# **2024 College 101, Part 1 Transcript**

**Shane:** Yeah. So we're going to kick it off. I'm gonna ask our panelists to introduce themselves. Amy, would you introduce yourself and tell us a little bit about your college journey?

**Amy:** Yes. Hi, I'm Amy, I'm a sophomore at the University of Minnesota Duluth, and I'm majoring in social work.

**Shane:** Thank you, Amy. Arianna?

**Arianna:** Hi, everyone. My name is Arianna. I go to South Central Community College in Mankato and this is my second year there.

**Shane:** Thank you Arianna. And Maddy?

**Maddy:** Hi everyone, I'm Maddy, I'm currently a SEO student at Normandale Community College and I'm a senior in high school at Armstrong High School in Plymouth.

**Shane:** Awesome. Well, thank you three for being here with us tonight. I love the diverse college experiences we have tonight, and I hope that all three of you can draw in some different experiences that will be insightful. This is going to be just like a round robin types of questions for all three panelists. Like I said, any attendees, if you have any questions, feel free to raise your hand or put them in the chat. We'll also leave time at the end if anyone has any questions or wants to connect and chat if we have time at the end. Amy let's start off with you. Can you tell us what types of accommodations students with visual impairments can receive?

**Amy:** There are so many different accommodations. There's like assistive technology, braille, large print, and I think really it's a lot of personalized accommodations too, because when you take your classes, you'll be like, oh, I think I'm going to need large print for this. And that's when you go to your disability center and you get that. So my school has a testing center, and it's where you can go into a quiet room and take your test. And also if you're taking your test for a longer time, extended time, like I have double time on my exams. So that way I don't have to worry about finishing in time before people in the class are done. I can just take my accommodated time and that's been really helpful for me.

**Shane:** Awesome. Thank you Amy. Arianna, do you want to talk about what accommodations you use both in the classroom and for tests and quizzes?

**Arianna:** Yeah, so some accommodations I use. I record my lectures, which anyone can do, but I work with my technology specialist and she helps me to convert those recording into word, a word document so that I can use my braille display to also incorporate my notes with that too. And I use like what Amy said, I use the testing room, I get extended time and notes provided sometimes by professors, but that's kind of more special circumstances and also communication with your advisor. It kind of helps with that. They make accommodations, too.

**Shane:** Thanks Arianna. And Maddy, want to close it out with that question?

**Maddy:** Yes, all my classes have been online so far, so most of my accommodations are kind of related to like the computer and testing. But I also get double time, like I get my textbooks and like a e-text format that is like screen reader compatible, any like worksheets I have if they're not already accessible. The disabilities office will convert that for me. Those are the main ones I use. I also get to use Desmos, like the online calculator, because the physical calculators doesn't really work for me. But yeah, those are the big ones.

**Shane:** Thank you. I heard a couple of themes there taking notes, so there's accommodations for taking notes. Arianna, you've recorded lectures ideally, and then you're able to convert that into different methods for referring back to those recordings when you work with the disability office to handle those recordings. Amy sounds like you use a mix of braille and electronic access to your notes into the courses. And Maddy as well. You've got the e-Text accommodation, which I'm assuming all three of you are able to get access to your textbooks electronically. So then testing, that's another area we've talked about having extended time to take your tests and quizzes and also having that quiet environment free of distraction going to, Amy said. There's a testing center that you're able to go to receive that extended time and being in that quiet environment for your tests. Amy, you mentioned some technology using a Braille display and Arianna as well. Any three of you? Are there any other assistive technology accommodations that either you use or were offered, or are able to use in the classroom or online for your classes?

**Maddy:** At Normandale, I haven't had to use like this accommodation yet, but it was offered to me and it's in my like accommodation letter, which is kind of like an IEP, like for testing if I ever like had to test on like one of like a Normandale like device, like it would have ZoomText on it. I believe it's also in that accommodation letter that I'm allowed to use my phone in class. Um, not during exams, but like in class if I need to like, use it as a magnifier or like take a picture of the board or something.

