From Walden University's Career Services Center, welcome to disabilities to abilities: Turning challenges into career success.
I am Dina Bergren, a member of your Walden Career Services advising team.
During today's session, we will explore a wide range of resources and strategies to boost your confidence and maximize your chances of success.
Before we delve into our program, I would like to introduce you to the Career Services Center team.
For those of you who are not familiar with the Career Services Center, here is a slide of our team members.
I'm Dina Bergren on the left.
Nicole Skalski is also joining us on this program to help us field some of our questions.
We all work out of the Minneapolis office and our mission is to educate, coach and advise our learners to proactively manage their careers.
Joining us today is also Senior Director of Disability Services, Carolyn Roney.
Carolyn, welcome to the program.
CAROLYN: Hi, everyone.

DINA: Carolyn Roney has served as the Director of Disability Services at Walden for over ten years. She runs the day-to-day operations of the disability services office ensuring students have the disabilities accommodations they need to access all Walden University programs and services. In addition to that, she works with course developers to incorporate concepts of universal design in the creation of new online courses and course materials. Prior to Walden, Carolyn worked for 11 years as Director of Disability Services of Metropolitan State University in St. Paul, Minnesota and for five years at St. Paul Technical College as a sign language interpreter. Carolyn has a master of arts degree in education administration, and she's also an active member of the Association of Higher Education and Disability.

Joining us on this program is also LeGrand Ouabo, who will be sharing his career story later on with us in the program. LeGrand is a master of art and teaching alumnus and an education teacher. He is working as a special education teacher in the D.C. public schools --

Hi, everyone, and thank you for inviting me.

You're very welcome. We are very honored to have you on our program here today. And with these introductions we will now move on to our objectives. So we'll learn how to strengthen your brand by conveying confidence to employers. We'll explore ability from the employers
virtual jobs and job search resources, discuss if and when to disclose a disability during the job search. And finally, we will prepare for interviews by handling difficult questions and addressing accommodations. To help us get started, let’s find out more about you, the audience. Nicole will help us launch a poll. So the poll is now open. So who is joining us here today? Are you currently employed and not seeking new opportunities at this time? Are you currently employed and considering a change in the near future? Maybe you’re in between jobs and seeking new opportunities, or re-entering the workforce or maybe other. So we’ll just give it a minute for all of you to make a selection. Okay. So the numbers are changing here. We’ll give it a second more and close the poll and then share the poll results. It looks like 35% are currently employed and considering a change in the future. 26% are in between jobs and seeking new opportunities. And we have folks also who are re-entering the workforce and some of you are currently employed and not seeking new opportunities. So you’re comfortable where you are now. So thank you for this input. And also many of you are facing challenges due to your disability on today’s program. And you are not alone because according to the U.S. Census Bureau, over 19.5 million working age Americans, ages 16 through 64, have a disability. And this is about one out of ten U.S. residents, or 10% of the entire working age population. The Americans with Disabilities Act protects individuals with disabilities and guarantees equal employment opportunities. However, as many of you already know from your firsthand experience, people with disabilities are faced with many additional
challenges in the workplace. Employment is not always equal. For instance, according to the U.S. census bureau, 34.7% of people with a disability, ages 16 to 64, were employed in 2009 as compared with 71.9 percent of people without a disability. At the same time, employers are seeking the most qualified candidates to fill positions. As Walden students and skilled professionals, you can bring many of your gifts, talents and contributions to the workplace. You can maximize your chances of success by learning to face and overcome barriers to employment. So this is the focus of our webinar here today. Athlete and begin he is GUINNESS Book of World Records holder Robert Hensel once said I choose not to place 'DIS' in my ability. We will help you control your job search and maximize your chances for career success. Effectively marketing yourself to employers includes accentuating the positive elements of your brand or what is unique about you. A Cornell University study on disability employment policies and practices identified the top barriers to employment for people with disabilities. Did you know that the top two barriers were, number one, a lack of related experience, and, number two, a lack of required skills or training? Notice that these challenges apply to applicants with or without disabilities. So even if you've been defined or limited by your disability in the past, I encourage you to assess other aspects of who you are and identify the many contributions you can make in the workplace. For instance, ask yourself these questions. What skills do you bring? Maybe writing, research, communication, technical skills. What prior paid or unpaid experience have you gained through the years? What training or certifications have you
completed?
And also, remember the knowledge you gain through your Walden program.
Your interest and hobbies, your strengths or what you're best known for or naturally good at.
What your contribution is at work, at home, or in your community.
Your personality traits.
Are you caring, collaborative, intuitive? And of course, your positive attitude and your enthusiasm.
And also, your resiliency and your ability to thrive during disability times.
Many times, your disability can become part of your positive attributes.
So, for instance, you may have developed stronger problem solving skills than other people.
So ask yourself what unique skills have I gained from my experience.
And Carolyn, could you give an example of communicating strength related to a disability?
>> CAROLYN: Sure.
When you're talking to a potential employer, you want to present whatever skills as you've been reflecting on what skills you have, like Dina said, probably problem solving.
You've had a lot more experience problem solving than the average person because of a disability.
You want to present that in a professional way, and the term that we typically use is disability management.
So think of your own disability management. What have you done to manage the disability in your daily life.
Not necessarily even in an employment situation, but if you have that experience, certainly, bring that to the forefront of your mind when you're assessing yourself, and you want to accentuate the positive.
You want to present the fact that you have experienced challenges and you've overcome them, you know how to manage them in a professional way.
So I think just keep looking through your own experiences for those skills that you can interpret as disability management. You can translate those to job skills and present them that way.

