

**Training for Female College Students with Disabilities and their Allies**

April 6, 2019

>>[Debbie Fink]: Welcome, everyone, good afternoon. Welcome, everyone, my name is Debbie Fink and I'm the Director of Community Outreach & Impact for RespectAbility, and the Project Director for this empowerment training series. RespectAbility is a national nonpartisan nonprofit that advocates on behalf of all people with disabilities -- both visible and nonvisible disabilities. We do this by fighting stigmas and advancing opportunities.

On behalf of RespectAbility, I'd like to welcome each and every one of you -- those here physically with us and those here virtually via the webinar and via the Livestream on Facebook -- to our *Empowerment Training for Female College Students with Disabilities and their Allies.* This is the fifth of six trainings in our women's disability leadership inclusion and advocacy series. We need somebody on the PowerPoint. Chris? Okay.

>> [Kris]: Coming.

>> [Debbie]: Thanks! Could we advance the slides, please. We're so pleased to get started. As a warmup I want to conduct some Participatory Action Research with you. It's voluntary to participate and it's fun to look around and get a sense for the makeup of the other participants. On the topic of participation, both for the research and throughout the afternoon, in both cases, our invitation to you is to participate at any level that you are comfortable with. Okay? We got that?

Now back to the research at hand. Please raise your hand to the following question:

How many here are students at Guttman Community College? Okay.

How many are CUNY students? All right we have a few.

Hunter College? Okay.

Stony Brook University? Great. Marymount college? Okay. Anyone want to call out another school?

Did I say NYU? NYU! Woo woo. Any other schools here present?

>> Fordham.

>> Let's hear it for Fordham, wow. Great showing, yay! All right, any other schools? Okay.

I also want to give a shout out to those students and professor from the college in Arizona and the self advocates from Utah State University who have tuned into our webinar. Welcome to all. For those present at any time during the training, feel free to wander over to our Self-Expression Graffiti Wall which is looking really blank right now to write or draw your disabilities on one side and your abilities on the other side. We have color markers. Make it really colorful, and then at the end we're going to do something really cool with it. All right? And you can feel free to get them around at any time. Also, if there's any sound that is bothersome to you let me know and I have in my pocket some ear plugs if you want to mute some of the sound.

To each one listening, I want to open up with a motivational quite. These 35 wise words are what today's empowerment training is all about.

*“Trust yourself. Create the kind of self that you will be happy to live with all your life. Make the most of yourself by fanning the tiny, inner sparks of possibility into flames of achievement”* [Golda Meir].

Translating this quote is a deliverable tool, here with us today, these are the tools we hope to deliver to you: To take charge, self-advocating on & beyond campus.

To take charge self advocating socially.

To take action advocating for yourself and others on and beyond campus;

to meet other students on a similar journey and cultivate new relationships.

Next slide, please. Moving right along.

As you see in this disclaimer we understand that when it comes to disability advocacy, folks have and should have strong ideas and opinions. Hence, we want to clarify that everyone here today is exercising free speech, one of our great freedoms in this country -- and that it is their own, personal views.

I also want to thank our generous host here today at Guttman Community College that does a *remarkable* job supporting its students with disabilities. Thanks to the other schools that shares the information about this training. And a big thanks goes to The New York Women's Foundation and the Coca Cola Foundation for their direct support of this effort.

It is now my pleasure to pass the mic to Barbara Bookman who is CUNY's director of the disability program. Before I say another word about her please make sure to silence your cell phone. Thanks. It is such a pleasure to have Barbara with us today and we would like to welcome you with a round of applause.

>> (Applause).

>> [Barbara Bookman]: Okay. Thank you, thanks so much. It's so great to be here. I just want to add one question to the participatory part.

How many anyone here a graduate of CUNY or did attend CUNY at any point. My hand goes up too. Okay. All right. Nice to hear. I stand before you as a Queens College graduate. Yeah. Okay. And from the year 19XX … I'm not telling. A long time ago. All right? So we have students, how many people are considering going to college, not quite there yet? Anybody? Okay. Wonderful. Wonderful.

So by way of introduction, since this isn't really a CUNY room, I am Barbara Bookman the university director of disability programs at CUNY. We proudly serve over 11,000 students with disabilities at the university. So that basically goes to say if you're a person with a disability, invisible, visible, whatever it may be there's place for you. It’s not just CUNY It's colleges and the world of work out there. So I want to say what's it's really great to be here. This is an amazing event. There's a lot of I can already from the room a lot of dynamic and visionary women who are using your intelligence and creativity to really move the dial for women with disabilities at what we call the CUNY verse and also beyond. Okay? And I know there are some terrific men in the room here too. It's not only women. In fact, there's Chris Robinson who introduced me today. Okay. So, there are some wonderful guys here as well.

