# **2024 College 101, Part 2 Transcript**

**Shane:** Arianna, let's start with you on this next question. If you could give your high school self one piece of advice, what would it be and what might you have done differently in high school if you had a chance?

**Arianna:** One piece of advice I would give to high school students now is that work on using tech like using a laptop and Jaws commands. Because when I got to college and I had to start writing papers, I was used to just using an iPad with the email app and all that. I didn't know how to access editing and all that. So it was a struggle at first, and I would have really appreciated spending more time on that.

**Shane:** I love that. Arianna so you're telling me I can't go off to college and just use my iPad and my phone and get by.

**Arianna:** No, it won't get you by at all.

**Shane:** The importance of lab top experience and knowledge is vital to going into college, because definitely going to be able to navigate the keyboard. And if your a screen reader user, navigating those key commands and navigating that technology to access your college material. Maddy, you're still in high school. So a little bit of a different question for you. But even looking back, let's say before you began classes, what piece of advice might you have given yourself?

**Maddy:** I would say just be a bit more assertive. And when it comes to like advocating for like certain accommodations or, well, like all accommodations, but just like not being afraid to say what you need or like to even suggest things because, you know, I'm sure a lot of us have had an experience where a teacher might think they know what works well, but it doesn't. So being better at speaking up for myself and also getting better at doing more audio related things as opposed to like magnification. That also is pretty important and I wish I started doing that earlier.

**Shane:** Audio. That is another great tool that going into college, a lot of college students rely on, more so than they may have thought they would have in high school. Amy, what piece of advice would you give your high school self and what might you have done differently in high school?

**Amy:** I think Arianna and Maddy had really great answers that I was going to give, so I'm making one up right now. But one thing I did in high school was I worried so much about the social aspect of college, like how people were going to react to me being visually impaired. And when I got here, it was like, like they're adult people here. Like, it's not high school anymore. And I've noticed that people treat me just like a regular college student, and that is like a really big thing that I was worried about in high school. So just be like, it's okay, because this is the real world now. You're not in high school anymore.

**Shane:** Yes, definitely a leap into a newer environment that we're hoping that events like this will help other students prepare for as they make that leap. I want to talk a little bit about being a good self-advocate working with SSB. I hope everyone has heard from their counselor or caseworker how important it is to be a good self-advocate. Maddy, can you talk a little bit about how you advocate for yourself in your PSEO classes?

**Maddy:** Really, the big thing for me is one just reaching out to the professor, you know, within that first week of classes, since they're all online, I do it within that first week. If they were like in person and I would probably need like more accommodations right on that first day. So I'd probably like, reach out like, you know, before the first day of class, but reaching out and making that connection. You know, just letting them know what like my specific situation is because like, I have had some professors who have had a visually impaired student before, but, you know, as we all know, like, you know, no two people are the same and we all need something different. So just letting them know, like what I need. And then also just being confident in myself and reaching out to them. If there's ever like an issue or like I need something else or something isn't working, just getting really good at communicating with that professor is really important when it comes to advocating for yourself.

**Shane:** Yes, building a relationship is key. That's what I've heard there. Arianna, I know you've done some really neat things advocating for blind and low vision users on your campus. Can you talk a little bit about how important advocating in college is and how you advocate?

**Arianna:** Yes. Honestly, if you can learn, one thing now is to don't forget to speak up because people don't know you can't read your mind. So an example of a time where I had to speak up was when I was my first semester of college, and I wasn't using my textbook correctly because I wasn't used to using textbooks on a computer. And my first test I did really poorly on. And I didn't know why, because I studied for hours on it every day, and eventually I figured out with my tech specialist that I wasn't accessing the entire chapter. So I had to go to my professor and say, explain the situation. And then he said no to me. So I was like, he didn't understand me. So I went above him and I went to the director of disability at my college. And then I was able to retake the test. So that was a hard situation because I had to advocate twice.

**Shane:** Yes, sounds hard, but it also sounds like you stood strong with your voice and your advocating skills. And at the end of the day, you got what you needed, which is very admirable. Amy, what about you? Can you talk about the importance of being a self-advocate?

**Amy:** Yes. In college, self-advocacy is so important because you're the only person that's there to advocate for yourself. There isn't like a teacher there to talk to your professors, for you, to give you your Braille materials, to give you your large print. You have to do all of the work to get what you need, because only you know what you need. Kind of like Arianna said. Like they can't read your mind and you have to let them know what you want and what you need to succeed. And like Amy said, forming that connection with your professors, like not just on the first day or before, like throughout the whole semester, continuing to work with them to make sure that they're giving you all the accommodations that you need. Yeah, like self-advocacy, like it's ongoing forever, unfortunately. But yeah.

