Access Matters - Creating Supportive Academic Environments for All Episode 196

00:00:00 **Jason**

The fact that you're here, it's going to help others that are stuck and want to get up and go to school. Because look at you, you're here, you're disabled, you're in a wheelchair, you're blind, you can't hear, but you're still here. So, instead of making the ACCESS, "Oh poor thing," be like, "Wow, that's amazing." So, just change it. Just give them credit for just showing up.

00:00:24 **Tania**

Welcome to the Mt. San Antonio College Podcast. My name is Tania Anders, your host for today's episode. I'm excited to visit today with a group of faculty and students who shared their stories during the most recent Flex Day.

00:00:37 **Tania**

I was lucky enough to attend their breakout session titled Stepping into the Shoes of An ACCESS Student is Extra Time Enough. I was so impressed with the stories and advice that were shared that I asked the group if they could sit down with me for this interview.

00:00:51 **Tania**

So, I would first like to go around the room so you can all introduce yourself. If you could please give your name and for the faculty, the department you teach in, and for the students, the major you're pursuing, if you have a declared major and for how long you've been attending Mt. SAC. So, I'd like to start it off with the faculty.

00:01:17 **Peter**

Hi, my name's Peter Churchill and I work in the English department. I teach the English one A linked with ACCESS 34 class. Just to clarify our connection to Julie.

00:01:31 **Michelle**

Hi, my name is Michelle Nava and I teach in the English department as well. And I teach the English one C linked to ACCESS.

00:01:38 **Julie**

Hi, my name is Julie Cortez and I'm an instructional specialist for writing in the ACCESS Department and I work in conjunction with Michelle Nava and Peter Churchill.

00:01:48 **Tania**

Thank you. I'd like to go to the students next. If you could please introduce yourselves.

00:01:52 **Becca**

Hi, my name is Becca Garcia. I'm a student here at Mt. SAC. My major is nursing and I've been here for about a year.

00:02:02 **Joshua**

Hello, my name is Joshua Flores and I am a early childhood educator and I've been at Mt. SAC for about three years, exactly.

00:02:12 **Jesus**

Hi, I'm Jesus Ramirez and I've been an ACCESS student for about three years and I'm currently majoring in ...

00:02:19 **Jason**

Hi, my name is Jason Chico. I'm an ACCESS student and my major is Administration of Justice. I've been here at Mt. SAC for going on two years now.

00:02:29 **Tania**

So, thank you all again. I really appreciate you making the time. Your breakout description at Flex Day read, "Step into the shoes of our ACCESS students and learn about not just proper accommodations, but how to help support our students when they need extra time on assignments."

00:02:48 **Tania**

And then it said, "Join us in a discussion with ACCESS students about accommodations, student and professor expectations, resources and ableism." And I was lucky enough to attend that breakout and I was like, "Oh, I wish I recorded it for the podcast." And so, thank you so much again for being here to recapture a little bit of what you shared during Flex Day.

00:03:11 **Tania**

So, I wanted to start with the faculty. Most of us are familiar with the request for extended time on exams, but you have clearly taken acts as accommodations to another level. Can you please share what you do beyond that extra time on exams for your students? What are some of the best practices you've identified that you might be able to share with us? Julie, do you want to start us off?

00:03:35 **Julie**

Yes. So, as I work with ACCESS students, one of the things I notice is the misconceptions between accommodations and modifications of a course. One focus is showing students that accommodations are little tweaks or changes that need to be met by the professor and by the students .

00:03:52 **Julie**

So, a lot of the responsibility also falls on our students to reach out and let the professor know what their needs are. However, that does not change the SLOs or the CMOs or class objectives. Students are still required to be successful and complete the assignments that the professor has been giving.

00:04:10 **Julie**

So, as our students go through our program, they start understanding how to advocate for themselves, reach out to the professor and say, "Thank you for what you provide. I wonder if maybe can this text be given to me in an audio format or a PDF or a Word format because a reader can't take it in and process it."

00:04:30 **Julie**

So, first and foremost, I think it's important to notice that our students are not asking for classes to be "easier" but to be provided with support to be able to confront those challenges and meet those goals.

00:04:46 **Tania**

Thank you. I'd like to turn it over to Michelle or Peter.