And also I think the timing of this event that it's really the junction of Women's History Month and CUNY Disability Awareness Month so it's a well-timed event. And also just talking for a minute about CUNY, we have been a leader in the area of diversity really since 1847 our first inaugural class was 143 men but 20 years later the women came on in and that was really the beginning of our diversity that just kept growing and growing and growing and 56% of our students are female and a lot of veterans so I would say at CUNY and whatever school you're in and just the world in general, we've really come a long way over the years. It's forums like this where we can come together, we celebrate our accomplishments and we continue to be strong self advocates.

But if you want to look at some of the statistics, we really show that only about 14% of people with disabilities achieve a BA. It compares to about 37% of people without disabilities over the course of the country. If you look just at New York, some statistics for women with some college, 37% of women are unemployed and 52% of women with a BA are working and that doesn't always say fully employed. Some people are underemployed. They may be part time but want to be full time. They may not be full time. We still do have work to do but with where we're going and what we're doing, I'd say we are really moving the dial forward. So this is great. We come together, we're preparing ourselves to show the world that there's no stopping us. The women of strength, power, resourcefulness, and on and on …

I want to wish you all a great day.

>> Thank you.

>> (Applause).

>> [Debbie]: Thank you, Barbara, that was so inspiring we really appreciate it and thank you on behalf of all the students in the CUNY area with disabilities. We are grateful for them all.

>> Now we begin or panel: *Self-Advocacy On & Beyond Campus.* I have the pleasure of introducing today's moderator, Gabby Einstein-Sim, who is both a RespectAbility board member and a graduate student here in New York City studying community health education at Columbia's Teachers College. Isn't that where you went, Barbara? Gabby's graduating next month! Thank you for taking the time away from your exams and papers to be here today!

I also want to welcome and thank Dr. Dee and her dear service dog Envy. Dr. Dee is another valued board member of ours who has joined us today. Raise your hand, Dee! There you go -- we want to thank you for coming. Dee will be taking notes and observing to help us better our best practices by providing me with feedback afterwards; so welcome and thank you, Dee and Envy. Now, Gabby, it's all yours.

>>[Gabby]: Thank you, Debbie.

>>[Debbie]: You're welcome! We will make way for our speakers. And one moment of transition and speak loudly for the sake of the webinar.

>>[Gabby]: Okay. Is this good? Louder? Okay. Well thank you, Debbie and once again, welcome, everyone, we're so happy to see you all today and I'd like to thank or panelists for being here as well. We're excited to hear what you have to say. I'm going to turn to each of you and have you start your time by answering the simple but complex question, what does self advocacy mean to you. We're going to start with Crystal, on the end there and thank you for joining us today. But really, *we* are all joining *you* here at Guttman. Thank you for inviting us to join you here. You've been so graciously hosting us and so helpful. Five out of our six trainings have been here and it's been wonderful working with you and Guttman.

Crystal is a CUNY alum and associate director of disability services here at Guttman Community College. Please share your story and how self advocacy plays out when it come to academic and curricular advocacy.

>> [Crystal]: Hi, everyone, can you hear me? So let me share about my disability. I have Lupus which causes me to have chronic kidney disease. When entering John J. College when I attend I didn't know there was disability services office. And my first semester was extremely difficult in terms of managing going to school full time, working part time along with tests and exams and so on and so forth. I met this special being of mine who actually assisted me in terms of becoming a better self advocate so my three points with becoming a self advocate is one, know yourself, be comfortable with your disability, understand that your limitations are not limitations. They're just strategies that you have to implement in order to receive what you need within the classroom or without the classroom. Also to understand that, you know, although within the office of accessibility services it doesn't mean that you're stigmatized in having a disability you're just using the support services. Many of the offices within CUNY have changed their name to accessibility or disability services with the notion of support services. So I hope everyone in this room understands, like accessibility is like the way to go.

>>[Gabby]: Thank you, Crystal. Appreciate you sharing such a personal story and it's great to see how self advocacy is a journey without even knowing about the office and now you work in it. So, yeah, thank you. We're going to move right along to Rebecca Gross. So Rebecca, thank you for joining us today.

