how you you didn't set up formal accommodations in college. And so you while you were communicating with your instructors, you disclose some disability information. And in that part of the day process for accommodations, students disclose to my office, the ADA Coordinator. they don't need to disclose to anyone else on campus unless they choose to so.

Katie Fields 8:57

And that was what was good for me. And that's not a always good for everyone else. It's not what everybody else wants to do. But you know, that was just what I felt that I could do for myself.

Nellie Hopmanm 9:05

Still involved a lot of good communication on your part, speaking with instructors and letting them know what your needs were.

Sarah Schwegel 9:10

And thank you. Yeah. So for me, I advocate every day. So since I'm a wheelchair user, I disclose immediately. You see me, you know, I'm disabled. In a formal context, disclosing and requesting accommodations, and being an advocate in the housing, making changes to my dorm room, requesting accommodations. And then in the informal setting, you know, asking for help in the dining hall. I really got to know a lot of the employees in our cafeteria and dining service, because I would just ask them for help. For me, a lot of my self advocacy is just being open and honest and saying, Oh, I think I've got this or Oh no, I do actually need help. And you being honest with yourself too is really important. And not trying to use all of your energy on one aspect of the day when you know maybe that's not the best thing for you to use your energy on.

Nellie Hopmanm 10:14

Good advice. Thanks for your experiences and for sharing those. So finally, what campus context to the student with the disability now not you know, not just specifically at Webster but in general?

Katie Fields 10:22

Sure. Well at Webster for accommodations and assistance with the disability they need to be utilizing the Academic Resource Center and specifically, you Nelly, as the

Academic ADA Coordinator. It's also important for them to know the number for facilities when their physical barriers that they might encounter on campus. It's good for them to know public safety, dining services, and res life, campus activities and student involvement. And I think career services too. Outside organizations are also important for support. So think of outside support groups, groups that are associated maybe with your disability and organizations like Starkloff Disability Institute, who are we work to empower people with disabilities. I think all those are great contacts and building a network of support.

Nellie Hopmanm 11:07

Thank you. Well, I really appreciate your time and appreciate your insight and also the continued collaboration. Webster we've been doing a lot of work with Starkloff to bring more resources to our students with disabilities so that they are better supported in being self advocates and also supported in their career goals. So look forward to accessing more podcasts on supports for students with disabilities. Upcoming we'll have another podcast about how students can set up their accommodations and maintain those accommodations while they're at Webster.

Katie Fields 11:34

Thanks.

Sarah Schwegel 11:34

Thank you.

Nellie Hopmanm 11:35

For more information on setting up your accommodations for the supports on campus for students with accommodations, you can reach out to me Molly Hopmann in the ARC. My email is C as in cat, h. o. p. as in Paul, MANN 22. CHopmann22@webster.edu. You can also reach me by phone at 314-246-7700. For more information on the resources provided by Starkloff Disability Institute go toStarkloff.org.

Jim Springer 12:02

Thank you for listening to this podcast. Our next podcast will focus on best practices and resources in supporting this initiative. To find out more information about Webster University's disability support, go to disability@webster.edu. For information on Starkloff

Disability Institute, check out their website at www.starkloff.org. This has been a presentation of Webster University's Academic Resource Center.