00:04:50 **Michelle**

So, I like that Julie said advocacy because that's really kind of a cornerstone of both my English one A class and my ACCESS one C class. And I think it's really important to note that my access classes look no different than my non-access classes.

00:05:04 **Michelle**

And when it comes to best practices, it's just really about listening to students and what their needs are. And really it's not so much an accommodation as it is about working with a student and finding out what their needs are and how I can best help meet those needs.

00:05:20 **Michelle**

Whether it's an audio file or converting something from a table into a Word doc. So, I don't like to think of it as an accommodation. I just like to think of it as listening to students, that's all.

00:05:32 **Tania**

What about you Peter?

00:05:33 **Peter**

Yeah, and I think to add to that, just that idea of universal design. At this point, my classes all are pretty accepting of accommodations, not just the ACCESS class. And it's kind of built in , like quizzes are done at home so there's no time limit on it or anything, things like that.

00:05:50 **Peter**

And then patience and empathy, those two things go a long, long way because we have students as well here that they come in, they're kind of traumatized and so they're afraid to talk to teachers. And so, if we show we have empathy, if we show that we're going to spend time with them to understand what they're saying, that goes a long way.

00:06:12 **Tania**

Thank you. I'd like to turn to the students now. Your stories are so powerful. Can you share with our listeners your journeys both before coming to Mt. SAC and then at Mt. SAC since you've joined our campus in particular, maybe you could share a little bit about how the Mt. SAC faculty have helped you to become successful but let's start with your journeys first. Who would like to start us off?

00:06:38 **Becca**

I would, my journey has not been the easiest. It's been very difficult. There were a lot of times where I was made to feel like I couldn't do anything or that I was too slow to do anything. One of the things that I love so much about being here at Mt. SAC and being introduced to Julie and Peter is the fact that because I was told that way in high school or in my public school education, doesn't mean it's like that here.

00:07:09 **Becca**

I'm a person who, as much as I don't like challenge, I love it at the same time. And I feel like with being in a class with Peter and Julie, I was challenged so hard that it just made me love it even more. Because I was never challenged when I was in high school, when I was given an essay, I was given a three paragraph essay because they would say I couldn't do it.

00:07:37 **Becca**

They didn't tell me what an analysis was, they didn't tell me what any of the stuff that I've learned now was when I was in high school. I'm so grateful that I'm here. I'm so grateful I found a group of people that even though I want to put myself down all the time, they don't let me.

00:07:52 **Becca**

I don't know how many times I would come to Julie or Peter and cry because I'm like, "I don't know how to do this. I never did this in high school. This is something - it's completely new to me." And they'd be like, "This is something you can do," though I did have to take an incomplete with Professor Churchill, I'm working so hard to finish the essays that I owe him with Julie and with a tutor that they both recommend.

00:08:17 **Becca**

So, I'm trying my hardest, which is something I can't say for what I did in high school because I didn't try at all because they just give me something so little that it was just something I'd have to snap my fingers and I was done in a matter of seconds. So, I'm grateful for the experiences I have with Julie and Peter.

00:08:35 **Tania**

Thank you Becca for sharing. Who would like to share their journey next?

00:08:40 **Joshua**

I could go next. When I started growing up as a student with a disability, I had no future in myself in terms of going to college. So, I would always pass by Mt. SAC not knowing that it's a college, with my parents. And I always tell myself, "I want to go here at a very young age," but my parents didn't see that in me.

00:09:02 **Joshua**

So, I would tell my teachers or somebody else and they would say the same thing, that I don't have the needs or the criteria to go to college. So, growing up, I didn't listen to them as often and I kept working towards my own goal. Despite of most challenges in school, that I didn't get the proper education not until I made it to college finally.

00:09:27 **Joshua**

I had struggled just a bit during my first semester until I was introduced to Julie and her ACCESS courses, which from there my journey of success started to grow much more. And as my English classes went on, it taught me how to be much more successful.

00:09:44 **Joshua**

And I was able to grow at a much faster rate within three semesters, which throughout my whole life, that's pretty fast to what I had to do and suffer just to be able to be in college and to be much more successful. And now I am at my last semester in college and I'm transferring out to the universities to pursue my own career and goals.

00:10:13 **Tania**

Congratulations Joshua. You have all reasons to be just so incredibly proud of yourself to have that. That you are the one who has to be the one to believe in yourself and keep pushing rather than the people around you supporting you in that from the start. Thank you so much for sharing that. Jesus or Jason, who would like to go next?