>> [Rebecca]: Thank you.

>>[Gabby]: You started as a volunteer with RespectAbility and are now working for us part-time as our inclusionist here in the city. You've had a lot of experience in the organization when you were at Sarah Lawrence College. Can you share your story as a self advocate and as a student when it come to advocacy for students.

>> [Rebecca]: Sure. So my name is Rebecca Gross, a little bit about me. I have a number of learning disabilities and when I was younger, I went to a couple of different Jewish day schools that did not know how to support my learning needs.

And that was very difficult. I didn't do the best in my little kindergarten through third grade. I didn't know about those with disabilities around me, I didn't understand what that meant and that was really difficult. I moved schools a couple of times. By the time that I was in middle school, partially because of this I was also dealing a lot with untreated mental health issues that were also making it much harder to learn and be successful in school. When I went into eighth grade I went to a school for those with learning disabilities and when I was there I was finally able to learn and understand that I'm a smart person. I'm breezing along because I want to cover a lot …

>> [Gabby]: You're fine.

>> [Rebecca]: Hooray. But even though I was in the school for students with disabilities, I had a lot of friends there I didn't really feel that I had a community of people with disabilities around me. Everyone around me had a disability. But that's not really there wasn't really any talk about how that disability helped define us as people.

So when I ended upstarting at Sarah Lawrence College as a first year and found the Sarah Lawrence Disability Alliance I was really, really excited and it made a big impact on me because I realized there were people on campus even though this wasn't a special ed school that there disability was a part of their identity.

I was a part of the group for the first year and for my following three years I was one of the co chairs of the group. And I was really fortunate to work with some really great people and we ran a number of pretty successful events throughout my tenure of working as the co chair of this group and so based on what I've learned from that I wanted to share sort of what I found helpful when I was planning a number of events even if it was a number of events at the same time. I wanted to share some thing us found helpful to think about while I was planning these events that we can talk more about in the small group discussions later.

Next slide, please? So when you were planning events for disability rights for disability access on campus or anywhere else I found it really helpful to think about the different groups of people that you were trying to address. That you were trying to reach. So for me, that meant the three groups of people, how I thought of it. That was most helpful for me was disabled students and for disabled students it's really important like I found in my first year to create an actual community space that meets at a regular amount of time. For, sorry, at a regular time each week so that you can have that community and share experiences with people who might also have be experiencing similar things. On top of that, the next group is allies or future allies. Which are students without disabilities. So your fellow students and most people who don't have disabilities, especially at, you know, my young age, don't necessarily know a lot about it, so the most important thing that you can do in that case is create fun events that they want to come to that are educational and help create allies in the nondisabled part of the student community.

The third group of course is faculty and staff who are the people that you have to talk about more specific access needs. If there's something blocking the accessible entrance to the building. If there's a professor refusing to put captions on the bottom of a movie for some reason or anything like that when you talk about professors, or administration, it's not as important to educate them about the wider issues as it is to explain the specific things that you need. And what they need to do in order to achieve those things. Not every event that you hold needs to reach all three of these groups.

But I found it very helpful while I was planning events throughout a whole year to make sure kind of in my head, ticking off, okay, the last two events that I had didn't really address what the faculty should be doing. So maybe the next event that I have should touch on that. The last event that I had was really only for talking to the faculty so the next one should really be about building community for my fellow students with disabilities and so on and so forth. The other thing within that is that in my opinion all advocacy should do one of both of these two things.

One thing is to increase awareness of a community and that could include within the community itself. So like me learning more about the disability community from people who are in different parts of the disability community. And also to excuse me, sorry and also reaching out to the non disabled community and the second thing is having specific goals. I found in my time leading this group that if I went to try and accomplish something and my list was 50 things long and they were not explained I didn't get a lot done. My focus was on one or two things that could be written in one page even and that could be easily understood. So I'm coming towards the end of my time, so could I have the next slide, please? The one thing I want to leave you with is that student advocacy for all different groups of marginalized identities including disability are really important and not on a campus level. A lot of the most important and most influential advocacy disability advocacy started out on campus. I don't have time to go into them. But I have these images up here to show you as an image description. One of them is a black and white image of a man named ed Roberts who was an amazing he started as a self advocate, a group in the 60s before they were people in wheelchairs in colleges.

He started a group called the rolling quads which was a group of students with disabilities who really paved the way for, well future students with disabilities. So I encourage you to look up the rolling quads UC Berkley later on when you have some time. And then the other thing that I'd encourage you to look up is the deaf president now from Gallaudet University. Which is a strong example of …

>>[Participant]: I was there!

