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Blind student Aleeha Dudley and US Department of Justice resolve Miami University of Ohio discrimination case

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COLUMBUS, OH -- Attorneys for Aleeha Dudley have [reached an agreement](#) with Miami University after the school failed to provide Ms. Dudley with equal and meaningful access to her curriculum to help her attain educational success as a blind student studying zoology. As part of a [separate consent decree](#) reached with the United States Department of Justice, Miami University will change its practices for obtaining and utilizing technology, including requirements to make its website accessible, to ensure Learning Management Software is accessible, and to educate faculty and staff about the importance of accessibility and how to achieve this. It will also be easier for students to obtain accessible course materials in all formats, including ebooks and Braille.

The agreement for Ms. Dudley, negotiated by Disability Rights Ohio (DRO), the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), the law firm of Brown, Goldstein & Levy, and Ohio State University Professor Ruth Colker, requires Miami University of Ohio to contribute \$108,000 to help Dudley pay for her education at the university of her choosing. It will also repay \$50,000 in student loans she and her parents took out for her education at Miami, in addition to paying \$102,000 as compensation for the pain and suffering she experienced as a result of the discrimination.

With the support of the NFB, DRO and Brown, Goldstein & Levy filed the initial complaint on behalf of Dudley in January 2014 in the US District Court for the Southern District of Ohio. The US Department of Justice joined the case in June 2015.

Ms. Dudley said: "I am pleased that Miami University and I have reached an agreement that will allow me to continue to pursue my education so that I can achieve my goal of becoming a large-animal veterinarian. I also hope and believe that the consent decree into which the university has entered with the Department of justice will substantially improve the educational experience of

current and future blind students at Miami University. No blind student, at any modern institution of higher education, should encounter the barriers that I experienced. My only intention throughout this process has been to further my own education and to make things better for other blind students. I hope my experience, trying as it was for me personally, now results in an equal education for Miami University students who are blind or who have other disabilities."

Mark A. Riccobono, President of the National Federation of the Blind, said: "Blind students cannot take advantage of educational opportunities and go on to live the lives they want unless course content and the technologies used in the modern classroom are accessible to them. Aleeha Dudley's experience shows that inaccessible content and technology create significant barriers to educational achievement, and that is why the National Federation of the Blind has advocated and will continue to advocate for accessibility in higher education institutions across the nation. We are pleased that this matter has come to a successful resolution and believe that the steps Miami University will take going forward, as laid out in the most comprehensive roadmap to accessibility that has yet been included in a consent decree, will create an inclusive learning environment on its campus and serve as a model for other colleges and universities."

Kerstin Sjoberg-Witt, Director of Advocacy for DRO said: "DRO has been so pleased to collaborate with the National Federation of the Blind and Ms. Dudley on our shared goal of ensuring equal access to students with disabilities. Our coalition is also grateful to the Department of Justice for its role in obtaining the comprehensive consent decree. We hope that every successful accessibility case will make it easier for students in the future to get the accommodations they need. Colleges and universities around the country should take note and work to make content and technology choices that will allow all potential students to tap into their educational resources. "

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About Disability Rights Ohio: Disability Rights Ohio is the federally and state designated Protection and Advocacy System and Client Assistance Program for the state of Ohio. The mission of Disability Rights Ohio is to advocate for the human, civil and legal rights of people with disabilities in Ohio. Disability Rights Ohio provides legal advocacy and rights protection to a wide range of people with disabilities.

About the National Federation of the Blind: The National Federation of the Blind knows that blindness is not the characteristic that defines you or your future. Every day we raise the expectations of blind people, because low expectations create obstacles between blind people and our dreams. You can live the life you want; blindness is not what holds you back.

National Federation of the Blind