**Shane:** Yes. That is why Self-Advocacy is a core service that State Services for the Blind provides, because it is a core skill that everyone needs, and developing that early is important and can be helpful, and I hope have helped all three of you prepare for and be successful in college. I want to switch it up a little bit and talk about the reading demand in college. Arianna, can you talk a little bit about your reading demands and how you access your textbooks?

**Arianna:** Yeah, I access my textbooks through two ways. One is the Voice Dream Reader app. If you haven't heard of it, you just can download it. It costs a little bit of money, but it's pretty cheap and I love it. You can have access to most books, most of my college textbooks I've been able to download, and it's a great way. If you need citations, you can check where the number is on the page. It's so accessible. I don't know what I'd do without it. Pdfs you can download to it. So anything in a PDF you can have access to it on the Voice Dream Reader app. That is honestly what I use every day for accessibility.

**Shane:** Thank you Arianna. Just to talk a little bit about voice dream Reader. Voice Dream Reader is an app on your phone that you can download. I know it's on iOS devices, and I believe it's on Android as well where you can, like Arianna said, get access to textbooks. Voice Dream reader can pair up with Bookshare, and so any Bookshare books that you download, you can pull into Voice Dream Reader and have access to right there on your device. Amy, are you familiar with Voice Dream Reader?

**Amy:** Yes, I am. I do love Voice Dream Reader, especially because of that bookshare feature. I have had some textbooks that have been sent to me by the disability office that are accessible. I can read the text, but they don't have headings in them, so I can't really. Find chapters as easily. So I've gone to Bookshare downloaded that version with the headings, and that way I can access it better. But yeah. Voice Dream is so helpful for textbooks. And also if like professors decide randomly that they want to hand out a worksheet or like a little reading or something in class on paper that I can't read. So then I take a picture of it through Voice Dream and it scans it, and then I can listen to it through my phone.

**Shane:** Can you talk a little bit about the reading demands in college, and maybe compare that to high school? How much more reading do you do in college versus high school?

**Amy:** So much more reading. Every professor has like well, most professors depending on the class, but have textbooks that you have to read and they'll be like, read page 51 to 80 or something before next class. And so it's a lot, a lot of reading, which is why having Voice Dream or some kind of way to listen to it is so helpful because you can speed it up or like, you can like even just listening to it. It's so much faster than trying to read it in braille or magnifiers. And also it's kind of finding a balance of like, if you have so many readings for a class and like other classes, have readings as well, kind of like deciding like, do I actually need to read this? Like that's kind of bad advice to give kind of that. That's why you need to like look at your reading materials, because I've had a class where all the reading was basically what we were going over in class. So I decided I don't need to focus all my time on this reading. I can skim it, and then I can pay attention in class to make sure that I get all the material. So it's kind of like learning your classes and the coursework.

**Shane:** Awesome. Thank you. Maddy, can you talk a little bit about the reading demands and how you access your textbooks?

**Maddy:** I mainly use I really like Bookshare. I also like will use like the PDFs that like a lot of my assignments are on PDFs, like one of my professors like, writes his own. He kind of writes his own textbook, but they're all in like accessible PDFs. So like, it's fine. But yeah, definitely all online. I use ZoomText to read it for me or Bookshare, but it's definitely different from high school. Yeah, a lot of reading, and you definitely need to learn how to manage your time and prioritize what is important. Like Amy said, because you might not need to read everything carefully, but just learning how to do that and learning how to manage your time is like super important. So it's definitely different from high school.

**Shane:** Thank you Maddy. Amy, I'm going to go back to you on this next one. Transportation And getting around the campus. Amy, you're up at Minnesota Duluth where you've got underground tunnels, which can be convenient, I'm sure, but not all campuses have those. How do you navigate campus and even getting to campus from your hometown in the Twin Cities? What's transportation and orientation and mobility look like for you?

**Amy:** Yes. So like Shane said, my campus is really cool in that it's all connected through tunnels and skywalks, so I don't have to, like, go outside ever. And sometimes it's kind of scary in like the middle of winter when I'm like, oh my God, I haven't been outside in two weeks. Let me do that. But as for transportation, there is this really cool system where there is a bus that will go from my college down to the Twin Cities campus and it will, you know, go from there to here or from here to there. And that's usually how I get home. I'll just go down to the cities, and then my dad or my mom will pick me up and take me home, and I really like using that. And then in Duluth, I also really like using the bus system. I take it to the grocery store, to subway, to Taco Bell. I like basically like learning the bus has been really helpful because it's given me a lot of independence to go places that I want to go off campus.

