

INTRODUCTION

Hello and welcome again to Let's Talk Ed with Professor Chris. Again, our goal and mission is to try to make sure that we give you all the information that you need, so you can experience college and don't survive it.

So, any resources we get for you and is great.

Today we're talking about Student Disability Services. It's one of the key areas for anyone who has any type of disability or needs help in any way.

Where to find the resources? How they could help you so you can also experience college.

I am very happy to have here today with me from the Student Disability Services Center, Ms. Angelita.

Please again if you haven't subscribed, please do subscribe and welcome again Angelita.

How are you doing?

ANGELITA RAGLAND: I'm good. How are you?

CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: I am doing great. Great.

It's great to have you here with us, so let's start with the very first question that I usually ask all my interviewers.

Is Student Disability Services Center.... Great place... when you were in college did you always envision yourself working at a student disability service center?

ANGELITA RAGLAND: No, I knew that I wanted to help individuals in some kind of way that had different medical conditions.

My first thought was I was going to be a clinical psychologist and I was going to spend most of my days one on one. But I think over time, I realized that I was interested in helping students in a broader way eventually, and being able to help with policy and advocate into each others on on different administrative levels. How to provide the best resources to students?

CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: It's good.

Well, so I'll be very honest with you. My whole experience with student disability services center, and you know three different colleges... It's kind of what my background has been with helping students. The only time I think about that is during exams.

And I'm sure you know where I'm going with that. Every time, and I've had incidents, actually

one of my memorable incidents as a student in my class during exam school... Literally collapsed out of, I guess anxiety or exams and that was very terrifying to me.

You know it happened and all the students, you've got to get everybody back and say, OK, calm down... Everything will be OK.

Took her out to make sure that she was OK and then we found out that she just couldn't take exams in that environment and that's when somebody said, well, you might want to talk to the disabilities services center, right?

So, that's kind of my, I was like ohh... OK, I have no idea again what goes on beyond that.

So, let's get back to that.

What are some of the services you provide for students?

ANGELITA RAGLAND: I think a lot of faculty members are first experience with our office is with testing accommodations.

Because it's pretty a pretty blanket accommodation for a lot of different conditions.

We're able to provide that separate environment. We have multiple testing rooms across different campuses.

We can have that distraction-reduced environment if, UMM, students can space out, they have different software they can use on the computers.

But we do provide a lot of support services within the classroom as well.

So, certain students need preferential seating. It might be closer to the instructor or near a door, so we're able to tell the instructor ahead of time to reserve a certain spot in the room.

We provide sign-language interpreters in the classrooms for deaf students.

We also, have equipment where we put cameras in the classroom so that way they any visually impaired student can zoom in on different material that might be necessary.

There are students that sometimes use special software within the classrooms as well, and so while the laptop may not be given to that student, they can use it in the classroom and access the software that's on our network through there.

So, there is a lot of different types of combinations I can think of.

Since we've been online a lot more, some of our asynchronous classes, we've been able to have

our sign language interpreting team go in, find recordings, and instructors have put in... Interpret the recordings. Put it back up and the notify students.

And so, we're providing access in that way as well.

CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: So, this is something that is very challenging to me in terms of... if a student has a need, what is the right term to use? You don't want to call somebody disabled, right?

And that's what I've always struggled with, and I've had students in my class, you know, say Professor Chris.... Uh, I'm not going to be able to take the exams with everybody else.

Or... I need to have more time for my exams and I have, you know, the permission slip.

So, my mind I'm going, OK, what is wrong? But I don't want to term them. What is the right term to use for students in need? Yeah.

ANGELITA RAGLAND: When they're approaching you like that, you could ask them, you know, are their support services that you need? You know are different support services across the college.

If they're not directly telling you that I need to go to DSS to test, I always go down the list of well... do you need ILC services to prep for the test beforehand or, you know is, have you considered going to the DSS office because you might need some testing assistance?

I go through all of the different support services and then let them guide you as far as how much more information you go into.

And so you know, I think a lot of students will come out and say, OK, I need some testing services DSS... you can give them the contact information and then we can get in touch.

CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: OK. That's good.

So, what about students who need the help but don't know that they need the help? How?

