

Podcast with Judith Tägener, presentation coach at ZESSKO

Intro: A warm welcome to all listeners! Our podcast aims to introduce you to students, teachers, as well as employees from the administration at the University of Potsdam. We interviewed people with and without disabilities. We wanted to hear from them, just how inclusive the University of Potsdam is as a place of study, and as an employer.

Hagen: Hello, my name is Hagen Damm and today we have Judith Tägener as a guest with us. Mrs. Tägener, would you like to introduce yourself and your work at the University of Potsdam?

Judith: Dear Mr. Damm, I'd first like to thank you for the invitation. Now, onto your question: at the Center for Languages and Key Competences – the ZESSKO – I train teaching assistants in the area of scientific research and work, and I support them in their positions at work afterwards. Furthermore, me and my team conceptualize the presentation coaching self-learning offers for students and employees. We support anyone interested with the preparation and arrangement of their oral scientific works, like presentations or defenses. I'm also a coordinator for student orientation phases at the Faculty of Human Sciences.

Hagen: You've been working with the commissioner for students with disabilities and chronic illnesses as well as the predecessor for a long time now, which is why I'd like to know how your collaboration works and how it came to be in the first place anyway?

Judith: I kind of inherited this collaboration from my predecessor, and my colleague that does the mentoring schooling, meaning this collaboration predates my work at the ZESSKO by a long shot. What's most important for me is that prospective TA's know about the support and advice offers for students with disabilities and chronic illnesses. And also for them to gain the confidence to aid these students when necessary and guide them towards these advisory centers. The interaction within these schoolings usually receives great feedback from the students as well as the employees, and it is also seen as very helpful in learning about these topics and unknown terms.

Hagen: Okay, thanks a lot. Where do you see the special value for TA's in knowing about the impairments students with disabilities face, especially after three semesters during the

pandemic?

Judith: Speaking from my lived experience during this pandemic, I'd say that especially now, all support offers for people with and without disabilities have gained immeasurable importance, simply due to the social isolation and being overwhelmed with this new learning format in this purely digital space. The social interaction was drastically reduced for most of the students, especially during lockdown, there were barely any work or learning groups, which in turn meant an immeasurable strain for the students. Meaning, the TA's find themselves here in kind of a double role – on the one hand, they need to manage their own overextension and on the other hand they need to be able to support their tutees. Here the cooperation with all these different support offices became very productive, like for students with disabilities, A University for All, and many other places.

Hagen: Well, now, you don't just train these student advisors, but you also accompany them during their first year as TA's, and on top of that, you also coordinate these schoolings at the Faculty of Human Sciences. Were you able to see that this advisory network proved fruitful and profitable for the students and TA's?

Judith: I'd say on average about one student per seminar or workshop were able profit off of this network from Mr. Meile and his team and got the support they needed during their studies.

Hagen: We're glad to hear that. Now, onto our last question. Do you see any potential for development in terms of inclusion at the University of Potsdam, perhaps especially in connection with the schooling and support of these student advisors/TA's?

Judith: The potential for development here and for other advisory services at the University of Potsdam is mainly reliant on making these offers more visible. There are many students and TA's who are very glad and eager to be referred to Mr. Meile and his team by me, but who have never before heard of any of these offers.

Hagen: Okay, well then I'd like to thank you for your time, especially in the name of my team and I'm sure that this podcast will contribute to spread awareness and visibility for all these support offers available.

Judith: I'm glad to hear that and I'd also like to thank you very much for allowing me to be here. And I wish you a lot of success with your advisory offers.