>> DINA: Thank you, Carolyn.
And also, after this session, you may want to take some time to write down your strength and refer back to them during your job search.

If you would like to access additional self assessment tools, you can also visit Career Services Center’s self knowledge page and complete the free interests, skills and strengths assessments. And after you take those steps to assess your strengths, the next step is to tap into the many resources that are available to you.

And some of these include government resources such as disability.gov, the job accommodation network, and your state Vocational Rehabilitation. In the past, I helped a student contact a VR representative for advice. And disability friendly field experience sites.

And the VR rep was extremely helpful and provided several helpful sites for the student to contact.

So reach out to your Vocational Rehabilitation folks there.
And other ideas include researching disability friendly employers and exploring specific job banks for people with disabilities.

Several disability friendly options include positions in the government sector such as the V.A., or non-profit jobs, even through organizations that serve people with disabilities.

Online teaching is an option, freelance, and entrepreneurship, and virtual employment.

And in general, virtual jobs are continuing to grow as technology advances. The added benefit of working virtually is that many times it removes the issue of disability altogether because people may not
even know that you have a disability in the virtual environment.
And again, these are only a few ideas for you on where to seek employment.
Please refer to our comprehensive handout that is provided to you in your handouts section for a list of job banks and resources to further research these options.
And Carolyn, do you have anything else to add about that?
>> CAROLYN: Well, I like your point about the potential for virtual jobs.
And for many Walden students with disabilities, they chose Walden because of the online education.
They probably chose online education, in part at least, because of the disability situation.
So what about that can be transferred to the employment situation, and what successes have you had in the online education that you can talk about to a potential virtual employer at a virtual employment site?
You can already demonstrate that you have the technological ability to be successful in the complicated, online educational environment.
You can transfer that same skill and experience to another virtual environment.
Of course, not everyone is going to choose a virtual job, but it's just another one of those things that you can sit back and think about how can I present the successes I've had in managing my own disability and making professional choices like choosing an online education.
How can I present that to a potential employer and sell myself that way?
>> DINA: These are great insights, and I think it's very true.
Because you want to expand your options. And online learning is one of those options. And transferable skills from your Walden programs are very valuable out there.
So along with self assessment and research, you also want to consider growing and expanding your networking activities.
Did you happen to know that 70 to 80% of
jobs are obtained through networking?
This is something to consider as you work to
create a job search strategy for yourself.
To help expand your network, you may want to
join a networking or support group, to share
ideas and opportunities with others.
Meetups allow you to network with
individuals with common interests in your
community.
And remember, there are many people out
there who are experiencing similar feelings,
frustrations, and working to overcome their
barriers.
I also recommend finding a mentor or several
mentors, ideally someone who
works in the
same industry and has a similar disability.
Or become a mentor and help someone else.
Remember that there are others who can gain
from your experience, your knowledge and
wisdom.
Carolyn, could you share a networking story
with us?
>> CAROLYN: Well, as you're talking, I'm
thinking you might think it's hard to find
someone who is in the same field as you that
also has the same disability.
But they're out there.
And they're working.
And so they have something to share with
you, and you have something to share with
them, and now in today's -- you know, our
age of technology where everybody can reach
out to those with similar interests through
just Googling them for lack of another
process, it's easy to do.
I have an experience here at Walden.
When I first started at Walden, our
counseling program, we had a process where
students had to practice giving assessments.
So like a neuropsych assessment.
So the students -- I don't know if -- most
people have probably not done this, but it's
similar to an IQ test, the part of it where
there would be blocks in front of you, and
is administrator of the test manipulates the
blocks and the person taking the test has to
mimic that behavior.
And anyway, the process of giving this test
required vision. You had to be able to observe your client while they were doing these block manipulations and some other things. And so we had a blind student in the counseling program, and they were saying to her, you can't be in this program because visual observation is a requirement. And the ability to administer these tests is a requirement. So we looked in my role as disability director, I wasn’t sure about that, and I wanted to find out more, so I looked around, and I found a person who was working as a psychologist and an educator. It was at the University of North Dakota, and he was blind, and he said, no you don't actually have to be able to give the test. You have to be able to interpret the results. Someone else can give the test. The psychologist has to be able to interpret the results. So we fixed that about Walden's program. That’s one thing we did. But in that process, I got to connect with this student who was blind and going into the field of psychology with a professional in the field, and actually, that relationship developed into a really good networking opportunity for that student. So the odds of us finding someone like that you might think are rare, but, no, they’re out there and in our global community, they’re definitely out there. So see what you can do to find someone in the same field or the general field and with similar disabilities, and you'll have a lot to share with each other. 

