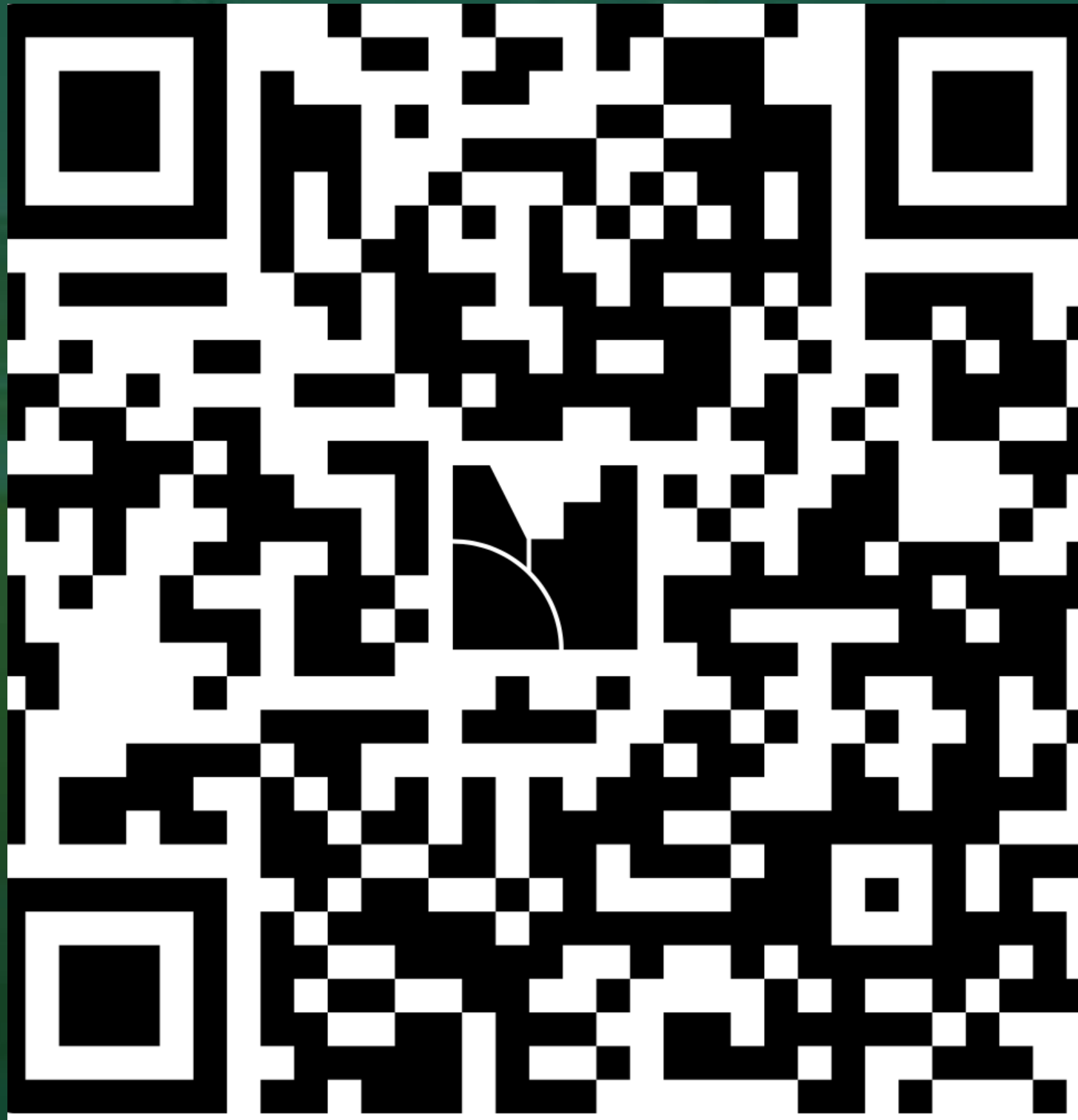


# Warm-Up Activity



*What does 'disability allyship' mean to you?*





# Action Over Words: Disability Allyship in Higher Education

Morgan Thompson, Ph.D.  
Jamilah Anderson, M.Ed.  
Jennifer Torrance, M.Ed.