ANGELITA RAGLAND: Yeah, a similar approach, but you know, I think most instructors go over the course syllabus during different parts of the year and kind of reminding about roles and then also, different it's support agent that I'm sorry, the support services across the college in reminding them of those kind of going over the ILC, the DSS you know maybe the STEM center you know whatever is appropriate and saying have you taken the time to look into these resources because you certainly don't want to make an assumption that they need one over the other.

But continuously putting that information in front of them.

CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: OK, right. Very good.

So, the situation that I kind of touch on with, I think that is more anxiety, right, with the student that wasn't able to take the test in that environment? Is that anxiety?

ANGELITA RAGLAND: It might have been.

It could have been potentially a number of different things, but maybe?

CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Right. And that's kind of what I was getting at.

In your situation with, and I've interviewed the Ombudsman, right, and I've interviewed the counselors and, you know, kind of all defined or discuss the different areas where they help students; stress, depression, you know, and disability.

Do we count those if a student... because I see stress and depression as temporary, right?

Is that is that a good way... not necessarily permanent so but would you would you help a student that is maybe... we're getting close on exams and say, well, I'm stressed, I'm depressed.

What is the right place to say such a students to, right?

ANGELITA RAGLAND: It could go a number of different ways, and so certain mental health conditions are temporary. Some of them are long term.

Some of them come in waves and so it's you can't necessarily predict when some of it's going to happen and so we do have coordinators who provide academic support counseling, not mental health counseling.

So, we do refer students to the Wellness counselor when necessary.

We have documentation on file for students, so once we build that relationship, we may know the name of their provider and be able to say you know hey, have you talked to this person?

We also, get some documentation that might help us with understanding some of their coping mechanisms and so working with them to just remind them if it's in the moment.

But our office doesn't provide that immediate mental health counseling. We can't help in deescalating any concerns that come up because it's, you know, academic stress that's come in and helping them with organizing and trying to make sure that they're prepared for their exam.

CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: OK, so I've actually had students who say ohh this person... They get

all this time to do their exams that I remember this very, very... and incident that had back in Florida... It was a huge college.

And I guess one of his students found out that they friend wasn't taking the exams with them or they, you know, they were wondering why time is up... Everybody needs to stop the exams, but this person is sitting in the corner they're doing or having more time to do the exams and they will say well, that's not fair.

It's OK. That's, you know, there's nothing wrong with him or her, right?

So, when a student... I'm sure they bring the doctor's notes to DS the disability... right to say... this is a condition.

So, nobody's really kind of getting by with an Excuse quote unquote. Right?

It's very legitimate like you do check to make sure this person qualifies for the service that they need.

ANGELITA RAGLAND: Absolutely.

We do gather medical documentation supporting documentation... sit one-on-one with the student for an interactive process to decide their accommodations, and those accommodations are not to put a students you know at an advantage over another one.

It's to bring students to an equal playing field so that they can access education the same and have the same opportunities for that.

And so I know it could be challenging as an instructor in a classroom, when you're having to, you know, deal with some of those conversations.

But I think it's classroom management and just protecting the privacy... I mean, I would not entertain past... You need to worry about yourself and the student... You know I am managing the needs of this student in my classroom.

And so you know, a lot of our students choose to test in our testing room.

CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: OK.

ANGELITA RAGLAND: But sometimes, depending upon the course, they may have to test in the environment if it's a specific lab you know they've got to work with some things that we don't have in our testing room.

But I know we've expanded as much as we can with that.

We currently have some of the SGD software on our computers.

So, whenever we can, we still try to provide that distraction-reduced environment. If it's an accommodation for the student, then we may be able to set up a time that's separate from the classroom.

If they have to have a physical lab, and so making sure that that student gets their extended time if they're eligible for that as well.

CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Right. Good.

So, one of my... I don't, I don't want to say that it's a concern that I have for students that I, you know getting the service that is needed.

My challenge is during the process. Let's say a student is needing that help... ah, specifically the exams.

You know the first semester and the second semester, what is the process or if any is there a process of trying to kind of help them get out of that to be able to go back in the classroom like a normal environment?

And I think the reason I bring this up is I know most companies, when students graduate right now, they have to compete with everybody else. And unfortunately, those companies are not going to make that exception.

Like ohh... you do have some need, right?

Even though they cannot, I think a company will get in trouble for saying, hey, we don't accept this person, but I know deep down here really kind of drawing that line.

