# **SSB Logo letterhead**

# **2024 College 101, Part 3 Transcript**

**Shane:** Next question. And Arianna, let's continue with you. Have you participated in any student life activities on campus and or any clubs? And if so, do you have any advice on how to get connected with clubs and campus activities?

**Arianna:** Yeah, my college always has like kind of like student council or student life activities like once a month. And I always like with my site, try to find like the table with the director or like the student like workers. And they're always so willing to like, help me and describe what's around. And that's how I usually can get involved and meet people. And yeah, that's usually the key is what I always do when I want to get involved.

**Shane:** Mandy, what about you?

**Maddy:** Kind of like what Arianna said. I've gone to, like, a couple events or whatever at Normandale, and, like, I literally will just walk in and go to the desk and, like, be like, where is this? And they'll be like, oh, right here. Like, it's just asking for help or like asking for directions and like just putting yourself out there. Yeah, it's a great way to, like, meet new people.

**Shane:** Yeah. Putting yourself out there. And sometimes that takes being vulnerable and that's okay. Every college student I think has their different approaches to putting their stuff out there and being vulnerable. Amy, what about you? Are you involved in any clubs or student life activities?

**Amy:** I used to be a part of my school's ballroom dancing club. I joined it my first semester, actually. During the first week they had like a bunch of different events and like clubs, you could go like, meet different clubs and stuff. And I went to the ballroom dancing meeting, and I was like, oh, this is fun and like to make it more accessible. I think one thing was they were like showing dance moves. And I was like, I don't know what you're doing, lady, please tell me. And so, they kind of just saying, hey, could you show me, like right in front of me, what you're doing so that I can see you, like, just like again, advocating for yourself. And I'm not a part of that anymore. Like, I just lost interest, which is totally fine. I think trying different things is so important. Like, you're not going to like everything that you join, and that's okay. And you can find something else that you like. And now I do go to a lot of student life activities and those are really fun. Definitely meet people and have fun experiences. And I would really recommend going to those.

**Shane:** I don't know if any of you have experienced this, but student clubs and on campus activities typically have free food, which...

**Amy:** Yes!

**Shane:** Thank you, Amy. And as a college student, free food, getting out of that dining hall and maybe going to a club for some local pizza. I think that that was a huge perk when I was in college. And meeting people is another huge thing there. Amy, you touched on that. Getting out of your comfort zone, meeting new individuals, networking. Great. Getting involved. Maddy, I've got a question exclusively for you. How, in your opinion, does being visually impaired make PSEO more challenging in juggling your high school and extra college classes?

**Maddy:** I would kind of say one thing I think it can kind of impact is like at least if you're doing online, like just like arranging your schedule to like, work for you. Like, I meet with like my vision teacher once a month, but some people might meet once a week or even more. I have to like, kind of think in advance, like, do I have a test this day? Can I meet at this time? Like, because things when you're in college, like, it's not like you're in school for seven hours a day, you kind of have more free time, but you also have to be in charge of managing your time and just be more on top of things like yourself. Because also like you are the only like your parents aren't, don't have access to like your college schedule, your grades, or your classes like it's all you. Even if your school, like your high school case manager, can't access anything through your college, so it's really on you to be on top of your like, assignments. Be on top of your grades, be on top of everything. And like that transition might be slightly harder for someone who's like, visually impaired because you might be used to having a lot of support and then you kind of have to, like, just go and figure things out yourself, which I actually kind of liked because then I was just in charge of everything, and I didn't have to, like, wait for people to send in these things. And I'll just say, like in college, it's much more like straightforward. I would say, like accommodations and everything, at least in my experience. But also, everything's on you. So yeah.

**Shane:** So, a lot more independence and autonomy at a younger age than a typical college freshman fresh out of high school. And then one follow up,… when can a high school student start taking PSEO classes? And how many classes can you take as a PSEO student?