>> DINA: And it’s easier these days to connect because of the technology. And in addition to the face-to-face networking and mentoring, you can also connect through social media to help you connect with people with similar goals and interests and challenges. And LinkedIn right now is the largest professional networking site.
It allows you to build and maintain connections and also join LinkedIn groups. So here is a screenshot of several groups related to disabilities. You can see here there's disability advocates, disability.gov, diversity and disability at work, and many others. And other groups are American Association for people with disabilities group. That's a great one. And the national vocational placement network. And so many others to check out on LinkedIn. Carolyn, are there other online networking options that you would recommend for students?

>> Well, all of them. Anything you can find. But there are blogs out there. You know? So if you just Google disability blogs you'll find a lot of them. I know one of them is enabled by design. And in that blog, people talk about how to use universal design to make their employment situation more accessible. And along with a lot of other discussions going in that blog. Disability Intel is another blog kind of focused on assistive technological solutions. And there are a lot of them. You'll find some of them. There's people like in any blog there are people that are just on there to complain. So you don't want to focus on those negative things but focus on the contributions of people who have some solutions and some opportunity to network. Find people in your field that have disabilities and have worked that way. So blogs are a good opportunity.

>> DINA: Thank you, Carolyn. And then for preparing for career success, your career success depends on how well you're able to present yourself to employers. So this is really important to consider.
And to help with this, you really want to practice your assertiveness skills and learn how to ask for what you want. And this may also include improving your public speaking skills or writing skills and practicing communicating clearly to employers. You also want to practice how you introduce yourself to others based on your interests, skills and strengths. An elevator pitch is a 30 second introduction that can help build confidence when networking with others face-to-face. Practice how you will introduce yourself to people who you meet and work on creating a positive first impression. And finally, fine-tune your brand or what is unique about you by working on your professional image and how others perceive you. And informational meetings are other great ways to make a positive impression in a non-interview context. Then, when an opportunity arises, you have already built a networking relationship. Contact people who work in your future role and ask for 20 to 30 minutes of their time to discuss their career path and share resources. And get referrals from former co-workers, friends, and family. And most of all, stay connected and continue to build your relationships. Ask people you've met with to connect with you on LinkedIn, and keep them updated on your successes and your accomplishments. And before setting on a career direction, test out the waters first. Volunteer to gain experience in your future field or build your needed skills. Some excellent volunteer sites include idealist.org, volunteer match.org. There’s the Walden University service network and many others. Virtual volunteering is becoming more and more popular. Online volunteering.org is an organization which offers global volunteering
opportunities to perform virtual tasks such as writing and editing, research, training, and coaching, project development, and many other high-end tasks.

And volunteer match and service leader are also sites where you can search for virtual volunteering opportunities.

So there’s a lot out there to explore, and we provide a comprehensive list of volunteer sites on the Career Services center website under the resources tab.

And we have a link to that in your handout as well.

Now, we would like to switch gears a bit and talk about the tough questions that may come up during the job search process.

In today’s competitive job market, you often get only one chance to make a positive first impression.

How do you best prepare yourself?

Let’s ask the following question to help us get started.

And we’re going to go ahead and launch another poll.

So when should I disclose?

You are not required to disclose your disability?

Delay disclosure as long as possible unless it works to your advantage?

Don’t disclose on applications unless it affects the job or any of the above.

What do you think?

What is the right answer?

And again, we’ll give it just a minute for you to respond to the poll.

And then we will share the results.

We will go ahead and close the poll and share the results with you.

So 52% of you said any of the above.

And that is the correct answer.

The purpose of your application is to get you to the next step of the process, which is the interview.

And we generally recommend not to disclose on the resume, cover letter, or application unless it is to your benefit.

For instance, if you are targeting a disability-friendly employer like the
V.A. Hospital, you may want to disclose on your application. Otherwise, we suggest that you do not disclose.

But keeping that in mind, when to disclose also depends on your particular situation. So Carolyn, let's say a person uses a wheelchair full-time and wants to avoid surprise at the time of an interview by giving the employer heads up. Should this person disclose on his cover letter or resume? What would be the best approach?