# Session Outcomes

1. Understand the core concepts of disability allyship
2. Learn practical approaches to allyship
3. Develop self-reflection practices as an ally
4. Apply allyship in daily practice



# Agenda

01

Define disability  
allyship

02

Identify  
approaches to  
allyship

03

Engage in action  
planning activity

04

Discuss  
implications and  
next steps



# Intro Activity

*What does 'disability allyship' mean to you?*





# Defining Disability Allyship





# Defining Allyship

Becoming an  
Ally

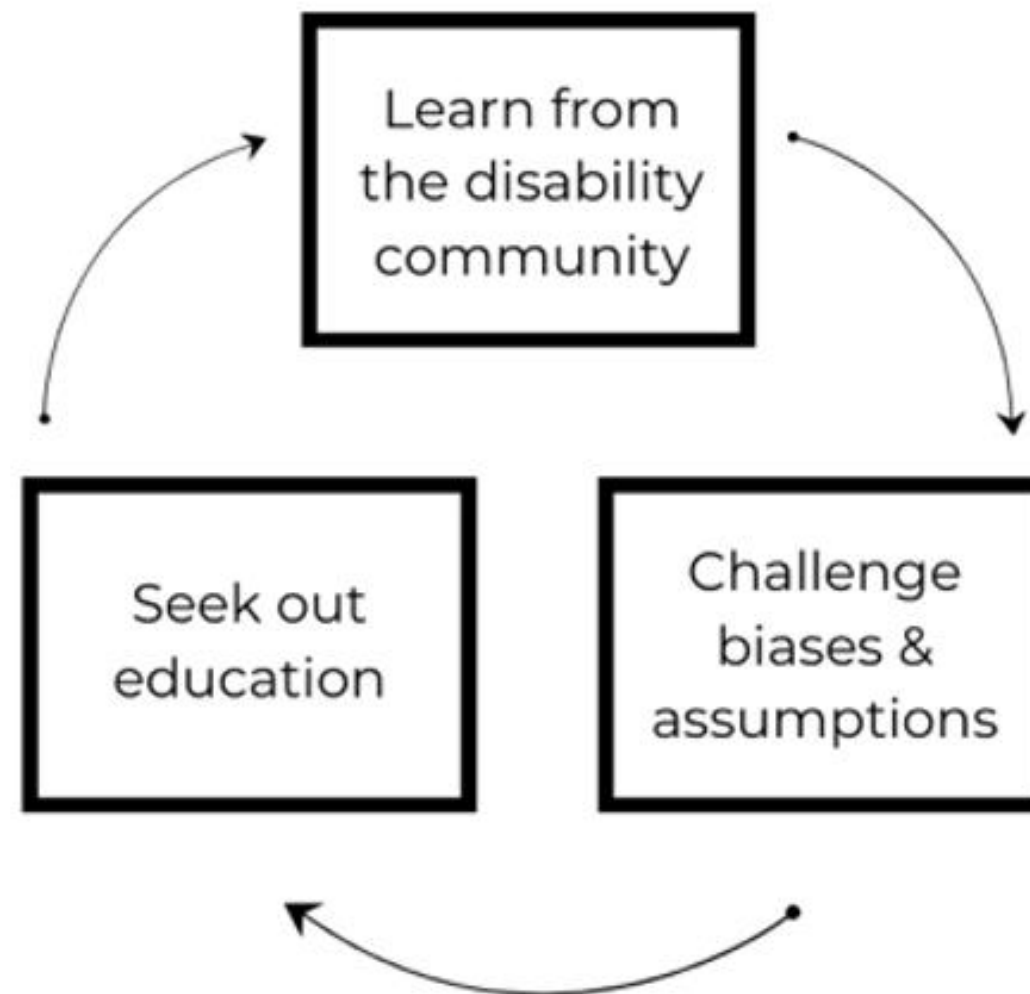
Allyship in  
Practice





# Becoming an Ally

Qualities of an ally: Supportive, affirming, accepting, empathetic, knowledgeable, understanding





