

# SELF ADVOCACY WITHIN THE COLLEGE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT AND THE WORKFORCE ENVIRONMENT

By:

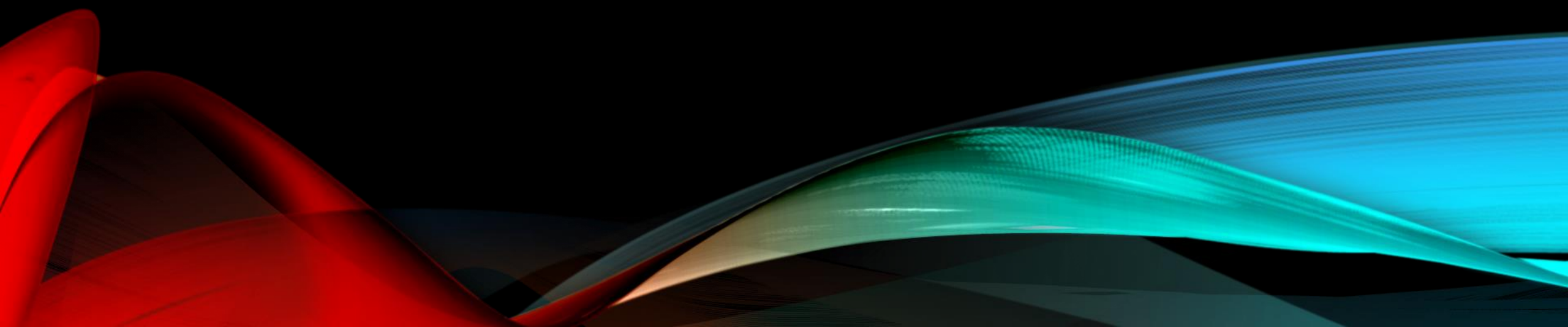
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NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

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## ADVOCATING WITHIN THE COLLEGE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

- Be able to explain what you supports you need with Instructors and Disability Support Services
- Know where Disability Support Services is located
- Know where Counselors office is located
- Know your rights and don't be afraid to speak up if you feel your rights have been violated. (hence why it's important to know where Disability Support Services is located)

## POTENTIAL CLASSROOM ADJUSTMENTS

- Preferential seating- Seating in front, by door, helps reduce audio/visual distractions
- Coach/Mentor Having someone (another student for example) accompany a student to class and/or stay in class with the student.
- Assigned classmate as volunteer assistant- Similar to an accompanier, a volunteer assistant may help take notes or provide informal support.
- Beverages permitted in class- Helps alleviate dry mouth or tiredness caused by medications.

# POTENTIAL LECTURE ACCOMMODATIONS

- Pre-arranged breaks- Helps students anticipate and manage anxiety, stress, or extreme restlessness caused by medication.
- Audio Recorder- Alleviates pressure of notetaking, freeing the student to attend and participate more fully in class.
- Notetaker- Similar to above, having someone in class to take notes alleviates anxiety of having to capture all the information; sometimes the anxiety of attending class interferes with effective notetaking.
- Using another student's notes- If notetakers are not available, then securing notes from another student helps free him or her to attend and participate more fully in class.

# Potential Examination Accommodations

- Change in test format- Altering an exam from a multiple choice format to an essay format may help students demonstrate their knowledge more effectively and with much less interference from anxiety or a learning disability.
- Permit use of technological assistance- Writing may be difficult due to medication side effects that create muscular or visual problems; using a variety of tech support or devices can be helpful.
- Extended time- Allowing extra time for exams, to be negotiated before the exam, allows the student to focus on the exam content instead of the clock, and lessens the chance that anxiety or other symptoms will interfere with his or her performance.
- Segmented- Dividing an exam up into parts and allowing the student to take them in two or three sessions over 1-2 days helps reduce the effect of fatigue and allows the student to focus on one section at a time.

# Potential Examination Accommodations Cont...

- Permit exams to be individually proctored - A non-distracting, quiet setting helps reduce interference from anxiety or other symptoms or medication side effects.
- Increased frequency of tests or examinations- Giving the student more opportunities to demonstrate knowledge creates less pressure than having just a midterm or a final.
- Permit exams to be read orally, dictated, scribed, or typed- Anxiety, other symptoms, medication side effects, or a learning disability may interfere with mental focus, concentration, ability to retrieve information, and/or writing capacity during a typical paper-pencil test. Reducing the amount of external pressure and distractions gives the student an equal opportunity to demonstrate his or her expertise without the mental health condition skewing the results.