>> CAROLYN: No. She shouldn't disclose on their cover letter or resume.

The best approach is first of all to do your own homework and know where the interview is going to be, what the site looks like, maybe go there. If it's some -- if it's open to the public, look around, see where the elevators are, all of those things. Do some research up front. And then at the time of the interview, if there's any concerns, you'll want to say when you're making the appointment for the interview over the phone, I do use a wheelchair, I've been to your site, I've looked around, I know I'll be able to get to your meeting room with the elevators that are there.

It's a very accessible building, whatever. I just wanted to let you know. In case of room can get crowded, we might want to move to a different room. Show that you're in control. You've done your research. This is an opportunity even at setting up the appointment for the interview, even if you're not talking to the boss, you're still presenting yourself as a professional who can manage the disability and has done the research necessary to make it work. But as far as when to disclose, I think it's appropriate at that time when you're preparing for the interview. Especially if you have noted there is an
accessibility problem when you've gone to visit the place and there's no elevator or there's no way to get into the building, then you are going to want to call. And again, you're going to want to say, this shouldn't be an issue, we can meet somewhere else, I'll be happy to meet you here or this where it is accessible. Something like that. So hopefully you're not going to run into an inaccessible spot. But just another opportunity to demonstrate your professionalism and management.

>> DINA: Great, Carolyn. It sounds like you're really advising to come up with solutions and workable solutions for employers.

>> CAROLYN: Options, yes. More than one if you can.

>> DINA: Absolutely. And that is very, very important advice. And let's say a person has an invisible disability, like maybe a brain injury or a mild form of autism. And it may show up in minor ways during the interview. Should this person mention this on his or her resume or cover letter? What would be the best approach?

>> CAROLYN: Again, I don't think it's ever appropriate to put it on the cover letter or resume. And if it's invisible, I don't think -- in that case, you really do have to kind of play it by ear. Everybody is different. If you're pretty sure it's going to show up in the interview, certain mannerisms or delays in speech or something like that that are caused by the disability, and you've had enough experience where you know this is going to be noticeable, then yes, you should have a prepared, two sentence explanation. You might notice I struggle with this minor communication glitch, whatever it is, use a professional term. But I can manage it this way or that way or, you know, you want to practice that, work
with professionals or your own -- call somebody here at Walden Career Services, and we can go over sort of a quick, two sentence explanation, and another opportunity to kind of take charge and show that you can handle it. But if it's not going to show up except in rare situations, I wouldn't mention it at all. It's best not to disclose unless you have to.  
>> DINA: Right, thank you, Carolyn. The next question is what if I encounter accessibility issues and need accommodations during the interview. According to the ADA, an employer is required to provide reasonable accommodations for the job interview unless they cause undue hardships, or are, in other words, too difficult or too expensive. So reasonable accommodations may include providing materials in accessible formats, providing readers and sign language interpreters, ensuring interviews are held in accessibility locations, adjusting application policies or procedures and many others. So generally, our advice would be is to, number one, prepare the recruiter so there are no issues before or during the interview, and number two, offer low cost solutions. So Carolyn, what advice would you give a person who is in a wheelchair and may have difficulties entering the building where an interview is scheduled to be held.  
>> CAROLYN: Well, like I said, if you've done your research, and you found out the building was inaccessible or the room was somehow inaccessible, address that before the interview. Don't let it be a surprise at the time. Call up and say, this is what I've discovered, and so here are some options. This has happened to me before, and I am totally capable of handling this, let me show you how well. You know?
So you present it like that. Not accusing people, you know, this is not accessible and you can get in trouble with the law. That's not what you want to talk about to a potential employer. You want to show that you've got this under control, you can manage it, you may want to address it at a future time but for the interview when this is your opportunity to sell yourself, you want to say here are some options. I'll be happy to meet you somewhere else in another building or I think the building itself is accessible but this particular room seems to be the challenge. Is there another room, a conference room, that we could reserve to meet, that kind of thing.

>> DINA: Wonderful.

And what advice would you give someone who is deaf and has recently received an invitation to interview for a job, and is not sure how to ensure that a sign language interpreter is available for the interview?

>> CAROLYN: Yeah, now you're talking about somebody having to spend money, so the things can change a little bit when someone has to spend money. Like I said, you do have to be assertive. It is the employer's responsibility to hire an interpreter for a job interview. And so my first recommendation would be to call up the employer through a relay service or an interpreter and say we have an employment scheduled, an interview scheduled. I am -- I do use a sign language interpreter for communication, and so I wanted to make sure we can make those arrangements, here is the phone number to call, the referral service to get the -- you know, be prepared to educate the employer in a friendly way. Explain this is, you know, assume they know this is their responsibility and just provide the resources. I have a friend who is a sign language interpreter who would be happy to work for
minimal fee or whatever. You want to provide the resources so that the employer knows you're on top of the issue and can manage your disability. It might even be an opportunity to say, you know, once I'm on the job I really won't need a sign language interpreter except for maybe the monthly training meetings or something like that. So it will be good for us to have this experience of hiring an interpreter service for this kind of thing. And here's the typical weight rate, you know, you can provide that kind of information but let them know in some way that it's their responsibility. If they don't accept that responsibility, again, you don't want to start threatening litigation. And that kind of thing.