00:10:35 **Jesus**

I'll go ahead. When I first started here, originally I had quite a bit of confidence in myself. I had to look forward to coming here, but I thought that what my education was like back in high school, I would have similar experiences here in college.

00:10:51 **Jesus**

Mostly because when I originally was introduced to accommodations, I had a different opinion as to what accommodations were. Because for me, when I would have an IEP meeting, they would actually take some stuff out of what I had to learn compared to other students had to learn.

00:11:05 **Jesus**

And so, I thought, "Oh, okay, this will be a walk in the park." Then I signed up for an English class that I had never had any experience with and all of a sudden I failed . And a lot of that confidence that I had did go down pretty quickly.

00:11:18 **Jesus**

And when I was just kind of almost ready to give up on college completely, after failing more and more classes for an entire year here, first year here, I ended up getting a phone call about some new classes that had just been opened for the ACCESS Department.

00:11:33 **Jesus**

And I was hesitant at first, but they explained to me what came along with those classes and I felt a little bit hopeful when I walked in. And then after going through the class for the first time and seeing how much support there was for me there, I felt like I was welcomed .

00:11:50 **Jesus**

Like I was actually going to be paid attention to here and it all dumbed down for me, which I actually really enjoyed because even though it was easier for me to do the work back in high school, I didn't like that I had to do less . I hated them cutting stuff out of my education.

00:12:04 **Jesus**

After being here for three years, going through English with Peter Churchill and Julie, my writing skills have improved greatly. I went through English one C with Professor Nava and somehow I passed that one on my first try, which I remember when that happened.

00:12:21 **Jesus**

I told my parents that health froze over because I didn't think that that would ever happen through my English requirements and my math requirements. All with help from the ACCESS program and I can be confident again in myself for my skills and continuing my educational goal. And I hope to point become a kindergarten teacher and be able to transfer out of Mt. SAC in a couple years.

00:12:41 **Tania**

Thank you, Jesus for sharing that's so wonderful to hear. And health did not freeze over. So , Jason, I'd like to turn it to you. Share your journey with us.

00:12:54 **Jason**

My journey is kind of different. I was incarcerated for about four years. So, when I came home I was geared up to continuing my education. So, I was steamrolling through everything. I was good at creating documents, PDFs, everything. And I was like, "Dang, I'm really going to accelerate."

00:13:12 **Jason**

And then I had a stroke a year ago in while I was attending Mt. SAC. So, that kind of halted my progress. I was able to write papers like nothing. Now, after I had my stroke, I didn't know how to even open a document. I didn't know how to email nobody.

00:13:28 **Jason**

And I was like, "What's going on? My whole dream is kind of, it stopped. What am I going to do now? I'm not just going to be disabled and stay home all day. I have to get back up." I owed a bunch of money on financial aid because as I was in the hospital I couldn't attend my classes so I was failing everything. So, I was backed up on that. I had to pay like 3000.

00:13:47 **Jason**

Finally, I got back on my feet in college and I was trying to do the normal classes and I completely failed. I was like, "What the heck is going on here?" And I was like, "I'm not used to this, so what am I going to do now? I'm not just going to let this take over."

00:14:03 **Jason**

So, I reached out after I failed two semesters straight, everything. I reached out and somebody told me about the ACCESS program and they go, "There's a program, it's not going to be easy. You still have to do the work but just show up." So, even in those ones, I did fail the first time I did it. But even in that failure I learned little things across the way, how to make a PDF .

00:14:28 **Jason**

Yeah, I got that F but now this next time I'm attempting it , I know how to create a document. I know how to email somebody. I know email etiquette. So, now I'm attempting it, I did do the ACCESS 33, 34, now I'm passing. I'm in the English one C with Michelle Nava and everything's going good because I had to fail in order to allow me to learn.

00:14:51 **Jason**

Everybody thinks F is failure, it's not. You're learning each step of the way. Yeah, it might be a 32% F but that 32% you learn something out of that. It's not just a complete failure. From being incarcerated, from having to change that mindset of out here I was steamrolling through school, I got sick and then I had the stroke, I almost passed away. Now that I'm back, I'm like, "This ACCESS program is really the reason why I'm in school and pursuing my higher education," it's because they made me feel comfortable with being myself.