# Allyship Development

- **Challenging biases and assumptions**
  - Reflect on personal assumptions about disability
    - what do you believe about disability based on your own experiences? The media?
  - Get comfortable being corrected
    - “Don’t be afraid of being wrong”.
- **Learning from the disability community**
  - “Nothing about us without us”
  - In its simplest form, ask questions
  - Take care in not burdening disabled people





# Allyship Development (cont.)

- **Seeking out education**
  - Expand knowledge of disability and disability-related issues
  - Identify gaps (you don't know what you don't know)
  - Include different disability types, the accommodations process, disability etiquette, issues of access and inclusion, etc.
  - Make it approachable (e.g., podcasts) and be kind to yourself as you go

“I find that the people who ask me more questions about my disability tend to be the most of an ally than those who decide to avoid the topic.”



# Discussion

Where are you in your  
allyship development?

Are you an emergent or  
practicing ally?



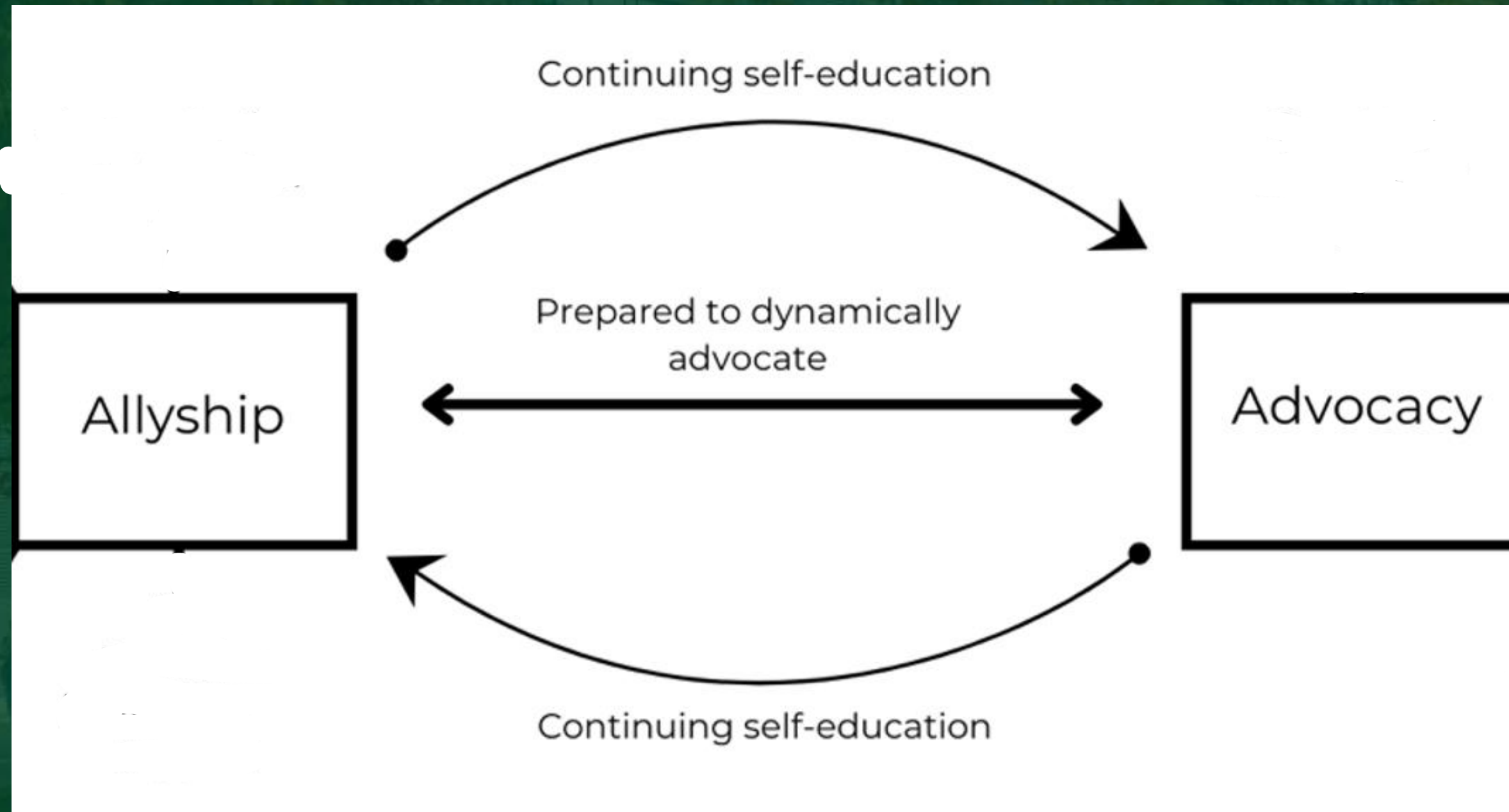




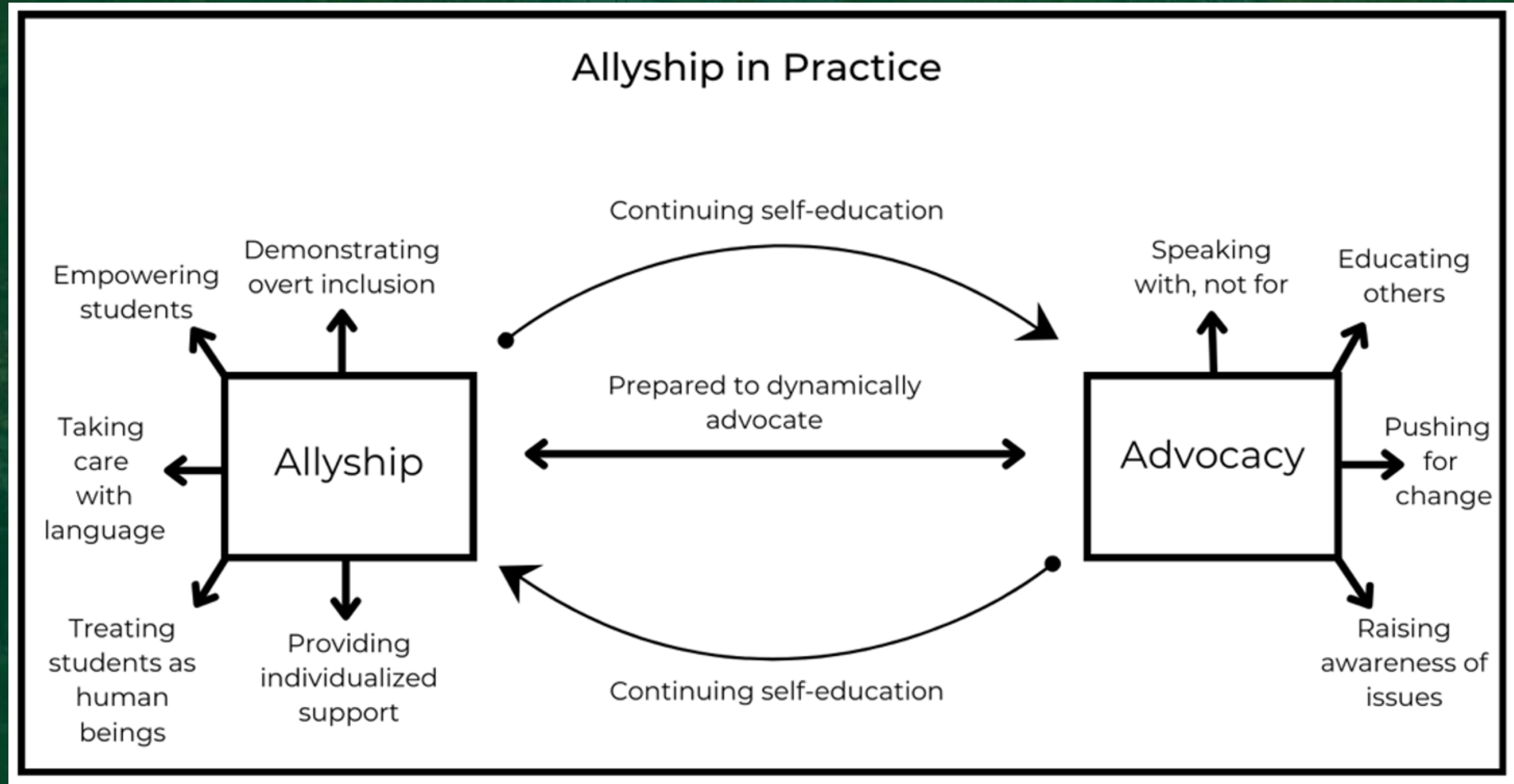
**Allyship in  
Practice: How can  
you show up?**



