

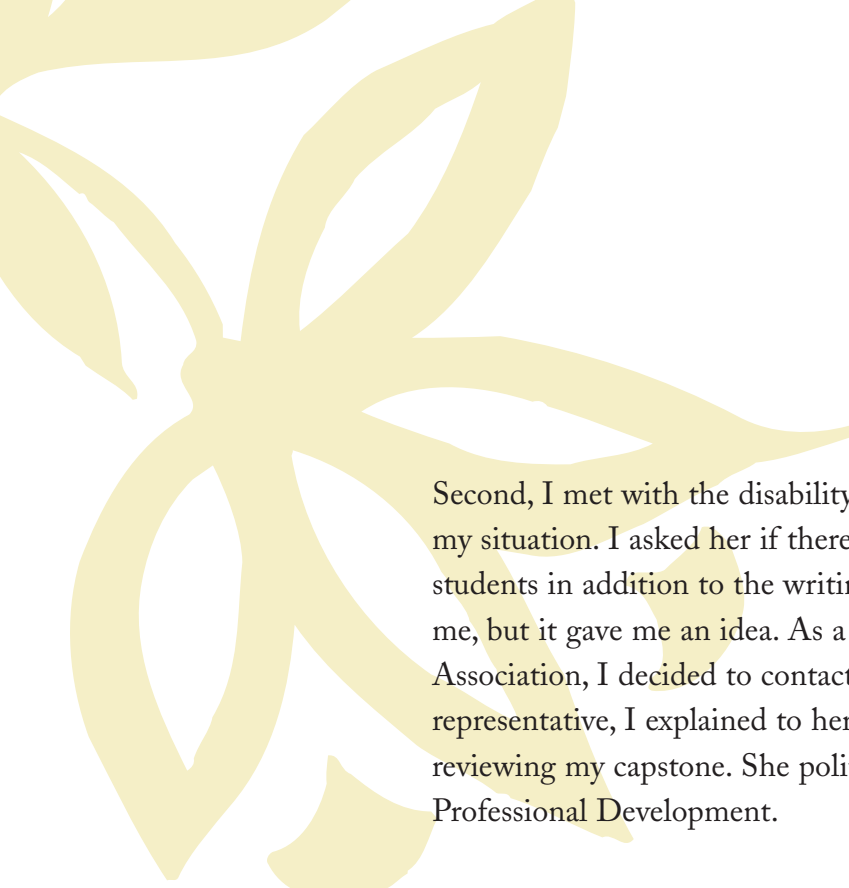
Don't Stop Don't Quit

HELLO EVERYONE, MY NAME IS ROCHELLE HARROD, Ms. Wheelchair DC 2006. I'm also a substitute teacher for D.C. Public Schools. In May 2005, I received my master's degree in counseling from Trinity University. The most challenging part of getting my degree was completing my capstone, which is sort of like a master's thesis. It was the hardest task that stood between me and graduation. I underestimated the huge task of reading, synthesizing, and paraphrasing various research articles for my thesis. I knew I needed help because it was harder than I thought and took longer than I anticipated. I thought that I would never get it done, but I made it happen because of my self-advocacy goals which made me determined to finish.

Self Advocacy is part of getting to know yourself by exploring your strengths, weaknesses, and limitations. So I started by asking myself the following questions:

- What is my disability and how much do I know about it?
- What are my positive assets and how do I maintain them?
- What skills do I need to improve?
- What assistance will I need to make these improvements?

When I could answer these questions, I knew what I was capable of. Then, I came up with a plan. First, I met with my professor to explain the issues that I was having with processing and synthesizing the reading material due to mild dyslexia. She was very understanding. Since I met deadlines for the first three parts, she told me to seek the help of the Director of the writing center to stay on target. The director was very helpful as she assisted me with everything from grammatical errors to correcting some of my badly written paraphrased passages.



Second, I met with the disability services support coordinator and informed her of my situation. I asked her if there was any additional support offered to graduate students in addition to the writing center. She told me no. That was devastating to me, but it gave me an idea. As a student member of the American Counseling Association, I decided to contact member services for assistance. When I talked to a representative, I explained to her that I was grad student that needed assistance with reviewing my capstone. She politely put me in touch with the President of Professional Development.

From the moment I started working with him, my progress with my thesis improved. He advised me as I read, paraphrased, and summarized several passages of my paper. The more my work improved, I could see myself completing my capstone to the best of my ability. So, I decided to take an “in-progress” in order to turn in the best thesis possible and not rush myself. An “in-progress” is a notation on a report card that indicates a student’s work is not completed, but will continue the next semester.

In the end, I was disappointed that I had to take an “in-progress”, but it was the best option for me to turn in a finished product that I was happy with the next semester. It was a wise decision because I learned that no matter the task perseverance, time, and effort do pay off. I completed my capstone the following semester and graduated on time. Challenges in life are rough, but without them I wouldn’t have known how strong I was. No matter what you want in life, self advocacy and self determination are the keys to your success. Remember, strive ahead. Don’t stop! Don’t quit!