>> [Rebecca]: We'll talk! But which is a really strong example of students of whether you're identifying as deaf or as disabled or as a combination, students having very specific set goals. They had I believe four goals:

Listing them very carefully, being very motivated and organized in those protests, and getting what they needed to happen -- which in this person was have a deaf president represent the deaf university. I'd encourage you to look up deaf president now The Rolling Quads, they're really some inspiring stories for self advocacy and for advocating for your community.

And never underestimate the power that you have starting small and growing from there. Thank you.

>> (Applause).

>>[Gabby]: Thank you, Rebecca, you are very right that students could and should be heard and that a respectful united front is the most effective way to go about that.

>> (Cell phone playing in the background).

>> (Laughing).

>>[Gabby]: I also appreciate you pointing out the organizations. There's the students, there's the allies, and the school staff and faculty. I think that a lot of us probably look forward to when we are in the smaller groups and getting some more information from you about actionable things we can do. Some hands-on ‘how to’ stuff -- so thank you!

Moving onto Brilynn, a former fellow of RespectAbility. You'll hear more about that soon. We're accepting applications. She has quite a story to tell and I will let her speak -- go ahead.

>> [Brilynn]: Great. Hi, guys! My name is Brilynn Rakes. I was born and raised in California and then I went to Fordham University the Lincoln Center campus, double majored in communications and media studies and dance. So my entire life I was in to competing and dancing my way through elementary school, middle school, high school. I wanted to be a ballerina my whole life and so I went to college for that. In New York. One of my dreams as well was to go to college in New York. And so I just graduated from there in 2017!

Right after that I went to Washington, D.C. to do a communications fellowship at RespectAbility. And this was a really important point for me because all I had done was dance. I had my second major which was just kind of a backup plan. But all I did was dance and then I was put into this nonprofit environment. And I was at a desk, I was in my business attire. It was amazing. We were doing so much good work for people with disabilities. And so I kind of realized that summer, summer of 2017 that maybe dance wasn't what I was going to do long term. Maybe there was more that I could offer.

So thank you RespectAbility for kind of opening my eyes to the fact that I can do whatever I want to do even though I knew I could have definitely become a professional dancer. I had the ambition and the talent, but my heart just wasn't in it anymore and so something that is really prevalent with me right now is understanding that it's okay to change directions. And you mentioned it. Starting small and building up from there is something that I'm doing personally right now. So currently, I am at the community college of Rhode Island taking business classes because, again, I had never done anything else except for communications and dance.

I'm setting the stage for a master's degree in business. I have no idea where I'm going to go yet but also I am involved in extracurriculars at the community college. I'm part of a club called DECA and I'm really close with the advisor for that club, and she wants me to be the incoming president of the club next semester so that's amazing. I'm laying the groundwork for business school. I'm setting the stage for business school.

Also a little segue: I have a visual impairment. I have what's called Achromatopsia. That includes full color blindness. I'm considered legally blind and I have a type of Cone Dystrophy which means my eyes are very sensitive to light so that's a little snippet about my disability.

And

>> [Debbie]: We're going to try to show your video which may … Yes. So there's a [technical difficulty]. It's a silent movie.

>>[Gabby]: Okay -- so I'm going to moderate while we show a really special video. When I was a senior in high school I was asked to perform on ABC's *Dancing with the Stars* and we are going to see it. Yeah, let's get the lights.

>>[Debbie]: Can we turn the lights out? Let's move the slide. There's something going on with the sound so Brilynn is going to moderate and you'll have to hear the music in your own ears. So feel free to

>> [Brilynn]: I'm interested to see how it's going to sound. We'll see. This is the host of the show and he is introducing me. What happened was I was auditioning for Julliard at the end of my high school experience. It was my dream school. I got to the end of like the audition process it started with a hundred people and then they cut me. I was devastated. A couple hours later I got a call from the producers of Dancing with the Stars asking if they could do a special segment on me. And so that's my dad. He actually passed away a couple days after this aired.

I haven't seen him I usually try to see him when I watch this video. So right here I'm just kind of talking about my visual impairment which I just explained to you. And here I am expressing myself and I never moderated to a group of people. He's explaining that you can't really tell that I have a disability but it's there and I also explaining how I'm light sensitive and I use enlarged print on an iPad and use lot of resources and I loved my office of disability sources at Fordham. Thank goodness for them. They helped provide me with all of these tools I also use audiobooks, learning ally, I'm also a learning ally mentor. And now this video is going into how I love dance so much and I never wanted to stop despite having my visual impairments.