So, for the student in preparing them up to school, what's kind of the process to kind of... you know, get them out of...

ANGELITA RAGLAND: Well, I sort of disagree a little bit about you're saying because... so like we don't, there isn't a process to try to wean somebody off of accommodations in the... in their academic setting.

We tried to provide them with enough support that they can access it on equal playing field and so there isn't a time limit for most accommodations.

Some students have... If it's a temporary condition, then we have set up a time period for that and then if they need anything else past that, we'll reassess.

And as they're transitioning into employment, there's accommodations that can be, provided and employment as well.

And in my past career life before Wake Tech, I actually worked for vocational rehabilitation.

So, it's an organization that helps individuals transition into employment and looking for work and being able to learn how to advocate for yourself and make sure that you get those accommodations that are set up as well.

So, it is available still in employment... It's just very confidential.

Ans so, I think a lot of people probably don't know that some of their colleagues you know are seeking services because it's private, it's for them. It's available as well.

It's not just in the post-secondary environment or learning environment and... we don't look too to wean somebody off of it because you know we've determined that they need us and they're eligible for it.

And if anything, we're looking for ways to make sure that they have access not only to the academic activities available but to the non-academic activities available too.

So, for example, I can think of them if a student wanted to attend a basketball game and it was a deaf student, they can ask for an interpreter to go to that event.

It's still a social event, but we want to make sure that they have access to that as well.

CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: That's great. So, I'm very, very happy that you kind of corrected me because this is new to me just as it is with... Hopefully for my students too and that's why I'm very happy to kind of have you here.

So, by all means, this is all my ignorance, but also, to kind of learn during the process.

So, thank you... Thank you very much for you know for all the help.

Is there... I think what I've learned again I open up by saying when I think about your services, there is just one specific group of people that I think of, but I'm very happy that you did point out all the different areas in which you know students can get help.

What is something that you could say to encourage students? Again, maybe not knowing that they need help.

What is the best way to kind of encourage students to, or maybe even... Is it a process of me... Just if I'm not sure, can I just come and get an evaluation or to check to see if I do qualify for the help that you all have?

ANGELITA RAGLAND: So, we don't do evaluations in house, we do keep a reference list of different people in the community who may provide evaluations on a sliding scale fee.

We haven't vetted any of those individuals. It's just more resource information, so if a student hasn't ever been evaluated, we were more than happy to try to guide them to the right place.

And I lost my train of thought about you asked something else.

CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Yeah.

Well, it's talking about this motivated, encouraging. Yeah, alright.

ANGELITA RAGLAND: Sorry. So as far as motivating, I think sometimes students come from secondary education, so they were in high school and they had IEP services, 504 plans their parents helped them with applying for those services.

And then they transitioned to post-secondary... wanting to try you maybe their first class or two without services and you get to a certain point they realized... Wait a minute... I need to get connected.

Yeah, it's never too late to get connected with our services.

And so if you've missed that beginning window with a big, you know, the fall semester is August, it's super busy.

Please still come to us.

You know, we are constantly taking referrals and looking through them.

It's a little bit faster when we're in the middle of semester to process referrals during the beginning of every semester.

It probably takes several weeks longer because everyone is coming in and so you know, whenever you're ready, come to us.

We are here and we want to support you and we're looking at different ways to continue even online support.

So, you know, we had students in online classes before the pandemic, but probably not as many as we do now.

I would say last semester about 600 of our students were taking online classes as well.

There was about 400-and-something taking hybrid or in person, and so we've seen that shift.

We want to be able to still support students where they're at and our goal is to continue that moving forward.

So, whether you're comfortable with coming in person, you're OK with the hybrid environments.

If you want to stay home and you're, and you still need that online support... We can provide accommodations where you're at and where it's comfortable.

CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Okay, great.

Well, first I might say thank you and your department for all that you all do, because recently we actually had a blind student, you know, in engineering and we never thought we would ever run into a situation like that.

And I was very very impressed with the accommodation your, you know, had in place for that student.

So, again, this is my narrow box that is kind of opening up a little bit like they do that they could help in blind student?

I thought all they did was this help students who cannot take tests in the classroom, right?

So, thank you. Thank you very much for you know, all the information that you provided.

Where can students find you or your offices? Yeah.