**Maddy:** So, it might be a dependent on your high school, but I believe in most cases you can start taking PSEO your junior year and you can take anywhere from like 1 to 17 credits. And so, like I've done part time PSEO. So, like last year when I was a junior, I took 11 college credits each semester. Then, like one class at my high school, just because I kind of liked still going to school and like having that sort of routine. So, I did that. Then this semester and next semester, I think I'm taking like 12 or 13 credits, and I still take that one class at the high school. But you can like, take as little or as much as you want, really. So, like if you were thinking about it, you always can just take like one PSEO class that first semester and still take like most of your classes at the high school, if you're kind of nervous about it, that's an option. Yeah, I think that answers the question.

**Shane: Yes,** thank you. I just want to take a quick pause. We've got about just over 20 minutes left in the evening. I have a few questions left on my list, but I do want to do a quick reminder. Any attendees, if you have any questions, feel free to raise your hand, come off mute or type something in the chat. If you have a question that you would like to ask Amy, Arianna or Maddy. Awesome! You guys are great. I saw Riley's hand go up first. Riley.

**Riley:** Hello guys. I'm a sophomore in high school and this might be for Amy and Arianna. I'm not sure. Maddy, how much this would affect you, but how crucial is it for instructors to explain the problems that they're doing on the board? I have this, you know, where biology, they're trying to do genetics problems. And during math, you know, our math teacher has to explain what he's doing. How crucial is it for you to tell your professors that, hey, you need to explain this? Not trying to be, like, rude about it, but in a you just gotta be able to ask them, hey, can you explain this? How crucial is that for you guys?

**Amy:** That is a really good question, Riley. That is definitely something that's really crucial because they might not know the level of vision you have. So really saying, oh, I really need you to explain what's going on, because otherwise I won't be able to understand is so important. And I think that's actually one of the accommodations in my letter that's like a spoken visual content, I think is what it's called, something like that. So adding that to your accommodation letter is something you can do too. But definitely give that reminder because they might forget, you know, they're humans too. So just reminding them maybe sit in the front so they can see you. Like definitely.

**Arianna:** I had a little frustrating experience my first week and taking Lifespan Psychology, where she was my professor was showing cells and not describing or anything. So I set up a meeting with the professor and my tech specialist, and we kind of just talked over things, and the professor had no idea that she wasn't describing. So, it was really good to point that out to her in a, of course, professional manner.

**Shane:** Another example of being a self-advocate. Thank you. Riley, did that answer your question?

**Riley:** Yeah, that helps a lot. Yeah.

**Shane:** Awesome. I know I saw another hand go up and then come down again. If anyone has a question, feel free to raise your hand or come off mute and chime in if you feel comfortable.

**Ghazal:** Yeah. Hi. It's Ghazal. Hi, gazelle. Hi. I was just going to ask the same question that I asked, so I'm good. Like, does professor come up to you and help you, like in high school or. Yeah, but I got my question answered. Thank you.

**Shane: Wonderful,** great minds think alike. Thank you. Ghazal and Riley, I've got another question that I'd like all of you to answer. Can you talk about taking notes? What practices do you use for note- taking that you'll find helpful, whether that be assistive technology or any methodologies that you find to take notes. Arianna, I know you mentioned recording lectures to audio. Is there any other note- taking methods that you use?

**Speaker6:** Yeah.

**Arianna:** So, as you mentioned, I record my notes, but I also work with my tech specialist. I think I might have mentioned this before, but she uploads it actually into AI. And so, it spits out it gives me every word the professor says, but then gives me an alternate version that just goes into more depth. So, I have two options for notes that way. And I have like just the recording itself. So, I have like three different options to go from.

**Shane:** Wonderful, thank you. So, in the AI, it's a real tool that individuals are using and being used in the classroom. Thanks, Arianna. Maddy, what do you use for note taking?

**Maddy:** I just use my computer. Just type on like a document. I also think this is an accommodation I have is that I can use my computer to note take. I feel like now that's like kind of a common practice. But like the only issue I've ever ran into was actually in a high school class where it was the teacher didn't want people to have their computers out, but like, kind of just having that, like on your letter might be kind of helpful, but I just use a computer. Next year when I'm like at the U of M, I'll probably like kind of do what Arianna does and record the lectures and then probably put it through AI or whatever to get like a summary. But yeah, I just like using a Google Doc. I use like Cornell Notes template if anyone knows what that is. But yeah.