This is me in class. That little tiny hop was not supposed to be there but nobody knows that except my mom. I was like no, you're not supposed to know that. So we're still discussing my vision. And this is, you know, in the rehearsal in L.A. and this is Derek huff one of the main dancers of the show and they surprised me by letting me dance with him.

I had no idea what I was going to be doing on the show. I knew I was going to be dancing with someone but I didn't know who or what it was going to be. This is me really excited. Ah!

>> [Gabby]: Dancing with you.

>>[Brilynn]: Right. Right. Yes. He was impressed with my skill and it was this whole process took like maybe two and a half hours and he cancelled the next day's rehearsal because I didn't really need it which was a compliment. This floor is incredibly slippery, scary, and so we are about to see the segment or the actual performance itself. So this is live, people, like, I could not make a mistake or else everyone on the east coast would see it live. It's sad that you can't hear this. It's a really beautiful song. You can see everything with sound on daily motion.com. You type in my name, Brilynn Rakes, daily motion and you can watch this for yourself. This whole beginning section is improvisation. Didn't know what it was going to be. Yep, here we go. Bam. Okay.

This is just a really fun piece. That gave me a cramp in my leg that move right there. I really loved performing this, it was such a pleasure, Derek was really cute he, like would walk me around the set holding my hand making sure I didn't step on or trip on any wires this lift had my back really score but I love how they did all the different camera angles. This part was kind of slippery. The whole thing was pretty slippery trying not to fall on my face on national television.

After the show, after this performance I got so much feedback from people with disabilities all around the country. Parents and kids with similar impairments to me. That's what gave birth to my passion for disability advocacy, knowing something like this can be on the internet and can be spread to people with disabilities that you can do great things if you set your mind to it and have the right attitude and go about it in a way that works for you and if you put the time and energy and if your heart is really in it you can really do, oh, funny thing, they thought that was my mom. That is not my mom. My mom was, like, *thank goodness. They didn't actually get me on there.* Which is silly.

So Derek is choked up at this point which is kind of funny. I'm actually *yes, I think so.* I was really out of breath trying to keep it together. It's fun to watch this. I wasn't actually that tan. They put makeup all over your whole body which is kind of crazy, and I really encourage you to go and look at the video so you can hear the sound but you got like an inside scoop moderating from me so that's kind of fun.

>> (APPLAUSE).

>> If you have any questions from me just let me know. Yeah, hopefully we have a great rest of the day together. Thank you.

>>[Gabby]: Thank you, wow. You were in front of all those people and danced beautifully. I hear we may be having movement with you later.

>> [Brilynn]: Yeah we're going to stand up and stretch our legs and move around a little bit and please don't be shy. There's no judgment in this room. It's just going to be fun and feel really good and it's going to be great and no one's going to be judging you: I know it can be a little nerve racking but it's going to be fun.

>>[Gabby]: We're looking forward to that but for now we are going to do a panel so if there are there are note cards on your table. If you have questions for the panelists please write them down and we will bring them up and ask as many as we can but you will seeing all three of them within the smaller group sessions after the panel.

So I've got a starter question for each panelist. I guess I'll start with Crystal. Crystal, *what do you think was your biggest hurdle faced in owning your disability in terms of self advocacy?* While Crystal is thinking about that I will collect cards so if you have a card for me to bring up please raise your hand and I will get it.

>>[Crystal]: My biggest hurdle was understanding my disability. I really didn't understand how it would affect me as attending the classes or having extra time on assignments or exams. I didn't understand my strengths in terms of self advocacy and what I could have done for myself.

>> (Coughing).

>> It took a lot of owning my disability and not looking at it as a limitation but look at it as is superpower or a strength. So just having conversations with faculty, the dean, disability services, and so on, made me, you know, created a path for me of working with a lot of our students.

>>[Gabby]: Re Rebecca, *what do you do if there's no established organizations on your campus?*

>>[Rebecca]: Good question. Someone right before me started to develop the group. But I highly encourage anyone who wants to create a community of disabled students on their campus to research the guidelines for starting organizations. Most schools don't make it very difficult because they want to be able to tout that they have a lot of different student organizations. I know for my school, it just meant that you had to have three people sign on as being interested.