If you want that job, well, first of all, if they don't take that responsibility then maybe you don't want that job. But if you want that job and you feel like there's an opportunity to educate them into changing their mind about this, then you could pay for it yourself and address it at a, you know, if you got the job, then address the need for an interpreter at a later date as far as who pays for it. So there's a couple different ways to handle it, but you should practice beforehand having your presentation of the disability management strategy in this case using a sign language interpreter and have the resources at your fingertips where you can refer the employer to that. It's just another opportunity to show that you can manage the situation.

>> DINA: Great, thank you, Carolyn. And then what happens if you enter a room, and you sense that your interviewers are somehow uncomfortable, like there's an elephant in the room? You may have experienced this situation before. Your interviewers may have conscious or unconscious emotions because of your
disability, and they may include curiosity or guilt or prejudice or ignorance or others.

Your goal is to put your interviewer at ease and prove that you're the best person for the job.

To do this, I suggest using a friendly matter of fact approach to briefly address your disability and then move on to other topics.

Here's an example.

Before we get started, you may notice that I have no movement in my left arm. My arm has been like this since birth. But I have compensated with my right arm. I've had more practice problem solving than other people. Now, let me tell you more about myself. And then move on to discussing your abilities to perform the job. And now to our neck question.

How can you best demonstrate your abilities? Here are a few ideas. Ask to give a demonstration of how you can complete aspects of the job, and if this is impractical, share an experience or example from your last job that describes how you are able to complete the tasks. Anticipate anything in the job description the interviewer may be worried about, such as physical mobility, safety, and motor coordination. And explain to them how you've adapted in these areas or will overcome these obstacles.

Remember, your role is to educate the employer on how you're the best person for the job and are able to perform the essential job functions. And also, utilize references who can testify on your ability to do the job. Previous teachers, counselors, employers, supervisors, and others, and create a career portfolio and use it to show case your work samples.

If your ability is not visible and will not affect the interview, our general advice is to disclose, number one, after receiving an
offer, and, number two, only if it will affect the job.
So however, there are many variables.
And if you truly believe your disability may impact your performance on the job, you want to take control, address the problem, and offer solutions before performance is affected.
Carolyn, do you have any additional comments regarding this question?
>> CAROLYN: Well, I just want to emphasize how important it is to not let something go until it becomes a performance issue on the job.
Because what I've seen happen many times is people will have performance issues that are really disability related, not related to their skills and knowledge or their ability to do the work.
Maybe they have a lot of absences because their dialysis schedule changed or something and they are having to miss a lot of days at work or something.
You know, something disability related that's impacting their performance markers like attendance or, you know, just typically it's attendance or just communicating on the job.
Those kinds of things.
You don't want to wait until it's a problem and then say oh, it's disability related.
Because that looks to many employers like a cop-out.
Acknowledge it.
Talk to your supervisor.
You'll notice that I'm having struggles with attendance lately, or you'll notice I'm not getting along with my co-workers as well as I used to, or I'm having some conflicts.
Whatever they are, whatever the performance issue is, have a private conversation with your supervisor or an library representative and say, you know, this is disability related.
And so I probably need to go through the process of requesting an accommodation so that we can work out a solution and I don't end up, and you don't have a bad impression
of me of someone who is not performing appropriately. 
So take control again. 
Show that you can manage the disability. 
Do it before it becomes a performance I should you other. 
Have some ideas for how the issue can be accommodated, not just one idea because the employer doesn't have to choose your preferred idea. 
They just have to use an effective idea. 
So have some options that you can live with to present. 
And go from there. 
Because you don't want it to be a situation where you're disciplined for something that really was disability related. 
Disciplined for something that really was disability related. 