**Shane:** Yeah, that's important there. Maddy, thank you for bringing that up. For low vision users, having that access to a magnifier in the classroom is something that you can get an accommodation for, like Maddy said. Having that accommodation of using your cell phone to enlarge texts or use it as a magnifier right there in the moment. Whereas if you're in a lecture on your phone, some professors might be wondering what. But having that as an accommodation, I'm sure that eases some of that potential confusion of, you know, hey, what's Maddy doing on her phone knowing that? Yep. It's an accommodation. And that's something that you're permitted to use. Thank you for that. Just to wrap up the accommodations question, I like all three of you to chime in. And let's start with Arianna. What accommodations have you found to be most helpful so far in your academic journey?

**Arianna:** Extra time on test is the biggest one because using braille takes so much more time that just reading, writing and then also just taking your time with it has been a big one. Also, having access to an assistive technology specialist to ask questions. I know that's not a recommendation, but having good connections with the disability office is huge. Honestly, for me it's make or break the experience.

**Shane:** So it sounds like that extended time and that access to a technologist has been huge for you.

**Arianna:** Yes.

**Shane:** Amy, what about you? What's been the most helpful accommodation you've utilized?

**Amy:** For me, I didn't mention this earlier because it kind of slipped my mind, but I have had an access assistant, which is what they call like someone who comes in to class and is kind of like support. If you've used like a para in school before, that's kind of what they are. And I've used one twice, one for a biology course that I took my first semester, and this semester I also have one for my linguistics class and both classes have been very visual, so they have been really helpful in describing what's going on. For my linguistics class, my access assistant has written what's on the board, on a whiteboard and in black marker in front of me so I can know what problems are being written up there. And that really has been like the biggest help, because I can actually follow along with the class and understand what's going on.

**Shane:** Wonderful. Thank you. Maddy, what about you? What accommodation have you found most helpful so far?

**Maddy:** Probably what Arianna said the double time has been pretty nice on exams. Just kind of. It does kind of take longer if you're magnifying things and it kind of you know, just takes some of the stress off of the test. And also, just like the disabilities like resource center as a whole, like at least in my experience, they've been really helpful if I've ever, like, come across something that I'm like, I don't know, like how I'm going to access this. They're helpful and they'll help you figure it out.

**Shane:** So yeah. Awesome. Thank all of you. It's important to know that these are three examples of students who use various accommodations. It's not all of the accommodations that are out there for blind, low vision and deaf blind college students. There are more that's out there. And one of you had mentioned that there's accommodations on your list of accommodations that you have not used. Can one of you talk about that briefly? Do you have to use all your accommodations and how does that work, getting accommodations for when you may need them?

**Arianna:** Every semester you put in a new accommodations because of course you're going to have different classes, different professors. I'm just doing this right now. Before I select my classes for the spring, I actually reach out to the tech specialist and say, do you know these professors? What's your advice? Are these ones good to take? Are they a heavy load? And then I go from there to make a decisions about, Yeah.

**Amy: I** would say that's a really good point, Arianna. Also to kind of go back to the accommodation question, I do have an accommodation that professors have to give me access to all of their PowerPoints for their like the class time so that I can go through them either during class or before class to take notes. And I honestly don't really use that accommodation because I just go to class and do the lecture. But if I ever needed to use them, I could. And that's like really important is to have it there just in case, because you never know when you're going to need it.

**Shane:** So what do you say, Amy? It's better off to list the accommodations that you may need versus only advocating for the ones you absolutely know you're going to use?

**Amy:** Yeah, for sure.

**Shane:** Thank you. Can you just talk about how disability services offices work and how you connect with that resource?

**Amy:** Yeah, I think a really like really important thing to do is look at their website because every school might have their own different procedure. But for my school I had to fill out a form kind of introducing myself and stating what kind of accommodations I would need. And then when they received that form, they sent me an email and asked to actually, I don't think they sent me an email. I think I had to send an email and set up a meeting time with one of their advisors. Once I set up that meeting, we kind of talked through what accommodations I would need, what it would be like to go to UMD because I, you know, I'd never been there before, obviously. So I didn't even know, like, what the process was like. And then my advisor helped me put together a letter of Commendation, which is just all of your accommodations laid out in a list, and then they're sent out to your professors through my school, it's really easy because you kind of just like on the website, you just send it and they get it right away, and it's when they approve it, it's all good. And then you're all set up, basically.