So I would really try to reach out to anyone who you know who either has a disability, or who is a strong ally of people with disabilities. Start with the people who you know would be interested to create core group. Even if it's not official at first you can start meeting unofficially and then grow from there so I guess sort of the same as what I said at the end of what I was saying before is start small, it counts for starting a group as well.

>>[Gabby]: Thank you, Rebecca. Just following that up, we got some questions from the audience but I wanted to just mention that if your question is for a specific panelist, please write down their name, I'm sorry, I forgot to tell you that earlier. So this question is: *When and how did you disclose your disability if it's non visible?* And do any of the panelists want answer….

>>[Brilynn]: I can comment on this and anybody like follow up with what I have to say. If you have a disability that's not visible right away I would not disclose it right away either. Don't wait too long. You really have to feel out each situation and weigh how comfortable you are with whoever you might be disclosing it to. There's not just one answer for this. It really just depends and also learning from each time that something happens. I know for me when I first got to Fordham I immediately disclosed that I had a vision impairment to all the dance faculty, all of my peers, and I feel like I should have waited maybe like a month to just show them what I was capable of and then tell them like what was really going on because you can't tell right away with me that I have a disability. And so just not leading with that. Leading with your abilities. I'm playing with the words here. Leading with what you can offer to whatever, if it's a position, if it's like a volunteering thing or an internship, leading with what you are able to do and then follow up a little bit later with that you have a disability that maybe they didn't realize. Make sure you say it does not hinder me. It sets me apart because I have a unique perspective and then they're going to have respect for you and what you do and it's a really good way to do it. That's just my take. Anybody want to add anything?

>>[Crystal]: I will add once you enter college and speak to your disability services officer, have a conversation and discuss with them in terms of your documentation. The first thing is to understand the documentation and what you could do within a class setting. Most directors have self advocacy tips on their board or a category where tips and strategies in terms of in the classroom that could help. I personally, I waited for a semester to do it on my own. I shouldn't have done that. I should have gone to the disabilities office within at least the first to two weeks to discuss the needs that I have, to discuss my strengths and what strategies would have been better for me.

>>[Rebecca]: If I could just add one more thing, I think like Crystal gave a really good description of the importance of speaking with the disability services office and Brilynn I think you gave a good description of sort of the nuances in when you self disclose as someone with an invisible disability. And one thing I want to add. It's situational. For me I emailed the disability services department at Sarah Lawrence three months before I started school. I'm in the master's program now at CUNY for disability studies and I e mailed, yeah, yes, yeah, at CUNY, yes, school for professional studies and I emailed the director of disability services like two months ahead of time. I will mail professors ahead of time but when it come to something like a job interview I will make myself seem very credible. First show what I am capable of and then at the end sort of as like an additional thing, not as like a now I have this terrible news to tell you but just a light hearted also, I have this disability, here's how it impacts you, I will let you know if I need anything and I have a different perspective and that's great. Like, it's throwing it in later so it's really situational.

>>[Gabby]: Thank you for all three of you. We have an additional question on the same topic that I want to pose as a follow up. It says, *What advice do you have for students to make them comfortable about disclosing their disability? What to do when you're uncomfortable?*

>>[Rebecca]: I would say one thing you can do. It sort of is a similar experience I think if you have a disability that isn't immediately noticeable. It's sort of similar to coming out to friends and family as LGBT. There's a lot of dialogue within the disability community about the idea of coming out. And I guess my suggestion for that is you know yourself best and start with the people who you feel most comfortable telling.

Just because you've told one person about your disability doesn't mean that you're all of a sudden obligated to stand on the top of a building and yell it out for everyone to hear. Like, you can tell some people and never tell anyone else. Once you tell one person it doesn't mean that you've officially set the course for anything.

>>[Gabby]: Crystal can you please address the issue of confidentiality once that information is disclosed?

>> [Crystal]: So depending on who you're speaking with, within the Office of Disability Services we are not allowed to speak to your faculty or anyone about your disability unless you provide us permission. Here at Guttman what we do is we meet with the student and the faculty together with the agreement of the student to discuss their needs and how they could become more involved in the classroom.

To answer your question, I think going to the disability office and understanding what the purpose of disability is, here at Guttman what we normally do is every Tuesdays and Thursdays is common hour and we have an event throughout the whole semester of what is accessibility, how can you self advocate? What is CUNY's concern with jobs and if a person is not aware of who to self advocate is just speak to someone in the office or attend an event and see if you're comfortable with that.

