

Mobility Ready for College? What's O&M got to do with it?



College is stressful enough without having to work on basic O&M skills!

- Problems:
 - Students are not prepared for real world O&M.
 - Students are not prepared for independent skills and advocacy needed for College
- No Teacher of Visually Impaired/TVIs
- No Parents
- No Paras
- No SPED Team

But Student looks fine!

- Following
 - Faking
 - Familiar vs unfamiliar
 - Inside travel is different
-
- Is the student using reliable methods of navigation and orientation in School or around Community?
-
- Always preparing for the next environment!



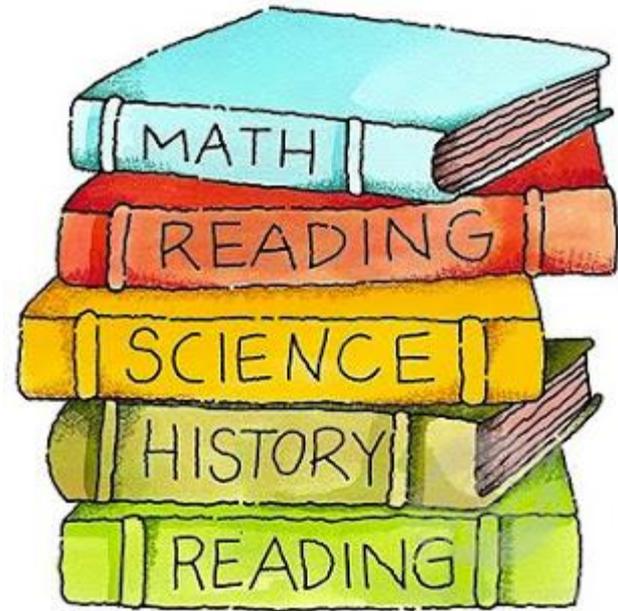
Education competency is not the only skill a student will need to succeed in college!

- Social Skills
- Travel Skills
- Advocacy Skills



Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic...

- What will you be using from your school career each day?
 - Reading
 - Writing
 - Math
 - Typing



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O&M is a Lifetime Skill.....

- Long Cane Training
- Complex street crossing
- Pedestrian skills
- Use of public transportation
- Wayfinding
- Advocacy
- Route Planning
- Exploring-never lost!



Massachusetts O&M Model



- School Systems provide O&M services.
- Adult O&M is provided by the State Agency for the Blind.
- Limited communication between groups!

Adult O&M College Training Skills

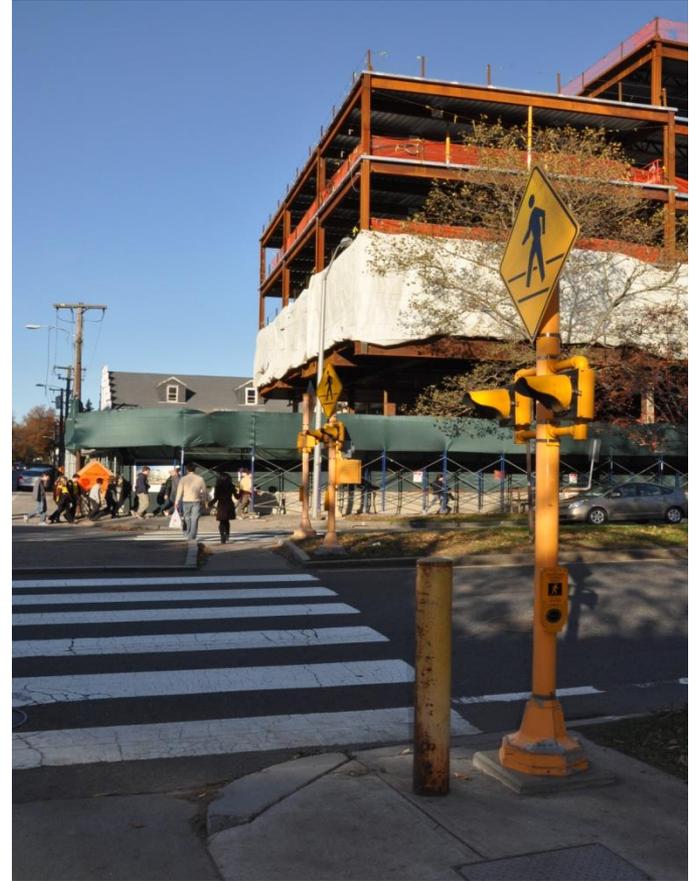
- There is an expectation that a student will only need a familiarization to the college, not extensive O&M training.