>> DINA: Thank you, Carolyn. 
And what if you have employment gaps on your resume? 
Maybe you were out of the workplace because of your disability. 
How do you explain these gaps? 
Just offering a very brief explanation of how you've overcome your challenges. 
However, you don't want to share details about what happened or your diagnosis. 
Instead, focus on the how you're capable and ready to Excel in this position. 
Provide specific examples of how you will add value to the employer. 
So here's an example. 
I had a medical issue that took me out of the workforce for a couple of years. 
This issue has now been resolved, and I learned a lot about resiliency and endurance during this time. 
I'm now fully ready to get back into the workforce and contribute 100% to this role. 
Let me tell you a little about what I can do. 
What if I need on the job accommodations? 
According to the ADA, to be qualified for the position, you have to be able to perform the essential job functions. 
Do your preparation ahead of time, and
consider what you’ll need to successfully complete the job. 
Put the employer at ease and offer specific low cost solutions. 
According to a study by the job accommodation network, most accommodations cost under five hundred dollars. 
And many require no cost at all. 
Assure your employer that you’ll need minimum additional supervision on the job. 
And Carolyn, could you tell a quick story about this? 
>> CAROLYN: The one that comes to mind is a classic story about an employer who really had an employee in a wheelchair and really wanted this employee and wanted to make the site accessible and overly accommodated. 
The bathrooms weren’t accessible or something. 
So they tore down the bathroom and put in a whole new setup or whatever, and really, the only thing the person needed was a rope on the handle of the bathroom door. 
If there was a little rope with a knot in it tied to the handle of the bathroom door, he could have easily gone in and out of the bathroom without any trouble. 
So it’s important to talk to an employer, educate -- you as the person with the disability have a responsibility for knowing what the options are, what accommodations will work, and try to think of the ones that are going to have the least impact to your employer, you know, the cheapest ones. 
They’re typically the best ones. 
And so present those so your disability isn’t negatively impacting your performance, and you can set yourself up for success by showing that you know how to resolve these problems in a minimal invasive way. 
>> DINA: Great, thank you, Carolyn. 
And a reminder to learn more about disclosure and accommodations. 
Check out the job accommodation network, or JAN, and the EEOC, which is the U.S. equal employment and Americans with Disabilities Act website.
And they have a list of questions and answers related to disclosure and accommodations.

And to sum up, you want to take a proactive approach to your career management for career success.

And before we have LeGrand join us on the program, Carolyn, could you quickly sum up some of the key points from this program as well?

>> Well, I just want to emphasize how important it is to have the right attitude and to -- even as frustrating as I know it can be when the work site isn't accessible or the potential employer or the interviewer doesn't have the right attitude about disability, and you can sense that, even when there's uncomfortable things that you feel legally are inappropriate, you can address those at another time.

For the job search, you want to have the most positive attitude you can.

You want to take responsibility for solving the problems just to demonstrate that you can, and then you want to toot your horn about that.

So try to stay positive.

Of course, if it's not, if it turns out to be a negative experience, and you really do believe that someone is not following the law, then there are ways you can address that.

But your goal is to find a job, and this is where you've decided this is where you want to work, this is the kind of employment you want.

You want to do everything you can to maintain that positive attitude.

Know yourself very well so that you can -- and practice.

Practice those two sentence explanations, those lists of potential cheap come indications accommodations.

Practice presenting those to your friends or whatever so you have those on the tip of your tongue and can then move on as Dina says to talking about the really important stuff, your skills and abilities to do the
job.

>> DINA: Thank you so much, Carolyn.
And with that, I would like to invite
LeGrand Ouabo back to our program.
So hello, and welcome back to the program,
LeGrand.

>> LeGrand:

>> DINA: LeGrand, are you able to unmute
yourself?

>> LeGrand: Can you hear me?

>> DINA: Hi, LeGrand, I can hear you now.
Thank you for coming back to us here.
And LeGrand you have such an interesting
story to share.
You recently landed a full-time position
teaching special education in the DC public
schools.
However, prior to this position, you
encountered many challenges in your job
search and career.
Could you share your journey with us?

>> LeGrand: Yes, Dina, thank you again.
In Cameroon I overcame all of having a
physical disability and served many years as
a lead high school teacher.
When I moved to the United States in 2004, I
had to start my career in education over.
As a teacher in the United States.
I earned a bachelor's degree in education
and started working as a substitute teacher
in Virginia.
I completed my master of arts in teaching
and earned my teaching license.
After I became licensed, I applied for
full-time teaching position for over three
years through [inaudible] school district.
But I was turned down for an exceptional
position for education.
I was [inaudible] in my [inaudible] of
applicants.
Yet, when I was called for an interview,
after my interviewer was pre-judging me due
to my physical disability.
After struggling for several years, I was
losing all hope in landing a full-time
position that would allow me to support my
family.

>> DINA: LeGrand, how did you start
approaching your job search differently and start seeing results?

>> LeGrand: Okay.
I started my Ph.D. in education program.
I attended the national [inaudible].
During the residential question -- residency, I met you, and plan that I [inaudible] the challenge I was [inaudible] in my job due to my disability.
And you offered me a different strategies to help me to address my misconception of my disability and referred me to webinars and video programs, including a prior recording of disability to ability and the webinars. Interview strategies. I started diligently watching the webinars and practicing my interview [inaudible]. Interview prep tool. Around the same time, a full-time position opened up in Maryland public schools due to a sudden resignation of a teacher, and I was selected for this role.

