

My grandfather and I ended up going back to the Disability Resource Center , and this time I saw a Goldador, (Golden Retriever Labrador Retriever cross), little did I know that the dog's handler would become my best friend.

My first semester was rough because I was getting used to how college worked, what resources were available to me, and then there was math. I struggled, and even though I tried, I failed my math class. My other classes I passed, but this was the first time I really failed academically. Even though my self-esteem was shot, my grandpa and The Disability Resource Center's director encouraged me to continue my studies and to re-take the course.

The next semester was more enriching because I was able to take more classes that were more interesting to me. I was able to get help with my math, and this time I was able to pass the course. However, one thing that hit me hard was that this semester I was told I had Night Blindness, and that I needed a cane. I felt alone, however I noticed a woman who was blind walking around campus with a guide dog. I wanted to go up and say hello and explain my situation, however I was hesitant. With the help of two, teachers Jessica and I exchanged emails and we started talking. I felt so happy I asked to be introduced to her because she is now my best friend.

The semester past quickly and I continued to struggle with math, but one class that really made me struggle because of my vision was computers. I feel that I am good with computers, however, the main issue was not being able to see my textbook. I was able to squeak by and pass the course. After making a request and then fighting for a print to text software program, I was able to obtain a copy. I was able to receive training for the software.

In the summer of 2011, I graduated with my Associates of Arts degree in journalism. That summer I started learning Orientation and Mobility (O and M) training. That fall I transferred to the University of West Florida as a Junior.

It was another adjustment for me but having Jessica across the hall in my dorm building helped make the transition easier. I learned to love living in the dorm, and I made a group of friends from the college bible study group. I continued learning my O and M lessons, and I was doing pretty well academically.

The hardest personal challenges were accepting who I am, the fact that I had night blindness, and I had to use my white cane so I could travel at night.

Soon it was my senior year and it was a struggle for me academically once again because I had problems accessing some printed material. The disability resource center did what they could to help, and my instructor realized that I was trying so hard to access the material and do well in his feature writing class. My instructor tried to help me with his class, and I passed. On December 13, 2013, I stood in my cap and gown as a college graduate.

If you would like to be part of this series contact Chelsey Zumpano by email: [vibindresources@gmail.com](mailto:vibindresources@gmail.com)

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