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A student should be able to accurately appraise their level of independence in the following areas:

- Unfamiliar environments
- Crossing complex street intersections
- Cane skills
- Public transit
- Travel in weather conditions-rain, snow, cold, wind, etc....



A High School Student should

- Know who, how and when to ask for help
- Know how and when to decline help
- Uses a variety of tools and techniques
- Know of and how to contact agencies that support individuals with visual disability
- Know how to maintain and replace devices (Cane, technology, monocular, etc.)
- Make informed decisions

High School O&M

- Preparing for the real world of college, work, living away from family and friends.
- Be able to use complex orientation skills
 - GPS and advanced technology for functional travel and route planning
- Plan and execute functional community travel independently
- Demonstrate self-advocacy skills such as soliciting assistance, interacting with adult agencies, etc.

Independent O&M Travel Skills?

- Traveling by self without friends or family?
- Route Planning?
- Public transit?
 - Uber/shared rides
 - Paratransit
- Crossing streets?
 - Traffic Control?
 - Complex Intersections?



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Transition and O&M

- Don't wait to contact MCB for transition services discussion.
- Never assume everything is taken care of.
- Transition connections to adult agencies for otherwise typical students should start in middle school
- Contact MCB O&M Dept. October of Senior year.
- HS COMS should prepare transition report for new COMS.



Guide Dogs.....



- Students thinking of getting a guide dog should apply for training;
 - The summer before HS senior year or
 - After 1st year of college.

What Do You Need?

- Learning to ask the right questions.
- Advocacy



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To do list

- Apply for Travel Transit Pass
 - Para Transit
- Identification
 - Obtain DMV State Real ID card
 - Consider getting a passport



Advocacy

- Student should be able to explain eye condition and functional issues.



Develop Realistic Accessibility Plan for College

- O&M training request
- How to request books? (Wait time?)
- How to make introductions to teachers?
- Types of communications with school personal?
 - Email, Text, Phone
 - Office hours?



Start at the beginning....

- O&M Considerations when choosing colleges:
 - Size
 - Location
 - Walkability
 - Transportation.....
- Meet with Disability Student Services at every college....
 - Have they ever worked with a student with legal blindness?
 - What accommodations were provided?
 - What issues came up?

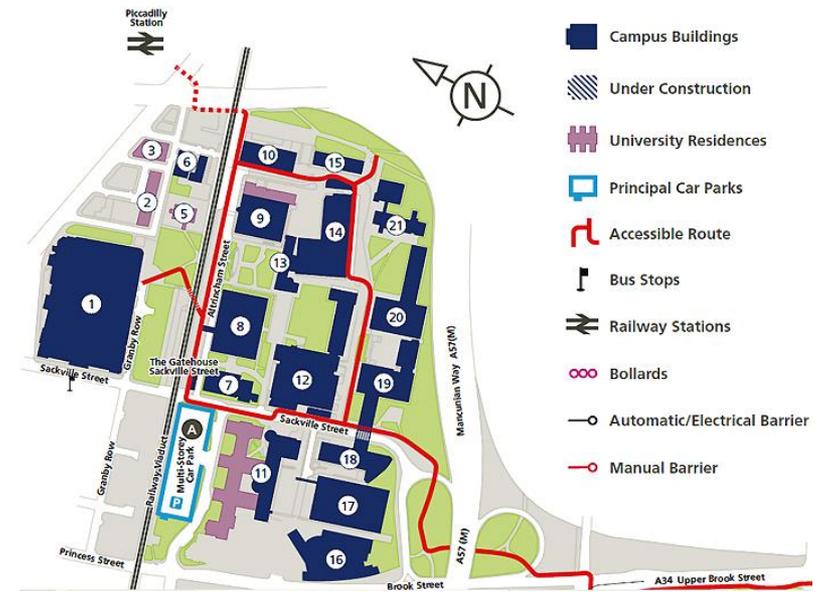
Learn about the college culture

- Commuter college?
 - Do students stay on campus during the weekend?
 - Are there planned activities on campus during the week & on weekends?
- Where do folks study?
 - Dorm room
 - Library
 - Quiet dorms



Orientation

- Review where the dining rooms & classes are in relation to dorm location.
- What are the transportation options on campus?
- Pedestrian/walking routes?



Transit options

- On campus
- Off campus

- Transit plan to get home.
- Develop winter travel plan around campus and to home.



Dorm Rooms



- Lighting issues
- Plugs
- Desk size
- Storage issues
- Roommates & communication

Plan Ahead!

- Be respectful of time needed for an accommodation
- Self advocate when needs are not met and know where to seek help to resolve issues
- Communicate with professors, disability services, and dorm mates.
- Have a back up plan when something doesn't work out.....