00:15:26 **Jason**

It's okay to not know, but you have to ask questions, ask for help. And if you don't know anything it's okay, nobody knows everything. But you have to put in the work, you have to go to tutoring, you have to reach out office hours. If you don't do that, then you're just going to get lost in the background because everybody's so engulfed in their own lives that you have to advocate for yourself.

00:15:46 **Jason**

"Hey, I don't understand this. Can I get multiple tutoring sessions back to back to back ," which I am doing now. It's awesome and just have a great relationship with your peers. Ask for help and also with your instructors because they have the answer. But are we willing to reach out and are we willing to accept what's hard?

00:16:07 **Jason**

Because what's hard is hard. But once we get over that we realize, "Hey, it's not so hard at all because I've figured it out. So, now I can move on to the next step." So, this journey from incarceration came home, had the stroke, I'm grateful to be alive, I'm finally going back to school failed and now I'm still here with you guys sharing my story. I think that's amazing. And everybody here has that survivor story that needs to be shared.

00:16:32 **Tania**

Thank you so much Jason and thank you all of you to the students for opening up and sharing your stories. I love everything all of you said. I love what you said about the F because it's exactly what you're saying. It's still learning and then taking what we learned from that experience and taking it to the next level.

00:16:53 **Tania**

And I love what you shared also about all of you, how you want to be challenged and how to grab those challenges, how your peers might play a role in helping you in that journey and pushing each other along. I would love to ask you now the students here, because you are in specialized classes with your ACCESS faculty, but you also be taking classes with other faculty who are not in that program.

00:17:22 **Tania**

And so, can you maybe share some advice that you have for the faculty? Like you already said Jason, for the students you're telling them, "Man, reach out to your professors, go do their office hours." But from the faculty side, what are some advice, if you had like one or two quick advice, each of you will go around the room again. What is one advice you might want to give a faculty member that is not in the ACCESS program? Like this is how you can support us.

00:17:48 **Becca**

Something I would advise for non-ACCESS teachers is we have accommodations for a reason. The accommodations that we were given are because we cannot do them like a regular student. Not that I'm saying any of us aren't regular. But I cannot be testing in a room full of people, it'll give me very, very bad anxiety. That is one of my accommodations. I test in a smaller setting.

00:18:13 **Becca**

Understand that just because I have these accommodations doesn't make me any less able to do any of the stuff that other students can. I'm proudly say I'm a student with autism who is also an access because I'm an access because I need the help, not because I'm just there.

00:18:32 **Becca**

It's something that helps a lot of students and I wish a lot of students knew that you don't have to struggle. You can look at your resources around and ask around and ask them like, "Hey, if I'm having this or this or this, tell them there's access." Tell them that there's help out there.

00:18:49 **Becca**

If I hadn't gotten information about ACCESS through my sister who has been here, I wouldn't have known, I wouldn't have been able to have passed the classes that I did with my sister not telling me that there was ACCESS.

00:19:03 **Becca**

And the asks that I would say is listen to the student and just if you have any questions about the accommodations that they were given, ask us. I'm 500% sure we'd be happy to tell you why we have a certain accommodation. It's to help us and also help the professor as well.

00:19:21 **Tania**

Thank you Becca . Joshua, do you want to go next?

00:19:25 **Joshua**

With our accommodations with ACCESS, we have assignments where we had to advocate for ourselves and just us as students we have to advocate for ourselves when it comes to the non-access professors who don't know that we have accommodations.

00:19:41 **Joshua**

And it's our responsibility to also reach out to the professors about who we are as the students, but also the responsibility of the professors to reach out to us and ask us questions that they don't know. Or they might have a question about a specific accommodations which we don't mind responding back. We like the connection with other professors to be able to have more success in our classes without being so intimidated by a specific class.

00:20:14 **Joshua**

Because we might not have the specific accommodations are approved from our professor, which has a bigger issue for us as a student with access to accommodations, which brings a much more of a challenge for us as students. So, it's for me just reaching out and having a connection with a student. Thank you.

00:20:36 **Tania**

Yeah, I appreciate you both saying this, that you want to talk to your professors. I think as a faculty member I can tell you we often are hesitant because we know of the privacy rules and all of that that come with it. And so, we can't ask you to open up to us.

