# Symposium Program

## Plenary Sessions

### When Compliance Efforts are Hampered by Organizational Discord

**Salome Heyward, JD**

In this session, we will use OCR rulings and court decisions to illustrate how a significant number of compliance violations are less a matter of a conscious desire to discriminate than a product of organizational missteps and poor methods of administration. Topics that will be discussed include: a) how successful problem solving is often defeated by failing to properly frame issues, as well as, paying proper respect to those things that are important to the participants, b) why understanding the institution's philosophical approach to providing services is a necessary part of achieving success, and c) how disability services staff should avoid the common pitfalls/traps that the other players in the drama (students, parents, faculty and administrators) set.

### What to Do When Students with Disabilities Aren't Coping Well – Forging Partnerships Among Students, Parents, and Disability Support Service Providers

**Anthony L. Rostain, M.D., M.A., and B. Janet Hibbs, M.F.T., Ph.D.**

Before college, much of readiness centers upon academic preparation for college admission. Important as that is, it is only one small (and very specific) indicator of a student's overall collegiate readiness. Yet, social-emotional readiness and executive functioning have proven to be better predictors of college success, especially for those students with learning disabilities and related problems. With soaring rates of anxiety and depression in today's college students, educators and institutions of higher education are tasked with the challenge of helping students resolve or recover from a variety of mental health concerns and prevent or manage crises. The college disability service provider is doubly tasked with assisting vulnerable youth, where negative self-stigma (i.e. "being different") can combust with typical college stressors. But how to be helpful when often students cope by not showing up, are too scared to let on that they're "in trouble," and/or introduce themselves in an end of semester panic about impending failure?

Drs. Rostain and Hibbs reveal how parents and educators can foster a growth mindset in students to promote resilience and better coping. They offer a new paradigm for partnering among students, parents, and disability service providers. The major content of this talk is drawn from their new book on college mental health, *The Stressed Years of Their Lives: Helping Your Kid Survive and Thrive During Their College Years* (St. Martin's Press, 2019).

# Morning Workshops

## A    Accessibility and Empathy: What Does it Really Mean and Why Should I Care?

**Manju Banerjee, Ph.D.**

Gone are the days when accessibility simply meant wheelchair ramps and a white cane for crossing the street. As our understanding of brain science, human diversity, and emotional engagement has grown, the value of "difference" is being better recognized. At its core, accessibility is also about connecting with our own sense of empathy. This session will challenge and invite you to rethink traditional practices for accommodations and access, in light of the science of empathy and the value of perspective-taking from another's point of view.

## B    What Are You Hearing? A Presentation and Discussion about Current Opportunities and Challenges in Providing Inclusive Experiences and Accommodations for Graduate Students

**Catherine Axe, M.Ed., and Eileen Connell Berger, M.S.Ed.**

This presentation will address the opportunities and challenges in working with graduate students with disabilities. Collaborations and programming across Harvard, Brown, and Johns Hopkins will be discussed as well as the current complexity of the work. This will be followed by a structured discussion and brainstorming session focused on things that are working and possible ways to address particular pressure points and challenges. Topics that will be covered include differences in how accommodations work at the graduate level, barriers to requesting services, methods to collaborate and support awareness/inclusion, referrals and information sharing, informal vs. formal accommodations, medical and personal leaves, extended time and/or part-time work, academic and workplace accommodations, working with advisors/committees, mentoring and allyship, disclosure, advocacy, and broader conversations about disability and proactive planning with the graduate school and departments. Key points will highlight that barriers for graduate students can be different than for undergraduates, accommodations and services tend to be more career/workplace related, and planning/close collaborations can be more critical in creating inclusive experiences.

## C    Scrutinizing Disability Documentation Over a Lifetime

**Morgan Blisard, M.S.Ed., and Loring Brinckerhoff, Ph.D.**

As individuals with disabilities move through their educational and professional careers, they may repeatedly need disability documentation to verify their need for accommodations. For example, high school graduates often think that an IEP entitles them to receive the same accommodations in college and on high-stakes tests as they received in high school. Different institutions, however, may have very different criteria for disability documentation. During this presentation, ETS representatives will discuss the legal aspects of documentation requirements, describe ETS's expectations for disability documentation, and use case studies to show

instances in which documentation may be acceptable in one setting but not another. The audience will be invited to participate in a general discussion about disability documentation, documentation guidelines, and how students can be prepared for requests for additional information through advance preparation and advocacy.