# POTENTIAL ASSIGNMENT ACCOMMODATIONS

- Substitute assignments- Other exercises may be considered for a student with a psychiatric or mental health condition to best demonstrate their grasp of the required knowledge.
- Advance notice of assignments- Helps a student anticipate and plan time, energy, and workload, and arrange for any support or academic adjustments.
- Delay in assignment due dates- Extra time on a due date might be all that is needed for a student to pass a course. The delay should be specified; i.e., a new due date should be negotiated and formalized, not be left open-ended.
- Assignment assistance during periods of difficulty- Staying connected to a student while he or she is experiencing difficulty coming to classes may mean the student can finish the course as planned and not have to take an incomplete or withdrawal grade, lose their money, or repeat the course again. (The exacerbation of symptoms does not necessarily preclude the student's ability to complete schoolwork, and in some cases may help them meet their academic responsibilities.)



## POTENTIAL ASSIGNMENT ACCOMMODATIONS CONT...

- Use alternative forms for students to demonstrate course mastery- A student may be better able to demonstrate his or her knowledge in ways that don't require lots of writing (e.g., a narrative audiotape instead of a written journal) or time pressure (an essay exam rather than only multiple-choice, or an extra paper if the student has not performed well on the exam due to his or her symptoms).
- Textbooks on tape- May help a student whose vision or concentration interferes with their reading ability.

# POTENTIAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOMMODATIONS

- Providing modifications, substitutions, or waivers of courses, major fields of study, or degree requirements on a case-by-case basis- These adjustments should be considered on an individual basis, and only if the changes requested would not substantially alter essential elements of the course or program, or if courses are required for licensure)
- Provide orientation to campus and administrative procedures- Increasing a student's familiarity with an environment and the system to help him or her to feel more confident and allow the student to plan, strategize, anticipate trouble spots, and know where to go for assistance.
- Provide assistance with registration/financial aid- Helping a student cut through red tape and coaching them through the intricate but critical process of financial aid eliminates a potentially debilitating amount of stress and hassle.
- Flexibility in determining "Full Time" status for purposes of financial aid and health insurance- A school often has the power to declare a student "full-time" even if he or she is part-time. If the psychiatric condition is such that a part-time load is equal in burden to a full-time load for a student without a disability, such a case can be made.

## POTENTIAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOMMODATIONS CONT...

- Assistance with selecting classes and course load- Early morning classes or high-stress classes, could set a student up failure.
- Parking passes, elevator key, access to a lounge- Anxiety and other psychiatric symptoms can physically and emotionally prevent a student from crossing the campus or climbing several sets of stairs or sustaining energy for a day of classes when they would otherwise be capable of attending class. These supports make the environment more accessible and “friendly,” and are usually cheap and easy to obtain.
- Incompletes rather than failures or withdrawals if relapse occurs- If a student has finished most of the coursework but is unable to complete the remainder before the semester’s end, negotiating an incomplete can be beneficial because it may mean that a student will not have to repay or retake the entire course in order to finish it.
- Identified place to meet on campus that feels “safe” before or after class- Having a place that is safe may help a student attend class more regularly and help lessen the effects of anxiety and avert stresses that can exacerbate other psychiatric symptoms.

# ADVOCATING WITHIN THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

- Know when and how much to disclose about your disability
- Understand your rights as well as the limits of protection under the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Know about the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and when to reach out to them.
- Be prepared to provide medical necessity documentation from your doctor for any accommodation request.

# POTENTIAL ACCOMMODATIONS ON THE JOB

- Modified Schedule
- Leave
- Assistive Technology
- Job Coach
- Training
- Job Restructuring

# RESOURCES

Boston University College of Health & Rehabilitation Sciences: Sargent College:  
Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation: What Accommodations Support School  
Performance?

<https://cpr.bu.edu/resources-and-information/reasonable-accommodations/what-accommodations-support-school-performance/>

JAN's Searchable Online Accommodation Resource (SOAR) system

<https://askjan.org/soar.cfm>

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

<https://www.eeoc.gov/>

TWC Vocational Rehabilitation Services

<https://www.twc.texas.gov/jobseekers/vocational-rehabilitation-services>