00:20:54 **Tania**

But I also know when you do open up, we understand your situation so much better and it makes it easier for both sides to work with each other. So, there's those two sides. So, I do appreciate it always when a student is willing to share a little bit about their story with me because then I'm like, "Okay, now I understand how I can best serve you." So, thank you for sharing that. Jesus, did you want to share something too ?

00:21:21 **Jesus**

Yeah. When it comes to the strategies for making it easier for ACCESS students, one of the biggest reasons that the ACCESS program is so strong with us and why we all connect very well is because they highly encourage us for, again, self-advocacy. They also encourage to have a sense of community.

00:21:38 **Jesus**

When we're in class we are constantly encouraged to do group work. We talk with one another, we work together, we learn the importance of having connections with one another. And I inaudible classes where students are always hesitant to work together.

00:21:54 **Jesus**

But by trying to pretty much embrace that idea further, it definitely will help make the class more comfortable for access to this because we can feel like, "Okay we have someone that we can rely on for help." What the ACCESS program really is , is just support and having a sense of community in the classroom is something that will definitely help us out a lot.

00:22:13 **Jesus**

Also, another thing that helped out with making me feel more at ease inside of my classes with the ACCESS professors was that they encouraged us to give our opinions how we felt about certain things. Like for example, when we first started ... allowed us give our opinions on her grading skill .

00:22:31 **Jesus**

And if we had any opinion on it, she allowed us to speak out and we would let her know we feel, "Oh, this should be worth more, there should be a few less points over here." But she would actually take our opinions seriously and consider them when it came to updating her grading scale.

00:22:47 **Jesus**

And it's mostly just the allowing students to be able to speak out without a fear of being yelled at or judged. Because a lot of us do have that and that's one of the main reasons that self-advocacy is pretty much enforced here a lot. Encouraging students to be able to speak out.

00:23:04 **Tania**

Thank you for that. I guess it touches a little bit also on what Peter said earlier about universal design. I mean, we're here to support all students and those best practices are good for all students. I love the advice you shared there. I think all faculty can pull from that.

00:23:20 **Tania**

Jason, what about you? Do you have some advice for the faculty how to best serve all students and in particular ACCESS students?

00:23:29 **Jason**

Yeah, some advice as us ACCESS students sometimes take non-ACCESS classes, we kind of get intimidated because the materials going by because we need a non-ACCESS classes to transfer, we're not always going to be able to take ACCESS classes. So, we need to venture out.

00:23:47 **Jason**

And when we do, we sometimes get discouraged because we see the rapid pace of the classes and the professor sees everybody going fast and, "Okay, this is the speed that we're going to get to, to complete the material."

00:24:00 **Jason**

But that one ACCESS student is in the back acting like they understand, but they just don't want to say nothing because you don't want to be the one holding everybody back. "What do you mean you don't understand, it's right here? It's plain English, what don't you get about it?" And then we never want to speak again because we're like, "Okay, we don't want to be in that position."

00:24:18 **Jason**

So, we have to reach out to our professors and say, "Hey, I am an ACCESS student, sometimes I don't understand things the first time. Sometimes I need to hear it maybe two or three times. So if you can, can you repeat things and go a little slower as you go? Just be understanding that it's not on purpose that I don't understand. That's not the reason why I don't understand. The reason I don't understand because my disabilities is a little slower, so sometimes I need extra."

00:24:46 **Jason**

But if you never say nothing, they're always going to think you're okay and just accelerate, "Okay, I'm reaching the syllabus week two, bam, week three, bam." So, maybe we need to slow down week two, go back to it and then tell the professor, "I didn't understand week two, could you please go over it in week three and integrate it a little bit."

00:25:06 **Jason**

Those non-ACCESS classes, there's a lot of kids in there that are very fast. The fastness intimidates because we're like, "Okay, we're barely opening the email, we're figuring out how to zoom in because we can't see, we're trying to figure out how to put our devices, plug them in." And then they're already on unit three and then we're just like, "Wait, I'm already lost. There's no way I'm going to pass this class ."

00:25:28 **Jason**

And then we end up dropping it because we're already behind on everything. It's just letting them know like, "Hey, I have a disability." Create that relationship with the professor. So, they kind of know your situation and just kind of not think you're slacking off.