>> DINA: That's great.
But there was a major obstacle that you encountered in this position. That led you to resume your job search. What was that obstacle?

>> I have to commute three hours a day to my job. This was extremely difficult for me and my family. I [inaudible] another career appointment to express my frustration. I wanted to teach, but you encouraged me to continue my effort, and at the same time, look for other opportunities. I continued to schedule appointments and utilize courses and resources on the career service center website. Most importantly, I learned new strategies for communicating my strengths to employers and addressing the misconception of my disability. You also helped me to prepare a K-12 career [inaudible] which led to an interview for my new position.

>> DINA: And how did you overcome challenges during your interview and show
case your strength and land your current position?

>> LeGrand: Actually, two major factors contributed to my getting this job, to me getting this job. First of all, I went above and beyond to set myself apart from other applicants by developing a 25 minute lesson plan, holding it to [inaudible], and launching the video during my interview. I not only told them what I can do, but I showed them. This extra effort set me apart.

And the second factor concerned my disability. [inaudible] did not have an [inaudible]. I [inaudible] how I would get up the stairs of the school to the classroom. In fact this question would make me angry in the past. However, this time, I was well prepared. I offered a confident [inaudible] by [inaudible] demonstration. That put the employer at ease. I say I understand your concern, but my physical disability should not be a problem for this role. When I told students in Cameroon I was able to go upstairs with little support, I didn't think that solution would be to move my classroom to the first floor of the building. I impressed my interviewer. I now have a full-time position and work one block away from my house.

>> DINA: That's great. You're really maximized career resources, and you addressed your disability, and you also stood out through specific samples of your work. That is amazing. And what advice would you give to others with disabilities at Walden?

>> LeGrand: I would always tell people that life is made of challenges. You must have a mindset of someone who [inaudible]. Use your disability as an advantage, and
show that you have the potential and the skill.
I struggled for three years to find a full-time employment, but I didn't give up. This day the whole school is [inaudible] me, and they can see the difference I'm making in the school. So I've overcome it. And I will forget that all people with disabilities should be overcomers. They should be overcomers.

>> DINA: Wonderful, LeGrand.
Thank you for joining us today. We wish you the very best as you continue to make a difference in special education and in Children's lives and also support Walden's social change mission. And with that, I want to now open it up for questions from our audience. And I know that we have so much great information and stories during today's program. And this program will run a little past the hour. We do want to address some of your questions from you, the audience. And while the questions are coming in, Carolyn, if you want to share a quick story, and also Nicole, if there are any questions you can go ahead and ask those questions right now.

>> Yes, actually we have quite a few questions Dina.
>> DINA: Oh, we do?
Okay.
Wonderful.

>> Yes, I've got them all ready to go here. So I think this question would be for Carolyn. What if at the time of discussing accessibility to the venue due to a disability the employer explains that unfortunately there's nothing else available in the form of accommodating the interviewee? Oftentimes employers can be prejudice about disability conditions and find a good excuse to eliminate persons -- I should say, this
person said me -- before the interview even begins.

>> CAROLYN: That's unfortunately very true. Losing out on -- the great employee they're losing out on. All you can do is be a hard sell, hard sell, that you are -- you're confident you're right for the job, and you just want the opportunity to show them that you can do the job.

You have solutions to offer for the disability, whatever their assumptions might be, ask them what those are.

What is your concern.

If you're getting the impression that they're making something else up and it really is about the disability but they're saying, oh, you're probably just not right for the job, or we've got somebody else that we're really thinking about strongly, or you just get the impression that they're just pushing you off, well, first of all, I think maybe you don't want to work for them. But then you can follow up, you know. There are legal avenues that you can address.

That doesn't help you get the job right now, and I know you want to spend your energy on finding a job and not confronting an employer who is not willing to work with you.

I would mimic with a Dina said, too, find out where the disability friendly employers are.

Go there.

>> DINA: Okay.

Thank you, Carolyn.

This is probably another one for you, Carolyn.

This student says I've been -- this is interesting -- diagnosed with narcolepsy, and on daily medication, of course, to avoid sleep attacks, quote-unquote.

Is this something I should disclose to my employer from the start?

