

Joceline Boucher: Welcome to this short video on Accessibility Services at Maine Maritime Academy. I'm Joceline Boucher and I direct the Academy's Accessibility Services which are located at the Center for Student Success which is this white building in the picture. My contact information is on the slide and it's also at the end of this presentation, so if there are things that we don't touch upon today or that you have questions about or, if you have special circumstances, please get in touch with me and I will try to get back to you quickly about your concerns.

Joceline Boucher: So, when we talk about accessibility in the college setting, we talk generally about the word accommodations which are represented here in this little graphic. So, on the left-hand side of this graphic, we have two individuals in front of a fence and beyond the fence is this beautiful scenery that only the first person can see, because that person is taller and can look over the fence. And in the second picture --a second portion of the picture -- we have made an accommodation for the student. We've adjusted the situation in a way that enables that person to look over the fence and to see the scenery.

So, we can think of the fence as metaphor -- as a barrier to learning in the classroom -- and what accommodations are, then, are things that lower or, in some cases even remove the barrier for an individual that has a difference or disability. And even though, you know, we're trained, probably, to think that the barrier is gone in this last portion of the picture, it may be that neither individual or that just one of them is sighted, so there may be further accommodations that are needed in order to see the scenery. Those are some of the considerations that we would have and applying this in a classroom situation, we always ask, "what is a reasonable accommodation?" and that term, "reasonable", or that word "reasonable", is, you know, what sort of accommodation will remove or lessen the barrier but will not change the standards that the student has to achieve so the standards and goals of a course remain the same for all the students. Sometimes it's either the barrier or the path that get moved so that's important to understand.

And at the Academy, we have a number of students that do have accommodations. Some of the types of differences and disabilities that we see at the Academy, they run over a broad range and often times students have may have more than one the disability or difference, so it's very hard to generalize, but I would say that, in a class of say, a typical class of maybe 30 students, two or three of the students are going to have some sort of accommodation. There are probably other students in the class that could use accommodations but have not come forward and the types of disabilities many of them have are not visible. They may have things like learning disabilities, unspecified disabilities that in affect learning, ADD-ADHD, sometimes mental health disabilities, autism spectrum, dyslexia, and so those are often some of the more common ones. We see fewer students with chronic health conditions or physical disabilities, but they exist as well, so if you do have a difference or disability, you're definitely not going to be alone at the Academy.

Joceline Boucher: Now I do get a number of frequently asked questions and they come mostly from parents, but sometimes from students and I'd like to answer a few of them here.

The first is "when do I disclose a disability or request and accommodation?" First of all, if you have not finished the admissions process to the Academy, you don't have to disclose any disability during the admissions process. I would say that's probably the best approach to take so that you're not

considered for your disability but considered for your other characteristics. You could, if you do disclose a disability, generally at that point, somebody from the Admissions staff would ask me to get in touch with you.

If you don't want to do anything now that's fine, because if, when you are admitted, once you have made an admissions deposit, I will send a letter by the postal mail. You'll get that typically in late May; all students will receive information about requesting accommodations. I would say this works for most students. If you have a disability for which that might take some time to put in place the appropriate accommodations, for example, if you are blind or have a hearing impairment, that might be a disability to disclose to me sooner rather than later, but you could likely wait until that May date. I would, at that point, solicit some sort of documentation from you.

The Academy generally requires that you either have maybe an IEP -- individualized education plan -- or a 504 plan from high school or maybe a neuropsych exam report. Those sorts of documentation are fine. You don't generally need to go out and have a new evaluation done. Sometimes that can be helpful at the college level to know what would be appropriate accommodations for you, but it's not a necessity, so if you (and other things might also suffice, for example, a letter from a medical professional or even, in some cases, some prescription information) so if you have a special circumstance, definitely get in touch with me about that and we can talk about what type of documentation is needed.

When you get to college, will you have a 504 plan or an IEP? Those are the common names in high school. No, you won't have these, you will have an accommodation letter. And that will be specific for you and you're going to have a lot more responsibility with that. There's never going to be a committee that meets or a group of people that meet about your plan to see that you're getting all of your accommodations. You're going to be the one in charge of your letter. You're going to use it in the classes as you think it is appropriate. So maybe in some classes, but not in all classes, maybe on some tests, and not on other tests. It would all depend on your disability and what your accommodations are so there is a difference there, and, generally speaking, we renew those accommodation letters every semester. Generally, the disabilities don't change, so that's just a simple renewal process, but they're not the same as in high school.