**Shane:** Thank you, Amy. Maddy, what was it like for you connecting with Normandale as a school student in getting accommodations?

**Maddy:** So it was kind of a similar process to what Amy described. I just went on like the Disabilities Resource Office website and scheduled an intake meeting. And then I went and I brought like my IEP. And so the like specialist who I was working with at that then also had a list of other accommodations that I may like from, like the other accommodations that other visually impaired students had used. And then we just kind of talked through like the classes I was signed up for, what those would look like, what future classes may look like. And then put that in the accommodation letter. And then they sent that off to my professors. I also reached out to the professors just being like, hi, like I need these accommodations. Then it was pretty smooth sailing from there.

**Shane:** I like that. Maddy, along with your letter being sent to the professors, you said you also reached out to advocate for your accommodations and make that instant connection with a professor. How have you found that to work with your teachers?

**Maddy:** It's been pretty great, especially like in the online courses, like it's not like you're seeing your professors really at all. So just being able to have that connection, even if it's just through email, is kind of nice. And I also think it kind of shows the teachers that, like, you care about this class, like you're committed, and it also is a good opportunity for you to like, let them know what you actually need. Since as we kind of talked through before, you don't need to use all the accommodations that are on your letter. So like for the online classes, a lot of times, the only accommodation I need the professor to do anything for is the double time on test. So just being able to kind of voice that to them is pretty great.

**Shane:** And one last quick follow up for you, Maddy. So you're a PSEO student. You're still in high school. You mentioned bringing in your IEP to get accommodations. Don't they just go off of your IEP for your accommodations.

**Maddy:** Like at Normandale?

**Shane:** Yes.

**Maddy:** Not necessarily. Since in college I mean college it's a bit different from high school. So you might not get the same accommodations. I mean, it really depends on your personal situation in college. They can be a bit more strict about what they let pass. So they might use the IEP as inspiration or like just to kind of get a better understanding of what's worked for you in the past. But it's not just going to be a straight okay, copy and paste your IEP. You're good to go.

**Shane:** So as a school student, even though you're still in high school, Maddy's accommodations are enforced and delivered through her college and not by the high school. Since when Maddy's taking those college classes, she is a college student, and she is covered through the college and their accommodations. And they're just really office and not the high school and the IEP, because that is a big shift. Going from high school to college is while you may still reference that IEP in college or the disability office might reference it when they're setting up your accommodations, that is not a plan. Even if you're still in high school as a student, that the college needs to follow since it is two separate entities. Arianna, what was it like for you setting up your accommodations and working with the Disability Services Office. Did you bring your IEP or did you just advocate for accommodations on your own?

**Arianna:** I brought my IEP, but I also just talked about my experience, and my college had some experience with people with visual impairments. So it wasn't too much of a struggle because the professor I had already had a student with a visual impairment. So my first semester was like really smooth sailing, which was nice because it got me familiar. I didn't take too many classes, so I wasn't overwhelmed. Yeah, it was great.

**Shane:** Awesome. Amy, when did you reach out to the Disability Services office? Coming from a graduating senior into an incoming freshman.

**Amy:** Um, I think it was around June or July. It was kind of late because I was kind of procrastinating. I was a little bit scared. I was like, oh, my God, scary. So I didn't really do it until I was like, okay, Amy, you have to do this now. And I think it was I want to say, June, that sounds right to me. Yeah, that's when I reached out. But a lot of people do recommend doing it earlier, especially if, you know, if you're going to have like math courses that require textbooks in Braille, like they really want those early. So getting connected with them as early as possible is really beneficial.

**Shane:** I couldn't agree more. So important to know you can connect with the disabilities office on campus at any time. Even as a prospective college student thinking of going to a college, you can set up a time to chat with them and get a feel of what it would look like if you attend that school, and what accommodations they can provide. And also ask a question of have you the office had experience working with students with vision loss. That might be a real big insight into their level of comfort working with those with a vision loss, providing those accommodations and having those tools right at their disposal.