00:25:43 **Jason**

Because sometimes that's what they assume, "Like why don't you get it? Everything's here. You're not paying attention." No, it's not that, it takes time, it takes maybe a day or two for it to register and then, "Oh, that's what that meant." So, it delayed learning. But if you never tell the professor, they're never going to know what to slow down on.

00:26:02 **Jason**

So, you just have to advocate for yourself. And the ACCESS class is teaching us how to do it in a respectable manner. How to email, email etiquette the professor in a pleasant greeting. Just let them know, "Hey, this is my situation, here are my accommodations. It's not that I'm not paying attention, it's my disability that's hindering me, but I'm still a student." Thank you.

00:26:25 **Tania**

Yes, absolutely. Thank you so much of the students for sharing your stories. I'd like to turn it back to the faculty for a moment here. Michelle and Peter, you are part of a team teaching classes specifically for the ACCESS students.

00:26:41 **Tania**

So, maybe you could share with our broader faculty, how do you become part of that? If a faculty member is listening to this and is like, "I would like to teach a class all just for ACCESS students. How do they become part of that? Or maybe that's a question for Julie. I don't know.

00:26:58 **Michelle**

I'm going to leave that to Peter because I feel like they chose me.

00:27:04 **Peter**

It's definitely not an easy thing to answer because it's a fairly small program and we've been slowly building and luckily Michelle was willing to take on the one C. She's also done a one A in the past, but right now we have the one class in the one A class, and then we're working towards having a second one A, we're hoping we can get done.

00:27:27 **Peter**

And between the one C and the one A and the potential other overflow class that we're doing, Julie is doing everything. So, what we need would be more budget and I'm not sure I would love to have that conversation though.

00:27:45 **Peter**

So, I mean, if there's professors who are interested in that, we could talk about what are some of the strategies that would help us do this and I think it might be unique to each of the departments.

00:27:59 **Tania**

Well, and it all starts also with like you offer to Flex Day. So, I think because of time constraints here with our podcast, maybe you can also, the three of you can share one quick advice that you have for faculty. From our experience, this is what's really helping the students, whether you're an ACCESS faculty member or not, here are some best practices.

00:28:27 **Peter**

One of the things that I think after listening to the students on the first day, when you talk about the syllabus, and I think a lot of us have the statement about the ACCESS students and everything, but to just say that you're an ACCESS friendly class because unfortunately all of our classes are not ACCESS friendly. They're not accommodations friendly.

00:28:48 **Peter**

Accommodations are legal. The students have to get them. But sometimes there are those who make the students really go through a lot and make them feel guilty for even asking for them. So, if you let them know that you are happy to help them with accommodations, you're more likely to get them to come talk to you. They'll feel safer.

00:29:12 **Tania**

I love that. It's such a simple phrase. This is an ACCESS friendly class. I love that. Michelle, what about you?

00:29:18 **Michelle**

It's hard to say. I feel like maybe a collaborative open spirit . I don't know, that sounds really new agey of me. But I think just maybe telling students that there's just no question too small or too large, like I will answer anything anytime , all the time.

00:29:35 **Michelle**

I think that a lot of times students are intimidated or scared at the person in front of the room and there's really no need to be, I mean, I'm not there to make them feel humiliated in any way, shape or form. I'm there to help them pass the class and that's what I truly see as my job.

00:29:53 **Michelle**

So, I'm a partner with them and I want them to see me that way. So, I want them to be asking me questions all the time. I usually say, I don't want them to leave the room without them understanding what they need to understand. So, please ask me whatever question they need to ask me over and over and over again if necessary. So, I think that's really important.

00:30:13 **Tania**

Yeah, thank you so much. What about you Julie?

00:30:16 **Julie**

Some of the things that I do are start off the class with objectives. Today, we're going to accomplish this and here are some tools you're going to need. And it goes back to Jason's comment like, "I'm barely taking out my laptop. What do you mean you're already on notes for unit three?"

00:30:30 **Julie**

So, just getting the students started, it's like when we make a sandwich, I need bread, cheese, ham, whatever it is. So, giving them two, three minutes at the beginning to set out their tools will be so much faster during the lecture. You can get to all your key ideas.

00:30:45 **Julie**

And the second one is don't be afraid to learn. I know I'm an ACCESS professor, but there are always new students with different types of needs. And just when I think the class is perfect, I have everything accessible. Someone says, "Actually no, I need this," and I have to go back and I have to use my own resources.