ANGELITA RAGLAND: So, we have an office on every campus. Our satellite campuses we are in rotation, so North and South campus it's five days out of the week, eight to five.

We are not in Student Services on both of those campuses.

I think when they were being developed, we were not in that section of the organization chart.

We were in curriculum, but now we're over technically in Student Services. So in South we are in building A. We are in a private suite, suite 138. On North campus we're building F and we're pretty much the only thing on that floor for the exception of some offices for the instructors there, so... Yeah.

Come see us. We are going to have an office on the new campus that they're building, we're going to be located in Student Services on that campus. We're also, at RTP.

We do have a private designated office there and we have nice testing space there as well and we're on the 2nd floor and building 1 in in the corner where the building meets.

CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Do you have any help for students who, in the middle of exams said brain freeze? I can't think of... I know.

ANGELITA RAGLAND: Having a brain freeze?

CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Yes, if there is such a thing?

ANGELITA RAGLAND: Yeah, you know, it's not... It's... students... have breaks in as an accommodation, so they are allowed to take that.

And so if it's one of those students who maybe needs that, you know, few minutes, then we allow them that accommodation, you know, we have great assistance and proctors that provide that the support just to encourage students.

So, you know, it might just be that thing out for movement and having a little chat... and do you need to get a glass of water or something and come right back.

CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: No, that's a very good point. And I'm going to share a very quick story with you here.

When that incident with my student happened, when she fell, I didn't realize I knew as a student, you know, I get terrified of what exams.

But I didn't really think it will escalate to that point.

So, when that incident happened in my class, you know I after the exams, I went back to class and I said guys honestly, you know, the exams is not the end of the world.

Right, because now I started thinking about what can I do as an instructor to make the environment a little more... Uh, good right, right?

So, this the panic and his you know you you could tell you know students... OK, coming to regular class, but then when it's an exams, it's like, OK, the room is cold.

Everybody's getting ready, so I will actually in this one incident... Uh, we're we're getting ready to the exams.... And I said, guys, you know, if you want to take a few minutes to pray or to relax... And one of my students actually looked at me and said Professor Chris, is the exams really that bad that we have to pray?

ANGELITA RAGLAND: You might have stressed me out a little bit too. Wait a minute. It's a really

hard exam?

CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: That's exactly where I went... I was like ohh no, no.

And actually it ended up being a very good ice breaker to, you know, the exams because everybody, you know, just laughed.

And I say, you know, that's a good thing.

So, I will actually always share that story and it really for instructors, I think that's something that they also, need to, you know, remind themselves of that.

It could be a terrifying moment, right?

So, anything you know and really from that point I would say, you know, I'm going to give you minutes. Just deep breath. Relax.

It's not going to be part of the exam time. I'll give you the time for the exams.

You know to do that something I've been shared with the faculty.

Uh, but again, thank you all for all that you all do.

Any closing remarks you that you have for students. Yeah.

ANGELITA RAGLAND: In relation to what you were just talking about, you know, I'd say say it's always a good idea to help support, you know, students and providing some kind of general comfort or tired in the classroom.

I would say, you know, instructors don't ever make the assumption that one or two year students who have accommodations in your class has it because of any particular reason.

Because it could be a number of different conditions, so it may not be anxiety, it could be some physical condition.

They may have a seizure disorder.

It good to stay away from making assumptions about what is it specifically going on, but just that creating that warm, welcoming environment in your classroom and making sure that students know that you're there for them, understanding their resources and that, you know, if they happen to disclose that, hey, I'm I think maybe DSS you, you were talking about DSS and can you tell me a little bit more please guide them to us.

I am a Teams chat away and I think that the environment over the last two years has shifted from sending emails.

I still get email but all of my staff have Microsoft Teams and if you need something quicker route you know, give us a chat.

CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Well, there we have it. Again. Another edition of Let's Talk Ed with Professor Chris.

This has been another great, great episode with getting, you know, students help.

When in doubt, check little the DSC Office to see how they can help. If you have any questions, please send it to me and I will get it to the DSC office as well.

ANGELITA RAGLAND: Yeah.

CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: DSS, thank you.

It's been great having you. Thank you again for sharing.

Really not just for the students, but outlining the process as well.

ANGELITA RAGLAND: Thank you, it's been a please.

CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Thank you.

We can do a handshake too, if you want to do that.