**Shane:** So, typing for you must be huge if you're typing in notes, must have strong typing skills. Another piece that I did want to touch on briefly is in the accommodations letter, how does having access to a computer can be an important accommodation? Yes, most colleges and most classes everyone's going to have access to a computer. Majority of students nowadays take notes on their laptops versus handwritten anyhow. But if you ever find yourself in a class where a teacher does not permit technology in the classroom, having that accommodation on your letter will afford you that accommodation. Another example of an accommodation that may not be needed, but if you ever find yourself in that one class where you need that accommodation, that's when it could be utilized. Amy, what about you? Can you talk about your note taking?

**Amy:** Yeah, I also just type my notes out in a word document and that's mainly what I do. I did have the option to record, and to be honest, I just never really got the program to work. I was more focused on like, the lectures. So, I'm sure that's really helpful and I might give it another try. And one thing I do for my document is I'm a really bad speller, so I make sure that the topic of the day is spelled correctly, and then I just like to do my notes for the day. But that way when I need to look for a specific like term or something, I can just do control F and like type in what I'm looking for in the document and it'll take me right to that section. And that's really helpful. So, I don't have to scroll through the whole document. Yeah, that's the big thing that I do.

**Shane:** Thank you. Have any of you been offered or utilize. And I'm not talking about a Braille note taker here, but accommodation of a note taker?

**Arianna:** Yeah. So, in the beginning of the semester, my professor asked me if I'd be interested in that, and I said, of course, that'd be super helpful. And it ended up being pretty great, except for the note taker asked me. This is a very silly to ask of someone that's very blind. If they could give me my notes in print and handwriting and I was like, no. So, there was a lot of work with that. So, you had to do advocating with that. And I was like, no, that will not work. I can't see that it worked for a little bit because she ended up finding a way to get it in word document, but it ended up being a great resource because now we're friends, we text, and she helps me with the class, even though she's not like an official note taker.

**Shane:** Yeah, and just for some information about that, some disability offices will be able to hire a sometimes a classmate that will take notes for you or share their notes with you, so you have access to. Yes, it's someone else's notes, but they go through a little bit of a vetting process to where they have to be strong note takers themselves. And another way to get some live notes in the classroom. Again, another accommodation out there not everyone uses, but an option for some that will work. I have just two more questions, so I'm going to just ask this question, and the three of you can um, chime in if you have a response. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of attending college with a vision impairment so far?

**Maddy:** Just doing my classes online, it's been kind of smooth sailing. Like pretty much. But like, I did have one class last semester, and it was a calculus class, and the teacher would lecture, but when she lectured, she would like hand draw these like graphs and like numbers and like they were like, borderline illegible and like, she had a really, like, thick accent. So, I like, couldn't tell what she was saying half the time. And it was kind of a struggle. Eventually I got used to it, but it can be kind of hard, just like having to navigate certain things like that. Also, with that, like for our test, we had like these like lockdown browsers, but it wouldn't let me use Desmos. So, like that was a whole thing, but I just had to like kind of reach out to the disabilities resource office and they got it all figured out. So definitely just like, don't ever be afraid to, like, ask for help or just tell people what's going on. But yeah, I feel like that was the biggest challenge I've come across so far.

**Shane:** Thanks, Maddy. And maybe just to cap off the evening, the question for all three of you. And let's start with you, Amy. What advice do you have for someone thinking about attending college?

**Amy:** That is really hard. I think just making sure that you have all the skills that you're going to need, whether that be computer skills like using a screen reader, making sure that you are like, know all your key commands and stuff like that, your self-advocacy skills practicing, you know, maybe go to your IEP meeting and advocate for yourself. Don't let the adults be the only ones talking. That's a really good way to really get your self-advocacy skill up a little bit. Take every opportunity that you have to get your skills up and take it. And you know, you could do some SSB training and stuff like that to get yourself ready. Yeah.