**Shane:** Awesome, thank you. And how about finding your classrooms? And every semester you're in new classrooms, right? How do you navigate that?

**Amy:** So my first semester I didn't know the school at all. So what I did was I worked with an O&M instructor to learn routes, class to class, from my dorm to the dining center, from my dorm to my first class of the day. And that was really helpful because I just followed those routes my first semester. And then I started, you know, kind of like, what if I take this turn instead and kind of exploring the building? And then for my next semester, which is last semester, I just walked around on my own with one of my friends to look for my classes and then did the same thing for this semester because, like, now I know the building, the buildings, I guess. But I do think that that one instruction at the beginning was really helpful because they helped me kind of get a foundation.

**Shane:** Arianna, what's transportation navigating your campus look like for you?

**Arianna:** Yeah. So I use a metro mobility. It's, um, the bus system that's connected to the city bus. So I get door to door service, which is really nice. In the winter when I don't want to walk three blocks to the bus stop. So that was just really simple. I might not get my ride right away, but in a few days I'll have a ride. And if I need a ride quickly, I use the city bus and there's an app that you can download and it will audio describe what is this stop? What's the next stop? And it's super accessible. So yeah that's the transportation I've been using.

**Shane:** Thank you guys. And yes I've heard of students every semester. If you're on a larger campus working with either SSB or the disability office to learn where those new classrooms are, you know, the bigger campus where a new semester you might have classes all in new buildings and new areas of the campus where connecting with an orientation and mobility professional or just someone to help you walk the route and learn where the building and where the classroom is, is something that can be set up and is available. Going to go on to the next question, because I know we all deal with this in all areas of our life and in college. Sometimes it might come out even more so than others. How do you manage procrastination, especially in college, where you don't have a teacher of the blind and visually impaired or an IEP team following you along? Maddy, do you deal with procrastination and if so, how do you help combat that?

**Maddy:** I definitely am guilty of procrastinating, especially this semester. Senior slide is hitting me, but something that I have found really helpful is like one having like an actual like planner system like I use. There's this website called Notion, which I use, like I put all my assignments in there and put like the due date. Then you can like check them off as you do them. Like before the semester, I would just like create a list of assignments in my Notes app and like might work for some, but like it wasn't working for me. So having like a good system to just like keep track of everything and then also like something I like to do, I think there's a name for it, but I don't know what it is, but it's you like, set a 25 minute timer and like you don't do anything but like homework or whatever you're trying to do. Then you take a five minute break, then you set a 25 minute timer and you just do that pattern for however long. So like if I really need to get an assignment done, I will do that. But also just like having a good system to keep track of everything and know when things are due is like definitely really important.

**Shane:** Amy, you mentioned procrastination already earlier on. How do you manage procrastination?

**Amy:** Yes, procrastination is so bad, especially like during the end of the semester where you just want to be done and want to go home. And that's like me right now. And I have like projects and papers and exams to study for. So kind of what Maddy said, putting some kind of system in place like that could be in your calendar app on your phone. I just typed everything out in a document and put what I'm doing each day. So today I have like music homework I have to do and start my review for my exam. That's like on my list, which I have to do today, like after this. But yeah, just having that schedule is so helpful because it kind of puts in your brain that you have to do something like you have to do your work. Also, getting out of my room, going to the library or like to a study area that's like specifically for studying is really helpful because it gets me out of the mind space of, oh my gosh, let me go on Instagram right now and it puts me in study headspace.

**Shane:** Thank you Amy. Arianna, what about you? Do you deal with procrastination?

**Arianna:** Um, usually I just mostly get on top of stuff. I have trouble with sometimes spacing different assignments, so I try to set reminders, create visuals of like I love check boxes, so if I see an empty box, I want to fill it. And that kind of motivates me. I know it might sound silly, but anything that kind of gets you to do something. Like Amy said, making a set list to make sure you get everything done you're accountable for. It is what I do, and it's a reminders app that I use. I have an Apple phone. I think that most phones have it and that's really helped me. I can set a folder for psychology, for US history, and then I can put my assignments, and then I can check them off as I go through my day.

**Shane: Awesome,** thank you. I think a couple of themes there is having some sort of management system, whether that's the reminders app, a app. Maddy mentioned one. Amy has her list. Something where you can put in assignments and responsibilities and have them down somewhere. So, you go down that list, get them taken care of, and know what's coming up that you have to work on.