If you plan to apply to the Strategic Sealift Midshipman Program or the Naval ROTC programs you shouldn't be requesting accommodations in college. Federal programs, which these two are, are allowed to bypass the ADA legislation and they do not wish for their students to have any accommodations. That's relatively few students in the school, for which this applies, so it probably doesn't apply for you. But if you have some questions, give me a call. I'm not going to be in contact with the Naval ROTC Office about your situation, and you can get some information from me about that.

And then I also often times get questions about medications that you might be taking. Specifically, will those medications be allowed by the Coast Guard, if you are in a license program here at the Academy. I can't give you a final answer for that, and in fact probably the best situation would be to contact the Health Services at the Academy and talk about your case there. I can say that a number of the students that I work with do have medications, typically for either anxiety or for depression or for ADHD, and, in general, those have been approved by the Coast Guard -- the students have been permitted to take their license exams -- but again I'm not the final word on that and the Coast Guard is and I definitely encourage you to chat with the people at Health Services.

“How do I arrange for dietary accommodations?” If this applies to you, if you have some special dietary needs, you can find some more information... I'm going to give you a website in another slide -- on another slide --I'll give you this information, but you can choose to work with the Food Services people informally. They're terrific, they will help you find the foods that you need to meet your dietary needs and they'll educate you about how to make sure that you're getting the right foods at the Food Services. If you want something more formal than that, where we sit down and we work with the medical information that you have, and with the Food Services people, we can arrange for that as well, and there is, again, information about that on the website.

Joceline Boucher: So, the last thing I'd like to do here is to give you some ideas to consider for making the transition to college a bit easier, whether you're coming from a year off or straight from high school or maybe you've been in college before. All of these things might make your life easier here, if you have a disability that requires accommodation. So, the first thing I would suggest is the summer prior to your enrollment -- so if you're coming this fall, for example, a meeting this summer, or even this spring, by phone, by video, or in person. I can learn about you and your needs. And we can put a plan in place. I will have that accommodation letter for you, assuming that, you know, you have needs in college for academic accommodations. We'll have that letter in place for you so that you don't have to spend time doing that, when you get here. The meeting typically takes 45 minutes to an hour and you'll be done with it, you know, we'll know each other and we'll know how you're going to proceed once you get to class. This would be especially important if you're going to be in the Regiment. I think students in the Regiment during their first six weeks or so are very, very busy with regimental training and that extra hour is going to be hard to find.

I would also suggest that if you have a particular disability that makes you struggle, for example with writing, or maybe you just have weak skills, for example with math, that you consider -- that in the fall most students will be taking composition, new students, or pre-Calculus and that it might be a really good idea to focus on those subjects in the summer, to take a course at the college level, get college credit. You can check with our Registrar's office to make sure that the course would transfer in and then you wouldn't have to take those courses when you get here. That would help you to focus on your other courses and maybe lighten your academic load a little your first semester, and that could be a good thing.

The other thing on this page here, I ask you to consider about materials and maybe even software and apps that you might need. I'm thinking apps in terms of things that could help you to do well in school, so maybe apps that help you track your homework or your due date or keep you well planned with your academics. There are other apps that would allow you to record class, we could talk about those, I'd be glad to give you some information. But do think about how are you going to be in your first class and what you can do to maximize your success.

If you have a reading disability --maybe you have dyslexia-- and you need some special course materials, that's something that we should also think about ahead of time, and so don't wait to the end on that, and let me know what your needs are there.

Joceline Boucher: So if you want more information I'd suggest that you visit the website [accessibility.mma.edu](http://accessibility.mma.edu) there's this information that I've gone over and more. There's a brochure there about requesting accommodations for disability I think that would be really worth your while to read about, and of course I would be glad to answer any information -- any questions -- you may

have. Contact me, you've got my materials there and or go to the website and the contact information is also there. So, thank you very much for your time and I look forward to you coming to Maine Maritime and I hope that you've had a great Open House, thank you.

For more information, contact:

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