>> [Gabby]: Great. Thank you. Switching topics a little bit. This is about accommodation. *Did any of you ever need them. How did you go about getting those specific needs filled?*

>>[Crystal]: Some CUNY schools have housing accommodations. Here at Guttman we do not have housing accommodations however there is res life where you can speak to those about rooms for those with disabilities. I would say have a conversation with them or have someone from the disabilities office have a conversation on your behalf. Just to discuss the needs of housing. And is this is housing within an educational setting or housing looking for an apartment type accommodation?

>>[Gabby]: I would say educational.

>> [Crystal]: Education? So speak to see what type of housing they have. Depending on your needs for wheelchair access we use the first floor. Others may need to be in certain areas within the building. But if you're planning to be within housing apply early. There is some limitations in terms of room space, and where you should come.

>>[Gabby]: I can actually speak to this personally. For me it was definitely ahead of time. Like go early. That's how it works best for me. Just finding your voice and reaching out early and really being honest about what you need. So our next question is … how are we going on time?

>>[Debbie]: We're great. We're good.

>>[Gabby]: Okay. Next question is just a general question for you all. Whoever wants to answer. *What do you think about a universal disability organization that stands up for students and their rights in higher education? What can we do about it?*

>> [Crystal]: So within CUNY we have CCSD.

>> Woo.

>> Please correct me if I'm wrong if I'm saying the name incorrectly. It's CUNY Council with Students with Disabilities.

>>[Louis]: Coalition.

>> [Crystal]: Coalition, I'm sorry. Louis attends our meeting. Louis stand up.

>> (Applause).

>> … at Guttman. If I'm saying the name incorrectly. He's part of CCSD. You also attend CCSD meetings and their events. They are extremely amazing in self-advocacy. They recently went to promote additional funding within CUNY and SUNY campuses. They are extremely helpful to our community.

>> Outside of CUNY I think CUNY provides a really great model for how that can be done because there are so many schools within so many locations that have so many different needs.

So, like having representatives from each type of school is important. I'm personally thinking about it now. How that can work when you have so many different types of schools and, yeah, I guess starting from even if you just started if it wasn't national to begin with. Even if it was just like statewide, reaching out to your local schools and going out from there. Maybe that could help in having like, if it's not one council altogether it could be like a meeting of student representatives from a number of different councils together. Once a year, twice a year, anything like that. That's use and feel a good idea and hopefully we will have that sometime.

>> And I want to add that you all are from different schools so talk to each other. Share what's going on together with different schools. Next question, what does the office of disabilities do to train each professor? Because not all of them are as good as following the rules and regulations as others.

>> So I can speak to the schools. I came from John Jay College. So we do a number of things. The first thing is attend onboarding where new faculty attends like a mini orientation and make sure that they understand the diverse population that we have here at Guttman. We are also creating an online service where it's a similar to Black Board, I'm not sure if everyone knows what Black Board is where you go through slides and look at scenarios and so on and so forth and at the end it's a mini questionnaire and what we do is here at Guttman we attend instructional team meetings so each person within my team they are in charge of an instructional team meeting and a cohort where we go and train faculty and staff, we educate them in terms of how students would need accommodations inside or off campus. We use the model of universal design within the instructional team meeting and also one on one meetings with our faculty. We allow them to come into our own orientation here into Guttman just to meet the first year students as well so we do a lot of collaborative efforts within faculty and staff here.

>>[Gabby]: You can also ask in the small groups about that more specifically. The next question is for Brilynn. *What made deciding to leave the dance world*? You kind of touched on this before but you decided to change what you were doing. And you kind of switched career paths. *What advice do you have for students who are worried about not knowing what they want to do or maybe think that they're not studying exactly what they want to do? What advice can you give?*

>> [Brilynn]: Oh my. This haunted me for months and months and months. It was a process to try to like say, *it's okay, Brilynn, you spent all this time doing one thing and now you're just going to say good bye to that and embark on a new journey and that's okay.* It still makes me nervous to think about how difficult that was for me because I was like, 100% like, I didn't even want to go to college. I wanted to go straight to a ballerina company. I was obsessed, ultimately.

And now I’m not even be dancing anymore and I'm happier than I'd ever been. **I'm free of that stress and comparison.** **All these unhealthy habits that you can develop when you're a dancer.** But if you are worry that had you're studying the wrong thing or you don't know what you're studying is going to take you. Don't worry about that. Just yet. You can learn a lot with each step of the way in college. Learning what you hate and what you do *not* want to do -- check that box off. That is a step you can take in saying I definitely don't like this math class and I definitely don't like this journalism class so that kind of going into that career's probably not the best idea.