>> CAROLYN: I would not unless it is -- unless it's going to impact your job to where they're going to consider it a
performance issue.
So if people are noticing, and if you are --
if your medication isn't working as well as
you want, and you're nodding off or, yes,
you should talk to your employer, just your
supervisor, just the immediate supervisor,
disclose the situation.
But don't go with just the problem.
Go with answers as well.
You know?
So here are the solutions to how we can
address this in the job.
>> Uh-huh.
Okay.
Thank you, Carolyn.
Okay, Dena, a question for you.
This person, this student says I've been in
my current job for 14 years and nearing
retirement age.
How do I start a new career and maybe
Carolyn, too, now that I'm getting to the
benefits part, and don't lose my benefits
from my current job.
So maybe the career change for Dina and the
benefits piece for Carolyn.
Maybe Dina, do you want to go first?
>> DINA: Sure.
It's very common these days that people are
considering what we call encore careers so
they may be approaching retirement and
looking at their next step and their next
career path.
I would encourage you to schedule a career
advising appointment.
We can explore your interests.
We mentioned some self assessments that we
do have on the website.
And also volunteering as a way to make --
maybe make that transition into an encore
career.
So everyone's situation is different, and
again, if you're looking to keep your
benefits, maybe the solution will be to look
at a virtual volunteering or local
volunteering opportunities.
And maybe bridge into a potential position
that way.
But we can definitely work with you
individually, visit your MyWalden portal and schedule an appointment with Career Services, and we can address your needs and look at your specific individual situation.  
>> Carolyn, do you have anything to add about keeping the benefits?  
>> CAROLYN: I really don’t.  
I’m not sure I understand the question.  
But I think you answered it appropriately.  
>> Okay.  
Great.  
One more here.  
My disability has 90% unemployment rate.  
So what can I do to help find jobs for others, I’m assuming for people on the autism spectrum.  
Dena?  
>> DINA: Yeah, I would say become a mentor for others with disabilities.  
Connect with others through social networking groups or meetup in the local area.  
So we presented some of those options on the slides here earlier today.  
But there’s, for instance, ability links.org where you can find a mentor or you can be a mentor.  
So there are many mentoring opportunities and ways to help others.  
>> That’s a great suggestion.  
Carolyn, do you want to add anything?  
>> CAROLYN: One thing about autism that helps a lot is finding a coach.  
So that might be a recommendation to a potential employer when you're disclosing autism if it’s that significant that it's going to make that big of a difference in the employment setting.  
You may want to have a coach, an employment coach work with you, and there are different resources for those.  
>> That's a great idea.  
Okay, thank you, ladies.  
I just want to wrap up to give you all some of the awesome -- wait.  
We have one more question here.  
Wait.  
I have -- I think this is a good one.
Post-traumatic stress disorder is often challenging.
Is there a plan of action I can take working in a busy environment?
Yeah, that's a hard one.
>> CAROLYN: Yeah, it's case by case. It has a lot to do with what the employers like and how the PTSD manifests itself. I would be happy to talk to you off line about it.
Because that's a challenging one, yeah.
>> Right.
Okay.
I want to wrap up by giving you -- we have some awesome feedback for you guys. The presentation was great. It takes out some of the anxiety of the whole returning to work process. Very inspirational.
Thank you all very much, and LeGrand as well.
LeGrand, your experience is indeed a milestone that many can assume and find a way through.
And thank you, LeGrand. We have many thanks and compliments to LeGrand and all of you for sharing your expertise in the area.
So with that, I think we'll wrap it up. I'll take it back -- pass it back to you, Dina.
>> DINA: Thank you, and I just want to mention one quick thing, that LeGrand was successful because he really worked very hard.
He practiced. He utilized career resources. But he didn't just watch webinars. He was very proactive, and he took those extra steps. And working with you, LeGrand, and your efforts really paid off because you made such an effort in your job search. So I just want to commend you and encourage others to follow your path to success.
>> LeGrand: Thank you, and I give you credit for that as well. You know?
You were very helpful.

DINA: And we are here in Career Services to help students maximize their career potential. So hopefully your story encourages others to reach out to us. And with that, I would like to go ahead and conclude our program. And if you have disability related questions, of course, please contact Walden Disability Services. And Carolyn and her staff are there to assist you, and they can provide some great resources and strategies. And if you need career-related assistance with your job search or career management, visit our sites. And we have a special interest area which includes resources for people with disabilities. So check that out. And to learn more, watch our many webinar programs. Featured here are just three. You may be interested in temporary contract and virtual opportunities, strategic volunteering and telling your career story. So those could be all found in our Career Services webinars. If you haven’t done so please register on our OptimalResume system to build your resumes, cover letters, career portfolios and practice interview skills using the interview prep and view over a hundred resume samples. So this is a free system for students and alumni to use. Please maximize this very robust system. And register for other live webinars and cafes on our home page and connect with us by joining the Career Services LinkedIn group, subscribing to our YouTube channel, our Facebook, and also using the features of the OptimalResume system. You can access everything from our website and you can also email us at Career Services@waldenu.edu. Here are a few references we referred to
during today's program if you like to read more and we would like to leave you with this final quote from tennis player Martina Navratilova, who says that disability is a matter of perception.
If you can do just one thing well, you're needed by someone.
And we would also like to thank Carolyn Roney and LeGrand Ouabo for being here today and sharing your wonderful insights with us.

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