Turning 18

- Ready or not, students are now legally an adult!
 - You sign it, you are responsible.
 - Read & respond to emails.
 - Deadlines mean something.
 - Don't wait until the last month of semester to get help!
 - Parents can't get health or grade information.



Develop Organization System

- Will need to keep track of dorm/room key
- College ID
- Scheduling of classes
- Banking/money



Should Request ASAP:

- Student now needs to coordinate own O&M requests.
 - Do not wait until the last minute....
- Will need:
 - Class schedule and booklist
 - Early move in date
 - Schedule O&M



How to get around in eating areas?



- Most colleges have buffet and multi food areas to select from.
- COVID changes.....

College Routes



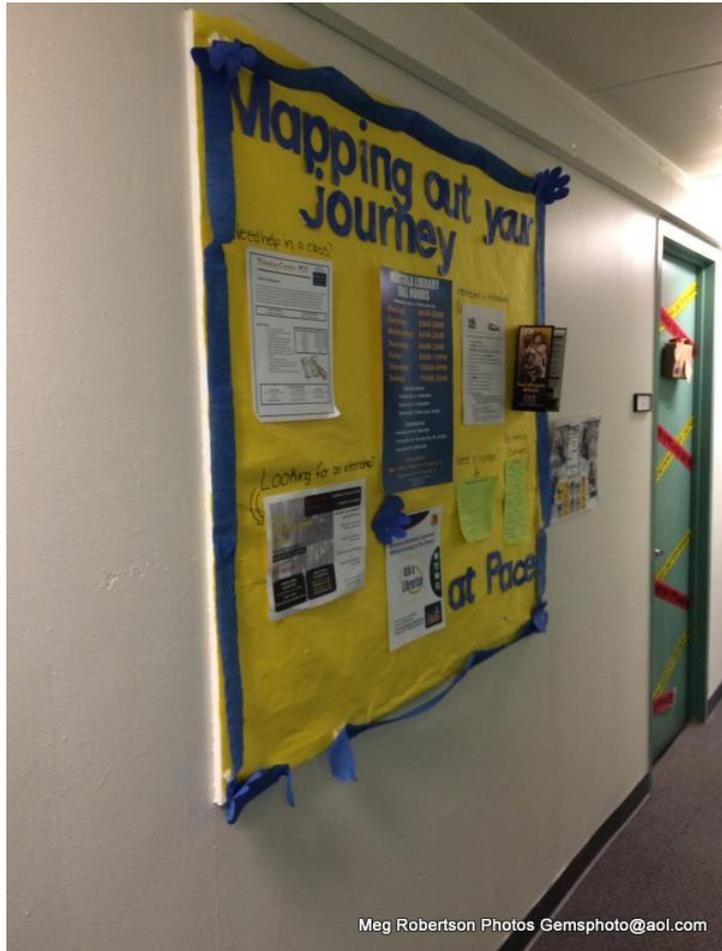
- Class Location
- Dorm Location
- Dining Hall Locations
- Surrounding Community
- Transit options on Campus

Signage



- Labeling of dorm rooms....
- Classrooms
- Bathrooms
- Laundry Room
- Mailboxes

Communication



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- How to get information?
 - Campus news
 - Dorm news

Bathrooms



- Hall/Suite
- Contrast
- Lighting?

Showers



Fire Exits



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O&M at College

- Dress for weather
- Bring marking items
- Recording device
- Have sunglasses, low vision items, flashlight, backpack, etc.
- Have a back-up cane-at college & home

Be Prepared

- There will be problems.
 - How to fix assistive tech?
 - Any upgrades will impact assistive tech.
- Don't wait until it is too late to fix a problem or issue.
 - Getting materials from College Instructors
 - In servicing College Staff on vision needs.
 - Resource list on how to make lessons accessible to your needs.
- Have patience
- Don't assume the issue has been taken care of.
- Follow up, follow up, follow up.

Suggestion: Early Action



- Early Action allows students to apply to as many colleges as they want and are not obligated to attend if admitted.
 - Applications due in Fall.
 - Acceptance notifications begin in Jan.
 - Students have until May 1st to make a choice.

Thank you for attending

- Massachusetts Commission for the Blind O&M Department.
 - Mass.gov/mcb
 - MCBinfo@mass.gov
 - 617-626-7581
- Grace Cummings COMS
- Cindy Curran COMS
- Cynthia Guise COMS
- Michael Dionne COMS
- Meg Robertson COMS

Handouts

- PDF Copy of this PowerPoint presentation.
- COMS TVI OM Skill College List
- Are You Ready for College?
- Customized Transportation Assessment
- Uber Checklist
- Email Meg.Robertson@mass.gov

Discussion....