**Shane:** Awesome. Arianna, what advice do you have for someone thinking about attending college?

**Arianna:** Like Amy said, don't be afraid to stick up for yourself. I always say this to myself, you got this. You can do it. If you're feeling intimidated and you don't feel like you can do it, maybe take a day break and, like, that's what one of my advisors told me. He's like, if you're tired and you're overwhelmed, take a day. You can take a day like you can take a personal day if you're just mental health is just like, I can't do it. And then the other thing is using your assistive tech. I use a Mantis Q40. I don't know what I'd do without it. It's a Bluetooth keyboard and it can connect to a phone, laptop, whatever, and it has braille input, and it has really helped me in college.

**Shane:** Then Maddy, what advice do you have?

**Maddy:** I would say kind of like what Amy and Arianna have been saying. Like, definitely get used to using a computer if you've just been going with like through high school and stuff using an iPad, maybe consider talking to your vision teacher about a computer because or other assistive technology that you might need in college. Just start having those conversations because you're probably going to need different support than what you have in high school. And also, maybe consider challenging yourself in high school, whether that be through like an AP class or like a PSEO class. Like you don't have to do all PSEO, you can just do one class if you want, but just kind of starting to have those conversations and like, yes, like at your IEP meeting, like talk about it and like advocate for what you want to do at your IEP meeting because I mean, you can ask for services like at mine IEP meeting last year. And I'd had a conversation with my own before, but I was like, can we like do some lessons at the U of M? Because like I'm kind of like intimidated by the campus and it seems really big. And she's like, yeah, like, why not? So, like just don't be afraid to like, ask for to do things that you want to do and ask for, like the resources and stuff you think would help you prep for college.

**Shane:** Great words of advice. I picked up on a few themes tonight, one being the importance of strong self-advocacy skills, another having strong technology skills. Being familiar with the technology that you may be using in college. That's important. Being comfortable with using a computer, using a laptop, and how crucial that is to success in college, and also just being willing to take that risk. Be vulnerable. Put yourself out there, connect with others, learn skills, and really challenge those abilities that you're going to need to be successful in college are just a summary of some of the skills that Amy, Arianna and Maddy talked about tonight. I encourage any student who's interested in college to really challenge themselves to developing, or some of you probably have developed those skills that may be trying to further those skills a little bit to help prepare yourself for college. If that's your goal, I'd also recommend to continue to connect with college students and learn from them about their experiences. Connect with colleges directly with those disability specialists on campus to learn about how they can be a resource for you as you go off to college, and also utilize State Services for the Blind, your counselor, your assistive technologist, and any support staff at SSB. Anyone to help you develop some more skills to further your skills to help you be prepared for success in higher education.

Tonight, we had three different perspectives. Two who are currently at a two-year technical school or community school. Maddy, I know you're preparing for a transferring to a larger university after you finish school, which is great. Arianna, you're at that technical school right now working on your degree. And Amy, you're at that university. You're diving right into that higher education for your degree. And so, these three perspectives, I'm hoping can help shed some light on what that transition to college might look like. And also know that that transition to college can be different for everyone. And those skills needed for that success can be similar amongst all of you. So if anyone has any last questions you would like to ask Amy, Arianna or Maddy, feel free to come off mute or raise your hand. But know that even if you have a question down the road, as SSB has connections to these students and other students, and we can help make more connections if that would ever be helpful. I do want to point out tonight's recording will be posted on our website under our Youth Services page. Under other Resources, we have a College preparedness section.

I encourage you all to go and check that out. We have a college readiness checklist on there that talks a lot about the skills that Amy, Arianna and Maddy talked about tonight. We have our college student handbook on there that details how SSB can be a resource in college and what our policies and procedures are for supporting a student when they go off to college. Amy and Arianna have read through this. Maddy, if you haven't, you will, as she goes off to college after high school, her next journey in college, I should say. And then we also have scholarships posted there as well. We have a list of college scholarships that are available for the 2025-2026 school year that are labeled 2024- 2025 because they're available this year to apply for. So, I encourage you all to go check those out. And like I said, if anyone has any questions about college or wants to dive deeper into anything talked about tonight, please contact your SSB counselor, me or anyone else on your team to help you be prepared for college. Thanks everyone for joining. I hope you all have a great night, and I hope to see you next time. Take care everyone!