### D  So Your University Wants to Go Online

**Terry L. Watson, M.S., and Maggie Kwok, M.Ed.**

This presentation will explore the criteria a university should consider before beginning an online program. The presenters will review how the accommodations may differ from brick and mortar and how the online environment can provide access to education to students with disabilities whom otherwise would not be able to attend a college or university due to the physical, social, and cultural barriers. This presentation will explore the unique concepts of working with students, training staff, and engaging faculty.

## Afternoon Workshops

### E  If We Knew Then What We Know Now: Lessons Learned from Experienced Disability Support Educators

**Jane F. Holahan, Ed.D., Susan McMenamin, M.A. SpEd, PRSE, and Marcia Wiedefeld, M.A.**

Trying to explain our roles as disability support providers/educators/administrators can be challenging since we wear different hats in undertaking our work. Being a disability support administrator requires a deep understanding of the laws that protect the rights of people with disabilities, which means the necessity of keeping up with legal cases that impact how we create protocols and processes for our offices. Our work requires analytical and strong decision-making skills, adaptability to situations, and sensitivity towards each student's situation. This panel is composed of experienced disability support educators who look forward to sharing their individual journeys of how they became part of the disability support field. If you are new to disability support, you can gain insights into handling the unexpected. If you are a veteran in the field, you can contribute to the discussion. Our work is critical to safeguard the rights of students with disabilities, to handle OCR cases, and to be leaders at our institutions.

### F  Accessibility On-boarding for College and University Staff

**Joe Schaffner, M.A., M.L.S., and Clay Colmon, M.A.**

How do colleges and universities prepare non-disabilities specialists to assists persons with disabilities? To answer this question, Penn's Accessibility and Learning Technologies group (ALT) is working on an online training module for liaison librarians. ALT will present on the design, implementation, and revision phases of this project that will focus on technological and logistical considerations (e.g., online platform selection), policy and specialist collaboration (e.g., consultations with assistive technology staff), staff-specific vendor concerns (e.g., locating a vendor's VPAT), and staff-cohort customization to the module template (e.g., helping librarians facilitate accessible research assistance). ALT will also share strategies for staff-cohort collaboration for needs assessment, assistance-scoping (e.g., identifying when to refer someone to a disabilities specialist), and community outreach on accessibility via staff

ambassadors. Additionally, ALT will use experiences from our special events to help participants consider how they might raise awareness about the intersection of accessibility and technology on their campuses. The stories from our experiences will illustrate opportunities to involve staff who are new to accessibility in both designing and attending events. As participants will learn, staff involvement in such events aims to help colleagues take ownership of accessibility considerations in their own outreach work through modeling and resource-sharing. Endemic to the event-involvement approach is the process of expanding staff's understanding of accessibility from a set of small actions one takes to a holistic perspective that affects all aspects of one's work.

## G     Beyond Accommodations: Meeting the Ongoing Needs of Students

**Susan Willson, M.S., and Emily Trott**

Accommodations remove barriers in the classroom, but that is only one aspect of college life. Students navigate negotiations with professors, manage their fluctuating symptoms in different environments and face challenges in their social relationships. Disability Resources and Services staff is limited in the amount of time and support they can provide to students to meet these ongoing needs throughout a semester. Temple University has implemented two initiatives: a peer mentoring program and weekly walk-in hours. These are designed to equip students as they build capacity through support and skill development. These initiatives have increased access to ongoing services and support throughout the semester with limited staff involvement. In this session, we will share the research that guided these initiatives, experience a supportive circle, and share the data from the first year of implementation.

## H     The Importance of Parent Partnerships for a Successful Transition to College

**John Woodruff, M.S.**

Parents are key to a successful transition to college for students with disabilities. The objective of this presentation will be to provide disability support staff and higher education professionals with strategies, tips, and best practices in partnering with parents during the transition process and during their student's college career. The session will explore examples of effective parent-centered programming prior to orientation, communication strategies to balance parent involvement, parents playing the role of 'cheerleader', parents helping students be the 'squeaky wheel' to build self-advocacy, and pitfalls for students and parents to avoid during the transition process.