00:31:07 **Julie**

I go talk to the counselors in ACCESS, I go to the ATC, Accessible Technology Center. I reach out to different people in my department like, "Hey, has anyone heard or what are the tools?" And of course I reach out to other professors and the writing center and the tutors and I need help too.

00:31:26 **Julie**

I'm only one person, but in order to help my peers and my students, I need to use my community as well. And I encourage all professors to reach out. They're welcome to email one of us and if they drop down to the writing center and see us to stop us, ask us questions but be open-minded.

00:31:44 **Tania**

Thank you so much. I think we have a lot of beautiful advice here. We're reaching the end of our time together here, unfortunately. But I wanted to open it up for if anyone has some last remarks, comments you would like to make, things that we maybe haven't talked about. I'll go around the room, would anybody still like to share something before we close?

00:32:07 **Becca**

I want to touch back on what Professor Churchill said about just the mention of an ACCESS friendly class. I know this semester I was supposed to be taking two classes, literally the first day I had to drop the second one. The teacher, when you mentioned ACCESS, she was just like, "What is that?" You could just tell it in her face.

00:32:28 **Becca**

It was very terrifying with the amount of work that she was asking for us to give and then just not understanding. Because I mentioned some of my accommodations and she just didn't seem to understand what I would need when I wasn't the only student in that class with ACCESS, so I had to drop the class.

00:32:49 **Becca**

I was very sad because it was a class that I was looking forward to. But I just think as much as I would've loved to take that class, thinking about how it would've been pretty much a class that I wouldn't have accommodations because she wasn't very understanding about them, it was very frightening.

00:33:08 **Becca**

So, I just think a lot of people need to be informed that there's this thing called access. A lot of students have it and a lot of students need it. And I would've loved to have seen that in that class, but I just didn't . And sadly I had to drop the class.

00:33:25 **Tania**

Yeah, I'm sorry you had that experience because yes, everybody should know that and by nature want to help. So, I'm sorry you had that experience. Anybody else? Some closing remarks?

00:33:40 **Jason**

Yeah, I would like to say a little something. I want maybe to change, like when I say I'm an ACCESS student, like, "Oh, what happened?" And maybe let's change it to like, "Wow, you're an ACCESS student, you're amazing. There's something great about you that you're still here."

00:33:54 **Jason**

Instead of being like, "Oh, that's horrible." Like, no, that's amazing, you're here. The fact that you're here, it's going to help others that are stuck and want to get up and go to school because look at you, you're here, you're disabled, you're in a wheelchair, you're blind, you can't hear, but you're still here.

00:34:10 **Jason**

So, instead of making the ACEESS, "Oh, poor thing," be like, "Wow, that's amazing." So, just change it. Just give them credit for just showing up.

00:34:20 **Tania**

Thank you Jason. Anyone else?

00:34:24 **Jesus**

Actually I'd like to add onto what Jason was saying as well. A lot of students who are on campus who probably do have a disability of some kind and are afraid to speak out about it in fear of being judged, we want to try to help change that perspective of the ACCESS program because it is a wonderful program with a lot of resources that definitely help you push yourself forward.

00:34:46 **Jesus**

We have great professors, a great sense of community here, and it's thanks to all of those professors, including Churchill, Nava , and Cortez, since they are the backbone of the whole program for us. It's just the support that you get here is very much welcoming.

00:35:02 **Jesus**

And I know that some people fear being labeled ACCESS as something negative, but what I kind of learned to interpret with ACCESS is that the reason we're called the ACCESS Department is because this department gives us access to the tools we need in order to succeed.

00:35:19 **Jesus**

So, I hope that if there are any students that do worry about that, that this helps them kind of understand that we're here to help push you forward, not push you back.

00:35:29 **Tania**

I think those are some wonderful closing words. I want to thank all of you again, so, so very much for your time to sit down with me and to talk about this incredibly important topic and for all of us to learn together to serve all of our students. So, thank you again so very much.

00:35:50 **Voiceover**

We hope you enjoyed today's edition of the Mt. SAC Podcast. Check back for other episodes to hear the incredible stories, happenings, and experiences we have in store for you on the Mt. SAC Podcast.

00:36:01 **Tania**

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