You don't have to stay awake at night and tremble and wondering if you're doing the right thing because there's hope. You can go through a four year degree and change your mind. You don't have to put all this pressure on yourself. I felt like for me, at Fordham, I put so much pressure on myself to keep dancing that it kept me from other opportunities, joining other clubs, student government, all these things that I'm actually very interested in now. I always have some regrets because I didn't take advantage of them at Fordham. I have a lot of regret about that but I'm taking advantage of them now.

My point is **you can start over anytime that you want** and it's just about like figuring out what you do want to do and not rushing that process because life is filled with ups and downs and twists and turns and this is kind of cliche but you have to continue going with the flow of your going with your journey. Everybody has a different journey. Don't compare yourself to others because no one going through exactly what you are going through. And so, yeah, don't really worry about it. Just do the best that you can in your classes. And if you're really passionate about a certain thing right now, dive fully into that 100% coming at it from different angles. Like I'm going to talk about there the small group with extracurriculars you can do so much in one semester coming at your interest with different angles in a different club and that is just really helpful and yeah just getting involved as much as possible. Helps you figure out what you do and do not want to do in the future and so the reason I started over was because I didn't do that really in undergrad. I just had one focus. I had my eye on dance and then I started over but if you can try to like figure it out before that's always good. But again, don't stress about it and do well in school and do as much as you can.

>>[Gabby]: Thank you. We have another question that actually it might be better for the small group session but . . . It's for Rebecca and it's about advertising about disability programs, and I guess also finding out about disability programs at your school. The question is: *How can you advertise that your college as deaf programs*? Many of us are unknown to the programs nowadays.

>>[Rebecca]: Sure. Could you say how can you advertise that your program has?

>> [Gabby]: Deaf programs. I would imagine any programs.

>>[Rebecca]: Sure. So one thing that I found useful -- I can't speak to deaf programs, unfortunately. Sarah Lawrence does not have one but for disability one thing I found useful in that I tried to do as much as I could was collaborate with unrelated student groups. I had an event where I was collaborating with a group that showed films on campus every week that maybe people who wouldn't look up the word "disability" or in a career fair seek out disability because we had a screening of Finding Dory and that was fun and brought people in that they didn't know that they might have an interest in disability or being an ally or in self advocating for themselves as one someone with a disability. And the other thing, this is very cliche and sounds silly but I'm being deadly serious.

Students go to things where there's **free food.** If you say there's free food you'll get more students. If it's chocolate-based you'll get more. Of course, serious events are important and we had a lot of serious events but mixing that in with fun events that people want to go to even if they have no interest in disability.

We had a fidget making workshop to talk about neurodiversity issues. But also people came because there was glitter and beads and like, it was fun. It's not always. That's my best advice is **combination of collaborating with as many people as you can and having fun events and bribing people with food.**

>> [Gabbyy]: Great. Thank you. For that. And I want to thank you, all, oh, did you have something …

[Crystal]: I wanted to add something. Here at Guttman what we do is we have RSVP link that we send out for our events and student who is require accommodations we ask them to come to our office and indicate what event they would like to attend to ensure we have the accommodations here. If we have a deaf or hard-of-hearing student who requires a sign language interpreter, then that gives us enough time to request one. If we have a student who has a visual impairment that requires large text, come to our office and we will do that for you.

>>[Gabby]: Thank you for providing that. I want to thank you, all, let's give our wonderful panelists a round of applause.

>> (Applause).

>> [Gabby]: That's really informative. Thank you to each of you. You will get to talk to them some more a little bit later; but for now I'm going hand the mic other to Debbie who will be the MC for the rest of the day.

>>[Debbie Fink]: Wow, let's give one more round of applause. You were all amazing--thank you!

>> (Applause).

>> [Debbie]: Thank you to all of the participants here today and to all those who joined us via webinar. This is where the webinar ends and we part ways with those virtual participants. We work our magic here and turn off all video coverage so participants feel safe to share and grow. Thank you for joining us and we want to hear feedback from Arizona and Utah on your shared group experience during this webinar. I know that Arizona, your great professor is going to do a lot of the empowerment activities with you that we're doing here. You women were *fabulous* and we really look forward to the interactive component that is waiting! So let's say fair well to our webinar and our Livestreaming friends!

>>[Debbie]: Bye.