# Allyship in Practice



# Allyship in Practice (cont.)





# Demonstrating Overt Inclusion

- Outward demonstrations of disability allyship
- Consider a sticker, email signature, digital badge, or note in a syllabus
- “...even if it’s a stupid little sticker that does nothing, it’s still an encouragement .”
- Wherever you are in your development, this shows that you “care to learn and grow” as a disability ally





# Empowering Students

- Knowing when to “uplift the voices of the disabled community” and “create space for others.”
- Ensuring that there is a voice at every table that represents disability in some way
- “How can I use my very sharp elbows to make enough room so that they’re in the front and I’m just continuing to elbow...because I have the privilege to do so?”





# Individualized Support

- Recognize that what you “think is helpful” may, in fact, not be to a student (e.g., a classroom modification).
- “Just ask” disabled students how you can best be supportive, and “they’ll tell you exactly what they need”
- Work individually with disabled students to find “the best way to be successful” in academic spaces



# Language

- Simple, yet powerful strategy to practice allyship
- Avoiding stigmatizing terms *and* being thoughtful around terminology
- “Much like how you ask people what their pronouns are, ask people what they prefer to be called in terms of their disability”
- Prepare to be corrected – it is okay!





# Treat Students as Humans

- Treat disabled and non-disabled students the same
- Participants shared several examples of instances of differential treatment, ranging from peers being afraid to interact with them after learning about their disability to professors “tiptoeing” around them or treating them differently







# Allyship and Advocacy

- “Everyone can be an ally, but those who take the extra mile can be an advocate.”
- “I don’t always need an advocate. I always need an ally.”
- “An ally is someone who brings cookies to the meeting and an advocate is the person who shows up to and participates in the meeting and leaves with a plan.”



# Qualities of an Advocate

- Knowledgeable in disability, access, and inclusion
- Prepared and comfortable speaking up when needed
- Rallies “with” the disability community, not from “the sidelines”
- Ready to “call for change” – “out there getting things done”





# Being an Advocate

- Speak up for issues related to disability access and inclusion
- Engage in advocacy events on campus and network with others
- Speak with, not for, the disability community

[Advocacy] is actively... 'Hey, I have a friend in student government, let me talk to them. Lemme send them an email.' Or 'I know this person at disability services' or 'I know I have a meeting with this person next month,' or whatever it is-, actually helping make the connections and helping get stuff done.







# Key Takeaway

You don't have to be a perfect ally - just committed.



# Action Planning Activity

- 10 minutes
- In small groups (3-5), identify one step you can take this month to advance disability allyship in your role
- Prepare to share





# Share Out

How will you approach allyship moving forward?





# Questions?





# Thank you!

[mthomp26@gmu.edu](mailto:mthomp26@gmu.edu)

[jander53@gmu.edu](mailto:jander53@gmu.edu)

[jtorranc@gmu.edu](mailto:jtorranc@gmu.edu)

